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Mark Neil Bennett

**Race, Democracy and the
American Civil War in the
County of Yorkshire**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy
History Department,
Durham University
2018

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Mark Bennett – Race, Democracy and the American Civil War in the County of Yorkshire

Between the shelling of Fort Sumter and the fall of Richmond, the British public followed closely the course of the Civil War in the United States. However, the themes of race and popular government typically associated with the war were not isolated to the American context. Over the course of the 1850s and 1860s, contemporary understandings of such themes were continually tested, challenged, and rebuilt in the light of international developments.

In order to better understand these themes, this thesis interweaves two historical strands. On the one hand, it explores responses to global events during the period: not just the American Civil War, but wars with China, rebellions in India, New Zealand and Jamaica, nationalist movements in continental Europe, and the transnational independence campaign of the Irish Fenians. On the other, it examines the domestic debate about the extension of the franchise, from the failure of Conservative and Liberal bills in 1859-60, to the eventual passage of the Second Reform Act in 1867.

Based on a case study of the large, influential and diverse county of Yorkshire, the thesis considers the extent to which a national intellectual culture existed in Britain at the time. In doing so, it examines the mechanisms by which new views of race and democracy were disseminated at the popular, provincial level.

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List of abbreviations

BC	<i>Barnsley Chronicle</i>
BT	<i>Barnsley Times</i>
BvG	<i>Beverley Guardian</i>
BvR	<i>Beverley Recorder</i>
BO	<i>Bradford Observer</i>
BR	<i>Bradford Review</i>
CP	<i>Craven Pioneer</i>
DC	<i>Doncaster Chronicle</i>
DG	<i>Doncaster Gazette</i>
DR	<i>Dewsbury Reporter</i>
ECH	<i>Eastern Counties Herald</i>
HxC	<i>Halifax Courier</i>
HxG	<i>Halifax Guardian</i>
HgA	<i>Harrogate Advertiser</i>
HC	<i>Huddersfield Chronicle</i>
HE	<i>Huddersfield Examiner</i>
HA	<i>Hull Advertiser</i>
HP	<i>Hull Packet</i>
LE	<i>Leeds Express</i>
LI	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i>
LM	<i>Leeds Mercury</i>
LT	<i>Leeds Times</i>
MM	<i>Malton Messenger</i>
PA	<i>Pontefract Advertiser</i>
PT	<i>Pontefract Telegraph</i>
RRC	<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i>
RA	<i>Rotherham and Masbro' Advertiser</i>
SM	<i>Scarborough Mercury</i>
SDT	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i>
SI	<i>Sheffield Independent</i>
ST	<i>Sheffield Times</i>
TP	<i>Tadcaster Post</i>
WE	<i>Wakefield Express</i>
WFP	<i>Wakefield Free Press</i>
WJ	<i>Wakefield Journal</i>
WG	<i>Whitby Gazette</i>
YH	<i>York Herald</i>
YG	<i>Yorkshire Gazette</i>
ERA	East Riding Archive
HC Debs	House of Commons Debates (Hansard)
NYCRO	North Yorkshire County Record Office
SA	Sheffield Archives
SIA	Southern Independence Association
UBSC	University of Bradford Special Collections
UES	Union and Emancipation Society
WMCA	Working Men's Conservative Association
WYAS	West Yorkshire Archive Service

Introduction

The mid-Victorian period was one of strange contradictions. Globally-oriented history views it as one of disruption, as the continued growth of European hegemony in Africa and Asia destroyed traditional institutions and provoked conflict in response.¹ In India, rebellion against British rule led to violent repression and the abolition of the East India Company.² In China, European governments trod an uncertain course between encouraging Western norms of free trade and rescuing an increasingly ailing government from a Christian-inspired civil war that killed millions.³ Civil war rocked the American continent, too, as tensions over Federal authority to constrain the expansion of slavery were resolved bloodily on the battlefield.⁴ In New Zealand, native Maori and European settlers fought over land ownership; in Jamaica, a campaign to redress economic and social grievances was met with military force and the abolition of the assembly.⁵ Nor was Europe itself exempt from violence, with movements for national unity leading to a successful war of independence in Italy and a suppressed insurrection in Poland.⁶

The global picture is of a world locked in conflict. However, in Britain itself the period between Chartism and Palmerston's death is seen almost as

¹ Christopher Alan Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons* (Oxford, 2004); Antony Gerald Hopkins, *Global History: Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (Basingstoke; New York, 2006), Antony Gerald Hopkins, *Globalization in World History* (London, 2002); Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge; New York, 2008); Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, *From Slave Trade to Empire: Europe and the Colonisation of Black Africa, 1780s-1880s* (London; New York, 2004).

² Christopher Alan Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge; New York, 2012); Michael S. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture: India, 1770-1880* (Basingstoke, 2007).

³ Tobie S. Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China* (Stanford, 2013); Philip A. Kuhn, *Origins of the Modern Chinese State* (Stanford, 2002); Julia Lovell, *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams and the Making of China* (London, 2011).

⁴ Bruce C. Levine, *Half Slave and Half Free: The Roots of the Civil War*, Revised edition. (New York, 2005); James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, 1988).

⁵ James Belich, *The New Zealand Wars and the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict* (Auckland, 1998); Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge, 2002).

⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1999); Harry Hearder, *Italy in the Age of the Risorgimento, 1790-1870* (New York, 2013); Frank J. Coppa, *The Origins of the Italian Wars of Independence* (London; New York, 1992).

one of stasis.⁷ The violent disturbances of 1848 were not repeated, with leading Chartist advocates transferring their interest to continental nationalist movements, and the strength of parliamentary Radicals slowly declined over the course of the 1850s.⁸ The political turbulence created by party splits over Corn Law abolition was lessened when the major liberal factions unified under Lord Palmerston.⁹ Agitation for franchise extension, meanwhile, was sporadic, leaving reformers bemoaning the people's lassitude.¹⁰

My thesis re-evaluates these disparate narratives, examining the nature of mid-Victorian political culture as a cohesive whole in the often overlooked period leading up to the Second Reform Act. It explores the way in which views of the world outside Britain interacted with and informed attitudes towards key concepts such as democracy, nationality, citizenship and race within Britain. Understanding how these concepts evolved over the course of the period, and how the communication of ideas and information affected this evolution, enhances our understanding of mid-Victorian political culture and gives insight into Britain's subsequent progression towards both democracy and imperialism.

However, the thesis is also based on the fundamental belief that discussions of these concepts have been too abstract to provide significant insight. Works examining the extension of the franchise have dealt with parliamentary debates, metropolitan newspapers, and national political figures – from activists like John Bright to thinkers like John Stuart Mill. Similarly, most explorations of the racial debate have tended to focus on the scientific community, policy-makers or colonial governors, with additional context provided by high-level discussion of cultural phenomena like minstrel shows or illustrated magazines. This thesis instead grounds the

⁷ William Laurence Burn, *The Age of Equipoise: A Study of the Mid-Victorian Generation* (London, 1968); Angus Hawkins, *British Party Politics, 1852-1886* (Basingstoke, 1998); Angus Hawkins, *Parliament, Party and the Art of Politics in Britain, 1855-59* (London, 1987).

⁸ Margot C. Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge, 1993); Miles Taylor, *The Decline of British Radicalism, 1847-1860* (Oxford, 1995).

⁹ P.M. Gurowich, 'The Continuation of War by Other Means: Party and Politics, 1855-1865', *Historical Journal* vol. 27, no. 3 (September 1984), pp. 603-31.

¹⁰ Kristin Zimmerman, 'Liberal Speech, Palmerstonian Delay, and the Passage of the Second Reform Act', *English Historical Review* vol. 118, no. 479 (November 2003), pp. 1176-1207.

discussion in a regional study of the county of Yorkshire. This provides a firmer understanding of the state of provincial opinion, which reflected a much larger proportion of Britain than did that of the elites: it also provides an opportunity to consider how ideas spread through Britain's global and national networks of intellectual communication.

The period chosen for this thesis is ideally suited to address the underlying motivations behind the mid-Victorian extension of the franchise. It encompasses two of the major periods of reform agitation – the fruitless campaign of 1859-60, and the 1866-7 gestation of the Second Reform Act.¹¹ However, it also includes longer interim periods of relative calm and their proposals and debates, which allows consideration of the longer evolution of the ultimate legislative solution.

The thesis also covers a vital transitional period in British political history. The hypnotic effect of the Chartists and the Palmerston government's limited ideological basis have resulted in most longer studies of the period glossing over the late 1850s and early 1860s. The exception to this historiographical gap is the high political events leading to the Second Reform Act, where historians have examined the cabinet decisions that led to Disraeli's offer of reform, or the political and ideological developments that resulted in that reform being accepted.¹² Not only will this study reconnect these discussions to their regional roots, but it will help to bridge the gap in our understanding between Chartist proto-democracy and the fumbling step taken in 1867 towards male suffrage.

Historians influenced by the Marxist focus on class see this period as one in which class relations stabilised with the establishment of middle class hegemony: the urban, commercial and industrial interest replacing the rural

¹¹ Robert Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics, 1848-1867: The Making of the Second Reform Act* (Farnham, 2011).

¹² For the former, see Maurice Cowling, *1867: Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution: The Passing of the Second Reform Bill*. (London, 1967) and F. B. Smith, *The Making of the Second Reform Bill* (Cambridge, 1966); For the latter, see Robert Saunders, 'The Politics of Reform and the Making of the Second Reform Act, 1848-1867', *Historical Journal* vol. 50, no. 3 (2007), pp. 571-91.

aristocracy.¹³ By expanding the electorate and redistributing constituencies, therefore, 1867 reflected this new supremacy. Conversely, historians influenced by electoral sociology emphasise continuity rather than disturbance. For these historians, the electorate maintained its pre-industrial character in essential respects, whether landlord influence in rural elections, or voting dominated by social or occupational affinity rather than class.¹⁴ With the rise of the linguistic turn, and the influence of postmodernism encouraging consideration of the broader cultural aspects of politics, a new school arose which emphasised politics being mediated by language rather than socio-economic class. However, this school also followed the electoral sociology line of identifying significant historical continuity, tracing continuations of earlier plebeian radical themes into mid-Victorian politics.¹⁵

This study brings new considerations into the picture. With the breakdown of post-Cold War liberal democratic certainties, increasing attention has been paid to the psychological mechanisms of political allegiance.¹⁶ In this period, local parties were often loose ideological coalitions, polarised by the voting system and the partisan requirements of registration into two organised and opposing structures.¹⁷ Despite this overt unity, they continued to contain a wide variety of heterogeneous views, which were submerged to a greater or lesser degree depending on the individuals in question and the issues at stake. Furthermore, parties were both social and political entities, binding their members with ties of friendship as well as ideology. I will draw out the diversity of attitudes within parties and,

¹³ Such historians include E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963); Royden Harrison, *Before the Socialists; Studies in Labour and Politics, 1861-1881* (London, 1965).

¹⁴ Richard Price, *British Society, 1680-1880: Dynamism, Containment, and Change* (Cambridge, 1999); David Cresap Moore, *The Politics of Deference: A Study of the Mid-Nineteenth Century English Political System* (Basingstoke, 1976); John Russell Vincent, *The Formation of the Liberal Party 1857-1868* (London, 1966), and *Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted* (London, 1967).

¹⁵ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983); Eugenio F. Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment, and Reform: Popular Liberalism in the Age of Gladstone, 1860-1880* (Cambridge; New York, 1992); Taylor, *British Radicalism*.

¹⁶ Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (London, 2013).

¹⁷ Philip Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work: Local Politics and National Parties, 1832-1841* (Suffolk, 2002), pp. 239-40.

recognising the variety of views which existed, explore how contemporary political actors balanced loyalty with conscience.

The thesis goes beyond the limits of traditional approaches via a broader definition of 'political culture'. In contrast to conventional political history, this more extensive approach examines the attitudes, beliefs and values of those throughout society.¹⁸ However, this particular thesis goes further: not just in linking political and racial debates which have usually been treated in isolation, but in questioning the means by which these fundamental concepts could be shaped and how effectively mechanisms of intellectual communication transmitted ideas that could affect political culture. Yet it also keeps those intellectual concepts rooted in a thorough understanding of the events on the ground, and the practical politics through which they were filtered.

By examining the extent to which a coherent view of race, citizenship and nationality was consistently applied inside and outside Britain, I will firmly link the domestic debate over extending the franchise to the controversy about fitness for self-government in both the European nationalist and global imperial spheres. Arguments advanced by Catherine Hall, among others, focus on the way in which the political nation was increasingly defined in racial terms during this period, as rebellions in India and Jamaica shook earlier faith in the universal applicability of the British model.¹⁹ Conversely, Bernard Porter plays down the extent to which imperial mentalities took hold within Britain.²⁰

Beyond the pure questions of British politics, however, there are wider considerations of the way in which race as a category was constructed. There have been a number of suggestions as to how the Victorians delineated race: in gendered terms, differentiating between Western masculinity and Oriental effeminacy, or as the representation of the Other, contrasting savagery and

¹⁸ Angus Hawkins, *Victorian Political Culture: 'Habits of Heart and Mind'* (Oxford, 2015) p. 16.

¹⁹ Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge, 2000).

²⁰ Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004).

civilisation.²¹ The thesis will address the question of how far earlier approaches, which saw racial differences in predominantly cultural or class terms, had been overcome by a hardening of attitudes – driven in part by the development of new intellectual doctrines of ‘scientific’ racism, based on the principle of the permanent inherited inferiority of non-Europeans.²² It will link these to discussions on nationalism, where the British have been portrayed as backward in their thinking by seeing it in predominantly cultural terms rather than the racial terms adopted by many other European countries.²³

Rather than examining how elite interactions between philosophers, government and MPs changed views about race, nationality or the franchise, this thesis will consider the effect of ‘bottom-up’ political interactions. Involving a range of political actors, from MPs to borough elites and non-electors, provides a clearer understanding of regional political culture as well as adding depth to the national debate. My aim is to take this examination beyond the conventional, well-trodden path, to recover and reconstruct (as far as the imperfect historical record allows) the minority figures of Victorian politics and their views.

Consideration of the means by which high intellectual concepts were diffused through society, and the interaction between national and local debates over these concepts, will add a valuable perspective to the discipline of intellectual geography.²⁴ In essence, this applies the spatial turn to

²¹ For the former, Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978), Ann MacClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Context* (New York, 1995). For the latter, Adam Lively, *Masks: Blackness, Race and the Imagination*. (London, 1999).

²² Douglas A. Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians: English Attitudes to the Negro in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1978), Nancy Leys Stephan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960* (London, 1982), Mike Hawkins, *Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945: Nature as Model and Nature as Threat* (Cambridge, 1997), Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge, 2012), Christine Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race* (London, 1971).

²³ Peter Mandler, ‘“Race” and “Nation” in Mid-Victorian Thought’, in Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, and B. W. Young (eds.), *History, Religion, and Culture: British Intellectual History, 1750-1950* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 224-44; see also Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 1992), Jonathan Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830-1886* (Cambridge, 2006), H.S. Jones, ‘The Idea of the National in Victorian Political Thought’, *European Journal of Political Theory* vol. 5 (2006) pp. 12-21 .

²⁴ ‘Intellectual Geography: Comparative Studies, 1550-1700’ (<http://intellectualgeography.history.ox.ac.uk/>, accessed 16/02/2015); Alan R. H. Baker, *Geography and History: Bridging the Divide* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 66-7.

intellectual history – not taking the dissemination of ideas for granted, but questioning and quantifying their success. Intellectual geography has focused predominantly on the early modern period, but an investigation of the networks which existed in Victorian Britain through which ideas spread – particularly at the regional level – adds context to these debates.

The sources used in this thesis would be familiar to earlier political historians, though I employ new analytical techniques to draw previously unstudied meanings from them. The vast quantity of provincial Victorian newspapers, their editorial positions, and the wealth of information on contemporary life which they hold, provide the backbone of the study in both depth and – through analysis of overall word frequencies – breadth. A wide variety of archival material, including the correspondence and papers of local MPs and letters from emigrants and soldiers, supplements them. This range of material supports the thesis in its aim of constructing a broad understanding of contemporary attitudes through the linking of the political and cultural.

The focus on the public sphere is critical for this question of popular attitudes. In private, no doubt, public figures were looser with their language, more willing to adopt positions that they would have disclaimed in front of strangers: from the use of crude racist stereotypes to, in the case of Liberal party figures, fears over the expansion of the franchise. However, the very fact that these positions could only be revealed in private tells us a considerable amount about the way that contemporaries understood the boundaries of acceptability. Moreover, individuals could only influence public debates through public speech: unvoiced opinions, or those safe only for private consumption, enjoyed less impact than the most poorly-attended lectures in isolated villages.

In understanding this public sphere, contemporary newspapers play a vital role beyond recording local events and relaying national and local news to their readership. Their editors were often influential members of their local communities, whose position allowed them to engage in a dialogue with their readers. In fact, the tentative floating of a particular opinion, never to be repeated or rapidly reversed, may reflect editorials meeting an unfavourable reception. This provides another instance of how a focus on the

boundaries of acceptability of the public sphere, and the communication of ideas as well as their origination, is integral to this study.

The thesis tackles a wide range of themes, which – although vital to our understanding of the course of world history – have traditionally been addressed in separate studies.²⁵ However, it retains a single question at its heart: how contemporaries defined the nation – their own and others’ – politically, culturally and racially. The overlapping nature of these concepts will help the thesis to maintain conceptual coherence. For instance, attitudes towards the potential independence of the southern Confederacy during the American Civil War could not be framed in isolation. When people spoke on the topic, they invariably revealed other elements of the worldview that had brought them to this conclusion: their attitude towards nationalism, their opinions of the limitations of a representative system or the universal white male suffrage of America, their views on racial differences or slavery’s legitimacy.²⁶ The purpose of the thesis is to reunite these concepts, studying them together, while retaining a manageable scope via the regional focus.

To support this, the thesis is structured both chronologically and thematically. At the heart of the thesis is its basis in a study of the large and diverse county of Yorkshire. As such, the first chapter focuses on questions of intellectual and historical geography. It is intended in large part to provide the reader with an understanding of the region’s geography – to introduce them to the towns and districts which will make up the study, and to explain a little of each area’s peculiarities. However, it also considers broader topics such as the strength and role of regional identity in mid-Victorian Britain. In its facet of intellectual geography, it examines the mechanisms by which high political or intellectual concepts – such as race – were diffused through the county, from mechanics’ institutes to newspapers and touring lecturers. Perhaps most importantly, it also engages directly with significant methodological questions such as the role of regional studies in broader historiography.

²⁵ One exception being Hall, McClelland, and Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation*, which explicitly brings together franchise reform and race as well as class and gender.

²⁶ Mark Bennett, ‘Confederate Supporters in the West Riding, 1861-1865: “Cranks of the Worst English Species”’, *Northern History* vol. 51, no. 2 (September 2014), pp. 311-29.

The second chapter deals primarily with questions of race and nationality. It considers and re-evaluates Britain's war with China in 1857, and the subsequent electoral defeats of prominent critics of the government's aggressive policy. Beliefs in the conflict's morality were driven not by a desire to see European civilisation triumph over Chinese 'barbarians,' as the historiography has suggested, but the need to redeem and defend British honour. The election, meanwhile, was driven less by national events than by traditional and even local factors: Cobden's opponent at Huddersfield decried him not just as 'un-English,' but 'un-Yorkshire.'

The chapter also considers the effect which the Indian Rebellion of 1857 had on British racial discourse. It emphasises that the events did little to shake the existing British civilizational perspective, distinct from the belief in inherent inferiority present in later 'scientific' racism. It also argues that newspaper reporting focused less on sexual atrocities than has traditionally been portrayed. However, by contrasting domestic views with letters and memoirs from Yorkshire Anglo-Indians, it shows the disparity between the lived experience of the empire and the conceptualised empire.

Chapter three evaluates the state of the franchise reform debate before the American Civil War. It examines the events of 1859-60, where the Liberals defeated a Conservative reform bill and won a majority at the ensuing general election, only to withdraw their own reform bill and abandon the topic for the rest of the parliament. It explores the justifications that both Conservatives and Liberals made for extending the franchise, with perhaps the most significant finding being the genuine willingness of Conservatives to contemplate the extension of the franchise well before Disraeli's 1867 reform bill.

The central section of the thesis deals with the American Civil War and its fallout over three chapters. The first (chapter four), looking primarily at the diplomatic sphere, establishes the pattern of loyalties to either North or South within the region. It asks whether Conservative newspapers or MPs were more likely to support the slave-owning South, differentiating strongly between mediation between the two sides, intervention on one side, and recognition of the South as an independent nation. It concludes that the

overwhelming majority, regardless of political opinion, hoped Britain would stay as distant as possible.

This progresses into a discussion of the role of democracy in views of the conflict. The traditional framework has been that the victory of the Union made democracy safe for Britain, leading to the subsequent expansion of the franchise. Chapter five tests this framework, considering views during the war and whether candidates in the 1865 election were more ready to endorse ‘Americanisation’, or even reform in general, than they had been in 1859. It concludes not only that there was no paradigm shift as a result of the Union victory, but that the arguments deployed by reformers sometimes directly contradicted fundamental American principles.

Chapter six focuses on the racial and national context of the American Civil War. Drawing on themes from chapter two, it highlights the strength of British anti-slavery as well as the continued dominance of civilizational understandings of race. Though most historiography suggests that Britain supported the Confederacy, and links this to a declining faith in racial egalitarianism, this thesis differs. Instead, it sets the meagre support for Confederate independence in the context of European national movements, and links this lack of support to Confederate slave-owning.

The remaining section focuses largely on the post-American Civil War period. Chapter seven brings the topics of race and nationality closer to home by looking at British imperial difficulties. Using the Maori rebellion in New Zealand, the 1865 Jamaica rebellion, and the Fenian disturbances in Ireland as case studies, it evaluates how far these events shook British faith in the civilizational perspective. Forced to choose between admitting their own responsibility for imperial misgovernment and putting their ‘subject races’ into a state of permanent inferiority, which would the British choose?

Chapter eight, meanwhile, concludes the discussion of democracy and the franchise by looking at the abortive Liberal reform bill of 1866 and the successful Conservative bill of 1867. It asks how and why attitudes towards the franchise changed – particularly among the Conservatives, who eventually passed a measure of household suffrage which many of them had previously decried. It also examines the phenomenon of Working Men’s Conservative Associations and their relationship with franchise extension. It

brings the thesis together by looking at how and why the equipoise over reform which had characterised the period ultimately collapsed.

By exploring how Britain's global role was understood and the local political effects of this understanding, the study will provide historians with a detailed analysis of specific issues such as race, imperialism and the franchise alongside a synthetic view of mid-Victorian politics in one of Britain's most significant regions.

Chapter 1: The Political and Intellectual Geography of Yorkshire

Local and national in British politics

Any historian treating Britain regionally, in the hope of delineating local peculiarities, must inevitably confront several inconvenient truths. Firstly, the four nations share significant common cultural heritage, particularly the three co-habiting mainland Britain: ‘united,’ as James I put it, ‘both in language, religion, and similitude of manners’.¹ As such, when the historian seeks to draw out regional differences they must also judge how meaningful those are: whether a regional approach represents paddling in the shallows, ignoring the great vistas of ocean opened by transnational histories.

Secondly, borders within Britain have always been highly porous. The patterns of even pre-industrial life crossed the artificial lines of a map, blurring areas in which regional distinctiveness might be found.² Even the ‘reivers’ of the early modern border regions, where violence might be expected to draw starker lines, existed in a state of ‘general confusion bordering on chaos’ that disregarded regional affiliation.³ We might even question whether place has any meaning other than as ‘the sphere of a multiplicity of trajectories’, a collection of moments in time snatched from individuals almost at random, held together in false coherence only to be scattered again.⁴

Thirdly, even those who still believe in the importance of place in history must acknowledge that regional borders were increasingly being broken down over the course of the nineteenth century. Within Britain itself the industrial revolution drove internal migration, from individuals to groups like the Heathcoat lace workers displaced *en masse* from Nottinghamshire to Devon. Better means of internal communication within Britain allowed

¹ ‘House of Commons Journal Volume 1: 22 March 1604’, in *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 1, 1547-1629* (London, 1802), pp. 142-149 [<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/commons-jrnl/vol1/pp142-149>, accessed 14 March 2016].

² For the Yorkshire context of this, David Hey, ‘Reflections on the Local and Regional History of the North’, *Northern History* vol. 50, no. 2 (September 2013), p. 167; for the general intellectual context, Baker, *Bridging the Divide*, pp. 184, 191-2.

³ George MacDonald Fraser, *The Steel Bonnets: The Story of the Anglo-Scottish Border Reivers* (London, 1995) pp. 7-8.

⁴ Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (London, 2008), p. 119.

individuals to travel more readily between regions – permanently, semi-permanently, or for holidays and tourism. Improved internal communication also facilitated the dissemination of ideas within Britain itself, strengthening a common cultural heritage through the growth of a cheap national press.⁵

Moreover, barriers between Britain and the rest of the world were also dissolving. Emigration, both to America and British colonies, and immigration from a variety of locations added new dynamics to British regional thought. Though much emigration was long-term, the steamship also facilitated regular and rapid transatlantic travel: less significantly, though with implications for the Anglo-American political debate, steamships also facilitated a quick escape for those seeking to evade parental responsibilities or impending bankruptcy.⁶ Under the onslaught of both nationalisation and internationalisation, one might be tempted to conclude that the region has little value as a historical category.

This study, however, defends the value of a regional study on three grounds; one general, two relating specifically to the area chosen. Firstly, historical methodology is always a trade-off between detail and comprehensibility, controlling for certain variables to better understand others. As long as the extent to which geographic constructions are artificial is taken into account, using the region as one of these controlling variables is an intellectually justifiable method of approaching a topic. Far from paddling in the shallows, it allows the historian to engage in a focused, in-depth examination of a topic. This, in turn, can be guided and informed by both transnational histories and similarly focused examinations of other communities both within and outside Britain.

Selecting Yorkshire as the target also provides two additional benefits to the regional study. Though most counties were too small and

⁵ Humphrey Southall, 'Agitate! Agitate! Organize! Political Travellers and the Construction of a National Politics, 1839-1880', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* vol. 21, no. 1 (1996), pp. 177-193.

⁶ Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York, 1994), p. 81. For two examples among many, George and J. Blackburn, manufacturers of Upper-lane Mill, Little Gomersal, and dyers at Mirfield, escaped to New York with between £40,000 and £50,000 of their creditors' money (*LT*, 24 June 1865 p. 5) while Mrs Anderson of Bridlington supported three children through sewing between her husband's flight to America and her suicide (*LT*, 5 March 1864 p. 3).

homogeneous to provide a helpful cross-section of Victorian England, Yorkshire's size and diversity enables the historian to identify and highlight significant trends without moving outside the region's boundaries. Equally critically, mid-Victorian Yorkshire had a particularly strong sense of identity, born of history, culture and significance. This facilitates comparisons between different areas within the county, and also allows us to better understand the interaction of competing sub-national identities at the time.

The balance of evidence points to sub-national units in general, and Yorkshire in particular, remaining a significant locus of loyalty throughout the Victorian period.⁷ Yorkshire's sense of identity was strengthened by its long history of territorial unity, with boundaries substantially similar to those of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Deira and the Viking kingdom of York.⁸ This existing sense of regional community, developed through both dialect and history, was strengthened by the growing antiquarian interest in local history and its dissemination through print.⁹ More scholarly books could object to examinations of 'Yorkshire' dialect, as 'a man living twenty miles from Leeds will laugh to hear a Leeds man talk', but the works of 'leisured clergymen, upon their annual visits to particular watering places,' and 'gentlemen... visiting their friend the rector of some country parish' had their effect – just as the inaccurate speculations of amateur ethnologists would have their effect later in the century.¹⁰

The significance of Yorkshire identity was noted outside the county. When the 1851 census divided the country into thirteen regions, Yorkshire

⁷ William Marshall, 'The Creation of Yorkshiriness: Cultural Identities in Yorkshire, c.1850-1918' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2011), pp. 204-5.

⁸ Matthew Townend, *Viking Age Yorkshire* (Pickering, 2014), pp. 15-18.

⁹ For the strengthening of national communities through print, Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. For examples of antiquarianism, Townend, *Viking Age Yorkshire* pp. 225-6; John Bigland, *The Beauties of England and Wales: Or Original Delineations, Topographical, Historical and Descriptive, of Each County, Embellished with Engravings*, vol. 16 (Yorkshire) (London, 1812), p. 59; Thomas Baines, *Yorkshire, Past and Present, a History and a Description of the Three Ridings of the Great County of York from the Earliest Ages to the Year 1870; with an Account of Its Manufactures, Commerce and Civil and Mechanical Engineering* (London, 1870) vol. 1 part 2, pp. 353-481.

¹⁰ C. Clough Robinson, *The Dialect of Leeds and Its Neighbourhood, Illustrated by Conversations and Tales of Common Life, Etc., to Which Are Added a Copious Glossary; Notices of the Various Antiquities, Manners, and Customs, and General Folk-Lore of the District* (London, 1862) ii-iii, vii; Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (London, 1997).

(like London and Wales) was treated as a single unit.¹¹ Gaskell, one of the foremost authors of provincial life, described how even Lancastrians were ‘struck by the peculiar force of character which the Yorkshiremen display’.¹² Henry Adams explained how:

More than any other county in England, Yorkshire retained a sort of social independence of London. Scotland itself was hardly more distinct... To a certain degree, evident enough to Yorkshiremen, Yorkshire was not English – or was all England, as they might choose to express it.¹³

Adams’ view of Yorkshire’s social identity was supported by its manifestations in the capital. Since 1812 the Yorkshire Society had provided a school in Lambeth ‘for educating, boarding and clothing the sons of respectable Yorkshire... parents reduced by misfortune or dead,’ an echo of the way that other migrant groups formed self-help organisations in new homelands.¹⁴ By the mid-Victorian period, its annual dinner and ball in London was an opportunity for Yorkshire peers, MPs and industrialists to gather.¹⁵ Within Yorkshire itself, social life at the highest echelons revolved around county-wide institutions such as the Yorkshire Union Hunt and the annual county ball.¹⁶

Moreover, individuals talked so frequently about their own conceptions of regional identity that it is difficult to escape the conclusion that it played a significant role in their thinking. When votes of national

¹¹ Robin A. Butlin, ‘Regions in England and Wales, c.1600-1914’, in R. A. Dodgshon and Robin A. Butlin (eds.), *An Historical Geography of England and Wales* (London, 1990), p. 240. Notably, Scotland was divided into Northern and Southern regions: *Office of Population Censuses and Surveys/General Register Office, Guide to Census Reports: Great Britain 1801-1966* (London, 1977)

[http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/travellers/Cen_Guide/19, accessed 17 March 2016].

¹² E.C. Gaskell, *The Life of Charlotte Bronte* vol. 1 (London, 1857), p. 10.

¹³ Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Washington, D.C., 1907), p. 178. London thought differently: Robin Gilmour, ‘Regional and Provincial in Victorian Literature’, in Ronald P. Draper (ed.), *The Literature of Region and Nation* (New York, 1989), pp. 51-61.

¹⁴ *HP*, 18 May 1860 p. 3; Terence Golway, ‘Machine Made: Irish America, Tammany Hall, and the Creation of Modern New York Politics’ (unpub. PhD thesis, State University of New York, 2012), pp. 145, 147.

¹⁵ ‘Advertorials’ for the dinner were carried in key Yorkshire newspapers: *SI* 28 April 1860 p. 6, *YH* 28 April 1860 p. 10, *BO* 3 May 1860 p. 5, *LI* 5 May 1860 p. 5, *YG* 5 May 1860 p. 7.

¹⁶ For the Yorkshire Union Hunt, *YH* 9 October 1858 p. 10, 12 November 1864 p. 10, 27 October 1866 p. 10, *YG* 6 October 1860 p. 10; for the county ball, *YH* 12 January 1856 p. 8, *YG* 3 October 1857 p. 9, 14 January 1860 p. 3, 19 January 1861 p. 11, 3 December 1864 p. 7.

significance were taken in the House of Commons, the local press provided lists of how Yorkshire members had divided alongside the overall totals.¹⁷ Non-partisan causes also sought to mobilise this bloc of Yorkshire MPs in their support.¹⁸

Conservatives frequently used county loyalty as an emotional lever. Colonel Henry Edwards, standing for re-election alongside the novice Christopher Sykes, ascribed ‘the courtesy and kindness we have received’ to their being Yorkshiremen.¹⁹ However, given the strength of Yorkshire regional identity, this was not substantially different from appeals to county loyalty elsewhere in Britain. At a Leeds dinner, William Beckett Denison introduced a speaker as ‘the type of an Englishman, the type of a Yorkshireman, and the type of a Conservative,’ implying at least a degree of coherence between the three categories.²⁰ However, there were few attempts to conflate Yorkshire identity with a Conservative political identity.

One of the rare attempts came in 1841, when Edwin Lascelles appealed to his ‘Brother Yorkshiremen’ to follow the lead of Leeds, Bradford and Hull, ‘Shew the Government agitators that Yorkshiremen are too shrewd to be cajoled by their Corn Law Cunning,’ and ‘Redeem your Riding from Whig thralldom and your country from Ruin’.²¹ However, it was as much national events and superior organisation as Lascelles’ passionate appeal that secured the Conservatives both West Riding seats for the first and only time.²² Though the Conservative *Halifax Guardian* could complain that Lancashire ‘sought to destroy the electoral “freedom” of Yorkshiremen’ by sending ‘consecutive railway trains and strings of omnibuses to cross Blackstone Edge, all loaded with voters,’ this was not sufficiently emotive to restore Conservative political fortunes in the Riding.²³

Liberals and Radicals generally made more effective use of county loyalty, by filtering their national narrative about civil and religious liberty

¹⁷ *LM* 9 March 1865 p. 3, *LT* 24 June 1865 p. 5, *LI* 13 May 1865 p. 5, *HP* 26 May 1865 p. 6, *HC* 18 March 1865 p. 5, *YH* 11 March 1865 p. 5, *YG* 11 March 1865 p. 7.

¹⁸ See the efforts of the Yorkshire Schools of Art, *SI* 16 March 1865 p. 4.

¹⁹ *HP*, 7 July 1865.

²⁰ *LT*, 29 July 1865 p. 3.

²¹ WYAS Kirkstall, KC174/82 ‘Brother Yorkshiremen’ (Edwin Lascelles, 5 July 1841).

²² Francis Michael Longstreth Thompson, ‘Whigs and Liberals in the West Riding, 1830-1860’, *English Historical Review* vol. 74, no. 291 (April 1959), p. 223-4.

²³ *HxG*, 7 May 1859 p. 4.

through a regional lens. The significant milestones of Liberal history were manifested locally, and the current generation were called on to prove themselves to their forebears:

A contest in the West Riding of Yorkshire... carries us back to old times... to the years before the Flood of 1832, when the great fight between Milton and Lascelles was regarded by all England with amazement... when Wilberforce stood forth as its candidate, the champion of the negro and the liberator of the slave. These are the men, say we, who thrust Henry Brougham into the House of Commons to knock with the sledge-hammer of Yorkshire's decision against the gates of the constitution... we see a repetition of the same vigorous efforts which carried Lord Morpeth... when the vale of the Calder and the moors of Keighley were alike resonant with the voices of ardent reformers.²⁴

This sense of Yorkshire as a Liberal heartland was intrinsically linked to the strength of religious Nonconformity, with Wesleyanism becoming 'a *de facto* second established religion' throughout the county.²⁵ The 1851 Religious Census put Anglicanism and Methodism close to parity in Yorkshire in terms of capacity (457,594 sittings to 423,109), and gave the Methodists a superiority of 426,960 to 354,507 in actual attendances.²⁶ Methodism was by no means as reliably Liberal as other Nonconformist sects, and could on occasion 'let the side down'.²⁷ Nor, however, was it as intrinsically linked to Conservatism as was the Church of England. Coupled with the Baptists and Independents/Congregationalists, who controlled 148,206 sittings across the county, the numerical Nonconformist superiority made Yorkshire fertile ground for Liberal appeals.

From the historian's perspective, we can appreciate that regional identity had considerable practical weaknesses. So, too, did Victorian conceptions of race,

²⁴ *ECH*, 12 May 1859 p. 5; note that this was an East Riding newspaper talking about a West Riding contest. See also *LT*, 24 June 1865 p. 5.

²⁵ John Wolffe, 'The 1851 Census and Religious Change in Nineteenth-Century Yorkshire', *Northern History* vol. 45, no. 1 (2008), p. 75; John Wolffe, *The Religious Census of 1851 in Yorkshire* (York, 2005), p. 5.

²⁶ 'Census of Great Britain, 1851, Religious worship (England and Wales)', *Parliamentary Papers* 1852-3, 1690, cclxxiv (Table G)

²⁷ See, for instance, *BO* 8 July 1847 p. 5.

though both substantially affected the way in which contemporaries thought. However, regional identity developed as part of a complex network of identities, in which people cultivated affinities with geographic units both larger and smaller than the region. Yorkshire's subdivisions had a history almost as long as the county itself: by the time of the Norman Conquest, the division of the county into North, East and West Ridings was already recognised.²⁸

As time passed and population grew, these divisions gained greater responsibility: their own commissions of the peace from the medieval period, their own lord-lieutenancies from the Restoration, their own county members from 1832, and in 1889 full administrative county status.²⁹ Indeed, Yorkshire was fortunate that the push for political devolution below the county split it along already-existing fault lines.³⁰ The subsequent development of commercial networks and infrastructure also supported these divisions: for instance, in the way that Leeds, York and Hull became local nexuses for joint-stock banking.³¹ These divisions created alternative loyalties and rivalries within Yorkshire, co-existing alongside a sense of a county identity. By the twentieth century, when 'Home Rule all round' offered the prospect of a Yorkshire Parliament, the *Hull Daily Mail* scoffed at 'the spectacle of the East Riding taking its rule and government from Leeds or Wakefield'.³²

Subdivisions below the Ridings also generated their own loyalties, particularly in urban areas: Asa Briggs, born in Keighley, noted that the West Riding's history was dominated by the 'sturdy civic pride of its constituent

²⁸ Baines, *Yorkshire Past and Present* vol. 1 part 2, p. 392.

²⁹ Simon Walker, 'Yorkshire Justices of the Peace, 1389-1413,' *The English Historical Review* vol. 108 no. 427 (April, 1993), p. 283; Miles Jebb, *The Lord-Lieutenants and their Deputies* (Chichester, 2007) p. 189.

³⁰ David Eastwood, *Government and Community in the English Provinces, 1700-1870* (Basingstoke, 1997), p. 106-7.

³¹ Derek Gregory, 'Three Geographies of Industrialisation', in R. A. Dodgshon and Robin A. Butlin (eds.), *An Historical Geography of England and Wales* (London, 1990), figure 13.11 p. 380; see also Cheryl Bailey, 'Provincial Banking in Nineteenth Century England: York City and County Banking Co., 1830-1880' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Leicester, 2003), pp. 53-8, 70.

³² G.K. Peatling, 'Home Rule for England, English Nationalism, and Edwardian Debates about Constitutional Reform', *Albion* vol. 35, no. 1 (Spring 2003), pp. 78, 80-1; *Hull Daily Mail*, 13 September 1912 p. 4. Leeds, perhaps understandably, looked more favourably on the scheme: *LM*, 14 September 1912 p. 5.

parts'.³³ National narratives were echoed at both county and local levels, as when Bradford Liberals mentally and rhetorically conflated their campaign to incorporate the town with the broader campaign for civil and religious liberty.³⁴ This was assisted not just by the necessity for local political activism to centre itself on the borough through registration and campaigning, but by urban geography itself, with the hills that surrounded many Yorkshire towns strengthening existing tendencies towards insularity.³⁵ Indeed, it was the urban political communities, of which the West Riding possessed so many, which would thrive following the reform of local government after the Great Reform Act.³⁶

If we demonstrated the existence of regional identity via its manifestations of regional pride, then the existence of local identity is even more strongly proven. Towns measured their commercial prosperity against one another, sought to match their neighbours in the construction of significant urban amenities, and generally jostled for position.³⁷ The tangible rewards of this jostling were often less significant than the prestige, and the level of disagreement more significant than the rewards seemed to merit.

For instance, although the removal of West Riding assize business from York to Leeds created a certain amount of employment, the dispute between Leeds and Wakefield as to which should receive the new assize showed a more fundamental battle over precedence which managed to cross party lines. The Conservative *Leeds Intelligencer* criticised its Wakefield counterpart for 'abusive' language and 'glaring misrepresentations'; the Liberal *Wakefield Express* accused the Liberal *Leeds Mercury* of having 'spirit of self-seeking,' while the advanced Liberal *Wakefield Free Press* claimed that the Leeds Liberal MP Edward Baines had introduced a private

³³ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Harmondsworth, 1990), p. 150; for a more detailed examination of Briggs' relationship with regional history, S.J.D. Green, 'Northern History and the History of the North: Forty Years On', *Northern History* vol. 42, no. 1 (March 2005), pp. 17-19.

³⁴ Adrian Elliot, 'The Incorporation of Bradford', *Northern History* vol. 15, no. 1 (1979), pp. 156-7.

³⁵ Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work*, pp. 11, 13.

³⁶ David Eastwood, *Governing Rural England: Tradition and Transformation in Local Government, 1780-1840* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 262-3.

³⁷ C. Dellheim, 'Imagining England: Victorian Views of the North', *Northern History* vol. 22, no. 1 (1986), pp. 223-4; Rosemary Sweet, 'Local Identities and a National Parliament, c.1688-1835', in Julian Hoppit (ed.), *Parliaments, Nations and Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1660-1850* (Manchester, 2003), p. 56.

member's bill lowering the borough franchise only as a bargaining chip to obtain the assizes, threatening to 'curiously watch' his 'political conduct'.³⁸ The equally-advanced Liberal *Leeds Times* called York 'effete' and argued that the 'stern business requirements of the present utilitarian age' should prevail over 'antiquarian and cosy recollections,' while the Liberal *York Herald* protested at the 'injustice' and 'hardships' caused by the decision – as well as denouncing 'the Leeds Mercury, and the clique whose opinions it represents'.³⁹ When the news of the Order in Council arrived in Leeds, its treatment resembled that of a military victory: 'the Union-jack was hoisted from the tower of the Town Hall... in Boar-lane and other principal streets of the town flags were displayed, and the bells... sounded merry peals'.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, in terms that suggest strong continuity between the Victorian period and the modern era, the Hull papers criticised their town's poor reputation and isolation, cast envious eyes towards Leeds and its municipal buildings, and suggested that Hull could attract more visitors if it bettered itself.⁴¹

In the majority of cases, the press strengthened local identity more than regional. Stephen Koss has suggested that 'the London press was tantamount to the national press': not only did provincial newspapers 'increasingly... draw their directives, inspiration, incentives, and capital from London', but schemes were frequently proposed whereby editorials and leading articles would be outsourced to London.⁴² In this period, at least, such a characterisation seems mistaken: except for the smallest sheets, for whom advertisement was a business and news a luxury, even minor proprietors guarded their editorial stances as jealously as did the major figures like William Byles of the *Bradford Observer*, Robert Leader of the *Sheffield Independent*, or Edward Baines of the *Leeds Mercury*. Whereas in 1850 95% of US daily and weekly newspapers professed loyalty to a party, in 1861 only 35 of 67 Yorkshire newspapers (52%) did the same – below the

³⁸ *LI*, 27 February 1864 p. 5; *WE*, 4 June 1864 p. 5; *WFP*, 30 January 1864 p. 5.

³⁹ *LT*, 25 June 1864 p. 5; *YH*, 31 December 1864 p. 8, 12 December 1863 p. 8.

⁴⁰ *LT*, 11 June 1864 p. 5.

⁴¹ *HA*, 19 January 1861 p. 4, 31 August 1861 p. 4, 8 March 1862 p. 4; *ECH*, 14 February 1861 p. 5, 5 September 1861 p. 5. However, Leeds also complained about being a 'filthy, ill-contrived town': *LT*, 29 December 1860 p. 6.

⁴² Stephen E. Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, Vol. 1: The Nineteenth Century* (London, 1981), pp. 21-2.

British national average.⁴³ 28 proclaimed themselves as Liberals (and only 7 Conservative), but the remainder announced that they were ‘Independent Liberal’, ‘Liberal Conservative’, ‘Independent’ or ‘Neutral’. Moreover, even listings for a party-affiliated newspaper could emphasise that it advocated ‘no peculiar political questions’ or ‘measures of reform without respect to party,’ or was ‘thoroughly independent in politics’.⁴⁴ Most papers adopted their own independent editorial line, focusing on the social and political life of their home town, and expressed resentment of those papers with broader pretensions– the *Doncaster Chronicle* sarcastically expressed their gratitude to the *Leeds Mercury* for ‘enlighten[ing] us as to the most fitting person to fill the chair of this borough’.⁴⁵ Such stances built a sense of local identity, though in lieu of rather than in opposition to regional identity. Any decline of rural solidarity in the mid-Victorian period must, at least in part, be correlated with their reliance on their urban neighbours for organs of public opinion.⁴⁶

Indeed, the effects of some aspects of contemporary life on identity were complex and multi-faceted. Although religion gave Yorkshire a sense of identity, the focus of religious loyalty was the parish; though the Reformation had swept away traditional participatory forms of worship, the Victorians filled at least some of the gap with Sunday schools, church outings and lectures. However, the conflict between Established Church and Nonconformity meant religion could also be a divisive force locally. When Bradford Dissenters stood up for their principles, counting among their number the manufacturer, Congregationalist and future MP Robert Milligan, it was a Bradford vicar who proposed a rate, the Bradford Churchwardens who laid it, and Bradford magistrates who declared that goods be seized from

⁴³ Michael E. McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928* (New York, 1986), p. 14; C. Mitchell, *The Newspaper Press Directory* (London, 1861), pp. 34-84; Martin Hewitt, *The Dawn of the Cheap Press in Victorian Britain: The End of the Taxes on Knowledge, 1849-1869* (London, 2015), p. 125.

⁴⁴ Mitchells Directory (1861), p. 34 (*Liberal Beverley Recorder*), p. 48 (*Liberal Dewsbury Herald*) and p. 71 (*Liberal Richmond and Ripon Chronicle*), pp. 54-5 (*Liberal Huddersfield Chronicle*).

⁴⁵ *DC*, 30 October 1863 p. 5.

⁴⁶ Eastwood, *Government and Community*, p. 167. Despite the existence of a local weekly (which many other towns were not lucky enough to possess), the *Leeds Intelligencer* and *Leeds Mercury* ‘circulated widely’ in the Skipton district: *CP*, 9 March 1861 p. 1.

the houses of the recalcitrant and sold.⁴⁷ Furthermore, it encouraged individuals to identify with their co-religionists elsewhere in the country through agencies such as the Liberation Society. Religion also provided transnational links, with members of the clergy travelling overseas for missionary activity and study, and relating their experiences to their parishioners.⁴⁸ Politics, too, enabled people to define themselves in multiple ways – as Leeds, West Riding or Yorkshire Liberals, as English or British Liberals, or as those who supported ‘the cause of constitutional, or it may be democratic, progress all the world over’.⁴⁹

It should be remembered that local identity could be just as fluid as regional identity, and in some respects more so. Increased population mobility often took people around the region rather than outside it, and Yorkshire’s coast meant that goods could be manufactured and exported without necessarily leaving the county.⁵⁰ In addition, shifting patterns of local government redrew these boundaries over the period. Boroughs were extended to reduce or prevent landlord influence, though in Bradford the inclusion of outlying townships in the borough led to a mass brawl between the Conservatives of Manningham and the radical weavers of Great Horton; meanwhile, Harrogate and Knaresborough petitioned to form a joint parliamentary borough – the former to gain representation in Parliament, the latter to retain it.⁵¹ Other attempts to create new identities were less successful: when the town of Billingsley applied to transfer between Poor Law Unions, the board of guardians jokingly dubbed it ‘the South Carolina of the Barnsley Union’ in reference to the recent events in America.⁵² While

⁴⁷ *BO*, 17 March 1842 p. 3.

⁴⁸ See Rev. J Bastow: *HxG*, 15 November 1862 p. 4, 17 January 1863 p. 4, 28 February 1863 p. 7, 17 September 1864 p. 4; Rev. J.P. Chown: *BO*, 27 November 1862, 5 October 1865, D.B. Milner, ‘J. P. Chown 1826-81’, *Baptist Quarterly* vol. 25 (1973), pp. 15-41.

⁴⁹ *LT*, 15 July 1865 p. 5, which cited America, France and Spain as justification for its optimism.

⁵⁰ Hey, ‘Reflections’, pp. 168-9.

⁵¹ Sarah Richardson, ‘Independence and Deference: A Study of the West Riding Electorate, 1832-1841’ (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1995), p. 4; Harry Fieldhouse, *Old Bradford Illustrated* (Bradford, 1889), pp. 71-3; *LM*, 25 May 1867 supplement p. 1.

⁵² *BC*, 19 January 1861 p. 5.

these boundaries shifted, the county itself remained as a significant and overriding focus of identity.⁵³

Given the importance of the North-South divide in modern Britain, we should also consider the extent to which Yorkshire may have been subsumed within a more general Northern identity. On a visit to York, the Liverpudlian Gladstone alluded to this idea of the North:

I have always felt that we of the North have a sort of common interest and character, I won't say as opposed to, but, at any rate, as distinguished from, our brethren in the South, but besides the character and the common interests of the natives in the North, there is also the distinctive character of the East coast and the West.⁵⁴

However, as Gladstone suggested, the amorphous North was too large a unit and its inhabitants were perceived to be too diverse in character to generate a significant sense of loyalty.⁵⁵ Liberals and Radicals frequently discussed the failure of the parliamentary system to represent the manufacturing interests of the country, but they did not consistently adopt the Gaskellite shorthand of an industrial North confronting a rural South. Antiquarian concepts of a 'Northumbrian' region spanning Northern England and Southern Scotland were limited to elite audiences, and were weakened even there by the recognition that Danish heritage differentiated Yorkshire from its northern neighbours.⁵⁶ Like many things, antiquarianism proved more effective in confirming rather than contradicting existing realities.

In fact, the distinctiveness of Yorkshire identity offers us the opportunity to challenge a particularly tenacious historical and

⁵³ For instance, although Rifle Volunteer Corps were regimented by Riding, a Yorkshire Rifle Association was formed to train them in marksmanship and the papers took pride that 'Yorkshire lays claim to a fair share of skill with the volunteer's weapon:' *YG*, 10 August 1861 p. 4.

⁵⁴ *YH*, 18 October 1862 p. 4.

⁵⁵ Asa Briggs, 'Themes in Northern History', *Northern History* vol. 1, no. 1 (1966), p. 3; John Le Patourel, 'Is Northern History a Subject?', *Northern History* vol. 12, no. 1 (1976), p. 6; for a dissenting view, Phillip Howell, 'Industry and Identity: The North-South Divide and the Geography of Belonging, 1830-1918', in Alan R. H. Baker and Mark Billinge (eds.), *Geographies of England: The North-South Divide, Material and Imagined* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 65-85. Dellheim, 'Imagining England' largely confirms this view of diversity, talking as much about differences within the North as about differences between the North and South (particularly p. 219).

⁵⁶ Rosemary Sweet, "'Truly Historical Ground": Antiquarianism in the North', in Robert Colls (ed.), *Northumbria: History and Identity 547-2000* (Chichester, 2007), pp. 104, 114, 125.

historiographical concept. The response of the 'New British History' to a perception of English dominance was to propose a new model of 'Four Nations History' in which Wales, Scotland and Ireland played their full part. An equally vital component of this should have been the simultaneous problematizing of the concept of 'England', whose size and diversity resulted in regional differences almost as great as the differences between the four nations of Britain. Like Wales, the strength of Yorkshire Nonconformity set it apart from the theoretical norms of English identity. Like Scotland, language and dialect differentiated the elites from the masses with their 'barbarous jargon': C. Clough Robinson believed 'if a genuine Yorkshireman begins to talk fine,' it bespoke 'some design on your pocket'.⁵⁷ As in Ireland, contemporaries acknowledged racial differences and speculated about their possible effect on personalities. In 1864 *Cornhill Magazine* believed that 'Yorkshire was, above all others, the chosen place of the great Brigantian race,' with 'the Saxon type' that 'preponderates in the inland dales' being 'fair, tall and stalwart'; 'the Celtic in the West Riding' being 'shorter, swarthy... with a fondness for music,' and 'the Danish along the coast' being 'bold, dark men' who 'cleave to a maritime life'.⁵⁸

Though it would be foolish to claim that Yorkshire did not see itself as English, Englishness in Yorkshire was certainly different from Englishness elsewhere – a fact recognised by contemporaries from the American Henry Adams to the 'Railway King' George Hudson.⁵⁹ However, from the historian's perspective, Yorkshire shared enough of the common English identity to make conclusions drawn there representative of other parts of the country. What matters, then, is whether Yorkshire is large, diverse and significant enough to provide a sufficiently wide cross-section of Victorian life to render any examination valid.

⁵⁷ Robinson, *Dialect of Leeds*, xxiii.

⁵⁸ *Cornhill Magazine*, volume 9 (January 1864), p. 87.

⁵⁹ Hudson commented 'he thanked God London is not England as Paris was France, but might he not rather say Whitby was England': *WG*, 24 June 1865 p. 4.

Yorkshire in overview

When selecting an area whose study can provide insights beyond purely local history, Yorkshire is as ideal a target as could be wished for. It was the largest county in Britain, over 3.8 million acres of land from the fells of the Pennines to the North Sea. Had a whimsical deity detached the county from England and nestled it into the coalescing German Confederation, its population alone (just over two million inhabitants in 1861) would have left it rivalling Saxony for the status of fourth largest state in the Confederation.

Within Britain itself, Yorkshire ranked behind only Middlesex and Lancashire in terms of population: however, its political significance was far greater. Between the Elizabethan period and the extenuating circumstances of the Reform Act agitation, only Yorkshiremen by birth or long residence could hope to represent the county in Parliament.⁶⁰ When they arrived in the Commons, they were the only provincial MPs to enjoy the privilege of designated seating, in an era where rank was closely bound with the rights of sitting.⁶¹ This pre-eminence was subsequently made more practical with the 1826 award to Yorkshire of four representatives, more than any other county. Until 1861 Yorkshire enjoyed as many county members as its larger rivals Middlesex and Lancashire combined; between 1865 and the abolition of county constituencies in 1885, it had more than them.

However, well before additional members institutionalised its importance, Yorkshire had developed a reputation for giving a lead to national politics in the same way as the Roman *centuria praerogativa* or the US state of Maine.⁶² Its size made electoral campaigns both logistically complex and prohibitively expensive, which meant that between 1742 and

⁶⁰ Martin Casey, 'Yorkshire', in D.R. Fisher (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1820-1832*, (Cambridge, 2009), accessed online at <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/constituencies/yorkshire> on 14 March 2016; E. A. Smith, 'The Yorkshire Elections of 1806 and 1807: A Study in Electoral Management', *Northern History* vol. 2, no. 1 (1967), p. 62.

⁶¹ Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Mass Politics in England before the Age of Reform: The Great Yorkshire Election of 1807* (Lancaster, 2015), p. 12; for the role of sitting in France, Elborg Forster, *A Woman's Life in the Court of the Sun King: Letters of Liselotte von der Pfalz, Elisabeth Charlotte, Duchesse d'Orleans 1652-1722* (London, 1984) p. 116; Christine Pevitt, *The Man who Would be King: The Life of Phillippe d'Orleans, Regent of France 1674-1723* (London, 1998) p. 82.

⁶² Lily Ross Taylor, *Roman Voting Assemblies from the Hannibalic War to the Dictatorship of Caesar* (Ann Arbor, 1966), p. 91.

1832, the county was only actively contested once.⁶³ However, when a contest was held the verdict was unequivocal. The 1807 election was the biggest and most expensive election in British history ‘before the democratic era’, and viewed as an emphatic endorsement of abolition.⁶⁴ Even uncontested elections for the county could be imbued with significance: the 1830 election of the leading reformer Henry Brougham (the first non-Yorkshireman to represent the county since the Reformation) and the return of four Whigs in the subsequent year were seen as putting the largest constituency in the country squarely on the side of reform.⁶⁵ Though the constituency was later divided, this prestige was not lost: Lord John Russell called the 1859 West Riding election ‘a great, popular, English contest’.⁶⁶

This prestige stemmed not just from the county’s size, but from the influential and varied nature of its communities. Stretching from Sheffield in the south to what is now Teesside and parts of County Durham in the north, the extraordinary diversity of Yorkshire was reflected in its division into three sub-districts or Ridings. The West Riding was the heart of manufacturing in the county, with a central belt of woollen manufacturing towns including Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield and Halifax; further south, beyond the mining towns of the South Yorkshire coalfield, was the steel city of Sheffield. The North and East Ridings were more rural, containing the agricultural districts of the North York Moors and the eastern Yorkshire Wolds, and fishing ports like Scarborough and Whitby along the coast of the North Sea.

However, there remains sufficient diversity within each area to make meaningful comparisons possible. The North and East Riding towns of Middlesbrough and Hull were as industrial as any in the West Riding. In the West Riding, meanwhile, the established civic centres of Leeds, Bradford and Sheffield adjoined burgeoning manufacturing towns like Keighley, Dewsbury,

⁶³ Two 1830 contests were each called off after a single day of polling (Casey, ‘Yorkshire’), while the poll of 1807 ran between 20 May and 5 June (Wilson, *Great Yorkshire Election*, pp. 212, 254).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4 (though, given the intense debate over the term ‘democratic’ which will recur throughout this thesis, perhaps ‘reformed’ would be a better term); Seymour Drescher, ‘Whose Abolition? Popular Pressure and the Ending of the British Slave Trade’, *Past & Present*, no. 143 (May 1994), p. 141.

⁶⁵ Casey, ‘Yorkshire’.

⁶⁶ *House of Commons Debates*, 3rd series 154, c.377, 10 June 1859.

and Barnsley, agitating to be recognised by enfranchisement, as well as smaller market towns like Pontefract and Wakefield, conscious that the industrial revolution was passing them by. Even the most developed towns retained a rural hinterland; for instance, when Titus Salt decided to found a model village outside Bradford's smoke and squalor, he only had to travel three miles north to find a suitable site. When Disraeli sought a pretext to carve out Conservative constituencies from the Liberal West Riding, he found it in this diversity:

In the West Riding we find a great territory seventy miles in length, which is purely agricultural. We find another great division studded with towns, none of them important enough, or having distinctive interests powerful enough to be represented, yet in their aggregate constituting a wonderful hive of industry and energy; and there is still another portion of the West Riding where there are blended and varied interests.⁶⁷

Indeed, it is striking how far Disraeli's proposed constituencies resemble the 1974 division of the county. His 'great territory seventy miles in length,' between Sedbergh and Selby, was annexed to the North Riding to form North Yorkshire or hived off to Cumbria; his 'hive of industry' became West Yorkshire; and his area of 'blended and varied interests,' where the country estates of the Fitzwilliams sat alongside the mining town of 'black' Barnsley and the notoriously democratic ironworking town of Sheffield was 'encircled by ermine', became South Yorkshire.⁶⁸

It is this range of diverse cohabiting communities, as much as its sense of a distinct communal regional identity or its political importance, which makes Yorkshire relevant for the historian. The diversity of Yorkshire provides an ideal opportunity to examine how the intellectual concepts which form the basis of the study differed from community to community and whether their reception was affected by occupational, social, political or

⁶⁷ *HC Debs* 152, cc.999-1000, 28 February 1859.

⁶⁸ Dennis Smith, *Conflict and Compromise: Class Formation in English Society, 1830-1914: A Comparative Study of Birmingham and Sheffield* (London, 1982), quoted in Butlin, 'Regions in England and Wales, c.1600-1914', p. 245.

religious factors.⁶⁹ This offers a valuable supplement to existing historiography on these intellectual topics, many of which have been addressed more frequently at the national or high political level than within a specific community.

Figure 1 (overleaf): the administrative geography of Yorkshire

⁶⁹ For an overview of one election, W.L. Guttsman, 'The General Election of 1859 in the Cities of Yorkshire', *International Review of Social History* vol. 2 (1957), p. 231-57.

Figure 1: the administrative geography of Yorkshire

About this map:

Successive reorganisations of boundaries have brought counties for Local Government, the post and for the ceremonial purposes of the Lieutenancies - to name a few.

Through all of this change, the boundaries of the historic county of Yorkshire and its Ridings have never changed, been disbanded nor faded into oblivion.

Ceremonial Counties:

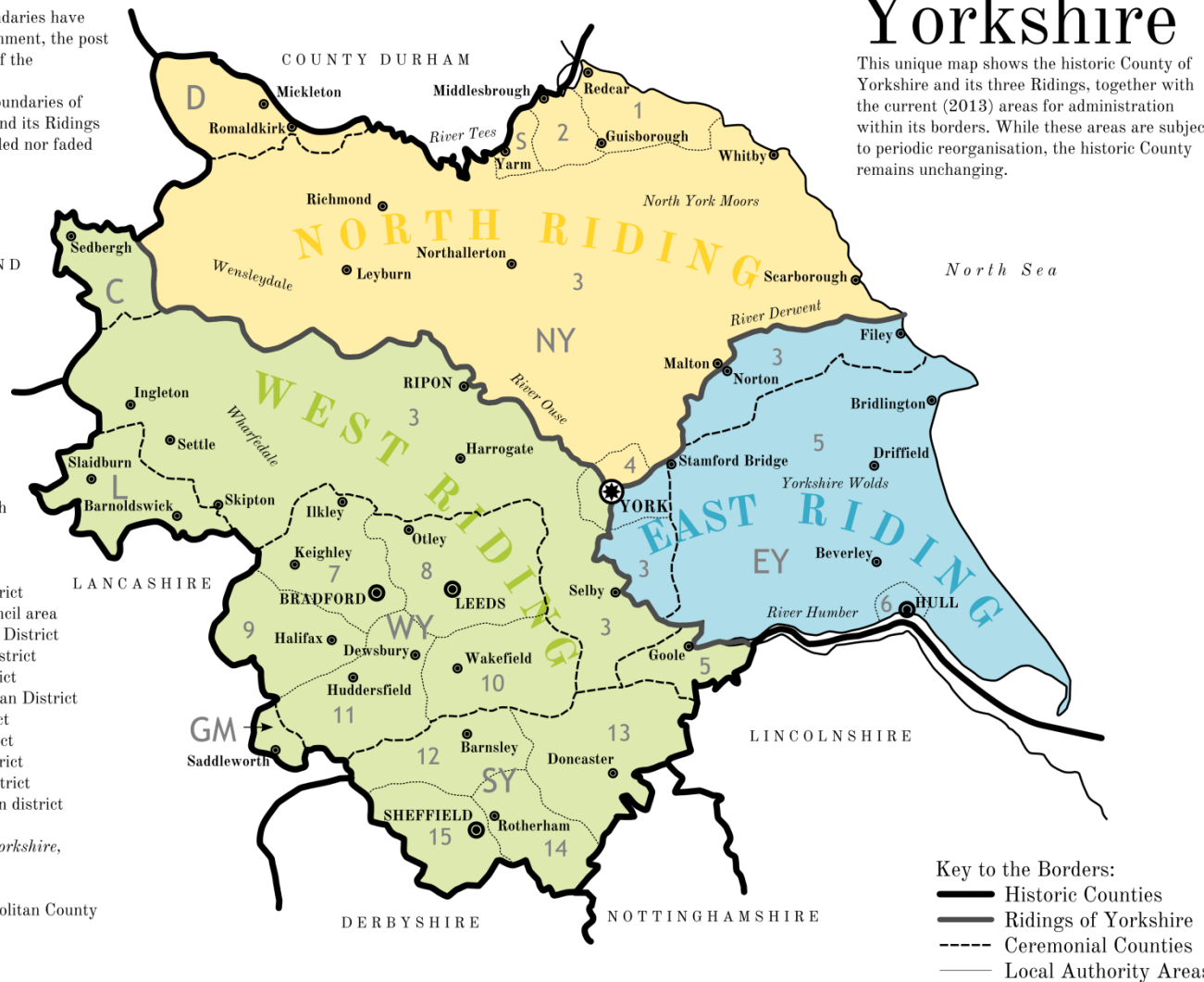
- NY - North Yorkshire
- SY - South Yorkshire
- EY - East Riding of Yorkshire
- WY - West Yorkshire

Local Authority Areas:

- 1 - Redcar and Cleveland Borough
- 2 - Middlesbrough Borough
- 3 - North Yorkshire
- 4 - City of York Council area
- 5 - East Riding of Yorkshire District
- 6 - Kingston-upon-Hull City Council area
- 7 - City of Bradford Metropolitan District
- 8 - City of Leeds Metropolitan District
- 9 - Calderdale Metropolitan District
- 10 - City of Wakefield Metropolitan District
- 11 - Kirklees Metropolitan District
- 12 - Barnsley Metropolitan District
- 13 - Doncaster Metropolitan District
- 14 - Rotherham Metropolitan District
- 15 - City of Sheffield Metropolitan district

Administrations mainly outside Yorkshire, but serving parts of it

- D - County Durham
- GM - Greater Manchester Metropolitan County
- C - Cumbria
- L - Lancashire
- S - Stockton-on-Tees Borough



The Association of British Counties map of

Yorkshire

This unique map shows the historic County of Yorkshire and its three Ridings, together with the current (2013) areas for administration within its borders. While these areas are subject to periodic reorganisation, the historic County remains unchanging.

This map is provided for illustrative purposes, no claim is made to accuracy of the positions of features and locations or the scale.

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The northernmost settlement of significance in Yorkshire was the town of Middlesbrough, which coal and iron had taken from 154 inhabitants in 1831 to 19,416 in 1861, separated from York by forty miles of agricultural territory.⁹⁶ This belt was more sparsely populated than the agricultural land of East Yorkshire, raising sheep and cattle rather than crops.⁹⁷ It was studded with parliamentary boroughs like Malton, Northallerton, Thirsk, and Richmond, which were predominantly market towns with small quantities of industry. With the exception of Thirsk, all returned Liberals: not just due to Liberal inclinations among the local aristocrats, but also from the strength throughout the North Riding of a rural Liberalism rooted in Methodism and the ‘non-agricultural village’ founded on small-scale mining or manufacturing.⁹⁸

Along the coast were a scattering of small ports: Whitby and Scarborough in the North Riding, Filey and Bridlington in the East. Poor inland communications left tourism in its infancy, and most of their income stemmed from serving the agricultural hinterland and traditional non-trawling fishing.⁹⁹ The exception was Scarborough, a Liberal two-member borough, where local newspapers already offered circulating libraries to accommodate visitors to ‘the Queen of Watering Places’ and where construction of the immense red brick Grand Hotel overlooking the sea dated from 1863.¹⁰⁰

Furthest south was the chief port in the county, Kingston-upon-Hull: until the 1820s, the key nexus for commodity flows from the woollen districts of the West Riding, travelling down the canal network and along the Humber.¹⁰¹ Despite the decline of that trade, the Humber continued to give

⁹⁶ Briggs, *Victorian Cities*, pp. 242-7.

⁹⁷ Baines, *Yorkshire Past and Present* vol. 1 part 1, p. 26.

⁹⁸ Duncan Bythell, *The Fragility of Rural Liberalism: Parliamentary Elections and Party Politics in Richmond (North Yorkshire)* (Durham, 2003), pp. 5-13, 25-30; Edwin Jaggard, ‘Small Town Politics in Mid-Victorian Britain’, *History* vol. 89, no. 293 (2004), pp. 26, 28.

⁹⁹ Norman William Robinson, ‘The English Fishing Industry 1790-1914: A Case Study of the Yorkshire Coast’ (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Hull, 1984), pp. 12-16; Stephen Frederick Friend, ‘A Sense of Belonging: Religion and Identity in Yorkshire and Humber Fishing Communities, c.1815-1914.’ (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Hull, 2010), pp. 67-76.

¹⁰⁰ *SM*, 30 April 1864 p. 4, 12 February 1859 p. 4; *Scarborough Gazette*, 1 June 1865 p. 4; ‘The Grand Hotel’, Historic England [<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1243163>, accessed 21 March 2016].

¹⁰¹ Derek Gregory, *Regional Transformation and Industrial Revolution: A Geography of the Yorkshire Woollen Industry* (London, 1982), pp. 58-9.

Hull vessels ready access both to the fishing of the North Sea and to the markets of Germany and the Baltic. Fortunes could still be made in the town: Zachariah Pearson, mayor of the town in the early 1860s, had worked his way up from cabin boy to shipping magnate.¹⁰² As well as oil seed crushing and tanning, the town had cotton mills, foundries and shipyards – though there was some resentment that the town was rarely awarded government shipbuilding contracts, which some ascribed to the town's isolated position and lack of amenities.¹⁰³

Hull Liberals could feel particularly isolated at times, surrounded as they were by the fields of the Yorkshire Wolds and the Holderness and Hull Valley: 'the corner where the old spirit of exclusiveness and intolerance still reigns.'¹⁰⁴ There was, however, at least some innovation within the district, with the last remnants of pastoral farming on the Wolds dying out and new techniques being introduced such as the use of bones as fertiliser.¹⁰⁵ The only other parliamentary borough in the East Riding was Beverley, returning two Conservative MPs, where the freeman franchise made bribery and riot commonplace.¹⁰⁶

Further west was York, whose cathedral shared the dignity of 'minster' with Beverley and whose ancient franchises gave it an unusually high proportion of voters (one in every ten inhabitants at the 1865 election), though without Beverley's public order issues.¹⁰⁷ As the county town, shifting patterns of influence placed York in an awkward position: every administrative function devolved to the Ridings, from judicial functions to elections, decreased its importance. Unlike Hull, however, York remained a key rail junction on the main north-south route from London to Scotland.

¹⁰² *HP*, 1 February 1861, 29 April 1864.

¹⁰³ James Joseph Sheahan, *General and Concise History and Description of the Town and Port of Kingston-upon-Hull* (London, 1864), pp. 581-600; *HA*, 19 January 1861 p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *ECH*, 21 May 1863 p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Alan Harris, *The Rural Landscape of the East Riding of Yorkshire, 1700-1850: A Study in Historical Geography* (London, 1961), pp. 100, 104, 106.

¹⁰⁶ 'Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Beverley borough election petition; with the proceedings of the committee (1857)', *Parliamentary Papers* 1857 Session 2, 243-I; 'Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Beverley borough election petition; with the proceedings of the committee (1859)', *Parliamentary Papers* 1859 Session 2, 187; 'Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on the Beverley borough election petition; with the proceedings of the committee (1860)', *Parliamentary Papers* 1860, 224.

¹⁰⁷ *YH*, 15 July 1865 p. 10.

Both York and Hull had two members, returning one Conservative and one Liberal each.

Before examining the industrial heart of the West Riding, we should first acknowledge its rural northern area. This strongly resembled the North Riding, albeit more mountainous: predominantly pastoral and studded with market towns.¹⁰⁸ These towns supported some industry – Skipton, for instance, possessed three cotton mills – but on a far smaller scale than further south.¹⁰⁹ As well as settlements like Skipton and the growing spa town of Harrogate, it possessed two parliamentary boroughs: Ripon, where Lord de Grey and Ripon still played a significant role, returned two Liberals, whereas Knaresborough returned two Conservatives.¹¹⁰

Though some of the fleeces from the northern district made their way south into the woollen district of the West Riding, Yorkshire's rise to manufacturing pre-eminence coincided with a move away from short English wool to longer overseas staples.¹¹¹ The region had held functionally distinct specialist sub-areas since the middle of the eighteenth century.¹¹² The middle Aire and Calder around Leeds, Bradford and Halifax represented the heart of broadcloth manufacture; Huddersfield produced narrow cloths, while villages towards the Lancashire border produced superfine broadcloths.¹¹³ Other towns specialised as best they could: Dewsbury and its neighbour Batley ground up everything from stockings to carpets to form 'mungo' and 'shoddy' which could then be recycled into 'a low-priced useful substitute for more expensive cloth'.¹¹⁴ These specialisations contributed to distinctions in the nature of employment, as well as to the political diversity essential to this study. A more egalitarian set of relations between employers and workers prevailed to the west and south of Huddersfield, whereas Bradford and

¹⁰⁸ Baines, *Yorkshire Past and Present*, vol. 1 part 1 pp. 26-7.

¹⁰⁹ William White, *Directory of Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Halifax, Wakefield, Dewsbury...forming the Great Seats of the Woollen and Worsted Manufacture* (Sheffield, 1866), p. 816.

¹¹⁰ Michael Markus, 'A Pocket Borough? Reformed Politics in Ripon, 1832-67', *Parliamentary History* vol. 27, no. 3 (2008), p. 357.

¹¹¹ Gregory, *Regional Transformation* pp. 30-1.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 116-7.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹¹⁴ *LT*, 16 February 1861 p. 6.

Halifax resembled the paternalistic politics of Lancashire in larger factories operated by industrial dynasties like the Salts, Akroyds and Crossleys – all of whom would parlay economic power into political.¹¹⁵

The politics of this district were generally Liberal, though with local variations. The West Riding had been foremost in the campaign for Corn Law reform, with the constituency returning Richard Cobden in 1847 and 1852; however, it had also been the heartland of the ‘Tory Radical’ movement of the 1830s.¹¹⁶ Leeds generally presented itself as the leader of the Liberal movement in the West Riding and more widely in Yorkshire, regardless of the resentment this occasionally caused.¹¹⁷ In the uncontested Yorkshire election of 1826, when the traditional aristocratic Whig member was joined for the first time by a representative of the towns, the chosen candidate was a Leeds manufacturer and his main sponsor was the editor of the *Leeds Mercury*.¹¹⁸ Political opponents accused the Leeds Liberals of being ‘the Lords and Masters of the county,’ but these pretensions were weakened somewhat by the way that the Conservatives were generally able to share the town’s representation and by the way that a campaign against state education could comprehensively split the Liberals.¹¹⁹ To the west, in Nonconformist and industrial Bradford – ‘Worstedopolis’ to Manchester’s ‘Cottonopolis’ – Conservatism was much less of an effective force, and the representation generally included one Radical and one moderate Liberal MP. Bradford had also been one of the most significant centres of Chartism, and special constables and drilling Chartists had come to blows in 1848.¹²⁰

Though Leeds and Bradford were the most significant cities in this area, their neighbours were anything but historically irrelevant. Wakefield

¹¹⁵ Richard Dennis, *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century: A Social Geography* (Cambridge; New York, 1984), pp. 6, 29; Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (Hassocks, 1980), p. 10.

¹¹⁶ Felix Driver, ‘Tory Radicalism? Ideology, Strategy and Locality in Popular Politics During the Eighteen-Thirties’, *Northern History* vol. 27, no. 1 (1991), pp. 124-5.

¹¹⁷ One Hull newspaper had ‘no faith in Leeds as the centre and birth place of any great national interest. There is something hollow and insincere about its advocacy’: *HA*, 6 November 1861 p. 2. For Leeds’ earlier role, Casey, ‘Yorkshire’.

¹¹⁸ Thompson, ‘Whigs and Liberals’, p. 218.

¹¹⁹ Derek Fraser, ‘Voluntaryism and West Riding Politics in the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, *Northern History* vol. 13, no. 1 (1977), pp. 201, 214-227; Matthew Roberts, ‘“Villa Toryism” and Popular Conservatism in Leeds, 1885-1902’, *Historical Journal* vol. 49, no. 1 (March 2006), p. 221.

¹²⁰ John Saville, *1848: The British State and the Chartist Movement* (Cambridge; New York, 1987), pp. 144-150.

enjoyed a certain amount of status as ‘in many civil matters, the capital of the West Riding,’ but resented having been overlooked as the site of the industrial development that was to become Saltaire.¹²¹ Its neighbour Dewsbury was a growing industrial town, looking confidently towards enfranchisement in the next reform bill – though not prepared to draw its boundaries too widely to achieve this.¹²²

Further west, towards the Pennine border, lay Huddersfield. The town’s industrial development had significantly benefited the Ramsdens, of whom it was suggested that they owned the entire town with the exception of one house.¹²³ Though this was untrue, and the single Liberal MP the borough enjoyed after 1832 remained more or less independent throughout the period, rents from the town were sufficient to justify Sir John Ramsden’s accession to the prestigious West Riding county seat in 1859. The town’s north-western neighbour Halifax, which had been the most significant manufacturing town in the North in the eighteenth century, was equally staunchly Liberal: Sir Charles Wood, perennial Whig cabinet member, had been one of the borough’s two members since 1832.¹²⁴ Further west, in the liminal region of the Pennines, were scattered a variety of towns and villages – Saddleworth, Todmorden, Marsden, Delph, Ripponden, Hebden Bridge – often located along the canal routes to Lancashire.

The most significant city of the southern West Riding was Sheffield, whose prosperity at this time was built on iron. The occupational structure of the cutlery trade – small workshops where ‘the artisans were one week masters, next week employees, the next self-employed’ – and the high proportion of

¹²¹ White, *Woollen District Directory*, p. 823; Keith A. Cowlard, ‘The Identification of Social (Class) Areas and Their Place in Nineteenth Century Urban Development’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* vol. 4, no. 2 (1979), p. 250.

¹²² Both Batley and Heckmondwike were prepared to join (*LM*, 29 December 1865 p. 3; *LI*, 30 December 1865 p. 5; *LM*, 5 January 1865 p. 3) but these proposals were struck down at a Dewsbury public meeting (*LM*, 29 January 1866 p. 3).

¹²³ The ‘one house’ claim comes from a petition of 1769 (Richardson, ‘Independence and Deference’, pp. 200-1), though by the nineteenth century there were ‘two or three houses’ outside Ramsden’s control: Thomas Langdale, *A Topographical Dictionary of Yorkshire* (Northallerton, 1822) p. 322.

¹²⁴ J.A. Jowitt, ‘Parliamentary Politics in Halifax, 1832-1847’, *Northern History* vol. 12, no. 1 (1976), pp. 172-201; Toshihiko Iwama, ‘Parties, Middle-Class Voters, and the Urban Community: Rethinking the Halifax Parliamentary Borough Elections, 1832-1852’, *Northern History* vol. 51, no. 1 (March 2014), pp. 91-112.

working-class voters strengthened the town's radicalism.¹²⁵ Like Bradford, Sheffield had been strongly Chartist; unlike Bradford, Sheffield's Chartism lasted beyond 1848 through an alternative system of town government based on ward committees.¹²⁶ Even mainstream politics was radical: the town's MPs were the Utilitarian John Arthur Roebuck, and the Nonconformist George Hadfield.

Outside Sheffield, however, the potential of radical politics was limited. Barnsley handloom weavers were staunch Chartists in the 1830s, but the expansion of mining did not compensate for the decline of the linen trade; in Doncaster, the works of the Great Northern Railway Company were driving urban expansion.¹²⁷ Both towns were also unenfranchised, and the only parliamentary borough in the district outside Sheffield was the ancient market town of Pontefract. While one of its members, Richard Monkton Milnes had sat for the borough since 1837 despite crossing the floor to the Liberals over free trade, the other seat was taken by a succession of minor Whig candidates. Although the district may have disappointed the hopes of the most radical, it remained reliably Liberal: in the new Southern West Riding constituency after the 1865 election, the 'true cerulean hue' could be found only in the rural districts closest to York.¹²⁸

Intellectual diffusion

By the time that this thesis begins, therefore, the fundamental attributes that had made Yorkshire such a significant constituency when Milton, Wilberforce and Lascelles went to the polls in 1807 remained true. Still vast, despite improvements in internal communications; still diverse, but with much more industry by mid-century; still sharing a strong cultural heritage,

¹²⁵ Vincent, *Pollbooks: How Victorians Voted*, p. 47; A.F. Cruikshank, 'J. A. Roebuck M.P.: A Re-Appraisal of Liberalism in Sheffield, 1849-1879', *Northern History* vol. 16, no. 1 (1980), p. 208.

¹²⁶ Derek Fraser, *Power and Authority in the Victorian City* (Oxford, 1979), p. 140.

¹²⁷ Frederick James Kaijage, 'Labouring Barnsley, 1816-1856: A Social and Economic History' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1975), pp. 522-3; Patrick John Spaven, 'Accommodating the Miners: A Comparative Study of Industrial Relations and Community Involvement in Some South Yorkshire Coalmining Townships 1855-1894' (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1978), vol. 1 pp. 11-20; Francis White, *General and Commercial Directory and Topography of the Borough of Sheffield* (Sheffield, 1862), p. 418.

¹²⁸ These were Tadcaster, Snaith, Selby and Sherburn: *DG*, 28 July 1865 p. 5.

despite the increasing devolution of power and the changing landscape of local administration. However, the mechanisms by which Yorkshire interacted with the world had evolved dramatically since the voters of 1807 had arrived in York in wagons and barges and the state of the poll was reported weekly in national newspapers.¹²⁹

The biggest and most obvious change was the introduction of the railway. The boom of the 1840s left the county criss-crossed with tracks, though the industrial centres of the West Riding often had two or more unconnected stations belonging to competing companies, while the agricultural towns of the North and East Ridings were much more poorly served.¹³⁰ Paradoxically, the effect of the railways was to strengthen both national and regional identity, enhancing the role of provincial cities as regional capitals and bringing the country hinterlands closer to the towns.¹³¹ On the intellectual level, their obvious effect was to draw Yorkshire more closely into a national framework, with London and Manchester newspapers sold in Yorkshire towns. In 1868, on average, London controlled 47% of the Bradford daily paper market, with Manchester recording 15% and Yorkshire 38% (plus almost all of the weekly paper market).¹³² However, the railways also had the effect of empowering Yorkshire's own newspapers, by expanding the variety of news they could deliver to their audience.

The 1860s was in many respects the heyday of the provincial press, with their combined circulations far outstripping the metropolitan newspapers.¹³³ Papers in minor towns like Dewsbury or Barnsley could sell three or four thousand copies, large towns like Halifax or Hull could offer between five and seven thousand sales, and Leeds and Sheffield could reach

¹²⁹ Wilson, *Great Yorkshire Election*, pp. 220, 227, 215.

¹³⁰ David Joy, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol. 8 (South and West Yorkshire)* (Newton Abbot, 1984), pp. 11-12, 14-15; Kenneth Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Volume 4 (the North East)* (Newton Abbot, 1986) p. 53. For helpful but slightly anachronistic maps, see 'Cheffins's map of the railways in Great Britain: from the ordnance surveys [1847]' (<https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/3019110>; accessed 18 January 2018) and 'W. H. Smith & Son's new railway map of the British Isles [1870]' (<https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/3018620>; accessed 18 January 2018).

¹³¹ David Turnock, *An Historical Geography of Railways in Great Britain and Ireland* (Aldershot, 1998), pp. 27, 187, 247.

¹³² Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 41-2.

¹³³ Alan J. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in England, 1855-1914* (London, 1976), p. 75.

twenty thousand copies or more.¹³⁴ Furthermore, Stephen Koss's case that local papers 'tended increasingly to draw their directives [and] inspiration' from the metropolis seems to be more true for later periods than this.¹³⁵ Some newspapers did buy part-printed sheets of national news and editorial comment from London, adding their own local news and advertisements. However, as the editor of the *Barnsley Chronicle* highlighted, it prevented Saturday papers from including 'home and foreign news, to any great extent, of a later date than the previous Tuesday.'¹³⁶ Most papers, therefore, selected material themselves from a range of newspapers, and did not do so entirely uncritically.

An excellent example of this local independence is the *Tadcaster Post*, first published in April 1861 by Henry Crossley, proprietor of the *Wetherby News* and *Knaresborough Times*. Though he sourced a London correspondent's letter, the number of other minor weeklies in which the same letter appeared suggests it came from an agency.¹³⁷ The appearance of *Tadcaster Post* editorials in other newspapers suggests that Crossley also sourced these centrally.¹³⁸ However, not every editorial appears in every paper, suggesting a degree of flexibility in the arrangement.¹³⁹ By mid-1862, Crossley had broken this arrangement: his paper favoured non-intervention in the American Civil War, while editorials elsewhere backed mediation.¹⁴⁰ Yet Crossley did not wholly abandon his reliance on centrally produced

¹³⁴ *BC*, 31 January 1863 p. 2 (3,000); *DR*, 17 January 1863 p. 7 (4,000); *HxC*, 29 December 1860 p. 4 (5,500 minimum and up to 7,000); *HxG*, 16 February 1861 p. 4 (7,000); *HP*, 6 January 1865 (5,500); *LE*, 24 September 1864 p. 4 (25,000); *LT*, 18 March 1865 p. 5 (23,000); *SI*, 22 January 1864 (40,000).

¹³⁵ Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, Vol. 1: The Nineteenth Century*, pp. 21-2.

¹³⁶ *BC*, 5 August 1865 p. 2.

¹³⁷ *TP*, 11 April 1861 p. 2, *Kentish Independent*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Luton Times*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Louth and North Lincolnshire Advertiser*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Kentish Chronicle*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Enniscorthy News*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Surrey Comet*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Chepstow Weekly Advertiser*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Leamington Advertiser*, 11 April 1861 p. 5, *Dublin Commercial Journal*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Walsall Free Press*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Buckingham Advertiser*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Bury Free Press*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Roscommon Journal*, 13 April 1861 p. 2, *Illustrated Berwick Journal*, 13 April 1861 p. 2.

¹³⁸ *TP*, 19 September 1861 p. 4, *PT*, 14 September 1861 p. 1, *Luton Times*, 14 September 1861 p. 4, *Buckingham Advertiser*, 21 September 1861 p. 4, *Chepstow Weekly Advertiser*, 14 September 1861 p. 1, *Illustrated Berwick Journal*, 14 September 1861 p. 4.

¹³⁹ e.g. The editorial from *PT*, 14 December 1861 p. 1 (and *CP*, 14 December 1861 p. 1, *Framlingham Weekly News*, 14 December 1861 p. 1, *Illustrated Berwick Journal*, 14 December 1861 p. 3, *Buckingham Advertiser*, 28 December 1861 p. 4) does not appear in the *Tadcaster Post*.

¹⁴⁰ Contrast *TP*, 24 July 1862 p. 4 with *PT*, 19 July 1862 p. 1; *CP*, 19 July 1862 p. 1

material, later sourcing at least two editorials from the same place as the *Scarborough Mercury*.¹⁴¹

These central arrangements seem to have been a prerogative of the very smallest papers: the *Craven Pioneer* had a circulation of only 1,725, while the *Whitby Gazette*'s 2,600 weekly copies enabled it to print sporadic but original editorials.¹⁴² However, the practice of sourcing materials from a central provider may be seen as an indication of ambition, rather than a lack of it.¹⁴³ Minor provincial sheets were determined to give their readers an experience to rival bigger newspapers, even if they lacked the resources to do this in-house. Where material was reprinted from central sources, we should perhaps see this as a dynamic culture of *bricolage* instead of the traditional interpretation of a hierarchical dissemination from metropolis to regions.¹⁴⁴

Nor were provincial editors focused solely on local news. Even before the creation of the Press Association, the *Yorkshire Gazette* was boasting of its arrangements with the Electric Telegraph Company, which allowed it to receive continental news 'on terms of perfect equality with the London press'.¹⁴⁵ Some more minor editors struggled – the *Bradford Advertiser* was forced to steal news reports from the local Mechanics' Institute's telegraph service – but even the isolated *Whitby Gazette* was able to arrange to receive the text of the Queen's Speech.¹⁴⁶ Like the railway, the telegram empowered local agents of information distribution, as much as it subjugated them to central and metropolitan organisations.

Provincial newspaper culture was not exclusively dependent on the individual subscriber, but also on the institution of the reading room. These normally featured a range of national periodicals and a few local ones, selected in accordance with location and political persuasion. The Whitby

¹⁴¹ *TP*, 14 May 1863 p. 4; *SM*, 9 May 1863 p. 4; *TP*, 10 September 1863 p. 4; *SM*, 5 September 1863 p. 4.

¹⁴² *CP*, 25 March 1865 p. 4; *WG*, 5 May 1859 pp. 1, 4; 28 March 1863 p. 1.

¹⁴³ It also seems to have originated slightly earlier than Lee, *Popular Press*, p. 91 suggests.

¹⁴⁴ Bob Nicholson, "You Kick the Bucket, We Do the Rest!": Jokes and the Culture of Reprinting in the Transatlantic Press', *Journal of Victorian Culture* vol. 17, no. 3 (September 2012), p. 283.

¹⁴⁵ Lee, *Popular Press*, p. 60; *YG*, 26 February 1859 p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 186; *WG*, 30 January 1864 p. 4.

Institute, for instance, took the *Manchester Examiner*, *Liberal York Herald* and *Conservative Yorkshire Gazette*; the Whitby Conservative reading room took the *Yorkshire Gazette* and but also the *Liberal Leeds Mercury*, and both offered national periodicals like the *Times*, *Illustrated London News*, and *Blackwood's*.¹⁴⁷

For most towns, the main agency of intellectual diffusion was the mechanics' institute. Previous studies have focused primarily on their role in adult education; however, the institutes also served as a locus for lecture tours and presentations.¹⁴⁸ Philosophical societies served a similar function for the middle classes and upper classes, though the class boundaries should not be made too much of. On the one hand, 'A lover of fair play for all classes' urged the middle classes to patronise 'the opportunities of improvement offered by the Literary and Scientific Society' as readily as the operatives used their mechanics' institute; on the other, W.J.S. Morrill MP complained that, not for the first time, the audience at the Barnard Castle Mechanics' Institute was 'well-dressed' and not 'the rough body of honest working men' which he had expected.¹⁴⁹

This thesis deals in large part with the dissemination of new intellectual concepts of race, and their reception in the provinces. As such, it is important to set these institutions in their proper context. Particularly in the smaller towns, they lacked the clout to attract prominent speakers. They were prone to rely either on the antiquarian interests of the local vicar, as when the incumbent Rev. J. Dunman lectured on 'Our Saxon Fathers,' or on self-improvement homilies, such as the 'lecture on the evils arising from novel reading' delivered by a member of the Leyburn Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society.¹⁵⁰ Larger towns might merit a meeting of the British Association, and their societies could attract more prominent speakers. For instance, the Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society received lectures on China and Japan from the British diplomats Sir Harry Parkes and Sir Rutherford Alcock respectively, and from du Chaillu on the division between

¹⁴⁷ *WG*, 4 January 1862 p. 4, 13 September 1862 p. 4.

¹⁴⁸ Martyn Walker, "Solid and Practical Education within Reach of the Humblest Means": The Growth and Development of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, 1838–1891" (unpub. PhD thesis, University of Huddersfield, 2010).

¹⁴⁹ *HC*, 5 February 1859 p. 3; *RRC*, 26 November 1864 p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ *RRC*, 23 January 1864 p. 3.

gorillas and man.¹⁵¹ However, these institutions were biased towards hegemonic metanarratives: they favoured the established and the prominent over the radical and new.

Moreover, there seems to have been no great desire on the part of the metropolis to evangelise concepts of race, whether old or new. Try as they might to mirror the institutional foundations of intellectual life in London, by creating museums to house collections of artefacts and holding *conversazioni* at which the elites would gather, it remained impractical for provincial towns – particularly in the north – to replicate the kind of tight-knit intellectual brotherhood that existed in the triangle between Oxford, Cambridge and London.¹⁵² Robert Knox’s anthropological tour of the provinces was a relatively isolated occurrence, and is probably better explained by his financial issues after an ill-judged association with Burke and Hare forced him from Edinburgh than by any desire to spread his doctrines.

This fact is all the more surprising when we consider the earlier extra-parliamentary campaigns of the anti-Corn Law League and the concerted efforts that metropolitan politicians like Bright made to speak in even relatively minor towns like Wakefield.¹⁵³ What this suggests is that these areas had political power through their representation in Parliament, but lacked the intellectual significance that would have encouraged the *intelligentsia* to engage with them in the same way. Notably, the Social Science Association, which did tour the provinces, had at its heart the purpose of influencing the political debate.¹⁵⁴ By contrast, newly-founded bodies like the Anthropological Society focused far more on procedural battles within the British Association than they did evangelising the wider public.¹⁵⁵

This reluctance to evangelise had two effects. On the one hand, it meant they held no provincial meetings which could spread these ideas both

¹⁵¹ *LI*, 21 February 1863 p. 7; 3 January 1863 p. 8, 9 November 1861 p. 7

¹⁵² Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain* (Oxford, 1991), p. 15.

¹⁵³ *WE*, 24 November 1860 pp. 2-3.

¹⁵⁴ Lawrence Goldman, *Science, Reform, and Politics in Victorian Britain: The Social Science Association 1857-1886* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 72.

¹⁵⁵ George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York, 1987), pp. 254-8.

directly to the audiences and indirectly through local newspaper reports; on the other, it meant that their periodicals and writings remained of niche interest.¹⁵⁶ Not only did it limit their circulation, but they were not picked up and recirculated or discussed by local newspapers through the process of *bricolage* described earlier. The *Anthropological Review*, founded in 1863 as the journal of this new Anthropological Society, merited only a handful of mentions in Yorkshire newspapers over the course of the 1860s – mentions which were evidently taken at second hand from other newspapers.¹⁵⁷ By contrast, periodicals like *Cornhill Magazine* or *Blackwood's* were sold directly to the Yorkshire public or purchased by reading rooms, as well as excerpted and reprinted by Yorkshire newspapers.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, political thinkers like John Stuart Mill could enjoy much greater national prominence than could the anthropologists because there was a greater appetite for engagement with his views. Given that the *Fortnightly Review* recorded a circulation of 1,400 in 1867 – less than the *Craven Pioneer* – it is clear how important this recirculation of ideas through reprinting and word of mouth must have been in enabling them to spread.¹⁵⁹

Indeed, the question of intellectual geography in this period needs to be considered with nuance. The eagerness with which new political or economic ideas were propagated throughout the country, received, discussed and evaluated is in stark contrast with the slowness with which new ideas about race were communicated. Though the historian can understand how concepts of race underlay many of these political ideas, this connection was less evident to contemporaries. When noting the evolution of new ideas, we should also be aware that the mechanisms by which they could be diffused were not equally rapid.

¹⁵⁶ Though the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society held issues 1-3 of the *Anthropological Review*, this was because the Anthropological Society had presented them with copies: *LI*, 16 January 1864 p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ *LM*, 11 September 1863 p. 1, *YG*, 26 September 1863 p. 2 (taken from *Weldon's Register*); *SI*, 9 July 1863 p. 4, *LT*, 11 July 1863 p. 2 (taken from *Punch*); *BO*, 11 July 1867 p. 7 (taken from the *Athenaeum*).

¹⁵⁸ Whether through reviews (*SI*, 2 March 1861 p. 9), excerpts (*SDT*, 30 March 1861 p. 3) or adverts (*LI*, 30 March 1861 p. 4).

¹⁵⁹ John Russell Vincent, *The Formation of the British Liberal Party 1857-68* (London, 1972), p. 185; *CP*, 25 March 1865 p. 4.

During this period, intellectual evangelism had much less significance for contemporary views of race than did popular cultural presentations of racialized forms. The exact nature and effect of these depictions, from minstrel shows to anti-slavery lectures, will be considered in chapter six. However, at this stage it is important to note that these were by far the most accessible forms of discourse on race in the period, and that they were largely disconnected from the intellectual arguments. They either drew from religious and moralistic concepts in the case of anti-slavery, or more crude burlesques in the case of minstrelsy. In other circumstances, where popular representations of any form were rare – for instance, images of the Maori of New Zealand – older, more traditional interpretations had a lengthy half-life.

As such, we should not be surprised if racial ideas that were current in London or in high intellectual life were overlooked, dismissed or even mocked in the provinces. However, we should not dismiss provincial opinion as backward solely because they differed from London. Though these regions might have lacked intellectual weight, they did have political power. Furthermore, they form a better representation of what might be termed 'broader public opinion' on a particular topic than the views of elites, whether leading academics, national newspapers or members of Parliament. Though official attitudes might be shaped by the views current in London, history is not solely about those in power. When asked to vote on great national issues – as they were when Palmerston appealed to the country in 1857 – it was these regional approaches which shaped the ultimate response.

Chapter 2: India and China, 1857-9

This chapter deals with a series of key turning points in conceptions of the political and the racial nation. These turning points are manifested through a series of significant events, the first of these being the election of 1857. Defeated in the House of Commons by a disparate coalition of Conservatives and Radical Liberals over a brushfire war in China, Palmerston appealed to the country to support his administration. A sweeping victory followed, in which his parliamentary opponents were defeated: in the West Riding, Richard Cobden was forced to abandon his prestigious county seat before crashing to electoral defeat in the contest for the borough of Huddersfield. Palmerston returned to Parliament, as the *Morning Post* put it, 'as the leader of the English people, and as the great designer and administrator of a national party.'¹

In early historiography – and subsequent biographies of Palmerston – this election marks a turning point. Domestically, this is purportedly the first truly 'national' election in Britain: fought on a single issue to vindicate a particular leader, rather than the patchwork of local contests previously seen.² Globally, it marked an increasing willingness to interfere violently in the affairs of other, 'uncivilised' nations for the purpose of expanding British trade – a nationally popular policy, as the election results showed, or to which the opposition was 'muted' without halting expansion.³

Other historians, however, have been less enthusiastic about the election's significance, claiming the transition between the primitive localised political system and a national one was only partially complete.⁴ After all, the addresses issued by candidates focused on their local links as often as far-flung Canton.⁵ Furthermore, even if candidates endorsed Palmerston, how

¹ Karl Marx, 'The Defeat of Cobden, Bright and Gibson,' 31 March 1857, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works* vol. 15 (Moscow, 1980) pp. 238-242; *Morning Post*, 27 March 1857 p. 4.

² David Brown, *Palmerston: A Biography* (New Haven, 2010), pp. 403-4; Harry G. Gelber, *Opium, Soldiers and Evangelicals: England's 1840-42 War with China, and Its Aftermath* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp. 179-80.

³ E. D. Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism, 1855-1865* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 59; Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920*, p. 6.

⁴ Sweet, 'Local Identities', p. 49.

⁵ Hawkins, *British Party Politics, 1852-1886*, p. 62; Taylor, *British Radicalism*, p. 275.

far was an endorsement of Palmerston an endorsement of aggression towards China?

The second key event swiftly followed the election: the Indian rebellion of 1857. Attitudes towards Indian governance had veered between Orientalist support for despotic government, and a reforming Anglicism which diagnosed ‘backwardness’ in Indian civilisation and manifested a hopeful expectation that this would gradually decline as European norms were exported to Indian society.⁶ However, the conventional interpretation suggests British attitudes towards India fundamentally shifted as a result of the rebellion.⁷ The rebellion, caused by the rejection of modernity (in the form of newly-introduced Enfield rifles) due to religious objections among Indian troops, was characterised by an outpouring of physical and sexual violence towards British expatriates. Lavishly reported in the press, and a perennial feature of Victorian literature, these events persuaded the British that Indians were incapable of ‘progressing’ and inherently barbaric, and that attempts to slowly reform India were doomed to failure.⁸ As a result, all that could be done was to work with and reinforce existing class hierarchies and religious and racial divisions, instead of gradually eroding them.

Peter Mandler has contradicted some of these suggestions, arguing that civilizational perspectives were more tenacious than has normally been allowed.⁹ These perspectives saw humanity as ‘linked by the rungs of a ladder rather than separated by the branches of a tree,’ thereby offering the possibility of progression – even for the societies of India and China.¹⁰ Perhaps more importantly, however, most studies have addressed the ‘official mind,’ national newspapers, or popular literature. In light of the already-

⁶ David Anthony Washbrook, ‘India 1818-1860: The Two Faces of Colonialism’, in Andrew N. Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire, Vol. 3: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 404-6, 415-6.

⁷ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 11-12; Denis Judd, *Empire: The British Imperial Experience from 1765 to the Present* (London, 1996), p. 66; Jill C. Bender, ‘Fears of 1857: The British Empire in the Wake of the Indian Rebellion’ (unpub. PhD thesis, Boston College, 2011), pp. 146-7.

⁸ Gautam Chakravarty, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 3-4; Alison Blunt, ‘Embodying War: British Women and Domestic Defilement in the Indian “Mutiny”, 1857-8’, *Journal of Historical Geography* vol. 26, no. 3 (2000), p. 422.

⁹ Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven, 2006), p. 72.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

highlighted difficulty in disseminating concepts of race, how far are these national and metropolitan conclusions borne out at the regional level?

The 1857 election: the militarism of free trade?

Contrary to the traditional view that MPs who voted against Palmerston were isolated, editorial opinion across the county emphasised that the bombardment of Canton was wrong, and the vote of no confidence vindicated Parliament's honour. There is very little variation in this opinion, despite differing political affiliations. The mainstream Liberal *Leeds Mercury* complaint of 'criminal blundering' by 'ambitious and meddlesome officials in China' harmonised well with the advanced Liberal *Leeds Times*' conclusion that hostilities were 'impolitic' and 'rash', and the Conservative *Leeds Intelligencer*'s proclamation that Palmerston was 'guilty of wrong,' adopting a course 'erroneous in itself and degrading to the British nation'.¹¹

In some cases, there was variation in the intensity of denunciation but not the overall conclusion. In Wakefield, for instance, the Liberal *Express* lambasted 'outrageous and truculent doings' by men on the ground but the Conservative *Journal* restricted itself to calling Cobden's view 'perfectly correct... both in law and equity.'¹² In Hull, the Conservative *Packet* and Liberal *Advertiser* were forthright in their endorsement of the vote against Palmerston: although the Liberal *Eastern Counties Herald* admitted that 'this Chinese question is a difficult one,' it still agreed with its neighbours.¹³ The balance of editorial opinion, then, was firmly against Palmerston's government when the vote was carried.

The Government did find some supporters among Yorkshire newspapers, all of them Liberal. Three came from South Yorkshire – Sheffield, Doncaster, and Barnsley – and two from agricultural north and central Yorkshire (Richmond and York). At first glance, this does not point to any great groundswell of opinion in the commercial towns and cities of the county in favour of opening the Chinese market, which in turn downplays the

¹¹ *LM*, 7 March 1857 p. 4; *LT*, 7 March 1857 p. 4; *LI*, 7 March 1857 p. 4.

¹² *WE*, 21 March 1857 p. 5; *WJ*, 6 March 1857 p. 4.

¹³ *HP*, 6 March 1857; *HA*, 7 March 1857 p. 5; *ECH*, 5 March 1857 p. 5.

economic motivations which have traditionally explained British intervention in China. However, local peculiarities may explain this. Yorkshire was a wool county, which made China a weaker target for expansion than with alternative textiles like cotton. Though it claimed precedence as the third port of the kingdom, Hull was tied into the Baltic trade and was unlikely to benefit from Chinese commerce as would Liverpool, London or Bristol. On the other hand, Sheffield certainly hoped to replace domestic manufactures with its own goods: a collection of Chinese tools exhibited at the School of Art promoted the comment that ‘unless the celestials are inconceivably stupid’ they would be better buying British.¹⁴

Counteracting this logic are the actual arguments used in favour of the bombardment. The *Sheffield Independent*, for instance, argued that the situation was ‘very trying’ and merited ‘a candid if not a lenient judgement’.¹⁵ The *Doncaster Gazette* similarly justified support for ‘servants of the country... doing their duty under circumstances of great difficulty,’ while the *Barnsley Times* rather baldly stated that ‘we were clearly in the right’.¹⁶ Taking a broader view of the dispute, the *York Herald* argued for the importance of national honour as a deterrent to conflict, while the *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle* saw the dispute as resulting from ‘inherent opposition of free principles with isolated barbarity’: Britain was attempting, consciously or not, ‘to free the myriads of China from a thralldom which has crushed them into imbecility’.¹⁷ While Britain itself might well benefit from the growth of trade with China, it was neither an overt nor a significant argument used to mobilise support behind Palmerston.

That most newspapers concurred that the government’s defeat was fair is interesting in light of the longer-term trends towards imperialist interventionism, as well as the immediate results of the election. It is certainly possible that the spread of opinion represents a combination of principled Liberal non-interventionism and a Conservative search for political advantage, by decrying an act with which they secretly sympathised. Alternatively, both MPs and newspapers thoroughly misjudged the public

¹⁴ *SI*, 4 July 1857 supplement.

¹⁵ *SI*, 28 February 1857.

¹⁶ *DG*, 6 March 1857 p. 5; *BT*, 31 January 1857 p. 2.

¹⁷ *YH*, 28 February 1857 p. 8, 14 March 1857 p. 8.

mood. If so, we might well expect a considerable amount of back-peddalling over the course of the campaign, resulting from contact with the electorate.

Certainly, Conservative candidates were far more prepared to endorse Palmerston's actions than were Conservative newspapers. Robert Hall in Leeds did not consider Bowring's conduct 'strictly justifiable, but they could not deal with a semi-barbarous people as with a civilised people... at the present moment, the war in China was a necessary and inevitable war. (Applause).'¹⁸ He later endorsed the war as protecting British life, property, commerce, and because 'the honour of the British flag has to be vindicated (cheers).'¹⁹ In Wakefield, John Charlesworth refused to 'allow the honour and dignity of our common country to be sullied, or permit our national flag to be wantonly insulted and outraged (hear).'²⁰ Colonel Smyth in York complained of the Chinese 'intention to insult the British flag' and said of his support of Palmerston that 'He had never given a more conscientious vote in his life. (Cheers)'.²¹

However, these endorsements were not endorsements of an aggressive policy in China. Instead – like the Liberal *York Herald* – Conservative candidates focused on the need to maintain honour, protect British standing, and refuse to accept insults, rather than risk escalation through weakness. Indeed, it is suggestive how often the word 'honour' appears in Conservative election addresses at this point: proportionally, almost twice as frequently as in Conservative addresses from 1859 and 1865 and Liberal addresses from all three elections.²² 'Support,' too, appears unusually frequently in Conservative addresses of 1857. Though only a small proportion of the instances of 'honour' (three of twenty two) and 'support' (three of twenty four) relate directly to the Chinese question, their disproportionate frequency at least suggests that these ideas were on the minds of the men writing the addresses.

¹⁸ *LI*, 21 March 1857 p. 5.

¹⁹ *LI*, 21 March 1857 p. 8.

²⁰ *WJ*, 27 March 1857 p. 7.

²¹ *YH*, 28 March 1857 p. 9.

²² The methodology of this analysis has been explained in Appendix A.



Figure 1: Words used in Conservative addresses at the 1857 election, sized by frequency.

Honour in itself did not imply an endorsement of an aggressive policy in China, or even necessarily an acceptance of Hall’s distinction between ‘civilised’ and ‘semi-barbarous’ states. Only a few years later, the Trent Affair (in which the United States boarded a British ship) would demonstrate British readiness to prepare for war as a result of an insult from even the most ‘civilised’ of its neighbours. This defence of honour was certainly an act of cultural imperialism, in that it enforced a standard international code of behaviour through the threat of violence. However, although Conservative MPs were more welcoming of Palmerston’s approach than were Conservative newspapers, they certainly did not propose that Britain adopt any imperial responsibilities in China.

On the other side of the debate, Liberal addresses did feature concepts related to the topic at hand – ‘honour,’ ‘Canton’ or ‘China’, ‘Lord’ and ‘Palmerston’ – but in a relatively limited fashion, given the extent to which the historiography of the election has focused on them. Though they are certainly prominent enough to justify the opinion of some contemporaries that the election was particularly focused, the prominence of ‘independent’ – much rarer in Conservative addresses – shows that, as historians like Angus

Hawkins and Miles Taylor argue, traditional electoral culture still held a more significant place than did these national issues.



Figure 2: Words used in Liberal addresses at the 1857 election, sized by frequency.

The relative unimportance of the Chinese question at this election is perhaps unsurprising given the vehemence and frequency with which most commentators denounced it as even the potential subject of an election. The Conservative *Doncaster Chronicle* protested that ‘it is not a desirable thing that a new parliament should be... elected on a narrow issue,’ and joyfully reported that the electorate ‘rejected the false issue they were so artfully invoked to try... [choosing] members either by broad distinctions of political opinions or by mere personal considerations’.²³ There was a certain amount of logic to the argument that the new Parliament would ‘have to deal with every variety of questions touching the honour and welfare of the country in its domestic and foreign relations.’²⁴ However, it was also almost undoubtedly founded in the fact that so many editors had opposed Palmerston on the issue underlying the dissolution.

²³ *DC*, 3 April 1857 p. 5.

²⁴ *LI*, 14 March 1857 p. 4; see also *LT*, 21 March 1857 p. 4.

Faced with the prospect of the Conservatives taking electoral advantage, Liberal newspapers rallied round traditional Liberal themes rather than Palmerston himself. Of the county's three most prominent newspapers, two had opposed Palmerston. Now the *Leeds Mercury* urged 'Liberal electors' to 'ask themselves whether upon the whole Lord Palmerston or Lord Derby is the Minister of progress and reform', while the *Bradford Observer* begged the voters not to let 'the natural development of a liberal policy in England be checked because an impolitic and inhuman act has been perpetrated at Canton'.²⁵

Of course, suggesting that Canton could not possibly be the issue of the campaign also gave editors the scope to explain how the real issue was their own personal *cause celebre*. The *Halifax Guardian* consigned China 'to the tomb of the election Capulets,' deciding that 'The Education Question is the great question of the present day.'²⁶ The *Yorkshire Gazette* meanwhile, decided that 'the advocacy of sound Protestant Principles will be the test imposed,' though it did not include this factor in the 'other more important questions [which] have presented themselves' when the results had come in.²⁷ However, it was reform which most editors fixed on, and even those who had supported Palmerston voiced their expectations. The *Doncaster Gazette* praised the new 'generally more patriotic' House but still expected 'wise measures of reform' from Parliament, while the *Barnsley Times* concluded that 'there need no longer be any excuse for delaying liberal measures'.²⁸

Similarly, those MPs who supported Palmerston hedged round their support with caveats. In Hull, James Clay praised Palmerston for taking 'charge of the vessel of the state (cheers)' 'when the winds were fiercest,' but followed this by refusing to commit 'to an indiscriminate and blind support of Lord Palmerston or Lord anybody else. (Cheers)'²⁹ On the hustings, he even proclaimed his readiness to abandon Palmerston – 'unusually backward in... the most valuable part of a Radical's creed' – for Lord John Russell.³⁰ In

²⁵ *LM*, 17 March 1857; *BO*, 5 March 1857.

²⁶ *HxG*, 14 March 1857 p. 4.

²⁷ *YG*, 7 March 1857 p. 8, 18 April 1857 p. 8.

²⁸ *DG*, 3 April 1857 p. 5; *BT*, 4 April 1857 p. 2.

²⁹ *HP*, 27 March 1857.

³⁰ *HP*, 3 April 1857.

York, Joshua Westhead made a similar announcement.³¹ The 1857 election may have been associated with Lord Palmerston to a greater extent than most previous contests: however, Palmerston's electoral allure was insufficient to entice most candidates to abandon their status as an independent local member.

This applied also to 'Palmerstonian' candidates. Few Liberal challengers, as opposed to those already holding seats, made much use of Palmerston or China as an electoral asset: most 'Palmerstonians', therefore, were Conservatives taking the opportunity to fly under vaguely Liberal colours.³² In Halifax, Major Edwards announced his support 'both on general questions and on the recent motion by Mr Cobden, of the policy pursued by Lord Palmerston's government' and distanced himself from Disraeli and Derby.³³ William Overend did much the same in Sheffield, though neither was successful. The Chinese war seems to have been little more of an electoral asset for these candidates than was Palmerston more generally, though Overend was supported by some relatively crude appeals to reject those 'who would lick the dust from the feet of the Chinese commissioner Yeh'.³⁴ When it came to the Halifax hustings, however, Edwards thought China had been 'so much discussed... it would be a wasting of your time to entertain it.'³⁵

These 'Palmerstonian' candidates were less successful than their conventional rivals in campaigning on their local connections or personal merit. The *Sheffield Times*, for instance, backed Overend as 'a man of education, travel, experience and ability,' but also found it necessary to urge the voters to 'unite in the general sentiment of the country, and aid in supporting Lord Palmerston by electing Mr Overend'.³⁶ They also struggled to reconcile their support for Palmerston with their professions of independence. Overend's profession that 'Lord Palmerston is the statesman I have selected as most nearly representing my views' was a relatively weak

³¹ *YH*, 21 March 1857 p. 5

³² See the speeches of W.E. Forster (*LT*, 14 March 1857 p. 7) or John Remington Mills (*LM*, 28 March 1857).

³³ *HxG*, 14 March 1857 p. 4.

³⁴ See the letters of 'AC' (*SDT*, 6 March 1857 p. 3), 'An Independent Voter' (*SDT*, 11 March 1857 p. 2), Jack Styles (*SDT*, 25 March 1857 p. 3) and 'John Bull' (*SDT*, 26 March 1857 p. 2).

³⁵ *HxC*, 28 March 1857 p. 8.

³⁶ *ST*, 14 March 1857 p. 8.

appeal, but the more emphatic statement ‘I stand before you a “Palmerstonian”’ was instantly weakened by the vital but contradictory profession ‘I won’t be dragged through the dirt by Lord Palmerston or any other Lord’.³⁷

It is no surprise that the most successful ‘Palmerstonian’ candidate, Edward Akroyd, who defeated Cobden at Huddersfield, was also the most conventional. Cobden acknowledged that ‘the public will consider that in my election at Huddersfield you will have been passing judgment on this question,’ and a Huddersfield Liberal reported that, though Cobden ‘considers his position impregnable... if he could only have an opportunity of meeting the electors and stating his case,’ ‘I fear the war question would make his prospect of success somewhat doubtful’.³⁸ However, China was only one aspect of Akroyd’s appeal: in fact, he accused Cobden of being the one who ‘staked the issue of the election on the question of China,’ which ‘distracted... from other matters more directly affecting the welfare of the people at large’.³⁹ He spoke at length about his support for the Liberal causes of franchise extension, the permissive ballot and retrenchment, and his prior involvement with the anti-Corn Law League.⁴⁰ Indeed, Akroyd mobilised Yorkshire identity against Cobden and his supporters as often as he did English national identity:

Now, gentlemen, I ask you, are you disposed to place your confidence – (Cries of “Cobden,” “Akroyd,” and disorder) – Was that man that called “Cobden” a Yorkshireman? I don’t believe it. (Applause). Was he an Englishman? I don’t believe it. – (A voice- Send him to China) I know my country-men are Englishmen, and are not such as to put their trust in a man who, at a time of national war, was so dead to all sense of honour, that he was disposed to strike the Union Jack to the Russians. (Loud cheers, and a Voice- Cobden). I think you come from Manchester – go back as quick as you can. (Laughter)⁴¹

³⁷ *SI*, 21 March 1857.

³⁸ *HC*, 21 March 1857 p. 8; WYAS Kirklees KC 312/17/6 (Wright Mellor to Willians, 13 March 1857)

³⁹ *HC*, 21 March 1857 p. 8.

⁴⁰ For his address, *LM* 21 March 1857 p. 4; for his meetings, *HC* 21 March 1857 p. 7 (Cloth hall) and p. 8 (Gymnasium hall).

⁴¹ *HC*, 28 March 1857 p. 6; Taylor, *British Radicalism*, pp. 275, 277.

Rather than linking himself directly to Palmerston, Akroyd used the familiar formula of claiming ‘the right to use [his] independent judgement’ in supporting Palmerston: this was not a mere rhetorical device given that, less than a year after his election, he helped to bring down the government over the Conspiracy to Murder bill.⁴² He also campaigned on the familiar theme of redeeming the independence of the borough, a theme that was so popular at this particular election that both candidates used it.⁴³

Many factors contributed to Cobden’s defeat, but clearly it was secured as much through traditional themes of local politics as through national issues or the question of imperialism. While Cobden abandoned his West Riding county seat in favour of the Huddersfield borough, the former Huddersfield member Lord Goderich transferred to the Riding. Though both had voted against the government, Goderich had the local links and history of previous service which Cobden lacked. Local magnate Thomas Pearson Crosland announced that a private meeting of influential borough activists ‘thought his general votes so good that it would be ungrateful and unthankful to oppose him because he had done wrong once’, despite Goderich’s ‘weak’ and ‘unmeaning vote,’ and his ‘coquetting between the Riding and Huddersfield’.⁴⁴ Faced with Cobden as candidate, however, Crosland chaired the committee that helped Akroyd to victory.

Moreover, the dispute over policy towards China was easily isolated. In practice, just as the government had felt bound to support Bowring and Seymour, Yorkshire was not disposed to see Britain lose an already-declared war to the Chinese. The *Leeds Intelligencer*, for instance, went from calling the war ‘erroneous’ and ‘degrading’ to arguing that ‘we have no course left but to prosecute the war until the Chinese are compelled to yield, and grant our just demands.’⁴⁵ Had this been a phenomenon limited to Conservative newspapers, or to this election, we might have concluded that this was political rather than ideological. However, the importance of honour was

⁴² *HC*, 21 March 1857; *HC*, 27 February 1858 p. 4; see also the letter of ‘One who has heard’, *HE*, 27 February 1858 p. 2.

⁴³ *HE*, 21 March 1857 p. 5 considered the issue to be ‘whether a small clique of High Whigs, united to the Tories, shall dictate to the electors’.

⁴⁴ *HC*, 14 March 1857 p. 6

⁴⁵ *LI*, 7 March 1857 p. 4, 11 April 1857 p. 4.

more than just a rallying-cry: the *Barnsley Chronicle*, for instance, felt that the war in China was a stain on the country's Christian reputation but supported its continuance because national prestige was at stake.⁴⁶ In the relatively simple and polarised world which the British understood, honour counted.

In the light of these two significant factors, the idea that 1857 marked a wholehearted endorsement of aggressive war to force open unwilling markets must be revised. Firstly, as Angus Hawkins suggests, the result was driven more by traditional themes of local politics or standard party rallying cries than a specifically Palmerstonian and imperialist campaign. Secondly, the war in China was supported for traditional reasons: to defend British prestige and honour.⁴⁷ Just as the China merchants lacked metropolitan influence, they also failed to win sympathy outside the capital.⁴⁸

Beyond this relatively narrow question of whether British honour should be protected, views on how aggressively Britain could legitimately treat isolationist Asian nations were varied. There was certainly a large swathe of opinion which considered British actions against China and Japan 'uncalled for,' 'cruelty,' 'disgraceful alike to our policy and our arms,' 'of the most reprehensible description,' and 'equally unjustifiable'.⁴⁹ However, even those who supported conflict did so with the justification that it would cause less bloodshed over the longer term. 'Gunboat diplomacy' was not to be a never-ending system, a source of cheap victories and loot for Britain, but a means of establishing and normalising peaceful relations between culturally distinct powers. In Japan, the *Yorkshire Gazette* hoped to 'inspire the natives with a salutary fear of our power, and prevent the recurrence of such untoward catastrophes'; in China, it was the 'Chinese court' or the 'corrupt, arrogant,

⁴⁶ *BC*, 10 November 1860 p. 4, 1 December 1860 p. 4.

⁴⁷ Glenn Melancon, 'Honour in Opium? The British Declaration of War on China, 1839-1840', *The International History Review* vol. 21, no. 4 (1999), pp. 856-8.

⁴⁸ John Darwin, 'Imperialism and the Victorians: The Dynamics of Territorial Expansion', *English Historical Review* vol. 112, no. 447 (June 1997), p. 632

⁴⁹ *WJ*, 1 January 1864 p. 2; *WFP*, 1 December 1860 p. 2; *BC*, 7 November 1863 p. 2.

besotted Mandarins' who needed 'a respectful opinion of British might' delivered 'with hard blows, not words'.⁵⁰

There is a danger, however, that we conflate the willingness to use force against neighbours with contempt for their societies. The British did look down on China and Japan, just as they looked down on every other country from the United States to Russia. However, attitudes were not universally contemptuous: the Japanese attracted more praise, with Sir Rutherford Alcock criticising their 'Asiatic immobility' but complimenting their possession of 'something of the same energy and industry of character... [as] the English people'.⁵¹ The *Yorkshire Gazette* even went so far as to describe them as 'a people highly civilised and of great intelligence and pride', and 'brave and intelligent'.⁵²

Attitudes towards the Chinese were less positive, but varied with circumstances. Moreover, they were acknowledged to have the same fundamental political impulses as other civilisations. The *Sheffield Times* denounced the Chinese in March 1857 as 'barbarians' using 'hieroglyphs... like the ancient Assyrians... the most ignorant heathens' with 'no regard whatever for human life,' lacking 'sense of decency or cleanliness'.⁵³ By December 1860, it was prepared to argue for the overthrow of the Manchu as there was no 'material difference' between the Taiping rebellion and the Italians, both 'seeking independence and liberty under native rule'.⁵⁴ Sir Harry Parkes, speaking on China at the Leeds Literary and Philosophical Society, concluded that commerce would create a middle class, and 'the feeling which now was seen bursting forth in insurrection might some time or other find vent in popular institutions.'⁵⁵ Before this could happen, however, the British found themselves confronting a popular insurrection much closer to home.

⁵⁰ *YG*, 27 December 1862 p. 8; *LM*, 5 September 1857; *ECH*, 15 November 1860 p. 4 (c.f. its views on Japan, 5 November 1863 p. 5).

⁵¹ *LI*, 3 January 1863 p. 8.

⁵² *YG* 21 November 1863 p. 8, 26 December 1863 p. 8.

⁵³ *ST*, 21 March 1857 p. 8.

⁵⁴ *ST*, 15 December 1860 p. 8.

⁵⁵ *LI*, 21 February 1863 p. 7.

The Great Indian Rebellion

The rebellion of 1857 is conventionally seen as a turning point in British attitudes towards India. It marked the point at which the hopeful ambition that Britain could Christianise and civilise India ended, and the emphasis passed to non-interventionism in domestic affairs.⁵⁶ The outpouring of violence, which was memorialised in fiction and repeated endlessly through the rest of the century, showed that Indians were fundamentally different to the British, and proved that European norms could not be implanted in India.⁵⁷ The negative characteristics displayed in the rebellion, such as untrustworthiness, bloodthirstiness, and credulous heathenism and idolatry, were inherent rather than learned, the British concluded.

However, we should firmly distinguish between the official reaction and the resulting policies, and the popular reaction. Colonial governors were recruited from social elites, spent most of their time outside Britain, and normally enjoyed considerable latitude from a distant and preoccupied government to shape policy on the ground. If the Mutiny challenged opinions among the elites who staffed colonial governments, the adoption of new policies could mask a wider survival of the civilizational model.

Certainly in Yorkshire, there was a recognition that the Indian rebellion stemmed from causes other than the racial. Though the *Leeds Times* called 'Oriental races' 'obstinately conservative in their way of thinking, and... subject to uncontrollable fits of fanatical frenzy,' it also acknowledged 'a state of chronic discontent and lax discipline which had long existed among the Bengal Sepoys.'⁵⁸ The *Wakefield Express* determined that the massacre of 'every European the rebels could find' showed 'the deep-seated animosity against the English as a race... not the revenge of a soldiery infuriated against their commanders'.⁵⁹ However, it later decided that the 'deep-seated dislike to Europeans' came about because 'aristocratic regimental officers refused to associate with the native officers', and

⁵⁶ Bender, 'Fears of 1857', pp. 144, 146-7, 185; Jon E. Wilson, *India Conquered: Britain's Raj and the Chaos of Empire* (London, 2016), pp. 287-8

⁵⁷ Chakravarty, *British Imagination*, pp. 3-4; Blunt, 'Embodying War', p. 422

⁵⁸ *LT*, 5 December 1857 p. 4, 25 July 1857 p. 4.

⁵⁹ *WE*, 4 July 1857 p. 5.

concluded that ‘Both sepoy and Subahdar came to look with contempt upon the raw, effeminate, and debauched European youths who were nominally their officers.’⁶⁰ Indeed, this kind of comment mirrored tropes about the poor quality of British officers, and the way they had misled British troops in the Crimea.

Though not all would have gone as far as the *Wakefield Express* in condemning army officers, the East India Company’s misgovernment of India was universally accepted.⁶¹ Even those papers which recognised wider discontent among the Indian population ascribed it to the Company’s failings. The *York Herald* argued that the ‘dreadfully defective’ system treated soldiers with ‘insolent contempt,’ but that ‘the native population are far from being satisfied’ either, while the *Yorkshire Gazette* blamed ‘a permanent system of misrule’ for bringing ‘our Indian fellow-citizens to the highest pitch of indignation’.⁶² It was, after all, much easier for popular domestic opinion to acknowledge problems in Indian government than it was for officials in India, intrinsically bound up with that system, or even for the members of British governments who had helped to uphold it.

Moreover, reforming antiquated institutions was a popular theme along the political spectrum. Pseudonymous Radicals like ‘the Stranger’ could rail against the way ‘a lot of gentlemen’ obtained ‘fabulous salaries’ under ‘a most rotten and depraved system of government’ funded by Indian taxpayers.⁶³ However, even Conservatives like the North Riding MP Colonel Octavius Duncombe could endorse reform of the ‘perfect anomaly’ that was the East India Company to show their openness to liberalism, safe in the knowledge that it would not reflect on the more critical areas of church, crown or constitution.⁶⁴

It has been suggested that responses to the revolt were divided on partisan grounds, with Conservatives blaming the ‘liberal civilising mission’

⁶⁰ *WE*, 18 July 1857 p. 4, 1 August 1857 p. 4.

⁶¹ Elaine Kathleen Musgrave, ‘Shadows of Mutiny: Englishness, Masculinity, and the 1857 Indian Uprising in the Victorian Imagination’ (unpub. PhD thesis, University of California, 2006), p. 21.

⁶² *YH*, 1 August 1857 p. 7; *YG*, 29 August 1857 p. 8.

⁶³ *BO*, 8 October 1857 p. 8, 15 October 1857; see also the comments of Thomas Moore, *SM*, 4 July 1857 p. 4.

⁶⁴ *YH*, 14 November 1857 p. 8.

for causing the rebellion.⁶⁵ At the level of national policy there may be some truth to this, but more popular approaches showed a greater degree of homogeneity. The most commonly identified flaw was that the Company had failed to go far enough in reforming India: more should have been done to reduce distinctions of caste and to spread Christianity. More importantly, this analysis tended to focus attention on British inaction rather than on the implied 'failings' of the Indian populace.

This focus was strengthened by the calling of a Day of Humiliation on 7 October 1857, whose entire purpose was to beg God's mercy for Britain's national sins.⁶⁶ The emphasis on divine agency, with the Indians as an instrument of retribution, necessarily reduced the extent to which Indians themselves could be blamed for the outbreak. Of course, it was still possible to couple divine intervention with criticism of Indians, and it would be dangerous to assume that the sole view of the situation was a Christian one. Nevertheless, the decline of Days of Humiliation later in the century coincides with, even if it does not correlate to, an increased racialized focus on the inability of India to adopt Western cultural norms.

Though mainstream opinion in Yorkshire acknowledged failings on both sides, there was also a section of the public which saw the Rebellion as stemming primarily or exclusively from British perfidy. This was particularly strong in Yorkshire, thanks in large part to General Thomas Perronet Thompson, member for Bradford. Whatever obligation Thompson felt to the Indian authorities had presumably been discharged when they sacked him for mishandling an expedition against Arabian pirates. Now, he argued that the British had broken faith with Indian troops by 'filling the mouths of the soldiers with hog's lard' and compared it to forcing the Life Guards to trample on the cross.⁶⁷ This went too far for many newspapers, with the

⁶⁵ Matthew Stubbings, 'British Conservatism and the Indian Revolt: The Annexation of Awadh and the Consequences of Liberal Empire, 1856-1858', *Journal of British Studies* vol. 55, no. 4 (2016), p. 729.

⁶⁶ This understanding is based in part on Dr Joe Hardwick, 'The disappearance and reappearance of days of fasting and humiliation in the nineteenth-century British Empire,' *Rethinking the British and Irish Worlds* (Northumbria University, 7 October 2016). However, its application to this context is original.

⁶⁷ *HC Debs* 148, c.930, 8 February 1858. See also Michael J Turner, "'Raising up Dark Englishmen": Thomas Perronet Thompson, Colonies, Race, and the Indian Mutiny', *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* vol. 6 no. 1 (2005). Thompson's son, who went to India as a major in the 7th Dragoon Guards, presumably felt differently: *SI*, 5 September 1857.

Leeds Intelligencer in particular dubbing him an ‘Anglo-Sepoy.’⁶⁸ However, his sympathy seems to have been shared in his native Hull, where the *Advertiser* protested that ‘not a word is said about the greased cartridges’, and thought the ‘wide-spread belief among the Orientals’ that the Company wished to ‘compel them to become Christians’ was not ‘unwarranted by recent events’: ‘had the religious prejudices of the Sepoys been respected no rising would have taken place.’⁶⁹ Even the Conservative *Hull Packet* was prepared to have an open mind, suggesting ‘there must have been *some* wide-spread and almost intolerable grievance, the redress of which seemed hopeless, ere such noble regiments as the 16th Grenadiers and the 26th Light Infantry would have mutinied’.⁷⁰

Even when failings on the part of the Indian population were recognised, they were not understood in racial terms. Instead, they stemmed from the civilizational perspective, and particularly from Indian religion. In part, this resulted from the Christian lens through which the conflict was viewed. The majority of speakers on the topic, and particularly those with direct experience of India itself, were missionaries or Churchmen. Reverend Canon Trevor considered the events ‘a fearful specimen of the manner in which the heathen rage’, while Reverend William Keane, formerly canon of St Paul’s Cathedral in Calcutta, considered ‘these accursed abominations... the legitimate fruits of heathenism’.⁷¹ This was not the result of race as we now understand it, of a genetic or heritable component, but simply the result of culture. This mirrored earlier narratives about Jewish emancipation: that existing cultural differences, stark as they might be, did not override the more fundamental equality between all of mankind.⁷²

That this was the case is shown in two ways. Firstly, the praise for Indian converts showed how quickly individual character could be changed: while ‘English Christians, coward-like, forsook their master... not one of the native teachers played the coward’; ‘where the Bible had been circulated in

⁶⁸ *LI*, 12 December 1857 p. 9, 19 March 1859 p. 5.

⁶⁹ *HA*, 18 July 1857 p. 5, 8 August 1857 p. 4, 22 August 1857 p. 5.

⁷⁰ *HP*, 17 July 1857; its argument is weakened somewhat by the underlying premise that ‘the Mussulmen... have no religious prejudices against the use of the fat of beasts’.

⁷¹ *YG*, 31 October 1857 p. 9, 12 September 1857 p. 4.

⁷² David Feldman, ‘Conceiving Difference: Religion, Race and the Jews in Britain, c.1750-1900’, *History Workshop Journal* vol. 76 (2013), pp. 172-4

the South there had been no mutiny'; and without 'the natives at our missionary stations... scarcely one European would have been left'.⁷³ In Travancore, it was explained, Christianity tended 'to civilise their previous wild character', and almost immediately sparked 'an intense desire for knowledge'.⁷⁴ This belied assertions that the Indian tiger 'cannot be tamed'.⁷⁵

Secondly, Christian ministers repeatedly explained that without the Gospel Britain would be no different to India. Reverend W.H. Perkins remarked that 'The Hindoos were a highly cultivated and a civilised people, when the inhabitants of this our island were yet worshipping at Stonehenge': the Rebellion was 'the issue of a long-continued civilisation, when unaccompanied by the light of the Gospel'.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, in 'a lecture in aid of the wives and children of the soldiers serving in India' the Hon. and Rev. Frank Sugden lectured on 'the early period of British history': in it, he explained how 'the inhabitants were in a state of barbarity' before 'the blessings of civilisation, and the benignant influence of religion and Christianity' arrived.⁷⁷

Generally, newspapers followed this stance. The *Sheffield Times* pronounced that 'until Christianity is introduced amongst a people, you cannot elevate them in the scale of civilisation'.⁷⁸ The *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle* ascribed British superiority to the 'national religion,' adding that 'time and opportunity will continually lessen' 'the marked inferiority of some races to others'.⁷⁹ As might be expected, some newspapers were hazier than preachers on the exact derivation of the flaws in the 'character' of the 'Asiatic'. While the *Hull Packet* critiqued 'the fiendish nature of the Eastern character' and its 'character for cruelty and deceit', its connection to 'the atrocities of the recent Chinese rebellion' leaves it unclear whether this was due to shared heathenism or another racial or cultural factor.⁸⁰ Similarly, the juxtaposition in other newspapers of the 'strong-willed indomitable

⁷³ *BR*, 13 October 1860 p. 5; *HC*, 10 October 1857 p. 5; *DC*, 9 October 1857 p. 5; see also *LM*, 4 August 1857 and *YH*, 19 September 1857 p. 10.

⁷⁴ *HP*, 23 May 1862.

⁷⁵ Musgrave, 'Shadows of Mutiny', p. 85.

⁷⁶ *HC*, 12 September 1857 p. 6.

⁷⁷ *YH*, 31 October 1857 p. 10.

⁷⁸ *ST*, 12 September 1857 p. 8.

⁷⁹ *RRC*, 24 October 1857 p. 2.

⁸⁰ *HP*, 2 October 1857.

Englishman' with the 'feebler native of India', or 'the European armed with his skill and appliances' with 'the half-savage hampered with his want of inventive capacity' suggests that the line dividing culture and race was beginning to blur.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the overall balance of opinion suggests that this civilizational premise continued to hold sway.

Though Indian civilisation was considered to be 'backward,' the balance of evidence seems to be against Catherine Hall's suggestion that contemporary Britain was 'in no way prepared' for Indians to be more intelligent than Britons, or to support the superiority of their own culture.⁸² Hindus had 'a curious or inquisitive disposition', meaning that missionaries had to be educated to overcome well-formulated local arguments.⁸³ It was mobility that was lacking, not intelligence: as Reverend John Walton explained, 'tied down by his caste', there was no reason for a Hindu to read 'a book on "self-help".'⁸⁴ However, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* could support Parsi doctors, combining 'local knowledge' with 'high scientific training' obtained in Britain.⁸⁵ Though some thought 'there was nothing to be learnt from the Bengalee literature but legends which inculcated... all the worst passions of human nature,' others showed that Hindu religious poetry 'showed a singular coincidence of expression and thought with some of our scriptural and homely sayings' or that 'customs, legends and superstitions' were brought to England from India.⁸⁶ Moreover, the Temperance movement was keen to show that Indian society possessed some advantages over the beer-swilling West.⁸⁷

The consensus that Indians were not ready for self-government was as strong in 1857 as it had been when Macaulay resigned his Leeds seat two decades before.⁸⁸ However, the rationale behind that denial varied. For the *Leeds Times*, it was the mere fact that India was 'densely peopled by Asiatics' that prevented rule 'on the British principle of representative self-

⁸¹ *LM*, 1 August 1857; *HxC*, 5 September 1857 p. 4.

⁸² Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 377.

⁸³ *HP*, 30 May 1862; *TP*, 1 September 1864 p. 4.

⁸⁴ *RA*, 6 June 1863 p. 5.

⁸⁵ *SdT*, 24 June 1861 p. 2.

⁸⁶ *LT*, 19 September 1857 p. 6; *HP*, 29 March 1861; *WG*, 12 April 1862 p. 4, 13 December 1862 p. 4.

⁸⁷ *SM*, 12 March 1859 p. 4; c.f. *SM*, 24 October 1857 p. 4

⁸⁸ Wilson, *India Conquered*, p. 213.

government'.⁸⁹ For the *Sheffield Times*, it was incompatible with Britain's superior position: 'If he be already as good as we are... what business have we in his land?'⁹⁰ The *Leeds Mercury* refused to empower 'the compatriots of Nena Sahib', but it also rejected an assembly representing only 'the few thousands of Anglo-Indians': regardless of any superiority they might have possessed over the indigenous population, they were 'mere sojourners in the land, entertaining no idea of perpetuating there their name and race.'⁹¹ As for the *Wakefield Journal*, 'For very many years to come India will have to be ruled as all newly conquered countries have hitherto been – by the constant display of a vast moral superiority, backed by physical power.'⁹²

The *Journal's* comment highlights an important fact of which the inhabitants of Yorkshire were well aware: that Britain itself had been invaded, occupied and ruled on various different occasions. Comparisons to British history were one method of re-legitimising British rule in India, which belonged to Britain 'as fully and fairly as Britain belonged to William the Norman after the battle of Hastings.'⁹³ However, these comparisons also emphasised that the process of invasion and tutelage – primarily under the Romans, the Saxons, and the Normans – had been an integral part of Britain's route towards its ultimate position at the forefront of civilisation. After all, if the pagan Romans had given to 'the half savage Britons a form of religion that was at least merciful and progressive', why should the British not pay this forward?⁹⁴

Yorkshire papers also justified British rule in India through the acquiescence of the wider Indian population. After all, a limited uprising implied a general acceptance of British governance – the reason why the British called it a Mutiny, and the Indian Government now calls it the First War of Indian Independence.⁹⁵ Readers were continually reminded that 'neither the native princes nor the masses of Hindoo population sympathise with the

⁸⁹ *LT*, 8 August 1857 p. 4

⁹⁰ *ST*, 12 December 1857 p. 8

⁹¹ *LM*, 22 October 1857

⁹² *WJ*, 25 September 1857 p. 4

⁹³ *BT*, 7 November 1857 p. 2; see also *DG* 9 October 1857 p. 4, *HC* 19 September 1857 p. 4.

⁹⁴ *BT*, 5 December 1857 p. 2; *RA*, 20 September 1862 p. 4.

⁹⁵ Chakravarty, *British Imagination*, p. 23.

insurgents'; that 'the general population of the disturbed districts show little disposition to make common cause with the rebels, while the native princes cautiously abstain from rebellious acts.'⁹⁶ If the political diary of J.C. Dundas is a reliable guide, this message that 'the population of the country generally take no part' was effective.⁹⁷ Moreover, it was considered praiseworthy that the Indian Relief fund was destined not just for European sufferers but for 'those who had been faithful to England, although they were of another nation. (Hear, hear)'.⁹⁸

However, this offers a distinct point of difference between opinions at home, where it was feasible to make such a distinction, and on the ground in India. There, the instinct for self-preservation often led individuals to suspect all they encountered. A major of the 6th Dragoon Guards, for instance, wrote about 'how much the European population is at the mercy of the native... I felt very unsafe at the idea of sleeping with open doors and windows a mile and a half distant from the men,' while a private soldier explained to his sister how 'every native is up in arms against us, even our own followers' and a second documented the executions of Indians for poisoning meat and milk.⁹⁹ As such, this is a strong argument for the non-existence of a single British imperial experience: it was more common in India than in Britain to believe that 'There could be no reliance on the loyalty of either Moslems or Hindus.'¹⁰⁰ Despite the networks which connected periphery to metropole, it was perfectly feasible for differing experiences to result in the simultaneous existence of different conceptions of race.¹⁰¹

It might have been expected that the large numbers of sepoys who supported the British would have encouraged individuals at the periphery to recognise the reliability of at least some races in India. In reality, if soldiers' letters are an accurate benchmark, the role of these auxiliaries – from communities which, as the 'martial races', would ultimately form the basis of

⁹⁶ *LM*, 16 July 1857; *BO*, 20 August 1857 p. 4.

⁹⁷ NYCRO, ZNK X/7/2 (Political diary of J.C. Dundas), 20 September 1857.

⁹⁸ *LI*, 3 October 1857 p. 12; *HxC*, 10 October 1857 p. 5.

⁹⁹ SA, MD8100 (Major William Greaves Blake letters), no. 6 (31 July 1858); ERA DDX 1052/1 (letters of Private John English), 24 October 1857; WYAS Bradford, 60D91/1 (George Smith to his father and mother, 26 December 1858); see also the letter of Lieutenant Edward Woolhouse, *SDT*, 5 October 1857 p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 377.

¹⁰¹ Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, pp. 18, 23.

the new Indian Army – was scarcely valued.¹⁰² In private letters, Captain Harry Denison of Waplinton Hall in the East Riding called the Sikhs ‘swarthy, fine black bearded fellows... I never saw a finer body of cavalry’; in print, a single letter from Edwin Wootton of the 6th Dragoon Guards praised them ‘as men of tall stature and exceedingly brave.’¹⁰³ The limited recognition of their assistance percolated through to newspaper reporting. Military success did enhance at least some opinions of these troops: the *Leeds Mercury*’s scepticism about Sikhs, ‘Punjabees’ and Gurkhas was rapidly followed by descriptions of them as ‘the best soldiers of India’ and ‘troops which have rivalled the Europeans in valour and loyalty.’¹⁰⁴ Yet for each description of them as ‘devotedly loyal’ there was another calling them ‘the most lawless and ruffian races in India’, and for the majority of newspapers these troops may as well not have existed.¹⁰⁵ It was ‘the discipline and bravery of the British troops’ which counted, the ‘matchless courage and discipline’ of ‘our few scattered countrymen, both military and civil’ ‘against which the hordes of Asiatic savages only break in their attacks like water against a rock.’¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, descriptions of Indian civilians supporting the British regime – even as passive spectators, instead of the active role that some actually played – helped to reinforce the message that this was a sectional revolt and not an indictment of the entire Indian population.

This message was, in theory, strengthened by an emphasis that executing ‘the stern mandates of justice’ on ‘the shedders of innocent blood’ was also ‘mercy to... the peaceable natives of India’.¹⁰⁷ In practice, however, it was weakened by apparent accidental looseness in language, and by deliberate suggestions that repression would provide a salutary lesson even to loyal communities. In the first case, when a Huddersfield meeting in

¹⁰² Thomas R. Metcalf, “‘A Well Selected Body of Men’: Sikh Recruitment for Colonial Police and Military”, in Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine, and Frank Trentmann (eds.), *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1860-1950* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 151-2; Kaushik Roy, ‘Recruitment Doctrines of the Colonial Indian Army: 1859-1913’, *Indian Economic Social History Review* vol. 34, no. 3 (1997), p. 335.

¹⁰³ ERA, DDSA 1077 (Correspondence of Harry Denison), letters of 5 August 1857 and 12 September 1857; *HxG*, 24 October 1857 p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *LM*, 3 September 1857, 10 September 1857, 1 October 1857.

¹⁰⁵ *LI*, 3 October 1857 p. 4; *HA*, 5 December 1857 p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ *HE*, 5 September 1857 p. 2; *ST*, 5 September 1857 p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ *HC*, 26 September 1857 p. 4.

support of the Indian Relief fund heard Joseph Batley talking about ‘beings who did not deserve the name of human, who have committed such atrocities’ and T.P. Crosland discussing ‘the monsters and oppressors’, or when Rev. Henry Batchelor depicted ‘hordes of black demons... thirsting for the blood of [the] innocent,’ their words could be interpreted as applying either to the wider population of India or to the rebels themselves.¹⁰⁸ These kinds of remarks generally became clear in context – a reference to ‘Indian fiends, who have obliterated the image of humanity in themselves’ might be elaborated on by demanding ‘retributive justice’ for armed mutineers and ‘mercy and protection’ to those uninvolved – but popular speech rarely gave opportunities for such contextualisation.¹⁰⁹

In the second, the suggestion that loyal Indians also needed an example of British power implied potential disloyalty. Such suggestions were made frequently and widely. In Leeds, the *Mercury* felt that showing India ‘the rigor of British justice’ was ‘the dictate of the soundest policy’; the *Intelligencer* thought ‘the whole presidency must be taught that’ Britain would ‘not permit the slightest insubordination’; and the *Times* felt ‘We cannot govern India with a rose-water policy’.¹¹⁰ However, the aspiration to ‘make whole generations of Hindoos tremble’ is more explicable in context.¹¹¹ As in China, it was a question of honour: the expectation of swift and certain punishment saved suffering among victims and criminals alike. The excessive reaction to the garrotting panic of 1862 suggests, however, that this was not just an imperial phenomenon but a domestic one as well.

In reality, imperial personnel on the ground, with potential rebellion all around them, were in no mood to distinguish between loyal and disloyal communities. Although those fighting in India thought little of ‘hanging half a day and a night for this last three months,’ few in Yorkshire supported these kind of reprisals.¹¹² In some cases, the punishment of innocent civilians was critiqued; in others, it was the use of excessive punishments against the

¹⁰⁸ *HC*, 26 September 1857 p. 6; *SA*, 46/1996 (Rev. Henry Batchelor lectures, delivered 24 January 1858).

¹⁰⁹ *HC*, 10 October 1857 p. 5, 31 October 1857 p. 5.

¹¹⁰ *LM*, 29 September 1857; *LI*, 4 July 1857 p. 4; *LT*, 4 July 1857 p. 4.

¹¹¹ *ECH*, 3 September 1857 p. 5

¹¹² *ERA*, DDX1052/1 (letters of Private John English) 26 July 1857

guilty.¹¹³ Even at services on the Day of Humiliation, the arguments made were for mercy rather than vengeance: against ‘blowing men from the cannon’s mouth’ and for ‘justice and mercy’, and even ‘some allowance for men who, having smelt European blood, and been tainted with the vices of mutiny, have been carried beyond themselves.’¹¹⁴ We should also be careful to nuance the more bellicose suggestions made. After all, the ‘total destruction’ of Delhi ‘along with its inhabitants’ was an extreme punishment which would affect those who had collaborated with the rebels, even potentially unwillingly.¹¹⁵ However, assuming the populace were evacuated, the destruction of an enemy fortification would merely mirror the way Sebastopol was slighted after the Crimean War, while the symbolism of its destruction would mirror the demolition of the Chinese Emperor’s Summer Palace as a punishment for the murder of British and Indian prisoners. In neither case would this be considered exceptional practice, while, even by British standards of cruelty, the massacre of an entire city would. Nevertheless, this difference between metropolitan reluctance and peripheral enthusiasm towards extreme measures further suggests the variety of contemporary imperial experiences.

Perhaps the most significant contribution to this variation was that atrocities were far more immediate for those in India than elsewhere. On arrival in India, Captain Harry Denison complained ‘it is difficult to distinguish truth from fiction’; shortly afterwards, he noted that they ‘make one’s blood run cold... nothing which Chinese, Caffres, or Red Indian ever imagined come near them’.¹¹⁶ Historiographically, explanations for the significance of these atrocities to the British – both at home and overseas – have focused largely on gendered expectations, either subverting norms of the patriarchal male defending his family, or on the threat of rape and miscegenation.¹¹⁷ However, though rape may have become one of the most common tropes of fictional depictions of the Indian rebellion, it was conspicuous in Yorkshire by its

¹¹³ For the former case, *HA*, 14 November 1857 p. 5, *WJ*, 16 October 1857 p. 5; for the latter, *SM*, 15 August 1857 p. 4, *WE*, 15 August 1857 p. 4, *BO*, 20 August 1857 p. 4.

¹¹⁴ *DC*, 9 October 1857 p. 5; *LI*, 10 October 1857 p. 8; *HC*, 10 October 1857 p. 6.

¹¹⁵ *YH*, 29 August 1857 p. 7.

¹¹⁶ ERA, DDSA 1077 (letters of Harry Denison) 21 July 1857, 28 July 1857.

¹¹⁷ Blunt, ‘Embodying War’, p. 422.

relative unimportance in this early period.¹¹⁸ Nor was this due to reticence about describing the sexual debasement of English women: commentators often passed up opportunities to hint about rape, even in the most discreet ways. This was perhaps because provincial newspapers at this time were intended to be read by the family, and therefore – unlike novels – had to appeal to the highest common denominator.¹¹⁹

Regardless of the reason, the fact remains that Yorkshire newspapers focused more on ‘acts of cruelty worthy of Moloch’ than on the ‘orgies of lust at which Belial himself might blush.’¹²⁰ The quantitative framework in which this might be studied has not yet been developed, but some crude approximations and qualitative judgements can be made. In a lengthy editorial paragraph, the *Leeds Times* was twice as likely to mention violent acts such as being ‘hacked to pieces’, ‘impaled on bayonets’ or ‘barbarously butchered,’ as it was to describe sexual ones like being ‘subjected to unspeakable outrages’ or ‘driven through the streets naked’.¹²¹ Elsewhere, sexual acts were subsumed in more general descriptions: ‘crimes upon women and children too horrible to relate’, for instance, or the mayor of Bradford’s mention of ‘outrages... perpetrated upon delicate females and children’.¹²² Moreover, where there was speculation about the role that rape played in the rebellion, it was often emphasised that this was an exceptional event. The *Wakefield Express* pointed out that it was ‘unparalleled in Asia,’ where ‘the honour of the female’ was ‘dearer than life,’ and happened ‘only when men are deemed utterly powerless and incapable of future revenge’.¹²³ ‘Even in the Kaffir war the persons of European women and children were sacred,’ the *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle* noted.¹²⁴ As such, conclusions

¹¹⁸ Nancy L. Paxton, ‘Mobilizing Chivalry: Rape in British Novels about the Indian Uprising of 1857’, *Victorian Studies* vol. 36, no. 1 (Autumn 1992), pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁹ For instance, the *Doncaster Gazette* was ‘a large and talented family journal’; the *Halifax Courier* ‘fitting for the family circle’ and the *Halifax Guardian* ‘a first-rate Family Newspaper’; the *Huddersfield Chronicle* ‘a good “Family Paper”’; C. Mitchell, *The Newspaper Press Directory* (London, 1861), pp. 48, 53, 55.

¹²⁰ *LM*, 29 August 1857.

¹²¹ *LT*, 8 August 1857 p. 4; compare the very similar section in *HP* 7 August 1857, which excises all sexual imagery.

¹²² *HC*, 8 August 1857 p. 4; *BO*, 24 September 1857 p. 6; see also the description by ‘Arma Virumque Cano’ of ‘horrible and fiend-like atrocities’ against ‘helpless women and children,’ *YG*, 12 September 1857 p. 10.

¹²³ *WE*, 8 August 1857 p. 4.

¹²⁴ *RRC*, 15 August 1857 p. 1.

that contemporary Britain saw other races as insatiably lustful at this early stage seem questionable.

It did, however, resonate with existing messages about the low value placed on women in non-Christian societies: not just in India, but also in China, where women were 'degraded'.¹²⁵ Observers both civil and military, both before and after the war, protested at the state of gender relations in India, where the women 'work harder than the men' and were 'drudges and slaves'.¹²⁶ The *Sheffield Times* interpreted this violence in two ways: firstly, as business as usual in a country where 'it was the habit... to cut a wife's throat, or hack her in pieces with a knife on the most trifling provocation'; secondly, as an Islamic attack on the policy of elevating women to 'equal rank in the human family'.¹²⁷ Though later narratives of the Indian rebellion would be used to check domestic demands for social and political equality in Britain, the initial reception was to reinforce the existing British policy of making slow and limited improvements to female status in India.¹²⁸

One of the most significantly gendered elements in the reporting of atrocities was the way that they were often presented as deliberately subverting the established family unit. The relation of parent and child was symbolically reversed when, per Lord Londesborough, 'children were cut in pieces, and portions of their flesh were crammed down their parents' throats'; the protective instinct of the parent was subverted by 'infants snatched from their parents arms' or 'from their mother's embrace', or when the sepoys 'dash the blood of the infant into its mother's face'.¹²⁹ This gendered component may have made the events more emotive in an exclusively male political and military sphere, but events which did not fit this gendered paradigm – such as the description of husbands being 'battered... in their heads before the very eyes of their wives' and a man being

¹²⁵ Charles Chambers, in *SDT*, 14 March 1857 p. 3. Sir Harry Parkes believed that they were 'in advance of other eastern nations' though still 'not what we should desire' (*LI*, 21 February 1863 p. 7).

¹²⁶ ERA, DDX1052/1 (letters of Private John English), 24 October 1857; *BT*, 13 October 1860 p. 5; *BC*, 13 February 1864 p. 3.

¹²⁷ *ST*, 29 August 1857 p. 8, 5 September 1857 p. 8. Compare the letter of George Smith (WYAS Bradford, 60D91/1, 26 December 1858), where 'a native murdered his wife and children and mutilated them in a shocking manner'.

¹²⁸ Paxton, 'Mobilising Chivalry', p. 6.

¹²⁹ *YH*, 26 September 1857 p. 10; *LT*, 8 August 1857 p. 4; *HP*, 7 August 1857; Jack Styles in *SDT*, 8 October 1857 p. 4.

stripped before his flogging and murder— were still shocking enough to merit publication.¹³⁰ The fundamental shock was the reversal of the power relationship and learning that trust in sepoys and servants had been misplaced.

While the need to punish the rebels was a driving force behind continued British dominance of India, it was not the sole motivation. The suggestion that British rule was better than any possible Indian rule was almost universal, as was the belief that there was some form of divine mandate behind this position of trust. As for what Britain got out of the arrangement, only one individual was prepared to suggest that their gain was monetary.¹³¹ Instead, the gain was primarily in prestige: defeating the insurgents was necessary to maintain ‘our position among the nations’, as well as to avoid presenting a shameful legacy to posterity akin to that of Lord North.¹³²

Prestige was more than a purely hypothetical commodity: its more practical effect was to protect Britain from a world of unfriendly or hostile rivals. As Lord Brougham explained to the Leeds Mechanics’ Institution soiree: ‘if we lose India by being defeated, then our reputation is gone for ever, and we shall not be safe from any quarter of the world. (Hear.)’¹³³ Defeat against ‘a horde of Asiatics’ would be ‘a sure indication of national weakness,’ and ‘if England once ceased to be respected for her power, she would at no distant day be robbed and pillaged by rival nations’.¹³⁴ The fact that these rival nations actually offered various forms of assistance to Britain, from the provision of French and Belgian troops, to a sword and revolver sent by Frederic Tudor of Boston to Major General Henry Havelock as a token that ‘your acts in defending the rights of humanity are valued and esteemed,’ was of little avail.¹³⁵ British observers responded sceptically to these

¹³⁰ *HC*, 3 October 1857 p. 8; *WE*, 8 August 1857 p. 4.

¹³¹ ‘Crux’, in *SM*, 15 August 1857 p. 4; for outright denials, *BvR* 7 November 1857 p. 4, *BO* 15 August 1857 p. 7.

¹³² *LI*, 19 September 1857 p. 4; *BT*, 5 September 1857 p. 2; see also *HxC*, 1 August 1857 p. 4.

¹³³ *LT*, 7 November 1857 p. 3.

¹³⁴ *LI*, 24 October 1857 p. 4; *WE*, 17 October 1857 p. 5; *DG*, 17 July 1857 p. 5.

¹³⁵ NYCRO, ZDG (H) II 4 (Frederick Tudor to Major-General Henry Havelock, 16 December 1857); Nikhil Bilwakesh, “Their Faces Were like so Many of the Same Sort at Home”: American Responses to the Indian Rebellion of 1857’, *American Periodicals* vol. 21, no. 1 (2011), pp. 2-7.

suggestions: in the case of the Anglophobic *New York Herald's* proposal that Britain be allowed to recruit Americans for Indian service provided they cede Canada and the West Indies in return, they were perhaps right to do so.¹³⁶ Regardless, it is clear that British actions in re-establishing control over India were framed not only in the imperial context but in that of foreign affairs.

There was a clear distinction between the empire as conceived at home and the empire actually experienced. In some cases, the experience of India reinforced beliefs which were already present: for instance, the universal domestic distaste for caste was strengthened by experiences such as thirsty soldiers struggling with taboos around drinking vessels.¹³⁷ However, outside the port cities, the only time a domestic audience might come into contact with an Indian might be the appearance of 'a native Hindoo from Dinapore, and a Mahomedan' at a lecture on 'India and its people'.¹³⁸ And no outside observer could ever match the experience of India of Edward Stuart Wortley, later Earl of Wharncliffe: though a relative subsequently censored what were presumably the more salacious sections of the diary, his references to 'another beautiful Kashmiri, splendidly dressed and very handsome, smelling delightfully of sandalwood,' 'kashi' or 'khashi bahut kharat,' and 'on my return found "Tuzhi" waiting in my room – turned in – rather nice' do not leave a great deal of room for speculation as to the nature of his activities.¹³⁹

The unequal power relations in India were all too frequently manifested among expatriates in contempt for those around them – 'despicable,' with 'no honesty, industry or mercy,' or 'a miserable race of people'.¹⁴⁰ While it was possible to show contempt in Britain – though it seems to have been much rarer than in India itself – it was impossible to employ the kind of casual violence that was commonplace in Indian life, as when two young officers 'kicked... away' a 'nigger fortune-teller'.¹⁴¹ As such, the effects of imperial government should be disassociated from British

¹³⁶ *BO*, 27 August 1857 p. 4; *LI*, 22 August 1857 p. 6.

¹³⁷ WYAS Bradford, 60D91/2 (George Smith letters) 8 December 1859

¹³⁸ *SI*, 21 November 1857 p. 3.

¹³⁹ SA, WHM692 (Diary of Edward Stuart Wortley) 19 February 1854, 3 September 1854, 5 September 1854, 14 September 1854, 9 September 1854.

¹⁴⁰ SA, MD8100 (Major William Greaves Blake letters), no. 8 (10 October 1858); ERA, DDX 1052/1 (letters of Private John English), 26 July 1857, 24 October 1857.

¹⁴¹ WYAS Halifax, RMP1106 (Diary of the late RH Gilmor, 6 August 1870).

domestic views on race. The horrors of the Indian rebellion did not overturn the existing civilizational perspective, but were fitted into it, ascribed to correctable religion rather than race.

In India, the potential for the ruled to exert political power was a direct threat to those who currently ruled them. In Britain, however, there was room to see things differently. For instance, the exiled Sikh monarch Maharajah Duleep Singh could live the life of a country gentleman at Mulgrave Castle near Whitby. He supplied newspapers to the local reading room, gave temperance societies permission to hold functions in his grounds, shot with the local MP, and paved a local road with 'spontaneous liberality' and 'the munificence of an Oriental prince'.¹⁴² In return, the local populace purchased jet ornaments as a wedding gift for his wife, wrote poetry to mark the death of his mother, and protested when the 'bigoted Gooeroos and Brahmins' considered that her visit to and death in Britain 'put her out of caste'.¹⁴³ He could even attend the electoral hustings along with his suite and be greeted by 'a round of cheers'.¹⁴⁴ Such isolated occurrences, posing no threat to the way things were done, were acceptable.

As well as the distinction of race, class dynamics also contributed to the way in which contemporary Britain defined the differences between India and itself.¹⁴⁵ Duleep Singh's adoption of the country gentlemen persona had no more effect on the local populace than its adoption by local industrialists or other forms of 'new money'. In India, however, it was the working classes who got to experience the gentlemanly lifestyle. Only some cavalry recruits adopted foxhunting, but all experienced being 'seen to like gentlemen. The Blacks even come and clean your toes and fingers and shave you while you are asleep and bring your meals to you in bed if you are too lazy to get up... The barracks in India are like palaces.'¹⁴⁶ Under the pressure of co-existing class privilege and racial hierarchy, it should not be surprising if attitudes towards race at the periphery developed differently from those in Britain.

¹⁴² YG, 7 December 1861 p. 4; WG, 7 September 1861 p. 4, 15 November 1862 p. 4, 29 October 1864 p. 4; see also BT, 8 August 1863 p. 2.

¹⁴³ WG, 17 September 1864 p. 4, 15 October 1864 p. 4, 21 May 1864 p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ WG, 26 November 1859 p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism* (London, 2001), pp. 9-10.

¹⁴⁶ John H. Rumsby, *Discipline, System and Style: The Sixteenth Lancers and British Soldiering in India 1822-1846* (Solihull, 2015), pp. 135-6, 146-7; ERA, DDX 1052/1 (letters of Private John English), 30 November 1856.

Conclusion

This regional study provides a number of corrective suggestions to existing historiography on the key turning points in this era. Firstly, the 1857 election reflected the continued dominance of traditional electoral culture, prioritising local issues and the independence of MPs. Moreover, those who backed Palmerston seem to have done so primarily on the basis of traditional Liberal appeals, rather than support for an aggressive stance in China. War in China was necessary to preserve British honour, but this requirement to preserve honour was common across the range of Britain's diplomatic commitments and not specific to 'uncivilised' nations.

As for the Indian Rebellion, initial popular reactions do not tend to support the suggestions that this was a watershed in British attitudes towards race. Its effect on the colonial authorities may well have been startling: however, imperial experiences varied dramatically across the empire. It seems that provincial opinion was slower to react, filtering the events through their existing civilizational perspective rather than shifting to a racial interpretation. Moreover, it is insightful to see how the critiques of Indian society could be echoed in accusations levelled at the British poor: missionaries could hope to civilise and Christianise the working classes as much as the Indians.¹⁴⁷ In an 1864 speech, the radical MP John Roebuck justified his belief that the working classes needed political education by referring to their superstitious belief in witchcraft; elsewhere, he referred to their poor treatment of women – both critiques which had previously been levelled at India.¹⁴⁸ While it was clear that Indian society was unprepared for the franchise, therefore, the question of what sections of British society could be trusted to vote still required further political battles to settle.

¹⁴⁷ Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ *HP*, 1 April 1864, 13 May 1864; *SDT*, 4 April 1864 p. 2.

Chapter 3: Reform, 1859-60

It is perhaps unfair to expect historians to dedicate much time to discussions of two reform bills that were never passed: they did not reshape the constitution, or even win the majority Disraeli hoped for. Indeed, the lack of historiographical focus on the Conservative reform bill of 1859, the subsequent Liberal measure of 1860, and the lengthy period before any further attempt was made, may well be explained by the awkwardness with which they sit in the topic. Reform in 1859 was important enough to unite Liberal factions into a party, topple the Conservative government amid continental conflict, and bring Palmerston, Russell and Gladstone into government together. Yet the bill they presented roused little active public support, and its eventual withdrawal was met with acceptance rather than outrage. Only at the 1865 election would grassroots Liberals begin to show concern for the introduction of a further reform bill.

Some historians have explained this by giving foreign policy, not reform, pride of place in renewed Liberal unity, or suggesting Disraeli campaigned less on the strength of his reform bill and more on a broad 'constitutional appeal'.¹ There are also suggestions that Liberal MPs were forced to disguise their distaste for reform in order to win support from their electorate, despite the difficulty which this caused them later.² Conversely, Robert Saunders acknowledges a greater degree of willingness to see reform passed, provided that it protected property and education and offered a logical stopping point.³

Given the lack of substantial historiography relating to this period, the decision to devote an entire chapter to it may be questioned. However, understanding the state of the reform debate prior to the American Civil War is vital to evaluating subsequent changes. As such, this chapter explores this period chronologically. Firstly, it evaluates the country's reception of the Conservative reform bill, both in newspapers and among the wider public.

¹ Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 227-8; Hawkins, *Art of Politics*, p. 226.

² Zimmerman, 'Palmerstonian Delay', pp. 1179-81, 1204; Jonathan Parry, *The Rise and Fall of Liberal Government in Victorian Britain* (New Haven, 1996), p. 210; Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, p. 124.

³ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 128-30; Saunders, 'Politics of Reform', p. 574.

The second section focuses on the parliamentary defeat of the bill and the election that followed, attempting to understand what consensus might have been established on the nature, purpose and extent of the franchise. The third section focuses on the short and troubled life of the 1860 Liberal bill. Fundamentally, it seeks to understand why and how reform varied in significance at this time. If Liberals had made so much effort to see a reform bill passed, why did they acquiesce so readily in the government's decision to defer reform?

January – March 1859: Overture to reform

Disraeli brought forward his reform bill amid growing public agitation. The campaign for reform had been fairly low-key since the 1857 election, when 'nearly all' candidates mentioned reform in their addresses.⁴ Although Bright had started to tour Scotland and Northern England in late 1858, the response outside the larger towns was 'muted' and, indeed, may have weakened the reform case.⁵ By the time Disraeli's bill was produced, however, agitation was beginning to percolate down through the Riding, from minor towns like Doncaster to villages like Elland and Lockwood.⁶ By March, the Bradford MP Thomas Perronet Thompson was presenting manhood suffrage petitions, while a reform committee 'appointed at the recent visit of Mr Bright' was able to assemble representatives 'from Bradford, Halifax, Wakefield, Keighley, Heckmondwike, and other towns in the West Riding' to criticise the bill.⁷ Clearly towns felt pressure to be involved: Charles Hall lamented that Lockwood should 'have been the first... to have taken up the subject; but... even Delph had had a meeting.'⁸ Though these meetings did not make many new recruits, they did keep the topic in the newspapers.

These meetings might have achieved more had they been able to agree on an alternative lower level for the franchise. An organised extra-parliamentary campaign could feasibly have pressured Disraeli into a more

⁴ Hawkins, *Art of Politics*, p. 64.

⁵ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 108; Zimmerman, 'Palmerstonian Delay', p. 1185.

⁶ *DC*, 14 January 1859 p. 7; *HxC*, 12 February 1859 p. 8; *HC*, 26 February 1859 p. 5.

⁷ *BR*, 5 March 1859 p. 4; *LM*, 5 March 1859.

⁸ *HE*, 26 February 1859 p. 3.

ambitious opening move. Instead, as popular pressure was insignificant, Disraeli's main concern was producing a manageable electorate rather than pleasing the public.⁹ However, this was too ambitious a goal in light of the difficulty in achieving consensus. Unable to agree a specific level, their emphasis was on demonstrating support for reform in general.

At Lockwood, William Shaw emphasised that Chartism's 'great mistake' was to 'have what they wanted and nothing else'; urging his fellows to 'meet each other, and make concessions', he proposed a borough rating and a £10 county rental franchise.¹⁰ At Elland, the resolutions specified only 'a large extension of the suffrage' and equality between the county and borough franchises.¹¹ At Doncaster, the motion urged that the extension make the Commons 'a full and fair representation of the population, property, intelligence and industry of the country'; when C. Townsend suggested a specific extension to freeholders, householders, friendly society members, £50 savings bank depositors, and income tax payers, 'it was proved that this... was embodied in the motion already carried.'¹²

Unity would be a recurrent theme throughout the period, as much locally as in Parliament. Beyond mere opposition to Conservatives, Liberals were brought together by a shared commitment to reform in the abstract. However, particular proposals would strain the ideologically fragile Liberal coalition – not sufficient to make it fracture irrevocably, but sufficient to prevent concerted action. Liberalism as a social and political identity was resilient; however, lacking an institutional framework, Liberalism as a party could not succeed without a substantial groundswell of opinion for a particular measure.

The reception of the reform bill was understandably sceptical, in large part because of its author. Disraeli's reputation as a political chancer was well-established: at Brighouse, Wright Mellor expressed his belief that he 'would as soon be the prime minister for a chartist cabinet as a tory one'.¹³ Writing to

⁹ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, pp. 110-111.

¹⁰ *HE*, 26 February 1859 p. 3.

¹¹ *LM*, 12 February 1859.

¹² *DC*, 14 January 1859 p. 7.

¹³ *HxC*, 19 March 1859 p. 6.

the *Pontefract Telegraph*, ‘Arch Willie’ protested that, despite reading both the Bill and Disraeli’s speech, ‘I knew no more about it than a child it was so in and out’.¹⁴ The very premise of a Conservative reform bill was, in itself, likely to attract scepticism, but Disraeli’s prominent involvement gave Liberals the perfect opportunity to attack the bill as partisan and dishonest.

The bill’s actual provisions were just as unlikely to inspire confidence. Although the details were tinkered with in cabinet, Disraeli’s fundamental approach was to carefully manage the enlarging electorate.¹⁵ He attempted to trade the extension of the county franchise to £10 with the removal of the county votes of freeholders in boroughs; compensated for the refusal to extend the borough franchise with eye-catching ‘fancy’ franchises based on everything from professional qualifications to financial investments; and balanced a limited redistribution of seats with a promise of boundary commissioners to review and extend borough constituencies.¹⁶ However, it was not difficult for even provincial editors to see through these compromises, and denounce the bill in stirring terms. The *Leeds Mercury* considered it ‘a decided humbug’; the *York Herald* felt ‘The more the bill is examined the worse it seems to become’; while the *Eastern Counties Herald’s* ‘own opinion is simply that the bill won’t do’.¹⁷

Failure to lower the borough franchise was the main source of contention, with almost every Liberal newspaper complaining about it. Understandably, advanced Liberal newspapers took the opportunity to protest on behalf of ‘the men who constitute the bone, sinew and muscle of the kingdom’, who were yet ‘politically to be treated as if they were goods and chattels’.¹⁸ Yet more moderate Liberal papers still saw the maintenance of the £10 limit as a flaw in the bill. While acknowledging the existence of workers ‘so low in self respect, discharging so ill their duties to their families, their employers, and society’ that they did not deserve enfranchisement, the *Sheffield Independent* still maintained the claim of ‘hundreds of thousands of

¹⁴ *PT*, 12 March 1859 p. 1.

¹⁵ Hawkins, *Art of Politics*, pp. 180-1.

¹⁶ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 110-112.

¹⁷ *LM*, 1 March 1859; *YH*, 12 March 1859 p. 8; *ECH*, 3 March 1859 p. 5.

¹⁸ *HE*, 5 May 1859 p. 2.

the working classes, sober, industrious, careful, intelligent'.¹⁹ In some cases, papers adopted Disraeli's own electoral calculus: 'Ministers might have thrown in a £5 borough franchise without any loss to the Conservative interest.'²⁰ More common was a general sense that the time had come for franchise extension: 'On this point public opinion is made up'.²¹

Liberal support for extension is hardly surprising, in the light of their desire for a more active government.²² However, even some Conservative newspapers concurred that the borough franchise should be lowered. The *Sheffield Times* was disappointed that there was 'no proposal for a £8 or £6 rating or rental suffrage', which would give 'a vast preponderance' to 'those who have an interest in maintaining and conservating [sic] the existing state of things'.²³ The *Doncaster Chronicle*, meanwhile, considered it a tactical defect: though 'intelligence and trustworthiness constitute the best claim to electoral suffrage... practically the restriction of suffrage to that sort of title has become impossible... It is not a logical sequence of the Act of 1832'.²⁴ Like Henley and Walpole, the two Cabinet resignations, it supported £6 borough and £20 county franchises. The *Yorkshire Gazette* also claimed to have preferred these levels, though only after the dissolution.²⁵

There was less dispute about the extension of the county franchise, with almost every Conservative newspaper supporting the reduction. The implication of this support varied in accordance with the location of the newspaper. Disraeli's intention in setting a low limit had been to bring in malleable agricultural tenants, a ruse which many Liberal newspapers saw through.²⁶ In traditionally agricultural areas like the East Riding, where the *Hull Packet* welcomed the imminent accession of the '£10 householder of Driffield, Patrington, and Bridlington' to the franchise, his scheme was likely to pay off.²⁷ However, in the industrial West Riding, the extension of the county franchise had significant repercussions. It would mean adding 'all

¹⁹ *SI*, 5 March 1859 p. 8.

²⁰ *BO*, 17 March 1859 p. 4.

²¹ *HC*, 5 March 1859 p. 5.

²² Parry, *Liberal Government*, p. 207.

²³ *ST*, 5 March 1859 p. 8.

²⁴ *DC*, 4 March 1859 p. 5.

²⁵ *YG*, 2 April 1859 p. 8.

²⁶ e.g. *LM*, 17 March 1859. See Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, p. 139.

²⁷ *HP*, 4 March 1859.

places not boroughs, such as Dewsbury, Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, Holmfirth, and all the large manufacturing villages,' to the existing constituency.²⁸ This influx of new voters was likely to threaten the political balance in the West Riding, which had returned one Conservative and one Liberal for 17 of the previous 18 years. With a vast influx of new urban voters, the Liberal party could hardly fail to capture both seats.²⁹ Yet the Conservative newspapers of the West Riding backed the extension.

It is possible that in private, their editors still expected the move to bring in agricultural voters. In public, however, newspapers across the county used the rhetoric of 'apply[ing] that standard throughout the whole country,' of abolishing 'a distinction always liable to be made the ground of discontent,' of rectifying 'the injustice of the act of 1832'.³⁰ What is more likely is that they saw the measure of 1832 as one which had proved itself, and were now willing to see it rolled out across the country. Henley and Walpole feared that this step would create a more stark division between the enfranchised and the disenfranchised, and thereby increase the severity of the agitation for reform.³¹ Evidently mainstream Conservatism felt otherwise.

It is tempting to suggest that there was a class basis to this: the middle classes pulling up the drawbridge. Certainly, some Conservative papers framed it in this way: the *Leeds Intelligencer*, for instance, argued that 'The question is between constitutional progress, and democracy in the shape of Liberalism.'³² Yet Conservatism was a broader ideology than this. Not only have we seen that some Conservative newspapers supported the reduction of the franchise below the £10 level, but others claimed to be protecting the existing rights of the working class. The *Yorkshire Gazette*, for instance, accused Russell of wanting to disfranchise the freemen: 'nine tenths of whom are of the labouring classes,' giving 'noble examples' of 'independence and integrity'.³³

²⁸ *WJ*, 11 March 1859 p. 8; 18 March 1859 p. 5.

²⁹ Thompson, 'Whigs and Liberals', p. 238.

³⁰ *HxG*, 5 March 1859 p. 4; *WE*, 5 March 1859 p. 4; *YG*, 12 March 1859 p. 8; see also *HP*, 4 March 1859, *ST*, 5 March 1859 p. 8, *LI*, 5 March 1859 p. 4.

³¹ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, pp. 114-5.

³² *LI*, 5 March 1859 p. 4.

³³ *YG*, 12 March 1859 p. 8.

Furthermore, when it came to the ‘fancy franchises’, the Conservatives were enthusiastic about their potential to bring the working classes into the electorate. The *Wakefield Journal* emphasised that the lodger franchise would include ‘many thousands of clerks and skilled workmen’; the *Sheffield Times* suggested it would bring in ‘clerks, warehousemen, and superior mechanics’ and thought the savings bank franchise would include ‘steady and industrious working men’; and the *Hull Packet* similarly anticipated the accession of ‘the most prudent and industrious of our working classes’.³⁴ This was not merely a political calculation – except in the case of the *Doncaster Chronicle*, which derided the franchises as ‘very laudable but not very practical’ in March but which by April had decided that Liberal opposition to them belied their status as ‘friends of the working classes’ and ‘promoters of education’.³⁵ Conservative newspapers, on the whole, seem to have genuinely felt that it was possible to enfranchise a meritorious sub-section of the working classes, and that such a step was preferable to a uniform reduction encompassing deserving and underserving alike.

Liberals were rarely as receptive to ‘fancy’ franchises, though there were naturally exceptions. Former MP J.C. Dundas confided to his diary that ‘educational tests and suffrage founded in personal property cannot be objected to.’³⁶ Publicly, the *Huddersfield Chronicle* was particularly enthusiastic: it had already proposed enfranchising provident society members, income tax payers, and possessors of ‘certificates of the universities for successful local examinations, and the certificates of the Society of Arts to members of mechanics institutions’, and urged Disraeli to add these to his bill.³⁷ Such fancy franchises also appealed to the *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle*, which argued they would ‘enfranchise all those who are fitted... either by good intellect, or industry sufficient to be called patriotic.’³⁸

Yet the majority of Liberal newspapers disliked them, with the bulk of their criticism falling on the savings bank franchise – ‘the single and slender exception’ with ‘the remotest reference to... the excluded artisan

³⁴ *WJ*, 5 March 1859 p. 4; *ST*, 5 March 1859 p. 8; *HP*, 4 March 1859.

³⁵ *DC*, 4 March 1859 p. 5, 22 April 1859 p. 5.

³⁶ NYCRO, ZNK X/7/2 (Political diary of J.C. Dundas, March 1859).

³⁷ *HC*, 5 March 1859 p. 4.

³⁸ *RRC*, 5 March 1859 p. 2.

population.³⁹ Some papers demonstrated hard-headed Yorkshire practicality by pointing out ‘active and intelligent men... can employ their money more profitably’ than in Savings Banks.⁴⁰ Others argued it was paradoxical that charity – ‘sympathy with suffering’ – might deprive a man of the franchise.⁴¹ The most consistent component of scepticism, however, related to a fundamental lack of faith in the bill: that ‘the whole of this seeming liberalism would be found wanting’; that they were solely ‘a churlish and grudging extension’ designed for ‘the stragglers and hangers on of the middle classes’.⁴² That it was not so much the principle but the execution of the fancy franchises that attracted Liberal ire does, perhaps, suggest that both parties acknowledged an underlying principle linking individual merit and the right to vote.

For the Liberal newspapers, the other flaws in the bill grouped around the core idea that this was an attempt to secure Conservative electoral dominance. Three measures in particular justified this conclusion. Firstly, voting papers would strengthen landlord power into ‘a tyranny from which there is no escape’.⁴³ Secondly, the revival of non-resident freeholders voting in boroughs was ‘alien to the very idea of a municipality’, allowing the wealthy to ‘swamp the local constituency.’⁴⁴ Though the bill has been characterised as an attempt to ‘consolidate Conservative strength in the counties,’ the Liberals feared it went further: it was not a consolidation of the counties, but an invasion of the boroughs.⁴⁵

The most vehement complaint, however, was the transfer from the county to the borough of the votes of 40 shilling freeholders residing in boroughs. Complaints on this measure verged on the hyperbolic. ‘A direct invasion of the rights of property,’ it was ‘perfidious’, designed to ‘sacrifice the towns to the landed interest’; it even demonstrated that ‘to command his

³⁹ *LT*, 5 March 1859 p. 4.

⁴⁰ *SI*, 5 March 1859 p. 8; *HA*, 5 March 1859 p. 4.

⁴¹ *LT*, 12 March 1859 p. 4.

⁴² *PT*, 12 March 1859 p. 1; *SI*, 5 March 1859 p. 8; *YH*, 5 March 1859 p. 8; *BC*, 5 March 1859 p. 5; *BT*, 19 March 1859 p. 2.

⁴³ *LT*, 5 March 1859 p. 4; *BO*, 3 March 1859 p. 4; *SI*, 5 March 1859 p. 8; *DG*, 25 March 1859 p. 5; *BC*, 5 March 1859 p. 5.

⁴⁴ *BO*, 3 March 1859 p. 4; *DG*, 25 March 1859 p. 5; *ECH*, 10 March 1859 p. 5.

⁴⁵ Boyd Hilton, ‘Disraeli, English Culture, and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit’, in L. W. B. Brockliss and David Eastwood (eds.), *A Union of Multiple Identities: The British Isles, 1750-1850* (Manchester, 1997), p. 46; Steele, *Palmerston and Liberalism*, p. 135.

[Disraeli's] veneration, institutions must... have existed since the times of Moses and Aaron.'⁴⁶ Yet, leaving aside the rhetoric about 'the most ancient portion of the electoral body' or 'the most independent class of electors', the reason for Liberal anxiety is clear.⁴⁷ During the Corn Law crisis, the West Riding had been the hotbed of the freehold land societies, which had broken the Tory hold over the representation by giving county votes to Liberals. The work of local Liberals like Bradford's Robert Milligan had delivered Lord Morpeth a walk-over for the constituency in 1846.⁴⁸ Moreover, the move challenged the symbolic dominance of the towns in which the newspapers were printed over their hinterlands.

It was of little use for the Conservatives to point out the valid rationales for this move. It would make all qualifications take effect where the property was held: giving 'the ten-pound occupier and the forty-shilling freeholder... equal privilege and similar conditions.'⁴⁹ This would 'prevent the borough and county constituencies with interfering with or swamping the votes of one another'.⁵⁰ If non-resident voters in boroughs were objectionable, why not borough freeholders voting for counties?⁵¹ Though some Liberal newspapers conceded this logic – that 'the towns represent the trading interests, the counties... those of the land' – others denied it, with the *Barnsley Chronicle* complaining of an attempt 'to draw a line of demarcation between land and trade'.⁵² For urban Liberals, the freeholders provided 'energy, intelligence and independence to the agricultural element', a 'wholesome corrective of landlord domination'.⁵³ What the Conservatives saw

⁴⁶ *ECH*, 10 March 1859 p. 5; *LM*, 12 March 1859; *HA*, 5 March 1859 p. 5; c.f. Mr Coning's statement that 'although Mr Disra-e-li- (laughter)- has repudiated the faith of his ancestors... candour compels me to acknowledge, that though he may not have undergone the process of circumcision, yet that he is a very Jew. (loud laughter)' *YH*, 19 March 1859 supplement p. 1.

⁴⁷ *DG*, 11 March 1859 p. 5; *HxC*, 5 March 1859 p. 4.

⁴⁸ *BO*, 16 January 1845; *Newcastle Courant*, 9 January 1846.

⁴⁹ *LI*, 5 March 1859 p. 4.

⁵⁰ *ST*, 12 March 1859 p. 8.

⁵¹ *SdT*, 11 March 1859 p. 2.

⁵² *ECH*, 10 March 1859 p. 5; *BC*, 19 March 1859 p. 4.

⁵³ *HA*, 5 March 1859 p. 4, *LT*, 5 March 1859 p. 4; *BO*, 3 March 1859 p. 4, *DG*, 25 March 1859 p. 5.

as landlord and tenant in paternalist harmony, the Liberals could see only as a relationship of coercion.⁵⁴

Other complaints, such as the protestation of the *Wakefield Journal* that ‘thirty three manufactured county votes’ in Volunteer Yard, Kirkgate had ‘paid towards the last poor rate just 31s 10d!!!’, were similarly rhetorically barren.⁵⁵ Indeed, some Conservative newspapers already recognised the weakness of their position. For the *Doncaster Chronicle*, it was tactically erroneous: the public would tolerate the abolition of one property giving duplicate qualifications, but not ‘mere tinkering with the 40s borough freehold.’⁵⁶ The *Chronicle* proved to be correct: the move even brought the gentleman banker Edward Tew onto the Wakefield hustings to defend ‘his birthright... inherited from his father’ by nominating the Liberal candidate.⁵⁷ In the meantime, when popular meetings were held about the bill, it was the ‘disfranchisement’ of the borough freeholders on which many would focus.

That Yorkshire Liberals organised many meetings to oppose the bill should not be surprising: that Yorkshire Conservatives did not organise any to support it is more so. Indeed, one of the only occasions that a Conservative spoke in defence of the bill was when a Liberal meeting called for a *Hull Packet* journalist to speak, and got rather more than they anticipated.⁵⁸ As the journalist showed, by advocating the claims to a vote of ‘all who could properly exercise it’, the silence of Conservatives cannot have been solely because they were inherently hostile to reform. They may have been inactive because they mistakenly expected the bill to garner enough moderate Liberal votes in the House to pass.

By contrast, Liberal agitation against the bill was widespread, stretching beyond the major towns like Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, York and Hull to minor townships like Brighouse, Queenshead, Armley, Hebden Bridge, and Holmfirth. The complaints highlighted by the public meetings

⁵⁴ Hilton, ‘Industrial Spirit’, p. 49; David Eastwood, ‘Contesting the Politics of Deference: The Rural Electorate 1820-1860’, in Jon Lawrence and Miles Taylor (eds.), *Party, State, and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 32.

⁵⁵ *WJ*, 18 March 1859 p. 5; *ST*, 5 March 1859 p. 8.

⁵⁶ *DC*, 4 March 1859 p. 5.

⁵⁷ *WJ*, 6 May 1859 p. 6.

⁵⁸ *HP*, 18 March 1859; *ECH*, 24 March 1859 supplement p. 1

were many and varied, but it was the ‘disfranchisement’ of the borough freeholders that was the most frequently voiced. Disraeli had ‘struck off the 40s freeholders, and put in their place pensioners’.⁵⁹

Evidently, local Liberals had anticipated this being an emotive issue, as many registration agents had provided calculations of its effect.⁶⁰ In Bradford, for instance, W.E. Forster claimed 917 freeholders who could vote ‘for the great West Riding of Yorkshire – for the imperial constituency of the kingdom – with some degree of pride’ would be completely disfranchised.⁶¹ At a Wakefield meeting a list of the names of the 600 freeholders to be ‘disfranchised’ was circulated, while the inhabitants of Keighley were informed that although it was not a Parliamentary borough, 500 voters would have been affected if it had been.⁶² The resolution passed by the Executive Committee of the West Riding United Reform Registration Associations complained firstly about the disfranchisement of freeholders; the ‘claims of the working-classes’ came sixth.⁶³ Indeed, the Liberal party’s misleading rhetoric – of ‘disfranchising’ freeholders rather than transferring them to the boroughs, and ‘fancy’ franchises that, like cloth, were not suitable for sustained use – was so effective that the Conservatives found themselves using it: it is almost impossible for the historian to avoid doing the same.⁶⁴

Like most Victorian political meetings, these were highly local affairs: the ‘disfranchisement’ of the freeholders was not the only event to be personified and localised. The tripartite division of the West Riding constituency and its places of election were ascribed to ‘a certain Conservative agent at Doncaster, a certain Conservative agent at Skipton, and a certain public officer at Wakefield’.⁶⁵ The non-resident freeholder vote brought to mind ‘127 York freemen, residing in London,’ brought thence ‘to vote for an entire cost per head of £27.’⁶⁶ The effect of redrawing borough boundaries was suggested with reference to the ‘agricultural out-townships of

⁵⁹ *HxC*, 19 March 1859 p. 6.

⁶⁰ *SI*, 12 March 1859.

⁶¹ *BR*, 12 March 1859 p. 4.

⁶² *LM*, 10 March 1859, 8 March 1859.

⁶³ *LM*, 12 March 1859.

⁶⁴ See, for instance, the speech of George Beecroft in *LM*, 30 April 1859, and that of John Charlesworth in *WJ*, 15 April 1859 p. 5.

⁶⁵ *LM*, 10 March 1859.

⁶⁶ *YH*, 19 March 1859 supplement p. 1.

Chapelton and Headingley' overriding the 'feelings of the trading population'.⁶⁷

The savings bank franchise also tended to make an appearance, with an interesting spin on its original presentation. It was framed in the context of the need for a young man to 'purchase... furniture for a house, in which to receive his loving wife'.⁶⁸ Although this was undoubtedly a manifestation of the gendering of the franchise, and the emphasis on manliness and character, its widespread use was not a reflection of support for household suffrage.⁶⁹ It was not proposing that married men were inherently deserving of enfranchisement, only that getting married made existing voters 'more respectable and more responsible... worth more to the state by fifty percent'.⁷⁰ If the lodger franchise had once been feared because of its potential to bring in homosexuals, this was no longer the case, nor did speakers concern themselves about the responsibility or morality of this new constituency.⁷¹ Moreover, the focus in looking for new voters was not solely on character, but on knowledge – hence the large number of speakers who qualified their support of extension with the fact that 'sound political knowledge had advanced rapidly'.⁷²

The wide range of views represented at these meetings generally required speakers to call for Liberal unity. The mayor of Bradford, for instance, urged that 'all reformers should act in unison (Hear, hear)... [and] not descend to any particular minutiae'; the working man Mr Rawlinson encouraged Leeds reformers to 'not discuss any particular measure, but be harmonious in passing their condemnation'.⁷³ Yet this approach proved more difficult than it might have first appeared. The *Leeds Intelligencer* remarked

⁶⁷ *LM*, 19 March 1859.

⁶⁸ *HC*, 19 March 1859 p. 6; *SI*, 12 March 1859, *HxC* 19 March 1859 p. 6.

⁶⁹ Matthew Roberts, *Political Movements in Urban England, 1832-1914* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 50; Keith McClelland, 'England's Greatness, the Working Man', in Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall (eds.), *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 98-99.

⁷⁰ *YH*, 19 March 1859 supplement p. 1.

⁷¹ Anna Clark, 'Gender, Class and the Nation: Franchise Reform in Britain, 1832-1918', in James Vernon (ed.), *Re-Reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England's Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 242; Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p. 310.

⁷² *HE*, 19 March 1859 p. 3.

⁷³ *BO*, 17 March 1859 p. 6, *LM*, 19 March 1859.

gloatingly on the results of the Bradford meeting, which encapsulated its overall suspicion of the reform movement:

many moderates attended the recent meeting at Bradford. When a resolution condemnatory of Mr Disraeli's bill had been passed the majority of them left the meeting and the ultras thereupon adopted a petition pledging those who had been present to Mr Bright's sweeping claims. In vain did Mr Lister, one of the principal manufacturers of the town, endeavour to oppose.⁷⁴

Though the main Leeds meeting passed without incident, it proved almost impossible to maintain control of the subsidiary ward meetings. At Holbeck, a working man protested at the resolution's imprecision, to which Mr Carter responded that 'he did not believe they could all agree upon any specific franchise'.⁷⁵ This was proved to be incorrect – as Carter may have expected – when the meeting carried an amendment in favour of household suffrage 'by a large majority'. In the North-West ward, where a manhood suffrage resolution was passed, Jon Pickles complained about the risk of dividing the party and that others refused to follow him in 'sink[ing] somewhat of his private opinion in order to preserve unanimity'; at Bramley, a ratepaying franchise motion was passed.⁷⁶

Elsewhere in the county, it was broadly possible to maintain a sense of unity – for instance, in Hull a motion for manhood suffrage was put and lost – but the situation in Leeds and Bradford hardly boded well for the future of moderate Liberalism. Zimmerman characterises the breakdown in Liberal unity as primarily a function of honest Liberal rank-and-file betrayed by an elite who made professions about reform on the hustings only to get cold feet in the lobbies.⁷⁷ Whether this is fair will be considered later in the chapter, in the context of the withdrawal of Russell's bill. Yet in light of the difficulty which was found in establishing an overall stance with respect to reform, it may be fair to question whether a sense of dissatisfaction and the break-up of Liberal unity was the inevitable result of moving from the abstract to the specific.

⁷⁴ *LI*, 19 March 1859 p. 4.

⁷⁵ *LM*, 12 March 1859.

⁷⁶ *LM*, 17 March 1859, 19 March 1859.

⁷⁷ Zimmerman, 'Palmerstonian Delay' p. 1179.

Nevertheless, it was clear from both public meetings and newspaper opinion that the provisions of the bill were highly unpopular. It was not ambitious enough to appeal to Liberals – or even to many Conservatives, despite their enthusiasm for ‘fancy franchises’ – and its cornerstone measure, the ‘disfranchisement’ of the borough freeholders, attacked a traditional qualification which provided Liberal strength. Given the reaction in the country, there was little incentive for Liberal MPs to cross the floor to support the bill. It was, therefore, in the House of Commons that the bill was to receive the first of its setbacks, and it is to the attitudes of Yorkshire’s MPs towards the bill which we now turn.

March – April 1859: Dénouements, parliamentary and popular

The Parliamentary climax of Disraeli’s reform bill was the passing of an amendment at its second reading which stipulated that the bill had two flaws too significant to allow it to pass: its treatment of the borough freeholders and its insufficient extension of the franchise.⁷⁸ Yorkshire MPs voted by 24-13 to support this amendment: much more of a disparity than the overall 330-291 result, and more or less what might have been expected based on the results of the 1857 election. However, the interest lies not in the broad partisan split, but the details: why Liberals like Marmaduke Wyvil and Conservatives like Lord Hotham broke party lines to vote for or against the bill, and why a Radical like John Roebuck who had previously supported the government voted against it.

A large proportion of Yorkshire Conservative MPs were unhappy with the bill – not because it went too far, but because it did not go far enough. At the start of the session, the Leeds MP George Beecroft seconded the address to the Crown and praised the prospect of the Commons being made ‘the reflection of the population, the industry, the wealth, the worth, the intelligence of the people’.⁷⁹ Yet when the bill came forward, Beecroft proposed an amendment to reduce the borough franchise to £8 rental.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *HC Debs* 153, c.405, 21 March 1859; for its passing, *HC Debs* 153, c.263, 31 March 1859.

⁷⁹ *HC Debs* 152, c.71, 3 February 1859.

⁸⁰ *LM*, 2 April 1859.

John Charlesworth wrote to his Wakefield supporters to announce his intention to support a reduction of the borough franchise and to oppose the transfer of the borough freeholders.⁸¹ A year earlier, Thomas Collins of Knaresborough had complained that 1832 had deprived ‘the poorer classes’ of representation, and proposed a £5 suffrage – ‘or even household suffrage’ – rather than see the equalisation of county and borough franchises.⁸²

All of these MPs, however, voted against Russell’s amendment, and they seem to have had two significant reasons for doing so. The first was the potential for the bill to be amended in committee: Collins, for instance, thought it ‘contained the basis of a large and generous extension of the suffrage’ if allowed to do so.⁸³ John George Smyth of York similarly announced that he agreed with the resolution, but felt its aims could be met in committee.⁸⁴ The second rationale, though less significant, was that it was an inopportune moment for a dissolution due to the imminent war between France and Austria. Henry Edwards of Beverley warned of ‘factious opposition’, as interference with the government ‘would be the greatest calamity which could occur in Europe’.⁸⁵ However, whether a ploy or not, most Yorkshire Conservatives seemed resolved to obtain some measure of reform rather than just to prop up their party. The sole exception was Lord Hotham, whose vote in support of Russell’s resolution caused a degree of confusion. ‘An East-Riding Elector’ from Beverley believed he had ‘thought the government measure so revolutionary that it ought to be opposed at every stage’; the *Hull Packet* suspected he supported a reduction in boroughs and had ‘been caught by the cunning phraseology’ of the resolution.⁸⁶ In reality, Hotham thought the assimilation of the franchise and the disfranchisement of county voters too dangerous to let pass.⁸⁷

By contrast, no Yorkshire Liberals who supported the bill did so to protect the government – perhaps understandably, given that one of their

⁸¹ *WJ*, 15 April 1859 p. 5

⁸² *HC Debs* 149, cc.1835-6, 27 April 1858.

⁸³ *HC Debs* 153, c.1194, 31 March 1859.

⁸⁴ *HC Debs* 153, cc.954-7, 28 March 1859.

⁸⁵ *HC Debs* 153, cc.1079-80, 29 March 1859; see also Admiral the Hon. Arthur Duncombe, *YH*, 30 April 1859 p. 5.

⁸⁶ *HA*, 9 April 1859 p. 5; *HP*, 8 April 1859; Hull Archives, U/DDHO/8/17 (Marmaduke J. Grimston to Lord Hotham, 23 April 1859, 30 April 1859).

⁸⁷ *YH*, 30 April 1859 p. 5

electoral assets was the popularity of Palmerston's foreign policy.⁸⁸ The Radical John Roebuck, who had been giving 'a complete and unvarying support' to the Conservative government, had to make a particularly hard choice.⁸⁹ On the one hand, the bill would 'not give one iota of power to the working classes' and would 'enhance the power of the landed gentry'; on the other, dissolution risked 'instantaneous war!' In the end, however, Roebuck chose political principle over national security.

The two Liberals who did cross the floor to support the bill both did so on the same grounds: that the bill was good enough. For Edward Stillingfleet Cayley, the independent and unorthodox Liberal member for the North Riding, it 'contained everything that everybody asks for, in principle'; Marmaduke Wyvil of Richmond 'was anxious that the question... should be settled' and thought 'the bill might be amended in Committee,' but 'if the bill were rejected, it was impossible that any measure... could be passed during the present Session'.⁹⁰ The key factor in Liberal success was not reliance on its advanced wing, which already believed that the bill was 'as false and unjust as a bill could be,' but persuading other moderate Liberals who might have supported the bill to abandon it instead.⁹¹ Edward Akroyd, for instance, had proposed a lengthy series of modifications to the bill including building and friendly society franchises, direct taxation franchises, and educational certificate franchises.⁹² He felt that 'in the absence of any other reform bill... [it] may pass the second reading, for the purpose of cutting down the borough franchise to £5 or £6 rating'; yet he voted for Russell's resolution.⁹³

What this begins to highlight is both the wide variety of overall views within the House of Commons on the nature, purpose and extent of any reform, and the extent to which these views shared common ground that crossed party lines. On the one hand, Conservatives and Liberals professed a shared commitment to protect the borough freeholders and extend the franchise; on the other, Liberal MPs could be found denouncing the 'fancy'

⁸⁸ Gurowich, 'War by Other Means', pp. 616-7

⁸⁹ *HC Debs* 152, c.1021, 28 February 1859

⁹⁰ *YH*, 7 May 1859 p. 5; *HC Debs* 153, c.1199, 31 March 1859; Bythell, *Fragility of Rural Liberalism*, pp. 8-9, 16.

⁹¹ *RRC*, 30 April 1859 p. 3.

⁹² *HC*, 19 March 1859 p. 5.

⁹³ *HC*, 5 March 1859 p. 8.

franchises as a snare or proposing extensive additions to their number.
Would an election draw distinct lines between the two parties?

Linguistic analysis of the election addresses of Yorkshire MPs in the 1859 general election immediately suggests the importance of reform – all the more so when set against those for 1857. Perhaps unsurprisingly, at the 1859 election ‘reform’ was one of the most frequently used words for both parties, though more frequently by the Liberals than the Conservatives. The Liberals also talked frequently about the ‘franchise’; ‘Palmerston’ almost disappeared from their election addresses, to be replaced by references to Lord John Russell. The Conservatives, meanwhile, discussed their ‘principles’. Liberals talked less, and Conservatives talked more, about being ‘independent’: this correlated with the party that was in government, and was often related to the MP explaining how they had offered the government ‘an independent but not a servile support’.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ *LM*, 9 April 1859 p. 4.



Figure 4: Words used in Conservative addresses at the 1859 election, sized by frequency.



Figure 5: Words used in Liberal addresses at the 1859 election, sized by frequency.

This overall trend is reflected in a more detailed examination of what was said by candidates. Four Conservative candidates broadly denied that the

election was about reform, instead arguing – like George Beecroft – that the question was ‘How is the Queen’s government to be carried on?’⁹⁵ The Liberal party was ‘a mob... without guide or leaders – perfect chaos’; it was important to have ‘that noble straight-forward statesman Lord Derby at the head of the government’ at a time when the most important question was how ‘this country stood in relation to foreign powers’.⁹⁶ Three additional candidates were of the opinion that reform did matter, but only in the sense that the election would determine how far the inevitable measure would go.⁹⁷ James Stuart Wortley, contesting the West Riding, argued that there was no disagreement on ‘the necessity of substantial reform in Parliament (hear, hear). The only question was the extent and nature’ – and he added that he thought the government measure insufficient.⁹⁸

Needless to say, this Conservative grassroots commitment to reform – or at the very least a pretence of commitment to reform – was not reflected in the Liberal press, which argued, almost universally, that to re-elect the Conservatives was to sign reform’s death warrant. Whether this belief was genuine, or arose from the need to energise the Liberal coalition sufficiently to triumph at an election, is unclear. However, it is perhaps notable that the *Bradford Observer* referred to the question which had torn apart Liberal parties across the North by urging that ‘the present duty, as accepted by State-educationists and Voluntaries alike, is for all Reformers to unite heart and hand’.⁹⁹ Regardless of the rationale, the views were remarkably homogeneous: from the *Huddersfield Examiner* asking voters ‘what reform do you require’, through the *Halifax Courier* calling the Bill ‘a mockery and an insult’, to the *Leeds Mercury* and its view that ‘the point at issue... is the great question of Reform.’¹⁰⁰

This line was repeated by Liberal candidates, though primarily in the larger cities. In Bradford, the Conservative bill was a ‘delusion and a sham’ supported by ‘one of the most deadly foes of popular progress,’ the local

⁹⁵ *LM*, 30 April 1859.

⁹⁶ *PT*, 23 April 1859 p. 1; *BvG*, 23 April 1859 p. 4; *YH*, 7 May 1859 p. 5.

⁹⁷ Hon. William Duncombe, *YH*, 7 May 1859 p. 5; John Smyth in *YG*, 30 April 1859 p. 1.

⁹⁸ *BO*, 21 April 1859 p. 7.

⁹⁹ *BO*, 14 April 1859 p. 4.

¹⁰⁰ *HE*, 16 April 1859 p. 2, *HxC*, 7 May 1859 p. 4, *LM*, 19 April 1859.

banker Alfred Harris.¹⁰¹ In Leeds the situation was much the same, and in Sheffield John Roebuck was even more expansive.¹⁰² If war broke out, the ‘old Tory leaven’ would try ‘to put down the parliament of England, the liberty of England, the free press of England. (Cheers)’ – a statement which was perhaps intended to restore Roebuck’s Liberal credentials after his extended support of Lord Derby’s government.¹⁰³

Naturally, Conservative newspapers saw things differently. Some characterised the contest expansively: the *Leeds Intelligencer* saw ‘the home and foreign policies, the administration of the law, both civil and criminal; the character of the national taxation; the maintenance and prosecution of foreign alliances’ mixed up in it all.¹⁰⁴ A few even saw it in existential national terms, asking ‘Are our time-honoured institutions to be overthrown in order that American republicanism may be reared on their ruins?’¹⁰⁵ Others focused on the risk of war: although this did rebuke the Liberal party for causing the dissolution, it did not automatically follow that the Conservatives should be returned.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the fact that the Liberal Sir Charles Wood was safe to admit (albeit in an uncontested election) that ‘the question of reform, which lately was nearly paramount, [is] almost absorbed in the now engrossing question of peace or war’ suggests that an appeal to the country on those terms was never a winning strategy for the Conservatives.¹⁰⁷

Yet, as always, the election continued to turn on local issues as well as national ones. At a Leeds Liberal ward meeting, both candidates spent much of their time refuting the suggestion that one of them had opposed the removal of the assizes from York to Leeds.¹⁰⁸ In Richmond, Henry Rich’s first priority was to exculpate himself from having failed to conduct a personal canvass of the electorate.¹⁰⁹ A letter to the *Pontefract Telegraph* from ‘Arch Willie’ also suggested that the mid-Victorian electorate refused to be driven

¹⁰¹ *BO*, 21 April 1859 p. 7.

¹⁰² *LM*, 16 April 1859

¹⁰³ *SI*, 30 April 1859 p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ *LI*, 23 April 1859 p. 4, *BvG*, 9 April 1859 p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ *WJ*, 21 April 1859 p. 5; *LI*, 26 March 1859 p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ *HxG*, 5 March 1859 p. 5, *HgA*, 7 May 1859 p. 3, *HP*, 8 April 1859.

¹⁰⁷ *HxC*, 30 April 1859 p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ *LM*, 21 April 1859.

¹⁰⁹ *RRC*, 30 April 1859 p. 3.

by partisan politics.¹¹⁰ ‘Arch Willie’ was a splitter for the Liberal Milnes and Conservative Overend: he disagreed with Milnes’ principles but preferred ‘old servants and familiar faces,’ and Overend was ‘a good sort of man, a hard worker, and as near the right mark as any we shall get.’¹¹¹ This proved some consolation to the *Leeds Mercury* when it later came to contemplate the incomplete Liberal victory: Beecroft’s return ‘was the victory of the townsman over the so-called stranger’, muddled in with his ‘half Liberal tone upon the question of reform’ which gulled or pacified ‘some of the more timid Liberals’.¹¹²

This half-Liberal tone proved to be the trend across the county. In borough after borough, Conservative candidates declared themselves in favour of the extension of the franchise to levels which almost matched the more cautious of the Liberals. In accordance with their earlier professions, Beecroft and Charlesworth (seeking re-election for Leeds and Wakefield respectively) came out for £8 rental in boroughs; Arthur Harris in Bradford did the same.¹¹³ Nor was this solely a phenomenon of the big industrial boroughs. In Pontefract, Overend suggested £8 rental in large boroughs and £5 in small ones; in York, John George Smyth offered the £20 county and £6 borough franchise of Henley and Walpole.¹¹⁴ Other candidates proposed more esoteric proposals: George Cayley in Scarborough, for instance, proposed to enfranchise every man receiving £50 annually in wages, and to ‘lower the franchise by a sliding scale’, ‘until it was found that labour was adequately represented’.¹¹⁵

It might very well be argued that these proposals were completely insincere, intended only as an exercise in public relations. Certainly, there were indications that some candidates were not wholly committed to the generous proposals they made on the hustings. Campaigning for the West Riding, James Stuart Wortley frequently suggested support for the £6 franchise, but ‘would not be so foolish as to pin himself to any particular amount. (Loud disapprobation; voices: “It’s all humbug;” and general

¹¹⁰ Jaggard, ‘Small Town Politics’, p. 28.

¹¹¹ *PT*, 23 April 1859 p. 1.

¹¹² *LM*, 3 May 1859.

¹¹³ *LM*, 30 April 1859; *WJ*, 15 April 1859 p. 5; *BO*, 21 April 1859 p. 7, 5 May 1859 p. 6.

¹¹⁴ *PT*, 16 April 1859 p. 1.

¹¹⁵ *SM*, 9 April 1859 p. 4.

confusion for some minutes.)¹¹⁶ In Hull, Joseph Hoare's support for the £6 rating or £8 rental franchise was undermined by an admission mere days before that 'I have not made up my mind (laughter)'.¹¹⁷ A further blow to the reputation of the East Riding's representatives was delivered when the county MP Lord Hotham had to admit, when asked about rating versus rental 'that he was unable to give such an answer to the question as would be satisfactory.'¹¹⁸

Some Conservative candidates at least were able to justify the stance which they took, though in emotional terms. At Leeds, Beecroft argued that £8 householders were 'working men, who... might have been safely entrusted with the enjoyment of the franchise (applause)'; however, it would also have 'prevented the present possessors of it from being swamped by a new and untried constituency. (Hear, hear)'.¹¹⁹ At Bradford, Harris thought much the same: £8 would 'include the honest, intelligent, working men of this country' who were as opposed to swamping as 'the rest above them'.¹²⁰ Hoare, after his late conversion, announced 'that if a person has a vote for a member of parliament that he ought to have some *status* in society', for which 'a house rating of £6 is low enough'.¹²¹

It is perhaps churlish to question the calculations of contemporaries, who had a better idea of what kind of voter lived in a £10, £8 or £6 house than the historian ever can. However, the figure itself – halfway between the proposed £6 and the existing £10 – suggests that this was not an evidence-based position. The £10 franchise was too high; the £6 proposed by the Liberals must be too low; therefore £8 suggested itself naturally. In fairness, beyond Russell (who had done the calculations), support for the talismanic £10 county and £6 borough franchise among the Liberals was scarcely more rational.¹²² It also shows how far the idea of a reforming Conservatism had percolated among the most vocal provincial candidates – even if only a mercenary, tactical reformism, as when Smyth sought to quiet Conservative

¹¹⁶ *LM*, 21 April 1859. For his hinted support of £6, *LM*, 28 April 1859; *LI*, 23 April 1859 pp. 6, 9.

¹¹⁷ *HP*, 15 April 1859, 22 April 1859.

¹¹⁸ *YH*, 7 May 1859 p. 5.

¹¹⁹ *LI*, 23 April 1859 p. 7.

¹²⁰ *BO*, 5 May 1859 p. 6.

¹²¹ *HP*, 15 April 1859.

¹²² Hilton, 'Industrial Spirit', p. 47.

complaints about his support of the £6 franchise by saying ‘Their opponents wanted it to be said that the aristocracy and the upper classes object to reform. That was their game’.¹²³ Far from being ‘highly critical of their party leaders... for needless concessions to opponents,’ Yorkshire Conservatives were prepared to confront the Liberals on their own terms.¹²⁴

Conservative candidates across the county offered a range of possible franchises according to their own personal opinions, very few of which correlated to what the party leadership were offering or considering. By contrast, the Liberal party had a policy position more or less fleshed out – £6 in boroughs, £10 in counties – which their candidates signed up to with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Almost every cautious Liberal like Henry Wickham, who ‘thought the working classes ought to be admitted in great numbers... [but not] in such numbers as to swamp all the other classes (applause),’ or Sir Charles Wood, who wanted ‘those who think, read and discuss,’ but not ‘those who are influenced by such considerations as money and beer,’ was paired with a Radical stablemate who proudly proclaimed that their heart went further but their head led them to support the party line.¹²⁵ In Bradford, Wickham was partnered with Titus Salt, who felt ‘if the opportunity occurs, I shall go further (applause). But I think the best way is to take the most we can get (hear, hear).’¹²⁶ In Halifax, Wood was returned alongside James Stansfield, whose ‘political faith’ was still the ‘old Radical principle of Household Suffrage’.¹²⁷ The *Doncaster Gazette* praised the position for being ‘sufficiently extensive to enable all reformers to take their stand upon it.’¹²⁸

In many respects, Russell setting this position was a master-stroke: it provided a single position, distinct from the Conservative stance. Yet – as we shall see – it would cause difficulty when it came time to frame a measure of reform, and it still required continual efforts to hold together the coalition. Though proud of their own independence, Liberals were also envious of the

¹²³ *YH*, 16 April 1859 p. 10.

¹²⁴ Bruce Coleman, *Conservatism and the Conservative Party in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1988), p. 4.

¹²⁵ *BO*, 14 April 1859 p. 5.

¹²⁶ *BO*, 21 April 1859 p. 6.

¹²⁷ *HxC*, 23 April 1859 supplement p. 1.

¹²⁸ *DG*, 8 April 1859 p. 5.

unity of the Conservative party. ‘The Conservative majority is not like a Liberal majority,’ Layard warned his supporters: they ‘are a compact body, and they work together; and if they obtain a majority the Reform Bill would be gone.’¹²⁹ In Leeds, songs were written arguing ‘in union is strength’, while a letter from a purported Liberal elector passed on the wisdom of ‘my boy Jack’: ‘the Whigs and the Radicals must be like the bundle of sticks in my book of fables, and then Beecroft can’t break them’.¹³⁰

Radical candidates had to balance the reassertion of their political faith with adherence to the common position, a balancing act which grassroots supporters did their best to make difficult. Sheffield seemed particularly prone to acting up: the Halifax radical Frank Crossley, electioneering in the town for the West Riding contest, was asked why the middle classes did not redeem their promise of 1832 to the working classes by the granting of manhood suffrage.¹³¹ Mr Bagshaw, meanwhile, felt that John Roebuck ‘did not appear to him to be the sincere reformer now he once was,’ because he had ‘begged and prayed Government to agree to a £6 rating suffrage in boroughs’.¹³² Though the party line managed to hold at the 1859 election, it was clear that much had been staked on the suggestion that a £6 rating suffrage was entirely achievable. It must be admitted, too, that in many cases the stance of Conservatives supporting £8 rental or £6 rating was successful in muddying the hoped-for clear blue water between the two parties. In Wakefield, the Liberal candidate William Henry Leatham’s choice of a £6 rental franchise was depicted by his opponents as ‘another step in his downward revolutionary path’ thanks to ‘his extreme friends’: while Leatham ‘had no fixed ideas,’ Charlesworth’s support for the £6 rating franchise was ‘as low as it would be safe to go.’¹³³

Indeed, there was often greater variety between different Liberal positions on the franchise than there was between the most moderate Conservative and Liberal opinions. A range of justifications for the extension of the franchise

¹²⁹ *YH*, 16 April 1859 p. 10.

¹³⁰ *LM*, 14 April 1859, 12 April 1859.

¹³¹ *SI*, 23 April 1859 p. 10.

¹³² *SI*, 9 April 1859 p. 7.

¹³³ *WJ*, 21 April 1859 p. 4.

were put forward, but the majority avoided asserting any inherent right to the franchise, whether derived from ethnicity, universal human rights, or historical precedent. One correspondent even called such concepts the ‘will-o’-the-wisp of the uneducated politician... the shadow the leaders of the great Chartist movement chased’.¹³⁴ Instead, the claim advanced was that of personal value: the working classes had demonstrated they could be trusted with the franchise.

There were three key components to the claim of personal value. The first, and probably the most often voiced, was that of education. Supporting the West Riding Liberal candidates at Selby, Major Waud explained that large numbers of the working classes were now better informed and more intelligent than were the higher classes fifty or one hundred years ago. (Hear, hear). In accordance, therefore, with the genius of their constitution, they were justly and fairly entitled to the Parliamentary franchise.¹³⁵

Abraham Holroyd of Bradford felt that in a comparison between present and potential voters, in ‘education, general intelligence, and morality’ the latter ‘would certainly stand A No. 1’; enfranchising them would ‘wipe away [the] reproach’ that the British franchise was based on ‘bricks, not brains’.¹³⁶

The specific claim that voters were independent – the second component of personal value – was less frequently offered than education. In some cases the two were conflated and combined: the *Leeds Mercury* felt it agreed with Bright in the sense that only those ‘*qualified for the exercise of the suffrage by intelligence, good character, and circumstances raised above poverty and dependence*’ should vote.¹³⁷ Yet we should be cautious before we use this evidence to challenge the fundamental position that independence occupied in the British political system. Though it was difficult to quantify independence, any amateur orator could refer to the number of newspapers and mechanics’ institutes as a ready yardstick for intelligence.

A more frequent justification than independence was patriotism: the personal value of the working classes lay in the way they were ‘imbued with

¹³⁴ *HC*, 12 February 1859 p. 8.

¹³⁵ *LM*, 26 April 1859.

¹³⁶ *BR*, 14 April 1860 p. 5.

¹³⁷ *LM*, 1 February 1859 (italics in original).

true national views'.¹³⁸ Though they were not philosopher-kings capable of detached and rational thought, the choices that they made would be influenced by their underlying love of the country. If 'no hearts have beaten more earnestly for England in her struggles with savage mutiny and foreign foes than those of the hard-working classes,' the common weal was safe in their hands.¹³⁹ If the middle classes would 'trustfully confide the task of thrusting back the foe' to the 'strong arms' of the working classes, they had no reason to deny them the vote.¹⁴⁰

Critically, the Conservatives did not challenge these fundamental assumptions about the purpose of an extended franchise. The *Sheffield Times* felt that 'to concede the demand for the franchise by degrees, and in accordance with the progress of the people in education and morality, would be an act both of justice and wisdom.'¹⁴¹ They differed in only two key respects from the Liberals, the first of which was an insistence on practical measures. 'Abstractly the occupier of a £5 house may be as well qualified as one of £10,' admitted the *Leeds Intelligencer*, but 'form your judgement from actual observation, rather than from philosophical theories' and it will become clear that the majority are not.¹⁴² The second was their greater concern for managing this change effectively, with the *Halifax Guardian* highlighting the twin needs to maintain effective parliamentary government, and to ensure 'the interests of property and the voice of the middle classes shall not be overwhelmed'.¹⁴³ Reform was acceptable, but it had to be 'safe and satisfactory'.¹⁴⁴

This tends to bear out the traditional image of Liberals as 'programme-drafters and preachers' and Conservatives as displaying 'good-humoured realism' and appalled by 'disorder'.¹⁴⁵ The image is further strengthened when we take into account that Parliamentary reform was not

¹³⁸ Jonathan Parry, 'Patriotism', in David Craig and James Thompson (eds.), *Languages of Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke, 2013), p. 80; *SM*, 9 April 1859 p. 4.

¹³⁹ *HE*, 5 March 1859 p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ *HxC*, 19 March 1859 p. 5.

¹⁴¹ *ST*, 5 March 1859 p. 8.

¹⁴² *LI*, 5 March 1859 p. 4.

¹⁴³ *HxG*, 12 March 1859 p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ Joseph Hoare, in *HP*, 15 April 1859.

¹⁴⁵ Robert Brendan McDowell, *British Conservatism, 1832-1914* (London, 1959), p. 9; Coleman, *Conservative Party*, p. 127.

solely a project for the elites. The vibrant contemporary print culture meant that many amateurs generated and published their own ideas on the franchise. Mostly produced by Liberals, these projects litter the archives: from Thomas Morgan and John Brooke's printed pamphlets to informal suggestions sent by well-meaning constituents to their MPs.¹⁴⁶ Of these amateur projects, perhaps the most notable were the suggestions of Sir John Eardley Wilmot.¹⁴⁷ They received a surprising amount of support: 'at once progressive and conservative,' a scheme that 'will recommend itself in every quarter where a large and comprehensive bill is desired.'¹⁴⁸ The Liberal candidate for Wakefield, W.H. Leatham recommended his redistribution clauses as 'by far the best I had seen... especially favourable to Yorkshire': however, Leatham added his own scheme whereby non-electors would appoint a proportion of their number to the electoral roll.¹⁴⁹ Although Parliamentary schemes were always the most prominent and the most likely to be enacted, these speculative schemes helped shape and inform local debates on the topic.

The aspect of Liberal reform which the Conservatives struggled most to understand was the concept of the franchise as a means of self-actualisation. When advanced Liberals talked about reform, they emphasised the status of the unenfranchised as 'goods and chattels... mere things politically' and the right to vote as the vindication of 'the dignity of their manhood'.¹⁵⁰ Conservatives, meanwhile, frequently expressed bemusement as to why there was agitation when 'there was never a time when legislation was so uniformly directed for the well-being of the working classes'.¹⁵¹ Yet Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which argues that humans seek to fulfil their

¹⁴⁶ WYAS Bradford, DB 31/2/3 (Thomas Morgan, *Reform of Parliament by an Extension of the Suffrage* [London, 1851]); WYAS Kirklees, KC174/Box 4/5 (John Brooke, *Thoughts on the Extension of the Franchise* [Huddersfield, 1859]); WYAS Kirklees, WYL109 49/7 (William Ibbitt to Sir John Ramsden, 5 May 1860).

¹⁴⁷ Sir John E. Eardley-Wilmot, *Parliamentary Reform: A Letter to Richard Freedom, Esq. on the Re-Distribution, Extension and Purification of the Elective Franchise* (London, 1853); Sir John E. Eardley-Wilmot, *A Letter to Lord Brougham, President of the Law-Amendment Society, on Some of the Legislative Requirements of the Coming Session* (London, 1857); Sir John E. Eardley-Wilmot, *Parliamentary Reform: A Second Letter to Richard Freedom, Esq., on the Re-Distributions, Extension and Purification of the Electoral Franchise*. (London, 1858).

¹⁴⁸ *YH*, 5 February 1859 p. 8; *HxC*, 29 January 1859 p. 4; *DG*, 16 March 1860 supplement p. 1

¹⁴⁹ *LM*, 8 March 1859; *WJ*, 15 April 1859 p. 5, 6 May 1859 p. 6.

¹⁵⁰ *HE*, 5 May 1859 p. 2.

¹⁵¹ *HP*, 15 June 1860.

basic survival requirements before attempting to establish a sense of identity, suggests a reason why agitation could continue or even strengthen in times of plenty.¹⁵² The Conservatives seem to have seen the franchise primarily as a tool of government, whereas the Liberals also conceived it as conferring an additional sense of citizenship – perhaps linked to their understanding of classical history.¹⁵³ Alternatively, it reflects an underlying psychological difference between the left’s focus on caring and fairness and the broader focus of the right.¹⁵⁴

Where both sides both agreed and disagreed most strongly was on the issue of good government. A correspondent urged the agitation to focus ‘not on the ground of ancient practice, but on modern wants – the good of the community, instead of inherent rights.’¹⁵⁵ Liberals urged reform ‘to enable the people to return men who would check the extravagant expenditure of government’; ‘Men who had to pay taxes, had a right to control the expenditure.’¹⁵⁶ However, the two sides were speaking past one another on the topic. While the Liberal *Barnsley Chronicle* differentiated between ‘the tax-paying people’ and ‘the tax-pocketing aristocracy and its minions’, the Conservative *Leeds Intelligencer* worried about ‘the Liverpool merchant and the Manchester manufacturer... [who] contribute largely to the direct taxation’ being ‘overwhelmed by the thousands who contribute nothing’.¹⁵⁷ Both sought to establish effective taxpayer control over the government, but their views of who constituted the taxpayers were irreconcilable.

February – June 1860: Reform revived

Disraeli’s gamble of going to the country failed: in accordance with his promises, Russell brought forward his reform bill in early 1860.¹⁵⁸ However,

¹⁵² W. Huitt, ‘Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs’, Educational Psychology Interactive [<http://www.edpsycinteractive.org/topics/regsys/maslow.html>], accessed 24 September 2016].

¹⁵³ Vincent, *British Liberal Party*, p. 14; Eugenio F. Biagini, ‘Neo-Roman Liberalism: “republican” Values and British Liberalism, ca. 1860–1875’, *History of European Ideas* vol. 29 (2003), pp. 55-6, 61-2.

¹⁵⁴ Haidt, *Righteous Mind*, pp. 178-9, 351, 357.

¹⁵⁵ *HC*, 12 February 1859 p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ *HC*, 26 February 1859 p. 5.

¹⁵⁷ *BC*, 19 March 1859 p. 4; *LI*, 19 March 1859 p. 4.

¹⁵⁸ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 118.

the public reaction to it was distinctly muted – even from the major Liberal newspapers in the West Riding. The *Bradford Observer* had predicted its terms (£6 borough rental and £10 county occupation) almost to the letter the previous year, and perhaps this lack of surprise contributed to the lukewarm reaction.¹⁵⁹ Though the *Sheffield Independent* anticipated it making ‘enormous change,’ the *Leeds Mercury* considered it well-targeted to the state of the legislature but still ‘of a milk and water description’¹⁶⁰ Further down the Liberal scale, papers were prepared to criticise more loudly: ‘a trivial and delusive measure, which settles nothing,’ according to the *Barnsley Chronicle*; ‘such a trifling amendment [of the Conservative bill] might have been carried in committee,’ said the *Scarborough Mercury*.¹⁶¹

Where Liberal newspapers did support the measure, it was almost entirely on a tactical basis: because it was expected to pass, not from its own merits. Though the *Eastern Counties Herald* ‘believe[d] a bolder measure could have made its way through... there seems no reason to believe that the bill will encounter serious opposition’.¹⁶² The *Beverley Recorder*, meanwhile, accepted it as ‘Conservatives have so little against it’, and although the *Doncaster Gazette* thought it included ‘an important extension of the suffrage’ they also felt it necessary to qualify that ‘The Bill is so moderate that it cannot fail to pass.’¹⁶³

It should be noted that there were particular problems with the bill in Yorkshire, as its proposal to give Leeds three members was almost designed to cause the maximum amount of offended civic pride. The Liberal *Halifax Courier* generally supported the bill, but protested loudly that ‘In no sense whatever is it [Leeds] the metropolis of the West Riding, neither is it entitled to be considered as at all of special importance.’¹⁶⁴ The Liberal *Huddersfield Chronicle* saw three members for Leeds as unjust, ‘when Dewsbury, Pudsey, Keighley, Saddleworth, Barnsley, and other populous localities of the West Riding have none at all!’¹⁶⁵ Nor could the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* ‘quite

¹⁵⁹ *BO*, 7 April 1859 p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ *SI*, 10 March 1860 p. 8.

¹⁶¹ *BC*, 10 March 1860 p. 5; *SM*, 9 April 1859 p. 4.

¹⁶² *ECH*, 8 March 1860 p. 5.

¹⁶³ *BvR*, 10 March 1860 p. 4; *DG*, 9 March 1860 p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ *HxC*, 3 March 1860 p. 4.

¹⁶⁵ *HC*, 3 March 1860 p. 5.

understand why a third member should be given to Leeds’, when Sheffield had a larger constituency – an issue which John Roebuck raised in the House on the first reading.¹⁶⁶ The suggestion that this single provision contributed to the downfall of the bill is unlikely at best, but it was a distraction that reinforced the idea that the whole measure had not been entirely thought through.

This lack of newspaper support was matched by a wholly unenthusiastic popular reception. There were only a handful of meetings in the large towns, on a smaller scale than the earlier agitation against Disraeli’s bill, and enthusiasm was hard to find. In 1859 Sheffield had seen a mass meeting in Paradise Square of between 2,000 and 4,000 people; in 1860, only the Town Council was invited to adopt a petition supportive of the bill.¹⁶⁷ Moreover, Dr Holland felt capable of mocking this mercilessly, moving an amendment that cited ‘the yearnings which have been manifested in favour of sanitary improvements – (laughter) – as reason for enfranchising ‘every male who has attained the age of 12 years – (Cries of “Hear, hear”) – and... every female who has attained the age of 16 years. (Laughter)’.¹⁶⁸ This showed how fragile Liberal unity was in the period. Every man found his own complaint with Disraeli’s bill, and it was easy to rally behind a general platform of £6 and £10, but problems occurred when a specific measure was brought in. It was difficult for individuals to resist the temptation to burnish their own reformist credentials by taking pot-shots at the bill for being too moderate, even when they were supposed to be rallying support behind it. W.E. Forster ‘hardly would call it a Reform bill, because it missed out... points... of great importance,’ while Councillor Carter refused, ‘because their friends were in power, to slur over the defects of the bill they had introduced... (Loud cheers)’.¹⁶⁹

When the bill was ultimately withdrawn, Liberal newspapers distributed the blame widely, though most blamed other Liberals. The *Halifax Courier* complained about ‘the rapid deterioration’ of radical members, caused by the Commons acting as ‘an aristocratic and social club

¹⁶⁶ *SDT*, 5 March 1860 p. 2; *HC Debs* 156, c.2073, 1 March 1860.

¹⁶⁷ *SI*, 12 March 1859.

¹⁶⁸ *SI*, 17 March 1860 p. 10.

¹⁶⁹ *BO*, 17 May 1860 p. 6; *LM*, 15 March 1860.

rather than an assembly of honest intelligent politicians;’ the *Leeds Express* blamed ‘the shopkeeping and trading classes’ for not redeeming their pledges of 1832; the *Bradford Review* blamed both.¹⁷⁰ However, it should be said in their defence that the Parliamentary Liberals had been given very little room for manoeuvre by public opinion.

The adoption of £8 rental by many Yorkshire Conservatives had ruled out any slight relaxation in the Liberal position when faced with opposition. As rumours began to fly, the *Leeds Mercury* warned that the £8 borough franchise would be an ‘evasion’ which would lower ‘the character of public men,’ the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* refused to credit it, and the *Leeds Times* warned that ‘earnest and honest reformers’ would ultimately show their displeasure with any such ‘ministerial compromise’.¹⁷¹ There was another potential opportunity for compromise: adding Disraeli’s ‘fancy franchises’ to the bill. Conservative newspapers claimed to be ready to support the measure if this were done, and some Liberals saw potential in the suggestion.¹⁷² It might have been feasible when J.C. Dundas suggested it back in November 1858, but by the time Sir John Ramsden was supporting the move it was far too late: given the heavy criticism of the franchises at the 1859 election, it would almost certainly have been seen as an admission of defeat.¹⁷³

We should also remember the mercenary aspect: contesting seats was expensive, and a new Reform Bill offered the prospect of a third election in four years. No Liberals were sufficiently brazen to ask, as did Henry Edwards of Beverley, ‘whether, if this Bill became law, it would be necessary to have recourse to a dissolution of Parliament’.¹⁷⁴ However, J.C. Dundas – with a degree of insider knowledge – blamed the resistance to the bill on ‘the man who likes to be in parliament and does not like the expense and chance of an election.’¹⁷⁵ Sir John Ramsden’s desire to pass ‘a measure which would really strengthen the institutions of the country—or no measure at all’ may well

¹⁷⁰ *HxC*, 9 June 1860 p. 4; *LE*, 16 June 1860 p. 2; *BR*, 16 June 1860 p. 4.

¹⁷¹ *LM*, 5 May 1860; *SDT*, 4 May 1860 p. 2; *LT*, 9 June 1860 p. 5.

¹⁷² *HxG*, 24 March 1860 pp. 4-5, *WJ*, 16 March 1860 p. 5, 27 April 1860 p. 4; *HxC*, 24 March 1860 pp. 4-5, *PT*, 16 June 1860 p. 1, *SI*, 16 June 1860 p. 7, *LM*, 12 June 1860 (c.f *BuR*, 16 June 1860 p. 2), *SDT*, 26 March 1860 p. 2.

¹⁷³ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Sir John Ramsden to Charles Hirst, 10 May 1860); NYCRO, ZNK X/7/2 (Political diary of J.C. Dundas, 24 November 1858).

¹⁷⁴ *HC Debs* 156, c.2067, 1 March 1860.

¹⁷⁵ NYCRO, ZNK X/7/2 (Political diary of J.C. Dundas, May 1860).

stem from the haggling which had taken place after the 1859 election about how much of the £14,000 bill he would be expected to foot.¹⁷⁶ In a subsequent letter to a constituent, he expressed his belief that only a comprehensive and permanent settlement could justify having changed government.¹⁷⁷

Unsurprisingly, Conservative reaction to the bill on its first appearance was negative. It has been suggested that the Conservative party's opposition hinged on the distinction between a £6 rental and £6 rating franchise, as the latter 'offered no logical resting place' and 'failed to connect the franchise with taxation.'¹⁷⁸ This may have been a phenomenon of informed metropolitan comment on the bill, but does not seem to have percolated down to the provinces. The *Hull Packet* considered that 'A six pound rental in all large towns is almost equivalent to household suffrage' not because there was no 'resting place' between the two, but because 'there is scarcely a tenement in Hull, however wretched, the occupant of which does not pay to the landlord a rent of half-a-crown a week.'¹⁷⁹ £6 in itself was 'a flood of the democratic element sufficient in the large towns to swamp the respectable classes, and enough in the smaller boroughs to maintain the influence of the great Whig families'; the fact that 'It does not settle the Reform question even for a year' was of only subsidiary importance to the *Leeds Intelligencer*.¹⁸⁰

The failure to link the franchise with ratepaying was also poorly understood by provincial newspaper opinion – and not because this was a novel idea. When Sir Francis Crossley had discussed the concept at the 1859 election, the *Sheffield Times* had suggested 'It scarcely seems just to exclude a man from the franchise because he pays his poor-rate through the landlord ['compounding'] instead of directly to the overseers.'¹⁸¹ In the same year, the *Leeds Intelligencer* considered Bright's proposal to enfranchise ratepayers who opted out of compounding 'neither more nor less than household

¹⁷⁶ *HC Debs* 158, c.608, 3 May 1860; WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Sir John Ramsden to HW Childers, 8 April 1859; Ramsden to Childers, 13 April 1859; Childers to Ramsden, 24 June 1859; Ramsden to Childers, 7 July 1859; Frank Crossley to Childers, n.d.).

¹⁷⁷ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Sir John Ramsden to Charles Hirst, 10 May 1860).

¹⁷⁸ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 121.

¹⁷⁹ *HP*, 2 March 1860; c.f. *YG*, 3 March 1860 p. 8.

¹⁸⁰ *LI*, 10 March 1860 p. 4.

¹⁸¹ *ST*, 23 April 1859 p. 8, 3 March 1860 p. 8.

suffrage under a disguise'.¹⁸² The *Yorkshire Gazette* was one of the few Conservative papers which did make the distinction, urging Parliament to adopt a £6 rating franchise instead of rental.¹⁸³ However, its scope for manoeuvre was limited by its previous support of Smyth and Walpole's proposal for £6 rating in boroughs, which it had described as 'good order and good government'.¹⁸⁴ This suggests that the link between personal ratepaying and the franchise was still in embryo among the majority of Conservatives.

When the bill failed, few Conservative newspapers were inclined to claim it as a scalp. The *Doncaster Chronicle* praised Conservative MPs for 'rigidly abstaining from anything like factious opposition,' and later disclaimed any 'desire to triumph over the noble Lord... in his hour of affliction.'¹⁸⁵ The *Sheffield Times* complained of the insincerity of Palmerston and 'so-called Liberals', while the *Halifax Guardian* announced that 'everyone must lament that the session of 1860 passed with the Reform question unsettled'.¹⁸⁶ Little over a month later, the inaugural meeting of the Wakefield Conservative Association saw the speaker announce that 'they, as Conservatives, had no objection to the working classes possessing the franchise, so long as it was coupled with intelligence': 'he saw many of them in that room.'¹⁸⁷

The flurry of different proposals for reform which appeared from Conservatives in this period seemed designed to contradict their earlier reputation for staid unthinking traditionalism. Some Conservative newspapers seemed to be undergoing searching transformations, with the *Wakefield Journal* being converted to 'The scot and lot suffrage... the old constitutional mode, most in accordance with our feelings,' coupled with a three year residential period.¹⁸⁸ Adopting John Stuart Mill's ideas, which proposed that extension of the franchise be coupled with multiple votes to preserve the hegemony of property and intelligence, the *Leeds Intelligencer* considered that with such a system 'we should scarcely demur to manhood

¹⁸² *LI*, 16 April 1859 p. 4.

¹⁸³ *YG*, 3 March 1860 p. 8.

¹⁸⁴ *YG*, 23 April 1859 p. 5.

¹⁸⁵ *DC*, 8 June 1860 p. 5.

¹⁸⁶ *ST*, 16 June 1860 p. 8; *HxG*, 16 June 1860 p. 4.

¹⁸⁷ *WJ*, 27 April 1860 p. 4.

¹⁸⁸ *WJ*, 16 March 1860 p. 5.

suffrage'.¹⁸⁹ 'B' agreed, arguing 'no other plan is just, or capable of stemming the tide of democracy'.¹⁹⁰ J.S. of Halifax went further by proposing a tripartite assembly presumably modelled on the Prussian estates, divided equally between manhood suffrage, ten pound householders, and 'the landed-ocracy'.¹⁹¹ However, the putative sympathy of Conservatives for reform has been challenged both contemporaneously and historiographically – not just by their actions in 1859-60, but much more concertedly by their reaction to the American Civil War.

Conclusion

The ultimate failure of reform in 1859-60 was a complex process, arising from a wide variety of small decisions taken in the provinces as well as in Westminster. The detailed discussions show that there were substantial differences in the way that the two parties conceived the franchise, with Liberals appealing to the broader use of the franchise as a tool of civic engagement, and Conservatives focusing more narrowly on its role in government. However, it becomes clear that Conservatism was not solely an ideology opposed to reform, even if its proposals were not as intellectually vibrant as they might have been. In fact, it appears that, as Robert Saunders suggests, there was sufficient common ground between the two parties to make reform possible.

However, the election itself demonstrates that partisan politics could make capitalising on this common ground impossible. The Liberal coalition was strong at times of threat, but surprisingly weak in times of success. The endless search for ideological purity prevented any significant demonstrations of support for a moderate measure, and ruled out any weakening of the existing provisions even when the Parliamentary arithmetic made such weakening advisable. As such, we might perhaps share the blame between activists and MPs more evenly than did Zimmerman. For the next five years, global events would play a significant part in keeping reform off

¹⁸⁹ Dale E. Miller, 'The Place of Plural Voting in Mill's Conception of Representative Government', *Review of Politics* vol. 77, no. 3 (2015), pp. 402-3; *LI*, 21 April 1860 p. 4

¹⁹⁰ *YG*, 4 May 1859 p. 10; see also 'A Real Reformer' in *SDT*, 25 April 1859 p. 3.

¹⁹¹ *HxG*, 8 January 1859 p. 8

the table; when the question returned to British politics, how recognisable would it be?

Chapter 4: The American Civil War, 1861-5

The traditional interpretation of Britain's relationship with the American Civil War is tenacious, surviving with remarkably little modification since the interwar period. This traditionalist case proposed that Britain's ruling classes were increasingly concerned about the challenge posed by democratic ideals. On the one side, 'the open friends of the South' proclaimed 'the failure of democracy'; on the other, radicals, anti-slavery activists and the working classes fought the cause of liberty and popular government.¹ Northern victory was a triumphal vindication of democracy: in the 1865 election, 'not a single member who had supported the cause of the North failed of re-election,' and subsequently 'the Reform Bill of 1867 changed Great Britain from a government by aristocracy to one by democracy.'²

A brief period of revisionism was overcome by the 1980s, with Foner reviving the idea that the working classes supported the Union and Jones detecting a general desire in Britain to intervene in the war, motivated by concern over bloodshed and *realpolitik* desires to split Britain's rival.³ Modern historians of British sympathies generally see the war and its subsequent effect on British politics similarly to Adams.⁴ A single response to this narrative, Campbell's *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War*, proposed that neither side attracted much sympathy among the British public.⁵ However, it is the traditionalist interpretation which currently holds sway, not just in the historiography but also more popularly.⁶ Indeed, this

¹ Ephraim Douglass Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War* (New York, 1925), vol.2 p. 287.

² *Ibid.*, vol.2 pp. 302-3. E.A. Leatham, the Northern advocate defeated at Huddersfield in 1865, would no doubt have taken issue with the detail if not the broad trend of this conclusion.

³ Philip Sheldon Foner, *British Labor and the American Civil War* (New York, 1981); Howard Jones, *Union in Peril: The Crisis over British Intervention in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, 1992). The key revisionist work, detecting 'a supreme determination to aid the South with at least moral backing,' was Mary Ellison, *Support for Secession: Lancashire and the American Civil War* (Chicago, 1972), ix.

⁴ Dean B. Mahin, *One War at a Time: The International Dimensions of the American Civil War* (Washington, D.C., 1999); R.J.M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge, 2001); Lorraine Peters, 'The Scottish Borders and the American Civil War', *Northern History* vol. 39, no. 1 (March 2002), p. 90.

⁵ Duncan Andrew Campbell, *English Public Opinion and the American Civil War* (London, 2003)

⁶ 'Op-Ed: Emancipation Proclamation A 'Huge' Risk,' (<http://www.npr.org/2012/09/24/161696144/op-ed-emancipation-proclamation-a-huge>)

view has permeated into the historiography of British politics, with historians of Liberalism emphasising the alliance between progressive politics and Union advocacy.⁷ Historians of race have also seen British sympathy for the Confederacy as illustrating a decline in British sympathy for slaves and belief that they could adopt Western norms.⁸

Leaving race for later, this chapter will test the validity of the thesis that ‘By and large, those in favour of reform supported the Union; those opposed, the Confederacy’⁹. It will consider Confederate support in Yorkshire, differentiating between broad sympathy and specific support for intervention. It will also recognise that ‘intervention’ (or ‘interference’) could take a variety of forms across three broad categories. The first is ‘mediation’: an offer or demand that Britain supervise negotiations between the sides with a view to agreeing separation. The second is ‘recognition’ – acknowledging the Confederacy as an independent state – and the third and rarest, generally phrased here as ‘military involvement’, reflects active British military support for the South.

Consideration of support for each measure will be framed through a tripartite approach, examining newspaper opinion, MPs’ public speech, and popular engagement with the conflict. Establishing the pattern of loyalties at the regional level, this chapter will set up the next chapter’s discussion of the role of democracy and the effect of Union victory in the immediate post-war period.

Newspaper opinion

One of the fundamental premises of the traditionalist thesis is that British anti-slavery had declined, meaning Britain was no longer susceptible to Union appeals to its better nature. Blackett, for instance, calls it ‘not as strong as it had been,’ while Hall claims ‘it no longer dominated the public

[risk](#), accessed 15 October 2016); Marika Sherwood, ‘Perfidious Albion: Britain, the USA, and Slavery in the 1840s and 1860s’, *Contributions in Black Studies* vol. 13, no. 6 (1995), p. 186.

⁷ Vincent, *British Liberal Party*, pp. 223, 234; Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p. 375; Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 246.

⁸ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 388-9, 394, 395; Seymour Drescher, *The Mighty Experiment: Free Labor versus Slavery in British Emancipation* (Oxford, 2002), p. 225.

⁹ Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, p. 7

mind' and Drescher references its 'declining strength' and 'diminution'.¹⁰ Yet this premise has been contradicted by suggestions that, though anti-slavery institutions atrophied, the ideology itself became institutionalised as a fundamental part of British national character.¹¹ When examining Yorkshire newspapers, the latter seems to be more accurate: anti-slavery was accepted across the political spectrum.

As storm clouds gathered across the Atlantic, not a single newspaper in Yorkshire expressed scepticism about Lincoln's accession to power. The Liberal *Leeds Mercury*, strongly linked to the anti-slavery movement, called the Republicans 'the wisest and best of the old American statesmen'; however, it was scarcely more fulsome than the Conservative *Sheffield Times*, which called the election 'an immense change in American public feeling'.¹² In the west, the *Huddersfield Chronicle* suggested 'the friends of true liberty' would welcome the check to 'the insolent pretensions' of Southern slave-owners, while the *Halifax Courier* saw it as 'an immense gain' following 'disgraceful acts of injustice' and 'overbearing violence... committed at the dictation of the slaveholders'.¹³ In Hull, the *Eastern Counties Herald* hailed it as 'a triumph' for 'liberalism'; in York, the *Herald* saw it as 'a new epoch... which shall eventuate in purging that country from this "sum of all villanies" [sic]'.¹⁴

Comparisons to earlier periods are difficult, as Lincoln's accession was probably the signal triumph of the American abolitionist movement. The Fugitive Slave Law and the Dredd Scott case had given the British press little to celebrate in recent years. However, it is difficult to conclude from these initial editorials that American slavery mattered less than previously. Lincoln's victory was celebrated across the county and across the political spectrum – a rare degree of unanimity.

Most papers, however, thought the victory heralded a long-term shift rather than an immediate change. The Conservative *Leeds Intelligencer*

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 54; see also pp. 36-7, 51; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 390; Drescher, *Mighty Experiment*, pp. 202, 209.

¹¹ Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Ithaca, 2012), pp. 6-7.

¹² *LM*, 20 November 1860; *ST*, 24 November 1860 p. 8.

¹³ *HC*, 24 November 1860; *HxC*, 24 November 1860 p. 4.

¹⁴ *ECH*, 27 December 1860 p. 5; *YH*, 24 November 1860 p. 8; see also *BT*, 24 November 1860 p. 2, *BC*, 24 November 1860 p. 4.

referred to Lincoln's 'very moderate views', and the *York Herald* denied he would take 'any very strong federal action against slavery'.¹⁵ Ambitions in some cases were insultingly low: the *Halifax Courier*'s idea of 'an immense gain' was that 'the foes of slavery... will be strengthened in some degree by a fresh distribution of offices'.¹⁶ These low expectations perhaps reflected the lack of progress American abolitionism had made in the late 1850s, which in turn suggests that British anti-slavery may have grown more realistic rather than weaker.

When Southern states began to secede, Yorkshire newspapers were slow to understand the crisis's true scale. They reacted with apathy: the *Wakefield Free Press* considered 'threats of a disruption' 'merely party cries'.¹⁷ For the *Beverley Recorder*, a state leaving the Union would ruin not the Union, but the state.¹⁸ This belief that secession doomed slavery was widespread: the *York Herald* felt dissolution would 'demolish it [slavery] altogether', while the *Pontefract Telegraph* claimed 'slave states cannot stand alone...only the leaven of freedom in the North... holds America together'.¹⁹

In early 1861, these newspapers clearly favoured one side. Even Conservative newspapers backed the North: 'the sympathy of all Englishmen is with them now', 'by far the better portion of the Anglo-American community'.²⁰ The prospect of a Southern nation was a source of derision, with the *Malton Messenger* describing it as a 'bowie-knife oligarchy... whose chief men fight in the streets with six-shot revolvers,' and the *Hull Advertiser* even calling its women 'fiends in human shape... in rebellion against God for having in His Word represented the negro as in His pure sight the equal of themselves'.²¹ However, in the majority of cases this failed to translate into support for war: instead, secession freed the North.

¹⁵ *LI*, 8 December 1860 p. 4; *YH*, 24 November 1860 p. 8.

¹⁶ *HxC*, 24 November 1860 p. 4.

¹⁷ *WFP*, 24 November 1860 p. 2. Others were more sceptical: *BO*, 6 December 1860

¹⁸ *BvR*, 8 December 1860 p. 5; for more of this early scepticism towards secession, *DC*, 7 December 1860 p. 5, *BT*, 24 November 1860 p. 2, *BC*, 1 December 1860 p. 4, *LT*, 17 November 1860 p. 5; *LI*, 12 January 1861 p. 4, *LM*, 20 November 1860.

¹⁹ *YH*, 22 December 1860 p. 8; *PT*, 5 January 1861 p. 1; *WG*, 5 January 1861 p. 4.

²⁰ *HxG*, 12 January 1861 p. 4; *SDT*, 23 May 1861 p. 2; *YG*, 4 May 1861 p. 8.

²¹ *MM*, 2 February 1861 p. 2; *HA*, 8 December 1860 p. 4.

This early period of unorthodox attitudes towards the Civil War has largely been overlooked. One exception is D.P. Crook, who acknowledges early British sympathy for the Union but claims it ebbed away due to the ‘disenchanted march of events,’ not ‘Lincoln’s refusal to make war on slavery’.²² However, Crook overlooks several points highlighting anti-slavery’s underlying importance. For instance, he argues that the concept of the North rapidly outstripping its ‘independent but decadent rival... became something of a cliché in the next year or so.’²³ This had much deeper roots: in the 1830s the American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison had urged the North to ‘Let them [the South] separate... and the liberation of their slaves is certain’, feeling that the preservation of the Union was not worth ‘treading upon the necks, spilling the blood, and destroying the souls of millions of your race’.²⁴

While this Garrisonian concept was common throughout the war, it was in the first few months that it gained currency.²⁵ Many papers agreed with the *Wakefield Free Press* that the North ‘partakes of the guilt of the system and assists in maintaining it’: without its support, ‘slavery would become more and more untenable’.²⁶ The experience of the 1858 boarding dispute, and the desperate attempts of the Democrats to compromise with slavery to avert secession, perhaps strengthened this belief that disunion would advance abolition.²⁷

Most importantly, papers broadly endorsed the war only when anti-slavery measures would be advanced. The *Leeds Mercury* preferred ‘strife

²² David Paul Crook, ‘Portents of War: English Opinion on Secession’, *Journal of American Studies* vol. 4 (1971), p. 171; D.G. Wright, ‘English Opinion on Secession: A Note’, *Journal of American Studies* vol. 5, no. 2 (1971), p. 154.

²³ Crook, ‘Portents of War’, p. 178.

²⁴ William Lloyd Garrison, ‘The Great Crisis!’, *The Liberator* vol. 2 no. 52 (29 December, 1832) [<http://fair-use.org/the-liberator/1832/12/29/on-the-constitution-and-the-union>, accessed 26 September 2016]. See also Wendell Phillips’ ‘From 1843 to 1861, I was a Disunionist’ letter: *New York Times*, 21 August 1862. [<http://www.nytimes.com/1862/08/21/news/letter-from-wendell-phillips.html>, accessed 3 July 2017]

²⁵ Daniel Ritchie, ‘War, Religion and Anti-Slavery Ideology: Isaac Nelson’s Radical Abolitionist Examination of the American Civil War’, *Historical Research* vol. 89, no. 246 (2016), pp. 811-2.

²⁶ *WFP*, 19 January 1861 p. 2; *HgA*, 4 May 1861 p. 2.

²⁷ Richard D. Fulton, ‘The London Times and the Anglo-American Boarding Dispute of 1858’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* vol. 17, no. 2 (1993), p. 138; Joel Henry Silbey, *A Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York, 1977), pp. 33-9.

between freedom and slavery' to any other type of war; by May, it hailed the conversion of the 'timid compromisers which practically supported all the evils and iniquities of slavery'.²⁸ The *Bradford Observer*, meanwhile, hoped that Bull Run marked 'the beginning of the end... of the North fighting for the Union and slavery.'²⁹

However, it became extremely difficult to maintain this belief when Northern representatives accused Britain of lacking sympathy. This forced many papers to rebut Northern abolitionism in self-defence. In response to Harriet Beecher Stowe, the *Leeds Mercury* pointed out that the 'dread of emancipation' which prompted secession was 'declared by the President and the North generally to be perfectly futile... English philanthropists must be excused if they feel little interest in a quarrel in which their own special subject occupies such a subordinate situation'.³⁰ Its Conservative neighbour the *Leeds Intelligencer*, meanwhile, pointed out to Cassius Clay that 'the North was ready to give all needful guarantees for the security of the "domestic institution", ' though they felt it necessary to disclaim 'advocating the cause of the South.'³¹

General Fremont's confiscation of slaves belonging to rebels challenged Lincoln to consider his views on the role of the executive, the Constitution and the nature of liberty, ultimately leading him to overrule the measure.³² Unfortunately, it also forced the British to confront the same issues, and they were much less sympathetic to Lincoln's view.³³ Many papers initially lavished praise on Fremont, seeing him as the harbinger of a true Union commitment to emancipation. The *Hull Packet* argued that Fremont had overcome previous Union blunders: 'if it be not disavowed, but generally followed, the North will not long have to complain of want of sympathy from England.'³⁴ Its Liberal neighbour the *Advertiser* called emancipation 'the best and sharpest arrow in their quiver' and argued that

²⁸ *LM*, 7 May 1861.

²⁹ *BO*, 15 August 1861.

³⁰ *LM*, 10 September 1861.

³¹ *LI*, 8 June 1861 p. 4.

³² James M. McPherson, *Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution* (New York, Oxford, 1991), pp. 128-9.

³³ Campbell, *English Public Opinion*, pp. 19-20.

³⁴ *HP* 20 September 1861.

Britain could not remain indifferent to such a war.³⁵ The West Riding was generally more sceptical, but the *Doncaster Gazette* suggested Fremont made ‘a practical connexion’ between the war and abolition, which was now ‘up on the cards’ if not certain of adoption.³⁶

Lincoln’s action rapidly reversed this opinion. In Hull, the *Advertiser* called the war ‘unprincipled’ and the *Packet* announced the North had ‘never been earnest’ in its anti-slavery, while the *Doncaster Gazette* concluded that they fought ‘against slaveowners but not for the emancipation of their coloured bondsmen.’³⁷ Most other newspapers saw things in the same light: an initial flourishing of enthusiasm for the North was choked off by the Lincoln administration’s conservatism.³⁸ This perhaps explains British scepticism about subsequent moves towards emancipation.

Indeed, most newspapers specifically cited Northern insincerity on emancipation as a reason for withholding sympathy. The *Barnsley Chronicle*, for instance, felt that at the start ‘the sympathies of the great majority of Englishmen’ were with the Union; however, events demonstrated ‘only a very small proportion of the inhabitants of the North have a true sympathy with the slave.’³⁹ The *Harrogate Advertiser* made similar complaints, which it linked to the decline in British sympathy for the North.⁴⁰ The war crisis that resulted from the Union’s boarding of the British mail ship *Trent* in late 1861 would further distance Britain and the Union. However, the most important steps had been taken already: for domestic reasons, the Union was unable to follow through on initial British hopes for an abolitionist campaign.

It may be said that Britain favoured the South for reasons of commercial or geopolitical self-interest, and subsequently cast around for an acceptable excuse. If so, it is telling that the most acceptable excuse they could find was in anti-slavery, and that the public ranked it above commercial prosperity and the preservation of British hegemony.

³⁵ *HA*, 14 September 1861 p. 4, 21 September 1861 p. 4.

³⁶ *DG*, 20 September 1861 p. 4; Mark Bennett, ‘Popular Reactions to the American Civil War in the West Riding of Yorkshire’ (unpub. MA thesis, University of Warwick, 2013), pp. 27-8.

³⁷ *HA*, 5 October 1861 p. 4; 30 November 1861 p. 4; *HP*, 14 March 1862; *DG*, 25 October 1861 p. 5.

³⁸ *YH*, 5 October 1861 p. 8; *LI*, 5 October 1861 p. 4, 23 November 1861 p. 4; *BO*, 3 October 1861; *WE*, 5 October 1861 p. 4; *ST*, 5 October 1861 p. 8.

³⁹ *BC*, 16 August 1862 p. 2.

⁴⁰ *HgA*, 26 October 1861.

Alternatively – though we must be cautious in taking evidence at face value – anti-slavery was the lens through which Yorkshire newspapers viewed the conflict, and their allegiances were determined primarily on that basis. Either of these interpretations tends to contradict the belief that anti-slavery no longer dominated the British public mind.

The question which then arises is: if anti-slavery was so dominant in contemporary British attitudes, what effect did Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation have? Revisionism tends to suggest that it shifted views little or even negatively, requiring intervention to prevent 'imminent servile insurrection and ultimate race war.'⁴¹ Conversely, the traditional narrative credits the Emancipation Proclamation with shifting public opinion decisively behind the Union cause: 'a watershed in attitudes'.⁴²

Across the county of Yorkshire, however, its effect fell somewhere in between. There were certainly many newspapers which argued that its goal was to spark a slave rebellion: some even felt it would accomplish this. The Conservative *Halifax Guardian* called it 'a direct and open invocation... to rise and murder their masters', while the Liberal *Sheffield Independent* warned that it risked making 'the South a desert'.⁴³ However, other papers differentiated between the Proclamation's intention and its result, with the *Doncaster Gazette* contrasting Lincoln's object ('a bloody insurrection') with its likely effect ('nothing at all').⁴⁴

Many Yorkshire newspapers looked beyond the Proclamation's immediate purpose to its ulterior meaning. The *Bradford Observer* felt it offered 'to give up the blacks to the tender mercies of their masters' as long as the latter swore fealty to Washington, and the *Wakefield Free Press* saw it as more 'a means of winning back the South to its former allegiance, than intended as a death blow to slavery.'⁴⁵ These were echoes of the kind of reconciliation with slavery that most had earlier condemned. Other papers

⁴¹ Jones, *Union in Peril*, p. 8.

⁴² D.G. Wright, 'Leeds Politics and the American Civil War', *Northern History* vol. 9, no. 1 (1974), p. 118.

⁴³ *HxG*, 18 October 1862 p. 4 (for more slave insurrection, 8 November 1862 p. 4, 22 November 1862 p. 4, 17 January 1863 p. 4); *SI*, 7 October 1862.

⁴⁴ *DG*, 10 October 1862 p. 5; *WJ*, 10 October 1862 p. 2.

⁴⁵ *BO*, 9 October 1862; *WFP*, 11 October 1862 p. 4.

set it in the context of Lincoln's domestic difficulties, with the *Huddersfield Chronicle* acknowledging that 'it was necessary to keep the Abolitionists in the Republican ranks'.⁴⁶ Still more understood it as a foreign policy move to appease Britain: the *Malton Messenger* asked 'Why the antislavery sensation in London just in the nick of time?'⁴⁷ Understanding it as 'a threat to the South, a concession to the Abolition party... a measure of war policy and nothing more,' they withheld their sympathy pending further developments.⁴⁸ After all, such a measure could be withdrawn when no longer useful.

For some newspapers, the Proclamation's favourability grew over time. The *Leeds Mercury* could not initially 'see what effect, for good or for evil, this proclamation can have,' before deciding it 'ought to secure for the Northern arms the friendly wishes of all lovers of human freedom.'⁴⁹ Its neighbour was no less changeable: the *Leeds Times* at first called it 'one of the most miserable State manifestoes ever published', but by early February was praising the North for 'identifying its cause with the destruction of slavery'.⁵⁰ Yet the majority of newspapers were highly sceptical about the Proclamation, and did not see it as a reason to support the North.

This might, on first impressions, be seen as an indication of the weakness of British anti-slavery. Yet the poor reception of the Emancipation Proclamation is in stark contrast to the overwhelming support from across the political spectrum for schemes of domestic emancipation. While the Liberal *Hull Advertiser* suggested Lincoln 'deserves the universal commendation of every friend of human freedom' for his domestic scheme, the *Hull Packet* also praised it – albeit with the muted terms 'would that it had been made earlier'.⁵¹ The *Barnsley Chronicle*, meanwhile, heavily criticised the Emancipation Proclamation – 'a mere political trick... without any real regard being felt for the Negroes in bondage,' 'no doubt to promote a revolt of the slave population' – but also suggested that 'if such a proclamation had been issued previous to the commencement of the war,

⁴⁶ *HC*, 4 October 1862.

⁴⁷ *MM*, 14 February 1863 p. 2.

⁴⁸ *ST*, 11 October 1862 p. 12.

⁴⁹ *LM*, 6 October 1862, 7 October 1862.

⁵⁰ *LT*, 11 October 1862 p. 5, 7 February 1863 p. 4.

⁵¹ *HA*, 29 April 1862 p. 4; *HP*, 19 December 1862.

President Lincoln would have had the sympathy of all liberal-minded men'.⁵² This could be the result of a lack of critical thinking on the part of the *Chronicle*, but is more likely to reflect three underlying beliefs that most contemporary British newspapers shared. They felt firstly that the North could not win the war; secondly, that the only significant gain it offered was the furthering of anti-slavery; and thirdly, that abolition, like any significant change, should be accomplished in an orderly fashion wherever possible.

While the Emancipation Proclamation was not a magic bullet for British non-intervention, neither did it push Britain towards interference. However, this should be unsurprising given the overall paucity of British support for even the mildest forms of intervention. This, of course, excludes the Trent Affair, in which almost every newspaper supported war against the Union if they did not make sufficient reparation. At this time, some newspapers advocated recognition as a war tactic, while others accepted Southern independence as the price of a war they did not want, but would not shrink from.⁵³

Judging when a paper advocated intervention is difficult, as editorials often hedged their bets. The *Tadcaster Post*'s October 1862 announcement that 'it is high time to talk of an armistice and separation' was weakened by the subsequent coda that 'A few weeks more' would prove 'whether we are to have two powerful nations or one weak empire in the west.'⁵⁴ Hints and suggestions that interference might soon be required have not been grouped with actual suggestions that Britain should intervene. Instead, they have been counted separately: the former as 'contemplating,' the latter as 'proposing' intervention. Similarly, hypothetical scenarios – as when the *Doncaster Chronicle* bemoaned Britain's inability to mediate because the Conservatives were in opposition – or calls for action not involving Britain – as when the same paper urged the Emperor of the French to resolve the conflict – have generally been discounted.⁵⁵

The early period following secession but before the Trent Affair saw a number of offers of mediation. Generally, these were pious or friendly, like

⁵² *BC*, 11 October 1862 p. 2.

⁵³ For the former, *SI*, 30 November 1861, 10 February 1862; *DG*, 6 December 1861 p. 4.

⁵⁴ *TP*, 2 October 1862 p. 4.

⁵⁵ *DC*, 16 May 1862 p. 5, 20 June 1862 p. 5.

the *Pontefract Telegraph*'s suggestion that 'the points in dispute are capable of settlement,' and the *Harrogate Advertiser*'s appeal to consanguinity and trade links.⁵⁶ They were also generally short-lived, lasting only a month or so.⁵⁷ The exception was the *Hull Advertiser*, which opened 1861 by hoping that 'some of the representatives of the Powers at Washington will try their hand at mediation' and held this view through the rest of the year.⁵⁸ The first aggressive suggestions that the blockade should be broken came from the advanced Liberal *Leeds Times* in October 1861, as 'Cotton we must have'; however, by November it advocated 'an energetic attempt to do without American cotton'.⁵⁹ Early in the New Year, the *Pontefract Telegraph* and the stable of newspapers which shared its editorials renewed this demand for the blockade to be broken, but gave it up shortly afterwards.⁶⁰

The renewal of the campaigning season in 1862 saw the greatest number of newspapers advocating intervention, though not always for long. 'The recent undoubted success of the Federal arms' in spring 1862 led the *Leeds Times* to renew its call for mediation, but only for a fortnight.⁶¹ The *Beverley Recorder* advocated mediation at the end of June, yet called recognition 'premature' the next week and abandoned mediation in the middle of July.⁶² In July, citing the interests of Lancashire and 'the civilised world,' the *Pontefract Telegraph* supported 'mediation – spontaneous, voluntary, and without and [sic] odious ultimatum,' though specifically as 'a very different thing to intervention.'⁶³ It abandoned this in August, yet revived it in September, and maintained this stance until the Emancipation Proclamation led it to declare that such schemes 'must now, under the new state of things, fall to the ground.'⁶⁴

The most changeable newspaper was perhaps the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*. In March, it had argued that intervention 'would reflect a deep

⁵⁶ *PT*, 4 May 1861 p. 1; *SM*, 11 May 1861 p. 4; *HgA*, 11 May 1861 p. 2.

⁵⁷ *PT*, 15 June 1861 p. 1; *SM*, 22 June 1861 p. 4; *HgA*, 8 June 1861 p. 3.

⁵⁸ *HA*, 19 January 1861 p. 4, 25 May 1861 p. 4, 6 July 1861 p. 4, 9 November 1861 p. 4.

⁵⁹ *LT*, 5 October 1861 p. 5, 2 November 1861 p. 5.

⁶⁰ *PT*, 11 January 1862 p. 1, *CP*, 11 January 1862 p. 1; *PT*, 15 March 1862 p. 1.

⁶¹ *LT*, 17 May 1862 p. 4, 31 May 1862 p. 4.

⁶² *BvR*, 21 June 1862 p. 5, 28 June 1862 p. 4, 19 July 1862 p. 4.

⁶³ *PT*, 5 July 1862 p. 1, 19 July 1862 p. 1: presumably 'intervention' here referenced 'military involvement'.

⁶⁴ *PT*, 23 August 1862 p. 1, 20 September 1861 p. 1, 11 October 1862 p. 1.

stain upon this country'.⁶⁵ In May, however, both sides would 'gladly welcome the intervention of the Western Powers' and 'a peaceable intervention... aided by France' would 'best serve our cotton manufacturers, and the nation at large'.⁶⁶ At the start of June, intervention would do no good; by July, the Confederacy had proved itself worthy of being recognised.⁶⁷ In August, mediation would unite the North behind the war effort; later that month, the paper argued that France and Russia should mediate.⁶⁸ In October, delaying recognition 'betrays a sort of cowardice'; in November, 'we should ourselves be disposed... to wait until the spring'.⁶⁹

Two newspapers were more steadfast in their arguments. The *Yorkshire Gazette* was prompted by the actions of General Butler in New Orleans to call for mediation in June, and continued to urge mediation, recognition, or both until the end of November.⁷⁰ In July the *Wakefield Journal* decided that the Confederacy was 'entitled to be recognised as an independent sovereignty,' which would be both the quickest solution and the best for both sides.⁷¹ This resolve lasted until October, when no intervention (other than armed intervention, which was unthinkable) would do any good.⁷²

Indeed, the autumn of 1862 was to be the peak of newspapers advocating intervention, just as it was to be the high point of cabinet consideration of the topic. The *Halifax Guardian* came round to recognition in September 1862 and 'wise and merciful mediation' in October, but gave these up as futile in November.⁷³ The *Sheffield Independent*, meanwhile, came to support recognition in response to Gladstone before rejecting it

⁶⁵ *SDT*, 10 March 1862 p. 2.

⁶⁶ *SDT*, 2 May 1862 p. 2, 8 May 1862 p. 2.

⁶⁷ *SDT*, 14 June 1862 p. 4, 19 July 1862 p. 5.

⁶⁸ *SDT*, 9 August 1862 p. 4, 20 August 1862 p. 2, 21 August 1862 p. 2.

⁶⁹ *SDT*, 22 October 1862 p. 2, 15 November 1862 p. 4.

⁷⁰ *YG*, 14 June 1862 p. 8, 21 June 1862 p. 8, 26 July 1862 p. 8, 23 August 1862 p. 8, 6 September 1862 p. 8, 27 September 1862 p. 8, 4 October 1862 p. 8, 11 October 1862 p. 8, 22 November 1862 p. 8; Michael T. Smith, 'The Beast Unleashed: Benjamin F. Butler and Conceptions of Masculinity in the Civil War North', *New England Quarterly* vol. 79, no. 2 (June 2006), pp. 248-9.

⁷¹ *WJ*, 25 July 1862 p. 2.

⁷² *WJ*, 24 October 1862 p. 2.

⁷³ *HxG*, 20 September 1862 p. 4, 4 October 1862 p. 4, 11 October 1862 p. 4, 15 November 1862 p. 4.

shortly afterwards.⁷⁴ In total, six newspapers advocated intervention in October, though not all at the same time.

Subsequent instances of such advocacy were far more sporadic, and most previous supporters abandoned the cause. Though the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* recommenced advocating recognition in the summer of 1863, it increasingly began to suggest that the price of such recognition should be Southern emancipation.⁷⁵ The *Halifax Guardian*, meanwhile, claimed ‘an overwhelming majority’, ‘Whig, Tory or Radical,’ for mediation and recognition, but finally abandoned intervention in November 1864.⁷⁶

Newspapers which advocated intervention for the first time tended to be the more minor provincial papers. In early 1863, the *Scarborough Mercury* advocated either recognition or mediation to end ‘this fearful bloodshed’, though it opposed forcible intervention because ‘it is not in the character of an Englishman... to fight a man who is blind’: any request would have to come from the Union.⁷⁷ It subsequently supported recognition in the event of the Union refusing mediation, and maintained this stance into 1864.⁷⁸ The *Pontefract Advertiser* urged ‘members of peace societies, or advocates of legitimate arbitration’ to attempt arbitration in September 1863, but disavowed it in November as ‘honest neutrality is the only honourable course’.⁷⁹ The *Whitby Gazette*, meanwhile, printed a single editorial in favour of ‘European intervention... offered in a friendly manner without menace.’⁸⁰ The fact that only the least important papers were converted to interference in this period suggests the limitations of Confederate diplomacy and the activities of pro-Confederate pressure groups.

Beyond these advocates of mediation was a larger group of newspapers which talked in generalities about mediation, but which never actually committed to endorsing it. Many newspapers agonised over this decision, drawing close

⁷⁴ *SI*, 11 October 1862, 18 October 1862.

⁷⁵ *SDT*, 28 April 1863 p. 5, 13 May 1863 p. 2, 25 June 1863 p. 2, 8 June 1864 p. 2, 1 July 1864 p. 2, 27 January 1865 p. 2.

⁷⁶ *HxG*, 5 September 1863 p. 4, 27 August 1864 p. 4, 10 September 1864 p. 4, 10 December 1864 p. 4.

⁷⁷ *SM*, 3 January 1863 pp. 2-4, 31 January 1863 p. 4, 2 May 1863 p. 4, 16 May 1863 p. 4.

⁷⁸ *SM*, 7 May 1864 p. 4, 28 May 1864 p. 4.

⁷⁹ *PA*, 19 September 1863 p. 2.

⁸⁰ *WG*, 3 January 1862 p. 2.

before backing away – in some cases, with excessive frequency.⁸¹ That these papers flirted with intervention is significant, perhaps, but not so much as the fact that they never actually endorsed it.

There was, however, a solid bloc of predominantly Liberal newspapers into whose heads mediation never appears to have entered. In some cases, such as the *Bradford Review* and *Huddersfield Examiner*, loyalty appears to have been guaranteed by their advanced Liberal stance and a local MP firmly on the side of the Union: W.E. Forster in the first case, E.A. Leatham in the second. In others, a combination of non-intervention, anti-slavery and broad favourability to America were sufficient to preserve their neutrality – the only exception being the *Huddersfield Chronicle*, which saw no reason to join the war because it was so obvious that the South would win its independence.⁸²

Twelve newspapers in total were prepared to contemplate intervention, with a remarkably even split: two Advanced Liberal, four Liberal, four Conservative, and two neutral. A similar split was shown among those which actually proposed intervention: one Advanced Liberal, five Liberal, five Conservative, and two neutral. At the October 1862 peak, six of the thirty-four studied newspapers advocated intervention (two Liberal and four Conservative). However, the relative proportion of partisan affiliations among Yorkshire newspapers meant Conservative papers were more likely to advocate intervention. Of the nine Conservative newspapers, five supported intervention and four more considered it, compared to forty per cent and thirty per cent respectively of the thirteen Liberal newspapers. As such, it can fairly be said that Conservative newspapers were more likely to openly advocate support for the South.

However, some caveats must be applied. Firstly, only forty per cent of newspapers ever advocated any form of intervention: even fewer did so contemporaneously. As such, British intervention must be treated as the

⁸¹ 'something must soon be done to put an end to the conflict', *ECH*, 1 May 1862 p. 4; 'England and France are only waiting for an opportunity to mediate,' *ECH*, 19 June 1862 p. 5; 'the recognition of the South... is only a question of time,' *ECH*, 24 July 1862 p. 5; 'We admire the spirit which prompts the call for... recognition... but at the present juncture... we question its prudence', *ECH*, 14 August 1862 p. 4; 'the perhaps somewhat punctilious forbearance of our government must surely now have reached its limit,' *ECH*, 1 January 1863 p. 5, 'there are but few who contend that the present is a fitting time to acknowledge the Southern Confederacy', *ECH*, 26 March 1863 p. 5.

⁸² *HC*, 25 January 1862, 26 July 1862, 20 September 1862, 6 June 1863.

fringe opinion which it was – a treatment supported by the paucity of parliamentary discussions of the topic.⁸³ Furthermore, the changeability of newspapers – proposing intervention in one issue, and then recanting it in the next – suggests that support for secession was not primarily dependent on the course of events or underlying political attitudes. Instead, it relied on a complex calculus which included the likely reaction of the local readership. It may be no accident that the most changeable newspaper, the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, was a penny daily aimed at working men: perhaps its editor believed its large readership fluctuated sufficiently for such shifts to go unnoticed.⁸⁴

Secondly, neither recognition nor mediation was necessarily framed as a hostile act. In some cases, recognition was seen as a matter of fact, like Britain's earlier recognition of Confederate belligerency. The *Yorkshire Gazette* suggested:

We have not sufficient respect for either side to wish to interfere, but we have a great interest in the application of international law, which requires that every nation that is independent ought to be treated as such. Let us not treat the South as a diplomatic nonentity, and let us offer mediation only when acceptable, and meanwhile protect our commerce from any illegal pretence of blockade, but beyond this none of us would go[.]⁸⁵

It would repeat this language a year later: 'We have no wish to interfere... but, even to compliment the North, we cannot refuse to recognise the plain fact of Southern independence forever.'⁸⁶ It is perhaps telling that even the *Yorkshire Gazette*, whose proprietor James Lancelot Foster was later a member of the Southern Independence Association, found the need to soften and reframe its proposals for intervention. However, these proposals were often coupled with harsh anti-Union language – the October 1862 piece criticised the 'cowardice, division and even treachery' in the Union, argued the war was 'one of revenge, and of private peculation and speculation,' and

⁸³ Campbell, *English Public Opinion*, pp. 163, 168, 173, 176.

⁸⁴ *SDT*, 5 September 1861, p. 2; 24 September 1861, p. 2.

⁸⁵ *YG*, 4 October 1862 p. 8.

⁸⁶ *YG*, 31 October 1863 p. 8.

complained of their tendency ‘to hang and plunder private citizens, and treat their wives and daughters as prostitutes’.⁸⁷

The implications of this particular difference, between readiness to critique American democracy and unwillingness to intervene, even via low-risk and hands-off diplomatic methods, will be considered in the two upcoming chapters. However, it suggests that a stark distinction should be drawn between language and action: that there remained a significant step between criticising the Union or praising the Confederacy, and advocating that Britain should do something other than look on.

The conclusions drawn from Yorkshire newspaper opinion contradict several key aspects of the traditionalist case that the primary determinant of British loyalties in the conflict was attitudes towards reform. Firstly, anti-slavery was the most ubiquitous factor across the political spectrum when considering the conflict: the issue was not that Britain no longer opposed slavery, but that the Union was insufficiently anti-slavery to excite British sympathy. Secondly, support for intervention was more of a fringe opinion than scepticism about reform. Furthermore, the hesitant and faltering tone characterising most proposals for intervention suggests that these were speculative and event-driven rather than rooted in fundamental ideological principles. But how far do these conclusions also apply to the potential Parliamentary supporters of intervention?

MPs’ public speech

As the war was drawing to a close, Professor Henry Fawcett told a non-electors’ demonstration in Bradford that 95 per cent of the ‘governing classes sincerely sympathised with the Southern Confederacy (Hear, hear, and cries of “Shame”)⁸⁸ Though it is generally suggested that most MPs supported the South, the MPs of Yorkshire by no means bore out this calculation.⁸⁹ Of those

⁸⁷ YG, 4 October 1862 p. 8.

⁸⁸ BO, 27 April 1865; Lawrence Goldman, ed., *The Blind Victorian: Henry Fawcett and British Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 11.

⁸⁹ Timothy S. Good, ‘The British Parliament and the American Civil War’ (unpub. MA thesis, Durham University, 1993), p. 1

MPs who spoke openly about the conflict, the overwhelming majority backed the government's stance of neutrality. This should perhaps be unsurprising, given the predominantly Liberal composition of the county's representation. Twelve of the fourteen who spoke in favour of neutrality were Liberal MPs, including the secretary of state for India Sir Charles Wood and the attorney general Sir Roundell Palmer – though cabinet membership did not prevent Gladstone breaking ranks to talk favourably about intervention.⁹⁰ One Conservative who praised neutrality, Basil Woodd of Knaresborough, did so at the 1865 election in the context of supporting non-intervention in Denmark; the second, his running-mate Thomas Collins, urged it in mid-1863.⁹¹

The other Liberal MPs who openly praised neutrality included significant future names such as W.E. Forster and H.C.E. Childers, as well as prominent backbench Liberals Robert Monckton Milnes and George Hadfield, and more minor figures like Harry Stephenson Thompson of Whitby and John Greenwood of Ripon.⁹² The presence of Radicals like Edward Baines, E.A. Leatham, James Stansfeld, and Frank Crossley also fits the traditional narrative that it was the working class and Radicals who were foremost in preventing Britain from intervening in the conflict.⁹³

However, certain reservations should be noted. For a start, the radical Dissenter George Hadfield appears to have been very close to joining his Sheffield colleague John Arthur Roebuck in supporting the Confederacy. In February 1862, he 'felt sure that if America were left to herself the disasters which at present afflicted her would work their own cure'.⁹⁴ Yet in August, at a Sheffield civic occasion attended by Lord Palmerston, which Roebuck had used to plead with the premier to recognise the Confederacy, Hadfield commented that 'the sentiments just expressed deserve the most serious consideration'. He followed this up with the hope 'that some expression of opinion will shortly be given by the whole country, which will have some

⁹⁰ *HxG*, 17 January 1863 p. 6; *YH*, 24 October 1863 p. 9.

⁹¹ *HgA*, 1 July 1865 p. 3; *TP* 29 June 1865 p. 4; *LI*, 11 April 1863 p. 7.

⁹² *HC Debs* 168, c.534, 18 July 1862; *WE*, 22 November 1862 p. 8; *HC Debs* 165, c.1201, 7 March 1862; *SI*, 5 September 1862; *WG*, 29 March 1862 p. 4; *YH*, 24 October 1863 p. 3

⁹³ *LM*, 4 February 1863; *WE*, 22 November 1862 p. 8; *HxG* 18 June 1864 p. 7; *HxG* 19 December 1863 p. 3.

⁹⁴ *HC Debs* 165, cc.76-77, 6 February 1862

effect upon the present war.’⁹⁵ This uncertainty did not last long, as the next month Hadfield announced his support for ‘that policy which Lord Russell and the Government of Lord Palmerston are now carrying out – (Hear, hear) – non-interference, non-intervention, [and] good-will to America’.⁹⁶ However, it demonstrates that some MPs who would appear natural supporters of the Union were actually tempted to promote intervention. This presumably applied not just to Hadfield, who spoke, but to others who remained silent.

Furthermore, it should be noted that not all of those who endorsed neutrality were wholehearted Union supporters. The Liberal MP Harry Stephenson Thompson had ‘aforetime laboured in the anti-slavery cause,’ and was in correspondence with Garrison.⁹⁷ However, despite supporting non-intervention, he was not shy of pointing out the fact that the war stemmed in part from the Union’s ‘unchristian spirit of revenge’, caused by ‘want of a closer adherence to... the Bible.’⁹⁸

Consideration of those who supported intervention does more to weaken this automatic connection between domestic reform and Union support, as well as ‘governing class’ Confederate support. Only eight MPs advocated or contemplated intervention, the foremost of whom was the Utilitarian John Arthur Roebuck of Sheffield, who moved for intervention in the Commons in mid-1863.⁹⁹ Three other MPs who could be described as Liberal joined him. At a Lancashire distress meeting in Malton, Charles Wentworth-Fitzwilliam felt there was ‘little doubt’ recognition would come ‘at some future time’.¹⁰⁰ At a meeting of the South Myton Reform Association, James Clay of Hull was ‘entirely content to trust the present government (applause), or any other government’ to take ‘the earliest opportunity of offering any mediation which can afford a reasonable chance of restoring peace to that wretched country (Hear, hear)’.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ *SI*, 9 August 1862.

⁹⁶ *SI*, 5 September 1862.

⁹⁷ *WG*, 29 March 1862 p. 4.

⁹⁸ *WG*, 13 September 1862 p. 4.

⁹⁹ *HC Debs* 171, cc.1771-841, 30 June 1863; *HC Debs* 172, cc.661-73, 13 July 1863

¹⁰⁰ *YH*, 8 November 1862 p. 9; *MM*, 8 November 1862 p. 2.

¹⁰¹ *HP*, 26 September 1862.

Joshua Westhead, MP for York, had argued in February 1861 that everybody ‘did hope most heartily that slavery would receive a fatal blow in this land (hear, hear).’¹⁰² By February 1862, however, Westhead was prepared to argue that ‘The Southern States had interests quite irrespective of the slave question, which might induce them to say to the North, “We wish to separate from you.”’¹⁰³ Though non-interference was ‘the sound policy (Applause),’ if Britain was ‘called on to interfere... we shall interfere as friends, and in the best interests of humanity (Applause)’. By October, ‘We should be glad to throw oil on the troubled waters. God grant that the statesmen of Europe might have wisdom to act’; in January 1863, ‘possibly it might be their duty, ere long, to tender their best offices as mediators’.¹⁰⁴

There were also four Conservative MPs who supported or considered intervention, though none as vociferously as Roebuck. In October 1862, John Charles Dalrymple Hay, MP for Wakefield, stated that ‘if to be successful in a long war against a powerful neighbour is the proof of nationality, then is the South deserving of recognition’; he restated this in October 1863, concurring with Gladstone ‘that the Confederate states have earned their independence.’¹⁰⁵ Colonel John George Smyth, MP for York but residing at Heath Hall in Wakefield, also argued for mediation – though ‘from France, whose motive could not be suspected, [rather] than from us, whose every word was misconstrued (Applause).’¹⁰⁶ The two representatives for the North Riding also advocated intervention, though at different stages. In early 1863 William Morritt had announced his willingness to support a motion for recognition of the Confederacy, while William Duncombe spoke in the House of Commons in early 1864 to say

More than a year ago the Chancellor of the Exchequer said that the Southern States had “made themselves a nation.”... he desired to ask how long this was to continue before we should recognize their independence? He hoped that the Government would lose no

¹⁰² *YH*, 2 February 1861 p. 5.

¹⁰³ *YH*, 1 February 1862 p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ *YH*, 18 October 1862 p. 7, 17 January 1863 p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ *WE*, 25 October 1863; 17 October 1863.

¹⁰⁶ *YG*, 31 January 1863 p. 10.

opportunity of offering their friendly advice in conjunction with that of other Powers¹⁰⁷

To these four should also be added Admiral Arthur Duncombe, Conservative MP for the East Riding, who joined the Southern Independence Association but apparently never publicly campaigned for intervention.¹⁰⁸

As forty-six per cent of the county's Conservative MPs considered intervention, but only fifteen per cent of Liberals, this appears to be further evidence for the suggestion that there was a link between those who opposed reform and those who supported the Confederacy. However, Conservative support for intervention seems to have been relatively soft. Morrill, for instance, said he wished 'it depended on the House of Commons to make them at peace and independent of each other', and would 'most certainly' support recognition there.¹⁰⁹ However, he subsequently failed to speak in support of Roebuck's motion in the summer, never spoke on America in the House, and denied it was ever his intention to vote for Lindsay's mediation motion in the summer of 1864.¹¹⁰ This suggests that the traditional picture overstates the importance to Conservatives of the survival of the Confederacy and the humiliation of the Union.

It should also be noted that the Liberal MPs who endorsed or considered intervention were not generally recalcitrant Whigs or Liberal-Conservative Palmerstonians waiting for an opportunity to defect. Westhead believed that the 1859 election demonstrated 'the people of York were entitled to a large extension of the franchise (Applause),' and reiterated his commitment to enfranchising 'those of my fellow countrymen whose intelligence and loyalty to our institutions entitle them to a just share of political power' in his 1865 election address.¹¹¹ Clay was a radical, who had condemned the 'overgrown aristocracy' at the 1859 election and proposed an educational franchise which 'a working man of ordinary intelligence might

¹⁰⁷ *YG*, 31 January 1863 p. 8; *HC Debs* 173, cc.211-2, 5 February 1864.

¹⁰⁸ John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester, Wilson Anti-Slavery Collection, 'List containing name of President, Vice-Presidents and General Committee members' (n.d.)

¹⁰⁹ *YG*, 31 January 1863 p. 3.

¹¹⁰ *YH*, 11 June 1864 p. 5.

¹¹¹ *YH*, 2 February 1861 p. 5, 1 July 1865 p. 6.

master by the sacrifice of his leisure hour at night for, say, six months'.¹¹² Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, too, advocated an educational test, and the enfranchisement of lodgers as well as property owners.¹¹³ Even Roebuck professed to 'have endeavoured to the best of my ability to give you power in the state'.¹¹⁴

If the supporters of intervention are surprising, there are also some notable absences from the list. Contemporary views of democracy will be addressed later, but in this diplomatic context it is important to note that some of the most prominent sceptics about democracy endorsed non-intervention. Thomas Collins of Knaresborough, for instance, 'denied the right of a number of people whose stake in the country was next to nothing, to put their hands into the pockets of the wealthy landowners'.¹¹⁵ He also criticised John Bright and the tendency 'to Americanise the institutions of this country'.¹¹⁶ However, he was also 'happy to say that the conduct of the government had in North America been that of non-interference... The longer we could keep out... the better it would be for us whether the interference was moral or material. (Hear, hear)'.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Major Henry Edwards of Beverley was highly critical of the Union, contrasting its history – 'held up to us, as the paragon of good government, for our imitation' – with its current state – 'Taxation of the heaviest kind... personal liberty subjected to martial law, and the detestable tyranny of provost marshals'.¹¹⁸ Yet this criticism did not spill over into support for interference, which was 'too wide a field to enter upon'.¹¹⁹

On the Liberal side, Sir John Ramsden is often cited as one of the main examples of British apathy towards the Union's struggle. His comment in the 1861 reform debate about 'the bursting of that great Republican bubble... so often held up to us as the model on which to recast our own English Constitution' has been taken as an example of the approach of British

¹¹² *HP*, 15 April 1859, 7 July 1865.

¹¹³ *MM*, 15 July 1865 p. 2.

¹¹⁴ *SDT*, 7 July 1865 p. 3.

¹¹⁵ *HgA*, 1 July 1865 p. 3.

¹¹⁶ *YH*, 15 July 1865 p. 5; *LM* 14 July 1865.

¹¹⁷ *LI*, 11 April 1863 p. 7.

¹¹⁸ *YH*, 15 November 1862 p. 7.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Whigs towards the conflict.¹²⁰ However, Ramsden was adamant that Britain should avoid interference. Even speaking at Sheffield, the heart of Confederate activism, Ramsden expressed his belief that ‘any intervention on our part would but serve to embitter the strife – (Cheers)’.¹²¹

The views of the county’s MPs bear out the conclusions drawn with respect to its newspapers: there was no automatic connection between support for reform and support for the Union, and there was a greater distance than has traditionally been portrayed between distaste for democracy, or belief that the war was unwinnable, and support for British intervention. However, the Liberal party was not shy of claiming at the 1865 election that their opponents would have plunged them into war with America. If, as has been suggested, the Conservative party leadership shied away from the South in the hope of using the war ‘for their own political benefit,’ they had little success in Yorkshire.¹²² In constituencies from Richmond to Scarborough, Liberal candidates and newspapers made the same accusation: ‘the opposition party in this country would have involved us in a war with America.’¹²³ These accusations were particularly frequent against MPs who had been most outspoken on the issue: in the North Riding, where both sitting Conservatives had supported intervention, the Liberal challenger Frederick Millbank spoke repeatedly of ‘the wars which the Conservatives would have led us into in America, in Austria, in Prussia, and France’.¹²⁴ In Wakefield, Sir John Hay was accused personally on the hustings of supporting war with America.¹²⁵

However, there are a number of indications that this was as much a party move as a matter of fact. When Millbank had contested the 1862 North Riding election in the immediate aftermath of the Trent Affair, his seconder had praised the way that the Liberal government had ‘jumped down Brother

¹²⁰ *HC Debs* 163, c.134, 27 May 1861. For Ramsden’s use, Frances Clarke, “‘Let All Nations See’: Civil War Nationalism and the Memorialization of Wartime Voluntarism”, *Civil War History* vol. 52, no. 1 (March 2006), p. 71; for works which claim him as a Conservative, Jones, *Union in Peril*, p. 48.

¹²¹ *SI*, 5 September 1862.

¹²² Wilbur Devereux Jones, ‘The British Conservatives and the American Civil War’, *American Historical Review* vol. 58, no. 3 (April 1953), p. 542.

¹²³ *Scarborough Gazette*, 13 July 1865 p. 3; see also Sir Roundell Palmer at Richmond in *YH*, 15 July 1865 p. 5.

¹²⁴ *YH* 8 July 1865 p. 7; see also 1 July 1865 p. 5, 8 July 1865 p. 7, 22 July 1865 p. 10.

¹²⁵ *WE*, 15 July 1865 p. 2.

Jonathan's throat with their spurs on.'¹²⁶ In February 1862, the Wakefield Liberals were already accusing Sir John Hay and the Conservatives of being 'anxious to embroil us with our American brethren of the Northern States, and to ally us with the slave-holders of the South'; in 1865, one of the Liberals who shouted at Hay that he wanted war with America had previously confessed his belief that the war was 'almost purposeless... [with] nothing in it to attract the sympathies of mankind'.¹²⁷ Indeed, some of those who accused the Conservatives of a plan to intervene had themselves considered or spoken in favour of intervention. The *Leeds Times*, Joshua Westhead at York, and Charles Wentworth-Fitzwilliam at Malton all criticised the Conservatives for abandoning the neutrality they themselves had expected to fall by the wayside.¹²⁸ We should, therefore, seek evidence that Conservatives supported the Confederates from their own words and not those of their opponents.

Moreover, the claim that Confederate activism was a prerogative of the governing classes may be dubious. Roebuck persuaded a 10,000-strong meeting in Paradise Square to back his pro-intervention stance; in June 1864, William Duncombe presented a petition 'from the inhabitants of Arkengarthdale, in favour of the recognition of the Confederate States'; and William Morritt's announcement that he was willing to recognise the Confederacy received either applause or 'applause and hisses'.¹²⁹ As such, we should consider how far we can detect popular sympathy on either side of the conflict, and its correlation with both domestic politics and other factors.

Popular participation

If the ultimate expression of British sympathy for either side was to take part in the conflict, then Yorkshire appears to have been on the side of the Union. The overwhelming majority of communications printed in newspapers across the county came from or referred to Union soldiers, and even a small sample

¹²⁶ *YH*, 22 March 1862 p. 11.

¹²⁷ *WE*, 15 February 1862 p. 4, 1 March 1862 p. 5; *WFP*, 22 February 1862 p. 2; *WE*, 6 September 1862, p. 6.

¹²⁸ *LT*, 24 June 1865 p. 5; *YH*, 8 July 1865 p. 10; *MM*, 15 July 1865 p. 2.

¹²⁹ *SI*, 30 May 1863; *YG*, 18 June 1864 p. 3; *MM*, 7 February 1863 p. 2, *YG*, 31 January 1863 p. 8.

of these communications illustrates the scope of such participation. From the North Riding, George Nettleton, formerly of Scarborough, was hit on the head by a shell at Antietam and killed at Fredericksburg with the 5th New Hampshire.¹³⁰ From the East Riding, John Coverdale, a grandson of a licensed victualler from Hull, was killed at Cedar Mountain with the 5th Ohio.¹³¹ The West Riding, meanwhile, as the most populous district in the county, saw a large number of participants, from Joseph Harrop, killed at Bull Run with the 1st Rhode Island, to Edwin Bulmer, killed in North Carolina with the 129th Illinois.¹³² Other surviving evidence is similarly skewed towards the Union, from the prisoner of war certificate of John Pearson of the 18th Wisconsin, to the presence of Charles Wood in Wakefield Asylum due to epilepsy developed in Libby Prison.¹³³

Crucially, barely any Confederate soldiers featured in the Yorkshire press. James Weadley, formerly of the Bull and Sun Inn at Bridlington, was killed at Shiloh with the 2nd Tennessee Infantry.¹³⁴ When Lt. Col. Thomas Beaumont, a relative of a Huddersfield Tory, was killed at the head of the 14th Tennessee, the local paper printed his obituary.¹³⁵ Some ex-Confederates also made their way through Yorkshire, either to settle like Joseph Taylor of the West Riding Constabulary (late 5th Louisiana), or to pass through like Louis Poletti of Switzerland.¹³⁶ However, the weight of communications was always overwhelmingly on the side of the Union.

There are multiple reasons for this imbalance. Although some of the disparity resulted from the relative difficulty of communicating with the blockaded South, the contemporary anxiety for news from the South should have counteracted that. The more significant factor is that there were more

¹³⁰ *MM*, 18 October 1862 p. 3; *YG*, 17 January 1863 p. 4; 'Corp George Nettleton,' *Antietam on the Web* (http://antietam.aotw.org/officers.php?officer_id=12548, accessed 12 October 2016).

¹³¹ *HP*, 3 October 1862.

¹³² *WE*, 8 July 1865 p. 2; Augustus Woodbury, *A narrative of the campaign of the First Rhode Island Regiment in the spring and summer of 1861* (Providence, 1862), p. 167; *LT*, 1 July 1865 p. 8.

¹³³ WYAS Kirklees, KC918 (Prisoner of War certificate); WYAS Halifax, FW 59/30/1 (Letter to Mr Emmet of Halifax).

¹³⁴ *YG*, 11 October 1862 p. 9; ERA, DDX1408/5/3 (File of research notes).

¹³⁵ *HC*, 19 December 1863; WYAS Kirklees, DD/BE (Letters from America to the Beaumont family).

¹³⁶ SA, WHM461 (Joseph Taylor to Lord Wharnccliffe, 5 January 1865); *LM*, 16 January 1865; *LM*, 8 July 1864.

Yorkshire emigrants in the North than the South, because it offered greater economic opportunities. Indeed, the number of Yorkshire emigrants who served alongside family, friends or neighbours reinforces this impression. Thomas Pitchforth, formerly of Salthebble, joined the 7th Iowa with his wife's cousin Feargus Hanson, formerly of Elland; William Baxendale of the 42nd New York wrote to his brother that 'there is a young man in my regiment a native of Halifax named Thos. Ramsden, who knows you'; Mrs Bowman of the Salutation Inn, South Fencote, had one son killed and a second wounded in the conflict.¹³⁷

It should, however, be noted that Union soldiers did not always speak out loudly in support of the war, either domestically or internationally.¹³⁸ Letters to friends and relations in Yorkshire were often sceptical or concerned about what was going on, particularly in the early years when the Union struggled to achieve military success.¹³⁹ Furthermore, some of the letters received in Yorkshire reflected a broader Northern belief that Britain was betraying them through its Confederate sympathy. A letter from George Baildon to his brother and sister, on his return from serving with the Pennsylvania militia during the Gettysburg Campaign, was hardly designed to bring the two sides closer together. He called England 'the Grate Humbug,' blamed the New York Draft Riots on 'lump heads... just come over from the old sod' and encouraged Britain, if it was willing to intervene, to 'pile in, and then you will pile out again'.¹⁴⁰ The British desire to see the conflict brought to an end was influenced by personal ties towards the combatants, and the sense that the Union was by no means a natural friend of Britain may have been enhanced by personal as well as public and official statements. As the *Tadcaster Post* argued, Southern sympathies could be 'more apparent than real... the reaction of the antipathy which Northern insult and brag have engendered.'¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ *HxG*, 14 December 1861 p. 4, 28 February 1863 p. 5; *YG*, 22 February 1862 p. 4

¹³⁸ Jennifer L. Weber, 'The Divided States of America: Dissent in the North during the Civil War' (unpub. PhD thesis, Princeton University, 2003), pp. 63, 75, 85-6, 89-91, 100-102.

¹³⁹ Bennett, 'Popular Reactions', pp. 109-111.

¹⁴⁰ WYAS Kirklees, KC312/2/1 (George Baildon to his brother and sister, 23 August 1863); Samuel P. Bates, *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-5* vol. 5 (Harrisburg, 1869) p. 1326; William Allen Blair, "A Source of Amusement": Pennsylvania versus Lee, 1863', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* vol. 115, no. 3 (July 1991), pp. 319-38.

¹⁴¹ *TP*, 22 January 1863 p. 4.

The only sizeable contingent of Yorkshire Confederates was in the maritime sphere. Running the blockade of the Southern coast, to bring weapons and rare commodities in and cotton out, was particularly attractive along the Yorkshire coast. Whitby newspapers reported multiple voyages by Captain Pickernell, of the *Flora* and the *Mary Ann*, and George Page, of the *Old Dominion*.¹⁴² The *Southwick*, lying at anchor in Hull's Queen's Dock, hoisted the Confederate flag to celebrate a successful voyage.¹⁴³

The most notable occasion of blockade running, if not the most profitable, was Zachariah C. Pearson of Hull. He had risen from cabin boy to owner of a minor shipping line, but at the opening of the American Civil War found himself overextended thanks to the credit-based purchase of a rival's ships.¹⁴⁴ For Pearson, the logical response was to start blockade running; however, he had a string of vessels captured and condemned despite appeals to the Supreme Court.¹⁴⁵ Compounding earlier commercial problems, such as the loss of ships in the Baltic trade, this resulted in bankruptcy.¹⁴⁶ Pearson's motives are unclear: at least one of the newspapers saw his activities as a philanthropic measure, on behalf of 'the spinners in our Hull and Kingston cotton mills.'¹⁴⁷ Hull itself suffered from the effects of the blockade, with over a thousand people out of work and two cotton mills closed: at one stage, 'some hundreds of unemployed working men' paraded 'through the principal streets, carrying flags and banners'.¹⁴⁸ At the bankruptcy proceedings, however, Pearson himself admitted the Federal authorities 'knew I was a sincere sympathiser with the Confederates' and Pearson's lawyer referenced his personal financial position.¹⁴⁹ Pearson was considered by some of his

¹⁴² *WG*, 28 March 1863 p. 4, 16 May 1863 p. 4, 24 October 1863 p. 4, 17 September 1864 p. 4.

¹⁴³ *YG*, 2 November 1861 p. 4; *HP*, 26 September 1862.

¹⁴⁴ Marian Shaw, 'Zachariah Pearson: Philanthropist, Victim or Swindler?', *East Yorkshire Historian* vol. 9 (2008), pp. 9-10, 16.

¹⁴⁵ *HP*, 3 January 1862 for the *Empress*; 6 June 1862 for the *Circassian*; 25 July 1862 for the *Modern Greece*; 18 July 1862 for his appeal; 1 August 1862 for the *Stettin*; 26 September 1862 for his vessels awaiting prize court.

¹⁴⁶ *HP*, 16 August 1861 for the foundering of a schooner; 18 October 1861 for the *Patras* running ashore; 5 September 1862 for suspension; 29 January 1864 for claims of selling Armstrong guns.

¹⁴⁷ *HA*, 25 June 1862 p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ *HA*, 28 December 1861 p. 4, 5 March 1862 p. 2, 2 July 1862 p. 2; *HP*, 30 August 1861, 31 January 1862, 21 February 1862, 10 October 1862.

¹⁴⁹ *HP*, 18 March 1864, 22 January 1864

fellow townsmen to be ‘the greatest kite-flyer we ever had’.¹⁵⁰ However, other merchants in Hull were also prepared to deal with the South.¹⁵¹

The second significant facet of the Confederate maritime war effort was the use of commerce raiders to attack Union merchant ships, and in this the Yorkshire coast also played its part. Some of these participants sought public recognition by writing to local papers, such as a sailor of the Confederate cruiser *Rappahannock* and the son of ‘a professional gentleman in Hull’ who sailed with the Confederate commerce raider *Alabama*.¹⁵² Others, less literate or less publicity-seeking, limited themselves to a local reputation – like John Tallentine, who returned to a fishing career in Bridlington claiming to have served aboard the *Alabama*.¹⁵³ The fact that the brother of a Hull butcher was accused of decoying men aboard the *Rappahannock* suggests that the prospect of Confederate service was not universally popular.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, men certainly served in the Confederate navy, though in much smaller numbers than in the Union army and (despite the difficulty of quantification) probably in similar numbers to the Union navy.¹⁵⁵

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this enlistment is that the numbers serving in the Confederate cause bore little relation to the pattern of Confederate activism. As has been seen above, the bulk of identifiable Confederate recruits came from the Yorkshire coast. However, the hope of the *Hull Advertiser* that Hull, as ‘a great British port,’ would take the lead in campaigning for recognition was unfulfilled. The total number of Southern Independence Association (SIA) activists in the East and North Ridings, five, was as many as in the growing but still minor West Riding town of Doncaster. Moreover, the SIA itself seems to have seen better prospects in

¹⁵⁰ J.D. Hicks, ed., *The Journal of Joseph Robinson Pease, 1822-1865* (Driffield, 2000), p. 243 (18 August 1862).

¹⁵¹ *HP*, 14 March 1862 for the seizure of Messrs. Bayley and Leetham’s *Labuan* at Matamoros, later declared to be illegal (6 June 1862); 9 August 1862 for the *Hero* and *Ladona*; 21 August 1863 for the case of a Hull merchant tricked into breaching the blockade; 20 November 1863 for the *Hero*.

¹⁵² *ECH*, 21 July 1864 p. 3; *HA*, 24 June 1863 p. 2. The latter was Geoffrey Fullham, the ship’s boarding officer: *HP*, 24 June 1864; Dean B. Mahin, *The blessed place of freedom: Europeans in civil war America* (Washington, 2002), p. 157.

¹⁵³ ERA, DDX1408/5/3 (File of research notes).

¹⁵⁴ *HP*, 12 August 1864.

¹⁵⁵ For Yorkshiremen serving in the Union navy, *BR*, 25 February 1864 p. 3, *YG*, 21 December 1861 p. 9, *WG*, 25 July 1863 p. 4.

Sheffield, Halifax and Bradford than in the more distant reaches of Yorkshire.¹⁵⁶ This may be because those towns held more political influence, but it seems hard to imagine that the SIA would have passed up the opportunity to hold a successful meeting in a town like Hull, the third most significant port in the country, if it could have done so.¹⁵⁷ The failure of an attempt by two Aldermen to have the Town Council petition the Queen to bring the war to a close also suggests that support was limited.¹⁵⁸

As such, it would seem likely that we can disassociate at least some pro-Confederate activity in Britain from a deeper and more meaningful support for Confederate independence. The fact that Liverpool was both the centre of blockade running activity and a hub of Confederate activism may have presented an incorrect picture of the links between the two.¹⁵⁹ Elsewhere, the element of sympathy behind blockade running seems to have been outweighed by opportunism. We may assume that this motive also applied to those serving aboard Confederate commerce raiders.

If the strength of Confederate sympathy was not strongly correlated to the numbers serving in the wars, it is also important to note that it seems to have been disassociated from the strength of Conservatism in the county. The West Riding was the heartland of Liberalism, with 90 per cent of its MPs in 1865 belonging to the party; the North Riding was marginally less strong, with 70 per cent Liberal MPs in 1865; the East Riding was the only area in which Conservatives held a majority, holding 83 per cent of the seats. However, it was the West Riding which was disproportionately represented among Confederate activists: with 74 per cent of the population, it had 86 per cent of Southern Independence Association (SIA) members, whereas the North and East Ridings with twelve per cent of the population each had two and three per cent of the activists respectively.¹⁶⁰ The most disproportionate

¹⁵⁶ SA, WHM460, letters 1, 2 and 4 (James Spence to Lord Wharnccliffe).

¹⁵⁷ Peter G. Crawford, 'The Impact of the Civil War on Hull, 1861-5', *Journal of Regional and Local Studies* vol. 4, no. 1 (Spring 1984), p. 35.

¹⁵⁸ *HP*, 4 July 1862.

¹⁵⁹ Blakett, *Divided Hearts*, pp. 62-4, 99.

¹⁶⁰ John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester, Wilson Anti-Slavery Collection, 'List containing name of President, Vice-Presidents and General Committee members,' n.d. [though after November 1863, when Rev. John Page Hopps moved from Sheffield to Dukinfield: *SI*, 26 November 1863, p. 3]

was the city of York, historically disassociated from the Ridings, which had two per cent of the population but nine per cent of activists: it returned one MP from each party. The disparity is even greater when we consider pro-Confederate meetings, all of which were concentrated in the West Riding. This suggests that the link between Confederate sympathy and Conservatism was by no means an automatic one.

If it was Conservative mistrust of democracy which motivated British support for the Confederacy, then it is among the ranks of the SIA that we should expect to see the most staunch anti-democrats and opponents of reform. Of its ninety-three Yorkshire members, thirty-two have left sufficient evidence for their political viewpoints to be categorised with an appropriate degree of confidence: twenty were Conservative, and twelve were varying degrees of Liberal. However, the implications of this statistic depend largely on whether the observer accepts the fundamental principle that Conservatives supported the South. If so, the most significant fact is that the SIA had a majority of Conservative members in a county whose representation was overwhelmingly Liberal. However, those prepared to test this principle a little more would highlight that representation under simple majoritarian electoral systems is not always an accurate reflection of the true political makeup of an area, particularly among the elites from which the SIA's membership was drawn.¹⁶¹ If so, and if the political balance among the target population was closer to even, then the statistical significance of the Conservative majority decreases.

Looking into the background of individual members helps to clarify these broad classifications. Certainly, Conservatives like James Robinson Pease fitted all the stereotypes of the typical Confederate supporter. He felt that Catholic emancipation meant 'Goodbye to England's glory,' Free Trade was 'a further carrying out of the Democratic Infidel Spirit of the Reform Bill,' and America was filled with 'intense hatred and jealousy of Old England'.¹⁶² He also chaired Conservative committees at the 1859 election, viewing the contest of that year as a question of 'Americanising or

¹⁶¹ Bennett, 'Confederate Supporters', p. 314.

¹⁶² Hicks, *Journal of Joseph Robinson Pease*, p. 48 (11 March 1829), p. 146 (11 December 1845), p. 154 (2 August 1846).

revolutionising England'.¹⁶³ However, other members of the SIA identified as Conservatives were much less active in the party. Charles Winn, for instance, had contested Beverley in the Conservative interest in 1832, when he had felt it necessary to announce that he held 'slavery *in every form...* in the utmost abhorrence'.¹⁶⁴ The evidence for the Conservative leanings of Reverend Abraham Smith, meanwhile, comes from a single comment in a letter to Sir John Ramsden, when Smith was angrily disclaiming Sir John's imputation that he was soliciting a bribe to vote Liberal.¹⁶⁵

It is relatively easy to identify an individual with a party; dramatically less so, except in the cases of the very vocal, to determine their political beliefs. Many of the Conservatives who did talk about their political sentiments disclaimed what might be termed radical American principles: for instance, John Swann hoped 'the North Riding will never return an advocate of... universal suffrage and vote by ballot.'¹⁶⁶ However, because reform was also Conservative party policy in this period, Swann had earlier argued for 'a good reform bill... that would satisfy all classes' in opposition to 'Bright and universal suffrage.'¹⁶⁷ Where exactly his views lay are unclear, but this should act as a reminder that Conservatives were not necessarily opponents of reform – a factor which will be addressed, along with Liberal attitudes towards 'democratisation,' in the next chapter.

That Confederate support was more multipolar than the mere question of extending the franchise may be seen in the backgrounds of the SIA's non-Conservative members. Rev. Canon Trevor, for instance, has not been grouped as a Liberal because he lacked institutional affiliation to the party: however, he proclaimed himself a supporter of Gladstone and universal suffrage in 1864.¹⁶⁸ His first involvement with anything that might be considered Confederate activism was when he moved an amendment at a meeting of the Union and Emancipation Society (UES) suggesting that the Union was insincere on abolition, and that 'a separation between the North

¹⁶³ *HP*, 22 April 1859, 6 May 1859.

¹⁶⁴ ERA, DDX1290/13/66 (18 August 1832, 22 September 1832).

¹⁶⁵ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Rev. Abraham Smith to Sir John Ramsden, 7 May 1859; Ramsden to Smith, 16 May 1859).

¹⁶⁶ *YG*, 22 July 1865 p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ *YG*, 7 May 1859 p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ *YH*, 11 June 1864 p. 10.

and South would prove a great step towards the freedom of the slave'.¹⁶⁹ Whether his rough handling by Northern supporters pushed him further into Confederate activism is unclear, though his Huddersfield counterpart Thomas Heelis Broadbent joined the SIA after being bodily thrown out of a UES meeting.

If Conservative members of the SIA were on the fringes of their party, the Liberals were fewer in number but more integral to Yorkshire politics. This seems to have been particularly the case in the county's rural areas. Major Thomas Elwon of Redcar, for instance, acted on the Liberal committee for the North Riding in 1865.¹⁷⁰ George Sergeantson of Bedale played a key role in both the North Riding and West Riding registration associations.¹⁷¹ Matthew Wilson of Eshton Hall of Gargrave, meanwhile, was a former Liberal MP for Clitheroe who acted in the West Riding's Northern division.¹⁷²

The traditional understanding of the effect of the war is that it brokered an alliance between pro-Union radicals and the mainstream of the party. This will be considered in more detail in the following chapter: however, the Liberal members of the SIA suggest that it was the ability to forget allegiances that had been held during the American Civil War that was critical. Far from being ostracised by a radicalising Liberal party, these former SIA members were welcomed back. Major Elwon was with the Liberal candidate at the declaration of the North Riding poll in 1868, and Sergeantson stepped down as the chairman of the North Riding Liberal Registration Association in the same year after 'a long life in promoting Liberal principles'.¹⁷³

It was Matthew Wilson who would have the most active post-American Civil War career, however. In 1866 he supported the Liberal reform bill; he chaired the Northern West Riding committee in 1868 and 1872; in the latter year he was proposed as a candidate for the Riding, almost beating out

¹⁶⁹ *YH*, 28 February 1863 p. 10; see also 12 December 1863 p. 4 for the letter from 'A Lover of Consistency'.

¹⁷⁰ *LM*, 8 July 1865; see also 16 April 1862.

¹⁷¹ *LM*, 19 April 1862, 18 July 1865 for the North Riding; *LM*, 22 February 1859, 9 January 1862, 4 July 1865 for the West Riding.

¹⁷² *LM*, 12 December 1862; *LI*, 19 December 1863 p. 7.

¹⁷³ *YH*, 5 December 1868 p. 5; *LM*, 24 October 1868; *YH*, 14 April 1866 p. 7.

the former Chartist sympathiser Isaac Holden.¹⁷⁴ He held a Northern West Riding seat until 1885, and was a firm opponent of the Liberal Unionists, arguing that they were ‘deserting Whig[s], who had no principles at all... [and] ought to be kicked out of Parliament (Laughter, and hear, hear).’¹⁷⁵

The exact motivations of this particular sub-set of SIA members are as unclear as their Conservative rivals. However, their long careers in the party suggest that they were sufficiently supportive of reform to survive within it. What they do demonstrate is the range of motivations behind those who went to the length of signing up to campaign for Confederate independence. In the case of Rev. Canon Trevor and others like him, it seems to have been a lack of faith in the Union’s anti-slavery credentials. In the case of Matthew Wilson, who owned cotton mills, it may have been economic.¹⁷⁶ Regardless of their exact motivations, however, their subsequent careers make it clear that the American Civil War was not so great a watershed in British politics as it has sometimes been portrayed.

Conclusion

In America, the memory of the Civil War was repeatedly reinvented to serve various domestic political purposes.¹⁷⁷ So, too, was the memory of British involvement in the Civil War reinvented to better fit the evolutions of popular politics – as well as to save the blushes of those who had mistakenly predicted its outcome. For instance, by early 1866 the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* was mocking ‘Speeches and articles in newspapers enough to cover the American continent’ anticipating Southern victory, as well as protesting ‘ignoble lovers of mischief’ who had been ‘itching to push us into collision with the people of the United States,’ without mentioning its own contribution to the Confederate cause.¹⁷⁸ Having supported the Union

¹⁷⁴ *LM*, 4 April 1866, 11 August 1868, 6 January 1872, 20 January 1872.

¹⁷⁵ *LM*, 17 August 1886.

¹⁷⁶ *CP*, 25 November 1865 p. 4; *YH*, 7 February 1874 p. 7.

¹⁷⁷ David W. Blight, “For Something Beyond the Battlefield:” Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for the Memory of the Civil War’, *Journal of American History* vol. 75, no. 4 (March 1989), pp. 1156-78.

¹⁷⁸ *SDT*, 14 March 1866 p. 2, 25 April 1866 p. 2, 26 June 1866 p. 6.

became more of a litmus test of ‘true Liberalism’ over time, but this should not be allowed to confuse the contemporary situation.

In reality, support for British interference was a relatively fringe proposition, even among the governing classes and newspaper opinion. Those serving with the Confederate navy and running the blockade seem to have been motivated as much by opportunism and profit as by genuine sympathy for the Confederacy. Though anti-slavery has long been supposed to have been declining in importance, the study of Yorkshire supports revisionist suggestions that it was the fundamental basis of British attitudes towards the conflict. However, scepticism about the strength of the Union’s anti-slavery convictions strengthened British instincts towards neutrality. This scepticism had its proximate cause in Union actions in the early months of the war, but its longer roots were in the perceptions of American racism which will be detailed in chapter six.

The suggestion that Britain remained true to its anti-slavery roots is strengthened when we consider American opinion. The stereotype of aristocratic Britain abandoning its anti-slavery convictions to support the South was only one contemporary American narrative. In some cases, Northern newspapers which opposed the war criticised it as a British abolitionist plot to split the Union and denounced the Republicans as pawns.¹⁷⁹ Others who supported the war argued it was critical to emancipate the slaves to keep Britain neutral, as a means of silencing anti-abolitionist opponents.¹⁸⁰ Not all those in the US, therefore, felt that the weakening of British anti-slavery might lead them to intervene. However, though Britain was never close to intervention in the war, we should also consider how the war, and the example of America more generally, affected the reform debate in British politics.

¹⁷⁹ Juneann Klees, ‘John Bull Rhetoric in American Politics: Great Britain in Northern Political Culture during the United States Civil War’ (unpub. PhD thesis, Kent State University, 1999), pp. 41-2, 47, 59-62, 125-6, 177, 213, 225.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

Chapter 5: Democracy and Reform, 1861-5

In the winter of 1863, when dedicating the cemetery at Gettysburg, President Lincoln gave the Union war effort a lucid, concise statement of purpose. The ‘great civil war’ they were fighting was to test whether ‘any nation,’ ‘conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal’ ‘can long endure’.¹ This belief that the victory of the Union was integral to the survival of free institutions of self-government was a common one in contemporary America. It was particularly strong among German emigrants, who hoped the American example would encourage democracy in their homeland.² In it, we may also see elements of the historiographical argument that it was those who opposed reform in Britain who hoped for Confederate victory.

In order to test this hypothesis, however, we must look more closely into Britain’s relationship with democracy and reform between the outbreak of the American Civil War and the 1865 election. In the historiography of British views on America, there is broad acceptance that the relationship was, at best, inspirational: there was no real prospect of replicating American institutions in Britain even had this been desirable.³ There is also a substantial body of literature which emphasises that Union victory gave new strength to a reform coalition, bringing together intellectuals and trade union activists.⁴ However, the widespread acceptance of ‘democracy’ as a concept seems not to pre-empt the 1867 Reform Act, but to follow it.⁵

This chapter seeks to ground these various high-level debates in an understanding of how the concept of ‘democracy’ was received more popularly within Yorkshire. It evaluates attitudes over the course of the Civil

¹ Abraham Lincoln, Philip Van Doren Stern, and Allan Nevins, *The Life and Writings of Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1999), p. 788.

² Mahin, *Blessed Place*, pp. 12-13.

³ Vincent, *British Liberal Party*, pp. 282, 283, 285; Robert Saunders, ‘Let America Be the Test: Democracy and Reform in Britain, 1832-1867’, in Ella Dzelzainis and Ruth Livesey (eds.), *The American Experiment and the Idea of Democracy in British Culture, 1776-1914* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 80-1, 84; Jon Roper, *Democracy and Its Critics: Anglo-American Democratic Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1989), p. 7; F. K. Prochaska, *Eminent Victorians on American Democracy: The View from Albion* (Oxford, 2012), vi.

⁴ Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, pp. 69, 73-4, 81, 257-8; Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, pp. 5, 239, 243; Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 165; Vincent, *British Liberal Party*, pp. 105, 225, 234.

⁵ Mandler, *English National Character*, p. 71.

War, but also the broader framework in which American democracy was contextualised. Furthermore, it considers what the results of the 1865 election tell us about the significance of both reform and democracy – two concepts which were not necessarily identical. The examination of this relationship will fall into two broad sections: the first considering British views of democracy in the American and global context, and the second bringing the question home to examine the state of the reform debate over the course of the period.

Democracy in the world

Though Lincoln felt that ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people’ was under threat, it appears to have been only a small contingent of Union activists who felt the same way. For instance, George Tatham argued to a Leeds audience that the North felt that ‘popular self-government, if allowed now to break down in their case, could never again be tried on the same scale... it would be a triumph for despotic over free institutions’.⁶ In some cases, these activists were arguing directly from Union sources: Charles Ernest wrote to his local newspaper citing a letter he had received from a former townsman, now in New Hampshire, who argued that separation would destroy ‘the best form of government for the benefit of the whole people’.⁷ Yet even some of these activists were less than consistent. The radical General Thomas Perronet Thompson, anti-Corn Law activist and former MP for Bradford, claimed that ‘the rebellion in America was under an official declaration that it was in support of slavery and the propriety of reducing the working class in England to the same condition.’⁸ Though Lincoln would have happily endorsed this sentiment, he would have been perturbed by Thompson’s earlier claim that the Constitution was ‘a fraud, not upon Americans alone, but upon all of unfortunate humankind’.⁹

⁶ *LM*, 16 May 1863; see also the claims of ‘X’ (*BO*, 19 June 1862), W.H Channing (*LM*, 22 September 1863), and Ernest Jones and E.J. Morton (*HxG*, 14 November 1863 p. 7).

⁷ *YH*, 22 October 1864 p. 7.

⁸ *LE*, 1 November 1862 p. 6.

⁹ *WE*, 25 May 1861 p. 6.

Mainstream opinion was substantially more sceptical about the claim that popular self-government was under threat. In Lincoln's famous 'house divided' speech, he had raised the prospect that the Union might be dissolved; much Yorkshire commentary was unclear as to why this was such a significant problem.¹⁰ In the event of separation, the *Leeds Mercury* was 'at a loss to see how either America or the cause of freedom would seriously suffer.'¹¹ Nor would there be an issue of prestige: 'America will be a great nation even if it cannot win back, or force back, its rebellious states.'¹² Furthermore, the choice between Union survival and abolition was no choice for the British. 'If the American union can only be kept together by encouraging slavery, perish the union,' thundered the *York Herald*.¹³

There is a more fundamental reason for this difference in attitudes towards the Union. 1860s Britain saw international geopolitics as a conflict between 'a successfully inclusive British political community... at odds with an overwhelmingly autocratic Continent.'¹⁴ Though Conservative newspapers were much more focused on Britain itself, Liberal opinion tended to see the United States as either a potential or an actual ally in this broader conflict. The *Wakefield Free Press*, for instance, looked back to 'troubled times, when... England and America alone... gave a refutation to the sneers of the abettors of despotism that popular government was a failure.'¹⁵

Before the outbreak of the war, the visit of the Prince of Wales to the United States had provided an opportunity for both sides to express their kinship.¹⁶ The *York Herald* argued that 'the last pang of jealousy had fled forever' and Britain and America 'could calculate on mutual assistance, in defence of the rights and liberties of the Anglo-Saxon race.'¹⁷ The *Leeds Times* located Britain's allies among 'emancipated and liberty-loving nations' rather than 'mouldy or mushroom despotisms,' and hoped for 'cordial

¹⁰ Lincoln, Stern, and Nevins, *Life and Writings*, p. 428.

¹¹ *LM*, 12 January 1861.

¹² *LM*, 4 July 1861.

¹³ *YH*, 12 January 1861 p. 8; see also *BR*, 8 June 1861 p. 4.

¹⁴ Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 4.

¹⁵ *WFP*, 27 April 1861 p. 2.

¹⁶ Skye Montgomery, 'Reannealing of the Heart Ties: The Rhetoric of Anglo-American Kinship and the Politics of Reconciliation in the Prince of Wales's 1860 Tour', *The Journal of the Civil War Era* vol. 6, no. 2 (2016), p. 214.

¹⁷ *YH*, 29 December 1860 p. 8.

friendship between the two most progressive and liberty-loving nations'.¹⁸ The *Beverly Recorder* warned that 'France and Despotism will take their advantage whenever they find a schism between us and our brothers in the West.'¹⁹

However, hopes for this progressive alliance were generally thwarted by the propensities of the United States. The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* complained that 'America was the bully of the world... to none more so than England, with whom she ought from affinity of principles and of blood, to have been on terms of amity and alliance... she is ever an unsafe reliance for liberty and a sure friend to such despotisms as Russia'.²⁰ The *Sheffield Independent* remarked that the pro-Northern MP W.E. Forster's vision of a 'great alliance of the Anglo-Saxon race' was only a dream:

our community of blood, of language, of ideas, is quite inadequate to overpower in the American mind that jealousy of our commercial greatness, that hatred of our influence in the world, that bitterness which was left behind by the revolutionary war, and of which the embers are sedulously blown into new life every 4th of July... The Americans have far more readiness to fraternise with Muscovite despotism and barbarism than with a free, peace-loving, commercial people, all whose successes they regard as detractions from their own greatness.²¹

The Civil War's upheaval offered the prospect that the US would change its ways, however. In a culture which saw the hand of Christian providence in international events, it was common to predict that the ordeal would improve America. Even radicals could hope for a more minor version of this moral renaissance: a prize essay produced by a working man for the *Bradford Review*'s competition ended on the hope that 'America may lose nothing but dross in the fiery furnace... flourish side by side with England... and that both may become... the champions of freedom'.²² There were, therefore, two

¹⁸ *LT*, 10 May 1862 p. 5, 20 December 1862 p. 5.

¹⁹ *BvR*, 28 December 1861 p. 4.

²⁰ *SdT*, 29 October 1861 p. 5.

²¹ *SI*, 14 January 1865.

²² *BR*, 7 January 1864 p. 3.

reasons that Britain was less concerned about the ramifications of a Union defeat in the Civil War. Firstly, ‘whatever may be the issue... the fundamental principle on which the political institutions of the States have hitherto rested – that of self-government – will not be overthrown’; secondly, ‘the public morality of her citizens will be improved, and her free institutions will have a better opportunity of developing those national virtues which are always associated with genuine liberty.’²³

Across the Atlantic, however, a dramatically different perspective held sway. The (perhaps stereo-) typical American self-image was of ‘the “last best hope of earth” for free government,’ an isolated power whose allies were individuals rather than countries.²⁴ Britain, rather than a kindred spirit, was an envious rival monarchy looking favourably on the prospect of America’s failure. The Californian Adjutant-General regarded with dread a ‘foreign government based upon principles antagonistic to our own... upon our northern frontier... ever jealous... unscrupulous as to the means which her statesmen adopt to crush out all’.²⁵ The North saw only evil from the disruption of the Union; the British saw the potential for good.

Hugh deBrulle has suggested that ‘Conservative-minded people,’ in reaction to urbanisation, industrialisation, and egalitarianism, constructed ‘an Anglo-Saxon Confederacy, a romantic image that served as a model for England’s regeneration.’²⁶ However, this case is supported largely by selective quotation. Rather than believing that ‘a gentry similar to that of England held the balance of power’, the British were under no illusions about the nature of Southern institutions – as the very source he cites makes clear:²⁷

of aristocratic government there is no trace... In the South popular suffrage really prevails... [and] the South has been getting more and more democratic... admirers of democracy are very short-sighted in

²³ *HC*, 26 October 1861; *HE*, 29 August 1863 p. 5.

²⁴ Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America and the World, 1600-1900* (London, 2006), p. 264.

²⁵ William C. Kibbe, *Annual Report of the Adjutant-General of the State of California for the Year 1862* (Sacramento, 1863) p. 9.

²⁶ Hugh Debrulle, “‘We Are Threatened With... Anarchy and Ruin’: Fear of Americanization and the Emergence of an Anglo-Saxon Confederacy in England during the American Civil War’, *Albion* vol. 33, no. 4 (Winter 2001), p. 584.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

not taking the part of the South... they might take up a stronger ground than they have hitherto done if they would... bring themselves to say – “You who are afraid of a slight extension of the franchise, look at what is being done by a people of English origin under a system of universal suffrage.”²⁸

At the start of the Civil War, the Confederacy was expected to fulfil the most heinous stereotypes associated with America. The Conservative *Halifax Guardian* found it remarkable that ‘The legislature of the Southern Confederacy has, so far, not had one single bowie-knife transaction’.²⁹ The *Sheffield Independent* explained that in the South, ‘life is so cheap, and the revolver and the bowie-knife are so constantly in hand, that the slightest quarrel suffices for a pretext for bloodshed. Such things do not agree with our more advanced civilisation.’³⁰

Although attitudes towards Southern manners later softened, Yorkshire opinion seemed generally to concur that the South was, and would remain, a democracy.³¹ Sagar’s prize essay for the *Bradford Review*, which might have been tempted to play up the South’s aristocracy for its radical audience, concluded that ‘both North and South will cling to their democracy.’³² ‘But for the article [on]... slavery,’ the *Hull Advertiser* explained, ‘this constitution of the Confederates would be all that the most Democratic among our countrymen could desire.’³³ As such, for many there seemed to be no realistic prospect of Southern independence inherently resulting in a significant blow to free institutions.

Instead, the most significant risk to free government came from the actions which the North was taking to win the war. Britain was aware of the fragility of liberal institutions, particularly in a state at war or under threat, basing this on more than domestic precedent. As the *Wakefield Express* pointed out, ‘Caesar, Cromwell, and Napoleon respectively arose out of the

²⁸ Marquess of Lothian, *The Confederate Secession* (Edinburgh, 1864), pp. 172-6.

²⁹ *HxG*, 30 March 1861 p. 4; cf *MM*, 2 February 1861 p. 2.

³⁰ *SI*, 3 October 1861.

³¹ Hugh Brogan, ‘America and Walter Bagehot’, *Journal of American Studies* vol. 11, no. 3 (December 1977), pp. 344-5.

³² *BR*, 21 January 1864 p. 2.

³³ *HA*, 13 August 1864 p. 4.

ashes of a republic'.³⁴ Moreover, the North's direction was disheartening: 'the press is shackled, private property is seized, numbers are imprisoned without crime or trial, and passports (the most hateful feature of European despotism) are imposed at once by the mere fiat of President Lincoln.'³⁵ As Alexis de Tocqueville concluded, setting the British experience alongside that of continental Europe suggested that democracy – or, at least, the liberal self-government of the North which most in Britain would have endorsed – could not survive except on the foundation of a thriving civil society.³⁶ As such, it was threatened more by the continuation of the war than by the Union's dissolution.³⁷

Indeed, even victory posed a significant challenge to democracy. It seemed to the British fairly clear that a Union based on respect for a shared constitution could not be held together by force. This was not a question of two nationalities having to go their separate ways, but an observation about the functioning of a democratic system. The *Leeds Times* pointed out that the Federal Constitution lacked 'any powers enabling a dominant majority or a victorious military commander to govern a conquered province.'³⁸ The *Hull Packet* made the obvious point that the South could not be forced to participate in free institutions, and the *Wakefield Express* pointed to the fact that a 'large standing army' risked becoming 'a tool in the hands of a designing man'.³⁹ Such behaviour made no sense in the American context: it would 'merely enable it to hold the South as Russia now holds Poland, or as we ourselves held Ireland a century ago.'⁴⁰ British belief that the South was unconquerable hinged not just on perceptions of the Confederacy's military prowess, but a more fundamental understanding of how a liberal society should treat dissent. Indeed, when we consider the failure of Reconstruction and the extraordinary restrictions which Southern elites placed on voting

³⁴ *WE*, 1 June 1861 p. 4.

³⁵ *YG*, 14 September 1861 p. 8.

³⁶ John Garrard, 'Democratisation in Britain', in John Garrard, Vera Tolz, and Ralph White (eds.), *European Democratization since 1800* (Basingstoke; New York, 2000), p. 44; André Jardin, *Tocqueville: A Biography* (Baltimore, 1998), pp. 266-7.

³⁷ Bennett, 'Popular Reactions', p. 50.

³⁸ *LT*, 26 January 1861 p. 4.

³⁹ *HP*, 3 May 1861, 11 January 1861; *WE*, 26 September 1863 p. 5.

⁴⁰ *LM*, 16 June 1862.

rights among white and black alike, it seems only fair to acknowledge that the British were at least slightly prescient in foreseeing problems for peace.⁴¹

Opinion seemed more divided, however, on the question of whether the war had exposed existing fault lines within democracy. Few went to the extent of James Lee of Delph Hall, who announced at the Saddleworth Mechanics' Institute that democracy had been tried and found wanting, and there were often counterpoints to be made.⁴² Though the *Halifax Guardian* was of the opinion that the war had 'demonstrated the inherent tyranny of democracy,' and the *Halifax Courier* broadly concurred, G.B. Browne thought that 'Republican principles... had been tried and glorified (cheers).'⁴³ There were a variety of other elements to which individuals could take exception whose prominence increased in the course of the war: 'tyranny of the mob, ruffianism of the press, corruption of the judicial authority, weakness and vacillation of the executive, peculation in the administration of the federal finances.'⁴⁴ However, as the date of the comment shows, these objections interacted with and overlapped criticisms of democracy which predated the war.

Perhaps the most significant criticism of the democratic system was the way it reduced standards. The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* complained that 'intelligent men who... should have had a decided voice... have been overridden,' replaced by 'very inferior men... [who] descended to low, grovelling arts, adapted to the prejudices and passions of the unenlightened masses.'⁴⁵ The neighbouring *Rotherham Advertiser* demonstrated that the presence of Macaulay, Disraeli and Bulwer in Parliament and the absence of Irving, Emerson, and Prescott from the Senate showed how the 'intelligent portion of the country' did not participate in American government.⁴⁶ The *Huddersfield Chronicle*, meanwhile, reported a brawl in Congress as if it had occurred in the House of Commons, with local MPs M.T. Baines grabbing Disraeli round the throat, J.A. Roebuck kicking Lord Russell's shins, and

⁴¹ McGerr, *Decline of Popular Politics*, pp. 6-7, 186

⁴² *HC*, 10 January 1863. One paper did concur: *BC*, 27 December 1862 p. 2.

⁴³ *HxG*, 27 May 1865 p. 4; *HxC*, 27 September 1862 p. 4; *HxG*, 6 May 1865 p. 6.

⁴⁴ *YG*, 12 January 1861 p. 8; for more weaknesses of democracy, 27 April 1861 p. 8, 20 September 1862 p. 8, 13 December 1862 p. 8, 27 August 1864 p. 8.

⁴⁵ *SdT*, 26 October 1861 p. 2, 23 May 1864 p. 2.

⁴⁶ *RA*, 26 July 1862 p. 4.

General Thomas Perronet Thompson brandishing ‘a heavy stone spittoon’.⁴⁷ Not all drew such a sharp distinction between the two systems, however: the *Hull Advertiser* criticised Palmerston for ‘adopting the stump style of American oratory’ and later blamed Gladstone for doing the same.⁴⁸ The *Sheffield Independent*, on the other hand, argued that Derby and Disraeli, with their ‘rancour of spirit, and indecency of language,’ were bringing down debate standards ‘to something approaching those which have been witnessed at Washington.’⁴⁹

In some cases, the comparison was made between Britain’s success in the Crimea, thanks to the responsiveness of the Parliamentary system, and American failure to defeat the South.⁵⁰ The *Leeds Mercury* even mused as to whether Confederate success demonstrated the advantage of the ‘aristocratic South’ over the ‘democratic North’ in finding out merit, though it did point out that the Union’s failure was as much down to the task’s difficulty as Confederate ability.⁵¹ This criticism was intensified by the way that appointments to government were made ‘on account of party considerations’ rather than ‘fitness or unfitness for office’.⁵² This also meant that office-holders formed a partisan voting bloc, a factor which both parties could unite in disliking: the Liberals because of its similarity to Old Corruption, the Conservatives because they favoured an unpaid administration staffed by natural leaders, and had railed against the ‘Russell justice’ of the 1840s, ‘raised from the *stool* of his counting-house to a *seat* on the bench’.⁵³

Yet America was not the only example of democracy which the British looked to. For a start, there were the ancient democracies: the advanced Liberal *Bradford Review* even complained that ‘Greek like English history has been written by party men – men who disliked democratical institutions.’⁵⁴ Cobden may have been the ‘member for America,’ but dubbing

⁴⁷ *HC*, 27 February 1858 p. 8.

⁴⁸ *HA*, 11 November 1863 p. 2, 15 October 1864 p. 4.

⁴⁹ *SI*, 11 May 1861.

⁵⁰ *RA*, 6 June 1863 p. 4.

⁵¹ *LM*, 18 September 1862.

⁵² *ST*, 29 November 1862 p. 12.

⁵³ W.D. Rubenstein, ‘The End of Old Corruption in Britain 1780-1860’, *Past & Present* vol. 101 (November 1983), pp. 55-8; WYAS Leeds, WYL2084/4066 (Miscellaneous Greenwood papers): Anon, *A Russell Justice’s Debut; dedicated to Lord John Russell, and the profits for Lord Minto to Equip the Navy* (Bradford, n.d.); Taylor, *British Radicalism*, p. 88.

⁵⁴ *BR*, 17 October 1863 p. 4.

John Bright ‘tribune’ instead linked him to the Roman tradition of the Gracchi. There was also Napoleonic France, where universal suffrage and the ballot sat incongruously with autocracy – or perhaps not, given republican America’s affinity for Tsarist Russia, and the announcement of Prince Napoleon that ‘democratic principles constitute the glory of Napoleonism.’⁵⁵ Even the advanced Liberal *Huddersfield Examiner*, local supporter of pro-Northern E.A. Leatham, found only one difference between their censorship of the press – ‘in France the Emperor does all the work himself, while in America the President finds ready helpers among the democracy.’⁵⁶

Thoughts on the likely functioning of democracy could also be gleaned from Britain’s own colonies.⁵⁷ In 1865, the *Examiner* could use Canada, Australia and New Zealand as an argument for unfettering the British working man, without needing to refer to America.⁵⁸ Some radical causes could gain little from America: for instance, advocates of the ballot had to look outside America to support their case for a ‘shield against consequences’.⁵⁹ There the ballot was a partisan tool – ‘distinctively printed or coloured,’ intended to flaunt rather than disguise allegiance.⁶⁰ As Childers explained in the House, it was Australia from which ballot advocates drew their inspiration.⁶¹

Others, however, found these colonial examples somewhat less than compelling, with the *Halifax Guardian* criticising Australia’s ‘political degradation’ and the *Leeds Intelligencer* arguing that, just as in America, ‘men of standing, wealth and intelligence are driven out of Parliament’.⁶² In one case, colonists themselves argued against democracy: the *Whitby Gazette* received frequent communications from John Mewburn, formerly of Skinner Street but now in Canada West, who criticised the ‘jobbery, robbery, chiselling, lobbying, office-hunting, land-granting, bribery-and-corruption-

⁵⁵ *TP*, 6 March 1862 p. 4.

⁵⁶ *HE*, 14 September 1861 p. 4.

⁵⁷ Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich, *The British World: Diaspora, Culture, and Identity* (London, 2003), p. 5.

⁵⁸ *HE*, 21 January 1865 p. 5.

⁵⁹ *YH*, 19 February 1859 p. 5.

⁶⁰ McGerr, *Decline of Popular Politics*, p. 29.

⁶¹ *HC Debs* 156, cc.771-93, 9 February 1860.

⁶² *HxG*, 15 February 1862 p. 4; *LI*, 4 May 1861 p. 4.

in-broad-daylight openly justified' of democracy.⁶³ He and his son Harrison sent pro-Southern commentary on the war until the complaint of 'an Englishman' that the information was '*drugged* by prejudice and misrepresentation' ended the communication.⁶⁴ The sympathies of other colonists in respect of the American Civil War were similarly mixed, with a letter from Halifax, Nova Scotia noting that 'Her Majesty's most loyal province' mostly supported the South, 'partly from principle, and partly... [because] our trade... has been with the South.'⁶⁵ As such, favourable colonial examples of democracy were, at best, a case of interpretation.

Similar examples of scepticism towards democracy could be found in letters from America itself. Sixteen years of correspondence showed that Joseph Wainwright remained intensely sceptical about his new home in Pittsburgh. He complained at the 'intolerable spirit among us which in France is called red republicanism that is a wish among the lazy poor to obtain their living without labour... we have plenty of worthless demagogues that flatter these evil propensities for the sake of office... stick to your little queen your house of Lords and your house of Commons'.⁶⁶ He even thought that his fruit being stolen by unruly youths was evidence 'that boys are not so well brought up under democracy than under Victoria.'⁶⁷ 'Anglo-Saxon' wrote from Philadelphia to explain that 'democracy is beautiful in theory; - but, alas! How different in practice,' citing the 'rowdy, assassin, and rag-and-bob-tail of creation... forc[ing] himself in front of the man of industry' and 'the sorrowful specimens of humanity boring Mr Lincoln and his cabinet for offices'.⁶⁸ An Episcopal clergyman, meanwhile, complained of the 'despotism of popular opinion' which made the US less free than Britain, and 'a quondam manufacturer' and 'thorough radical' from Huddersfield was claimed to have found his democratic views 'completely altered'.⁶⁹ As such, it must be remembered that this was not solely a question of the British

⁶³ *WG*, 18 April 1863 p. 4, 15 February 1862 p. 4, 16 April 1859 p. 4.

⁶⁴ *WG*, 9 August 1862 p. 4, 11 October 1862 p. 4, 7 February 1863 p. 4, 23 May 1863 p. 4, 6 June 1863 p. 4, 18 June 1864 p. 4, 25 June 1864 p. 4.

⁶⁵ *RA*, 12 April 1862 p. 4; Greg Marquis, 'The Ports of Halifax and Saint John and the American Civil War', *The Northern Mariner* vol. 8, no. 1 (January 1998) p. 2.

⁶⁶ Barnsley Archives, A/150/F (Wainwright to his cousin, 13 December 1850).

⁶⁷ Barnsley Archives, A/150/F (Wainwright to his cousin, 13 April 1860).

⁶⁸ *LI*, 20 April 1861 p. 5.

⁶⁹ *HP*, 24 March 1865; *HC*, 19 February 1859 p. 8.

dismissing an overwhelming weight of positive evidence in favour of democracy: opinion was divided on both sides of the Atlantic.

Indeed, the letters of emigrants show that Lincoln's 'government of the people, by the people for the people' – literally, democracy – tended to be more important for British observers than emigrants. Emigrants' letters focused on economic opportunities, and negative liberty was more important than the opportunity to participate in institutions of self-government. James Holliday wrote to his relatives in Drax to urge them to come and 'find plenty of everything you want to eat, drink and wear... A poor man can soon become a farmer... and live as he pleases, and work as he pleases and play when he wants.'⁷⁰ Edmund Alderson informed his brother that 'we have no crown, no duty no Bishops'; emigrants 'are their own boss they can work when they please'.⁷¹ In some cases, however, emigrants recognised that this prosperity was as much due to the country's natural resources as its system of government. Joe Kay wrote to his father to say that

in my opinion it is the worst governed [country] in the world... the majority of working people are no better off than at home... it is trodden down by speculators... the damndest fools can give or rather sell a vote and every office is sought for the sake of the dollars now I was once a Chartist but I say that one half of working people have no right to vote for a vote gets them crazy.⁷²

It is clear that British emigrants who came from an already-free society were by no means as awestruck by the operation of democracy as were those from Germany and other more autocratic continental societies.

One further element should be noted. The traditional picture of the war is that it vindicated democracy and the American vision of popular government throughout the world. Though the difficulties of Reconstruction are beyond the scope of this piece, it should be noted that the struggles to hash out a framework for the post-war settlement left plenty of scope for scepticism about whether democracy had, in fact, been vindicated. In September 1865, a Leeds debating society split 4-4 on whether America's

⁷⁰ NYCRO, CRONT1746 (letter from James Holiday to John Thompson, 12 August 1829).

⁷¹ NYCRO, ZSC/5/3/1 (Edmund Alderson to his brother, 29 June 1841); ZSC5/3/2 (Edmund Alderson to Jonathan Alderson, 28 January 1843).

⁷² WYAS Kirklees, KC312/17/6 (Joe Kay to his father etc., 15 March 1857).

state was ‘additional proof of the rottenness of democratic institutions’.⁷³ Under such circumstances, we should not be surprised that America remained a contested topic.

Furthermore, even after the war, there remained a significant anti-democratic streak within American politics. The *Imperialist* newspaper and its praise for monarchy may have been a Manhattan prank, but its Southern supporters took it more seriously.⁷⁴ In New York, meanwhile, the ‘Swallowtail’ Democrats’ scepticism about the potential of mass democracy led them to propose schemes of municipal reform that would leave civic government in the hands of urban elites.⁷⁵ Crucially, these schemes were based on British examples. If the legacy of the Civil War was contested even in America, therefore, we should consider how unambiguous an endorsement of Union victory could ever be for the British. What is clear, however, is that the Union’s trials were only one part of a larger perspective on democracy, and that victory or defeat could only do so much to affect British views on the conflict.

Reform in Britain

The suggestion that the Civil War in some respect made democracy respectable, which in turn defanged the Conservative allegations of ‘Americanising British institutions’ and made reform possible following the 1865 election, is weakened by the use that was made of the topic during the campaign. Liberals almost universally disclaimed any intention of bringing American institutions to the UK, before, during and after the war, regardless of their Union or Confederate sympathies. The *Halifax Courier* felt that the suggestions that advanced Liberals preferred ‘either American Republicanism or any other form of republicanism to the mixed constitution under which we live is either a gross blunder born of ignorance or an

⁷³ WYAS Leeds, WYL22 GAC/31 (‘The Owls’ Minute Book, 1865-6).

⁷⁴ Andrew Heath, “‘Let the Empire Come’: Imperialism and Its Critics in the Reconstruction South’, *Civil War History* vol. 60, no. 2 (June 2014), pp. 152-7.

⁷⁵ Nancy Cohen, *The Reconstruction of American Liberalism, 1865-1914* (Chapel Hill, 2002) pp. 132-137; David Quigley, *Second Founding: New York City, Reconstruction and the Making of American Democracy* (New York, 2004) pp. 145-174.

outrageous calumny [sic].⁷⁶ The *Leeds Express* made its feelings similarly clear: ‘We do not want the republicanism of America any more than we want the despotism of continental Europe. We want our growth as a nation to be regulated by the conditions of our own political life.’⁷⁷ The *Bradford Review* emphasised that it was not ‘recommending Republican government for this country, or maintaining the perfection of American political institutions.’⁷⁸

The *Leeds Mercury* showed a slight evolution in its attitudes. In 1861, they were ‘not, and never have been, advocates of American institutions... We enjoy a more thorough liberty, a better government, and a better class of men in the government than the Americans do.’⁷⁹ In 1864, it argued that ‘the friends of Reform have never advocated Americanising anything; but they want the working classes to have some share in the representation of the country’; it buttressed this by discussing the ‘abstract twaddle about the rights of man’ on which the US Constitution was built, and its belief that the Constitution’s checks and balances were its most significant weaknesses.⁸⁰ In 1865 it did remark that ‘we see a great deal to admire... in the working of democratic institutions in the Federal States... our fear is, not whether democracy would work as ill in England, but whether it would work as well’.⁸¹ However, it later emphasised that ‘we are no great admirers of American institutions... they would not answer if introduced into this country.’⁸²

There were a handful of advocates who were prepared to speak out in favour of Americanisation: Alderman Carter, of the Leeds Working Men’s Parliamentary Reform Association, for instance, who said that ‘if to give every man a vote was to Americanise England he was in favour of it’.⁸³ However, most reformers rejected the claim that they wanted to make Britain more like America. Perhaps one of the most surprising individuals to have done this was Edward Aldam Leatham, Radical, Northern advocate, and brother-in-law of John Bright, who argued that ‘we do not seek to make these institutions American; we only seek to make them more thoroughly

⁷⁶ *HxC*, 31 August 1861 p. 4.

⁷⁷ *LE*, 17 October 1863 p. 4.

⁷⁸ *BR*, 17 August 1861 p. 4.

⁷⁹ *LM*, 19 September 1861.

⁸⁰ *LM*, 13th August 1864, 29 March 1865.

⁸¹ *LM*, 18 May 1865.

⁸² *LM*, 8 July 1865; Saunders, ‘Let America Be the Test’, pp. 84, 86, 87.

⁸³ *LM*, 1 June 1865.

English.⁸⁴ Leatham's words do not quite fit with Biagini's suggestion that refusal to 'Americanise' was solely a celebration of the Saxon roots of manhood suffrage.⁸⁵ Although Leatham expected to see 'the forms of government under which we live assimilate to the American,' this was to be a mutual process: 'the American harking back as it will do from the abyss of democracy, and the English advancing as it will do'.⁸⁶

We must allow for the fact that these statements were made in 1862, possibly the nadir of Union fortunes. Nevertheless, they are supported by Liberal speech in the immediate aftermath of Union victory, at the 1865 election. Thomas Dunn of Sheffield, speaking on behalf of Lord Milton at Wakefield, said that American government was 'suitable for the Americans I believe (loud cheers). But we don't want it here. We envy them not... We are free – nay, perhaps, I may say, more free under our institutions than we should be under theirs (cheers)'.⁸⁷ At Malton, meanwhile, ED Taylor of Kirkham denied that the introduction of the £6 borough franchise would be a 'step towards democracy... similar arguments were used against the introduction of the £10 franchise.'⁸⁸ If Union victory validated American institutions, it seems odd that Liberal activists should have been no more enthusiastic about them in 1865 than they were when the result of the war was in doubt.

Further evidence that the concepts of 'America' and 'Democracy' were not transformative at the 1865 election may be seen in an analysis of election addresses. Conservative mentions of 'Southern' related not to the vanquished Confederacy, but to the newly-created Southern Division of the West Riding. The Liberals were even less likely to discuss reform in 1865 than they had been in 1859, generally referring to 'support' for the 'present' 'Government'. Even the 35 mentions of 'honour' referred less to the Government protecting the 'honour' of the nation through foreign policy, and more to the personal honour of the candidates.

⁸⁴ *WE*, 1 March 1862 p. 2.

⁸⁵ Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p. 266.

⁸⁶ *HC*, 13 December 1862.

⁸⁷ *WE*, 8 July 1865 p. 2.

⁸⁸ *MM*, 15 July 1865 p. 2.

The other significant suggestion in respect of the Union's victory is that it led to a coalition of Radicals and Liberals which resulted in electoral success.⁸⁹ This may, perhaps, have been true at the national level. However, at the local and provincial level – which was, after all, where the election campaigns were fought and won – the nature of political life was very different. In provincial politics, as well on the fringes of the empire, heterogeneity was a significant weakness. In 1859 the *Hull Advertiser* fervently hoped the election would show such linsey-woolsey politicians as Mr Anthony Bannister that such freaks as his will no longer be tolerated – that, Radical at heart, as he is known to be, he must either submit to the regulations adopted for the orderly and safe guidance of the Liberal party, or he must endeavour to form some notion of the line of conduct required from him as a nominal Conservative.⁹⁰

It was possible for an academic to stand aloof from party politics, or for an independent or an ex-Chartist to make a living on the national stage through lecture tours, writing and journalism without linking themselves too closely to a political party. In the provinces, however, things were harder: John Snowden of Halifax, ex-Chartist and Union advocate, was reduced to selling nuts from a stall in the market to supplement his meagre pension.⁹¹ The annual demand of the registration also encouraged polarisation between Liberal and Conservative: independent Radical registration organisations were almost unknown as of 1865.⁹² This made a 'progressive alliance' a more essential component of local politics than it was at the national level.

As well as the organisational alliance, in most constituencies an ideological coalition between Radicals and Liberals had been in place for generations. The approval of the non-electors association for whatever candidate the mainstream Liberal parties chose was almost inevitable, and there were few Radicals who were prepared to argue that it was better to vote for an ideologically pure candidate and risk a Conservative being returned than to overcome ideological scruples and back a moderate Liberal. The only

⁸⁹ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 165; Vincent, *British Liberal Party*, pp. 105, 225, 234; Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, p. 5; Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p. 72.

⁹⁰ *HA*, 30 April 1859 p. 4.

⁹¹ Bennett, 'Popular Reactions' pp. 86-7.

⁹² The conclusions in Salmon, *Electoral Reform at Work*, p. 40 apply to the later period.

exception was perhaps Edgar Balfour, contesting Pontefract in 1865, who promised that ‘more good [would] come out of an advanced liberal opposition party in the House’ than ‘a Government who trim their policy to keep office.’⁹³ However, Balfour was an unusual candidate, who stood primarily on a stance of criticising the surveyors of taxes, and withdrew before the poll rather than ‘be dabbled down at least £2,000 extra’.⁹⁴

Moreover, this alliance of Radicals and Liberals was not an automatic recipe for success. In Leeds, the coming together of the Liberals (as represented by Edward Baines) and the Radicals (as represented by Alderman Carter) has been presented as one of the archetypal manifestations of this new unity, healing an earlier breach over education.⁹⁵ However, in 1859 the Liberals had brought forward W.E. Forster as the candidate of the radical element in the town, just as they would subsequently bring forward Lord Amberley – Lord John Russell’s son – in 1865.⁹⁶ Although for practical rather than ideological reasons, the *Leeds Express*, speaking for the town’s radicals, backed this arrangement.⁹⁷

As the second, more radical candidate was unsuccessful in both cases it is unclear what exactly the benefit of this reunion between Liberals and Radicals is supposed to have been – particularly as the losing margin was greater in 1865 than it had been in 1859.⁹⁸ Wright suggests that it was mostly non-electors who were radicalised by the Civil War, and that ‘the effects of the war on the restricted electorate were much more limited.’⁹⁹ Pushing the electorate in a more conservative direction seems a very odd type of victory for the ideal of democracy. The alliance also threatened to be an extremely short one, leaving the *Leeds Express* raging that the Liberal committee, who promised ‘a majority of from 800 to 1000,’ ‘will have to justify themselves to the public.’¹⁰⁰

⁹³ *LI*, 1 July 1865 p. 4.

⁹⁴ *PA*, 15 July 1865 p. 1.

⁹⁵ Wright, ‘Leeds Politics’, pp. 98-9.

⁹⁶ Richard Martin Green, ‘Politics in Leeds 1852-1865’ (unpub. MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1983), pp. 169-72.

⁹⁷ *LE*, 9 April 1859 p. 2.

⁹⁸ William Wardell Bean, *The Parliamentary Representation of the Six Northern Counties of England* (Hull, 1890), pp. 915-6.

⁹⁹ Wright, ‘Leeds Politics’, p. 121.

¹⁰⁰ *LE*, 15 July 1865 p. 4.

Across the county, it is extremely difficult to identify areas where there were actual tangible benefits from a political realignment of the kind that has been suggested. It is possible that this may be an artefact of Conservative weakness in the county, and in a more evenly balanced area it might have been possible to see this realignment in action. However, its absence in Yorkshire must call into question its significance overall. In Hull, the Liberals captured the town's second seat by a considerable margin of 600 votes; however, in 1864 the Liberal organisation in the town was moribund, with the Holderness Ward Liberal Association concluding that 'of the leaders of the Liberal party in Hull... the majority of them were dead, while the remainder were advanced in age'.¹⁰¹ In York, although the radical alderman George Leeman was elected, it was in the place of the old Liberal member Joshua Westhead: James Lowther, the Conservative, topped the poll, as indeed did George Beecroft in Leeds.¹⁰² Although it is dangerous to generalise from so few results, it is possible that the end of the war saw a process of electoral polarisation in which some Liberals became more inclined towards radicalism while a larger proportion of Liberals and many existing Conservatives became more determined to oppose excessive reform.¹⁰³

In the industrial boroughs which formed the Liberal heartland, this Liberal-Radical alliance seemed more likely to break down in 1865 than to be consolidated. In Bradford, an attempted coup by the Radicals almost replaced the town's long-serving MP Henry Wickham, formerly a Conservative but now a moderate Liberal, with a local Radical alderman. Despite the alderman begging to be refused a nomination 'to which he had never aspired... and was also quite unfitted... by inclination, by the demands of business, by habits, and by taste,' he was selected by a meeting of Liberal electors and non-electors as the town's second candidate.¹⁰⁴ The problem was resolved only by ignoring the public vote and having Wickham stand as if

¹⁰¹ HA, 2 March 1864 p. 2.

¹⁰² Matthew Roberts, 'Currents of Electoral Independence: James Lowther and Popular Politics in York, c.1865-1880', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* vol. 78 (2006), pp. 225-6.

¹⁰³ That the Liberal proportion was larger may be inferred by the results of the Liberal canvass of Leeds in 1865, in which 'very few indeed... favour an extension of the suffrage; the great body promise for our candidates in spite of their convictions': Green, 'Politics in Leeds', pp. 241-2; Vincent, *British Liberal Party*, p. 283.

¹⁰⁴ BO, 13 July 1865 p. 2.

nothing had happened. In Sheffield, meanwhile, disagreements on a variety of topics from the American Civil War to the local water company's rates led to a Liberal schism.¹⁰⁵ Ultimately, four candidates went to the polls, all of whom professed to be Liberal and three of whom represented various flavours of Radicalism. This reiterates, if reiteration were necessary, the very great difficulty of projecting a national model onto what were intensely local elections.

The only contest in which it seems possible that the radicals were flexing their new-found muscles was that in the newly created Southern West Riding constituency. Sir John Ramsden had been returned for the West Riding in 1859 with more votes than any other candidate in the House of Commons. On first glance, his failure to be reselected for the 1865 election seems likely to be linked to his comments in early 1861 about the Civil War representing the 'bursting of that great Republican bubble' and his decision not to support measures of reform – particularly when it is also borne in mind that his running mate of 1859, Sir Francis Crossley, was returned unelected for the Northern West Riding constituency. Yet an examination of the behind-the-scenes correspondence reveals that the plan for the contest went through several very different stages.

When the Liberals began to select their candidates, the Conservatives had already offered a compromise of one member each.¹⁰⁶ At a private meeting held in Doncaster, the 'gentry' were keen to stand Ramsden as their single candidate while the 'extreme party' were 'anxious for a contest,' though there would be 'great difficulty' finding a second candidate.¹⁰⁷ This led to the suggestion to stand Ramsden alongside the Hon. Charles Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, currently M.P. for Malton.¹⁰⁸ This failed, largely because both candidates were similarly sceptical about the £6 borough franchise: a subsequent attempt to have one of the two accepted broke down due to the

¹⁰⁵ Bennett, 'Popular Reactions', pp. 88–91.

¹⁰⁶ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (James Brook to Sir John Ramsden, 9 June 1865; Ramsden to Brook, 11 June 1865; Hon. Stuart Wortley to Ramsden, 28 June 1865).

¹⁰⁷ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (R. Adams to Sir John Ramsden, 6 June 1865); see also J.W. Childers to Ramsden, 19 October 1864.

¹⁰⁸ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Sir J.W. Ramsden and C.W. Fitzwilliam to Childers, 20 June 1865; printed circulars entitled 'election for the Southern Division of the West Riding of Yorkshire, 1865' and dated 19 June 1865).

refusal of both candidates to participate.¹⁰⁹ Wentworth-Fitzwilliam was publicly reluctant ‘to supplant an old Representative, who has so long enjoyed the confidence of the constituency’ and privately ‘much annoyed at the pressure that has been put upon me to leave Malton’, while Ramsden was annoyed that the Machiavellian string-puller behind the arrangement, Sir Charles Wood, appeared to be favouring Wentworth-Fitzwilliam as candidate.¹¹⁰ Though Wood felt he could not return Ramsden alone, there might have been an arrangement through which Ramsden stood a second time.¹¹¹

However, although Ramsden felt that his personal reluctance towards the £6 franchise was the most significant obstacle to his re-election, others seemed to think differently. Thomas Dunn felt that though ‘much dissatisfaction was expressed... at the course you took on Mr Baines’s bill,’ it ‘would have been passed over – but then comes the paper question – there it was felt to some extent the policy of Free Trade was involved’.¹¹² When Sir Charles Wood was buttonholed in the House of Commons by a Liberal county court judge from Huddersfield ‘very uneasy at the effect on the politics of the S[outhern] Division’ of Ramsden’s actions, it was not his political conduct but the lengthy and ill-tempered ‘tenant right’ case fought over his Huddersfield property that ‘might be fatal in the event of a contest’.¹¹³ Ramsden noted that Sir Roundell Palmer had spoken to him about much the same topic.¹¹⁴ Though his current stance on reform was a more prominent objection than his earlier comments on America, there were many objections to a renewed Ramsden candidacy – yet even these might not have ultimately prevented him from standing.

¹⁰⁹ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Account of a meeting held 22 June 1865, at 1 Upper Broad Street, London).

¹¹⁰ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Fitzwilliam to Childers, 23 June 1865; Ramsden to Sir Charles Wood, 24 June 1865).

¹¹¹ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Sir Charles Wood to Ramsden, 23 June 1865).

¹¹² WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Thomas Dunn to Sir John Ramsden, 23 October 1861); for other mentions of the paper duty, J Mitchell to Sir John Ramsden, 19 May 1861; J.E. Jenkinson to Sir John Ramsden, 4 April 1861; ‘A West Riding Liberal Elector’ to Sir John Ramsden, 13 June 1861.

¹¹³ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Sir Charles Wood to Sir John Ramsden, 25 February 1864, 2 March 1864).

¹¹⁴ WYAS Kirklees, WYL109/17 (Sir John Ramsden to Sir Charles Wood, 26 February 1864).

It is also worthwhile noting the resilience of the core Liberal coalition, held together not just by political ideology but by a general sense of affiliation to the cause of civil and religious liberty as well as by links of socialisation, acquaintance and affinity. Ramsden, for instance, sat on Liberal committees in three constituencies in 1865 and donated £500 to the Southern West Riding election – a quarter of his own expenditure six years earlier, despite the constituency being smaller and easier to manage.¹¹⁵ He was also more than happy to throw his weight behind the Huddersfield pro-Northern Radical Edward Aldam Leatham. He kept alive the *Huddersfield Examiner*, the advanced Liberal paper which supported Leatham, with both injections of capital and professional advice from the editor of *All The Year Round*.¹¹⁶

Ramsden was wary of using his influence, but he was prepared to ask whether it was possible ‘by any public expression of my sympathy with Mr Leatham [to] promote his success’ without breaking this rule.¹¹⁷ As the election wore on, he advised individual voters seeking clarification that ‘My political sympathies are entirely with Mr Leatham, and I wish him every success,’ and instructed his agent to inspect the canvassing books and, if ‘my assisting Mr Leatham will win his election... spare no pains to do so.’¹¹⁸ Following the unfavourable results of the election, the pair exchanged notes of condolence on their enforced exclusion from the House of Commons.¹¹⁹ As was the case with the members of the SIA, the key to the effect of the American Civil War was not that it enabled new alliances to be formed, but that the Liberal party was able to overlook its differences to put more or less the best men it could in Parliament.

In the run-up to the 1865 election, the Liberal party, and liberal politics in general, appeared to be on top of radical demands. At a Halifax

¹¹⁵ North and South West Riding, *LM*, 15 July 1865; North Riding committee, *YH*, 10 July 1865; see also Kirklees Archives, WYL109/17 (Wright Mellor to Sir John Ramsden, 4 July 1865); Kirklees Archives, WYL109/17 (Childers to Sir John Ramsden, 24 June 1859; Edward Tew to Sir John Ramsden, 12 July 1865).

¹¹⁶ WYAS Kirklees, RA/C/12/9 (Ramsden to Thomas Mallinson, 15 September 1860); RA/C/9/5 (Wright Mellor to Sir John Ramsden, 16 March 1864; W.H. Wills to Ramsden, 12 April 1864; Ramsden to Wright Mellor, 15 April 1864; Wright Mellor to Ramsden, 23 April 1864, Ramsden to Wright Mellor, 7 May 1864; Ramsden to Wright Mellor, 12 May 1864).

¹¹⁷ WYAS Kirklees, RA/C/12/9 (Sir John Ramsden to Joseph Woodhead, 15 May 1865).

¹¹⁸ WYAS Kirklees, RA/C/12/9 (Joseph Storey to Sir John Ramsden, 20 June 1865; Ramsden to Storey, 30 June 1865; Sir John Ramsden to R.H. Graham, 30 June 1865).

¹¹⁹ WYAS Kirklees, RA/C/12/9 (E.A. Leatham to Sir John Ramsden, 15 July 1865).

meeting, George Webber stood to claim his ‘political right’; ‘nothing short of a large and comprehensive measure of reform, including universal manhood suffrage’.¹²⁰ However, Councillor Hutchinson responded by saying ‘he clamoured for that which was as yet utterly impossible’, and Webber’s motion was lost with only six votes in its favour. At a lecture on the 1832 reform act, a motion for manhood suffrage received no supporters, but Baines’ £6 borough franchise bill was ‘almost unanimously’ supported.¹²¹ The victor of the *Bradford Review*’s essay competition, Benjamin Sharp, announced himself to be ‘in favour of Mr Baines’s bill and also that of Mr Locke King’.¹²² An increasing number of radical organisations were set up, like the Working Men’s Parliamentary Reform Associations: the National Reform Union’s Bradford branch had 250 members, 90 more than the old Political Union.¹²³ However, as of 1865 these do not appear to have had a significant influence on the electoral process. Indeed, the former Chartist John Brown of Colliergate protested at the seeming ‘falling off’ of the two York Liberal candidates:

They both, with one accord, have come to the conclusion that if we are to have any representative reform at all, it must be a £6 borough, and a £10 county franchise, unaccompanied by any other remedial measures. Why, gentlemen, a very little while ago the creed of a moderate man was a £5 or £6 franchise, the ballot, three years’ parliaments, and a considerable redistribution of seats.¹²⁴

However, as it turned out, York was in many respects in advance of Liberal ideology in the other large boroughs of Yorkshire (those with an electorate of over 4,000). In Leeds, Baines and Amberley matched Westhead and Leeman’s commitment to the £10 county and £6 borough franchises. Elsewhere, other borough candidates were more reticent. Although W.E. Forster came out for household suffrage and the inclusion of lodgers, his Bradford stablemate Henry Wickham endorsed ‘a comprehensive reform bill’

¹²⁰ *HxG*, 9 April 1864 p. 4.

¹²¹ *RA*, 18 February 1865 p. 5.

¹²² *BR*, 27 May 1865 p. 5.

¹²³ *BR*, 19 January 1865 p. 4.

¹²⁴ *YH*, 13 February 1864 p. 7.

but refused to say to what extent.¹²⁵ Though it was this reluctance which led to his reselection troubles, many other MPs either shared this reticence or coupled it with a desire to supplement newly enfranchised artisan voters with more trustworthy, reliable and predictable classes. In Hull, James Clay spoke in favour of an educational franchise, while Charles Norwood advocated reduction coupled with ‘a lateral movement, bringing within the pale of the Constitution lodgers and others who are perfectly qualified to exercise the right of voting... [but] don’t happen to be householders. (Cheers).’¹²⁶ James Stuart Wortley in Sheffield was ‘unwilling to give any distinct pledges’ other than that he supported an extension, while Roebuck was ‘not in love with what they call the fancy franchises, but even them I would accept, because they would increase the number of voters’; he felt that in the current climate the fancy franchises were the most that could be achieved.¹²⁷ It was only his liberal adversary Thomas Campbell Foster who would ‘go for more than fancy franchises’, though his announcement of this fact resulted in hooting and his subsequent elaboration was drowned out by people shouting Roebuck’s name.¹²⁸ His aim was for equalised suffrage in boroughs and counties at a lowered limit, and income-tax paying and educational test franchises.¹²⁹

In the West Riding’s medium boroughs – those containing over 1,000 electors – candidates seemed happier to support a specific level. In Huddersfield, T.P. Crosland ‘had no objection to a £5 franchise’, but felt there was ‘no chance of carrying’ it and would therefore ‘vote for a £6 rating’ plus lodgers and income tax franchises – though he would not ‘swamp all interests by the admission of one interest alone’.¹³⁰ His rival Edward Leatham felt the £6 borough and £10 rental franchise, plus the ballot, was a minimum; by contrast, his brother William Henry Leatham told the electors of Wakefield that although he supported a £6/£10 franchise by default, he would prefer a means of indirect election in which the non-electors would

¹²⁵ *BO*, 13 July 1865 p. 2.

¹²⁶ *HP*, 7 July 1865, 30 June 1865; John Markham, ‘James Clay, M.P. for Hull: A Pioneering Constituency Member’, *Northern History* vol. 36, no. 1 (May 2000), pp. 156-7.

¹²⁷ *SDT*, 8 July 1865 p. 1; *SI*, 7 July 1865, 10 June 1865.

¹²⁸ *SI*, 6 July 1865 p. 3.

¹²⁹ *SDT*, 8 July 1865 p. 1.

¹³⁰ *HC*, 17 June 1865 p. 8, 3 June 1865 p. 5.

choose a proportion of their best men to be placed on the electoral roll.¹³¹ In Halifax both candidates agreed to the £6 franchise, though Akroyd hedged his approval round with the need to avoid swamping the existing constituency, the requirement for it to be a government bill, and the advocacy of fancy franchises including income tax, savings bank and education from college degrees to the Society of Arts mechanics' institute qualifications.¹³²

In similar boroughs in the East and North Ridings, candidates tended to be vaguer. In Beverley, this was because David Keane claimed 'I will go each time for what I can get. If I can get a £6 suffrage, I will take it to get more. If I can get £8, I will take it... you cannot get it all at once (hear, hear).'¹³³ In Scarborough, however, both candidates seemed to hedge their bets: Sir John Vanden-Bempde-Johnstone wanted to give 'full recognition of the increasing intelligence of the industrial classes' and John Dent argued for 'a large and liberal' government measure, but neither specifically endorsed a level to which the franchise should be reduced.¹³⁴

In the very smallest boroughs, with fewer than 1,000 electors, the Liberals were even less specific about their plans. In Knaresborough, Isaac Holden proposed 'a moderate and gradual extension of the suffrage, and at once and always zealously [to] prepare all classes for its safer exercise.'¹³⁵ In the Ripon election, John Greenwood talked about 'a mere lowering' being 'neither wise nor sufficient' and having 'grave apprehension [of] any measure calculated to bring about a very extensive change.'¹³⁶ However, he supported those 'who from their education, intelligence, and good order were fully and entirely entitled to the franchise,' while his rival Robert Kearsley proposed that 'the intelligent and the industrious of the working-classes must be gradually admitted to the franchise... but not so as to overpower' existing electors.¹³⁷ At Pontefract, Hugh Childers 'repudiated anything like great changes' and MacArthur supported the £6 franchise, plus income tax and

¹³¹ *LM* 8 July 1865 p. 9.

¹³² *LI*, 10 June 1865 p. 4; *HxG*, 16 June 1864 p. 4, 1 July 1865 p. 4, 15 July 1865 p. 5.

¹³³ *BvR*, 17 June 1865 p. 5.

¹³⁴ *Scarborough Gazette*, 15 June 1865 p. 4.

¹³⁵ *LM*, 10 June 1865 p. 8.

¹³⁶ *YH*, 1 July 1865 p. 4; *LM*, 12 July 1865.

¹³⁷ *LM*, 12 July 1865.

votes for Oxford and Cambridge graduates.¹³⁸ Although the Hon. Charles Wentworth-Fitzwilliam's Malton running mate James Brown argued for the £6 franchise, and Wentworth-Fitzwilliam's seconder argued that 'as we could not hope for a universal suffrage now we must take the most liberal measure we can get,' Wentworth-Fitzwilliam himself seems unlikely to have supported a £6 franchise.¹³⁹ Not only was it an objection raised to his standing for the Southern West Riding, but he opposed Baines' bill – allegedly because it would have enfranchised the Conservatives of Malton's neighbouring town Norton.¹⁴⁰

In the counties, the Liberals were more open about committing to franchise reduction. In the uncontested Northern West Riding, both Liberal candidates endorsed the £6 borough and £10 county franchises: Sir Francis Crossley also supported lodgers paying 40 shillings per year in tax having the vote, while Lord Frederick Cavendish opposed the ballot.¹⁴¹ In the Southern West Riding, Lord Milton argued for a reduction proposed by government, and Henry Beaumont would have 'no hesitation in voting for the £6 franchise in towns'.¹⁴² The single North Riding Liberal candidate, Frederick Milbank, would 'readily accord his support' to a £10 county and £6 borough franchise.¹⁴³ These were strong, radical professions, particularly in light of the higher property qualification in the counties when compared to the boroughs, although the large number of 40 shilling borough freeholders qualifying for county votes may have affected candidates' willingness to commit themselves.

However, what is clear is that the stances of candidates were not substantially beyond the proposals made in 1859. If the American Civil War had a significant effect on Liberal candidates' views of reform, it was not evident from their public speech. What had changed, however, was that the Liberal government no longer had the benefit of the doubt – as reflected in the Bradford Radicals' attempt to deselect Wickham for refusing pledges on reform. Even without the American Civil War, the strategy of Palmerstonian

¹³⁸ *PA*, 30 January 1864 p. 1; *PT*, 27 May 1865 p. 4.

¹³⁹ *YH*, 15 July 1865 p. 5; *MM*, 30 April 1859 p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ *MM*, 27 May 1865 p. 3.

¹⁴¹ *LI*, 19 July 1865 p. 4; *LM*, 4 July 1865.

¹⁴² *LM*, 8 July 1865 p. 9.

¹⁴³ *YH*, 17 June 1865 p. 11.

delay seems unlikely to have been viable: Liberals would have had to commit one way or the other.¹⁴⁴

Unlike 1859, the Conservatives were no longer committed to a government measure. However, there were still Tories prepared to endorse reform – or, at least, to make encouraging noises about reform in the hope of attracting moderate voters. Generally, this was coupled with rhetoric against indiscriminate debasing of the franchise. In Leeds, for instance, George Beecroft opposed ‘such a violent and extensive lowering of its amount as would give to mere numbers a preponderance of political power,’ but pointed out that ‘Lord Derby’s bill would have brought to the franchise a greater number of people than Mr Baines’s (Cheers)... why should not lodgers have votes?... And why not the clerk, with his £150 a year’.¹⁴⁵ In York the new candidate James Lowther amended the relatively liberal stance of his predecessor, objecting to ‘so abstract a proposition’ as the £6 franchise and asking for the revision of all the ‘anomalies which now exist,’ such as ‘the exclusion of lodgers from the franchise’.¹⁴⁶ In Hull, Joseph Hoare was not in favour of lowering the borough franchise but was prepared to extend it through savings bank and income tax franchises, while his nominal running mate John Somes hinted about a taxpaying franchise.¹⁴⁷

In the medium and small boroughs, Conservatives were equally opposed to the £6 franchise while making similar vague hints towards the prospect of an expanded electorate. In Beverley, Colonel Henry Edwards hoped for the enfranchisement of ‘all men who can save £50... all clerks in banks and offices, clergymen resident in houses paying perhaps 8s a week, all overseers of factories and warehouses, in fact, all those men who shew the slightest degree of intelligence’, while Christopher Sykes simply praised ‘well-considered improvement’ in general.¹⁴⁸ In Scarborough, George Cayley argued as a ‘Conservative reformer’ that the £10 rental should be retained, but admit the working classes to around a third of the electorate through

¹⁴⁴ Zimmerman, ‘Palmerstonian Delay’, pp. 1179, 1194

¹⁴⁵ *LM*, 24 June 1865 p. 8; *LI*, 4 July 1865 p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ *YH*, 8 April 1865 p. 10, 15 July 1865 p. 10.

¹⁴⁷ *HP*, 30 June 1865, 7 July 1865.

¹⁴⁸ *HP*, 7 July 1865; *BvR*, 17 June 1865 p. 4.

taxpaying franchises.¹⁴⁹ In Thirsk, Sir William Payne-Gallwey was opposed to Baines's bill; in Pontefract, Samuel Waterhouse had voted against the bill but was in favour of the £6 rating franchise if coupled with lateral extension.¹⁵⁰

Most Conservative county candidates adopted a similar stance. In the North Riding, the Hon. William Duncombe opposed the £10 county franchise as 'crude theories' which would 'swamp the present constituency', but was prepared to endorse savings franchises.¹⁵¹ In the East, Admiral the Hon. Arthur Duncombe 'would be very glad to see the franchise extended, but not degraded'; his colleague Lord Hotham believed that 'there are numbers of individuals who might without impropriety be admitted to the exercise of the electoral franchise... provided that they shall not be in such numbers as to entirely swamp the existing constituencies, providing that they shall be of a class which has shown itself possessed of intelligence and feeling of good order and moderation'.¹⁵²

Even in the Southern West Riding, the most heated of the contests, Walter Stanhope and Christopher Denison were still prepared to pay lip service to the need for some sort of reform. Though Stanhope believed 'that the House of Commons as at present constituted fairly represents all classes and interests in the United Kingdom,' he would support 'any well considered measure for admitting to the Franchise persons fitted by intelligence and education to its due exercise'.¹⁵³ Denison, on the other hand, felt that 'True Conservatism... implies a readiness to modify our laws so as to meet the growing requirements of the age,' and was 'quite ready to admit to the privilege of the franchise all who have acquired a stake in the stability of the State and all whose education enables them to appreciate the franchise as a trust to be exercised for the common weal' without swamping or giving predominating influence to any one class.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, though the two disagreed on its level, Denison's conception of the franchise as 'an object to be sought after by honest and sober men' does not appear to have differed substantially from that of Gladstone, who wanted the franchise 'dangling just

¹⁴⁹ *Scarborough Gazette*, 13 July 1865 p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ *BO*, 13 July 1865 p. 5; *PT*, 27 May 1865 p. 4, *PA*, 27 May 1865 p. 1, 15 July 1865 p. 1.

¹⁵¹ *YH*, 22 July 1865 p. 10.

¹⁵² *HP*, 21 July 1865.

¹⁵³ *LM*, 24 June 1865 p. 8.

¹⁵⁴ *LM*, 24 June 1865 p. 8.

above the heads of most artisans, and encouraging them to save that little bit extra'.¹⁵⁵

The idea of opposing 'Americanisation' of British politics was a relatively common one among both the Conservative candidates and their supporters, particularly in the larger boroughs. George Beecroft's seconder argued that 'It was democracy Mr Baines wanted, and when they got democracy where would free trade be?'¹⁵⁶ James Lowther announced himself as 'opposed to the wild Democrat, who would reduce our glorious Constitution to the level of American institutions.... [but] no advocate for a stand-still policy, or a retention of acknowledged abuses.'¹⁵⁷ In Beverley, Colonel Edwards opposed those who would 'swamp the present constituency, and hand over the ruling power of the State to a democracy.'¹⁵⁸

Yet, as we have already seen, the Liberals were just as anxious as the Conservatives to disclaim any intention to make Britain more like America. Isaac Holden believed 'the perfecting of the Constitution was not the work of hours, but of ages, consequently any extension of the suffrage must be gradual and moderate, by a just and cautious policy characteristic of true Englishmen.'¹⁵⁹ 'A True Liberal' claimed that T.P. Crosland, Edward Leatham's Liberal rival, was 'opposed to Toryism as much as to Brightism.'¹⁶⁰ They were also alive to the potential of 'swamping': in Wakefield, Edward Leatham's brother felt 'it is not the want of intelligence, it is not the want of honesty, but the numbers we have to deal with.'¹⁶¹ They were more polite about America than the Conservatives, but there was no indication on either side in 1865 of the kind of paradigm shift that we might have expected as a result of Union victory. Indeed, George Beecroft, celebrating topping the poll in Leeds, thought 'The greatest losers by the election are the "advanced Liberals" and the "Yankee Radicals" – (laughter) – men who love America more than England'.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁵ *BT*, 15 July 1865 p. 3; Hilton, 'Industrial Spirit', p. 50.

¹⁵⁶ *LM*, 13 July 1865

¹⁵⁷ *YH* 1 July 1865 p. 6.

¹⁵⁸ *HP* 30 June 1865 p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ *TP*, 6 July 1865 p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ *SI*, 3 February 1865.

¹⁶¹ *WE*, 15 July 1865 p. 2.

¹⁶² *LT*, 29 July 1865 p. 3.

Conclusion

The fundamental point of the evidence considered in this chapter should be to underline the point made by Robert Saunders, that broad support for ‘reform’ is less significant a topic than ‘who’ and ‘where’.¹⁶³ Conservatives were not inherently opposed to reform as an abstract – indeed, it would have been highly awkward for them to recede from the earlier promises made in 1859. However, their main concern was for reform to be measured and limited. Though the Liberals were broadly optimistic about reform, even they were conscious of the risk of going too far. Moreover, they grounded their support for the extension of the franchise not in the broad, sweeping universalist language of the American Revolution, but in a narrow, particular argument about the upper echelons of the working class. Comparing the Declaration of Independence with Edward Baines’ speech in favour of his £6 borough franchise bill, with its long litany of details about the number of members of friendly societies and mechanics’ institutes, co-operative flour mills and weekly papers, children at Sunday School and miles of railway and telegraph, makes it clear that the two are basing their arguments on fundamentally different premises.¹⁶⁴ Victory or defeat in the American Civil War could not have challenged the statistics that Baines marshalled to support his case, only their interpretation.

Not only did the Liberal justification for reform differ from the American context, but when British radicals were called on to describe their politics they used language that was startlingly different from that found in America. During the American War of Independence, there had been a tension between those claiming their traditional rights as Britons and those who grounded their arguments in fundamental philosophical principles.¹⁶⁵ However, it was the latter argument that would win out. Even before the Civil War, the future President Lincoln was clear that American liberty was not based on English heritage, but was an offer to all: ‘We have... perhaps half our people who have... come from Europe – German, Irish, French, and

¹⁶³ Saunders, ‘Politics of Reform’, p. 574.

¹⁶⁴ *HC Debs* 157, cc.1030-109, 22 March 1860; *HC Debs* 162, cc.351-410, 10 April 1861; *HC Debs* 178, cc.1372-450, 3 May 1865.

¹⁶⁵ Roper, *Democracy and Its Critics*, p. 5.

Scandinavian... when they look through that old Declaration of Independence... they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh, of the men who wrote that Declaration'.¹⁶⁶

However, for the British radicals, the theft of Saxon liberty by the Norman aristocracy was too effective an emotional lever to abandon altogether.¹⁶⁷ During the 1866 reform agitation, a leaflet published in Leeds proposed the holding of a 'Great West-Riding Folk-Mote' (or meeting) under the Headingley shire-oak, which it linked to Edwin the Great, and denied the right of Registration courts to ask 'all sorts of degrading and insulting questions' to 'free men of Saxon blood'.¹⁶⁸ Unlike Lincoln, the anonymous author was clear that free association was a very particularly English characteristic: 'This was no gathering of Rogue and Thief, Bondman, Serf, Briton, Pict or Scot'. As such, although the victory of the Union might have vindicated one of the arguments which some of the advocates for reform used, the two campaigns were not as closely intertwined as has sometimes been suggested. Indeed, this focus on liberty as a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon characteristic suggests that we must also attempt to understand the American Civil War in its racial and nationalistic context.

¹⁶⁶ Lincoln, Stern, and Nevins, *Life and Writings*, pp. 448-9 (Speech at Chicago, 10 July 1858).

¹⁶⁷ Mandler, "Race" and "Nation", p. 239.

¹⁶⁸ WYAS Bradford, DB19/C19/6, 'The Great West-Riding Folk-Mote' (1866).

Chapter 6: Race and Nation, 1861-5

In viewing the American Civil War, contemporary Britain had to balance the Confederacy's right to self-government against the morality of their 'cornerstone' institution of 'negro slavery'. However, the combination of racial and national factors affected Britain's responses to many contemporaneous international events. Public opinion was excited by German and Italian unification, and fledgling nations like Poland and Hungary. In addition, the ongoing question of Britain's racial and national status, and the global role of the 'Anglo-Saxon' race, also invited comment.

To understand this period, we must understand the evolution of British attitudes towards nationality, and the consequent links between racial categories and political and geographical arrangements. The aftermath of the European revolutions of 1848 left the British with two significant assumptions. The first was that Anglo-Saxon self-governing communities were unusually successful in almost every field; the second, that liberal Britain would inevitably find itself opposed to Continental autocracies.¹ As a result, Britain tended to look favourably on nationalist movements while insisting on seeing them in libertarian terms.²

However, it is in the racial sphere where the greatest change has been perceived. Catherine Hall is one of the foremost historians to argue that British thought began to move towards 'a racial vocabulary of biological difference' in the 1850s, coalescing as a result of the Indian Rebellion and the American Civil War, and emerging in its full form as a result of the 1865 rebellion in Jamaica.³ This confirmed distinctions between 'the "excitable," which meant black, population' of British colonies, who 'needed strong government,' and white populations able to manage representative institutions.⁴ She also emphasises that cultural explanations for this differing treatment were just as racist as those of scientific racism based on inheritable differences, and 'in many situations... both were in play'.⁵

¹ Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 4; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 368.

² Mandler, "Race" and "Nation", p. 230.

³ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 21, 24, 12.

⁴ Hall, McClelland, and Rendall, *Defining the Victorian Nation*, p. 226-230.

⁵ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, pp. 13, 17.

Other historians broadly concur that racial attitudes hardened over the course of the 1850s. Christine Bolt saw this period as the one in which ‘the aggressive assertion of white superiority... prepared the way for the next great phase of British expansion towards the end of the century.’⁶ Douglas Lorimer argues that scientific racism overtook a class-based understanding of racial difference during this time.⁷ There have been some attempts to contradict or amend the fundamental basis of this theory. Bernard Porter, in the context of theorising on imperialism, has pointed out that colonial attitudes towards race ‘were more often moulded by the relationships these expatriates were placed in with other peoples, than by any cultural baggage they brought with them from home.’⁸ Peter Mandler, in arguing that the English were somewhat backwards in their thinking about nationality, argues that civilizational perspectives were more common than racial ones in this period, even among those who argued for ‘paternal repression’ of ‘Negroes or Indians’.⁹ However, by and large it is the view of hardened racial attitudes which dominates.¹⁰

As such, this chapter will begin by considering how Yorkshire reacted to the treatment of other races by its ‘American cousins’. It will then examine the most significant forms of discourse on race in the county at the time, and the effectiveness of the mechanisms by which new concepts could be transmitted to and disseminated within the provinces. It will then consider the Confederacy in the context of views on other nationalities and of the legitimacy of British intervention in their affairs. Finally, it will consider the concept of the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ race, on which putative British affinity for the Confederacy is sometimes predicated.¹¹

⁶ Bolt, *Victorian Attitudes to Race*, x-xi.

⁷ Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, pp. 203-4.

⁸ Porter, *Absent-Minded Imperialists*, p. 23.

⁹ Mandler, “Race” and “Nation”, pp. 231-2.

¹⁰ Edward Beasley, *The Victorian Reinvention of Race: New Racisms and the Problem of Grouping in the Human Sciences* (New York, 2010), pp. 17-20.

¹¹ Debrulle, ‘Anglo-Saxon Confederacy’, p. 599.

Race in America

The relative extent to which Britain's views of the race question in the Northern United States were shaped by the views of escaped slaves on anti-slavery lecturing tours, letters from emigrants, and books of pre-war travel commentary will forever remain unquantifiable. However, wherever the British drew their views from, there was an extraordinary consensus on the topic. From across the political spectrum and across the county, they condemned the Union's racially-motivated mistreatment of its black citizens.

It is important to emphasise how universal this condemnation was. In the hub of the industrial West Riding, the Liberal *Leeds Mercury* might well have been expected to critique 'the disgraceful prejudice against colour still reigning in the North'.¹² The stances of the advanced Liberal *Leeds Times*, which complained that 'so-called free "niggers" were habitually treated by the white-skinned Republicans as... inferior and unclean creatures who had no just claim to the dignities and privileges of human beings,' and the *Leeds Express*, which summed the Union's view up poetically as 'libbaty's a kind o'thing/That don't agree with niggers,' may also fail to surprise the historian.¹³ However, the Conservative *Leeds Intelligencer* also protested against their treatment: unable to 'ride in a street omnibus, nor in an ordinary railway car, nor worship in a public church... He is hustled out of the labour market, and any honest livelihood is grudged to him, as filched from a better man.'¹⁴

The criticism also extended beyond the West Riding to the more rural North and East. In Hull, the Liberal *Eastern Counties Herald* refused to 'look upon the black man as inferior to his pale-faced brother in any respect... [though] The negro is regarded, even in the North, as an inferior being'.¹⁵ The Liberal *Hull Advertiser* considered Northern segregation 'more detestable than slavery,' because segregation asserted that 'neither freedom, nor intelligence, nor wealth can raise the blacks to the level of even Christian

¹² *LM*, 17 November 1860.

¹³ *LT*, 26 October 1861 p. 4; *LE*, 30 November 1861 p. 2.

¹⁴ *LI*, 22 August 1863 p. 4.

¹⁵ *ECH*, 20 March 1862 p. 4. For more northern racism, *ECH*, 8 January 1863 p. 5, 15 January 1863 p. 4 (and the letter of 'An Abolitionist and a Southern' on p. 7), 16 March 1865 p. 5.

fellowship and association with the whites.¹⁶ The Conservative *Hull Packet* justified its scepticism about Union emancipation with the rhetorical question; ‘how could we believe that men who would neither eat, drink, nor travel with those who had the slightest taint of negro blood... were earnest in their love of freedom?’¹⁷

Moreover, these editorial views seem to have largely been shared not only by correspondents to the newspapers, but more generally and publicly. Harrison Mewburn, writing from Canada to Whitby, complained that Illinois made ‘all negroes, black or coloured, runaways or free citizens’ pay a bond, and that those who could not pay were sold: ‘Is this, let me ask, freedom to the negro?’¹⁸ Another adopted Canadian, William Howard Day, explained how ‘colour was a crime’ while Rev. J.R. Balme, an American Baptist clergyman, reported that ‘there could rarely be seen more than half a dozen coloured faces... at any of the white men’s chapels;’ even Republicans refused ‘to acknowledge the equality of the black man, to ride with them in the railway carriage, to sit with them in church, to vote with them at elections, or to serve with them on juries’.¹⁹

Balme’s focus on the social, religious and occupational exclusion of black people was typical of the more broad British emphasis. The *Yorkshire Gazette* criticised the way that ‘they are treated as outcasts, with every mark of contempt,’ citing railways and churches to support this case.²⁰ In an altercation following a pro-Northern lecture in Sheffield, the Confederate-supporting Mr Wheatman asked ‘whether blacks were allowed to sit with the whites at the public hotel tables in the North, to travel in the same railway carriages, and enjoy the social and electoral privileges of the whites? (Hear, hear).’²¹ In response, Mr Jackson ‘maintained that as great distinctions were preserved between the rich and poor here as between the whites and blacks in North America. (Laughter)’; Wheatman, unperturbed, responded that ‘He

¹⁶ *HA*, 6 November 1861 p. 2.

¹⁷ *HP*, 20 September 1861.

¹⁸ *WG*, 23 May 1863 p. 4

¹⁹ *HP*, 10 January 1862; *YH*, 12 October 1861 p. 10, *LT*, 5 October 1861 p. 3; see also *BO*, 17 November 1864.

²⁰ *YG*, 28 September 1861 p. 8, 7 February 1863 p. 8.

²¹ *SI*, 1 January 1863.

had travelled much in America... in Massachusetts and other states the blacks were not allowed to associate with the whites, or enjoy the same privileges.’

The fact that the British seemed more offended by the social exclusion of black people in the North than by their political exclusion tends to support the argument that the British did not necessarily see voting as an integral component of membership of a particular community. In a society with a limited franchise, the social sphere was the only one where its members could establish their fundamental equality. Despite Jackson’s arguments, echoed by other pro-Union activists, mainstream public opinion broadly disagreed that Britain was more divided by class than America was by race.

As described above, the historical debate has focused primarily on the increasing discrimination in British thought on race over this period. However, if racial discrimination was seen by contemporary observers either as a positive good or a necessary evil, attitudes towards North America become almost impossible to understand except as mass hypocrisy. There is no way to reconcile criticism of the Union segregating black people with the belief that black people were innately incapable of participating in civil society. Moreover, much of the scepticism about Union motivations during the war stemmed from this critique of a racially segregated society.

Lincoln’s modern status as the great liberator of the slaves can make it difficult for us to understand contemporary British mistrust of his motives, when he was an unknown politician from a state with some of the harshest Black Codes in the North. Though Lincoln rejected the exclusionary white supremacist ‘Herrenvolk democracy’ theory of the Confederacy, which many Northern Democrats shared, he still insisted on linking emancipation to schemes of repatriation long after they had been shown to be impractical.²² These public acts seemed to confirm that he shared Northern racism, and therefore made him unsound on slavery.

Not only were the British public well aware that Lincoln supported colonisation, but the newspapers were clear that they disagreed with him. The *Wakefield Express* felt that his view ‘that white and black can never be

²² McPherson, *Second American Revolution*, pp. 50-4; Michael Vorenberg, ‘Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Black Colonization’, *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association* vol. 14, no. 2 (1993), pp. 43-4.

equal' 'sounds strangely into the mouth of the President of a Republic,' and later cited it to justify their expectation that race relations would be slow to improve.²³ The *Bradford Observer* used it as an example of Free State 'prejudice against the negro', while the *Halifax Courier* suggested that 'Lincoln's own declarations' ranked alongside the Black Codes in ruling out 'any intention on placing black and white on a footing of political or social equality.'²⁴ The *Sheffield Independent* considered it 'the most miserable exhibition of imbecile weakness', because 'America is as much the native country of the men of African, as those of English, Irish, or German descent': it later referenced it in casting doubt on the manifesto of the National Coloured Convention.²⁵ The *Doncaster Gazette* complained that Lincoln 'still harps on the impracticable scheme' of colonisation, while the *Chronicle* felt the slaves could expect nothing but 'cool advice to seek emancipation in the best way they can, and when they have it, "take themselves off".'²⁶ The *Yorkshire Gazette*, meanwhile, felt that the only reason that the two races could not live together was 'the Northerners' detestation of the negro'.²⁷ Nowhere could there be found support for Lincoln's belief that black and white were incompatible, despite the theoretical rise of racial discrimination in the period.

This broad belief in equality extended to the military sphere, where Union disagreements over whether to arm freed slaves were seen as further evidence of their racism. The British had been arming black people, slave and free, since the mid-seventeenth century, and by 1861 amateur black militias were more welcome in the British world than the American.²⁸ The *Leeds Times* and the *Sheffield Independent* noted that white troops refused to serve with black ones and Union officers resigned to support a white-only army.²⁹ 'If the Irish and German refuse,' the *Doncaster Chronicle* concluded, 'and

²³ *WE*, 6 September 1862 p. 4, 19 September 1863 p. 5.

²⁴ *BO*, 4 September 1861; *HxC*, 27 September 1862 p. 4.

²⁵ *SI*, 4 September 1862, 13 August 1863; c.f. 'New York is as much the country of the black man born [there]... as America is the country of President Lincoln' (*HA*, 1 August 1863 p. 4).

²⁶ *DG*, 5 September 1862 p. 5; *DC*, 5 June 1863 p. 4.

²⁷ *YG*, 7 February 1863 p. 8.

²⁸ Maria Alessandra Bollettino, "'Of Equal or of More Service": Black Soldiers and the British Empire in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century Caribbean', *Slavery & Abolition* (November 2016), pp. 2-3; Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie, 'Rehearsal for War: Black Militias in the Atlantic World', *Slavery & Abolition* vol. 26, no. 1 (2005), pp. 21-2

²⁹ *LT*, 14 March 1863 p. 4; *SI*, 30 May 1862.

prejudice runs so high against the negro that white men will not even fight side by side with them, the war must collapse.’³⁰ Moreover, the practice of using black troops as ‘a cover or shelter... behind which the white troops may advance with greater safety’ was also criticised, perhaps because white troops were expected at the very least to share equally the peril of battle.³¹ Indeed, the *Hull Advertiser* – perhaps ironically – hoped for the appointment of black officers, as ‘They evidently have men among them more competent to command an army than ever was General Hooker’.³²

One of the most significant outbursts of criticism came with the New York draft riots of 1863, where British newspapers noticed that much of the violence was directed against the black community. Indeed, several months before, the *Doncaster Gazette* had predicted ‘a series of bloody riots and conflicts’ provoked by ‘the enmity of the whites towards the race for whose freedom it is in some quarters asserted the war is carried on.’³³ However, this predictive achievement is weakened by the earlier ‘violent outbreak against the coloured race on the occasion of the turn-out of [New York] dock labourers for an advance of wages... soon after the onslaught against the negro population of Detroit,’ coupled with the ‘attack made by a mob on a factory at Brooklyn where negroes were employed,’ motivated by ‘growing antipathy to negroes.’³⁴

The Conservative *Leeds Intelligencer*, which might have been expected to focus on the mob’s defiance of law and order, claimed that ‘All other excesses... become insignificant beside the savage outrages... committed upon the unhappy negroes.’³⁵ Other newspapers, too, highlighted that the mob’s primary target was the black community: it was ‘both symbolical [sic] of the antipathy of the white labourers to their black competitor, and of their additional hatred to him at the present time as the cause of the war’.³⁶ It was ‘an atrocity of which the most degraded savage

³⁰ *DC*, 27 February 1863 p. 5.

³¹ *HxC*, 27 June 1863 p. 4; *HxG*, 20 June 1863 p. 4; Donald Featherstone, *At Them with the Bayonet* (London, 1968) pp. 36-7.

³² *HA*, 15 August 1863 p. 4; it does, however, ‘abhor the employment of the coloured race under any circumstances in this fratricidal war’ (*HA*, 9 November 1864 p. 2).

³³ *DG*, 1 May 1863 p. 5.

³⁴ *SdT*, 8 April 1863 p. 2, *LM*, 18 August 1862.

³⁵ *LI*, 1 August 1863 p. 4.

³⁶ *BO*, 30 July 1863; *PA*, 1 August 1863 p. 1; *BT*, 1 August 1863 p. 2.

would be ashamed' or 'circumstances which ought to have been sacred to the kingdom of Dahomey.'³⁷ The *Leeds Times* went furthest, calling New York 'the great reservoir into which the moral sewage of Europe was emptied and accumulated,' finding its only historical parallel in 'the Middle Ages, when the besotted populace, at the instigation of ignorant and fanatical priests, were in the habit of setting upon the inoffensive Jews' and proposing that Lincoln punish the culprits, 'as foul a gang of irredeemable Yahoos as ever usurped the form or disgraced the name of man,' with enslavement on Southern plantations.³⁸ The only real defence that Union apologists had was to blame the riots on someone else: 'BB' claimed that 'the chief actors in that dreadful riot' were 'from our own Islands,' while the *Wakefield Free Press* blamed the Irish.³⁹ In total, however, the effect of the riots was to confirm existing British prejudices about the state of race relations in the North.

Confederate advocates were just as likely as mainstream outlets to emphasise the lacklustre state of Northern race relations. James Lee of Delph Lodge spoke repeatedly of his belief that 'The white Republican American would not travel in the same railway carriage, or eat at the same table with a black man'.⁴⁰ Thomas Broadbent, interrupting a Union and Emancipation Society meeting at Huddersfield, complained that 'an industrious negro... robbed by a white man... went to no fewer than 60 magistrates in Washington, but... being a black man he had no redress.'⁴¹ Samuel Mills challenged the Union advocate Rev. Mr Wheatley with, among other questions, 'Does the North recognise the negro as the equal of the white man?'⁴² Mr Padman, supporting Southern recognition at the anniversary meeting of the Boston Spa, Clifford, and Bramham Wesleyan Training School, argued that 'A Northerner would not ride in a railway car with a negro... would sooner have his horse at table with him than a man of colour... would not worship in the same house of God with him.'⁴³

³⁷ *LE*, 1 August 1863 p. 4; 'Caveto', in *TP*, 8 October 1863 p. 4 and *YG*, 3 October 1863 p. 5.

³⁸ *LT*, 1 August 1863 p. 4.

³⁹ *HP*, 11 December 1863; *WFP*, 1 August 1863 p. 4.

⁴⁰ *HC*, 3 January 1863 p. 8, 10 January 1863.

⁴¹ *HC*, 28 February 1863 p. 6.

⁴² *HC*, 2 July 1864 p. 7.

⁴³ *TP*, 9 July 1863 p. 7.

The Confederate activist James Spence complained that ‘There was a party in the North who regarded... the negro as they did the red Indian, to be improved away’.⁴⁴ Ironically, one of the firmest believers that ‘wherever civilization advanced the red man retired’ was John Arthur Roebuck MP, who simultaneously believed that black people were preserved from this fate by their ‘buoyancy of nature’.⁴⁵ However, he was emphatic about their poor treatment – ‘in the North the feeling against the black man is stronger than in the South (Hear, hear)... tomorrow, if the States were re-united, slavery would be fixed more firmly than ever (Applause)’.⁴⁶ He criticised President Lincoln, who ‘quietly advised them to retire from America. “Take yourselves off”. (Hear, hear).’ He also emphasised the social exclusion experienced in the North – ‘he is treated worse than you would treat a dog... there are fights constantly taking place in Washington and other cities because the poor black man wishes to ride in an omnibus (Hear, hear).’⁴⁷ More importantly, he contrasted this unfavourably with British racial egalitarianism:

[when] we admitted as a member of the English bar one of our black fellow subjects in Africa... the American people... were horrified at the idea... we have no sympathy with that sort of feeling (Hear, hear). We hail a human being, whether he be black, brown, or fair. (Hear, hear).⁴⁸

This commitment to egalitarianism even among advocates of the Confederacy makes little sense in the context of a Britain that sees race as the immutable determinant of human capacity. Even if the advocates were using the topic of racism solely as a talking point, to discredit the Union in the eyes of the British public, this would only be effective if they were aware that Britain remained committed to egalitarianism. A more rational explanation can only come through a deeper understanding of why the British of the 1860s opposed slavery, and why they might see social exclusion as an equal evil. Nevertheless, it is clear that racism is an ineffective explanation of British attitudes towards the American Civil War.

⁴⁴ *HxG*, 13 February 1864 p. 4.

⁴⁵ *HC Debs* 151, c.1111, 8 July 1858; c.1844, 20 July 1858.

⁴⁶ *SI*, 9 August 1862.

⁴⁷ *SI*, 11 July 1865.

⁴⁸ *SI*, 24 August 1861.

Some felt that the condition of black people in the North was improving, or that it might do so. The *Wakefield Express* hoped Reconstruction would 'ensure to the negro his just rights,' while the *Leeds Mercury* claimed that 'The free black of the North has risen indefinitely in social position since the war began... no longer persecuted and despised.'⁴⁹ 'L' claimed untruthfully that Illinois 'like the more Northern States now gives full recognition of the rights of the coloured race,' 'Truth' argued that the black citizens of New York 'have all the rights of white men and are protected in the enjoyment of those rights by the strong arm of the law,' and Washington Wilkes asserted that emancipated slaves 'were now as free as any white man.'⁵⁰

However, it was far more common for newspapers to portray the lot of Northern black people as deteriorating: even the pro-Northern *Huddersfield Examiner* was forced to report that Free States had 'passed laws excluding them from the very soil of the country, and Wendell Phillips has been mobbed at Cincinnati for daring to preach the gospel of freedom'.⁵¹ Without understanding that Britain deeply mistrusted Northern motives towards the black community, and expected to see progress in race relations across the country before revising these views, it is impossible to understand why Britain might be sceptical about events such as the Emancipation Proclamation. The pro-Confederate *Yorkshire Gazette* perhaps summed it up best: 'Before we believe in the Northern sympathy for the negro, we should prefer to see the abolition of the state laws against his admission into Indiana, Illinois, and other Northern States'.⁵²

It is hard to conclude that 'Britons were of a divided heart about the fate of Southern slavery': in reality, support for slavery clearly remained a fringe proposition.⁵³ The overwhelming majority of newspapers were clear:

slave breeders... are as hateful to the best portion of the English people as the cannibals of the Fijean Islands. Only let a breeder or seller of

⁴⁹ *WE*, 20 May 1865 p. 5; *LM*, 25 September 1863.

⁵⁰ *SDT*, 4 February 1865 p. 6, 15 February 1865 p. 4; *HP*, 11 December 1863.

⁵¹ *HE*, 12 April 1862 p. 4.

⁵² *YG*, 10 December 1864 p. 8.

⁵³ Drescher, *Mighty Experiment*, p. 225.

slaves be recognised in the Strand... and his reception would be of the same sort as that which Marshal Haynau experienced at the hands of Messrs. Barclay and Perkins' draymen.⁵⁴

The Conservative *Halifax Guardian* considered domestic servitude 'even more debasing to the slave-owner than the slave' and complained at 'the Scriptural authority blasphemously claimed for this', while the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* grumbled that 'any ruffian who has the money may buy at the auction block a better man than himself'.⁵⁵ The Conservative *Yorkshire Gazette* picked up this theme of slave-owners being inferior to their slaves and put a gendered spin on it, protesting at

the degradation of women to prostitution which is the more certain the more she is fitted for a high and noble grade... imagine the corruption of their masters, who may go forth from the company of the most honoured ladies of the land and buy their equals in look, intellect, and even manners, in the next slave-market⁵⁶

Even where attempts were made to moderate this criticism, it was generally restricted to revising the level of harm caused, rather than claiming slavery was a moral good in itself. For instance, the Conservative *Wakefield Journal* claimed that slave-owners 'on the whole treat them well, because injury to the slaves is an injury to the slave-owner, inasmuch as they probably constitute his whole property'.⁵⁷ The advanced Liberal *Leeds Express* regretted *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which 'seized hold of a few exceptional cases... and made their depravity apply to the whole... Speaking of the masters as a body, they were kind, attentive and considerate to their slaves.'⁵⁸ However, this was in part because it blamed the book for preventing the 'conciliatory and compromising policy' of Buxton and Brougham from 'bringing the planters themselves to adopt their emancipation views by a gradual scheme'.⁵⁹ In light of the immense popularity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Beecher Stowe's attempt to drum up support for the North, perhaps there

⁵⁴ *LT*, 21 February 1863 p. 4.

⁵⁵ *HxG*, 4 May 1861 p. 4; *SDT*, 29 October 1864 p. 5, 2 November 1864 p. 2.

⁵⁶ *YG*, 7 February 1863 p. 8.

⁵⁷ *WJ*, 4 September 1863 p. 2.

⁵⁸ *LE*, 24 January 1863 p. 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

was some element of a backlash against the book in comments like ‘There *are* Legrees in the Southern States. It would be ridiculous to deny a fact so patent: but Legrees are not so common in the South.’⁶⁰

In large part, the British were predisposed to critique slavery in the South because they had an existing complaint there. The practice of imprisoning coloured British merchant seamen during their stay in Southern ports had highlighted the issues of race relations in a way that encouraged the extension of the protections of British liberty regardless of race.⁶¹ This issue was still live at the time of the Civil War: the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* considered it ‘the most systematic indignity it [our flag] has ever suffered,’ connecting it with the fact that ‘they lately tarred and feathered an English captain for dining at the same table with a coloured stevedore’ and the *Leeds Times* complained about ‘outrages of the most cruel description by those same “chivalrous” [Southern] gentlemen’.⁶² Union advocates such as ‘RS’ and Russell L. Carter used it to contrast the South’s desire for freedom: ‘these men, whose corner stone is slavery, are fighting for liberty!’⁶³ It was also used to moderate attitudes over the Trent Affair, as ‘in Southern ports coloured men have been torn from the protection of the British flag with just as little ceremony as Messrs. Slidell and Mason’.⁶⁴ Moreover, the coloured seamen issue was cited as one of the many areas in which the weakening of the Union offered the potential for Britain to act more effectively against slavery. ‘England will no longer tolerate the imprisonment of her sailors, men of colour, at Charleston’; ‘hitherto they were screened and sheltered by the great power and greater name of the Federal Republic... when broken up into hollow and jealous sections, the case will be very different’.⁶⁵

Although the British were convinced that slavery should be ended, they were also emphatic that it should be gradual. With an institution ‘so widespread and extensive... it is most perilous to attempt the destruction of it

⁶⁰ *DC*, 13 January 1865 p. 5.

⁶¹ Philip M. Hamer, ‘British Consuls and the Negro Seamen Acts, 1850-1860’, *The Journal of Southern History* vol. 1, no. 2 (1935), pp. 138-9.

⁶² *SDT*, 14 March 1865 p. 6, 7 November 1864 p. 2; *LT*, 17 January 1863 p. 4.

⁶³ *BO*, 5 November 1863, *HxG* 30 November 1861 p. 8.

⁶⁴ *WE*, 7 December 1861 p. 4.

⁶⁵ *HA*, 12 January 1861 p. 4, 26 January 1861 p. 4, 25 May 1861 p. 4, 6 November 1861 p. 2, 18 January 1862 p. 4, 19 March 1862 p. 2.

suddenly.’⁶⁶ Though apprenticeship failed in the West Indies, it was sometimes proposed as the best solution for the American issue – and was even made a quasi-ultimatum: ‘to such an emancipation, as the price of their recognition, the Southern States of America would not object. If they do... let them be left to the natural retribution which will inevitably follow.’⁶⁷

However, this support of caution was not due to ‘widespread stereotypes about black immaturity and savagery’: preparation for liberty was a universal need.⁶⁸ The *Wakefield Express* explained that ‘Men must be educated to freedom ere they can be safely entrusted with all the privileges of those who have for centuries enjoyed political liberty,’ adding ‘We have instances nearer home than America of failures for that reason.’⁶⁹ The moral and intellectual degradation suffered under slavery could simultaneously be ‘a very strong reason unquestionably why he should be free but no argument in favour of immediate emancipation’: while ‘legal disabilities must be at once and entirely removed... social degradation... must be left to the operation of time and better teaching.’⁷⁰ This approach was rooted in decades of anti-slavery messages about the deprivation which the slaves had suffered, but was also consistent with the domestic emphasis on an educated and independent electorate and Tocquevillian observations on the failure of French self-government, as much as it was inspired by racial factors.⁷¹

In America, the Republican critique of slavery was often based on ‘the economic superiority of free to slave labour’, using ‘Elaborate statistical comparisons’.⁷² Though this economic criticism did feature in British anti-slavery, it was more often based on moralistic, religious grounds. This is unlikely, however, to reflect Seymour Drescher’s belief that the relative efficiency of slave labour had led the British to see West Indian emancipation

⁶⁶ *ST*, 29 March 1862 p. 8.

⁶⁷ *BC*, 29 November 1862 p. 2.

⁶⁸ Michael de Nie, ‘The London Press and the American Civil War’, in Joel H. Wiener and Mark Hampton (eds.), *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850-2000* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 139.

⁶⁹ *WE*, 24 June 1865 p. 5.

⁷⁰ *BvR*, 24 May 1862 p. 4, 6 September 1861 p. 4.

⁷¹ Richard Huzzey, ‘British Liberties, American Emancipation, and the Democracy of Race’, in Ella Dzelzainis and Ruth Livesey (eds.), *The American Experiment and the Idea of Democracy in British Culture, 1776-1914* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 127-8, 131, 134.

⁷² Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York, 1970), p. 43.

as a failure.⁷³ As we have seen, the popular press welcomed Lincoln's compensated domestic emancipation but lamented its duration. This was the polar opposite of the 'slow death for slavery', which gradually withdrew legal protections for slavery without compensating the slave-owners, and which Drescher argues had superseded the West Indian model by the 1860s.⁷⁴

More simply, the moralistic argument was easier to understand and more forceful – indeed, the words used have retained much of their force, despite the passage of a century and a half. The *Tadcaster Post*, for instance, considered it

a violation of all just and moral law... to breed, buy, feed or sell men and women as we do horses, dogs, pigs and sheep, and to sneer at all conjugal and domestic purity and virtue as if lust and vice were virtuous, is a state of society which must, as a natural consequence, corrupt and debase any people, and slowly yet surely bring down the judgement of Heaven.⁷⁵

This association with sexual immorality was an integral part of the British critique: every 'Southern gentleman' could be suspected of 'being a trafficker in his own flesh and blood – of leading a life of unmentionable pollutions – of being addicted to crimes and habits which combine the cruelty of fiends with the filthiness of swine'.⁷⁶ The most emotive point of Dr Cheever's lecture was when he announced that 'In selling children like cattle, it was often the slaveowner's own children that were thus disposed of (sensation).'⁷⁷

As well as the sanctity of marriage, both the Protestant work-ethic and the belief that it was God's plan for everybody to maximise the talents given to them were also directly opposed to the institution of slavery. As the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* put it:

They say that the African slave is not a man, because where he is suffered to know nothing he is shockingly ignorant – because when treated as cattle are treated, he does not exhibit that manliness which freedom alone can import – and because, when held in a helpless,

⁷³ Drescher, *Mighty Experiment*, p. 207.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

⁷⁵ *TP*, 15 October 1863 p. 4.

⁷⁶ *LT*, 21 February 1863 p. 4.

⁷⁷ *HxG*, 30 March 1861 p. 7.

hopeless, mind-killing bondage, which denies him his own will, his own children, and his right to defend either his virtue or his life, he becomes a stupid, sluggish, brainless sort of creature, whose actions betray more of the animal than of the man.⁷⁸

Yet the social exclusion which black people experienced in the North also impeded the development of these characteristics. By denying them the ability to work freely, through restrictive hiring, residence exclusions, and restrictions on public transport, it also denied them the ability to become the head of a respectable working class family; by barring them from church, it prevented them from living a fulfilling spiritual life through Christian worship. Although the British may have disagreed on whether the working classes merited the extension of the franchise, there was little dispute over whether work and faith were valuable.⁷⁹ As such, it is perhaps unsurprising that they condemned Northern segregation almost as frequently and vehemently as they condemned Southern slavery.

Racial discourse in Britain

This criticism of segregation and slavery, and the fundamental equality between black and white on which it was based, suggests there may be an opportunity to re-evaluate the effect of scientific racism. Catherine Hall, speaking for the mainstream, argued that the 1849 publication of *Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question*

marked the moment when it became legitimate for respectable, influential men publicly to profess a belief in the essential inferiority of black people... By mid-century, it had become the fashion within scientific discourse to aver that distinct and fixed racial types provided the key to human history.⁸⁰

What a detailed examination of popular contemporary opinion tends to suggest, however, is the remarkable persistence of a religiously-motivated

⁷⁸ *SDT*, 2 November 1864 p. 2.

⁷⁹ McClelland, 'England's Greatness', pp. 102-107

⁸⁰ Catherine Hall, 'Imperial Man: Edward Eyre in Australasia and the West Indies, 1833-66', in Bill Schwarz (ed.), *The Expansion of England: Race, Ethnicity and Cultural History* (London; New York, 1996), pp. 148-9; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 48.

belief in foundational racial equality. In the provinces, where the spread of any new scientific dogma was restricted by the limited networks of intellectual diffusion, references to fixed racial types were outnumbered by references to Acts 17:26, to the effect that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men'.⁸¹ Importantly, the fundamental attitude of Christianity – that all are imperfect and striving to improve – provided a basis for sympathy. As the Quaker Wilson Armistead noted, black people were 'by no means perfect, but subject to all those infirmities incident to our fallen nature.'⁸²

Perhaps the most prominent enunciation of the doctrine of scientific racism was Dr James Hunt's speech at the British Association's 1863 Newcastle meeting. However, Hunt's reception was highly sceptical: even the newspapers which were prepared to entertain his opinion still tended to disagree with him.⁸³ Moreover, although this scientific belief might have circulated effectively in the capital, there was almost no infrastructure in the provinces through which it could be disseminated. There was only one lecture which communicated Hunt's views, delivered at the Hull Literary and Philosophical Society by C.C. Blake FGS, secretary to Hunt's Anthropological Society of London.⁸⁴ However, his attendance was undoubtedly related to the fact that the chairman of the meeting and president of the society, Dr Kelburne King, was honorary secretary of the Anthropological Society's local branch. For the most part, however, the Anthropological Society was an institution against which Yorkshire identity could be mobilised:

A Yorkshireman who had attended a meeting of the Anthropological Society was asked by a friend what the learned gentlemen had been saying. 'Well... they believe that we have come from monkeys, and I thowt as how they were fast getting back again to where they came from.'⁸⁵

⁸¹ *HA*, 8 December 1860 p. 4; *HE*, 31 January 1863 p. 4; *YG*, 14 January 1865 p. 8; *YH*, 13 May 1865 p. 10.

⁸² *LM*, 24 June 1865.

⁸³ Bennett, 'Popular Reactions', pp. 44-5.

⁸⁴ *HP*, 17 February 1865.

⁸⁵ *LM*, 12 September 1866; *ECH*, 13 September 1866 p. 8; *SDT*, 13 September 1866 p. 3; *WE*, 15 September 1866 p. 3.

In contemporary discourse about race, it was the traditional anti-slavery lecturers and missionaries who held sway, and these were committed – at least in principle – to equality. In the words of Rev. T. Llewellyn, ‘God’s image in ebony was as precious as in ivory’; as Rev. Mr Gedge explained, in the Niger mission ‘there had not been a white man engaged in it, all native clergymen... with human hearts and human feelings, with minds and souls, like ourselves.’⁸⁶ This also applied to the education provided by the churches: ‘A Reader’ ‘beg[ged] to refer sceptics to the coloured students of Wesley college, in this town, for some examples of the intelligence of persons of colour.’⁸⁷

More importantly, these persons of colour often had the opportunity to speak for themselves about the situation in America. One of the most significant features of the anti-slavery lecturing circuit was the use of escaped slaves as lecturers. On the one hand, this gave them the opportunity to set the agenda; on the other, it also directly contradicted the allegation that black people were inherently inferior to white people.⁸⁸ The structure of lectures forced the speakers into a quintessentially Western format, which let them prove ‘the African race is something more than mere goods and chattels’ or ‘remove the groundless prejudice against [their] downtrodden race’.⁸⁹ The reach of the anti-slavery movement was far greater than that of the academic community. While the Anthropological Society barely ranged outside London, escaped slaves could be found lecturing in minor towns like Settle, Mirfield, Malton, Saddleworth, Holmfirth and Barnard Castle.⁹⁰ These escaped slaves also published books, which were generally more accessible than the academic texts in which the new doctrines of scientific racism circulated.⁹¹

⁸⁶ *RA*, 6 June 1863 p. 5; *TP*, 30 June 1864 p. 4.

⁸⁷ *SDT*, 3 November 1864 p. 2.

⁸⁸ R.J.M. Blackett, ‘William G. Allen: The Forgotten Professor’, *Civil War History* vol. 26, no. 1 (March 1980), pp. 48-9.

⁸⁹ *CP*, 4 May 1861 p. 1; *WG*, 12 March 1864 p. 4.

⁹⁰ *CP*, 10 August 1861 p. 1; *DR*, 9 March 1861 p. 5; *YG*, 8 June 1861 p. 9; *HC*, 14th February 1863 p. 8, 4 April 1863 p. 5 (and *DR*, 11 October 1862 p. 8); *YH*, 26 September 1863 p. 5 (and *YH*, 27 April 1861 p. 5, *RRC*, 27 April 1861 p. 3).

⁹¹ Jacob D. Green, *Narrative of the Life of J. D. Green, a Runaway Slave, from Kentucky, Containing an Account of His Three Escapes, in 1839, 1846, and 1848* (Huddersfield, 1864) [<http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/greenjd/greenjd.html>, accessed 6 October 2016]; WYAS Bradford, DB65/C4/4 (James Watkins, ‘Original and Selected Poems on Slavery’)

If anti-slavery managed to reach into even the smallest of Yorkshire towns, so too did minstrelsy. Minstrelsy featured white performers who blacked their faces with burnt cork to present burlesque parodies of what were, at least in part, intended to be scenes of slave life in America. Though it was an American invention, it rapidly spread in Britain: not only to professional troupes like Christy's, Templeton's, Rumsey and Newcomb's, but also to performances by groups like the Pontefract Amateur Ethiopian Troupe and the Bowling Coloured Minstrels.⁹²

The general image of minstrelsy has emphasised that these performances presented a wholly negative stereotype of black people, and that the image portrayed by the minstrels bled over into broader cultural perceptions of the behaviour and attributes of the race.⁹³ Although both propositions are fundamentally true, we must be prepared to nuance our assumptions about how readily theatrics were conflated with real life. For a start, although minstrelsy included scenes intended to represent plantation life, it also jumbled and blended a variety of cultural forms.⁹⁴ For instance, some performances included 'a Tyrolean solo... a singular combination of sounds – without words – resembling alternately the tones of a German fiddle and a flageolet.'⁹⁵ The 'Female Christy's Minstrels,' meanwhile, appeared 'in full Indian costume' featuring 'Songs, Duetts [sic], Glees, Dances, etc. peculiar to the Indian and Negro races.'⁹⁶ Blurring racial lines so overtly necessarily distanced the depictions from reality. This air of unreality may have been facilitated by the fact that amateur groups were familiar to their audiences, and that even in professional groups some of the minstrels

⁹² *LM*, 10 January 1863; *SM*, 2 July 1864 p. 4.

⁹³ Michael Pickering, 'Mock Blacks and Racial Mockery: The "Nigger" Minstrel and British Imperialism', in J. S. Bratton (ed.), *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage, 1790-1930* (Manchester, 1991), p. 183; John M. MacKenzie, 'Passion or Indifference? Popular Imperialism in Britain: Continuities and Discontinuities over Two Centuries', in John M. MacKenzie (ed.), *European Empires and the People: Popular Responses to Imperialism in France, Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Italy* (Manchester; New York, 2011), p. 67.

⁹⁴ J. S. Bratton, 'English Ethiopians: British Audiences and Black-Face Acts, 1835-1865', *The Yearbook of English Studies* vol. 11 (1981), pp. 135, 138, 141-2; Derek B. Scott, 'Blackface Minstrels, Black Minstrels, and Their Reception in England', in Rachel Cowgill and Julian Rushton (eds.), *Europe, Empire, and Spectacle in Nineteenth-Century British Music* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 266.

⁹⁵ *BC*, 31 October 1863 p. 2; *BO*, 10 April 1861; *The Broadview Anthology of Nineteenth-Century British Performance* (Peterborough, 2012), p. 278.

⁹⁶ *BvR*, 5 July 1862 p. 4.

were visiting their home towns.⁹⁷ In this light, minstrelsy may have echoed earlier ceremonies of misrule which incorporated face-blackening.⁹⁸

Furthermore, some of the aspects of minstrelsy which have been characterised as specifically black could more accurately be depicted as generally American. For instance, one of the characteristics of the minstrel show was the stump speech – a humorous monologue parodying academic or political public speaking.⁹⁹ However, stump oratory was more a prerogative of white Americans than the disfranchised black populace: it was the Yankee who was the *fons et origio* of ‘stump oratory and bunkum’.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, when the ‘coloured citizens’ of America produced a manifesto, the *Yorkshire Gazette* argued that ‘The first sentence has such a genuine ring of American stump oratory that we cannot believe that any black has written it.’¹⁰¹ Other characteristics of minstrelsy were also generic stereotypes about Americans at large, such as the creation of neologisms. The most famous line from the play *Our American Cousin*, one of the blockbusters of the 1850s and 1860s, was when the title character denounced the villainess of the piece as a ‘sockdologising old mantrap’. Characters like Artemus Ward (created by the American humourist Charles Farrar Browne) produced pieces so thick with dialect and neologisms as to be almost incomprehensible.¹⁰² This makes it difficult to conclude which aspects of minstrel characters the audience understood as stemming from them being black, and which from them being American.

The heavy use of dialect was a characteristic of minstrelsy, and must be considered not just in terms of generic British views on America, but also in terms of the role of dialect in provincial life. Almost all forms of Victorian drama, and many forms of literature, used dialect as a means of easily

⁹⁷ *BT*, 26 July 1862 p. 2; minstrels sometimes appeared undisguised on sheet music (Davis, *Broadview Anthology*, p. 267).

⁹⁸ A. Howkins and L. Merrick, ‘“Wee Be Black as Hell”: Ritual, Disguise and Rebellion’, *Rural History* vol. 4 (1993), pp. 47–8

⁹⁹ For the academic, see the speech of ‘Professor Julius Hannibal’ at the Beverley Mutual Improvement Society, *BvR*, 21 January 1865 p. 4; for the political, *BR*, 14 May 1863 p. 2, *MM*, 12 October 1861 p. 2, *SI*, 3 January 1862.

¹⁰⁰ *LT*, 8 June 1861 p. 4.

¹⁰¹ *YG*, 22 August 1863 p. 8.

¹⁰² *HC*, 22nd October 1864 p. 3; *LM*, 19 October 1861; *HP*, 31 March 1865.

conveying a character's origin and status.¹⁰³ However, this function of defining groups had different implications at a metropolitan, national and elite level than it did in the provinces. At the centre, dialect was an aberration, a deviation from the norm: at the fringes, dialect was an important facet of regional identity. Whether political or otherwise, letters and poetry written in Yorkshire dialect were as important a part of local life as were interjections at public meetings, recorded in their dialect forms by local newspapers. The Conservatives, as a largely English party of the elites, might be expected to champion a generic English nationalism: however, on occasion they too found use for dialect.¹⁰⁴ The use of thick American accents by minstrels undoubtedly set them apart from their audience. However, it seems plausible that, in the provinces, the emphasis lent by the use of dialect was less on inferiority and more on difference.

In most cases, dialect performed the important function of speaking truth to power. This, too, seems to have been the case for at least some of the stump speeches which formed a significant component of the practice of minstrelsy. Some speeches presumably mocked the pretensions of intellectual black people – for instance, in Quambo's 'absurd jumbling of time and place,' accompanied by antics with an umbrella.¹⁰⁵ Others, however, seem to have played a similar role to the medieval jester, whose lowly position enabled them to mock and humiliate their social superiors. One of Templeton's speeches included 'severe criticism' for 'great European potentates,' while Rumsey and Newcombe's minstrels 'brought down the house' by mocking Sheffield councillor Isaac Ironside.¹⁰⁶

It is impossible to ever know exactly what contemporaries understood by minstrelsy, and what proportion of the audience drew some or all of their views on the behaviour of different races from the performances. However, it is important to highlight that there do seem to have been a variety of possible interpretations of the performances. Furthermore, there was always the countervailing influence of the escaped slaves to demonstrate that not all

¹⁰³ Susan Belasco Smith, "A Yorkshire Burr": Language in "Shirley", *Studies in English literature 1500-1900* vol. 27, no. 4 (Autumn 1987), p. 638.

¹⁰⁴ Wakefield Local Studies Library, Box 6 (Local Government), A17: 'A Working Man's Opinion on the Wakefield Borough Election and Parliamentary Reform' (1859).

¹⁰⁵ *BR*, 14 May 1863 p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *MM*, 12 October 1861 p. 2; *SI*, 3 January 1862.

black people were clowns. However, the American Civil War resulted in the effective dissolution of the transatlantic anti-slavery network. When slavery ended, so too did the supply of escaped slaves who were both visibly Westernised and able to talk in emotive terms about the plight of others like them. Appeals by the Freedman's Aid Society would never have the same inherent motivational quality as would the plight of human beings treated as property and denied the fundamental rights of marriage and religion. During the American Civil War, the anti-slavery message seems powerful enough to have counteracted the pressure of both 'scientific' racism and minstrelsy. Without it, the progress of 'scientific' racism seems to have been inexorable.

Nationalism and noninterventionism

That Britain was so hesitant about supporting the Confederate right to national independence is perhaps surprising when set in the context of their support for European nationalism. The British looked favourably on almost every national movement available, from the Hungarians to the Circassians, generally on the utilitarian basis that these national movements best promoted constitutionalism and libertarianism. On some occasions, national independence was seen as an inherent right or appropriate aspiration in itself; for instance, a Bradford councillor explained at a meeting for Poland that 'it was unquestionably the first right of a people to decide on his own government (hear, hear).'¹⁰⁷ However, support for nationalities was often correlated with oppression by some form of multinational despotism.

In the case of Hungary, almost all newspapers highlighted traditional constitutional privileges that they were striving for. The *Sheffield Independent* rooted Hungary's claim to 'independent self-government' in its 'ancient constitutional rights' as well as its size and history.¹⁰⁸ The *Yorkshire Gazette* praised the Hungarians for defending 'their solemnly guaranteed constitutional liberties,' while the *Eastern Counties Herald* argued the Hungarians merited special treatment as 'an ancient kingdom'.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ *BR*, 2 April 1863 p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *SI*, 7 September 1861.

¹⁰⁹ *YG*, 28 December 1861 p. 8; *ECH*, 31 January 1861 p. 4.

This constitutionalist perspective on Hungarian liberty was strengthened by the parallels drawn with British circumstances. The *Leeds Times*, for instance, explained how ‘The Obergespanns (lord-lieutenants) are superseded, and the Comitats (county assemblies) are suppressed... the rights they claim to exercise are no new-fangled pretensions, the offspring of political fanaticism, or theoretical constitution-mongering. They take their stand upon the ancient laws of their country.’¹¹⁰ It is unclear whether the British willingness to connect overseas national struggles to their own reflected a teleological sense that liberation always followed the same path, or simply the prioritisation of English constitutional history. Nevertheless, they continued to do so: for instance, the conflict between King Wilhelm I and the Prussian *Landtag* was frequently interpreted as a re-enactment of the precursor to the English Civil War.¹¹¹

There was also a tendency to refer to Polish aspirations in constitutional terms, with the Conservative *Doncaster Chronicle* suggesting that Britain, France and Austria should demand ‘for the Poles a constitutional government, and that form of national autonomy guaranteed by treaty in 1815.’¹¹² The *Rotherham Advertiser* argued that the Poles hoped ‘to enjoy those laws, institutions and privileges which they regard as peculiarly their own.’¹¹³ The *Hull Advertiser* felt that Polish independence was more necessary than Italian on the grounds that ‘in central and Southern Italy... the cities and towns were always in the enjoyment of an excellent system of municipal government... [whereas] in Poland, the iron heel of the barbarian conqueror is as crushingly visible in the government of the municipality as in the command of the imperial fortress’.¹¹⁴

Perhaps because the question of Polish independence was less firmly constitutional than the Hungarian example, there was also a romantic nationalist element in British opinions of the struggle. The *Harrogate*

¹¹⁰ *LT*, 9 November 1861 p. 4.

¹¹¹ *LT*, 25 October 1862 p. 4; *HE*, 7 March 1863 p. 5; *TP*, 23 October 1862 p. 4; *ECH*, 11 June 1863 p. 4; *YH*, 3 January 1863 p. 8; *YG*, 15 June 1861 p. 8; c.f. Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 232, on Italy.

¹¹² *DC*, 6 March 1863 p. 5.

¹¹³ *RA*, 11 April 1863 p. 4, 21 February 1863 p. 4.

¹¹⁴ *HA*, 28 January 1863 p. 2; the Russian emperor also needs ‘a class of English officials capable of assisting him in overcoming the prejudices of his untravelled nobles’; c.f. praise for the ‘amended Constitutional form of government’ Poland proposes, 14 March 1863 p. 2.

Advertiser felt they were ‘in every respect more noble, chivalrous, and virtuous than their oppressors’; James Law praised the transfer of ‘national sentiment from the present patriots to their children’; and the *Sheffield Independent* highlighted how ‘The Poles cling with an ever-growing tenacity to their national existence, which it has ever been the object of their Russian oppressors to efface.’¹¹⁵ More so than in the Austrian case, some newspapers emphasised Polish racial and cultural superiority: the *Scarborough Mercury* contrasted Poland, possessing ‘intellects capable of the grandest development’ with Russia, ‘the fatherland... of barbarity, of religious fanaticism and superstition’.¹¹⁶ Yet, even in the Polish case, a liberal constitutional system was expected to ensue: ‘peoples and nations will no longer allow themselves to be crushed under the iron heel of tyranny.’¹¹⁷

That British support for nationalism was intrinsically bound up with constitutionalism may be seen in the case of the joint Prussian-Austrian attack on the Danish province of Schleswig-Holstein. In this case, British support for a union of nationalities was overridden by contempt for German despotism, resulting in support for the Danes. The *Leeds Times*, which also doubted just how German the Holsteiners were, felt the annexation would ‘exchange a fair and constantly-increasing measure of constitutional freedom for all the rigours of a contemptible and malignant despotism,’ highlighting how Austria ‘champions the principles of nationality in the Duchies of Schleswig-Holstein, but strangles it in Venice, Hungary, and Gallicia [sic].’¹¹⁸ The *Keighley News* felt ‘The appeal to the nationality principle is a strange one to be raised by Powers that send Poles, Hungarians and Venetians to slaughter the Danes in the name of German rights,’ and that ‘the Germans of Schleswig had no more right than the Germans of Bradford to carry their pretensions of nationality into a country never included in the German Empire.’¹¹⁹ Even the *Bradford Review*, which supported the Germans rather than the Danes, felt continued German disunity was preferable to European

¹¹⁵ *HgA*, 9 May 1863 p. 3; *BR*, 2 April 1863 p. 3; *SI*, 20 April 1861.

¹¹⁶ *SM*, 9 May 1863 p. 4; *TP*, 14 May 1863 p. 4.

¹¹⁷ *WFP*, 13 April 1861 p. 2.

¹¹⁸ *LT*, 28 November 1863 p. 5, 5 March 1864 p. 4.

¹¹⁹ *Keighley News*, 27 February 1864 p. 2.

war serving 'the interests of despots'.¹²⁰ Similarly, the *Yorkshire Gazette* might 'sympathise with the desire of the Great Germanic nation to unite their divided elements more fully', while also feeling that 'the spoliation of Denmark is written in the blood of a free and brave people.'¹²¹ It was not merely the right of peoples to set up their own systems of government, but the potential to expand the sphere of liberal constitutional powers which interested the British.

If the British lacked enthusiasm about the nationalist movement as applied to Schleswig-Holstein, their support of Confederate nationality also appears much more muted when set in context. 'On this particular question of Poland... there is no difference of opinion' the *Leeds Times* confidently averred, subsequently advocating their recognition as belligerents.¹²² The *Bradford Observer* had an answer for those who asked why recognise Poland but not the South: Poland had 'a proven nationality... a name and a place in history.'¹²³ There also seems to have been far more support for Italian independence than for Confederate. The Halifax MP James Stansfield expressed his belief that 'the Italian movement is no question of party politics. I do not know the English party which does not desire the freedom, the independence, and I may add the unity of the Italian people.'¹²⁴ The *Leeds Mercury* agreed: 'Never did any nation watch the course of events with livelier emotion and more unselfish good-will' than did Britain with Italy.¹²⁵ Yet enthusiasm rarely overcame the tendency to hold aloof. The *Sheffield Times* asked why Poland should not 'succeed as well as the Confederates', but also felt that 'Any encouragement or aid which the voice of the English people... can give, ought to be afforded. Further than this the nation has no call to go.'¹²⁶ The *Hull Advertiser* supported Polish and Southern independence, but still felt that 'The lives of Englishmen are too valuable to be flung away in contests of this description'.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ *BR*, 26 December 1863 p. 4.

¹²¹ *YG*, 23 February 1861 p. 8, 31 December 1864 p. 8.

¹²² *LT*, 7 March 1863 p. 4, 19 September 1863 p. 4.

¹²³ *BO*, 16 July 1863.

¹²⁴ *HxG*, 16 November 1861 p. 7.

¹²⁵ *LM* 9 July 1861.

¹²⁶ *ST*, 21 March 1863 p. 8.

¹²⁷ *HA*, 14 March 1863 p. 4, 18 July 1863 p. 4, 22 July 1863 p. 2.

If we look away from sympathy and towards active support, there was greater unanimity about going to war on behalf of Denmark than the Confederacy. At first glance, we might assume these were Conservative newspapers seeking to support Conservative efforts to dethrone Palmerston using foreign affairs. However, newspapers across the political spectrum backed war on behalf of the Danes: from the Conservative *Leeds Intelligencer* who rejected the suggestion that Britain could abandon Christian IX without dishonour, to the advanced Liberal *Leeds Express* which argued that Britain must risk war to maintain its great power status. Even the *Leeds Times* backed war, though only if the other signatories to the Treaty of London joined in.¹²⁸ The *Malton Messenger* claimed that ‘There never was an occasion when the people of this country... more sincerely and thoroughly sympathised with a nation in distress... the almost universal impulse in England was to draw the sword’.¹²⁹ The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* made the comparison clear: Denmark was more worthy than the Confederacy.¹³⁰

This greater support for action may be explained by the suggestion that the European balance of power was more immediately relevant to Britain than the result of the American Civil War. However, it is not possible to reconcile these relative levels of support with the assertion that ‘No other event... had as decided an effect on British life as did the Civil War.’¹³¹ Once again, by setting the Confederacy in its broader context we see that the levels of support they attracted were by no means exceptional: in fact, they attracted less enthusiasm than many other comparable causes.

In many cases, Confederate supporters compared their cause to other national movements, in the hope of matching their levels of support or success – something that it seems unlikely that they would have done, if the Confederate cause was without equal. The *Pontefract Telegraph* considered that recognition ‘would be as much warranted by international law as was the recognition of Italy’.¹³² Though the *Halifax Guardian* opposed the recognition of Poland, it used it to press the Confederate case: ‘If we

¹²⁸ *LT*, 25 June 1864 p. 5.

¹²⁹ *MM*, 3 December 1864 p. 2.

¹³⁰ *SDT*, 8 June 1864 p. 5. For further examples of support for war, see *WFP*, 30 April 1864 p. 5; *BC*, 16 January 1864 p. 2; *TP*, 14 January 1864 p. 4; *YG*, 6 February 1864 p. 8.

¹³¹ Blackett, *Divided Hearts*, p. 4.

¹³² *PT*, 11 January 1862 p. 1.

recognise this skeleton, with what grace can we refuse any longer to unite with the Emperor of France in recognising the Southern Confederacy?’¹³³ Father Conway of Oldham ‘asked why it was that England was so long in recognising the Southern States. Victor Emmanuel was recognised in Naples and Tuscany in half the time’¹³⁴ ‘A Lover of White Freedom,’ meanwhile, pointed out that ‘Whether the Polish nobles treated their peasants well or ill did not lessen European sympathy’ for them.¹³⁵ In Sheffield, Henry Turner – like the pseudonymous correspondent ‘Locomotion’ – felt that if Hungary or Poland had ‘maintained a two years’ war with the same success, those who were crying out against the South would have been the strongest advocates of immediate recognition (Cheers).’¹³⁶

It is evident that many Confederate supporters perceived their cause to be somehow treated unfairly or differently from mainstream opinion. Despite years of informed commentary in Britain on the sectional divisions within America, the Confederacy simply could not garner support for its independence.¹³⁷ This had a clear cause. If British support for national movements was dependent on their likelihood of producing a more liberal, constitutional society, then the deep scepticism of the Southern economic and political systems necessarily militated against enthusiasm for Confederate independence. The ‘antislavery wall’ was not created by the Emancipation Proclamation: it existed from the very beginning.¹³⁸ Mainstream opinion often saw Confederate independence as inevitable, or had faith in God turning the victory against the South by making its result the end of slavery. However, there is little to suggest that Yorkshire – and by extension Britain more generally – was enthusiastic about an independent Confederacy, or was turning against earlier attitudes of racial egalitarianism.

Although the British sense of satisfaction with their position in the world bordered on smugness, we should accurately reflect their beliefs as to how

¹³³ *HxG*, 21 March 1863 p. 4.

¹³⁴ *BO*, 20 November 1862.

¹³⁵ *SI*, 29 January 1863.

¹³⁶ *SI*, 4 June 1863; for ‘Locomotion,’ 31 January 1863.

¹³⁷ Peter O’Connor, “The Inextinguishable Struggle Between North and South,” *American Sectionalism in the British Mind, 1832-1863* (unpub. PhD thesis, Northumbria University, 2014), pp. 16-18, 179-80.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 256-7.

they had arrived at it. In particular, we should understand to what extent they considered self-government a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon prerogative, and from what causes this stemmed. If contemporary Britain traced its origin to primarily racial factors, the prospect of other nations and races managing to mimic the British was limited; if it came from cultural factors, there was the potential for other countries to do the same, albeit with a transitional period. Given the widespread support for liberal constitutional nationalist movements and the opposition to hasty enfranchisement of American freemen, it seems more likely that they believed the cultural thesis.

This interpretation is strengthened by the answers most settled on when asked to describe the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxons. These were less often detailed specifically as the capacity for self-government than as a grab-bag of personal attributes.¹³⁹ The *Leeds Times* considered them to be ‘pluck, and truth, and frank manly behaviour’; the *Leeds Express* ‘firmness of character and build’.¹⁴⁰ The *Bradford Observer* favoured ‘daring and endurance’, and the *Bradford Review* ‘the tenacious pursuit of great aims’.¹⁴¹ The *Halifax Guardian* considered them to be ‘intellectual energy... commercial activity... [and] indomitable spirit’, and Reverend Gervase Smith, speaking at Hull, thought it was readiness ‘to suffer for, rather than abandon the truth’.¹⁴² The readers of the *Rotherham Advertiser*, meanwhile, were offered a variety of explanations. The paper itself thought it was the ability to maintain its national character overseas, which stemmed from ‘cricket, yachting, boxing, wrestling, and other English pastimes’.¹⁴³ However, Henry Vincent – speaking in the town – believed it was ‘that they loved work’ and Mr H. Harrison considered it to be ‘our invaluable political constitution, favoured by the insular position of the country, and the natural courage and nobility of the race’.¹⁴⁴ Many elements of this variety of national characteristics may have contributed to British success in maintaining liberal institutions, as the *Yorkshire Gazette* acknowledged when praising ‘the good sense, the moderation, the intelligence, the practical ability, the persevering

¹³⁹ Mandler, *English National Character*, p. 53.

¹⁴⁰ *LT*, 24 December 1864 p. 5; *LE*, 21 February 1863 p. 4.

¹⁴¹ *BO*, 19 June 1861; *BR*, 30 March 1861 p. 4.

¹⁴² *HxG*, 5 January 1861 p. 4; *HP*, 1 February 1861.

¹⁴³ *RA*, 5 July 1862 p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ *RA*, 28 January 1865 p. 8, 18 February 1865 p. 4.

industry, and the right principle' of the English.¹⁴⁵ However, there was little indication that those listing them felt that Britain was exceptional in a way other countries and races could not mimic.

Catherine Hall argues that the biological racist Robert Knox established that 'Civilisation depended... on the separation of races, not on their harmonious integration.'¹⁴⁶ However, the British understood the Anglo-Saxon 'race' itself not as a pure strain but as a mixture. In Barnsley, Rev. R.A. Redford MA of Hull emphasised the blending of Saxon, Teutonic, Danish and Norman characteristics, while Mr Applebee attributed British greatness to 'Celtic imagination, Danish pluck and fire, Roman love of order and of law, and Norman self-sustaining command... grafted on the trunk of Saxon plodding, industry and endurance'.¹⁴⁷ Henry Vincent at Rotherham told his audience that 'The English people were built of the odds and ends of the entire universe. There never was such a queer mixture (laughter)', and when the American Elihu Burritt described the British union of Latin, Teutonic, and Norman elements, 'he wished his audience to bear in mind the equal importance of each element that was combined'.¹⁴⁸ This sense that Britain was a fusion of races was even more pertinent in Yorkshire, with its sense of a distinct Danish heritage, strengthened through lectures on topics like 'the Danish occupancy in Cleveland, and the traces it has left', which dwelt 'upon the old manners and customs still kept up in Cleveland, especially in the Dales'.¹⁴⁹

Although the British were broadly clear that the original Anglo-Saxons were a mixture, there was a smaller degree of consensus on whether this distinction could be lost. The *Eastern Counties Herald* argued that it already had been, as the Union victory represented 'a motley host of Yankees, Irish and Germans... [triumphing] over a race which can boast of a pure Anglo-Saxon origin'.¹⁵⁰ However, the *Herald* was already unclear on racial terms: it

¹⁴⁵ *YG*, 1 November 1862 p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ Hall, 'Imperial Man', p. 149.

¹⁴⁷ *BC*, 24 November 1860 p. 8, 11 March 1865 p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ *HP*, 13 January 1865.

¹⁴⁹ *WG*, 31 January 1863 p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ *ECH*, 9 July 1863 p. 4; 27 April 1865 p. 4.

had previously called ‘the Americans’ ‘a nomad agricultural race’, and the Poles ‘a community of the ablest representatives of our race’.¹⁵¹

Perhaps influenced by Hunt’s thoughts on racial degeneration, there were suggestions that the Americans were falling away from British standards. A.R. Wallace FRGS argued that their ‘peculiar characteristics’ demonstrated ‘physical change in a people... dependent on material and moral causes’.¹⁵² In the absence of a full understanding of how racial characteristics developed and were communicated, these moral suggestions were common. The *Barnsley Chronicle*, for instance, noted the suggestions of physiologists ‘that the Americans have gradually acquired something of the Red Indian caste of countenance’ and wondered if the violence of the American civil war indicated that they had also acquired ‘the spirit of the savage’.¹⁵³

However, too much can be made of this issue of degeneration. For a start, papers were as changeable on this fundamental topic as on other issues of daily interest. In July 1862, for instance, the *Leeds Times* felt it was ‘still an open question’ if the Anglo-Saxon race could ‘maintain itself unimpaired in the New World’; by October, though the theory was ‘countenanced by many notable scientific names,’ the paper was ‘disposed to reject’ it.¹⁵⁴ More importantly, the idea of an Anglo-Saxon Confederacy construed on racial lines appears to have received little contemporary support in the Yorkshire press.¹⁵⁵ When the *Leeds Times* speculated about Anglo-Saxon degradation, it based this on ‘unmistakeable symptoms of both bodily and mental degeneracy... discernible in the native Americans of the Northern and Southern States’.¹⁵⁶ Meanwhile, when the *Bradford Observer* lamented the passing away of the close ties between British and American political life, it did so by citing both the Pilgrim Fathers and Virginia’s connection ‘with the

¹⁵¹ *ECH*, 15 August 1861 p. 5, 5 March 1863 p. 5.

¹⁵² *LI*, 5 December 1863 p. 7.

¹⁵³ *BC*, 5 November 1864 p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ *LT*, 12 July 1862 p. 4; 4 October 1862 p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ Debrulle, ‘Anglo-Saxon Confederacy’, p. 599.

¹⁵⁶ *LT*, 12 July 1862 p. 4. By ‘native Americans’ it means US citizens born in the New World, rather than what we would now term ‘Native Americans’.

patrician descent of families sprung from the adventurous companions of Raleigh' – neither of which it felt were still valid.¹⁵⁷

Conclusion

During the period of the American Civil War, then, there was a fundamental continuity in British attitudes towards race. Scientific attitudes may have been changing, but Hunt's complaints about 'the profound ignorance which exists in the minds of even the semi-scientific public on the Negro race' suggests that this was a slower process than has been characterised.

Mainstream attitudes, however, remained fixed on the civilizational and religious approach, in which all races shared a fundamental equality of foundation and potential – though this approach, of course, left room for stereotypes and discrimination.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, there was optimism about the potential for other European nations to follow the British path towards liberty. It was the potential to expand liberty, rather than the mere question of nationality, which tended to be the ultimate determinant of whether Britain supported nationalist movements. So how would the British respond when faced with movements clamouring for liberty in territories which they controlled?

¹⁵⁷ *BO*, 27 March 1862.

¹⁵⁸ James Hunt, *On the Negro's Place in Nature* (London, 1863), v-vi.

Chapter 7: Colonies and Empire, 1865-7

So far, the examination of racial thought in the 1860s has focused on views of areas outside British control. However, as the world's foremost imperial power, the practicalities of colonial government often tested British theories about race and civilisation to destruction. It was easy to proclaim fundamental human unity when criticising American backwardness on racial questions, but substantially more difficult when such proclamations threatened to weaken Britain's hold on its own colonial possessions. How far, then, were British proclamations consistent across the globe?

To understand this, this chapter examines three imperial hotspots. In New Zealand, where the native Maori clashed with settlers in order to protect both their land and their way of life, British governors struggled not only to win the war but to create a lasting settlement between the two sides. In Jamaica, the long stagnation of the black community after emancipation combined with the anxiety of the white colonial elite following the Indian Rebellion, resulting in riot and bloody suppression. In Ireland, meanwhile, tensions of language, religion, culture and race spilled over in a transnational movement for independence which threatened British dominance in Canada as well as Ireland.

Developments in these three areas have been seen as key to Britain's pathway towards imperialism in the later nineteenth century. However, they have also been understood as spurring forward 'scientific' racism, and contributing towards the increasing subdivision of the human race – not solely based on skin colour, but also strengthening earlier divisions between 'Celts' and 'Saxons'.¹ To what extent did popular attitudes towards self-government show this to be a primarily Anglo-Saxon phenomenon?

¹ Amy E. Martin, "Becoming a Race Apart": Representing Irish Racial Difference and the British Working Class in Victorian Critiques of Capitalism', in Terrence MacDonough (ed.), *Was Ireland a Colony? Economics, Politics and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), pp. 189-192; Catherine Hall, 'The Nation within and Without', in Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland, and Jane Rendall (eds.), *Defining the Victorian Nation: Class, Race, Gender and the British Reform Act of 1867* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 212; MacClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 52.

New Zealand

The growth in racism has been connected to changes in Britain's colonial relations, and the balance between colonists and the indigenous inhabitants. As Catherine Hall put it, 'The Colonial Office and public opinion in Britain were moving away from the influence of the humanitarian lobby, with its emphasis on native welfare, and were increasingly preoccupied with settler development and self-government.'² The policy of responsible government therefore reflects British reluctance to shoulder the financial burden of empire, and willingness to hand policy on the ground over to local settlers – either heedless or actively in favour of negative effects on the indigenous population.

However, this does not seem to be borne out by the New Zealand conflict. Instead, newspapers across the political spectrum remained sceptical about the motivations of colonists, and reluctant to support them. The advanced Liberal *Leeds Times* was 'by no means satisfied that we have justice on our side', while the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* considered colonists 'too prone to disregard native rights and interests,' hoping the 'fine race' of Maori could be spared the fate of other indigenous people.³ The Conservative *Yorkshire Gazette*, too, suspected 'justice is not wholly on the side of the colonists'.⁴ This was also the stance espoused by the Aborigines Protection Society: S.J. Abington emphasised that the Maori had been reasonable during the land disputes, and if 'the governor had acted prudently no difficulty would have been experienced'.⁵

Moreover, in some cases support for the settlers weakened with time. This often hinged on a difference in material interests between colony and metropole: whereas the settlers wanted land, the British wanted stability. For instance, the advanced Liberal *Bradford Review* initially saw the war as a 'brutal outrage on the part of the natives' and believed they 'have perhaps been treated with far too much consideration'.⁶ Yet when land confiscation

² Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 47; Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 189.

³ *LT*, 17 November 1860 p. 5; *SDT*, 17 March 1862 p. 2.

⁴ *YG*, 21 November 1863 p. 8.

⁵ *YH*, 3 November 1860 p. 10.

⁶ *BR*, 18 July 1863 p. 4, 24 October 1863 p. 4.

appeared likely, it trusted Britain would veto such acts even though ‘the colonists, who are accustomed to regard the New Zealanders as beings of an inferior species’ believed them ‘perfectly just’.⁷ Tellingly, as will be considered later, this suggests that seeing the Maori as inferior was viewed as a colonial prerogative. In general, the dominant view was that of the *Leeds Times*, which expected the New Zealand government to tell the Maori that

Your Great Mother is not incensed; she is only sad because her white and dark children cannot live together... if you will try to live peaceably, you shall have fair-play and fair price for your lands when you want to sell them; for the Queen wishes the Maoris to live and prosper, and not to die before the face of her own people.⁸

The settler press has been suggested as one of the main agents for defeating the humanitarian approach towards colonial governance, in a deliberate strategy of communication.⁹ If true, it should also be noted that by the 1860s at least some members of the British press were becoming sceptical of the accuracy of the views being provided to them: the *Yorkshire Gazette* ‘wished that the English public could have a clear and truthful statement of the native side of this unhappy question’.¹⁰

Elaine Musgrave has suggested that, in India, the figure of the sepoy was deliberately ‘invoked to rally the metropolitan and colonial British together’ when fair legislation threatened the privileged position of settlers.¹¹ In New Zealand, however, there was far less sympathy for the plight of the settlers: only one newspaper, the *Leeds Times*, accepted the inevitability of backing the settlers against their ‘savage’ foe. In less than a month, it moved from saying that ‘colonists must be left to bear the expense of native wars’ to believing that this stance was ‘useless,’ owing to the ‘decidedly material and earthly’ nature of the ‘loyalty of free-born Britons ten thousand miles away’: those colonies would ‘cease to care for the sovereignty of the British Crown’ as soon as Britain stopped paying for their wars, making the financial

⁷ *BR*, 5 March 1864 p. 4.

⁸ *LT*, 15 October 1864 p. 8.

⁹ Alan Lester, ‘British Settler Discourse and the Circuits of Empire’, *History Workshop Journal* vol. 54, no. 1 (2002), pp. 32, 37-40.

¹⁰ *YG*, 26 December 1863 p. 8.

¹¹ Musgrave, ‘Shadows of Mutiny’, p. 59.

sacrifice worth paying.¹² Most newspapers, however, agreed with the *York Herald* that

the best guarantee against a recurrence of these hostile encounters, would be to throw the expense of conducting them on the settlers themselves... by their aggressive spirit, [they] are constantly provoking the natives... They are those who gain by the wars, and, under these circumstances, it is hard that the mother country should be saddled with all the expenses.¹³

It swung behind the war in the belief that the Maori objective was to ‘obliterate all traces of civilisation and Christianity’ from the North Island, hoping ‘that the natives, who have needlessly provoked the war, will be taught a lesson which they will not soon forget.’¹⁴ However, once done, the government should ‘let the New Zealand colonists distinctly understand that any future fighting must be at their own cost’.¹⁵ Its neighbouring *Yorkshire Gazette* believed that ‘The colonists may be in the right, but, still, it is scarcely fair in them to ask us always to fight their battles... It sometimes makes men civil even to disagreeable neighbours, if they know they must get out of their own rows in their own way.’¹⁶ This accountability was one of the fundamental principles of responsible government in the colonies: as Gladstone explained to a Select Committee including the Sheffield MP John Roebuck, ‘no community... not primarily charged with... its own defence is really... a free community’.¹⁷ However, it was also the basis of demands for the extension of the franchise at home: that reposing decision-making power in the taxpayers was the only way to ensure fiscal responsibility.

Even those fighting were not universally favourable to the colonists. An officer of the 68th (Durham Light Infantry), which recruited extensively from Yorkshire, called colonial ministers ‘a lot of scoundrels’ in contrast to the Maori – ‘a very fine, plucky race,’ with ‘so far as I can see, right on their

¹² *LT*, 22 August 1863 p. 4, 12 September 1863 p. 5.

¹³ *YH*, 24 August 1861 p. 8.

¹⁴ *YH*, 24 October 1863 p. 8.

¹⁵ *YH*, 9 July 1864 p. 8.

¹⁶ *YG*, 27 December 1862 p. 8.

¹⁷ Report from the Select Committee on Colonial Military Expenditure, *Parliamentary Papers* 1861, 423: p. 257, paragraphs 3781-2

side.’¹⁸ His colleagues did not all find the Maori so praiseworthy: one private letter talked about ‘atrocities committed by these warlike savages’ for whom the men felt only ‘utter contempt and disgust’.¹⁹ Yet others tempered their criticism: ‘A young officer whose parents reside in Beverley’ frequently called the Maori ‘niggers,’ but also described them ‘continuing the fight most gallantly’; Thomas Fall of the 68th felt that the Maori were ‘sly dogs’ and ‘savages,’ but described the native fortifications as ‘the most ingeniously constructed affairs I ever met with... defended with a spirit which we cannot but admire’.²⁰ Though views may have soured as conflict escalated, early praise for the Maori was never abandoned completely.²¹ Among those whose lives were not at stake, views of the Maori were generally favourable. A letter from Coromandel opined that ‘most of them are very dirty... [and] very lazy, but very civil,’ and a letter from Marlborough noted of one Maori employed on the harvest that he was ‘a good man to work, and very steady... I pay him 20s a week, the same as white men get, and I would rather have him than most whites about the place.’²² A lady also felt that ‘The Maories [sic] here dress like gentlemen. Indeed, some of them you would scarcely know from any dark Englishman.’²³

This idea that the Maori were exceptionally close to the British was also acknowledged by comparing them to earlier stages of British development.²⁴ The *Leeds Times* noted they ‘have been called the English of the Southern Seas... superior in natural courage and intelligence to the abject human creatures found by the first settlers in Australia... not unlike the aboriginal Britons who encountered Caesar and his legions on our own shores.’²⁵ Radical General Thomas Perronet Thompson described the question as being ‘whether a gallant race of aborigines, much resembling in many points those found in Britain by Caesar, could be moulded into British

¹⁸ *LI*, 1 October 1864 p. 3.

¹⁹ *HA*, 28 October 1863 p. 4.

²⁰ *BvR*, 20 February 1864 pp. 4-5 (likely Lieutenant John Easter); *SM*, 30 July 1864 p. 4.

²¹ In contrast to Christina A. Thompson, ‘“A Dangerous People Whose Only Occupation Is War”: Maori and Pakeha in 19th-Century New Zealand’, *Journal of Pacific History* vol. 32, no. 1 (1997), p. 114.

²² *LE*, 16 May 1863 p. 6; *WG*, 20 August 1864 p. 2

²³ *WG*, 20 August 1864 p. 2

²⁴ James Bennett, ‘Maori as Honorary Members of the White Tribe’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* vol. 29, no. 3 (2001), p. 38.

²⁵ *LT*, 17 November 1860 p. 5.

rule... The difference was not much more than with the Highland tribes in the '45.'²⁶ Importantly, this suggested that 'there seemed to be a fair chance of raising them to the level of western civilisation, and at the same time preserving the pristine vigour and the distinctive qualities of the race.'²⁷ It also suggested the potential to integrate them in the British system: Thompson, for instance, blamed 'hungerers and thirsters after the natives' land' rather than a clash of civilisations or the Maori themselves for the disputes.

Elsewhere, the Maori's civilised characteristics were emphasised. The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* complained that

"learned pundits"... assume that a race which numbers among its ranks farmers, shipbuilders, shipowners, fashionably-dressed horsemen, clever pleaders in the law courts, and soldiers who don't object to face Europeans when the odds before them are three to one, is accurately described as a race of "savages".²⁸

In fact, the *Telegraph* continued, they were 'a race that manifests in bargain-making the shrewdness and caution of the Scottish character... teachers, preachers, church-builders, owners of steam flour mills, shipowners, and shareholders in the colonial banks.' The *Barnsley Chronicle* was a little less complimentary, but emphasised that the Maori had 'manly gifts... reasoning powers of the finest quality.... good judgement, a fine person, great possessions,' and were mature enough to deal with an open capitalist market.²⁹

Catherine Hall has argued that the Treaty of Waitangi, the foundational contract between British and Maori which provided a basis other than conquest for British assumption of sovereignty over New Zealand, was 'an experiment akin to emancipation – were the blacks capable of emulating the British?'³⁰ As we have seen, however, the Maori defied the broad division between 'black' and 'white' – if such a stark, ungraduated division ever existed in the minds of the mid-Victorians. More importantly, if

²⁶ *BC*, 26 December 1863 p. 2.

²⁷ *LT*, 17 November 1860 p. 5.

²⁸ *SDT*, 14 June 1865 p. 2.

²⁹ *BC*, 30 July 1864 p. 2.

³⁰ Hall, 'Imperial Man', p. 147.

this 'experiment' was focused on the possibility of the Maori adopting representative institutions, then by the 1860s the experiment seems to have determined that just like settlers, the Maori deserved self-government.

Perhaps more importantly, this conclusion happened before the withdrawal of British troops forced pragmatic settlers to bring the more amenable Maori factions (the *kupapa*) within the tent of self-government.³¹ When Sir George Grey planned to grant the Maori civil institutions, newspapers from the Conservative *Leeds Intelligencer* to the Liberal *Barnsley Times* endorsed his plan.³² Nowhere was there outright opposition to the plan, with the *Sheffield Independent* going furthest in its praise:

The Maories [sic] might enjoy in certain districts of the country full municipal rights, send their representatives to the colonial parliament, and perhaps furnish from among themselves members of the colonial Ministry... If their readiness to acquire the arts of peace be equal to their quickness in learning to fight white men with their own weapons, we may augur great things for them.³³

This acknowledgement that the Maori were to be an integral part of the future settlement of New Zealand was a stark contradiction to the supposed belief that 'the Maori was inevitably dying out as a result of contact with Europeans.'³⁴ This idea, which Belich argues 'received a fresh impetus... from Social Darwinism,' was by no means unquestioned in this period. Though Dilke's *Greater Britain* featured the belief, it was less Darwinistic than might have been presumed, and other educated opinions differed.³⁵ More importantly, at the popular level it was far more common to suggest that 'the Maori was both worthy and capable of assimilation into British civilisation,' a belief which Belich suggests emerges later (from the 1885 book *The Aryan*

³¹ James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Rosedale, N.Z., 2007), p. 265.

³² *LI*, 18 January 1862 p. 6; *BT*, 18 January 1862 p. 2.

³³ *SI*, 18 October 1864.

³⁴ Belich, *New Zealand Wars*, p. 299.

³⁵ Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order* (Princeton, 2007), pp. 115-6; Miles Taylor, 'Republics versus Empires: Charles Dilke's Republicanism Reconsidered', in David S. Nash and Antony Taylor (eds.), *Republicanism in Victorian Society* (Stroud, 2000), pp. 31-2; John Stenhouse, "'A Disappearing Race before We Came Here": Doctor Alfred Kingcome Newman, the Dying Maori, and Victorian Scientific Racism', *New Zealand Journal of History* vol. 30, no. 2 (1996), p. 127.

Maori).³⁶ After all, the Britons of the 1860s seem to have assumed that Macaulay's New Zealander contemplating the ruins of London, who symbolised the inevitability of Britain following Rome's route of imperial decline, would not be a Pakeha settler, but a civilised Maori.³⁷

The only prominent public figure in Yorkshire to both predict and welcome the Maori being exterminated was John Arthur Roebuck MP, whose position as an outlier among British public opinion may be becoming as familiar to the reader as it was to contemporaries. Roebuck felt that 'European civilization' was 'destruction to the brown man... the sooner the Maori was destroyed the better.'³⁸ Yet Roebuck seems to have been as isolated in these beliefs as he was in others. In the House of Commons, his position was met with parenthetical shock: "They were about to dispossess the wild animals of New Zealand... the most mischievous [of which] is the wild man. ["Oh, oh!"] I knew you would cry "oh, oh!" but of that I am quite sure.'³⁹ In his constituency, the electors shouted 'shame' when he repeated his argument, his opponent Thomas Campbell Foster made a detailed speech directly contradicting Roebuck, and the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* mocked the comparison between the Maori – 'fleet of foot, supple of limb, fluent of speech, stately of stature... sublimely brave' – and Roebuck – 'the little one,' 'the lesser mortal, who... says with rasping voice, "Sir, I perceive you are brown, and therefore an inferior animal"'.⁴⁰

Clearly, then, the British did not by any means see the Maori as 'helpless and inferior,' inevitably to be replaced by settlers, as suggested by the 'Fatal Impact' thesis.⁴¹ However, it was easier to have respect for the Maori as a race of 'noble savages,' than to treat the former slaves of Britain's West Indian colonists with the respect they deserved. After all, though anti-slavery activists may have encouraged sympathy with the slave, they did this

³⁶ Belich, *New Zealand Wars*, p. 300.

³⁷ Kelly J. Mays, 'Looking Backward, Looking Forward: The Victorians in the Rearview Mirror of Future History', *Victorian Studies* vol. 53, no. 3 (2011), pp. 450-3; William Howard Russell, *General Todleben's History of the Defence of Sevastopol, 1854-5: A Review* (London, 1865), p. 1; *HP*, 23 October 1857.

³⁸ *HC Debs* 165, cc.1448-9, 13 March 1862.

³⁹ *HC Debs* 177, c.1486, 10 March 1865.

⁴⁰ *SI*, 10 June 1865 p. 6, 7 July 1865 p. 3; *SDT*, 16 July 1864 p. 6.

⁴¹ Fee Lian Kwen, 'Interpreting Maori History: A Case for Historical Sociology', *Journal of the Polynesian Society*. vol. 96, no. 4 (1987), p. 446.

through an infantilising narrative that denied black agency.⁴² So how would Britain respond when the Jamaicans reacted angrily against the continued domination of the white planting elite, and those colonial elites replied with violence?

Jamaica

The historiography of the Morant Bay rebellion has focused on the concept of political division in Britain. On the one hand, we have the Jamaica Committee, representing the leading lights of intellectual and activist Liberalism, raising funds to privately prosecute all those involved in the violent and excessive suppression of the disturbances from the governor downwards. On the other, we see the arch-Conservatives of the Eyre Defence Fund holding banquets to praise the governor for his swift and decisive action against impulsive savages, including the judicial murder of mixed-race Assembly member and reformer George William Gordon under the dubious shelter of martial law, and looking with concern towards the potential extension of the franchise in Britain. In fact, both Eyre's supporters and his opponents seem to have shared a surprising amount of common ground.

In particular, both sides were committed to an investigation into what had gone on. In Huddersfield, the meeting held to condemn the violence also petitioned the government for 'a speedy and strict enquiry'.⁴³ At the same time, on the other side of the question, 150 'clergy, magistrates, merchants, and other influential gentlemen' wrote to the colonial secretary requesting 'a strict investigation,' but withholding judgement on whether Eyre had used 'undue and excessive severity' and calling such condemnation 'unjust and premature'.⁴⁴ Though the commitment to an investigation can fairly be ascribed to the fact that both sides thought they were right, it does show a degree of commitment to a nominal truth. Perhaps more importantly, it is a less hard-line stance than had been adopted in the case of China eight years earlier, where those who advocated sympathy for colonial governors forced to

⁴² Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 323.

⁴³ *HC*, 16 December 1865 p. 6.

⁴⁴ *HC*, 16 December 1865 p. 8.

make hard decisions had not suggested that an inquiry might be necessary to vindicate their judgement.

The Liberal press were willing, perhaps even eager, to paint their Conservative rivals as supporters of Eyre and all his atrocities.⁴⁵ Their position, however, was more nuanced than this. In Hull, for instance, the Liberal *Hull Advertiser*'s stance that the events reflected 'disgrace upon the British name' received more support from the Conservative *Hull Packet* than its fellow Liberal *Eastern Counties Herald*.⁴⁶ From the very start, the former broadly endorsed the principle of the suppression while decrying its severity: it repeatedly declared Gordon's execution to be a murder.⁴⁷ The latter, however, vociferously supported Eyre, comparing the Jamaica Committee to the Sheffield Foreign Affairs Committee in its misguided activism, arguing that the goal of the insurgents was 'the destruction of every white man, and the degradation of every white woman,' and accusing those who opposed Eyre of having sided with the Sepoys.⁴⁸ Needless to say, it also supported 'a most searching investigation' and intended to 'reserve our judgment until the case against both parties has been fully heard.'⁴⁹

This willingness to revise views in the light of new evidence was not always a mere pretence, intended to make the newspapers appear more reasonable to their readers, only to be abandoned when the investigation proved unfavourable. In fact, the Royal Commission's report does seem to have softened the position of some of Eyre's supporters. The *Leeds Intelligencer*, for instance, refused to censure Eyre just because he was too severe for those 'regarding the business from a distance and in safety'.⁵⁰ The paper subsequently argued that the Commission's report 'completely disposes of the negrophilist version of the Morant Bay revolt'.⁵¹ Nevertheless, after a year or so, the paper felt safe to endorse the withholding of sympathy

⁴⁵ *WE*, 23 December 1865 p. 5; *LT*, 3 February 1866 p. 4.

⁴⁶ *HA*, 22 November 1865 p. 2.

⁴⁷ *HP*, 24 November 1865, 15 December 1865.

⁴⁸ *ECH*, 12 July 1866 p. 5; 18 January 1866 p. 5; 16 November 1865 p. 5.

⁴⁹ *ECH*, 23 November 1865 p. 5; 15 February 1866 p. 5.

⁵⁰ *LI*, 25 November 1865 p. 5.

⁵¹ *LI*, 23 June 1866 p. 4.

from ‘certain acts which have appeared more vigorous than were absolutely required’.⁵²

The *Leeds Intelligencer* was not the only newspaper to make such a tactical withdrawal. The *Yorkshire Gazette* originally denounced ‘inhuman brutes,’ ‘negrophilism,’ and ‘sentimentalism’ displayed by those ‘sitting by safe firesides’.⁵³ As the scale of the reprisals and the lack of resistance became clear, it continued to criticise Radical ‘howls’ but came to the conclusion that ‘stringent inquiry’ was necessary before approving or condemning.⁵⁴ By March, it felt it the duty of ‘every one with the least spark of manly feeling in his breast to... protest in the name of England and humanity’ against Eyre’s defenders.⁵⁵ The *Doncaster Chronicle*, too, went from praising Eyre for giving ‘the red-handed murderer short shrift’ to describing the excesses as ‘an error in judgment, pardonable considering the exceptional circumstances’.⁵⁶ These were hardly wholehearted endorsements of rule by force in the colonies.

If Eyre’s supporters tended to soften their position over time, we might well question why the Jamaica Committee’s endeavours to enforce what they considered a crucial constitutional protection were so unsuccessful. For a start, the government’s prompt action in removing Eyre from office and instituting an inquiry successfully quashed initial outrage. At York, a meeting requisition was abandoned after the government pre-empted all its significant desires.⁵⁷ This probably saved it from the fate of the uproarious meeting at Hull, which fell apart after Joseph Harrison protested that the meeting would prejudge the royal commission and was, therefore, ‘un-English and unconstitutional! (Loud applause)’.⁵⁸ The Sheffield Foreign Affairs Committee chairman Isaac Ironside failed in a bid to have the council memorialise Government, after Alderman Beckett asked ‘what’s the good when Governor Eyre has been recalled’ and the mayor announced his belief

⁵² *LI*, 21 August 1866 p. 2.

⁵³ *YG*, 25 November 1865 p. 8.

⁵⁴ *YG*, 16 December 1865 p. 8.

⁵⁵ *YG*, 24 March 1866 p. 8.

⁵⁶ *DC*, 24 November 1865 p. 4; 19 April 1867 p. 5.

⁵⁷ *YG*, 23 December 1865 p. 7.

⁵⁸ *HP*, 22 December 1865.

that ‘the Government will do all that is required’.⁵⁹ The downward revision of the death toll from 2,000 to 400 is also likely to have deflated some of the enthusiasm for action, just as pro-repression outrage declined when it became clear how few whites had actually died.

After the commission reported, the Jamaica Committee continued to pursue Eyre and his subordinates in the belief that the law had not been sufficiently clarified. However, their willingness to continue legal proceedings into the 1870s seems not to have been shared by the broader community of Eyre’s opponents.⁶⁰ Lacking the Committee’s sophisticated legal background, many editorials concluded that the Lord Chief Justice’s intervention settled the question. It was ‘a noble vindication of the fundamental principles of the British constitution’, which left ‘little fear’ that a governor would ‘overstep the limits thus clearly laid down’ or ‘venture again to trifle with men’s lives’.⁶¹

There was also a tension in the Committee’s campaign between the need to settle the abstract legal point of the rights and responsibilities of a colonial governor, and the personification of those issues in Eyre. Put simply, it was hard to differentiate between determination to settle the law and an individual vendetta. The number of times that newspapers which supported the committee felt it necessary to deny that the prosecution was motivated by ‘partisan faction’ or ‘private animosity’, or that they wanted only ‘a decision by a competent authority upon a most important question of law’ and not Eyre’s punishment, suggests that they too were conscious of this image problem.⁶² The evolution of Eyre’s racism has subsequently been well examined by historians, but at the time those ‘personally acquainted’ with him were prepared to testify to his ‘humanity and kindly Christian spirit’ or the impossibility ‘that he would or did act from any motive of inhumanity towards the negroes’.⁶³ Even those who criticised Eyre were often less passionate than John Stuart Mill, arguing that ‘the utmost that can be said is that he blundered terribly’, or that he was ‘terrified and panic-stricken...

⁵⁹ *SDT*, 14 December 1865 p. 4.

⁶⁰ Rande W. Kostal, *A Jurisprudence of Power: Victorian Empire and the Rule of Law* (Oxford, 2009), p. 445.

⁶¹ *WFP*, 1 June 1867 p. 5; *RRC*, 20 April 1867 p. 4; *BR*, 13 April 1867 p. 4.

⁶² *HA*, 16 April 1867 p. 4; *SDT*, 2 April 1867 p. 6.

⁶³ *HC*, 23 December 1865 p. 8; *HP*, 15 December 1865.

when coolness was especially required.⁶⁴ His subordinates, such as the ‘demoniac’ and ‘utterly fiend like’ Provost-Marshal Ramsay, might have been a better target: the *Craven Pioneer* excused Eyre, ‘respected for his integrity and humanity,’ but felt his ‘underlings who have desecrated every principle of justice and rejected every dictate of humanity, ought to swing as high as Haman.’⁶⁵

This choice of targets, however, goes to the heart of the Jamaica Committee’s change from an organisation focused on the plight of black Jamaicans to the legal issue of martial law.⁶⁶ The Committee claimed that if Gordon could be executed then so could any other activist, a point occasionally repeated in provincial Yorkshire newspapers.⁶⁷ For the most part, however, their opponents (and even many of their supporters) ignored this point – with the exception of ‘FM’, who endorsed bringing a hypothetical Radical MP from London to Leeds to be tried and hung for fomenting a rebellion of six-pound householders.⁶⁸ The key to understanding mainstream attitudes seems to be the question of political culture. British institutions were protected not just by their precise legal forms, but by a broader culture of liberalism which permeated the country and made military dictatorship implausible in mainland Britain. Moreover, this was not just a racial question: as we have seen, a significant section of the British public recognised that the American constitution’s legal checks and balances had not sufficed to restrain the executive. It was the culture that underlay the system that counted.

The other reason that the Committee struggled seems to have been the absolute predominance of reform in this period. Everything was finite, from the time of activists to space in newspaper editorial columns, and the extension of the franchise – which directly affected a larger proportion of the country – necessarily took precedence. Though historians draw intellectual

⁶⁴ *HxC*, 4 August 1866 p. 4; *HC*, 29 September 1866 p. 5.

⁶⁵ *RA*, 10 March 1866 p. 5; *LE*, 24 March 1866 p. 5; *CP*, 31 March 1866 p. 4.

⁶⁶ Kostal, *Jurisprudence of Power*, p. 191; this contradicts J. Joseph Miller, ‘Chairing the Jamaica Committee: J.S. Mill and the Limits of Colonial Authority’, in Bart Schultz and Georgios Varouxakis (eds.), *Utilitarianism and Empire* (Lanham, 2005), p. 155, who sees Mill’s arguments as focused on the colonial sphere.

⁶⁷ *HE*, 25 November 1865 p. 6; *LE*, 9 February 1867 p. 4; J.H. Bridges in *BR*, 27 October 1866 p. 8.

⁶⁸ *LI*, 9 December 1865 p. 8.

links between rebellion in Jamaica and working-class enfranchisement, contemporaries were clear about which topic had to take priority. When Bradford constituents attempted to quiz W.E. Forster about the case, ‘a voice from the gallery’ protested: ‘We are not met to hear about Jamaica, but about reform’.⁶⁹ Just as the Royal Commission checked the initial swell of outrage, the ongoing debate over reform in Britain took the wind out of the Committee’s sails.

The dominant interpretation of the Jamaica rebellion is that of Catherine Hall, who concludes that it provided ‘further evidence for the Colonial Office... of the rebellious nature of “native populations”’⁷⁰. The abolition of Jamaica’s representative assembly demonstrated that ‘a considerable body of opinion’ acknowledged that black and white were ‘essentially different’ and ‘could not expect the same rights.’⁷¹ By contrast, Kostal argues that race is ‘simply too narrow an aperture’ to interpret this question, and that this interpretation ‘ignores or minimises some important facts’ in a ‘sometimes overweening determination’ to illustrate ‘monolithic’ British ‘anti-black racism’.⁷² Here, we should once again distinguish between the official view and the popular view. It is entirely plausible that the Colonial Office, civil servants and governors took a particular series of actions for one motive, and the wider public endorsed their actions for a variety of different motives. If networks of intellectual geography failed to ensure that all shared a common view of the events in Jamaica, then conclusions drawn largely from elite sources are unsafe to project nationally.

It was Conservative newspapers which predominantly interpreted the events in Jamaica through a racial lens. These generally argued that black people had been given ‘pretty nearly equal civil and political privileges with the educated and civilised whites’, with ‘the privilege of the franchise within their reach,’ and ‘almost every local office was filled by the blacks’.⁷³ Other newspapers, however, fitted the Jamaica question into an alternative

⁶⁹ *BO*, 25 October 1866 p. 7.

⁷⁰ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 24.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁷² Kostal, *Jurisprudence of Power*, p. 498.

⁷³ *HP*, 17 November 1865; *DC*, 1 December 1865 p. 4; *YG*, 25 November 1865, p. 8.

interpretive framework: ‘whenever a dominant class has the administration of the law entirely in its own hands... either the lower class is ground to the very dust, or rises in despair’.⁷⁴ They blamed not black people, but the white elites who had failed to ‘adhere to the spirit of their bargain’ made at emancipation, and had erected ‘the most cruel obstacles... such as no other race in the world could be expected to overcome’.⁷⁵ Though this framework was particularly congruous to the Liberal mind-set, the Conservative *Sheffield Times* concurred in the belief that ‘Jamaica has long been misgoverned, [and] that the negroes were oppressed’.⁷⁶

This narrative is all the more striking because it seems to have come about as a result of the Eyre controversy. The emphasis before the outbreak had been on there being ‘no legal disabilities in reference to colour’ and the black population being ‘a hard-working, moral, and sober people’.⁷⁷ Despite a single exception, using the planters’ shortcomings to deny that black people were ‘a brutish and irredeemably lazy race,’ the bulk of commentary focused on the progress that the freed slaves had made.⁷⁸ Metropolitan intellectual opinion may have been more open to statistical calculations intended to demonstrate that emancipation had been a failure.⁷⁹ However, the dominant narrative in the provinces was the moralising anecdote of the fundraising missionary, which could brook no such suggestion. The fact that this narrative of elite betrayal became so popular so rapidly tends to suggest that it was more satisfying to contemporary newspaper opinion than blaming the inherent flaws of the slaves.

The dominant historiographical interpretation also tends to see the abolition of the Jamaican House of Assembly as a removal of black voting rights, ‘highly significant... at a time when black male suffrage was being hotly debated in the USA.’⁸⁰ However, most contemporaries seem to have viewed the abolition as a punishment for the ‘small constituency’ which the House represented: ‘the remnants, perhaps we ought to say the refuse, of that

⁷⁴ *BR*, 17 November 1866 p. 4.

⁷⁵ *LM*, 4 November 1865; *WFP*, 4 August 1866 p. 5.

⁷⁶ *ST*, 25 November 1865 p. 8.

⁷⁷ *HP*, 31 May 1861; *HC*, 4 April 1863 p. 7.

⁷⁸ *LT*, 2 January 1858 p. 4.

⁷⁹ Drescher, *Mighty Experiment*, pp. 202, 207, 209; Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 360.

⁸⁰ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 422.

planter population whose brutality and debauchery were so notorious'.⁸¹ The *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* would not acknowledge that 'the blacks of Jamaica were fit for the suffrage': however, 'under the late system of rule' they were 'the governed and not the governors'.⁸² The *Beverley Recorder* saw disfranchisement not just as a punishment for black people, but as a reflection of the fact that 'Neither white, mulatto, nor black is fit to have any share in the government.'⁸³ The British government's positive duty was to amend the constitution to stop the planters 'making the black people even more miserable than when they were actually in a state of slavery.'⁸⁴ This attitude seems unlikely to have been shared at the Colonial Office, despite the comments of newly-minted Under-secretary of State W.E. Forster, who argued that the Assembly 'necessarily represented only one portion of the community' and 'the elections fell almost inevitably into the hands of the white portion of the community'.⁸⁵

In the 1840s, Britain had responded to rebellion in Canada by extending representative government to the colony. The fact that rebellion in Jamaica saw not the extension of electoral privileges but their abolition immediately suggests an underlying racial motivation – perhaps the drawing of a 'global colour line' between self-governing 'white men's countries'.⁸⁶ However, the 'global colour line' thesis is rooted in an 'assertion of whiteness' intended to 'enshrine the white man as the model democrat': this wholesale acceptance of democracy, and faith in the suitability of a substantial proportion of the population for the franchise, was demonstrated in chapter 5 to be a fringe proposition as of 1865. Furthermore, as we proposed in chapter 2, we should acknowledge that material motives may affect attitudes at sites of contact and confrontation (such as the United States, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia), while more detached approaches may have been possible elsewhere. The man in 1865 Great Britain who acknowledged the potential for black suffrage faced much less immediate repercussions than

⁸¹ *LM*, 14 November 1865.

⁸² *SDT*, 25 February 1866 p. 2.

⁸³ *BvR*, 25 November 1865 p. 5.

⁸⁴ *YH*, 18 November 1865 p. 8.

⁸⁵ *LT*, 12 January 1867 p. 3.

⁸⁶ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 5-6

his counterparts in the US, South Africa, or Jamaica – or, indeed, the Great Britain of the 1890s, which now owned much of sub-Saharan Africa and where the vote united classes rather than dividing them. However, it is the attitudes of the former that interest us here.

Perhaps the strongest evidence against the idea of Jamaica reflecting the drawing of a ‘global colour line’ is that (contrary to the broad trend of the historiography) Yorkshire reactions tended not to support the premise that black people in Jamaica were ‘beyond all hope of improvement’ and should be barred from the franchise permanently.⁸⁷ For a start, condemnation of the existing state of affairs in Jamaica had necessarily required the admission that ‘nothing is done to raise them to their real position’.⁸⁸ ‘Ignorance’, ‘barbarism, and ‘imbecility’ were not inherent characteristics of the black population, but ‘the essential attributes of slavery’: however, ‘enlightenment’, ‘self-restraint,’ and ‘moral and physical purity’ were necessary for ‘true beneficent liberty’.⁸⁹ The effects of the ‘tyranny and oppression’ of the planters, which had perpetuated ‘some of the worst disadvantages of slavery,’ would take time to efface.⁹⁰ Until sufficient ‘guiding and training’ had been provided under ‘some system of education,’ and ‘mutual trust and confidence... between whites and blacks’ had been restored, extending the franchise would create more problems than it solved.⁹¹ This would not be swift – after all, ‘it takes three generations to make a gentleman...we cannot rationally hope to find the far greater and larger work of civilisation accomplished in a shorter time.’⁹² However, ‘when that period arrives we have no doubt that the negro will be found fully qualified’.⁹³

Events, from the initial confrontation at Morant Bay to the subsequent bitter reprisals, had not only highlighted Jamaica’s divisions but strengthened them. Victorians were sceptical of the potential of

⁸⁷ Hall, ‘Nation Within’, pp. 183, 199; Lorimer, *Colour, Class and the Victorians*, p. 200.

⁸⁸ Dr Underhill, speaking in *Bridlington Free Press*, 1 September 1866 p. 2.

⁸⁹ *LT*, 18 November 1865 p. 5.

⁹⁰ Reverend John Hanson of Huddersfield, in *BuG*, 20 January 1866 p. 4; *SDT*, 13 November 1865 p. 2.

⁹¹ *CP*, 15 December 1866 p. 4 (c.f. ‘guidance and training and protection’, *SDT*, 30 January 1866 p. 6; ‘train them for the duties of civilised life’, *LE*, 18 November 1865 p. 5); *HC*, 18 November 1865 p. 8; *BO*, 23 November 1865 p. 4.

⁹² *SDT*, 13 November 1865 p. 2; Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 25.

⁹³ *WE*, 16 September 1865 p. 5.

representative systems to cope with such a starkly divided society – just as they had been when they warned that the South could not be kept in the Union by force, a prognostication which remained to be disproven. While in the United States there had been the possibility of a neat territorial division between the opposing interests, such a step was impossible in Jamaica. Expanding the franchise in a society divided as Jamaica would give license to demagogues, whose populist measures would worsen divisions. Furthermore, granting the vote to even the upper echelons of a population whose had only just been absolved because of their lack of moral and intellectual education would be inconsistent at best, given the emphasis on responsibility and education in franchise extension in Britain. The planters could not be left in charge, yet the Assembly could not be recast on a broader basis because the populace were – through no fault of their own – not ready for the responsibility. In the absence of innovation on the scale of Lord Durham, reversion to Crown Colony status won by default.

At the time, such a reversion did seem to be a sensible policy based on other colonial examples. Jamaica was the only one of Britain's West India colonies where exports were failing and where peace could not be maintained, and also compared unfavourably to the Indian Crown Colony of Ceylon.⁹⁴ The cause of this decay was not race, but 'downright bad government' which necessitated a 'thorough organic change'.⁹⁵ Moreover, Crown Colony status was endorsed by men like T. Burrows of Denby Dale, who 'spent fourteen years as a Wesleyan missionary there.'⁹⁶ Indeed, it is tempting to suggest that the reversion marked the last spark of the traditional humanitarianism in which the interests of the natives took precedence over the concerns of the settlers.⁹⁷ As the existing planter elite had failed in their duty to elevate the ex-slaves for which they had responsibility, Britain would take over. Unfortunately, domestic opinion seems to have had little conception of how this elevation might work in

⁹⁴ *SDT*, 29 November 1865 p. 2, 13 November 1867 p. 2; *WE*, 9 December 1865 p. 8; *BvR*, 25 November 1865 p. 5; see also the comments of Mayor J.V. Godwin in *BO*, 7 December 1865 p. 6.

⁹⁵ Mr Ingham, speaking at a lecture by Charles Savile Roundell (Secretary to the Royal Commission on Jamaica), reported in *CP*, 20 October 1866 p. 4; *YH*, 3 February 1866 p. 8.

⁹⁶ *LM*, 12 December 1865.

⁹⁷ Hall, *Civilising Subjects*, p. 47.

practice, beyond a vague endorsement of Roundell's suggestion of 'paternal despotism'.⁹⁸ When future governors did nothing to implement such policies, the distant and indifferent British public did not press the issue.

Ireland

Just as the dominant view of the Eyre case sees it as a stage towards Britain accepting the permanent racial inferiority of its colonial subjects, the dominant view of Ireland in this period sees Britain concluding that its Irish subjects were incapable of coping with the British system of liberal self-government. Immediately after the 1865 election, there was a flurry of Fenian disturbances, from abortive risings in Ireland to an attack on Chester Castle and, further afield, the invasion of Canada by an army of Civil War veterans. In response, the narrative of 'Celts versus Saxons' developed, with the 'impulsive, imaginative, violent and somewhat childish Celt' mirroring many characteristics of 'savages of the non-western world'.⁹⁹ However, we have already challenged the interpretation of the Jamaica question by reiterating the continued dominance of the 'civilizational' model of racial characteristics. As such, it seems only appropriate to extend this to Ireland, to understand if the model held up under the direct threat of violence.

For a start, it should be noted that the Celt/Saxon dichotomy was not solely one used by the British to justify their rule: it was also adopted and advanced by Irish Nationalists themselves, to justify their struggle for independence.¹⁰⁰ As such, when British observers talked about the struggle between Celt and Saxon, they were not necessarily explaining their own world view. Mentions of Saxons and their 'hoof,' 'iron yoke,' or 'domination' were in fact echoing Fenian rhetoric.¹⁰¹ In these cases and others, it is practically impossible to identify whether the British agreed with the dichotomy they presented, or found it so risible that they presented it intact.

⁹⁸ *CP*, 15 December 1866 p. 4; c.f. *HP*, 17 November 1865, which argued for 'a wise and well-regulated despotism'.

⁹⁹ Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, pp. 62-3; Hall, 'Nation Within', pp. 212, 215, 220; see also K. Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800: Conflict and Conformity* (London, 1999), p. 138.

¹⁰⁰ Cian T. McMahon, *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880* (Chapel Hill, 2015), pp. 11-12.

¹⁰¹ *RA*, 24 February 1866 p. 5; *ECH*, 29 November 1866 p. 4; *BC*, 26 May 1866 p. 5.

Equally, it is impossible to identify whether the constant repetition of this dichotomy embedded it in the public mind.

At the very least, it must be acknowledged that thinking about race within the British Isles was highly confused. The *Rotherham Advertiser* could suggest that ‘the bulk of the nation’ was ‘an amalgamation of five or six separate races’, identifying ‘The Celts of Wales, Scotland and Ireland’ and ‘the comparatively unmixed remnant of the old Saxons’ in the form of English agricultural labourers.¹⁰² At almost the same time, the neighbouring *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* argued that Scots were Saxons: ‘mere Yorkshiremen and North countrymen with a little harder brogue’.¹⁰³ As noted previously, *Cornhill Magazine* detected racial differences within Yorkshire itself, with Saxons populating the North Riding and Celts the West.¹⁰⁴ Under these circumstances, it was difficult for British newspapers to draw the kind of hard and fast lines between England and Ireland that Irish Nationalists found useful.

Moreover, the attitude that nations were built by tradition rather than blood persisted. The *Leeds Mercury* argued that it would be impossible to persuade the Saxon of Sussex, the Briton of Cornwall or the Norseman of Yorkshire of their difference: ‘Community of language, of laws, of history, of traditions, has made them one nation centuries ago’.¹⁰⁵ The ‘semi-simious types of Celts’ illustrated by Punch (and highlighted by Catherine Hall) were misleading, the effect of ‘poverty... mingled with a cankering sense of wrong’ and not racial inheritance – demonstrated in the ‘physical improvement’ among Irish labourers in England.¹⁰⁶ Elsewhere, even Fenian supporters in England were informed that ‘their sons will have as much right to call themselves Englishmen, after old associations have passed away, as they now have to call them Irishmen’: the profusion of ‘family connections’ meant the two were ‘of one kindred, but not of one tongue.’¹⁰⁷ If Fenians could become

¹⁰² *RA*, 24 March 1866 p. 5.

¹⁰³ *SDT*, 26 March 1866 p. 2.

¹⁰⁴ *Cornhill Magazine*, volume 9 (January 1864), pp. 87-8.

¹⁰⁵ *LM*, 18 August 1866.

¹⁰⁶ *SDT*, 26 March 1866 p. 2; Hall, ‘Nation Within’, p. 213; Fintan Cullen, *Visual Politics: The Representation of Ireland 1750-1930* (Cork, 1997) pp. 81-3.

¹⁰⁷ *Bridlington Free Press*, 15 December 1866 p. 2.

Englishmen – if only ‘old associations’ prevented this – then it is hard to conclude that Englishness was particularly exclusive.

Indeed, some newspapers which seemed to be moving to a racial conception of the nation found older ideas hard to shift. The *Bradford Observer* featured the Celt/Saxon dichotomy in concluding that the ideal Irish civilisation would be closer to France than England – ‘less of freedom than of enjoyment’ – and suggested, as the existing government was ‘unsuitable to the Irish national genius,’ that ‘they should be governed not as Saxons, but as warm-hearted, impulsive Celts’.¹⁰⁸ However, it later suggested that English constitutional liberty stemmed from the ‘magnanimity of the English mind’ and that ‘Celts and Spaniards and the late American Seceders’ needed to be ‘trained to the same habit of tolerance’.¹⁰⁹ If such habits could be trained, then amending Irish government was expedient but not essential.

The argument that Fenianism changed British views of Ireland is also predicated on the assumption that ‘Irishness and Fenianism went together’.¹¹⁰ However, Fenianism had a significant American component to it, from funds to volunteers. As such, it is possible that the British could decouple Fenianism from Ireland, leaving it as more than an Irish phenomenon. Making it an external development would also have had the benefit of removing the requirement for deep soul-searching about Ireland’s plight.

Needless to say, the majority of Yorkshire newspapers – thirteen of the twenty-four which expressed a view – chose to see Fenianism as ‘essentially an American notion’.¹¹¹ The reason they considered it ‘a plant of foreign growth’ was not just because Irish-Americans were providing ‘men and money to revenge their old grudges’.¹¹² Instead, the very aims of Fenianism were explicitly denounced as not Irish. Its republicanism was ‘foreign to the Irish,’ ‘peculiarly clannish... ruled by kings or chiefs... not by

¹⁰⁸ *BO*, 22 February 1866 p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ *BO*, 20 June 1867 p. 4.

¹¹⁰ Hall, ‘Nation Within’, p. 216.

¹¹¹ *ECH*, 21 September 1865 p. 5.

¹¹² *SI*, 2 February 1866 p. 2.

senators or parliaments'.¹¹³ The whole movement was a rebellion against both 'Saxon rule' and 'the social laws and usages of Ireland'.¹¹⁴ Its means were also alien, reflecting 'the practices of American rowdyism,' nurtured in 'the land of liberty [and] the government of mob violence'.¹¹⁵ Only 'the spawn of a civil war,' imbued with all 'the vices of war,' could be capable of Fenian terrorism.¹¹⁶ Even George Sneaton, a Royal Naval Reservist who attacked 'four peaceable and unoffending Irishmen, declaring they were all Fenians,' was believed to have developed his aversion during four years in America.¹¹⁷ Fenianism was therefore not 'decisive proof' of 'a greater Ireland beyond the seas', but an entirely different development.¹¹⁸

Uprisings in Ireland and among the Irish community in Britain changed only a few editorial stances. The *Leeds Intelligencer*, for instance, originally felt that 'disaffection in Ireland has ceased to be part of any widely extended national movement'; in the aftermath of the Clerkenwell attack, however, it acknowledged that 'a large section of our Irish population' would 'condone the wickedness of any atrocity directed against' Britain.¹¹⁹ Yet it was the only newspaper to change in this direction, whereas two others which had previously recognised Irish roots in Fenianism transferred the responsibility to America. The *Doncaster Chronicle* had originally linked Fenianism to Irish predilections for 'secret societies, and flaunting banners, and processions' – though still attributing this to religion rather than race – but subsequently decided Fenianism was 'of American growth... fostered there for a political purpose.'¹²⁰ The *Halifax Guardian*, meanwhile, had originally located the strength of Fenianism in the 'Celtic race' being 'more impulsive than reasoning' and 'the innate repulsion in Celtic blood towards the Danes and Angles'.¹²¹ When the uprisings failed, it concluded that the Celts had been persuaded by 'the logic of events' that 'public tranquillity and individual industry' were its only chances at progress, identifying the 'only difficulty' as

¹¹³ *WE*, 9 September 1865 p. 5.

¹¹⁴ *YH*, 7 October 1865 p. 8.

¹¹⁵ *HE*, 21 September 1867 p. 6; *DG*, 7 September 1866 p. 5.

¹¹⁶ *RRC*, 21 December 1867 p. 4.

¹¹⁷ *YG*, 3 February 1867 p. 10.

¹¹⁸ Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity, 1789-2006* (Oxford, 2008), p. 245.

¹¹⁹ *LI*, 28 November 1866 p. 2, 17 December 1867 p. 2.

¹²⁰ *DC*, 22 September 1865 p. 4, 18 October 1867 p. 5.

¹²¹ *HxG*, 23 September 1865 p. 4.

‘the shameless license’ the New York Fenians enjoyed from the Federal government.¹²² The paper did not explain how the Irish had been persuaded by logic if ‘the chance of a fight’ robbed the Irishman of ‘more than half his reason, and of all his discretion’.¹²³ However, the contradiction is a salutary reminder of how flexible racial thinking could be.

The other significant interpretation of Fenianism was that it was a hybrid, in which both the American and Irish components were essential. For the *Beverly Recorder*, it combined ‘the worst phases of American rowdiness’ with traditional Irish rebellious solidarity; the *Huddersfield Chronicle* called it ‘an Irish growth,’ but one that sprang from both American and Irish Anglophobia; and the *Leeds Times* felt it was ‘an American production’ that grew from Irish ‘disaffection... revengeful feelings, and... mad expectation’.¹²⁴ There was also circumstantial evidence to support Fenianism’s hybrid nature, identified both contemporaneously and historiographically.¹²⁵ For instance, Patrick O’Rafferty, described variously as ‘a sanguinary Fenian’ and ‘a dirty, rough Irishman,’ wielded ‘a shoemaker’s knife, ground in similitude of a bowie knife’ – the quintessential weapon of the American rowdy.¹²⁶ Nevertheless, this hybrid interpretation suggested that, had Ireland been left to itself, Fenianism might not have developed.

The belief that Fenianism was external to Ireland was strengthened by the response within Ireland to the phenomenon, or at least the way that Yorkshire newspapers described the response. Around a third of newspapers placed unbroken emphasis on Fenianism’s lack of support, even among groups which might have been expected to endorse the movement. In the view of the *Bradford Observer*, for instance, ‘the priesthood and the respectable classes of the Catholic community’ provided an ‘eager display of loyalty’.¹²⁷ Only ‘the very lowest classes and the rabble,’ ‘clerks, shopmen and

¹²² *HxG*, 24 February 1866 p. 4.

¹²³ *HxG*, 23 September 1865 p. 4.

¹²⁴ *BvR*, 28 September 1867 p. 2; *HC*, 7 April 1866 p. 4; *LT*, 13 October 1866 p. 5.

¹²⁵ R. V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society, 1848-82* (Dublin, 1998), p. 114.

¹²⁶ *SI*, 3 April 1867 p. 4.

¹²⁷ *BO*, 21 September 1865 p. 4.

agricultural labourers,' displayed disaffection, while 'the bulk of the nation... are loyally disposed.'¹²⁸

The lack of support for Fenianism perhaps best explains why the British might have endorsed the national aspirations of the Confederacy and Poland but denied those of Ireland – other than nakedly hypocritical self-interest, of course. Both the Confederacy and Poland had seemed to be able to count on the support of most classes in their campaigns for independence. Irish independence, by contrast, struggled to mobilise even its traditional supporters, failing to inspire the 'intensely anti-Saxon' peasantry of Kerry to rebel.¹²⁹ For many, this confirmed earlier suspicions that the Irish Nationalist movement had 'sunk to a whisper and then died away.'¹³⁰

This unbroken confidence in Irish loyalty, however, was not universal. A third of newspapers tended to favour the narrative of Fenian popularity, with half adopting the view from the start and half coming to it over the course of the period. Those who adopted the view from the start formed a particularly eclectic group: on the one hand, the Advanced Liberal *Leeds Express* and *Bradford Review*; on the other, the Conservative *Yorkshire Gazette*, which grounded its belief of widespread Irish dissent in memories of '1640 and 1798,' proving 'what savages they had for neighbours'.¹³¹

Around a third of newspapers seemed unable to come to a definite conclusion about the popularity of Fenianism. For example, in December 1865 the *Leeds Times* proclaimed confidently that 'The overwhelming majority of every class and party' had nothing but 'abhorrence and contempt' for Fenianism.¹³² In January 1866, it feared that Fenianism was both 'more widely disseminated' and 'more deeply implanted in the hearts of the Irish' than previously, as the priests had 'abated much of their former vehemence against Fenianism'.¹³³ In March of 1867, only 'the lowest and least intelligent class' had even a 'languid passive sympathy' with Fenianism; in May, it was

¹²⁸ *ST*, 16 March 1867 p. 8; *BC*, 23 September 1865 p. 4; *RRC*, 16 March 1867 p. 4.

¹²⁹ *WFP*, 23 February 1867 p. 4; *WE*, 23 February 1867 p. 4; *RRC*, 23 February 1867 p. 4. Contrast Bew, *Politics of Enmity*, pp. 262-3.

¹³⁰ *BO*, 6 December 1860; c.f. *LM*, 8 December 1860, *BC* 5 December 1863 p. 2, 20 August 1864 p. 2; c.f. Mandler, *English National Character*, pp. 62, 99-100.

¹³¹ *YG*, 8 December 1866 p. 8, 16 March 1867 p. 8.

¹³² *LT*, 2 December 1865 p. 4.

¹³³ *LT*, 20 January 1866 p. 4.

only ‘compulsion’ that kept Ireland in the Union.¹³⁴ None, however, changed their views as swiftly as the *Huddersfield Examiner*, where Fenianism went from ‘a mere sectional movement’ to enjoying the support of ‘great numbers of Irishmen’ and back again, all in the matter of a month.¹³⁵

This anxiety suggests that at least some of the press may have been putting on a front, proclaiming Irish loyalty in which they themselves did not believe in the interests of shoring up domestic harmony. At times the mask may have inadvertently slipped – for instance, when the *Doncaster Chronicle* criticised Lord Russell’s support of self-determination by arguing that Ireland would leave the Union as a result.¹³⁶ Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to draw firm conclusions on what the editors or proprietors thought personally. However, other private communications from public figures do suggest that they genuinely saw Fenianism as a fringe movement. Writing to his son in early 1866, the former York MP J.G. Smyth felt Fenianism ‘seems to be dying out’ and ‘will not be heard of in another month’.¹³⁷

This belief in Fenianism’s unpopularity tends to be supported by its manifestations within Yorkshire. There were only two significant outbreaks: one real in Bradford, where a Fenian mob assembled at White Abbey and attacked passers-by with bludgeons, and one potential in Leeds, where the military was assembled to prevent a funeral procession honouring executed Fenians.¹³⁸ For the most part, Fenianism was an assertion of Irish identity usually associated with drunkenness, brawling, or other disorder. Patrick O’Grady was ‘charged with being drunk and riotous’ while ‘shouting at the top of his voice that he was a Fenian’; Michael Rhodes threw a stolen drinking glass at a witness while professing his Fenianism; John Robinson, arrested for ‘drunkenness and begging’, ‘vented some unfriendly wishes anent the Queen’s life’ and ‘declared that he would be a Fenian again as soon as he got out.’¹³⁹ There were at least some enthusiasts for the cause: Mary Glynn, for instance, ‘was ready to take up arms for the Fenians... [and] die in

¹³⁴ *LT*, 16 March 1867 p. 4, 11 May 1867 p. 4.

¹³⁵ *HE*, 16 September 1865 p. 8, 23 September 1865 p. 5, 14 October 1865 p. 5.

¹³⁶ *DC*, 27 July 1866 p. 5; c.f. 30 November 1866 p. 4, where ‘most Irishmen’ were ‘loyal to the Union’.

¹³⁷ WYAS Wakefield, C547/3/1/3 (JG Smyth to George, 25 February 1866, 25 March 1866)

¹³⁸ *HC*, 7 April 1866 p. 5; *LT*, 7 April 1866 p. 2, 21 December 1867 p. 3.

¹³⁹ *YG*, 26 October 1867 p. 5; *HC*, 11 August 1866 p. 6; *SI*, 21 May 1867 p. 3.

their cause' (or at least to break the windows of Wesleyan ministers at Tadcaster), and an anonymous Fenian made an 'ostentatious and declamatory' speech at Wetherby.¹⁴⁰ However, in many cases the term 'Fenian' was taken as insult rather than compliment. In York, John McAnally felt 'compelled to fight' as a result of being called a Fenian, as did John Mack at Heeley; fortunately, 'a respectably-attired young woman' at Hull only applied for a summons against the man who had 'called her a "d-- Fenian"'.¹⁴¹

Yorkshire's balance of evidence suggests that Fenianism remained a relatively fringe movement, but that many in Britain were deeply concerned about emigrant Irish support for the movement. There were panics across the county about potential Fenian uprisings. In the East Riding, 'large numbers of Irish drovers' arriving for cattle fairs resulted in 'a state of Fenian dread, probably totally unfounded,' and Volunteers were called out, served with ball cartridges, and patrolled the towns.¹⁴² Rumours of Fenian drilling circulated: 300 were said to have congregated in the 'Green Lane' at Middlesbrough, 150 at Sheffield, unknown numbers at Dawgreen and Heckmondwike.¹⁴³ When telegraph wires were cut at Selby, it was blamed on Fenians, who had earlier been reported to have bought revolvers and concealed powder outside the town.¹⁴⁴ In the light of this anxiety, it is hard to conclude that Yorkshire contemporaries really thought that Fenianism was as unimportant as they pretended. Nevertheless, it was only later in the century that the popular strength of Irish separatism would become apparent.¹⁴⁵

With Jamaica, many chose to see events through the lens of the traditional struggle against an overbearing governing class rather than adopt a racial interpretation. Similarly, the disturbances in Ireland could be interpreted not as irreconcilable differences between Celt and Saxon, but as standard

¹⁴⁰ *YH*, 16 November 1867 p. 5; *TP*, 22 March 1866 p. 4.

¹⁴¹ *YH*, 23 November 1867 p. 10 (but see *YG*, 6 April 1867 p. 9, where John McAnally was described as 'a Fenian leader in York'); *SI*, 5 October 1867 p. 10; *HP*, 1 November 1867.

¹⁴² *DG*, 11 October 1867 p. 5; *YH*, 12 October 1867 p. 8, 19 October 1867 p. 3.

¹⁴³ *YH*, 5 October 1867 p. 5, 19 October 1867 p. 3; *LM*, 12 December 1865.

¹⁴⁴ *YG*, 12 October 1867 p. 9; *HP*, 16 March 1866.

¹⁴⁵ Mandler, *English National Character*, pp. 99-100.

problems to be corrected in the conventional Parliamentary way.¹⁴⁶ In Huddersfield, where the townspeople had been fighting a long legal war against the influential Liberal landlord Sir John Ramsden, W.R. Haigh drew a direct comparison: Sir John's proposal to live closer to his estate would lessen the town's 'urban Fenianism'.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, linking Ireland to the British domestic political sphere offered considerable potential advantages for the Liberals, when the new Reform Act meant that 'the Irish element in English boroughs' could, 'in large manufacturing towns, pretty much hold the balance'.¹⁴⁸

Conservatives tended to denounce this as disloyalty: for instance, Working Men's Conservative Associations criticised the Reform League for 'sympathy with the disloyal and murderous class known as Fenians'.¹⁴⁹ Though they also tended to be more sceptical about correcting the problems of Ireland through legislation, they still proposed such legislation. The *Sheffield Times* blamed 'the habits of the people, the dampness of the climate, and the absence of manufactures' as well as 'defective laws' for the 'poverty and discontent which prevails': at the same time, it felt that Parliament was prepared to treat Ireland with 'a fair and considerate spirit' and to 'do all that is reasonable and proper' to 'remove any real or supposed grievance'.¹⁵⁰ The *Hull Packet* originally thought that 'there is nothing Ireland wants so much as freedom from political agitation and a release from demagogues', but later highlighted 'the necessity for real legislation,' including remodelling the Church, reforming education, and treating land tenure in a 'cautious and gradual manner'.¹⁵¹ The *Leeds Intelligencer* thought 'a moderate bill to guarantee the tenant his improvements and, on certain conditions, his holding, would assist to crush out the spirit of Fenianism'.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Anthony Daly, "'The True Remedy for Irish Grievances Is to Be Found in Good Political Institutions': English Radicals and Irish Nationalism, 1847-74", *Historical Research* vol. 86, no. 231 (February 2013), p. 55.

¹⁴⁷ *HC*, 25 May 1867 p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ *WFP*, 18 August 1866 p. 2; *BO*, 19 December 1867 p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ *HC*, 7 December 1867 p. 6, 14 December 1867 p. 8; see also *PA*, 21 December 1867 p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ *ST*, 16 March 1867 p. 8, 9 December 1865 p. 8, 24 February 1866 p. 8.

¹⁵¹ *HP*, 23 February 1866, 29 November 1867.

¹⁵² *LI*, 28 August 1866 p. 2.

If legislation could compensate for these differences, they could hardly be irreconcilable.¹⁵³

The blurred lines of Victorian thinking about race make it difficult to disentangle the various components of inherited characteristics, culture, language, and religion. However, at least some of the blame for Fenianism was put down to the Irish being Catholics rather than Celts. The *Doncaster Chronicle* thought the disparity in ‘religious formularies’ underlay the dispute.¹⁵⁴ ‘A True Irishman’ railed against the Catholic church, which had supported as ‘just and lawful – nay, holy’ any organisation to eradicate Protestantism and overthrow ‘the so-called tyrannical Saxon yoke’.¹⁵⁵ The *Sheffield Times*, meanwhile, thought that it was essential to have ‘some centres of British and Protestant influence to promote and spread the idea of unity’.¹⁵⁶ If the Irish could be pacified through changes in laws, or even through a more significant change of religion, it is hard to conclude that the British thought that inherent characteristics lay at the root of their difficulties.

The example of the Conservative *Yorkshire Gazette* is particularly instructive. In 1864, it had compared the West Indies to the ‘indolence’ and ‘intemperance’ in Ireland, speculating that a shared ‘weakness in the abdominal regions’ affected both societies.¹⁵⁷ In 1865, it highlighted the ‘old feud between the Celtic and Norman race,’ concluding that the Celt hated law, order, and settled government, and wanted ‘the fruits of labour without toiling’.¹⁵⁸ In 1866, it felt that the true Celt, found in France or Ireland, was ‘exceedingly vindictive and blood-thirsty’.¹⁵⁹ However, it subsequently determined that laziness was not ‘inherent in the Irish race,’ as in England they undertook ‘the most laborious employment’; the only conclusion that could be drawn was that ‘the insecurity of life and property in that country has created a want of capital and a consequent dearth of employment’.¹⁶⁰ ‘It needs only religious and political quietude,’ the paper argued, to ensure ‘the

¹⁵³ Parry, *Politics of Patriotism*, p. 260; Daly, ‘True Remedy’, pp. 68–9.

¹⁵⁴ *DC*, 15 March 1867 p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ *LE*, 18 March 1867 p. 2; see also 28 April 1866 p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ *ST*, 10 November 1866 p. 8.

¹⁵⁷ *YG*, 2 January 1864 p. 8.

¹⁵⁸ *YG*, 21 October 1865 p. 8, 25 November 1865 p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ *YG*, 13 October 1866 p. 8.

¹⁶⁰ *YG*, 5 January 1867 p. 8.

rapid increase of prosperity and happiness' there.¹⁶¹ This abandonment of a racial interpretation in favour of a political one, at the very time when opinion was meant to be shifting in the other direction, from a Conservative newspaper that supported the Confederacy and Governor Eyre – periodically, at least – suggests that the intellectual links between these positions may well have been overblown.

Conclusion

These three imperial hotspots provide little justification for the argument that this was an era of tightening racial thinking. Instead of finding a new racial narrative to link the three together, contemporaries seem to have incorporated them into existing narratives: the slow spread of civilisation, the misgovernment of elites, or a need for reform to resolve sectional tensions. In all three areas – New Zealand, Jamaica, and Ireland – it was widely accepted that the population were by no means irreconcilably incompatible with British-style self-governing representative institutions. This explains the relative absence of race from discussions of reform in 1866-7, and the suggestion of one contemporary writer 'that in Britain... black people and Hindus were qualified to exercise the franchise'.¹⁶²

In New Zealand and Ireland, the locals were more or less ready to take on the responsibility immediately; in Jamaica, things might take longer. However, even the latter case was not because of inherent racial or cultural inferiority, but because the elites had not taken their duties towards those around them seriously. Perhaps it was the assumption that progression towards self-government was the natural course of all humanity that led the British to the rather facile and misguided belief that taking power out of the hands of the House of Assembly would automatically restart the process of advancement.

However, in all three cases the criteria were much the same: that the right to the franchise was earned gradually and through self-improvement.

¹⁶¹ YG, 7 September 1867 p. 8.

¹⁶² Alex Middleton, 'The Second Reform Act and the Politics of Empire', *Parliamentary History* vol. 36, no. 1 (2017), p. 90.

The next chapter brings this perspective back to the domestic sphere, by examining the events of 1866-7 and the unexpectedly radical extension of the franchise that they produced.

Chapter 8: Reform, 1866-7

Any attempt to study the events of 1866-7 through a regional lens will almost certainly attract the pertinent objection that the Second Reform Act is unquestionably a national event. The historical discipline has changed dramatically since it was possible to explain the passing of the Act almost exclusively through high politics.¹ However, the key events in the Act's story remain wedded to the Parliamentary and metropolitan theatres: the defeat of the Liberal government in 1866, on basing the borough franchise on rent paid versus the valuation for local rates; the Hyde Park riots, which tested the issues of popular sovereignty and the commitment of the working classes to an orderly society; the debates of 1867, which broke the unity of the Liberal party but not of the Conservatives, and resulted in a Conservative Prime Minister passing an Act more radical than all but the most extreme earlier proposals.

However, any truly national story can also be told regionally. Yorkshire MPs were an integral part of the bill's passage, whether Conservatives filing loyally through the lobbies in support of Disraeli, or Liberals breaking ranks to enfranchise every householder who paid their own rates, rather than Gladstone's preferred option of a 'hard and fast' line of valuation below which the franchise would not extend. The mass meetings on Woodhouse Moor, just outside Leeds, were reported nationally, though it was the traditional emotional levers of dialect and county history which summoned a quarter of a million people there.² Moreover, Yorkshire was the heartland of the Working Men's Conservative Association movement, which – if nothing more – was a vital propaganda component of Disraeli's push for an extended franchise. This chapter does not fully divorce itself from the national story, but uses the regional lens to focus and sharpen our understanding of national events.

It also maintains the study's overall focus on the racial and political definition of the nation. As such, this chapter does what most contemporary observers did and takes the figure of the voter as male as a given, considering

¹ Smith, *Second Reform Bill*; Cowling, *Disraeli, Gladstone and Revolution*.

² WYAS Bradford, DB19/C19/6, 'Johnny Reight to Tim Politic'.

instead the particular characteristics of independent ‘manliness’ which delimited the bill’s boundaries. Similarly, it glosses over some of the debates around the bill which, though important both at the time and historiographically, do not directly pertain to the topic of the thesis. Ballots and voting papers, minority representation in the new ‘three-cornered’ constituencies, and the representation of currently unenfranchised communities – as well as the abolition of existing seats – were all discussed at this time. Deprioritising these debates, while still acknowledging their existence, allows us to focus on the fundamental question: why were so many admitted to the franchise in 1867, despite – or indeed thanks to – the collapse of Liberal unity in 1866?

1866: Liberal failure

Russell and Gladstone’s proposed reform of 1866 had three significant flaws. Two of these – not bringing forward a redistribution scheme, and basing the borough franchise on the gross estimated rental value of the property instead of its assessed value for the purposes of laying local rates – were the proximate causes of the bill’s failure, and the Parliamentary debates over them have been well studied. The third significant flaw, however, has attracted less attention: the proposed level of the borough and county franchises.

During the fallow years of reform before 1865, the ‘single-barrelled’ reform bills of Baines and Locke King had resulted in the £6 borough rental and £10 county occupation franchise becoming a Liberal talisman. As detailed in chapter 5, most Liberal candidates had framed their support for reform in the context of these figures, giving them considerable symbolic significance. However, Cabinet wrangling ultimately resulted in a £7 borough rental franchise, and £14 county occupation.³ Although the extension of the franchise in boroughs had always been the Liberal preoccupation, and the government expected the £7 rental to approximate a £6 rating franchise, the decision to abandon both figures should not, perhaps, have been taken as

³ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, pp. 194-5.

lightly as it was. Even the veteran Bradford MP Henry Wickham, hardly a Radical, considered it ‘a milk and water affair’, containing ‘the basis for mischief and none for real good’.⁴

From their statements before the bill was brought in, the Liberal provincial press was clearly expecting the government to follow through on these pledges. Advanced Liberal newspapers expected anything short of £6 rental to ‘produce universal discontent,’ be ‘a suicidal course,’ or ‘not be worth having.’⁵ However, even more moderate Liberal newspapers acknowledged disappointment with the bill. The *Bradford Observer* ‘accept[ed] the measure for the sake of the men,’ though the Conservatives in 1859 could have been pushed to a similar level; the *York Herald* praised it mutedly as ‘go[ing] as far perhaps as is warranted by political prudence.’⁶ The bill even required some newspapers to revise earlier positions. In the space of a week, the *Doncaster Gazette* had to amend its stance that £6 rental was ‘practicable in the existing state of public opinion,’ and praise the new Reform Bill as ‘a wise, liberal and practical scheme’.⁷

This minimal enthusiasm was reflected in the meetings called to support the bill. In Bradford, speakers admitted that the bill was ‘not what most of them had been asking for’ and ‘expressed regret that... they could not obtain a bill embodying something better’.⁸ A Scarborough meeting resolved that the bill was ‘a substantial measure of reform’ even though it ‘falls short of what the unenfranchised classes might reasonably have expected’.⁹ In most cases, however, those who considered themselves reformers were prepared to unite behind the bill. The sole exception was in Sheffield, where the formerly pro-Confederate Alderman Saunders proposed the Council petition the Commons in support of the bill. He was foiled by the formerly pro-Union Councillor Ironside, who ‘denied that the bill was an honest measure’ and then, when nobody agreed with him, ‘seized his hat and bolted from the hall, amidst general laughter’ to deny the meeting a quorum.¹⁰

⁴ WYAS Bradford, 68D82/18 (Henry Wickham to Matthew Wilson, 14 March 1866).

⁵ *LE*, 13 January 1866 p. 4; *BR*, 17 February 1866 p. 4; *WFP*, 13 January 1866 p. 5.

⁶ *BO*, 15 March 1866 p. 4; *YH*, 17 March 1866 p. 8.

⁷ *DG*, 9 March 1866 p. 8, 16 March 1866 p. 8.

⁸ *BO*, 22 March 1866 p. 5.

⁹ *SM*, 7 April 1866 p. 3.

¹⁰ *SI*, 12 April 1866 p. 3.

During the 1865 election, constituency activists had punished representatives unwilling to bring forward a further reform bill.¹¹ In Yorkshire, the lukewarm press reception of the 1860 bill had been matched by an unwillingness to turn out and campaign for the measure, and the resulting failure had taken reform off the table for five years. There was clearly little desire to jeopardise the bill this time: the activists were willing to engage in the necessary provincial political theatre to give the measure the required legitimacy.

In general, during this period, the moderates were well in control of the reform movement. At Sheffield, when Alderman Saunders held a meeting to support the bill, the former Union advocate Samuel Jackson's motion for 'manhood suffrage' received only four supporters among four hundred present in the hall, with his accusation that 'radical friends' had deserted the working class being met by denunciations of 'silly obstructive schemes of universal suffrage'.¹² Even at 'a large open air-meeting of working men' in radical Bradford, only two out of 3,000 could be found to support the proposition 'that the bill did not meet the intelligence of the working classes'.¹³

Robert Saunders highlighted the concept of permanence as a critical one in determining whether a measure would be successful.¹⁴ At this time, however, a few activists did suggest that pressure for franchise extension would restart shortly after the passing of any bill. At Doncaster, George Hatfield expressed his belief that agitation would continue 'until the elective franchise is assimilated to the municipal one. (Loud applause)'; in Huddersfield, Wright Mellor considered a £6 rental 'a beginning'.¹⁵ Rhetoric around every 'intelligent, respectable, virtuous, and well-conducted' taxpayer being entitled to the franchise, with £6 being 'a sort of rough-and-ready measure' below which 'it would be perfectly hopeless to attempt to go... at

¹¹ Zimmerman, 'Palmerstonian Delay', pp. 1179, 1194.

¹² *SI*, 20 February 1866 p. 6.

¹³ *BO*, 12 April 1866 p. 6.

¹⁴ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 187.

¹⁵ *DG*, 19 January 1866 p. 3; *BC*, 17 November 1866 p. 5; *HC*, 24 February 1866 p. 6.

present' perhaps fed into Conservative beliefs that the reduction was only a stepping-stone on the way to universal suffrage.¹⁶

As the Conservatives noted, there was a certain amount of opportunism in reformers attempting to push through a measure they considered inadequate.¹⁷ This opportunism perhaps explains the vehemence with which reformers denounced those voting against the government on two key confrontations: the first being the government's refusal to present redistribution schedules alongside the franchise bill, and the second – which ultimately doomed the bill – the question of rating against rental. However, closer examination of the views of these opponents suggests that they were not merely opportunistically attempting to shelve reform. Instead, it reveals aspects of the way in which views of the franchise's nature and purpose differed both between and within parties.

The specific details of redistribution go beyond the scope of this chapter, which focuses on the question of reform in its relation to concepts of citizenship and nationality. However, those Liberals who interpreted Conservative insistence that the scheme be brought forward as 'political hypocrisy,' or one of 'the intricacies of strategy which the craft of the Jew can devise', seem to have been incorrect.¹⁸ In the Commons, the Hon. William Duncombe (Conservative MP for the North Riding) complained that 'it was impossible to estimate the full scope and extent of the reduction' without redistribution proposals.¹⁹ Yorkshire Conservative newspapers expressed a similar belief: it was the overall composition of the measure, the extension of the franchise plus the effect of redistribution, which mattered. The franchise was merely 'a single wing', while 'the opposition ask for... a glimpse of the whole building': Parliament could not 'judge what extension of the franchise was proper and necessary' without seeing what redistribution was planned.²⁰

¹⁶ *LI*, 27 January 1866 p. 6.

¹⁷ *HxG*, 14 April 1866 p. 4.

¹⁸ *LT*, 24 March 1866 p. 5; *SI*, 2 June 1866 p. 6.

¹⁹ *HC Debs* 183, c.70, 27 April 1866; not to be confused with the contemporaneous East Riding MP Admiral the Hon. Arthur Duncombe, or William's predecessor and successor for the North Riding Colonel the Hon. Octavius Duncombe, who were his uncles.

²⁰ *HP*, 20 April 1866; *ST*, 31 March 1866 p. 8.

This organic view of Parliamentary reform was coupled with other motives, with self-interest among MPs threatened by redistribution undoubtedly being a significant one. Outside the Commons, there was also a fear that an extended electorate would push a ‘more democratic’ Parliament into a wide-ranging redistribution that would overthrow whatever balance had been achieved.²¹ The *Doncaster Chronicle* congratulated Parliament on avoiding ‘being taken by surprise by... one of Mr Bright’s schemes for redistribution... [to] completely change the character of Parliamentary representation and throw predominant power into the hands of the representatives of labour alone.’²²

Liberals did recognise the importance of redistribution: for instance, when John Dent MP argued that franchise extension had ‘comparatively little value’ without ‘a judicious redistribution of seats.’²³ However, their support for it was framed in the context of expected partisan advantage. The *Richmond and Ripon Chronicle*’s argument that a ‘reformed Parliament’ would still ‘deal gently with representative centres’ was somewhat weakened by its subsequent admission that ‘With a reduction of the franchise, a Liberal majority would be so far secure as to enable the country to do without any redistribution bill at all.’²⁴ On balance, despite the Liberal focus on ‘single-barrelled’ reform bills, the evidence does not support a differing view of the franchise between Conservatives and Liberals in this respect. It is perhaps truer to say that although the Conservatives were sincere in their insistence on seeing a redistribution scheme alongside the franchise reduction, this came from both partisan and principled motives.

The ultimate downfall of the 1866 reform bill was not over redistribution, but the question of whether rented value or rated value should be taken as the basis of the franchise. The government defeat brought condemnation from many Liberal newspapers, arguing that those who supported rating did so to

²¹ *ST*, 17 March 1866 p. 8.

²² *DC*, 4 May 1866 p. 5.

²³ *SM*, 7 April 1866 p. 3.

²⁴ *RRC*, 2 June 1866 p. 4, 9 June 1866 p. 2.

limit the extension of the franchise or 'to destroy the bill'.²⁵ However, they overlooked the fact that other Liberal newspapers had expressed their preference for rating over rental before it became a party issue. The *Bradford Observer*, disclaiming allegiance with 'the enemies of Reform,' supported rating for its tendency to counteract 'the excesses of centralisation' and 'corrupting trickery,' while the *Huddersfield Chronicle* argued against the 'less satisfactory evidence' available to support rental valuations.²⁶ The logic used to justify rating as the basis of the franchise was just as solid as that justifying rental.²⁷ However, though committed reformers may have been sincere in their support of rating, the question remains as to whether the Conservatives were merely attempting to derail reform.

At first glance, the rhetoric of the Conservative press seems to support this more cynical interpretation. Any reduction of the borough franchise was 'unnecessary and impolitic'; 'one step in the downward and democratic movement, which is to hand over to the working classes the preponderance of political power'; 'a step downwards towards republicanism'.²⁸ However, this outright opposition to any reduction in the franchise was not universal among Conservative newspapers, despite the Liberals bringing forward their measure. The *Wakefield Journal* stuck to its earlier proposal for household suffrage with plurality of votes; the *Yorkshire Gazette* similarly advocated plural voting; and the *Hull Packet*, 'not only pledged to Reform, but anxious for reform,' supported a £6 rating franchise as the point at which the occupier also paid the rates.²⁹ The intricacies of Conservative proposals for franchise reduction will be considered later in the chapter, but it is clear that not all Conservatives felt it necessary to die in the last ditch opposing a reduction of the borough franchise. However, the Conservative minority in Parliament could not have blocked the bill by themselves: it was only through Liberal defections that the government was defeated.

²⁵ *LM*, 19 June 1866; *LT*, 30 June 1866 p. 4; *WE*, 23 June 1866 p. 5; *SI*, 20 June 1866 p. 2; *ECH*, 21 June 1866 p. 5.

²⁶ *BO*, 1 February 1866 p. 4; *HC*, 16 February 1867 p. 5.

²⁷ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 268.

²⁸ *LI*, 19 May 1866 p. 5; *ST*, 17 March 1866 p. 8; *DC*, 13 April 1866 p. 4.

²⁹ *WJ*, 26 January 1866 p. 2; *YG*, 28 April 1866 p. 8; *HP*, 11 May 1866, 13 July 1866, 31 August 1866.

All twelve Yorkshire Conservatives voted for the amendment, including the Hon. Egremont William Lascelles, sworn in for Northallerton just over a month earlier. Of the twenty-seven Yorkshire Liberals, however, there were three who failed to support the government. Though the Radical John Roebuck was one of the three, it was illness rather than contrarianism which led to his absence without pair. Earlier in the month he had held himself in readiness to be summoned to the House, but at the time of the division he was unable to leave his room.³⁰ The other two MPs, Colonel Thomas Pearson Crosland of Huddersfield and the Hon. Charles Wentworth-Fitzwilliam of Malton, voted against the government.

The vote of Wentworth-Fitzwilliam is perhaps the easier of the two to unpick. As we have seen, it was clear by the 1865 election that Wentworth-Fitzwilliam opposed the £6 borough franchise: however, he also voted against the Liberal party in every significant division on the bill. His support for Grosvenor's amendment requiring the redistribution scheme to be brought forward may be explained as him protecting the family investment in the borough of Malton, but his voting on Conservative lines over reductions in the county franchises tends to suggest that it was opposition to reduction in the franchise which motivated him in supporting the rating requirement.

Robert Saunders has framed Crosland's vote as purely motivated by rating, arguing that 'he would have preferred a lower qualification than £7, but thought "a ratial test much safer than a rental".'³¹ Perhaps unintentionally, this implies that Crosland would have accepted a lower rental qualification than £7. However, Crosland's actions leave open the possibility that he voted against £7 rental not just because it was a rental franchise, but because it was too low. In his explanation of his vote, he restated his support for rating as a measure, and justified his vote against an amendment setting the county franchise at £20 rating because it 'not only affirmed the *rating principle* but fixed the *amount...* at a figure so incompatible with the views I had expressed to my constituents that I could not support it.'³² Yet Crosland did not explain his earlier vote against a

³⁰ *SI*, 9 June 1866 p. 10; *SDT*, 20 June 1866 p. 3; *SI*, 28 June 1866 p. 3

³¹ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 219.

³² *HC*, 30 June 1866 p. 5.

second amendment designed to set the county franchise on a rating basis, whose sponsor emphasised that ‘The question, however, was not so much whether the amount should be raised to a higher figure, as whether the Committee should adopt the principle of rating’³³

On the hustings, Crosland had insisted he would vote for £6 rating over £6 rental and invited his constituents to ‘note it, because I would not enter the House of Commons on the shoulders of a falsehood or a misunderstanding – (cheers)’.³⁴ However, he was equally clear that this was his absolute limit – ‘I am not “squeezable” (Much laughter and applause)’ – and that he considered income tax, lodger and educational franchises essential to avoid ‘an isolated measure that only operates one way... that would transfer the power from those that have it to the masses’.³⁵ With most of these ‘fancy franchises’ lacking from Russell’s bill, Crosland would have been all the more insistent on the higher £6 rating qualification.

Both Yorkshire Liberals who voted against the bill, therefore, seem to have done so not because of the difference between a rating and rental franchise – in other words, to maintain the link between taxation and representation – but in large part because they wished to maintain a higher qualification. The more taciturn Conservatives may well have done the same. However, outside Parliament there was a sufficient body of opinion to make rating an entirely valid basis for the franchise. The *Pontefract Advertiser’s* belief that Gladstone’s decision to resign was ‘most infatuated’ was not entirely without grounds.³⁶

Regardless, the fall of the government and the accession of the Conservatives to power led to a period of intense agitation intended to secure an extensive measure of reform. But how genuine was this agitation? Did the Liberals in the country change their views about the franchise? Or was the goal to pressure the Conservatives into delivering a moderate offering, instead of nothing at all?

³³ *HC Debs* 184, cc.177-8, 11 June 1866.

³⁴ *HC*, 1 July 1865 p. 8.

³⁵ *HC*, 1 July 1865 p. 8, 15 July 1865 p. 6.

³⁶ *PA*, 30 June 1866 p. 1.

1866-7: extra-parliamentary interlude

The importance of extra-parliamentary pressure in the passage of the 1867 Reform Act is debated, but most historians now play down its significance.³⁷ Certainly, the scope of demonstrations in Yorkshire was impressive. In the earlier phase, the largest event involved between six and fifteen thousand people – and even then, ‘an Elector’ claimed the hall ‘was not half filled’ and the meeting lacked enthusiasm.³⁸ By contrast, the Reform League organised two monster demonstrations on Woodhouse Moor (one in October 1866 and a second in April 1867), each attracting several hundred thousand individuals.³⁹ Though these were the centrepiece demonstrations for the West Riding, there were smaller local demonstrations, with the largest perhaps being the 12,000 in Sheffield who listened to Edmund Beales.⁴⁰ Though the monster demonstrations were generally regarded as successful, others were less well-attended: a subsequent Sheffield meeting ‘with the thermometer about freezing point and three inches of snow dust under foot’ attracted just over 7,000, and a Hull demonstration was reported as fewer than 1,500, including ‘a considerable number of women and boys’, with ‘dingy and shabby’ banners.⁴¹

Numbers alone were never the deciding factor in the success of popular protest movements: short of revolution, it was always their ability to influence Parliament that counted. In this case, as high political studies have concluded that this movement was ineffective, it seems inappropriate to challenge this overall conclusion through a regional study. Yet this thesis can offer some counterpoints and insights to better contextualise the extra-parliamentary campaign for reform.

Firstly, the ineffectiveness of these popular demonstrations should not be allowed to overshadow the intensity of anger in this period. This anger was growing even before the defeat of the Government: complaints about Conservative tactics in 1866 were far more furious than in 1860. The

³⁷ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 227; McClelland, ‘England’s Greatness’, p. 76.

³⁸ *LI*, 7 April 1867 p. 8; *PA*, 7 April 1866 p. 1.

³⁹ Malcolm Chase, ‘The Popular Movement for Parliamentary Reform in Provincial Britain during the 1860s’, *Parliamentary History* vol. 36, no. 1 (2017), p. 19.

⁴⁰ *RA*, 11 August 1866 p. 5; *ST*, 11 August 1866 p. 6

⁴¹ *SI*, 22 January 1867 p. 3; *HP*, 2 November 1866.

Sheffield Independent's comment about 'the craft of the Jew' was mild in comparison to the *Wakefield Free Press*, which denied that the Tories were gentlemen because they deferred to 'a mongrel Jew barely naturalised... a Jew mountebank, whose very features suggest... the inevitable tiara of old hats in the Minories'.⁴² This sudden outburst of antisemitism is striking, given that his Jewishness 'was not an aspect of Disraeli Liberals had taken great pains to exploit' until the 1870s.⁴³ As in 1878, however, accusations of conspiracy were in the air: 'Quasi' even went so far as to claim that the Fenian outbreak was a Tory false flag designed to distract from reform.⁴⁴ This angry rhetoric extended from the Tories themselves – a 'blind, brainless class of men' – to Liberals 'who have proved false to the principles of Reform,' whose 'factious opposition' would be punished at the oncoming dissolution.⁴⁵

A certain amount of this anger was justified in the light of Robert Lowe's comments about the morality of the working classes: similar comments by Roebuck had been received equally poorly in 1864. However, while Roebuck's comments were brought up spontaneously by the crowd at an 1866 Sheffield reform meeting, Lowe's words were deliberately exploited by those pressing for agitation.⁴⁶ Not only did their rejection form the first resolution at the October Woodhouse Moor meeting, but the advanced Liberal *Leeds Express* printed copies of Lowe's speech and advertised them 'for free distribution amongst the working classes' shortly beforehand.⁴⁷ The 'men of Bingley' were also urged to 'show the "Lowes" and "Elchos"... they must not slander you with impunity' by attending a meeting at the Oddfellows Hall.⁴⁸ The reaction to these comments has been understood as vindicating working-class respectability, and certainly this must have been a significant motivation among the rank-and-file of the movement.⁴⁹ However,

⁴² *SI*, 2 June 1866 p. 6; *WFP*, 2 June 1866 p. 5.

⁴³ Anthony S. Wohl, 'Ben JuJu: Representations of Disraeli's Jewishness in the Victorian Political Cartoon', *Jewish History* vol. 10, no. 2 (Fall 1996), pp. 97-8.

⁴⁴ *BR*, 16 February 1867 p. 5.

⁴⁵ *WFP*, 30 June 1866 p. 5; *PT*, 23 June 1866 p. 4.

⁴⁶ *SI*, 3 April 1866 p. 6.

⁴⁷ WYAS Bradford, DB19/C19/6 ('The West Riding Manhood Suffrage Demonstration at Leeds, Monday Oct. 8 1866, Programme of proceedings on the Moor'); *LE*, 1 September 1866 p. 5.

⁴⁸ WYAS Bradford, DB17/C19/4 ('Reform! Reform!', n.d. but presumably September 1866); *BO*, 4 October 1866 p. 4.

⁴⁹ Chase, 'Popular Movement', p. 21; Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, pp. 260-2.

the deliberate exploitation of the statement by the campaign's leaders suggests that it may have been a tactic, as well as – or perhaps even more than – a motivation for them. The melodrama of Victorian politics needed a villain, and Lowe – who 'disclaimed the utterance of the language originally imputed to him' – provided a suitable candidate.⁵⁰

This question of tactics raises a further problem. Was there a genuine shift among more prominent activists and the Liberal press, which reflected them moving towards a more radical point of view – abandoning the 'hard and fast line' in favour of household or manhood suffrage – as a result of popular agitation? Or was the fostering of this anger solely a tactic to pressure the Conservative government into greater concessions, or even just to get the Liberals back into office – as the Conservatives alleged of 1859, and would allege again in this period?

It seems significant that, for the most part, the newspapers which demanded a greater instalment of reform in late 1866 were those which had already been demanding a larger instalment. The *Wakefield Express*, for instance, argued that 'Reformers are no longer bound by their [previous] offer' and 'Whether it be manhood suffrage or household suffrage... the constitution must now be opened.'⁵¹ However, earlier in the decade it had already been sceptical about the power of 'even a £6 rating franchise... [to] remedy the evils complained of by Mr Bright'⁵² It was hardly surprising that other advanced Liberal newspapers, like the *Bradford Review* and the *Leeds Express*, supported similarly radical measures.⁵³ In this respect the agitation seems to have been preaching to the converted.

The bulk of regional press opinion seems to have encouraged the agitation as a tactic for forcing through a moderate measure, rather than having been convinced by it. The *Leeds Mercury*, the county's most prominent Liberal newspaper, never swayed from its belief that neither manhood nor household suffrage was 'prudent or practical', or 'juster and more beneficial than... that now prevailing'.⁵⁴ The campaign's only value

⁵⁰ *HxG*, 14 April 1866 p. 4.

⁵¹ *WE*, 30 June 1866 p. 5, 8 December 1866 p. 5.

⁵² *WE*, 15 December 1860.

⁵³ *BR*, 1 September 1866 p. 4, *LE*, 18 August 1866 p. 5.

⁵⁴ *LM*, 27 January 1866, 8 September 1866, 27 February 1867.

seemed to be to ‘teach those timid people whose disastrous fears caused a moderate settlement of the question to be rejected... what is the meaning of “swamping the present constituencies”.’⁵⁵ The *Pontefract Telegraph* complained that the agitators were ‘virtually playing into the hands of the Tories’ with their insistence on ‘impracticable crotchets’.⁵⁶ Many of these moderate newspapers switched to support of household suffrage not during the reform agitation, but in early 1867 when the Conservative party began to discuss limited household suffrage.⁵⁷ In private, other Liberals remained considerably less enthusiastic: the recently-elected Knaresborough Liberal Isaac Holden was informed by a correspondent that ‘I do not approve of Household Suffrage and think a *Five Pound Rental* quite *low* enough.’⁵⁸

The second insight provided by a regional study is the way in which existing tensions within the Liberal party were exacerbated by the existence of two formal organisations both campaigning for different measures of franchise extension. The belief that the Reform League and the Reform Union ‘readily collaborated’ with ‘compromise on tactical grounds’ tends not to be borne out by the struggles which went on in Yorkshire, or indeed Wolverhampton.⁵⁹ The *Bradford Review*’s hope that there would be ‘no antagonism, no jealousy, indeed no rivalry’ proved false, and instead the ‘common tradition’ broke down spectacularly: radical reformers pushing for the largest measure possible, and moderates stuck between the Scylla of Conservatism and the Charybdis of manhood suffrage.⁶⁰

It was relatively simple to patch over ideological differences between Union and League: as the *Wakefield Free Press* pointed out, ‘when the Household and Lodger franchises of the Union are fully carried out... the difference between the result and “*registered residential* manhood suffrage” would be very little.’⁶¹ However, battles at the constituency level were of organisation as well as ideology. In the provinces, elections required

⁵⁵ *LM*, 8 February 1867.

⁵⁶ *PT*, 8 September 1866 p. 4, 29 September 1866 p. 4, 13 October 1866 p. 4.

⁵⁷ *LM*, 6 March 1867; *RRC*, 25 May 1867 p. 4; *YH*, 2 March 1867 p. 8.

⁵⁸ University of Bradford Special Collections, Isaac Holden Papers, 1/1/24 (Richard Park to Isaac Holden, April 1867)

⁵⁹ Chase, ‘Popular Movement’, pp. 27, 22; Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 85, 87.

⁶⁰ *BR*, 1 September 1866 p. 4; Parry, *Liberal Government*, p. 19.

⁶¹ *WFP*, 16 February 1867 p. 4.

committees, canvassers, and the ability to support a candidate from selection to poll. In many cases, the Reform League acted not as an aid to the existing Liberal organisations but as a potential replacement for them. When discussing Wakefield reformers, T.H. Holdsworth had to clarify that he meant ‘the old original Reform party (cheers), not the new establishment which has just been set up in opposition to us (laughter and cheers).’⁶² Moreover, the expansion of the electorate in itself posed a threat to the existing borough and county elites. At a Bradford open-air working men’s meeting, one speaker predicted the £7 franchise would mean ‘the working men of Bradford would be able to “lick” all comers, and would not have to go down on their knees to the Whigs to ask them to accept their candidate, as they had in the case of General Thompson’.⁶³

In Hull, the South Myton Reform Association had been ‘the only organised body of Reformers in the borough,’ managing both candidate selection and registration.⁶⁴ It funded delegations to various reform conferences, and subsequently became an auxiliary branch of the Reform Union.⁶⁵ In early 1866, a general Liberal association for the town was set up: however, the local Reform League branch claimed the right to nominate seven members to the committee, purporting to have secured the town’s second Liberal MP at the 1865 election.⁶⁶ League and Union disagreed on the behaviour of the local MP James Clay, particularly on his vote against the Liberals in support of an amendment against the corrupt payment of rates.⁶⁷ In March 1867, members of the Reform League threatened to ‘act independently’ of the Reform Association if it delayed in calling a public meeting, suggesting also that ‘they would perhaps not feel bound to support the lead of the Association in future, in supporting at an election any candidate that they might bring forward, or in other ways.’⁶⁸

In Sheffield, the tension crystallised around the town’s long-standing member John Roebuck. Roebuck had continually professed that he would

⁶² *WE*, 27 April 1867 p. 5; for the Reform League branch’s creation, *WE*, 23 February 1867 p. 6.

⁶³ *BO*, 12 April 1866 p. 6.

⁶⁴ *HA*, 24 December 1864 p. 6, 13 May 1865 p. 5.

⁶⁵ *HA*, 18 November 1865 p. 4.

⁶⁶ *HP*, 2 February 1866 p. 3; *ECH* 8 March 1866 p. 6.

⁶⁷ *HA*, 6 June 1866 p. 2, 14 July 1866 p. 4.

⁶⁸ *HA*, 9 March 1867 p. 7.

accept a reform bill from whatever party it issued, and supported the Conservative measure in both 1859 and 1867. Coupled with harsh language to Gladstone over compounding, this earned him the Reform League's ire. He was blamed for 'the apathy of the old Liberal party in Sheffield,' with speakers claiming he had done nothing for the working classes, and was told to 'go to some Tory borough more consonant with his feelings.'⁶⁹ Even the *Sheffield Independent* commented ominously that 'Sheffield men do not lightly desert the member they have chosen... We hope it is not too late for Mr Roebuck to repair the mischief that he has done'.⁷⁰ The enlarged Sheffield electorate did desert Roebuck in 1868, though with characteristic contrarianism he returned in 1874 to top the poll.⁷¹

Perhaps the most significant battle between moderates and radicals came in Leeds, the home of the Reform League's Yorkshire Department. Malcolm Chase characterises the attendance of Edward Baines at the Easter rally on Woodhouse Moor as securing 'The foundations for viable co-operation' between the two.⁷² In reality, it might better be described as a capitulation. In June 1866, a meeting of advanced Reformers had been asked if they 'would allow the Leeds Whigs thus continually to sell them as they were doing. (Great applause)'.⁷³ A new association was needed to 'get rid of the milk-and-water men', and the Reform League became this association.⁷⁴ Though Leeds had generally run a Radical and Liberal in tandem, previously the Radical had been selected by the mainstream Reform Registration Association.⁷⁵ In February 1867, the Reform League decided to bring forward its own second candidate at the Leeds election.⁷⁶ In April, the *Leeds Express* became 'the medium of communication in all matters concerning the Reform League Party in this district', just as the Baines family's *Leeds Mercury* had acted for the Liberals.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ *SI*, 23 April 1867 p. 6, 28 March 1867 p. 3, 7 May 1867 p. 8.

⁷⁰ *SI*, 18 May 1867 p. 6.

⁷¹ Cruikshank, 'J. A. Roebuck M.P.: A Re-Appraisal of Liberalism in Sheffield, 1849-1879', pp. 211-3.

⁷² Chase, 'Popular Movement', pp. 28-9.

⁷³ *LT*, 23 June 1866 p. 8.

⁷⁴ *LM*, 22 August 1866.

⁷⁵ Green, 'Politics in Leeds', pp. 238-40, 243.

⁷⁶ *LE*, 4 February 1867 p. 3.

⁷⁷ WYAS Bradford, DB17/C19/4 (FR Spark and Co., Leeds Daily Express Office, 4 April 1867).

There were some attempts at a rear-guard action, such as when a meeting of Leeds Liberals in the Stock Exchange voted 20-18 in favour of Gladstone's £5 rental rather than household suffrage.⁷⁸ Immediately afterwards, the *Leeds Express* accused them of trying to 'stultify the wishes of nearly the entire community' and printed a letter from 'No Whig' urging the 'Men of Leeds' to 'plump for the Radical' at the next election.⁷⁹ The electoral logic was inexorable: a month later, Baines attended the Reform League rally, and in July negotiations about an alliance between the Reform League and Reform Association had begun.⁸⁰ Though each nominated a candidate to a joint Leeds ticket in 1868, there was no doubt who was in charge.⁸¹ The moderate Liberal Sir Andrew Fairbairn, who stood unsuccessfully, subsequently condemned a Registration Association where 'moderate Liberal views were not regarded as they ought' because 'three-fourths of the working members of that association were also members of the Reform League'.⁸²

The likely effect of this pressure on Liberal parliamentarians was to increase the necessity to find a suitably radical settlement, though for practical rather than ideological reasons. It had previously been possible to manage the Radical threat, but the creation of the Reform League as a viable campaigning organisation outside the existing party structure changed this. Even if the leadership of the League did not instruct their branches to oppose mainstream Liberal candidates, their inaction would harm the Liberal cause.

Yet the Liberal members, out of office, could only do so much to affect the Government bill. Ultimately, it was the willingness of the Conservative party to trust their leader and support a measure of reform which they would unquestionably have rejected from another party, coupled with the determination of independent Liberals to see reform passed regardless of party considerations, which decided the ultimate shape of the 1867 Reform Act.

⁷⁸ *LE*, 23 March 1867 p. 4.

⁷⁹ *LE*, 25 March 1867 p. 2, 26 March 1867 p. 2.

⁸⁰ For criticism of his earlier absence, *LE*, 24 November 1866 p. 5; WYAS Leeds, WYL GA/C/18 (Reform League- Minutes of General Council and Executive Committee, 1866-70), entry of 16 July 1867.

⁸¹ *LI*, 10 June 1868 p. 3.

⁸² *LT*, 12 December 1868 p. 3.

1867: Conservative success?

A number of factors complicate understanding the motivations of backbench Conservative MPs in supporting the reform bill. For a start, they seem to have been far more willing to submit to discipline than the Liberal party, though whether this was innate or due to the talent of Conservative whips is unclear.⁸³ Across thirteen key divisions, 0.79% of votes from Yorkshire Conservatives were given against their party, compared to 5.7% of Yorkshire Liberal votes. Secondly, although they were not necessarily 'booby squires, who valued Westminster simply because it was "the best club in the land", they were certainly far more taciturn than their Liberal counterparts, and therefore provide significantly less evidence for why they voted the way they did.⁸⁴

James Lowther, MP for York, 'championed the uncompromising principles of conservatism,' and gave his maiden speech in support of Earl Grosvenor's wrecking amendment on the 1866 reform bill.⁸⁵ In 1867, he insisted that 'no great party' wanted 'pure and simple household suffrage', making 'sufficient safeguards' like dual voting essential.⁸⁶ As the bill was currently 'not a Conservative measure', and seemed unlikely to become any more Conservative, 'he should hold himself at liberty' to vote against it and reject the '*felo de se*' in which his party seemed to be engaged. Despite this trenchant standpoint, most of his Parliamentary contributions were about academics voting for borough members at Oxford and Cambridge. Though this may indicate a desire to prevent members of 'the educated classes' being 'deprived of the suffrage,' it tells us little about his wider views on the franchise.⁸⁷

⁸³ Gurowich, 'War by Other Means', pp. 620-1; John R. Bylsma, 'Party Structure in the 1852-1857 House of Commons: A Scalogram Analysis', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* vol. 7, no. 4 (Spring 1977), p. 625; Scott Mosier and Andrew Reeves, 'Taking the Leap: Voting, Rhetoric, and the Determinants of Electoral Reform', *Legislative Studies Quarterly* vol. 39, no. 4 (November 2014), p. 476.

⁸⁴ Hilton, 'Industrial Spirit', p. 47.

⁸⁵ Roberts, 'Currents of Electoral Independence: James Lowther and Popular Politics in York, c.1865-1880', p. 222; *HC Debs* 182, c.1404, 16 April 1866.

⁸⁶ *HC Debs* 186, cc.472-558, 25 March 1867.

⁸⁷ *HC Debs* 188, cc.480-1, 24 June 1867; cc.1462-7, 12 July 1867.

Lowther was positively loquacious compared to his fellow MPs, many of whom gave little indication of whether they actually supported the bill or not. Like Lowther, the newly elected Colonel the Hon. Octavius Duncombe went to Parliament believing that a long residence, lateral extension and ‘duality, if not plurality, of votes’ were also ‘certain necessary requirements if a household suffrage were adopted’.⁸⁸ However, as the Commons demolished each of those safeguards, Duncombe said nothing. That he ended the year praising Disraeli as a ‘distinguished statesman’ who ‘had swept away all opposition’ may be put down to partisan loyalty, but did he ever doubt the wisdom of the bill which he had supported?⁸⁹

It is understandable that Conservative MPs held to the party line, rather than admit the Reform Bill was going too far. What is intriguing, however, is that Conservative newspapers – with much less incentive to keep their concerns to themselves – did the same. Some of their positivity must be ascribed to the relative speed with which the changes were made: in effect, due to the weekly schedule of most of the newspapers in question, the safeguards were gone before they knew it. However, when it came to a final evaluation of the measure, only the *Sheffield Times* hedged its welcoming of a measure containing ‘all the elements of finality’ with a refusal to ‘predict what will be the issue’.⁹⁰ Ultimately, Disraeli’s triumph must lie not just in having persuaded the Commons to pass a Reform Bill, but in persuading the wider party to accept it without splitting as it did over Corn Law reform.

Some of the enthusiasm must also be ascribed to glee, in seeing the Conservatives not just in office but actually out-manoeuvring the opposition.⁹¹ The *Pontefract Advertiser* was positively glowing when it invited its readers to ‘Mark how cleverly Mr Disraeli checkmates his opponents... [with] a majority of 66 notwithstanding the bitterest and most envenomed hostility of Gladstone, Lowe, and Bright’.⁹² The *Doncaster Chronicle* forecast shifts in party structure that would ‘keep at the head of

⁸⁸ *HP*, 8 March 1867.

⁸⁹ *YG*, 2 November 1867 p. 5.

⁹⁰ *ST*, 18 May 1867 p. 8, 26 July 1867 p. 8.

⁹¹ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 275.

⁹² *PA*, 11 May 1867 p. 1.

affairs men whose patriotism... never will be questioned.’⁹³ Similarly, the *Yorkshire Gazette* gloated at the way that ‘the gigantic efforts and surpassing ability of Mr Disraeli and the Tory party’ had dispelled Liberal delusions based on ‘prejudice’ and ‘self-conceit’.⁹⁴ However, if it had only been the prospect of an extended tenure of office which enthused the Conservatives, it seems likely that they would have treated the bill itself in more muted terms. As such, we must understand what merit the newly extended franchise may have held from a Conservative perspective.

By early 1867, Conservative rhetoric on reform centred around three fundamental principles. Firstly, it must not swamp the constituencies; secondly, it must enfranchise merit; and thirdly, it must provide a lasting settlement. These fundamental principles led fairly naturally onto the proposals for rated household suffrage with a long qualification period, plurality of votes and ‘fancy franchises’ which, in effect, were forced on an uncertain Cabinet by their internal logic.⁹⁵ These proposals differed only from the demands of the reformers in the safeguards which lay around them. However, these safeguards were for the most part abandoned in the interest of the third principle – finality.

Although Disraeli had announced his 1859 bill to be a complete measure, Conservatives seemed to be much more anxious for finality in 1866 than they had been previously. The insistence that the bill should ‘settle the question,’ ‘establish a barrier against renewed agitation,’ or be ‘much more complete’ than the offered measure may well have stemmed from tactical as well as the obvious ideological reasons.⁹⁶ Conservatives had alleged that the popularity of Palmerston’s government lay in its essentially Conservative nature; at the same time, the Liberals had also been able to use Reform as a party cry at elections. Removing both Palmerston and Reform would, in theory, level the electoral playing field.

Of the safeguards attached to household suffrage, plurality of votes had been the most important. Conservative newspapers had struggled to

⁹³ *DC*, 12 April 1867 p. 5.

⁹⁴ *YG*, 13 July 1867 p. 8, 26 October 1867 p. 8.

⁹⁵ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, pp. 233-5, 242.

⁹⁶ *PA*, 14 July 1866 p. 1, *LI*, 17 March 1866 p. 4, *DC*, 27 April 1866 p. 5.

understand the importance of personal ratepaying when it was proposed to abolish it in 1860, but whenever a newspaper had proposed household suffrage it had always been coupled with plural voting as a safeguard. However, the very reasons that Conservative newspapers suggested in support of plural voting may also explain why they abandoned it. It offered no partisan advantage either in theory – ‘where parties are so evenly balanced, there would be quite as many Liberals as Conservatives who would have the double vote’ – or in practice, as the fact that plural voting had ‘long been in operation in every parish in England’ did not stop the Liberals dominating municipal government.⁹⁷ In the end, the Conservative party clung to the single plank of personal ratepaying.

Disraeli’s framing of the bill as restoring to the working classes the votes that the Whigs had taken from them in 1832 was successful, playing to a Conservative weakness for tradition which Disraeli himself, as an outsider, tended to lack. It also negated the critique of ‘Americanising’ the constitution, though the Liberals did have a point when they pointed out that this ‘for years has been propounded and advocated by Mr Bright.’⁹⁸ The framing had direct appeal in boroughs like Pontefract, where those who qualified under the ancient franchises had been dying off.⁹⁹ However, even in Wakefield (enfranchised in 1832) such a comment could raise a cheer at public meetings.¹⁰⁰

Some Conservatives also claimed to detect a partisan advantage in reaching beyond the Liberal upper urban strata to the honest, solid Conservatives below. However, we should distinguish this from Disraeli’s wish to appeal to lower working class ‘resentment,’ given the wholeheartedness with which most Conservatives rejected class warfare.¹⁰¹ It was not resentment but stability that they warmed to: unlike shopkeepers, ‘the working man, upon the whole, is contented with his social position’.¹⁰² This quest for stability perhaps explains the emphasis on long residential qualifications, which would tend to rule out the ambitiously mobile as well as

⁹⁷ *WJ*, 22 March 1867 p. 2.

⁹⁸ *WE*, 15 June 1867 p. 4.

⁹⁹ *PA*, 14 July 1866 p. 1, 30 March 1867 p. 1, 20 April 1867 p. 1, 11 May 1867 p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ *WJ*, 17 May 1867 p. 3; *ST*, 23 March 1867 p. 8.

¹⁰¹ Hilton, ‘Industrial Spirit’, p. 50.

¹⁰² *LI*, 13 June 1867 p. 2; *WJ*, 18 April 1867 p. 2.

‘flitting hordes of characterless labourers’.¹⁰³ Support for ‘beer-barrel influence’ against the ‘puritanical prig’ was suspiciously absent.¹⁰⁴ When the *Leeds Intelligencer* granted a vice to ‘the simple working man of the old school,’ it was not that he drank but that he ‘smokes his pipe in the summer evening’.¹⁰⁵

If the bill offered such an advantage to the Conservatives, however, why were Liberal newspapers so certain that they had got the best of things? Disraeli had been ‘doing the work of the Liberal party so well,’ passing what was ‘in reality Mr Gladstone’s bill’ after Liberal amendments had ‘changed a sham into a reality’.¹⁰⁶ Dissent from this view clustered in east and central Yorkshire, where credit was given to the independent Liberals, or the weakness of the party’s position highlighted.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, the majority Liberal view was that they had triumphed.

This view was only tenable when the Conservatives’ last remaining safeguard, the personal payment of rates, was excluded. The *Leeds Express*, which also supported personal payment, argued that no ‘radical reform advocate... demands the vote for a man without the performance of some personal duty’.¹⁰⁸ Yet the Liberal emphasis had always been on removing impediments to the exercise of the franchise wherever possible. The Liberal reform bill of 1866 had proposed to remove the ratepaying clauses, and Liberals had praised it for doing so.¹⁰⁹ When the bill of 1860 had not done the same, Liberals – including the future Alderman Carter, Reform League leader and part-owner of the *Leeds Express* – had complained that these clauses would ‘prove fatal to the just claims of a very large proportion’.¹¹⁰ When Isaac Holden, Liberal MP for Knaresborough, sent a copy of the bill to an acquaintance, it was returned with the observation that ‘I quite object’ to personal payment.¹¹¹

¹⁰³ *HP*, 22 March 1867

¹⁰⁴ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 241.

¹⁰⁵ *LI*, 28 June 1867 p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ *HE*, 25 May 1867 p. 5; *WE*, 25 May 1867 p. 4; *LT*, 13 July 1867 p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ *TP*, 25 April 1867 p. 4, *ECH*, 18 July 1867 p. 5, *HA*, 20 August 1867 p. 4, *YH*, 7 September 1867 p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ *LE*, 15 April 1867 p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *WFP* 14 April 1866 p. 5, *RRC* 17 March 1866 p. 4, *LM* 29 March 1866.

¹¹⁰ *LM*, 15 March 1860; *LT*, 31 March 1860 p. 5.

¹¹¹ UBSC, Holden Papers 1/1/11/24 (Richard Park to Isaac Holden, April 1867)

Though Liberal intellectuals recognised the concept of ‘participatory citizenship,’ Liberalism at large tended to focus on the franchise as a tool of self-actualisation and individual empowerment: establishing the individual as a full member of the community, or permitting them to hold the executive to account for the use of their taxes.¹¹² By contrast, Conservative justifications for the restricted franchise had focused on the vote being a trust to be exercised on behalf of the whole community. This led relatively naturally to proposals to link the franchise to other civic duties. For instance, as the *Leeds Intelligencer* highlighted, the former Conservative cabinet minister Walpole had supported a £6 borough and £20 county franchise both in 1859 and 1866 because these figures harmonised with both direct taxation and compounding.¹¹³ The voluntary payment of taxes had often featured in Conservative proposals for franchise extension: as the *Sheffield Independent* commented, ‘We have often heard a stout Conservative say he should not fear to enfranchise every man who would voluntarily pay a tax of 5s a year.’¹¹⁴ Rating provided a more solid basis than other taxation because, as the Liberal Sir Roundell Palmer pointed out, ‘there was no reason to expect the time would ever come when local burdens would be dispensed with’.¹¹⁵ Ultimately, this question of civic responsibility managed to sustain the bill in Conservative eyes despite its many contradictions. When the *Wakefield Express* argued that enfranchising lodgers abandoned the ‘talismanic test of ratepaying’, the *Doncaster Chronicle* responded that they had ‘other duties to perform’ including jury service, which ‘The lower class of lodgers will probably shrink from’.¹¹⁶

Civic responsibility was not solely a Conservative concern, however. The Liberal *Hull Advertiser* considered a proposal for allowing a voluntary income tax payment franchise worthy of publication, was requested to re-publish it a month later, and printed a letter from Bolton urging ‘the Reformers of Hull’ to distribute the scheme to ‘every newspaper in the United

¹¹² Biagini, ‘Neo-Roman Liberalism: “republican” Values and British Liberalism, ca. 1860–1875’, pp. 60, 62-3.

¹¹³ *LI*, 7 April 1866 p. 4; Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 197.

¹¹⁴ *SI*, 16 April 1866 p. 2; c.f. *LI*, 16 March 1861 p. 4.

¹¹⁵ HC Debs 187, c.1241, 28 May 1867.

¹¹⁶ *WE*, 11 May 1867 p. 4; *DC*, 24 May 1867 p. 5.

Kingdom'.¹¹⁷ It was not just the restriction in the terms of debate that led to reform being passed: Disraeli's chosen basis provided sufficient cross-over between Conservative and Liberal opinion to allow a consensus, temporary and faltering as it was, to be reached.¹¹⁸ As such, we should consider the opinions of the 'Liberals and so-called Radicals... ready to catch at anything in the shape of a Reform bill' who joined the loyal Conservative minority to pass the measure.¹¹⁹

There were two deciding moments in the passage of the bill, both related to Gladstone's attempts to weaken the bill's insistence on personal ratepaying. The first came on 8 April, when Liberal MPs gathered in a Commons tea-room and resolved to confront Gladstone about his proposal to enfranchise all ratepayers (personal or compound) above £5 and disfranchise those under it. The second, on 12 April, saw Liberal MPs vote with the government to defeat Gladstone's attempt to enfranchise householders who did not pay their rates personally.

The Yorkshiresmen among the tea-room group were an eclectic bunch, yet their motivations are perhaps comprehensible.¹²⁰ Edward Akroyd of Halifax gave the clearest exposition of his motives: as an independent Liberal, elected 'to exercise an honest and independent judgment,' he supported personal payment of rates because it excluded 'the least independent portion of the householders'.¹²¹ He concurred with Sir Francis Crossley of the Northern West Riding that all householders over £5 rating should be forced to pay rates personally, and those under £5 should be required to demonstrate their worth by opting out of compounding.¹²²

Both Hull MPs, Charles Norwood and James Clay, seem to have emphasised the measure's permanence. Norwood used the phrase 'satisfactory and permanent' twice in his response to the Hull Reform League.¹²³ Clay also felt that £5 'would not be a settlement... for five years', and had tired of 'lowering the qualification by £2 or £3 at a time... a peddling

¹¹⁷ *HA*, 4 November 1865 p. 4, 2 December 1865 p. 4, 16 December 1865 p. 5; see also 'An electioneering Conservative' on 15 November 1865 p. 2

¹¹⁸ Mosier and Reeves, 'Taking the Leap', p. 486.

¹¹⁹ *BR*, 20 April 1867 p. 4

¹²⁰ Smith, *Second Reform Bill*, p. 271.

¹²¹ *LM*, 29 April 1867.

¹²² *HC Debs* 186, c.604, 26 March 1867.

¹²³ *HP*, 3 May 1867.

and poor way of going to work'.¹²⁴ However, Clay seems also to have favoured some demonstration of worth for new voters. In 1866 he had introduced his own private member's bill offering an educational franchise to those passing 'some examination as a working man of ordinary intelligence might master by the sacrifice of his leisure hour at night for, say, six months', claiming it was a test 'not for his little smattering of learning, but for his earnestness'.¹²⁵ Clearly, a similar demonstration of earnestness would be the personal payment of rates. The greatest difficulty lies in understanding the motivations of John Dent of Scarborough, but we know that at the 1865 election he expressed a preference for 'a large and liberal' government measure and insisted on being allowed 'to use his own judgment'.¹²⁶

The motives of the three Liberal defectors on the 12 April vote are also understandable. The Hon. Charles Wentworth-Fitzwilliam was secure not just from family interest, but because the Malton Conservatives were prepared 'to bring him in at all hazards,' and he voted against the Liberals in almost every significant division in the session.¹²⁷ Edward Akroyd stuck to his guns in supporting the personal payment of rates, in which John Roebuck evidently found his 'test of the worth, the intelligence, the virtue,' the 'sieve which should separate [out] the respectable and trustworthy'.¹²⁸ Though civic responsibility was not as important to the Liberals as to the Conservatives, it was sufficiently resonant for both to form the basis of a measure – a fact which Disraeli recognised earlier than most.¹²⁹

Most importantly, a ratepaying franchise was an explicitly anti-democratic measure. Many critiques of democracy had focused on the way that the lower classes dominated the electoral system but paid no taxes. By making the electorate and taxpayers as coterminous as possible, despite the logistical difficulties caused by upheavals in the compounding system that now forced householders to pay their own rates, the reform act effectively institutionalised a corrective to the flaws of democracy in America. The enthusiasm across the political spectrum for this institutionalised

¹²⁴ *HP*, 3 May 1867; *HA*, 14 July 1866 p. 4.

¹²⁵ *HP*, 7 July 1865; *HC Debs* 181, c.828, 20 February 1866.

¹²⁶ *Scarborough Gazette*, 15 June 1865 p. 4; *YH*, 15 July 1865 p. 5.

¹²⁷ *RRC*, 7 July 1866 p. 2.

¹²⁸ *HC Debs* 186, c.542, 25 March 1867; *ST*, 18 May 1867 p. 8.

¹²⁹ Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, pp. 235-6.

requirement for responsibility, even after the Union victory in the American Civil War, strongly suggests that support for reform did not equate to a favourable view of democracy.

An essential corollary of the Conservative decision that the country would be safe in the hands of the working classes was for the working classes to show an interest in protecting it. At the time, that interest was demonstrated most clearly by the Working Men's Conservative Association (WMCA) movement. They have played little part in the historiography of the national debate: the indices of Smith, Cowling and Saunders do not contain a single entry for the associations between them. Yet their role, though limited, should not be overlooked.

Though the 1846 split is traditionally seen as marking the end of 'efforts to foster a broad organisational bond between Conservatives and social groups from the lower classes,' this first phase of organised popular Conservatism died out in Yorkshire only in the 1850s.¹³⁰ In Bradford, the society was 'increasing in numbers' with 'funds in a flourishing condition' in 1854, yet it held its last annual meeting the next year.¹³¹ In Leeds and Beverley, societies simply petered out.¹³² Only the Hull society survived into the 1860s, though as the sectarian Protestant Operative Conservative Association.¹³³

The new phase of popular Conservatism began shortly afterwards, with the foundation of the Leeds WMCA in 1862.¹³⁴ However, it was not until the accession of a Conservative government in July 1866 that a second Yorkshire association was formed in Bradford. Halifax, Huddersfield, Cleckheaton, and Wakefield societies were created in a flurry towards the end of the year, perhaps in response to the growing agitation for reform and the Reform League's Woodhouse Moor meeting.¹³⁵ By March 1867, when Leeds held a Conference of Working Men's Conservative Associations, five more

¹³⁰ Jörg Neuheiser, *Crown, Church and Constitution: Popular Conservatism in England, 1815 - 1867* (Oxford, 2016), p. 259.

¹³¹ *LI*, 28 October 1854 p. 6, 21 July 1855 p. 8.

¹³² *LM*, 3 April 1852; *BvG* 23 April 1859 p. 4.

¹³³ *HA*, 23 April 1859 p. 3; *HP*, 13 April 1860 p. 5; *HP*, 10 April 1868 p. 5.

¹³⁴ Green, 'Politics in Leeds', pp. 230-5.

¹³⁵ *LI*, 9 October 1866 p. 2; *HC*, 3 November 1866 p. 5; *LM*, 7 December 1866; *WFP*, 22 December 1866 p. 5; *LI*, 30 March 1867 p. 10.

societies had been set up: Pudsey, between Leeds and Bradford; Shipley, to the north of Bradford; York; and Dewsbury and Batley, in the heart of the woollen district east of Huddersfield.¹³⁶

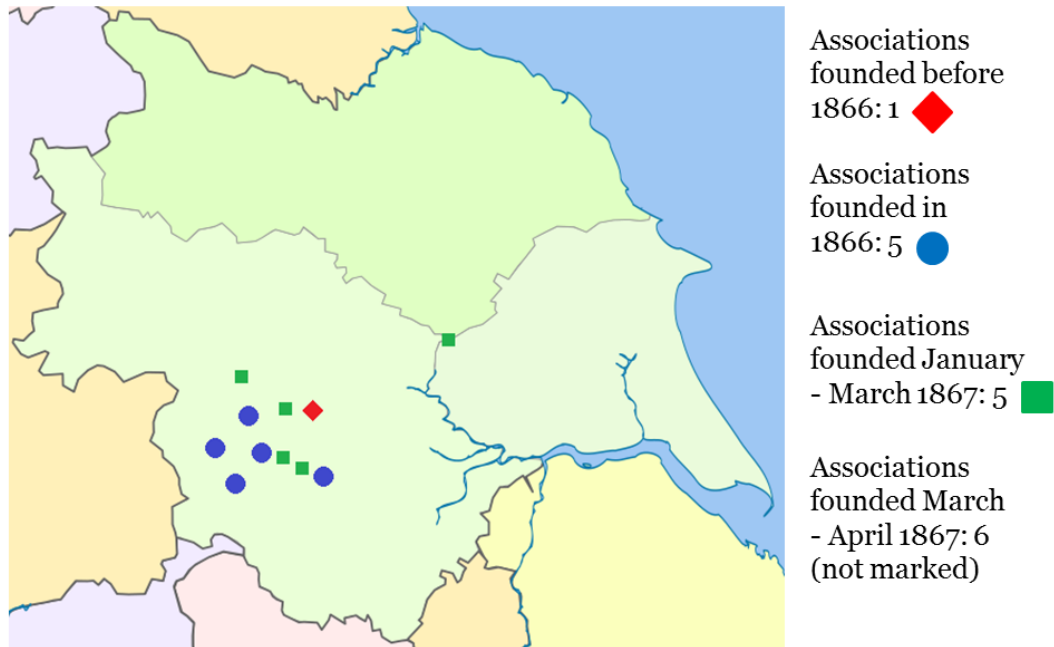


Figure 8: Yorkshire WMCA foundations

As can be seen, Working Men’s Conservatism did not originate in ‘the month before the Second Reform Bill was finally passed’: its roots were deeper.¹³⁷ The outward forms of its banquets, for instance, strongly echoed earlier manifestations of popular Conservatism.¹³⁸ Indeed, the particular strength of Working Men’s Conservatism in Yorkshire may well stem from its earlier tradition of Tory Radicalism. The leading figure in these newly-created societies was William Busfeild Ferrand, former associate of Richard Oastler, a regular fixture at inaugural banquets and the first president of the Yorkshire Union.¹³⁹ Ferrand’s brand of ferocious rhetoric, which appealed to ‘the enemies of Popery, the supporters of the monarchy, and the friends of

¹³⁶ *LI*, 24 January 1867 p. 1; *WE*, 9 February 1867 p. 5; *YG*, 9 February 1867 p. 4.

¹³⁷ Edgar Joseph Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party: Conservative Leadership and Organization after the Second Reform Bill*. (Oxford, 1968), p. 122.

¹³⁸ Matthew Cragoe, ‘The Great Reform Act and the Modernization of British Politics: The Impact of Conservative Associations, 1835-1841’, *Journal of British Studies* vol. 47, no. 3 (2008), pp. 582-3, 593-5.

¹³⁹ *LT*, 2 February 1867 p. 3 (Leeds); *BO*, 22 November 1866 p. 5 (Bradford); *HC*, 26 January 1867 p. 6 (Huddersfield); *LI*, 20 April 1867 p. 5

native industry' to defeat 'Whig thralldom' and the 'conspiracy of cotton lords,' had made him 'admirable for the mob' in the Bradford election of 1837.¹⁴⁰ Now, he made a direct appeal to the history of popular Conservatism in Yorkshire, claiming to 'see my name honourably associated on that flag (pointing to a banner on the wall) with Oastler, Ashley, Bull, and Fielden,' and praising the earlier Operative Conservative Associations as 'Sir Robert Peel's right arm, by which he fought the battle of the Constitution'.¹⁴¹

Attempts to organise a national structure within which to fit these local organisations were faltering.¹⁴² Proposals for an association of only the six northern counties were defeated by a single vote, despite the presence of delegates from Birmingham, London and Reading.¹⁴³ Though a second meeting proposed county associations, to send delegates to 'a national conference when united action is necessary,' a Blackburn delegate apparently left with the impression that no national organisation whatsoever had been agreed.¹⁴⁴ It is perhaps telling that Liberal campaigning organisations such as the National Reform Union could be formed in the provinces, but that a series of London meetings created the National Union of Constitutional and Conservative Associations.¹⁴⁵

In fairness to the capital, it should be noted that the meetings which adopted the provincial structure were dominated by Yorkshire associations – eleven out of sixteen at the first, and seven out of nine at the second – and therefore fundamentally reflected local preoccupations. The executives of Yorkshire WMCAs were clearly passionate about county identity: they immediately formed their own Union with secretary, president, and committee, 'to establish an association in every town and village of this important county'.¹⁴⁶ The Yorkshire Union sent delegates to the London

¹⁴⁰ WYAS Bradford, DB13/C3 ('To the Farmers, the Operatives, and the Friends of Native Industry in the West Riding of Yorkshire,' WB Ferrand, 16 January 1846); Alfred Erskine Gathorne-Hardy, *Gathorne Hardy, First Earl of Cranbrook, a Memoir*, vol. 1 (London, 1910), p. 32; Neuheiser, *Crown, Church and Constitution*, p. 226.

¹⁴¹ WYAS Bradford, 51D79/5/14 (Speech of Busfeild Ferrand at the banquet of the Bradford WMCA); *BO*, 22 November 1866 p. 5.

¹⁴² Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party*, p. 123; Chase, 'Popular Movement', p. 22.

¹⁴³ *LM*, 19 March 1867 p. 7.

¹⁴⁴ *YG*, 20 April 1867 p. 5, *Blackburn Standard* 24 April 1867 p. 3.

¹⁴⁵ *YG*, 4 May 1867 p. 2; *LI*, 22 June 1867 p. 9; *LI*, 13 November 1867 p. 3.

¹⁴⁶ *LI*, 20 April 1867 p. 5, 4 May 1867 p. 8.

meetings alongside the town associations, and held its own convention at York.¹⁴⁷ Based on the ultimate structure of the National Union, Yorkshire seems to have been alone in this county sentiment.¹⁴⁸

Malcolm Chase argues that these organisations were ‘frail’, and that ‘The Reform League targeted public meetings convened by operative Conservative groups... passing manhood suffrage resolutions’.¹⁴⁹ However, both his examples are incorrect. At the London meeting he cites, the Reform League did not pass resolutions but rioted to disrupt the meeting.¹⁵⁰ This suggests either that the League’s commitment to working-class respectability lapsed, or (as is most likely) that not enough tickets had been obtained to enable the dissidents to pass their own resolutions.¹⁵¹

Furthermore, though the Reform League did successfully take over a meeting of the Huddersfield WMCA, there is more to the story.¹⁵² For a start, the meeting was held at Berry Brow, where ‘not long since... they only had one man who was thought to be a Conservative on the register’.¹⁵³ Perhaps more importantly, it was the newly-formed Huddersfield WMCA which initially disrupted a Reform League meeting. The two bodies first clashed at a formal debate on manhood suffrage, though we cannot determine which got the better of the discussion as no vote was taken.¹⁵⁴ The real battle started on 15 March, at the town of Golcar, where the Huddersfield WMCA packed the room at a Reform League meeting and defeated a resolution in favour of manhood suffrage by two to one.¹⁵⁵ Four days later, in a League meeting at Huddersfield, the WMCA ensured that ‘a good deal of confusion prevailed’; three days after this, the League disrupted the Berry Brow meeting reported in the *Leeds Mercury*.¹⁵⁶

However, the WMCA did not accept their defeat. At Lockwood, their amendment calling the government bill ‘liberal, comprehensive and honest’

¹⁴⁷ *YH*, 3 August 1867 p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ *YG*, 4 May 1867 p. 2; *YH*, 3 August 1867 p. 10.

¹⁴⁹ Chase, ‘Popular Movement’, p. 22.

¹⁵⁰ *Globe*, 18 June 1867 p. 4.

¹⁵¹ McClelland, ‘England’s Greatness’, p. 77; Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 228.

¹⁵² *LM*, 25 March 1867 p. 4.

¹⁵³ *LI*, 9 December 1867 p. 3.

¹⁵⁴ *HC*, 22 December 1866 p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ *HC*, 23 March 1867 p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ *HC*, 23 March 1867 p. 5.

was defeated only by ‘a trifling majority’.¹⁵⁷ At Moldgreen, they voted one of their own members into the chair and then ‘hooted, yelled, and interrupted the speaker’ without defeating the resolution.¹⁵⁸ The rematch at Golcar saw the show of hands ‘so evenly balanced... the chairman was heard to say that he did not know which party had it’.¹⁵⁹ Clearly, the two sides were closer in strength than Chase’s isolated incident suggests.

Like the Huddersfield WMCA, the Hull Conservatives also seemed to show greater confidence (or a willingness to adopt the opposition’s tactics) by intervening in a Reform meeting.¹⁶⁰ There, they claimed ‘the Conservative party always had in view a Reform Bill (Oh, oh, applause, and “Speak the truth”’, and called personal ratepaying ‘a guarantee that a man was an honest and industrious citizen. (Uproar).’ In the end, however, only a sixth of the meeting supported their amendment.

We should be careful not to overstate the WMCAs’ effect. They were far less widespread than Reform associations; they could not carry opposing motions at Reform meetings; and they failed to form an organised and effective national movement.¹⁶¹ Nor, however, should we write them off. For a start, the fact that Conservatives were daring to disrupt their opponents was a mark of growing confidence: previously, ‘No Conservative working man dared to raise his voice up’ for fear of being ‘denounced as “tag-rag”. (Hear, hear, and laughter)’¹⁶² Furthermore, the very existence of Conservative associations showed progress, whether at Berry Brow, or at Cleckheaton ‘considering what Cleckheaton had been (laughter and cheers),’ or in towns ‘so thoroughly overrun with rampant Radicalism as Batley or Dewsbury’.¹⁶³ Though the Liberals could hold larger meetings, it was spectacle and not politics which drew at least some of the audience: the advanced Liberal *Huddersfield Examiner* was forced to acknowledge that the

¹⁵⁷ *HC*, 6 April 1867 p. 8; *HE*, 30 March 1867 p. 7.

¹⁵⁸ *HE*, 6 April 1867 p. 5; *HC*, 6 April 1867 p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ *HC*, 13 April 1867 p. 8.

¹⁶⁰ *HA*, 23 March 1867 p. 5; *ECH*, 28 March 1867 p. 7.

¹⁶¹ Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party*, p. 126.

¹⁶² *LI*, 27 January 1866 p. 8.

¹⁶³ *LI*, 27 April 1867 p. 9; *WE*, 27 July 1867 p. 5.

‘greater part’ of a Morley meeting had vanished part-way through to watch ‘a feat at arms... [at] a beerhouse’.¹⁶⁴

Thirdly, the importance of WMCAs may lie not in their effectiveness as campaigning organisations, but as agents of propaganda.¹⁶⁵ In many respects, the size of a meeting mattered less than the number of column inches it generated. It was not just reform meetings that were ‘widely reported beyond their immediate locality’, but WMCA banquets.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, they were often reported in gross disproportion to their actual importance: the London *Evening Standard*, for instance, devoted almost an entire column to the Cleckheaton WMCA banquet, and more than two to Wakefield.¹⁶⁷ Audiences with the Conservative leadership helped to generate publicity, not just in the provinces but also in metropolitan papers, which could report Disraeli meeting ‘very numerous deputation[s]... which outraged the etiquette of such receptions by cheering the right honourable gentleman vociferously’.¹⁶⁸

Moreover, Liberal newspapers simply could not resist complaining about WMCAs. Paradoxically, they lambasted them for being ‘working men who glory in seeking to exclude their class from the rights of citizenship’, and also as ‘retired gentlemen and persons owning property’ or ‘lawyer’s clerks, town and government officials... general servants or occasional workers’ operating under false colours.¹⁶⁹ Correspondence columns were filled with letters from ‘An Operative Konservative’, ‘A Real Conservative,’ or even ‘Dizzy’ himself, expressing their gratitude ‘to our Conservative leaders for keeping us in our proper place’ or explaining how they had convinced their neighbours ‘that I was not fit to have a vote; nor any other working man who goes to a Conservative banquet’.¹⁷⁰ In the light of this publicity blitz, any

¹⁶⁴ *HE*, 20 April 1867 p. 7.

¹⁶⁵ Cragoe, ‘Conservative Associations’, p. 600, for the earlier period.

¹⁶⁶ Chase, ‘Popular Movement’, p. 29.

¹⁶⁷ *Evening Standard*, 26 April 1867 p. 3, 25 April 1867 p. 6.

¹⁶⁸ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 9 April 1867 p. 6; see also *LM*, 9 April 1867 p. 5, *Morning Post* 9 April 1867 p. 3, *Dundee Courier* 9 April 1867 p. 3, *Standard* 9 April 1867 p. 3, *Newcastle Daily Journal* 9 April 1867 p. 3, *Western Times* 9 April 1867 p. 5, *Liverpool Daily Post* 9 April 1867 p. 6, *Aberdeen Journal* 10 April 1867 p. 6, *Royal Cornwall Gazette* 11 April 1867 p. 6, *North Wales Chronicle* 13 April 1867 p. 2, *Hampshire Telegraph* 13 April 1867 p. 4, and others.

¹⁶⁹ *BR*, 24 November 1866 p. 4; *WE*, 2 February 1867 p. 8; *HE*, 26 January 1867 p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ *BO*, 15 November 1866 p. 3, 29 November 1866 p. 7; *HE*, 23 February 1867 p. 7.

the Whigs had unjustly labelled the working classes as drunken and uneducated in order to disenfranchise them.¹⁷³ The Conservatives were righting this wrong, extending the franchise to those ‘whose education and talents qualified them,’ ‘steady, earnest and sober-minded men’ with ‘regard for order and good government’.¹⁷⁴ Though WMCAs met in pubs, they aspired to reading rooms.¹⁷⁵

The constant reiteration of the Tories’ previous history of social reform, the lambasting of Bright for failing to support local charity, and the emphasis on the Church being the ‘poor man’s church,’ might all be seen as a thinly-veiled bribe to the new electorate: an economic reward for political support, in line with the traditional exercise of landlord influence in rural districts. However, taken in context with comments about the purpose of the British constitution being ‘to bring justice to every man’s door’, or the working class being denied ‘no degree of honour or prosperity’, there is an alternative interpretation.¹⁷⁶ The aim was to reverse Liberal portrayals of government as a battle for political power between the productive and parasite classes. Instead, WMCAs emphasised that the working classes were now part of the responsible in-group entrusted with the defence of the constitution, who should view their votes as a duty and use them selflessly in the national interest.

Conclusion

Looking into the justifications for reform within Yorkshire strongly suggests that its ultimate success was not due to a dramatic change in the attitudes of the parties towards the franchise. Instead, Disraeli managed to win over dissident Liberals by rephrasing the terms of Reform, but avoided Conservative splits by maintaining the foundation of civic responsibility. Coupled with the biggest manifestation of working-class Conservatism since

¹⁷³ *LI*, 7 January 1865 p. 7, 27 January 1866 p. 7, 4 July 1867 p. 3; *YH*, 3 August 1867 p. 10.

¹⁷⁴ *LI*, 27 April 1867 p. 9; *YH*, 3 August 1867 p. 10; *YG*, 2 November 1867 p. 5.

¹⁷⁵ *LI*, 17 August 1867 p. 8, for Bradford meetings at the Stanley Arms, Hare and Hounds Inn, and Wharf Hotel; *HP*, 4 October 1867. c.f. Cragoe, ‘Conservative Associations’, p. 590.

¹⁷⁶ *LI*, 7 January 1865 p. 7; *YG*, 2 November 1867 p. 4.

the 1830s, amplified by supportive and hostile press alike, this held the reform coalition together until the bill passed.

This emphasis on civic responsibility, however, shows the extent to which the successful measure was framed in opposition to American democracy despite the Civil War's outcome. Neither party accepted that self-government was an inherent British capacity, but instead that the performance of civic duties either demonstrated or developed such capacity. The development of racial solidarity followed rather than preceded franchise extension, perhaps related to the abandonment of impractical anti-compounding safeguards post-1867.¹⁷⁷

Though hopes of 'Conservative reaction' might have been delusive, so too were Liberal beliefs that expansion of the electorate would wipe out the Conservatives. At the 1868 election, the Conservatives only lost a single seat in Yorkshire, with William Henry Gladstone capturing Whitby. Though they also lost a seat through redistribution at Knaresborough, the creation of the new Eastern West Riding constituency left them with twelve seats to twenty-eight Liberal. Like the national vote share, this was more or less the result at the 1865 election.¹⁷⁸

Yet the Act had changed both parties substantially. The Conservative establishment had survived more or less unscathed, but they had been forced to broaden their appeal: to abandon the defence of a narrow electorate in favour of a wider body united by a sense of civic duty. The Liberal party, meanwhile, could look beyond the extension of the franchise to the other aspects of its programme of civil and religious liberty, spurred on by an increasing proportion of Radical MPs like Alfred Illingworth, A.J. Mundella, and the former Alderman Robert Meek Carter. However, this Liberal 'faddism' created casualties: Abraham Holroyd of Bradford, who had 'twice trudged through the mire and dirt to Woodhouse Moor,' returned his Reform League membership ticket because the separation of Church and State was

¹⁷⁷ Hall, 'Nation Within', p. 233; Mandler, *English National Character*, p. 59; Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote*, p. 257.

¹⁷⁸ Matthew Roberts, 'Popular Conservatism In Britain, 1832-1914', *Parliamentary History* vol. 26, no. 3 (2007), p. 391.

'the greatest calamity that could befall my country'.¹⁷⁹ In this respect, the Conservative desire to remove franchise reform as a Liberal rallying cry seems to have succeeded.

¹⁷⁹ WYAS Bradford, DB16/C33/10 (Abraham Holroyd to S.C. Kell, 12 November 1867); Martin Pugh, *The Making of Modern British Politics* (Oxford, 1982) pp. 27-8.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to reconcile the dramatic changes happening around the world with the seeming inactivity in domestic British politics. The explanation for this disparity lies not in the fact that these events went unnoticed, as they were reported and discussed lavishly across the country. Instead, this thesis demonstrates how contemporaries found it easier to fit events into existing intellectual frameworks than to undergo immediate, substantial and far-reaching changes in their attitudes. Even before we consider questions of intellectual geography, and the difficulty encountered by those who attempted to disseminate new ideas – those who ventured into the provinces to do so, that is – we should acknowledge that, when they change at all, mentalities tend to change slowly.

The thesis also clearly demonstrates that it is essential for the study of popular attitudes to be as wide-ranging and broad-based as possible. Historians of history may well trace the last survival of the ‘great man’ school of history in the way that studies of race nearly constantly return to Carlyle’s 1849 *Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question*. Some of the new techniques applied in this thesis will facilitate these broader studies: for instance, the coupling of corpus analysis with the growing range of digitised newspapers may enable future historians to trace the process by which the British abandoned their use of prophylactic quotation marks around the word ‘nigger’.

Although the title of this thesis encompassed race, democracy and the American Civil War, the Civil War was always intended to act as a nexus for the strands of race and democracy. However, its findings on reactions to the war hold significant repercussion for the large body of literature on Anglo-American relations during the conflict. In contrast to the historiographical emphasis on Southern sympathies, this thesis illustrates how support for British interference was sporadic, offered tentatively, and withdrawn quickly. When compared to other national movements, or to other potential international interventions, the Confederacy mustered much less sympathy

than the putative British sense of solidarity with the underdog would suggest.¹

The only factor that explains this lack of enthusiasm is the ‘peculiar institution’ of slavery. Historiographically, British support for the Confederacy has been used as an indicator of the decline in anti-slavery sentiment. In fact, the relative insignificance of such support demonstrates the institutionalised ubiquity of anti-slavery. Although the majority of newspapers studied were Liberal, opposition to slavery was shared across the political spectrum with remarkably little variance. Furthermore, anti-slavery underlay not just British distaste for the Confederacy, but distrust for the Union.

The persistence of anti-slavery also highlights the persistence of traditional attitudes towards race identified by this thesis. Racial differences continued to be interpreted through culturally differentialist rather than biologically essentialist terms throughout this period. At the start, the Indian Mutiny was blamed on heathenism; in the middle of the period, commentators showed a general expectation that fair treatment should be afforded to black Americans and Maori alike; and at the end, a new narrative about the failings of planters was invented for the purpose of explaining the Jamaican rebellion. Without this growth in biological essentialism, coupled with factors such as the downward revision of Confederate support, the evidence for ‘hardening’ racial attitudes appears much sparser. Lamentable as contemporary British racial prejudice was, it does not seem to have been noticeably worse at the end of this period than it was at the start.

Consideration of intellectual geography also shows that whatever progress the new ‘scientific’ racism was making in the academic sphere, it made little on the ground in Yorkshire. This is striking because of the provincial significance of Yorkshire cities like Leeds, Sheffield and York: we might well have expected these areas to be early adopters of the latest theories, but no such thing took place. Moreover, this regional study of Yorkshire is probably more representative of attitudes in the bulk of the UK

¹ A propensity acknowledged by those involved in the debate: *LM* 25 January 1864, *YH* 28 February 1863 p. 10, 6 February 1864 p. 10, *HP* 26 September 1862, 1 May 1863, *SI* 29 July 1862

than studies of high politics, the views of academics, or the attitudes of colonists.

Studies which treat the British world as a cohesive whole are valuable, but we should acknowledge that pressures on the ground affected attitudes towards other races as much as did shared discourses on race. The changing post-Rebellion policy towards India, and indeed the policy towards representative assemblies in Jamaica, reflected the practicalities of power and consequently differed from domestic opinion as to the course that should be taken. When exactly racial attitudes in provincial Britain shifted is unclear, but the dismantling of the anti-slavery lecture circuits after the American Civil War is a likely candidate for the catalyst in a decline in the traditional, religiously based view of foundational equality.

Similarly, changes in fundamental attitudes towards the British nation seem to post-date the 1867 reform act. This thesis demonstrates how the concept of democracy failed to muster support across the political spectrum, and how Union victory in the American Civil War did not resolve mainstream concerns about democracy's flaws. 1867 was an explicitly anti-democratic measure, framed to negate one of its most significant deficiencies by institutionalising taxpayer hegemony. Impractical and unsustainable though this was, such a concept mustered support from across the political spectrum.

When we disentangle democracy from reform, we can acknowledge that the Conservative party in Yorkshire was more willing to see the franchise expanded than is normally acknowledged. In 1859 they made proposals which went beyond Disraeli's limited measure; in 1867, they held firm to his more radical bill despite the abandonment of the safeguards which they had considered essential to its passage. However, their steadfastness was due in part to the evidence, provided by the WMCAs, that the working class could be trusted to defend the pillars of the British constitution. My analysis of their rhetoric shows that it was responsibility and not irresponsibility which they sought in the expanded electorate: the cornerstone of the appeal was to make the working classes part of the in-group, rather than to turn them against moralisers and temperance advocates.

Though Disraeli's measure went further than previous ones, it also had the internal logic which other proposals lacked. It was in the requirement for responsibility that the Conservatives and Liberals found sufficient common ground to pass reform. However, this thesis also illustrates that conceptions of the franchise differed between parties. While Conservatives focused on the use of the franchise as a tool of government, Liberals were much more eager to see it as a form of self-actualisation. Popular Conservatism is a woefully understudied phenomenon in this period, but the difference is likely to result from greater Conservative willingness to accept hierarchical distinctions. It may also have stemmed from a broader conception of nationality which went beyond the political sphere to incorporate institutions such as the Church of England. As Liberals were prevented from acknowledging the Church's potential uniting role by their affinity with Nonconformity, they placed much greater emphasis on the franchise.

Biagini's assertion about the ideological coherence of Gladstonian Liberalism presumably was not intended to apply to this period.² From this study of local parties in Yorkshire, however, it was not a lack of ideological coherence so much as the 'narcissism of small differences' which blighted Liberalism. Throughout the period, members of the party were continually bickering over what, in hindsight, seem relatively minor policy disagreements. Yorkshire Conservatives were much less liable to such fallings-out, perhaps because they were conscious of their minority status, or perhaps because conservatism tends to stress a greater sense of value for loyalty and respect for authority.³ Liberal bickering culminated in the formation of the Reform League: in essence, an independent Radical party in embryo, under the threat of which the mainstream party submitted.

By bringing together these two strands of race and democracy, this thesis highlights the glacial pace of change before 1867. It emphasises how the Second Reform Act marked the end of an era, reflecting the culmination of earlier attitudes towards the racial and political nation rather than stemming

² Biagini, *Liberty, Retrenchment and Reform*, p. 4.

³ Haidt, *Righteous Mind*, pp. 161-9, 212-4.

from newly emerging ideas. In this respect, it also revives the view of the Second Reform Act as a significant turning point on Britain's route towards both democracy and imperialism – turning points which few of those involved in its passage could have predicted.

Appendix A: Corpus analysis methodology

The corpus of Working Men's Conservative Association events was taken from a range of banquets across the country between 1865 and 1867. A full list of those selected, and the sources, is at the end of this appendix.

To obtain the corpus of election addresses, William Wardell Bean's *Parliamentary Representation of the Six Northern Counties* was used to provide a starting list of candidates.¹ Candidates who withdrew before the poll were also included in the list, on the grounds that they may still have produced an address. Addresses for as many candidates as possible were subsequently obtained from a range of digitised and hard copy newspapers. A full list of candidates and addresses, along with the sources from which the addresses were taken, is at the end of this appendix.

In some cases, candidates retired before issuing an address, or an address could not be found. These individuals have been highlighted with red text. Coverage increases from 67% in 1857 to 79% in 1859 and 86% in 1865: however, the poor early figures are due in part to a large number of candidates not standing.

Most candidates described as 'Liberal Conservatives' by Bean could relatively easily be categorised as either one or the other. The party to which they have been assigned for the purpose of analysis has been underlined in their description.

The AntConc software was used to investigate the corpus, and a graphical representation of the top 100 words was provided through wordle.net. To make these images more pertinent to the discussion, some of the more common words were excluded from the analysis:

- Working Men's Conservative Association banquets: 'Mr.', 'hear', 'Cheers', 'loud'.
- Election addresses: 'Parliament,' and the close of the address (e.g. 'I beg to subscribe myself, gentlemen, your obliged and faithful servant' or 'I have the honour to be, gentlemen, your obedient servant').

¹ William Wardell Bean, *The Parliamentary Representation of the Six Northern Counties of England* (Hull, 1890).

Working Men's Conservative Association banquets

Leeds, January 1865.²

Leeds, January 1866.³

Bradford, November 1866.⁴

Bramley, December 1866.⁵

Huddersfield, January 1867.⁶

Wakefield, April 1867.⁷

Cleckheaton, April 1867.⁸

Pudsey, July 1867.⁹

Shipley, July 1867.¹⁰

Halifax, September 1867.¹¹

York, November 1867.¹²

Slaithwaite, November 1867.¹³

² *LI*, 7 January 1865 pp. 7-8.

³ *LI*, 27 January 1866 pp. 7-8.

⁴ *BO*, 22 November 1866 p. 5.

⁵ *LI*, 20 December 1866 p. 3.

⁶ *HC*, 26 January 1867 pp. 6-7.

⁷ *LI*, 27 April 1867 p. 9.

⁸ *LI*, 27 April 1867 p. 9.

⁹ *LI*, 4 July 1867 p. 3.

¹⁰ *LI*, 11 July 1867 p. 3.

¹¹ *LI*, 25 September 1867 pp. 2-3.

¹² *YG*, 2 November 1867 pp. 4-5.

¹³ *HC*, 16 November 1867 p. 6.

Lists of candidates

1857

Constituency	Candidate	Party	Source
North Riding	Hon. Octavius Duncombe	Conservative	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
	Edward Stillingfleet Cayley	Liberal	<i>York Herald</i> , 14 March 1857 p. 7
	Hon. John Charles Dundas	Liberal	<i>York Herald</i> , 14 March 1857 p. 7
East Riding	Lord Hotham	Conservative	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 13 March 1857 p. 4
	Hon. Arthur Duncombe	Conservative	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 13 March 1857 p. 4
West Riding	Edmund Beckett Denison	Conservative	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
	Viscount Goderich	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
Beverley	Hon. William Henry Forester Denison	Liberal	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 13 March 1857 p. 4
	Edward Auchmuty Glover	Liberal Conservative	
	William Wells	Liberal	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 13 March 1857 p. 4
Bradford	Henry Wickham Wickham	<u>Liberal</u> Conservative	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
	Major-General Thomas Perronet Thompson	Liberal	<i>Bradford Observer</i> , 26 March 1857 p. 8
	Titus Salt	Liberal	
Halifax	Francis Crossley	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 14 March 1857 p. 1
	Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Wood, Bt.	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 14 March 1857 p. 1
	Major Henry Edwards	Conservative	<i>Halifax Guardian</i> , 14 March 1857 p. 4
Huddersfield	Edward Akroyd	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
	Richard Cobden	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
Kingston-upon-Hull	James Clay	Liberal	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 20 March 1857 p. 5
	Lord Ashley	<u>Liberal</u> Conservative	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 20 March 1857 p. 5
	Lord William McLeane Compton	Liberal	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 20 March 1857 p. 5
	William Digby Seymour QC	Liberal	

Constituency	Candidate	Party	Source
	Hon. W.H.F. Denison	Liberal	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 13 March 1857 p. 4 ¹⁴
Knaresborough	Basil Thomas Wood	Conservative	
	Thomas Collins	Conservative	
	Robert Campbell	Liberal	
Leeds	Matthew Talbot Baines	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
	Robert Hall	Conservative	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
	John Remington Mills	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 24 March 1857 p. 1
	W.E. Forster	Liberal	
	Francis Carbutt	Liberal	
Malton	Hon. Charles William Wentworth-Fitzwilliam	Liberal	
	James Brown	Liberal	
Northallerton	William Battie Wrightson	Liberal	
	Hon. Egremont William Lascelles	Conservative	
Pontefract	Richard Monckton Milnes	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
	William Wood	Conservative	
	Benjamin Oliviera	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
Richmond	Henry Rich	Liberal	<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 1
	Marmaduke Wyvill, jun.	Liberal	<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 1
Ripon	John Greenwood	Liberal	
	John Ashley Warre	Liberal	<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 1
Scarborough	Sir John Vanden Bempde Johnstone, Bt.	Liberal	<i>Scarborough Mercury</i> , 14 March 1857 p. 1
	Earl of Mulgrave	Liberal	<i>Scarborough Mercury</i> , 7 March 1857 p. 1
	Dr. Augustus F. Bayford	Conservative	<i>Scarborough Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 1
	Thomas Moore	Not given	

¹⁴ Not included in Bean, *Parliamentary Representation*, p. 858.

Constituency	Candidate	Party	Source
Sheffield	John Arthur Roebuck	Liberal	<i>Sheffield Independent</i> , 14 March 1857 p. 1
	George Hadfield	Liberal	<i>Sheffield Independent</i> , 14 March 1857 p. 1
	William Overend	Conservative	<i>Sheffield Independent</i> , 14 March 1857 p. 1
Thirsk	Sir William Payne Galloway, Bt.	Conservative	
Wakefield	John Charlesworth Dodgson Charlesworth	Conservative	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 4
Whitby	Robert Stephenson	Conservative	
York	Joshua Proctor Brown Westhead	Liberal	<i>Yorkshire Gazette</i> , 21 March 1857 p. 3
	John George Smyth	Conservative	<i>York Herald</i> , 14 March 1857 p. 7
	Malcolm Lewin	Liberal	

1859

Constituency	Candidate	Party	Source
North Riding	Hon. William Ernest Duncombe	Conservative	<i>York Herald</i> , 16 April 1859 p. 7
	Edward Stillingfleet Cayley	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 4
East Riding	Lord Hotham	Conservative	<i>York Herald</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 7
	Hon. Arthur Duncombe	Conservative	<i>York Herald</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 7
West Riding	Sir John William Ramsden, Bt	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 4
	Francis Crossley	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 4
	Rt. Hon. James A. Stuart Wortley	Conservative	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i> , 16 April 1859 p. 4
Beverley	Ralph Walters	Liberal	
	Major Henry Edwards	Conservative	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 4
	James Robert Walker	Conservative	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 8 April 1859 p. 5
	Edward Auchmuty Glover	Liberal Conservative	
Bradford	Henry Wickham Wickham	Liberal	<i>Bradford Observer</i> , 21 April 1859 p. 4
	Titus Salt	Liberal	<i>Bradford Observer</i> , 21 April 1859 p. 4
	Alfred Harris	Conservative	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i> , 16 April 1859 p. 4
Halifax	Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Wood, Bt	Liberal	<i>Halifax Courier</i> , 16 April 1859 p. 4
	James Stansfeld, jun.	Liberal	<i>Halifax Courier</i> , 16 April 1859 p. 4
Huddersfield	Edward Aldam Leatham	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 28 April 1859 p. 1
	Edward Akroyd	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 4
Kingston-upon-Hull	James Clay	Liberal	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 8 April 1859 p. 5
	Joseph Hoare	Conservative	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 15 April 1859 p. 5
	John Harvey Lewis	Liberal	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 8 April 1859 p. 5
Knaresborough	Basil Thomas Wood	Conservative	
	Thomas Collins	Conservative	
	Harry Stephen Thompson	Liberal	
Leeds	Edward Baines	Liberal	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i> , 16 April 1859 p. 4

Constituency	Candidate	Party	Source
	George Skirrow Beecroft	Conservative	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 4
	William Edward Forster	Liberal	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i> , 16 April 1859 p. 4
	John Shaw	Not given	
Malton	Hon. Charles William Wentworth- Fitzwilliam	Liberal	<i>Malton Messenger</i> , 23 April 1859 p. 1
	James Brown	Liberal	<i>Malton Messenger</i> , 23 April 1859 p. 1
Northallerton	William Battie Wrightson	Liberal	
	Charles Henry Mills	Conservative	
Pontefract	Richard Monckton Milnes	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 4
	William Overend	Conservative	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i> , 16 April 1859 p. 4
	Hugh Culling Eardley Childers	Liberal	<i>Pontefract Telegraph</i> , 16 April 1859 p. 1
Richmond	Henry Rich	Liberal	<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i> , 23 April 1859 p. 1
	Marmaduke Wyvill, jun.	Liberal	<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i> , 23 April 1859 p. 1
Ripon	John Greenwood	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 4
	John Ashley Warre	Liberal	<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i> , 23 April 1859 p. 2
	Alfred B. Richards	Liberal	
Scarborough	Hon. William H.F. Denison	Liberal	<i>Scarborough Mercury</i> , 23 April 1859 p. 4
	Sir John Vanden Bempde Johnstone, Bt.	Liberal	<i>Scarborough Mercury</i> , 23 April 1859 p. 4
	John Dent Dent	Liberal	<i>Scarborough Mercury</i> , 23 April 1859 p. 4
	George John Cayley	Liberal	
Sheffield	John Arthur Roebuck	Liberal	<i>Sheffield Independent</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 1
	George Hadfield	Liberal	<i>Sheffield Independent</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 1
Thirsk	Sir William Payne	Conservative	

Constituency	Candidate	Party	Source
	Galloway, Bt.		
Wakefield	William Henry Leatham	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 4
	John Charlesworth Dodgson Charlesworth	Conservative	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i> , 23 April 1859 p. 4
Whitby	Robert Stephenson	Conservative	<i>Whitby Gazette</i> , 23 April 1859 p. 4
York	Joshua Proctor Brown Westhead	Liberal	<i>Yorkshire Gazette</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 7
	John George Smyth	Conservative	<i>York Herald</i> , 9 April 1859 p. 7
	Austen Henry Layard	Liberal	<i>York Herald</i> , 16 April 1859 p. 7

1865

Constituency	Candidate	Party	Source
North Riding	Hon. William Ernest Duncombe	Conservative	<i>Yorkshire Gazette</i> , 3 June 1865 p. 6
	Frederick Acclom Milbank	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 10 June 1865 p. 8
	William J.S. Morritt	Conservative	<i>Yorkshire Gazette</i> , 3 June 1865 p. 6
East Riding	Lord Hotham	Conservative	<i>York Herald</i> , 1 July 1865 p. 6
	Hon. Arthur Duncombe	Conservative	<i>York Herald</i> , 1 July 1865 p. 6
Northern West Riding	Lord Frederick Charles Cavendish	Liberal	<i>Leeds Times</i> , 1 July 1865 p. 4
	Sir Francis Crossley, Bt	Liberal	<i>Leeds Times</i> , 1 July 1865 p. 4
Southern West Riding	Viscount Milton	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 9
	Henry Frederick Beaumont	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 9
	Christopher Beckett Denison	Conservative	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 24 June 1865 p. 8
	Walter Thomas William Spencer Stanhope	Conservative	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 24 June 1865 p. 8
Beverley	Colonel Henry Edwards	Conservative	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 30 June 1865 p. 4
	Christopher Sykes	Conservative	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 30 June 1865 p. 4
	David Keane, QC	Liberal	<i>Beverley Recorder</i> , 24 June 1865 p. 4
Bradford	Henry Wickham Wickham	Liberal	<i>Bradford Observer</i> , 29 June 1865 p. 1
	William Edward Forster	Liberal	<i>Bradford Observer</i> , 29 June 1865 p. 1
Halifax	James Stansfeld, jun.	Liberal	<i>Halifax Courier</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 1
	Edward Akroyd	Liberal	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i> , 10 June 1865 p. 4
Huddersfield	Lt Col. Thomas P. Crossland	Liberal	
	Edward Aldam Leatham	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 9
Kingston-upon-Hull	James Clay	Liberal	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 30 June 1865 p. 5
	Charles Morgan Norwood	Liberal	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 30 June 1865 p. 5
	Joseph Somes	Conservative	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 30 June 1865 p. 5

Constituency	Candidate	Party	Source
	Joseph Hoare	Conservative	<i>Hull Packet</i> , 30 June 1865 p. 5
Knaresborough	Basil Thomas Woodd	Conservative	<i>Knaresborough Times</i> , 21 June 1865 p. 1
	Isaac Holden	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 10 June 1865 p. 8
	Thomas Collins	Conservative	
Leeds	George Skirrow Beecroft	Conservative	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 24 June 1865 p. 8
	Edward Baines	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 24 June 1865 p. 8
	Viscount Amberley	Liberal	<i>Leeds Mercury</i> , 24 June 1865 p. 8
Malton	Hon. Charles William Wentworth-Fitzwilliam	Liberal	<i>Malton Messenger</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 2
	James Brown	Liberal	<i>Malton Messenger</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 2
Northallerton	Charles Henry Mills	Conservative	
	Jasper William Johns	Liberal	
Pontefract	Hugh Culling Eardley Childers	Liberal	<i>Pontefract Telegraph</i> , 3 June 1865 p. 1
	Major Samuel Waterhouse	Conservative	<i>Pontefract Telegraph</i> , 3 June 1865 p. 1
	William McArthur	Liberal	<i>Pontefract Telegraph</i> , 3 June 1865 p. 1
	E. Brefitt	Liberal	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i> , 1 July 1865 p. 4 ¹⁵
Richmond	Sir Roundell Palmer	Liberal	<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 2
	Hon. John Charles Dundas	Liberal	<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 2
Ripon	Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Wood, Bt.	Liberal	<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i> , 1 July 1865 p. 2
	Captain Robert Kearsley	Liberal	
	John Greenwood	Liberal	<i>York Herald</i> , 1 July

¹⁵ Not included in *Ibid.*, p. 986.

Constituency	Candidate	Party	Source
			1865 p. 4
Scarborough	Sir John Vanden Bempde Johnstone, Bt.	Liberal	<i>Scarborough Mercury</i> , 10 June 1865 p. 4
	John Dent Dent	Liberal	<i>Scarborough Mercury</i> , 10 June 1865 p. 4
	George John Cayley	Liberal	
Sheffield	John Arthur Roebuck	Liberal	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 1
	George Hadfield	Liberal	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 1
	Hon. James F. Stuart Wortley	Conservative	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 1
	Thomas Campbell Foster	Liberal	<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i> , 8 July 1865 p. 1
Thirsk	Sir William Payne Galloway, Bt.	Conservative	<i>Yorkshire Gazette</i> , 1 July 1865 p. 7
Wakefield	William Henry Leatham	Liberal	<i>Wakefield Journal</i> , 7 July 1865 p. 1
	Sir John Charles Dalrymple Hay, Bt.	Conservative	<i>Wakefield Journal</i> , 5 May 1865 p. 2
Whitby	Thomas Bagnall	Conservative	
	Harry Stephen Thompson	Liberal	
York	James Lowther	Conservative	<i>York Herald</i> , 1 July 1865 p. 6
	George Leeman	Liberal	<i>York Herald</i> , 1 July 1865 p. 6
	Joshua Proctor Brown Westhead	Liberal	<i>York Herald</i> , 1 July 1865 p. 6

Appendix B: Political affiliations of newspapers

By and large, papers were assigned a political affiliation in accordance with the self-reported designations given in Mitchell's *Press Directory* for 1861 and 1866.¹ Where those designations were not adopted, an explanation has been provided below.

Note that the statistical breakdown of 67 newspapers given in chapter 1 refers to all publications listed in the directory. The list below refers only to the 34 newspapers cited in chapter 4, and counts the shared editorials of the *Craven Pioneer* and *Pontefract Telegraph* as a single newspaper.

Newspaper	Political affiliation
<i>Barnsley Chronicle</i>	Liberal
<i>Beverley Recorder</i>	Liberal
<i>Bradford Observer</i>	Liberal
<i>Bradford Review</i>	Advanced Liberal; Liberal per Mitchell, but its consistent advocacy of radical causes (e.g. manhood suffrage) merits the 'Advanced' tag.
<i>Craven Pioneer/ Pontefract Telegraph</i>	Liberal; Mitchell gives the <i>Pioneer</i> as Independent and the <i>Telegraph</i> as Liberal, but their shared editorials broadly support the Liberals. ²
<i>Doncaster Chronicle</i>	Conservative
<i>Doncaster Gazette</i>	Liberal
<i>Eastern Counties Herald</i>	Liberal
<i>Halifax Courier</i>	Liberal
<i>Halifax Guardian</i>	Conservative
<i>Harrogate Advertiser</i>	Conservative; Neutral per Mitchell's, but the paper's stances (including opposition to reform) support a Conservative identification. ³
<i>Huddersfield Chronicle</i>	Liberal; owned by Colonel T.P. Crosland, later Liberal MP for the town.
<i>Huddersfield Examiner</i>	Advanced Liberal; listed as Liberal but also 'represents what is considered the advanced section of the Huddersfield Liberals'. ⁴

¹ C. Mitchell, *The Newspaper Press Directory* (London, 1861; 1866).

² Mitchell, *1861 Press Directory* pp. 69, 74; *1866 Press Directory* pp. 68, 74.

³ Mitchell, *1861 Press Directory* p. 53.

⁴ Mitchell, *1861 Press Directory* p. 55; *1866 Press Directory* p. 53.

<i>Hull Advertiser</i>	Liberal
<i>Hull Packet</i>	Conservative
<i>Leeds Express</i>	Advanced Liberal; 'independent Liberal' per Mitchell's, but strongly associated with the radical Alderman Carter and the Leeds Working Men's Parliamentary Reform Association. ⁵
<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i>	Conservative
<i>Leeds Mercury</i>	Liberal
<i>Leeds Times</i>	Advanced Liberal; 'Liberal' per Mitchell's, but advocates 'complete suffrage' (among other positions). ⁶
<i>Malton Messenger</i>	Neutral
<i>Pontefract Advertiser</i>	Conservative
<i>Richmond and Ripon Chronicle</i>	Liberal
<i>Rotherham and Masbro' Advertiser</i>	Neutral
<i>Scarborough Mercury</i>	Liberal; 'Independent' per Mitchell's, but in practice supports the Liberal party.
<i>Sheffield Daily Telegraph</i>	Neutral; later notably Conservative, but in this era disregards party affiliations.
<i>Sheffield Independent</i>	Liberal
<i>Sheffield Times</i>	Conservative; 'Independent' per Mitchell's, but actually supports the Conservatives both locally and nationally.
<i>Tadcaster Post</i>	Neutral
<i>Wakefield Express</i>	Liberal
<i>Wakefield Free Press</i>	Advanced Liberal; 'Liberal' per Mitchell's, but in practice adopts more radical positions than the neighbouring <i>Express</i> . ⁷
<i>Wakefield Journal</i>	Conservative
<i>Whitby Gazette</i>	Neutral
<i>York Herald</i>	Liberal
<i>Yorkshire Gazette</i>	Conservative

⁵ Mitchell, *1861 Press Directory*, p. 58.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 58.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 79.

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