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A MAN OF HIS TIME: TOM WATSON'S NEW SOUTH BIGOTRY

by

COREY CANTRELL

Under the Direction of Marni Davis

ABSTRACT

Georgia statesman Thomas E. Watson is best known as a Vice-Presidential and Presidential candidate for the People's Party, the progressive third party movement of the 1890s and 1900s. As a Populist candidate, Watson advocated a racially progressive platform in order to appeal to African American voters. But following a series of electoral defeats and the collapse of the Populist Party, Watson retreated from politics and began a career as the publisher of his own weekly and monthly periodicals. As a publisher, Watson utilized his editorial space to express bigoted attitudes towards African Americans, Catholics, and Jews, that greatly contrasted with views he espoused as a Populist. But Watson's rhetorical shifts occurred during the industrialization, urbanization, and immigration of the South. These radical transformations inspired fear and anxiety for thousands of rural white southerners. Within this context, Watson, as the proprietor of a profit-driven enterprise, offered opinions about the era's numerous social, political, and economic upheavals that his readership appreciated. Throughout his career, Watson's rhetoric shifted with the ebb and flow of contextual variation and in this period of intense economic, social, and political change, the context was favorable for the bigoted opinions that he expressed.

INDEX WORDS: Thomas E. Watson (1856-1922), Georgia politics, The New South, Racism, Anti-Catholicism, Anti-Semitism

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by

COREY CANTRELL

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

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DEDICATION

To Haley, Chloe, and my family

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I would like to thank Marni Davis and Jeffrey Young for guiding this project. But I am most indebted to my family. My mom cleared my mind with countless hours of laughter and conversation and my grandpa has always been more than just a friend or father. My younger siblings, Will, Cooper, Lily, and Lawson, provided much needed love and entertainment. Chloe has been my faithful companion for the past decade and was of great assistance with her keen sense of when I most needed a break. Lastly, but most importantly, I must thank my best friend and wife, Haley, for years of love and support.

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INTRODUCTION

For almost a century historians have been perplexed by the paradoxical legacy of Georgia statesman Thomas E. Watson. Watson is best known as a Vice-Presidential and Presidential nominee for the People's Party, the progressive third party movement of the 1890s and 1900s. However, Watson is equally associated with the deeply racist, anti-Catholic, and anti-Semitic rhetoric that he voiced during his later years. Because of these glaring inconsistencies, historians have struggled to reconcile the racially moderate, progressive leaning, Tom Watson of the 1890s with the bigoted Tom Watson of the 1910s. In *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, acclaimed historian C. Vann Woodward accounted for these shifts by theorizing that the series of defeats Watson had endured as Populist candidate created a deeply resentful and vindictive Watson. Just before his discussion of Watson's anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism, Woodward stated: "A new spirit seems to have taken possession of Hickory Hill in the fall of 1910, most clearly manifesting itself in the master of the house."¹ But I argue that Watson's racist, anti-Catholic, and anti-Semitic rhetorical shifts did not begin simultaneously in the fall of 1910. These shifts were part of a process that occurred during Watson's time as a profit-driven proprietor of various periodicals. As the intensity and sensationalism of Watson's writings increased, Watson's business became increasingly profitable. Throughout this period the circulation of Watson's weekly paper increased from 43,043 to 61,000, and the his monthly magazine increased from 16,000 to 80,000. In order

¹ C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 416.

to understand these inconsistencies and Watson's legacy, we must take a closer look at Watson's later life and examine these shifts within the broader regional and national historical context.²

Thomas Edward Watson was a direct descendent of the Old South aristocracy. He was born September 5, 1856 near Thomson, Georgia on his grandfather's plantation, before the after-effects of the Civil War nearly destroyed the once prosperous plantation. But the young and intelligent Watson never expressed an interest in farming. Instead, Watson's parents borrowed money and sent him to Mercer University when he was fifteen. Although unable to complete his degree, Watson passed the bar examination and began a brief career as a lawyer before he was elected to the state legislature. Soon thereafter, Watson became a legal representative for the Farmers' Alliance, a movement dedicated to the mobilization and cooperation of the millions of the regions' struggling agrarians. In response to the disastrous postwar conditions, the Alliance advocated a series of reforms such as the free coinage of silver, the sub-treasury plan, and government ownership of railroads, that were intended to alleviate the plight of struggling farmers.³

Watson was elected to the United States House of Representatives in 1890 with the support of the Farmers' Alliance. But not long after the 1890 election, as leaders of the Alliance became frustrated with the limitations of their influence on the national Democratic Party, the alliance launched their own party, the People's Party. Tom Watson became one of the first sitting congressmen to join the new party. He also began his first venture in the publishing industry with

² Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 56-57.

³ Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, 29-33, 135; Alex Mathew Arnett, *The Populist Movement in Georgia: A View of the "Agrarian Crusade" in the Light of Solid-South Politics* (New York: AMS Press, Inc, 1967), 74-77.

the launch of his own newspaper, the *People's Party Paper*. But Watson political career suffered from a series of close and controversial defeats in 1892, 1894, and 1895, as the new party struggled to gain traction in the Solid South, a period of almost a century of total Democratic Party dominance of southern politics.

These defeats would pale in comparison to the disastrous results the party experienced in the Presidential election of 1896. In their support of the Democratic Party's ticket and moderately progressive nominee William Jennings Bryan, the People's Party also nominated Bryan as their candidate. Although Watson opposed this strategy, he was symbolically selected as the party's Vice-Presidential nominee. But it was unlikely that if Bryan had been he elected he would have selected Watson over the Democratic Party's own nominee. Bryan's loss to William McKinley began the demise of the Populist Party. As Bryan was again nominated as the Democratic Presidential nominee in the 1900 election, there was a considerable divide between Populist leaders. The issue was whether to replicate the failed 1896 strategy or nominate their own candidate and somehow campaign against the same candidate the party had nominated just four years earlier. This debacle proved to be fatal. As the party's numbers dwindled, Watson was nominated as the party's presidential nominee in 1904 and again in 1908 with dismal results.

While Watson's political career appeared to be in shambles, he focused on a career as the editor of his own periodicals. During this time Watson concerned himself with the profitability of the publications and as an editor, Watson operated within a period of frustration, anxiety, and paranoia for his primarily rural audience. Many rural southerners struggled to conform the new social, political, and economic order that accompanied the New South's era of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration. As an editor, Watson marketed to an audience of southern white males. As the war against capitalism and corporate privilege subsided, Watson launched a new

war on African Americans, the Catholic church, and Jews. As the paper became increasingly radical, organizations such as the Coca-Cola company no longer advertised in Watson's papers. Articles by professional contributors decreased and these publications steadily developed into solely an outlet for Watson's personal commentary. Watson's readership responded to these profound shifts with more subscriptions, which increased what Watson privately described as the "handsome clear profits" of the periodicals.⁴ As a result, by the end of the decade Watson was perhaps more popular than ever in Georgia.⁵

The effectiveness of these shifts can be seen in Watson's victory in the final political campaign of his life, the 1920 U.S. Senate campaign. I argue that Watson's rhetorical adjustments during the 1910s elevated his popularity within the state to the extent that he was able to defeat the candidacies of two of the state's most popular leaders, Senator Hoke Smith and Governor Hugh Dorsey. The six week campaign for the state Democratic nomination was covered by the national press, and featured Watson's highly publicized arrest for violation of prohibition law, in addition to a serious illness that forced Watson to miss a number of appearances in the climax of the campaign. Watson's popularity enabled him to win the primary despite these events, the candidacies of popular state leaders, a hostile Georgia press, and the opposition of influential organizations such as the American Legion, the United Confederate Veterans, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Although historians have been interested in Watson throughout the century following his death, there are still aspects of Watson's political career that have been overlooked in the histori-

⁴ Thomas E. Watson to Dr. John N. Taylor, October 5, 1910.

⁵ Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 56-57.

ography. The first biography of Watson, *The Life and Times of Thomas E. Watson*, was published by William W. Brewton just four years after Watson's sudden death in 1922. Brewton's unapologetic heroic narrative of Watson's life was marred by its flaws even before its publication. Brewton, a lifelong friend and supporter of Watson, provides an account that lacks the physical and temporal distance of a true historical work. Throughout the pages of Brewton's narrative the reader is overwhelmed by his admiration for Watson, who had actually assisted Brewton's writing. Although his account does cover the chronology of Watson's career and provides some valuable primary sources, because of his personal relationship with Watson, Brewton's contribution to the historiography is limited.⁶

A little over a decade later, acclaimed southern historian C. Vann Woodward published what many in the field still laud as the definitive biography of Watson. In *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, Woodward focused extensively on the first half of Watson's political career as a Populist. Well known for his liberal activism during his lifetime, Woodward overstated the progressive leanings of Watson's earlier career, especially Watson's ostensibly progressive position on race relations. Yet in his admiration of this moment of Watson's career, Woodward overlooked some of the less appealing aspects of the movement and Watson's positions at the time. Woodward failed to explore the pragmatic incentives that influenced the biracial appeal for many within the Populist party, including Watson. As recent historians of Populism such as Charles Postel and Joel Sipress have argued, "Neither Woodward's rendering... nor Populism's reputation for racial egalitarianism have stood the test of time." Likewise, they counter Woodward's rendering

⁶ William Brewton, *The Life and Times of Thomas E. Watson* (Atlanta: The Author, 1926); Ferald Joseph Bryan, *Henry Grady or Tom Watson?: The Rhetorical Struggle for the New South, 1880-1890* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1994), 8.

of the Populist's racial progressiveness by pointing out that "white Populists shared a pragmatic interest in building cross-racial political alliances."⁷ These shortcomings complicate Woodward's analysis, particularly with regards to Watson's later career and his dramatic rhetorical shifts. In his flawed attempt to reconcile the latter Tom Watson with the earlier, more admirable Watson, Woodward advanced a Jekyll and Hyde portrayal. He argued that the series of losses that Watson endured as a Populist, and the failure of the Populist Party more generally, had serious psychological effects on Watson. In order to prove that Watson was once a sincere advocate of certain African American rights, Woodward could only account for these discrepancies by advancing this Jekyll and Hyde portrayal of Watson.

C. Vann Woodward's portrayal of Watson has been so highly esteemed that no one has published an updated biography of Watson. Instead, numerous articles have been published about Watson in various journals that are inspired by Woodward's work. Historians such as Eugene Fingerhut and Charles Crowe have looked more closely at Watson and the Populist's appeal to African Americans. Harmon Zeigler has examined some of Watson's private correspondences to shed further light on Watson's private sentiments. Ralph Reed has closely examined Watson's 1918 campaign and Fred Ragan has provided an interesting account of Watson's obscenity trial in the wake of his anti-Catholicism and anti-War editorial protests. Others have focused on the transformation and complexities of Watson's persona. Louis Schmier in "No Jew can Murder" has looked at an instance in 1901, just before Watson's radical rhetorical shift, in which he defended a Jewish man who had been charged with murder. During the affair, Watson had omi-

⁷ James M. Beeby, *Populism in the South Revisited: New Interpretations and New Departures* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 4-5; Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 173-204.

nously proclaimed, “No Jew can murder,” which raises doubt over the authenticity of the anti-Semitism he profited from as a publisher during the Leo Frank case. Robert Saunders has published a compelling article that looks at the “Transformation of Tom Watson, 1894-1895,” where he argues some of the origins of Watson’s extreme rhetorical shifts can be found. In “Troubled Tirader: A Psychobiographical Study of Tom Watson,” Janet Brenner Franzon provides an interesting and insightful psychological analysis of Watson’s life that was inspired by some of “the psychological innuendos in Woodward’s study.”⁸

In sum, in the decades since Woodward’s *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* was first published, historians continue to be interested in Tom Watson. But regardless of Watson’s psychological state, missing in the historiography is a thorough analysis of the context of Watson’s shifts. I argue that the rise of Watson’s racism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-Semitism are part of a broader regional and national nativism that was inspired by a series of factors. This study seeks to examine all of these factors, including the rise of racism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-Semitism

⁸ Eugene Fingerhut, “Tom Watson, Blacks, and Southern Reform,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 60 Issue 4 (1976): 324-343; Charles Crowe “Tom Watson, Populists, and Blacks Reconsidered,” *The Journal of Negro History* Vol. 55 Issue 2 (1970): 99-116; Harmon Zeigler, “Letters of Tom Watson to His Campaign Manager,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 46 Issue 3 (1962): 274-279; Ralph Reed, “Fighting the Devil with Fire’: Carl Vinson’s victory over Tom Watson in the 1918 Tenth District Democratic Primary,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 67 Issue 4 (1983): 451-479; Fred Ragan, “Obscenity or Politics? Tom Watson, Anti-Catholicism, and the Department of Justice,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 70 Issue 1 (1986): 17-46; Louis Schmier, “No Jew Can Murder’: Memories of Tom Watson and the Lichtenstein Murder Case of 1901,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 70 Issue 3 (1986): 433-455; Robert Saunders, “The Transformation of Tom Watson, 1894-1895,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 54 Issue 3 (1970): 339-356; Janet Brenner Franzon, “Troubled Tirader: A Psychobiographical Study of Tom Watson,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 57 Issue 4 (1976): 493-510.

in the South and the nation, and to place Watson's rhetorical shift within these broader developments. It is my hope that this will contribute to our understanding of not only Tom Watson but the popular nativism that was inspired by the changes, fears, and anxieties of the New South.

In chapter I of this thesis I discuss the issue of race, the most important social and political issue of the postwar South. As early as June 1905 Watson began reevaluating the meaning of "our creed."⁹ Although many of the main tenets of Populism would survive this revision, the issue of race would not. Initially, in their efforts to dismantle the Democratic Party's total control of the "Solid South," Watson and Populists throughout the South had appealed to African American voters. As a result, the new party adopted moderately progressive platforms that were friendly to African American voters. Yet for many, including Watson, this was not an action of sincere conviction but a deliberate political tactic. Once it became clear that this strategy had failed, most Populists, Watson included, had little hesitation in altering their approach to the African American question. In articles such as "Is the Black Man Superior to the White?," "The Ungrateful Negro," and "The Negro Question," Watson offered new paternalistic arguments about African Americans. He argued that African Americans had benefited from the guidance of whites, that they should essentially be relegated to a second-class citizenship and overtime would eventually "gradually reconcile themselves to the condition of a reorganized peasantry."¹⁰

⁹ *Tom Watson's Magazine*, June 1905, pp. 386-388.

¹⁰ *Tom Watson's Magazine*, June 1905, pp. 385-387, 393-399; April 1906, pp. 165-174; William J. Cooper, Jr., and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History, Volume II* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 2009), 437-443; *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, November 1907, pp. 1032-1040; April 1908, pp. 163-167.

I place these rhetorical developments within their broader regional and national historical context. It is within the transformation of the entire region's political system that these profound rhetorical changes occurred. By the time Watson's public racism began, the political system throughout the region, and in Georgia specifically, had undergone a vast transformation. Beginning with Mississippi in 1890, states legislatures throughout the South began to pass disfranchisement legislation. In Georgia, racial segregation and disfranchisement began in 1900 as the Georgia Democratic party adopted the white primary. As a result of the white primary and subsequent Jim Crow legislative acts, by 1908 very few African Americans had the opportunity to vote in Georgia. Race relations between white and black Georgians had reached an all time low and ultimately resulted in the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot. This brutal conflict between thousands of white and black Georgians lasted for three days and left dozens of African Americans dead. It was within the context of these broader development that promoted Watson's shift on race as he no longer had the option to appeal to an African American electorate or the potential to build a biracial alliance.¹¹

In chapter II I discuss the development of Watson's anti-Catholic rhetoric and the favorable historical context for that bigotry. By the 1910s, Watson was in the midst of a vigorous campaign against Roman Catholicism with a lengthy series entitled "The Roman Catholic Hierarchy: the Deadliest Menace to Our Liberties and Our Civilization." Beginning with the August 1910 issue of *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, Watson ran the "The Roman Catholic Hierarchy" series for twenty-seven months. Some of the titles published from "The Roman Catholic Hierar-

¹¹ Bartley, *Creation of Modern Georgia*, 147-150; David Fort Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 107-110, 122.

chy” series included: “Maria Monk and Her Revelations of Convent Crimes,” “Roman Catholics in America Falsifying History and Poisoning the Minds of Protestant School Children,” “Rome’s Law or Ours -- Which?” and “The Italian Pope’s Campaign against the Constitutional Rights of American Citizens.” Throughout this period, Watson described Catholicism as a “jackassical doctrine” and priests as “bull-necked convent keepers.”¹² He also questioned the loyalty of American Catholics, was suspicious of the Church’s influence in government affairs, and lamented the “torrent of Pauperism and illiteracy” that “pours into this country from Catholic Southern Europe,” which according to Watson was “driving this republic hellward.”¹³

American anti-Catholicism has a long and enduring history within the United States. But Watson’s anti-Catholic message resonated especially well with his southern audience. As C. Vann Woodward stated in the *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, little compared with “religion in power and influence over the mind and spirit of the South.” Woodward continued: “The exuberant religiosity of the southern people, the conservative orthodoxy of the dominant sects, and the overwhelming Protestantism of all but a few regions were forces that persisted powerfully in the twentieth century.”¹⁴ Writings such as Watson’s were not unique in this period; throughout the 1910s anti-Catholic crusaders waged war through the American press. Watson’s periodicals were part of a broader movement of anti-Catholic literature that had developed throughout the country at the time. Publications such as *The Menace*, *The Peril*, *The Crusader*,

¹² *Watson’s Jeffersonian Magazine*, April, 1912, pp. 997-998; Thomas E. Watson, *Political and Economic Handbook* (Thomson, Ga: The Jeffersonian Publishing Co, 1916), 441.

¹³ *Watson’s Jeffersonian Magazine*, April 1915, pp. 309-316; September 1911-December 1914; Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, 416-430.

¹⁴ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1951), 448.

The Liberator, and others, were all dedicated to exposing the perceived Catholic threat. Like Watson's writings, these papers often employed similar alarmist rhetoric. Articles within the anti-Catholic periodicals commonly insisted that Catholic Priests targeted women, children, the elderly, and the sick, and that it was the job of the press and protestant men to offer protection for the perceived weaker elements of society.¹⁵

In the final chapter, I analyze the development of Watson's anti-Semitism and the regional and national dynamics that fostered this prejudice. Watson's anti-Semitic writings were never as central to the publications as that of his racism or anti-Catholicism. But when the opportunity presented itself, Watson had little trouble offering a similar disdain. In the midst of Watson's war on Catholicism, Mary Phagan, a thirteen-year-old white factory worker, was found dead in the factory's basement. Within days, Leo Frank, the Jewish, northern-born supervisor of the factory was accused of the murder. Although Watson did not begin writing about the Frank case until over a year after Frank's arrest, he became obsessed with the case and his analysis of Frank's alleged crimes appeared until the climax of the entire affair. Frank was convicted and sentenced to death in an unfair trial, but Governor John Slaton commuted the sentence to life in prison. For Watson, one of the most crucial factors in determining Frank's guilt was his Jewish heritage. In his analysis of the trial Watson made derogatory comments about "rich Jews," described Frank as a "lascivious character" and a "Jew pervert."¹⁶ But unlike his war against "Popery," Watson actually perpetuated many of the events that led to Frank's lynching with calls such as "RISE!

¹⁵ Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 448-457; Wayne Mixon, "Georgia," in Samuel S. Hill, *Religion in the Southern States: A Historical Study* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1983), 77-99; Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 2-15, 57, 82, 104-107, 204.

¹⁶ *Watson's Magazine*, January 1915, p. 143; September 1915, pp. 251.

PEOPLE OF GEORGIA,” when rumors of the communication of Frank’s sentence began to surface. Watson even stated that perhaps “another Ku Klux Klan may be organized to restore HOME RULE,” and once the affair had ended, he publicly defended those who had participated in his murder: “When the constituted authorities are unable, or unwilling to protect life, liberty, and property, *the People must assert their right to do so.*”¹⁷

Yet for all his scathing indictments of Leo Frank’s guilt in his analysis of the case, Watson had remained silent on the issue for over a year after Frank’s arrest and his trial. By looking at the context of Watson’s anti-Semitism, we can see more of the developments that preceded Watson’s involvement in the case. Shortly before Watson’s commentary on the trial began, the *Atlanta Journal* had printed a controversial editorial that called for a retrial and argued that an execution based on the initial trial would be “judicial murder.” Amidst the public outcry surrounding the editorial, the *Atlanta Journal* experienced a loss in circulation and readership, and unsurprisingly quickly dropped their defense of Frank. Soon thereafter Tom Watson entered the fray: “If the Atlanta politicians and editors are crazy enough to make war on Dorsey, *because he did his duty in the Frank case, LET THE WAR START.*”¹⁸ Although this new war consumed almost every issue of Watson’s weekly and monthly publication until the affair’s tragic climax, it

¹⁷ *Jeffersonian*, June 3, pp. 1-2; August 12, pp. 1-3, 6, 9; September 2, 1915, pp. 1-5; *Watson’s Magazine*, October 1915, pp. 323; The italics and capitalization here and elsewhere are in the original texts; Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003); Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

¹⁸ *Jeffersonian*, March 19, 1914, pp. 1, 8-9.

is important to recognize that Watson chose not to wage this war until the overwhelming public sentiment on the issue was well apparent.¹⁹

In sum, I will show that Watson's shifts towards an angry nativist worldview occurred within a broader context and with the intent of boosting his profits as a publisher. As a result, Watson exploited the fears and anxieties of his audience of primarily rural southerners. With the failures of their efforts to alleviate their plight through collective action, with the collapse of the Farmers' Alliance and the People's Party, nostalgia for the Old South increased. Likewise, the fear, anxiety, and animosity towards the New South order surged. As a result, this angry, disillusioned, and defeated class was susceptible to Watson's tactics. Unable to understand global economic forces or the uncontrollable factors that produced periodic crop disasters, immigrants and African Americans became the target of their frustrations.

As Atlanta became the industrial and urban center of the New South, many southerners perceived the rise of immigrants into the region to be interconnected with the broader transformation of the region. Already economically defeated, politically manipulated, and on the lowest sector of social spectrum, southern men resented the loss of autonomy within this new industrial sphere. For many, they not only worked for someone other than just themselves, but were also often times reliant on the supplemental income of their wives and children. Historians such as Nancy Maclean have argued that these changing gender dynamics contributed to the reaction of male patriarchs, whose "inability to protect their daughters signaled their own loss of power, authority, and status in the New South."²⁰ These factors are essential in analyzing the southern con-

¹⁹ *Jeffersonian*, June 11, 1914, p. 1; Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, 378-380.

²⁰ Nancy MacLean, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 78 Issue 3 (1991): 930.

text of Watson's actions, as southerners channeled their anxiety and frustrations over the new diverse, urban, industrial order into their hatred of Leo Frank, immigrants, and African Americans.²¹

I conclude with a brief epilogue that analyzes the final campaign of Watson's career, his victorious candidacy in the 1920 U.S. Senate election. I argue that it was because of these dramatic rhetorical shifts that he positioned himself to defeat the candidacies of two of the state's most popular leaders. Watson had been defeated in yet another campaign for Georgia's tenth congressional district just two years prior. But in 1918, Watson did not want to seek the office, did not campaign for it, and was only on the ballot because his supporters paid the entrance fee. Likewise, Watson's opponent Carl Vinson campaigned against Watson by using a racist, bigoted, and nativist appeal that greatly mirrored the views Watson espoused.²²

Unlike the 1918 campaign effort, in the six week campaign for the 1920 Senate Democratic primary, Watson did actively campaign for the office. The campaign garnered national attention and featured three of the state's most influential politicians at the time: Watson, Governor Hugh Dorsey, and the state's senior senator Hoke Smith. I examine how Watson's mass appeal enabled him to win the primary despite a hostile Georgia press, a personal vendetta waged against him by the powerful and influential American Legion, the opposition of other influential organizations such as the United Confederate Veterans and the Sons of Confederate Veterans, a nationally publicized night of incarceration for violation of prohibition law, and a serious illness that forced him to miss a number of appearances in the climax of the campaign. Watson only

²¹ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 92-94; Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case*, xv, xv-xvii; MacLean, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered," 917-948.

²² Reed, "Fighting the Devil with Fire," 451-479.

served in the Senate until his death in 1922, but he was mourned throughout Georgia. In 1932 he was awarded a bronze statue that at the footsteps of the Georgia state capitol building. Only recently, has that sculpture, and its description of “A CHAMPION OF RIGHT WHO NEVER FALTERED IN THE CAUSE,” garnered criticism. As advocates raised public awareness of Watson’s bigoted attitudes, Governor Nathan Deal authorized the removal of the statue from the state capital in 2013.²³

²³*Atlanta Constitution*, December 4, 1932, p. 1.

CHAPTER I: THE DEVELOPMENT OF WATSON'S RACISM

As a Populist candidate during the 1890s, Tom Watson denounced lynching and ridiculed fears of “negro domination.” Watson even stated: “I despise the Anglo-Saxon who is such an infernal coward as to deny legal rights to any man on account of his color for fear of ‘negro domination.’”²⁴ Watson was never an advocate of total social equality, but he did champion certain African American rights. Watson condemned violence against African Americans, mocked the prevalent fears of “negro domination,” and attempted to unite lower class blacks and whites by focusing on their shared struggle and not racial difference. Because of these moderately progressive platforms, at this stage of his career Watson even enjoyed the support of some of the most prominent members of the African American community. Watson’s African American supporters included W.E.B. Du Bois, one of the most prominent and influential members of the African American community at the time.²⁵

Over the next decades, however, Watson’s position on African American freedom underwent a drastic revision. By 1917 Watson boldly proclaimed: “In the South, we have to lynch [the black man] occasionally, and flog him, now and then, to keep him from blaspheming the almighty, by his conduct, on account of his smell and his color.”²⁶ What inspired such a drastic rhetorical shift? While Watson continued to champion the cause of white supremacy, he did so

²⁴ Quote by Watson during a 1893 speech in Thomas E. Watson, *The Life and Speeches of Thomas E. Watson* (Thomas E. Watson: Nashville, 1908), 163.

²⁵ C. Vann Woodward, “Tom Watson and the Negro in Agrarian Politics,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 4 Issue 1(1938): 14-33.

²⁶ *Jeffersonian Weekly*, January 4, 1917, p. 4.

by utilizing a platform that increasingly relied on tactics that degraded African Americans. These radical changes occurred amidst a transformative period in Georgia, the South and across the United States. When Watson promoted racially progressive views in the 1890s, African Americans were considered an important demographic in the southern political system. Southern Populists like Watson sought to appeal to African American voters in their efforts to dismantle the Democratic Party's total political control of the South. By the early twentieth century, after a series of failures and the collapse of the People's Party, it was clear that this strategy had failed. Democrats throughout the South successfully galvanized voters with fear-inducing claims concerning the alleged risk the Populists represented to the racial status quo. After a variety of fraudulent tactics by Democrats and Populists alike that left districts like Watson's with more ballots cast than census figures would deem possible, Populist candidates experienced widespread defeat in the South.²⁷

These efforts notwithstanding, the origins for the region's political transformation had begun in Mississippi in 1890 with the passage of the first legislative efforts to remove African Americans from the political system. Soon thereafter, states throughout the South began to replicate the "Mississippi Plan" with their own set of legislations that limited the ability of African Americans to vote. These efforts left African Americans almost completely powerless within the political system, and paved the way for decades of uninterrupted white supremacist rule. In Georgia, the disfranchisement movement grew as news accounts increasingly reported various violent African American crimes. These reports, and the perception by many white Georgians that African American freedom equaled social chaos, contributed to an escalation of racial ten-

²⁷ Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 18-22; Numan Bartley, *The Creation of Modern Georgia* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 91-92.

sions that climaxed with the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot. By the conclusion of the first decade of the twentieth century, African American voters were almost completely removed from the political system in Georgia and most of the South. For many Populists, it had been clear that their initial efforts to create a biracial coalition of the lower classes had failed. The development of Watson's racism was within the context of a violent escalation of racial tensions and a widespread belief by white Georgians that African American freedom was a risk to the safety of the region.²⁸

By the early twentieth century, racism towards African Americans was not just a southern peculiarity. Immigration waves fostered by industrialization of the nation, a new intimacy between diverse groups in urban settings, an exodus of African Americans escaping the Jim Crow South, a growing literature and science movement dedicated to racial studies and Anglo-Saxon supremacy, and a renewed American imperialist agenda, all contributed to and were dependent on a growing American belief in white supremacy and black inferiority. Issues of race were central in scientific studies, foreign policy initiatives, and cultural productions. Throughout the nation, Americans were fascinated by works that celebrated the greatness of the Anglo-Saxon tradition or described the horrors of African American freedom. This is perhaps best exemplified by the national popularity of D.W. Griffith's *Birth of Nation*, a film that celebrated the white vigilantism that limited African American freedom in the South.

Historian Eugene Fingerhut first noted in the 1970s some of the practical factors that may have guided Watson's shift towards racism. Fingerhut suggested that "when blacks were no

²⁸ William J. Cooper, Jr., and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History, Volume II* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 2009), 549-551.

longer useful, Watson discarded them. Their political rights were a means to an end.”²⁹ The importance of this study is to highlight these factors and Watson’s rhetorical shifts during times of contextual transformation, a skill that would serve him well throughout the next decade. Tom Watson operated within a context in the 1890s as a third party political candidate that required an appeal to African American voters to have any realistic chance of electoral success. When this strategy failed, the empowered leaders of the established political party took measures to remove the possibility of a reoccurrence of this threat. With the failure of the Populist’s biracial appeal evident, the collapse of the Populist Party set in motion, and the wide support of the removal of African Americans from the political system, there was no longer an option to appeal to African American voters. Watson’s racist shift occurred while he proclaimed to have lost all political ambition and was dedicated towards sustaining his publications. To accomplish that goal, Watson had to offer a product that would appeal to the interests and concerns of his audience. It is within this context that Watson adjusted his rhetoric on the most contentious issue in the region’s history.

Watson and the “Negro Question”

In the earliest moments of Watson’s political career, as a member of the Democratic Party and as a Georgia legislator in the 1880s, Watson did not focus on the question of African American rights. But as a candidate for the People’s Party in the 1890s, Watson often utilized a progressive rhetoric in order to appeal to African American voters. Yet these progressive pro-

²⁹ Eugene Fingerhut, “Tom Watson, Blacks, and Southern Reform,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 60 Issue 4 (1976): 341-342.

nouncements were often filled with contradictions. While proclaiming in Jeffersonian terms his belief that “all men were created equal,” he juxtaposed this egalitarianism with a rhetoric that proclaimed his belief in white supremacy and black inferiority. Watson and other Populists often struggled with the complexities of balancing an appeal to African Americans within the hostile racial dynamics of the region. As a Populist, Watson proclaimed that the party should “make lynch law odious to the people” and provide “a platform immensely beneficial to both races and injurious to neither.”³⁰ But in his appeal to African American voters, Watson often contradicted such pronouncements. Watson, like many of his contemporaries, including even African American activists such as Booker T. Washington, never offered a vision of social equality for the races. Watson had argued that he had “never advocated social equality” because he believed equality “would ruin our race.”³¹ The inconsistencies expressed by Watson were mirrored by Populist candidates throughout the South. In order to compete with the Democratic Party’s political control of the region, Populists had to offer a reasonable appeal to African American voters. But they had to do so without alarming the region’s white voters. In this balancing act, candidates like Watson often offered complicated and inconsistent appeals to voters.³²

As Populist Party candidates’ efforts to balance an appeal to African Americans without alarming white voters ultimately failed, Watson’s position on issues of race became much less contradictory. The collapse of the People’s party relegated Watson back into private life for near-

³⁰ Watson quoted in C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 62-63.

³¹ Thomas E. Watson, “The Negro Question in the South,” in George Brown Tindall, ed., *A Populist Reader: Selections from the Works of American Populist Leaders* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 118-128; *Atlanta Constitution*, May 17, 1894, 2.

³² Fingerhut, “Watson, Blacks, Reform,” 326-330.

ly a decade. During that time he briefly returned to practicing law, but he focused more on a new career as a publisher of historical monographs such as *The Story of France*, *The Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*, *The Life and Times of Thomas Jefferson*, and *Bethany*, a semi-autobiographical fictional novel. Although he was nominated by the People's Party as their Presidential candidate in the 1904 election and again in 1908, these campaigns were far from serious national candidacies and he experienced embarrassing results on both occasions. In the years that followed the collapse of the Populist Party, Watson stated that he "turned to literature and advocated the same eternal principles of human liberty and justice and good government in historical works." Although Watson did occasionally give lectures on southern history during these years, he found public speaking "too exhausting." It was at this time that Watson and New York based publisher W.D. Mann launched *Tom Watson's Magazine*, a monthly political publication dedicated to the nation's political issues. Having "lost all political ambition" and "in love [with his] editorial and literary work," Watson dedicated himself towards elevating his publications to a "self sustaining" state.³³

Originally published in October 1904, Watson's novel *Bethany: A Story of the Old South*, first shows some of Watson's new racial attitudes. The novel centered around a fictional southern farming family, the Hortons. The account focuses on the perception of the Hortons on the issues that led to the Civil War, and is mixed with political commentary, autobiographical themes, and a love story. Some of the passages on racial topics included provocative statements such as: African Americans "under our system are a d---d sight better off than they ever were in Africa, better off than the white laboring class anywhere" and "the truth is that slavery is a curse to everybody except the negro," and southerners had "took a naked black cannibal and

³³ Quote by Watson in a brief autobiographical section in Watson, *Life and Speeches*, 22-26.

made a human being out of him; but in the process, in the contact, we ourselves have become morally and mentally lowered.” These sentiments contrasted greatly with the pronouncements he had made just a few years earlier while a Populist candidate, but they would greatly resemble the rhetoric he would espouse for the remainder of his life.³⁴

By the early twentieth century, Watson had largely shifted his focus from his historical and literary interests towards his weekly and monthly commentary in his periodicals. In the early editions of his papers, Watson often used his editorial space to advocate traditional Populist tenets. These included his support of the public ownership of railroads, direct legislation, graduated income tax, government sanctioned national currency without the intervention of the national banks, and progressive labor policies. In these early issues, Watson focused extensively on Wall Street, the National Banks, and the problem of capitalist friendly legislation. He often featured editorials with sarcastic titles such as “The Modesty of the Bankers.” He also frequently attacked the Democratic and Republican parties and some of their most prominent leaders for their policies and alleged acts of corruption.³⁵

Even as early as the June 1905 edition of *Watson's Magazine*, Watson had begun publicly reevaluating the meaning of “our creed” in his magazine. While many of the main tenets of Populism survived this revision, Watson’s position on race relations did not. Once it became clear that the Populist appeal to African American voters did not result in the desired outcome, many former Populists, including Watson, had little hesitation in altering their position on race. In the earliest volumes and issues of his monthly magazine, the changing nature of Watson’s po-

³⁴ Thomas E. Watson, *Bethany: A Story of the Old South* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), 47, 235.

³⁵ *Tom Watson's Magazine*, March 1905, pp. 1-12.

sition on race developed quickly and firmly. In articles such as, “Is the Black Man Superior to the White?,” Watson clearly began to grapple with racial issues with a new perspective. In this particular article Watson took issue with claims made by Booker T. Washington concerning the level of progress of African Americans had experienced in just the brief period after emancipation. A year later, in a similar article titled “The Ungrateful Negro,” he offered his commentary on comments made by Bishop Henry McNeil Turner, in which he lamented the condition of African descendents in America both in the past and the present. Watson argued that Turner was ungrateful and that he should be more appreciative, for “nowhere else in the universe is the negro treated so well as in the United States.”³⁶

Watson was fired from his position as editor of *Watson's Magazine* in November 1906 after a dispute with the ownership group. Watson claimed to have not been paid for over a year and to have been owed \$9,000. In an editorial published in the November issue of the magazine, managing editor Arthur S. Hoffman described Watson as “too dogmatic, abusive, and narrow in his relations with other reformers and radicals.” It appears that the other partners had taken particular offense to an editorial published by Watson in which had stated, “*I am the magazine.*” Hoffman continued: “We intend to get the best of these [other editors] to help us make *Watson's Magazine*, not the personal organ of any individual, but a forum, wherein every sincere man with a message may be heard.” This could not be said about the magazine while it was under Wat-

³⁶ *Tom Watson's Magazine*, June 1905, pp. 385-387; April 1906, pp. 165-174; *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, November 1907, pp. 1032-1040; April 1908, pp. 163-167; Watson, *Life and Speeches*, 22-26; Cooper and Terrill, *The American South*, 437-443.

son's control. When Watson went on to form his own paper, it too would not be a forum, but in fact an outlet for Watson's personal commentary.³⁷

As Watson became the sole proprietor of the new magazine, the sensationalism and controversial views that had offended the partners of the old paper dominated Watson's new periodicals. In the *Weekly Jeffersonian* and *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, issues of race became the central focus of Watson's writings. The "everlasting and overshadowing Negro Question" which he argued had acted to "hamper and handicap" the progress of his political career. In an extended essay that appeared in the November 1907 edition of *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, "The Negro Question," Watson discussed his and the People's Party's initial appeal to African American voters:

When the People's Party sprang into life the negro question was the most perplexing one which confronted us. What should we do? If we ignored him entirely, he would become a balance of power to destroy us. Neither of the opposing parties would hesitate to use him to defeat us. Would it not be best to invite him to our meetings, give him political education, take his guidance into Southern hands, and cultivate his confidence? If we could do this successfully, we would destroy the Republican Party, in the South... And with the negroes all in our ranks, the Republicans eliminated, and the democrats defeated, we saw no danger, no general menace, in the colored race. We had him under complete control and meant to keep him so... So it seemed to me then—so it seems now; God knows how sincere I was in the faith. Yet it may be that I was wrong. The question is too complicated for dogmatism. If I erred, it was a grievous blunder, and grievously I have paid for it, —as was just.³⁸

As Watson's words indicate, in his initial support of limited African American rights, he and other Populists were motivated by "a desire to destroy the Republican Party, in the South" and equally to prevent African Americans from becoming "a balance of power to destroy us." In this explanation, Watson offers no evidence that he was motivated by any genuine concern for

³⁷ *Tom Watson's Magazine*, November 1906, pp. 1-6; *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, January 1907, pp. 3-27.

³⁸ *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, November 1907, pp. 1035-1036.

the well-being of African Americans or by outrage over the violence they experienced. Rather, it was a decision that was motivated by tangible results. But in offering his apology for actions that would have been overwhelmingly unpopular at the time of this publishing, Watson stated “that it may be I was wrong,” and if so, “it was a grievous blunder,” for which he had paid. This quick shift calls into question the sincerity of Watson’s appeal to African Americans. But perhaps the racism he would espouse during the remainder of his life was insincere. Regardless of whether we can truly determine Watson’s genuine beliefs on a given issue at a specific time, it does seem apparent that his rhetoric is context-driven, and ebbed and flowed with the tides of public opinion.³⁹

Once Watson accounted for his previous appeal to African Americans, he completed his shift towards racism quickly. In the years that followed, Watson advocated for a more bigoted, condescending, and paternalistic method of race relations. He argued that African Americans should essentially be relegated to a second-class citizenship. The races should be segregated, African Americans should be disfranchised. Watson believed African Americans should receive a more practical education to prepare them for a life as laborers and they should be prohibited from participating in government affairs. He also stated that efforts to enact social equality should be fought against tirelessly, African Americans should not be allowed to participate in secret societies or in military organizations, and vagrancy laws should be upheld and defended in order to protect white women and children from the “criminal vagabonds.” He argued that if this consistent strategy was adopted then most African American in the South would “gradually reconcile themselves to the condition of a reorganized peasantry.”⁴⁰

³⁹ *Watson’s Jeffersonian Magazine*, November 1907, pp. 1035-1036.

⁴⁰ *Watson’s Jeffersonian Magazine*, November 1907, pp. 1032-1040; April 1908, pp. 163-167.

Throughout the life span of Watson's periodicals, he repeatedly addressed the African American issue. He often described African Americans as "bestial black brutes," "imps of Satan," "black devils," and other offensive terms. His articles described horrendous crimes of what he described as "an almost epidemic of crimes against southern women" and "hellish lusts" in painstaking detail, including articles concerning black rape of white women. He argued "*LYNCH LAW IS JUST THE RIGHT LAW FOR SUCH CASES*," an expression of mob rule that would prove that "*a sense of justice yet lives among the people.*" Here was a sharp contrast to the man that had once despised such an "infernal coward" as those that lynched out of fear of the threat of "negro domination."⁴¹

Black-White Relations in the New South

Tom Watson was far from alone with his concern over the "negro question." Throughout this period, the Georgia press frequently discussed issues such as the political rights of African Americans, the social effects of black freedom, and the economic issues that concerned white and black laborers. In Georgia and throughout the South, African Americans found themselves within yet another transformative period. In the years that followed emancipation, African Americans had briefly enjoyed legal suffrage. Because of their large numbers, African Americans suddenly became an important demographic within the southern political system. The Republican Party created a fragile alliance between Unionists, northern immigrants, and African Americans. Under these conditions, black men such as Tunis Campbell and Aaron Bradley were elect-

⁴¹ *Jeffersonian Weekly*, November 11, 1909, pp. 1, 5; *Jeffersonian*, February 12, 1914, pp. 1, 8; *Jeffersonian*, May 1915, p.5; Watson, *Life and Speeches*, 163.

ed to the state senate and some black men played a prominent role in the 1867 state constitutional convention.⁴²

Historian C. Vann Woodward has described this period from Reconstruction until the development of Jim Crow in 1890s as an “unstable interlude.” Throughout the South, African Americans and whites experienced daily contact with surprisingly little conflict. Contemporary observers, according to Woodward, often noted the “tolerance and acceptance of the Negro in the South” and “frequency and intimacy of personal contact” between the races.⁴³ But as Reconstruction ended and the South was “redeemed” by Democratic rule, the fragile Republican coalition collapsed, and the Ku Klux Klan helped restore white supremacy through violence and intimidation. Under Democratic Party control, African American rights and suffrage were suppressed, and gains for freedom and equality were limited. As Alex Arnett noted, “by the close of the eighties the Bourbon Democracy was established upon a rock. Great must be the storm that would shake its foundation. But clouds were appearing.”⁴⁴

This suppression also presented an opportunity for candidates like Tom Watson who were willing to offer an appeal to African Americans in exchange for their own electoral success. By the early 1890s, the clouds described by Arnett were becoming more apparent. Historians such as Charles Postel have noted that as the People’s Party was formed amidst the frustration and desperation of an alliance of southern and Western agrarians, “the formation of the people’s party formed a racial dilemma...” for all Populist candidates in the South. Postel reasoned that

⁴² Bartley, *Creation of Modern Georgia*, 45-57; Cooper and Terrill, *The American South*, 575-576.

⁴³ Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 31, 44.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 31-44; Alex Arnett, *The Populist Movement in Georgia: A View of the “Agrarian Crusade” in the Light of Solid-South Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1922), 48.

“for the new People’s party to have any chance of success at the polls it had to attract a section of the black vote without undermining its support among white farmers.”⁴⁵ Many Populists like Tom Watson appealed to African American voters by focusing on the commonalities of the plight of poor whites and blacks. Populists candidates often invited African Americans to attend their meetings, appointed African Americans to certain often but not exclusively insignificant committee posts, and even used black speakers at political events. In Georgia, Ephraim White, a prominent minister within the African American community, was nominated to serve on executive committee of the party in Georgia. The approved nomination was seconded by Tom Watson who stated that “the time has come for the black man to be meted out simple justice as a citizen of this country.” Despite White’s appointment, its significance is the rarity of the occasion, as African Americans seldom received positions of importance within a party that was ever conscious of balancing the racial dynamics of the region.⁴⁶

The Populist appeal to African Americans worked in some ways and failed in others. In their efforts to bridge the fragile coalition of poor whites and blacks, Watson and other Populist candidates consistently offered paternalistic but still progressive policies in a moment when African Americans were often ignored by the established political parties. African American Populists never enjoyed many significant positions of power within the party leadership, but rather were almost exclusively relegated to largely insignificant positions within the party hierarchy. But the Democratic Party’s tactics were effective. Through their campaigns against the “Negro party,” Democratic candidates successfully used the fears and anxieties of white voters to their advantage. For much of the next decade, political commentators would note: “NEGROS SOL-

⁴⁵ Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 173.

⁴⁶ Barton Shaw, *Wool-Hat Boys*, 109-110; Postel, *The Populist Vision*, 173-180.

IDL Y POPULIST.”⁴⁷ The Populist’s enjoyed solid African American support, but the party struggled at the ballot box. Through a variety of legal and illegal tactics by both parties, districts were often left with more votes than voters. Although Populists sought tirelessly to appeal to African American votes, it appears that desperate African Americans in the region were often susceptible to bribes and other illegal tactics from the Democratic Party.⁴⁸

This, in addition to an effective strategy by Democrats to brand the Populists the “Negro party,” contributed to the failure of the coalition. Democrats throughout the South built campaigns against Watson and other Populist candidates by labeling their opponents as advocates of social equality, an unfathomable crime that risked “negro domination” of the region. This created fear and paranoia among many white voters. As the Populist Party collapsed nationally and regionally, so too did the brief position of power for African American voters in the South. As Steven Hahn has noted, Populism was always limited “by the enduring racism” of the “rank and file” of the party’s membership.⁴⁹ But with the collapse of the party, there was a commonly held perception that African Americans destroyed the movement among disillusioned Populists. As Barton Shaw noted, “many Populists bitterly agreed: the black man was to blame.” With the collapse of the Populist Party, so too did the brief position of influence held by African American voters in the region. After the party’s demise, African Americans found themselves in the most unenviable of positions. Not only were they blamed by Populists for the failure of the party, but

⁴⁷ *Macon Telegraph*, October 4, 1894, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Barton Shaw, *The Wool-Hat Boys: A History of the Populist Party in Georgia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 76-77, 78-90.

⁴⁹ Stephen Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 285.

their brief position of power did much to raise the alarm of fearful whites and their legislators and hasten a solution that would remove the risk of “negro domination” for generations.⁵⁰

But African Americans did not face discrimination or prejudice only in the South. The shift towards racism witnessed in the rhetoric and actions of Tom Watson was imitated throughout South and the nation. Historian Dewey Grantham described the late nineteenth century in the United States as the “era of retrogression.” This was largely because of the series of Supreme Court rulings during the final decades of the nineteenth century that did much to relegate African Americans to second class citizenship throughout the nation. With the Court’s ruling in the *Slaughter House Cases* (1873), *United States v. Reese* (1876), and *United States v. Cruikshank* (1876), the Court began its retreat on what constituted federal protection. But the culmination of the Supreme Court’s acquiescence to the South’s method of race relations is best illustrated in its decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). The Supreme Court determined that segregation was constitutional but under the condition of “separate but equal,” as in the opinion of the court, separation did not “necessarily imply the inferiority of either race...”⁵¹

In the South especially, issues of race bordered on the obsessive. Throughout the first decade of the twentieth century, the Georgia press was obsessed with any issue related to the “Negro question.” The articles published in most of the state’s most popular newspaper lacked

⁵⁰ C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 56-60; Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*, 283-285; Shaw, *The Wool-Hat Boys*, 77; Dewey Grantham, “Georgia Politics and the Disfranchisement of the Negro,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 32 Issue 1 (1948): 1-3.

⁵¹ Dewey Grantham, “The Progressive Movement and the Negro” in *The Negro and the South Since 1865: Selected Essays in American Negro History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1965), 62-63; “Plessy V. Ferguson” in *Constitutional Law for a Changing America: A Short Course*, 636-642.

the explicit racism Watson espoused in his own periodicals with his description of “black brutes” and their alleged “hellish crimes,” but the articles often expressed at least an implicit racism. Almost daily, popular state publications like the *Atlanta Journal*, the *Atlanta Constitution*, the *Atlanta Georgian*, the *Macon Telegraph*, and other smaller state papers, described detailed accounts of black crime. The issue was discussed in conferences, at universities, and repeatedly in articles published in the local press. Writers debated the potential of African Americans in articles about the “Education of the Negro,” “The Negro as a Suffragist,” “The False Basis of Negro Suffrage,” and the “Burden of the Negro Problem.” Perhaps more common though were articles that inspired fear and anxiety such as: “Negroes Desire to Rule” and “Negro’s Inability to Rule Shown by Miserable Haiti.” The issues raised throughout the Georgia press were mirrored, albeit in a cruder more sensational fashion in Watson’s periodicals. Watson too pointed towards the Haitian example as evidence of the social and political instability of the black race and argued that he sought only to see “that the negro makes no Haitian hell of the United States.”⁵²

As these articles in the state press indicate, countless issues from various state papers detailed African American crimes in horrific detail. Although these articles often lacked the sensationalism that shrouded Watson’s analysis of these issues, often times, at least implicitly, they suggested the dangers of African American freedom. One of the most common offenses reported in the Georgia press were cases of African Americans who had been charged with rape. Likewise, articles detailed thefts, escapes from incarceration, various violent acts, and other alleged

⁵² *Atlanta Constitution*, March 11, 1900, p. 19; October 14, 1902, p. 6; September 23, 1903, p. 6; *Macon Telegraph*, April 24 1903, p. 6; July 10, 1904, p. 4; January 18, 1907, p. 4; *Atlanta Georgian*, September 8, p. 9; September 10, p.7; September 25, p. 2; September 26, p. 2; October 17, 1906, p.9; *Athens Banner*, May 18, 1900, p. 1; April 11, 1906, p. 2; *Watson’s Jeffersonian Magazine*, April 1908, p. 166.

illegal acts on behalf of African Americans. For readers within the state, these accounts within the state press did much to foster a growing perception among Georgia readers. These issues raised by Watson and members of the press proved to many readers that African American freedom had a series of negative implications for politics and society. Whether it be through government legislation or mob action, for Watson and other Georgians, it was time to take action.

Although historians contend that these newspaper accounts were frequently fabricated, they did much to alter the white perception concerning the dangers of African American freedom. Earlier in the decade, Atlanta historian Thomas Martin had proudly boasted, “There has never been a race riot in Atlanta. The white man and the negro have lived together in this city more peacefully and in better spirit than in any other city, in either the North or South.”⁵³ But as southern whites gradually stripped African Americans of their right to vote and segregated social life, jealousy over the economic prosperity of an emerging black middle class in Atlanta fueled increased racial resentment. On Saturday September 22, the Atlanta press published reports that four white women had been attacked by black men on that day alone. By the end of the night, thousands of whites filled the Atlanta streets. Over the following three days, countless African Americans were attacked and dozens were killed.⁵⁴

The Atlanta Race Riot made national and international headlines. The national press denounced the actions of white Georgians who were involved, criticized the failure of the police to

⁵³ Thomas Martin, *Atlanta and its Builders: A Comprehensive History of the Gate City of the South: Volume II* (Century Memorial Publishing Company, 1902), 102.

⁵⁴ Rebecca Burns, *Rage in the City: The Story of the 1906 Atlanta Race Riot* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 5-7, 133-134; David Fork Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 122.

stop the violence, and condemned the Georgia press for “stirring up race feeling.” The *New York Times* reported that “the outbreak of savagery in Atlanta” was mostly “because of the weakness of the city authorities.”⁵⁵ Despite such clear denunciations, the reality is that just a few years earlier, the *Times* had reported a race riot between black and whites in New York City. In 1900 after black man had killed a white policemen, New York whites sought to avenge the policeman’s death. In their analysis of the riot, the *Times* asserted the affair was “started by a drunken negro,” although they did condemn the numerous white policemen who were involved in the riot as “a disgrace to the police.”⁵⁶

Throughout this period, there were race related riots in virtually every geographic section across the nation. A series of riots broke out in 1898 in South Carolina and North Carolina and many innocent African Americans were murdered. This was followed by riots in: New Orleans in 1900, Brownsville, Texas in 1906, and Springfield, Illinois in 1908. But perhaps the best evidence for the expression of racial violence throughout the nation occurred in a series of riots that broke out in 1910. On July 4, 1910, over 20,000 spectators traveled to Reno, Nevada to witness defending world heavyweight champion Jack Johnson face former undefeated heavyweight champion Jim Jeffries. Johnson, an African American, was the first black athlete of national repute. Up until this match, Jeffries had refused to even face a black opponent. But after Johnson had become champion, white Americans throughout the country urged Jeffries to take on Johnson and restore Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the ring. To their dismay, Jeffries lost the match to Johnson, who retained his championship crown. In response, race riots broke out throughout the South, as well as in Illinois, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Colorado, and the District

⁵⁵ *New York Times*, September 25, 1906, p. 8.

⁵⁶ *New York Times*, August 16, 1900, p. 1; August 17, 1900, p. 1.

of Columbia. In most of these case, resentful white men attacked African Americans that celebrated Johnson's victory. In all, over eighteen people died and hundreds were injured.⁵⁷

Perhaps the surge in southern and national racism can be seen in the widespread popularity of numerous cultural productions. The popularity of Watson's periodicals only grew as his editorials became more sensational and racist, just as the Georgia press had profited by the exploitation of racial topics. Throughout the South and the nation, literary figures such as Thomas Dixon enjoyed great popularity and offered opinions on issues of race that greatly resembled Watson's. Dixon became a bestselling author with the publication of *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden, 1865-1900*. Dixon's fictitious narrative covers the thirty-five year period following African American emancipation in North Carolina. Throughout the narrative, Dixon described the horrors of Republican rule, "scalawag" and "carpetbagger" corruption, and countless examples of "African barbarism." Dixon utilized a scientific racism similar to the one later espoused by American eugenicists like Madison Grant who lamented the influx of immigrants and the diversification of the America populace, which he warned would doom the purity of the "great race." Dixon stated: "I happen to know the important fact that a man or woman of Negro ancestry, though a century removed, will suddenly bred back to a pure Negro child, thick-lipped, kinky-headed, flat-nosed, black-skinned. One drop of your blood in my family could push it backward three thousand years in history."⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Anne Collins, *All Hell Broke Loose: American Race Riots from the Progressive Era through World War II* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012), 29, 41-44, 139; Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1-5.

⁵⁸ Thomas Dixon, *The Leopard's Spots: A History of the White Man's Burden, 1865-1900* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1903), 96, 196, 398; Maxwell Bloomfield, "Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots*: A Study

In the years that followed the success of *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon would also publish *The Clansman* in 1905 and *The Traitor* in 1907. *The Clansman* was received so well that it was quickly adapted into a play and later a film by D.W. Griffith under the title *The Birth of a Nation*. His silent film epic chronicled the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the efforts to restore white supremacy by a intertwined white northern and southern families. The film documents the heroic vigilantes of the Ku Klux Klan and their efforts to save southern society from the perils of black freedom. *The Birth of a Nation* was a critical and commercial success and did much to inspire the formation of the second Ku Klux Klan in the year of its release. White audiences throughout the nation, inspired by the White Man's Burden in foreign affairs and informed by a body of pseudo-scientific theories proclaiming Anglo-Saxon superiority, embraced Griffith's and Dixon's work. The best-selling novels and the most popular film of the period reinforced the prevalent belief in black inferiority and white superiority throughout the United States.⁵⁹

The accounts of black crime that preceded the Atlanta Race Riot did much to push Georgia legislators towards a solution to the perceived problems of black freedom. But Georgia was hardly alone in this regard. As the first of the southern states to craft a solution to the so-called "negro problem" was Mississippi. In 1890, Mississippi legislators passed legislation that elimi-

in Popular Racism," in *The Negro in the South Since 1865: Selected Essay's in American Negro History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1965), 83-102; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 148-157; Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916).

⁵⁹ Bloomfield, "Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots*," 84, 89-91, 99-102; Nancy Maclean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 12-13; Melvyn Stokes, *D.W. Griffith's Birth of a Nation: A History of the Most Controversial Film of all Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3-14.

nated African Americans from the electorate through a complex variety of residency requirements, poll taxes, literacy tests, and other clauses that were enforced primarily on African Americans. Over the next decades, states throughout the South replicated the Mississippi Plan with their own legislations that disfranchised African American voters. In Georgia, this process began after the Atlanta Race Riot and was completed by the end of the decade. Popular state political candidates such as Hoke Smith successfully campaigned on a platform that promised black disfranchisement. With widespread popular support, the Georgia legislature passed a series of amendments that by the end of the 1910s had removed African Americans from the state political system.⁶⁰

In the span of just one decade, African American voters in Georgia and throughout the South devolved from their status as an important and sought after demographic. After the collapse of the People's Party, through a variety of legislative actions, African Americans became a marginalized, voiceless, and ignored populace within a new political system. A number of factors had contributed to these developments. Historians such as Barton Shaw have suggested that embittered Populists made African Americans a scapegoat for the failures of the party. Regardless, in the aftermath of the 1890s, southern Democrats, former Populists, and most southern whites, supported the African American disfranchisement effort.

By the time of Tom Watson's extreme rhetorical shifts on African American issues, black Georgians and most black southerners were no longer a part of the political system and racial

⁶⁰ Cooper and Terrill, *The American South*, 549-551; Dewey Grantham, "Georgia Politics and the Disfranchisement of the Negro," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 32 Issue 1 (1948): 1-21; Bartley, *Creation of Modern Georgia*, 147-153.

tensions between the southern races had reached a boiling point. As Eugene Fingerhut noted, appealing to African Americans was “a means to an end” for Watson and many other southern Populists. For a pragmatic and profit-driven publisher, the decision to espouse racism and black resentment was a logical one that he carried out swiftly and firmly. It is important to note that Watson was far from alone in espousing rhetorical beliefs in white superiority and black inferiority, but was merely operating within regional and national environments that celebrated these perceived truths. Watson recognized the interests and concerns of his audience and was careful to deliver a commentary on recent events that they would appreciate.⁶¹

⁶¹ Fingerhut, “Tom Watson, Blacks, and Southern Reform,” 341-342.

CHAPTER II: THE WAR AGAINST POPYRY

Although anti-Catholicism was not a consistent feature of Tom Watson's periodicals initially, by 1910 Watson engaged in a tireless crusade against the Roman Catholic Church. This campaign followed Watson's successful efforts to support the disfranchisement of African Americans and other Jim Crow legislations. During that time much of Watson's writings focused on fear-based arguments concerning African American freedom. But with African Americans limited as a economic, social, and political threat, Watson and his followers turned their attention to a new menace. In the midst of America's industrial age, New South cities like Atlanta became central in the emerging industrial economy, which contributed to the region's increasingly diverse population. In the wake of the great black exodus to the North that was inspired by Jim Crow and widespread violence in the South, immigrants had even found success in the South's agrarian economy. But it was in the developing urban centers that most European immigrants settled and worked within the region's rigid racial boundaries alongside black and white workers. This degree of intimacy between such ethnically diverse peoples was unfathomable for many white southerners, who often responded with distrust, hostility, and resentment.

To be sure, Catholicism had never developed a mainstream following within the American South. Even at the time of Watson's writings, the Catholic population of the region was of negligible proportions. The region was overwhelmingly Protestant and primarily home to a variety of Methodist and Baptist sects. Although immigration, particularly of Irish and Italian immigrants, had increased the numbers of the region's Catholics, it seems implausible that southerners could have perceived a genuine Catholic threat. However, it does appear that the development of anti-Catholicism was part of a broader reaction to the changes that southerners had

witnessed. It is important to recognize that for generations southern culture and society had embraced as a virtue the region's reverence for maintaining its traditions. But within a generation, much of the region's social, political, and economic spheres had undergone drastic alterations. With African Americans relegated to the backseat of southern civilization, for a time Catholics became the new target for the region's disillusioned and anxiety ridden populace.⁶²

Southerners were not alone in expressing discontent with Catholicism and its adherents. American anti-Catholicism was far from a twentieth century phenomenon, but was rather something of an American tradition. In his highly acclaimed work on American nativism, *Strangers in the Land*, John Higham argued that anti-Catholicism was one of the most common and reoccurring forms of American nativism. Higham believed that nativist sentiment and foreigner backlash ebbed and flowed with economic booms and recessions. In short, according to Higham, in times of economic growth, foreign immigrants were welcomed to fill labor demand, but in economic downturns and as labor competition increased, American nativism developed. It was in the midst of what Higham defines as the "Loss of Confidence," that Watson launched his "Roman Catholic Hierarchy" series that lasted for twenty-seven months. But Watson's anti-Catholic publications were hardly the only examples of intensely anti-Catholic writing. Watson was part of a broad, popular anti-Catholic literature that fascinated readers across the nation. As a publisher, Watson worked within a social and cultural context that was favorable to anti-Catholicism. By channeling existing fears and paranoia concerning American Catholics, Watson galvanized his readers, who rewarded Watson's efforts by almost doubling their subscriptions to the weekly *Jeffersonian* from 43,043 to 61,000 and increasing the subscriptions to the monthly magazine from 16,000 to

⁶² Wayne Mixon, "Georgia," in Samuel S. Hill, *Religion in the Southern States: A Historical Study* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1983), 77-99.

80,000. Because of his anti-Catholic writings, Watson reaped enormous profits and enjoyed an unrivaled popularity among rural white Georgians.⁶³

Watson and Exposing the “Deadliest Menace”

On the night of January 27, 1907 over twenty thousand American Catholics met in New York City to protest the actions of the French Third Republic in their recent dispute with the Roman Catholic Church. From the formation of the republican government in 1870, many members of the French government had sought reforms to separate the Church’s influence on state affairs. These efforts culminated in the 1905 Separation Law and recently installed Pope Pius X responded more aggressively than his predecessor, Pope Leo XIII. From there, a prolonged debate emerged between the Church and advocates of the Republic’s separation initiative. The thousands of American Catholics that met that night in New York denounced the actions of the French government and voiced their support for Pope Pius X.⁶⁴

For Tom Watson and other American nativists, this profound expression of support by American Catholics seemed to suggest that they too sought the power and influence of the Church in United States affairs. This prompted Watson to speak about the issue in that month’s edition of the *Jeffersonian Magazine*. In a lengthy editorial, Watson described the events as “the

⁶³ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 182-183; C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 419-420; Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 3-5, 56-57.

⁶⁴ *New York Times*, January 28, 1907, p. 2.

crisis that now threatens civil war in France,” which he argued was a conflict between citizens that favor “Home rule and those that favor Rome rule.” Watson argued that the events were in part a consequence of the French Revolution, when “a revolt of the Catholic common people and the Catholic nobility of church and state,” had occurred. In the pages that followed, Watson praised the efforts of both the American and French Revolutionaries to form a government that honored a separation between church and state. However, Watson stated, “the Pope is asking the individual Catholic to defy the laws of the state in which he lives.” But Watson offered praise for American Catholics, who he argued had adhered to the constitutional principles of the separation of church and state and accepted “home rule.” Watson warned that the crisis in France represented a genuine problem if the American Catholic population continued to grow, as the “United States would have to contemplate a death-grapple with the Pope” as that “which now endangers the life of the republic of France.”⁶⁵

Although he remained silent on the Catholic issue for over a year, Watson published another lengthy editorial on “The Catholic Hierarchy and Politics,” in the June 1908 issue of the *Jeffersonian Magazine*. In the editorial, Watson discussed the French church and state separation issue and the response of American Catholics who supported the Catholic Church’s efforts against “our sister republic, France.” Watson argued that the Catholic Church had used the crisis to “throw the public opinion of the United States in the scales against the French government.” Watson took particular issue with the actions of Baltimore Cardinal, James Gibbons, whom he argued had misled the public with false statements concerning the atheist motives behind the efforts of the French government. Watson argued, “I am free from religious bigotry. I have no prejudice whatever against any citizens because of his religious faith” but that “the secret influ-

⁶⁵ *Watson’s Jeffersonian Magazine*, February 1907, p. 172-179.

ence of the Roman hierarchy controls Congress is shown by facts that cannot be disputed.” Watson argued this will continue until Protestants “will have to fight for dear life in a land which its blind devotees believe is dedicated forever to free speech, free thought, and free worship.”⁶⁶

This was followed by a silence on the “Catholic Hierarchy” that lasted over two years. But during that time, Watson had been researching and studying the Catholic issue, preparing for a lengthy series on the Church. Watson began “The Roman Catholic Hierarchy: the Deadliest Menace to Our Liberties and Our Civilization” series with the August 1910 issue of the *Jeffersonian Magazine*. Over the next twenty-seven months, an issue of the magazine would not appear without a new editorial on the “Hierarchy” and the series would be followed by countless other exposes of the Church. Some of the titles that appeared in the “The Roman Catholic Hierarchy” series included: “Maria Monk and Her Revelations of Convent Crimes,” “Roman Catholics in America Falsifying History and Poisoning the Minds of Protestant School Children,” “Rome's Law or Ours -- Which?,” and “The Italian Pope's Campaign against the Constitutional Rights of American Citizens.” Throughout these issues, Watson hashed and rehashed the same nativist fears of immigration, the growth of the Church, and potential for a church-led plot to subvert the authority of the Constitution.⁶⁷

Within the series, Watson charged that American Catholics were “in secret league with the head chiefs of the of both the old political parties,” that they had “shackled the press,” and that “the cowardly politicians are afraid of them.” In the first issue of the “Roman Catholic Hierarchy” series, Watson proclaimed that American Catholics had even “promised Papa that the

⁶⁶ *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, June 1908, p. 296-305.

⁶⁷ Woodward, *Tom Watson*, 419-423; *Watson's Jeffersonian Magazine*, August 1910-August 1912.

United States shall be his within the next few years.”⁶⁸ Watson often argued that: “the Canon law of the Roman Church Savagely denounces separation of Church and State,” which he argued, represented a threat to the sovereignty of the United States. This was especially true considering the role that European immigration had on the growth of the American Catholic population. He charged that the Catholic Church had “been able to compel two Presidents, of opposing politics, to put a veto” on immigration restriction, therefore imposing “the will of one man, to defeat the will of an overwhelming majority of the people’s representatives.” Likewise, as a result of the Church’s “treasonous crusade,” Watson argued the Church had “control of nearly half of the Army and Navy, through their unlawful chapel at West Point.” Watson argued that the American Catholic population had risen to over twelve million and were in the process of “establishing the inquisition here” with “a torrent of Pauperism and illiteracy pours into this country from Catholic Southern Europe,” which Watson argued was “driving this republic hellward.”⁶⁹ For Watson, many of his fears about the potential of Catholic Church to subvert the authority of the Constitution were summed in a passage in the series that was published in January 1913:

No other church organization claims and exercises the right to say what books its members shall read; no other church openly takes part in political affairs; no other church sends and receives ambassadors; no other church holds court at which royal ceremony is observed, embassies from foreign governments received, and far reaching questions of international policy debated and decided... There is not a government of the civilized world at whose capital the Catholic church is not represented by a resident representative. No question of national policy, which my directly or indirectly affect the Catholic church, is decided on until the Pope has been heard from.”⁷⁰

But Watson’s editorials were not exclusively devoted to the issues of Catholic doctrine and American national loyalty. Watson often described the issues in the most sensational fashion

⁶⁸ *Watson’s Jeffersonian Magazine*, August 1910, p. 625; January 1913, 148-159.

⁶⁹ *Watson’s Jeffersonian Magazine*, April, 1915, pp. 309-322; Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, 362-372.

⁷⁰ *Watson’s Magazine*, January 1913, p. 148.

and often utilized insulting and bigoted terminology. In the series of open letters to Baltimore Cardinal James Gibbons, Watson described Catholicism as “that stupid, degrading faith,” and as a “jackassical doctrine.”⁷¹ In numerous issues Watson proclaimed to have a special disdain for Catholic Priests, whom he described as “bull-necked convent keepers” and as “chemise-wearing bachelors.” Editorials such as “How the Confessional is Used by Priests to Ruin Women,” “One of the Priests Who Raped a Catholic Woman in a Catholic Church,” and “What Happens in Convents,” and countless others describe Catholic priests who allegedly exploited their position of power in numerous sinister actions.⁷²

Watson’s anti-Catholic crusade was finally ended when the federal government intervened in 1917. Watson was charged with violating the 1917 Espionage Act, but that charge was merely part of a longer pursuit by the federal government. Watson had been under investigation by the Department of Justice for violating federal obscenity laws with obscene material from his “Roman Catholic Hierarchy” series. Arrested in 1912, Watson defeated the indictment in 1913, and after a second indictment was ruled a mistrial, Watson was acquitted in 1916 in the government’s third attempt. Throughout the affair, Watson previewed the trial in his publications and dedicated pages to his defense arguments. After the passage of the Espionage Act in 1917, in his

⁷¹ *Watson’s Jeffersonian Magazine*, August 1910, pp. 621-628; *Watson’s Magazine*, April, 1912, 997.

⁷² Thomas E. Watson, *Political and Economic Handbook* (Thomson, Ga: The Jeffersonian Publishing Co, 1916), 441; *Watson’s Jeffersonian Weekly*, January 25, 1912, p. 12; April 16, 1914, pp. 1, 5; December 23, 1915, pp. 1, 5-8; Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, 416-430; For a complete list of titles from the “Roman Catholic Hierarchy Series,” see *Watson’s Jeffersonian Magazine* and *Watson’s Magazine*, August 1910-December 1915.

publications Watson voiced his disdain for “the 100% idiots,” and America’s involvement in World War I.⁷³

The Department of Justice ultimately succeeded in their efforts to suppress the publications, which were deemed detrimental to the American war effort. The Wilson Administration’s aggressive implementation of federal legislative initiatives, such as the Conscription and Espionage Acts, did much to discourage public dissent of America’s involvement in World War I. Watson’s public critique of Wilson Administration and America’s involvement in the war contributed to the federal government’s restriction of his periodicals. Watson unsuccessfully attempted to return to print media with a couple of failed purchasing attempts of smaller periodicals. Following the conclusion of the war effort, Watson was able to purchase the *Columbia Sentinel*, a small newspaper that he reorganized into the similar editorial format he had used in his previous periodicals. Although the *Sentinel* would never reach the popularity of his previous periodicals, the anti-Catholic crusade Watson had devoted much of the decade to exposing had greatly influenced the of readers across Georgia and the South.⁷⁴

The Resurgence of American Anti-Catholicism in the South and the Nation

Many of the issues raised by Tom Watson in his Roman Catholic Hierarchy series were expressed by Americans since the initial immigration of Catholics. The American anti-Catholic

⁷³ Woodward, *Tom Watson*, 451-458; Fred Ragan “Obscenity or Politics? Tom Watson, Anti-Catholicism, and the Department of Justice,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 70 Issue 1 (1986): 17, 35-46.

⁷⁴ Woodward, 416-430; *Atlanta Constitution*, June 3, p. 1; June 29, p. 7; September 7, 1917, p. 1; Ragan, “Obscenity or Politics?,” 35-46.

tradition dates back to the earliest settlements of the Americas by Protestants. The inherent antagonism between Protestantism and Catholicism that followed the Reformation had been a persistent force in global affairs for centuries. John Higham argued that American anti-Catholicism has been one of the most persistent and reoccurring forms of American nativism in American history. Higham believed that American nativism ebbed and flowed in response to economic growth and collapse. Central to this thesis is the importance of immigration. In times of economic expansion and high labor demand, European immigrants were largely welcomed. However, in times of economic duress and as Americans found themselves competing with European immigrants for limited employment opportunities, an anti-foreign backlash occurred.⁷⁵

Widespread American anti-Catholic sentiment certainly ebbed and flowed for much of early American history. But one of the greatest national political expressions of American anti-Catholicism can be seen with the Know Nothing movement during the middle of the nineteenth century. The movement was greatly influenced by anti-Catholic bias and fears concerning the rise of European Catholic immigrants. The movement enjoyed the support of notables such as former President Millard Fillmore, who was the nominee for the Know Nothing Party in the 1856 Presidential Election. According to historian of the Know Nothing Party, Tyler Anbinder, “the Know Nothings not only took advantage of the existing anti-Catholicism but actively helped to enflame it as well.” Although the party’s existence was brief, as members divided over the

⁷⁵ Owen Stanwood, “Catholics, Protestants, and the Clash of Civilizations in Early America,” in Chris Beneke and Christopher Grenada, *The First Prejudice: Religious Tolerance and Intolerance in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 218-240; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 4, 14; Jenny Franchot, *Roads to Rome: The Antebellum Protestant Encounter with Catholicism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), xvii-xxvii, 3-16.

slavery issue and the party declined into oblivion by the end of the 1850s, the movement represented the extent of American anti-Catholic discontent.⁷⁶

The Know Nothings had a particularly popular following in the South, as expressed in a faction of the movement known as the “South Americans.” But this was hardly a peculiar expression of a broad southern anti-foreign or anti-Catholic sentiment. In Georgia, after centuries of English and Catholic animosity and the Trustees prohibition of Catholic entry into the colony, a variety of Protestant churches were established in the settlement of the colonies, but the Catholic church struggled to establish a presence. Although in the period following American independence, with constitutional protection of religious liberty, the Catholic church did grow in the state but only marginally as the region remained overwhelmingly Protestant. Even at the time of Watson anti-Catholic crusade, according to historian of the anti-catholic press Justin Nordstrom, not a single Catholic lived in the county where Watson lived and his publications were printed.⁷⁷

The influence of Protestantism in the region would be difficult to overstate. As southern historian C. Vann Woodward stated in the *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, Protestantism was an especially powerful force in the South, where little compared with “religion in power and influence over the mind and spirit of the South.” Woodward continued: “The exuberant religiosity of the southern people, the conservative orthodoxy of the dominant sects, and the overwhelming Protestantism of all but a few regions were forces that persisted powerfully in the twentieth

⁷⁶ Tyler Anbinder, *Slavery & Nativism: The Northern Know-Nothings & the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 30; Franchot, *Roads to Rome*, 102-103.

⁷⁷ Anbinder, *Slavery & Nativism*, 103, 163, 198-201; C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1951), 448-457; Mixon, *Religion in the Southern States*, 77-99; Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 65.

century.”⁷⁸ Likewise, as W.J. Cash noted in *The Mind of the South*, Catholics were largely perceived by southerners as “the intolerable alien, the bearer of Jesuit plots to rob them of their religion by force.”⁷⁹ At times anti-Catholicism could even supersede the racial tensions between black and white southerners. As James Bennett has described, in the late nineteenth century diverse urban centers such as New Orleans, “black and white Protestants as a whole, held much in common that overshadowed racial differences.”⁸⁰

But it appears that in the South and the nation, the anti-Catholic spirit briefly faded in the aftermath of the American Civil War. In the South, immigrant labor was needed and sought after, but not without a persistent hostility towards immigrant groups by southerners. Many southern farmers were forced to look towards immigrant labor as a result of the demise of slavery, the emigration of many of the region’s workforce, and dissatisfaction with the quality of black labor. Immigrants were also sought after by the state, who attempted to appeal to immigrants to complete the state’s postwar construction and railroad projects. As historians such as Andrew Moore have argued that in the early twentieth century, Catholics “flirted with the margins of the South’s racialized public sphere.”⁸¹ Similarly, as Rowland Berthoff has argued, a near culturally homogeneous population of southerner whites possessed a racial predisposition from their attitudes towards African Americans that made racial distinctions almost automatic. Within this worldview,

⁷⁸ Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 448.

⁷⁹ W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1941), 334.

⁸⁰ James Bennett, *Religion and the Rise of Jim Crow in New Orleans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 57-61; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 448-457; Mixon, *Religion in the Southern States*, 77-99.

⁸¹ Andrew Moore, *The South’s Tolerable Alien: Roman Catholics in Alabama and Georgia, 1945-1970* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 1-2.

immigrants represented “alien scapegoats,” and immigrants from Catholic stronghold such as south Italy and Sicily were “subjected to the most antagonism.”⁸²

Following a series of economic breakdowns during the 1880s and 1890s, the national mood began to reflect wide apprehensions concerning the role of immigration in inflating the labor supply and the suspicion that labor competition held down wages and contributed to unemployment. American anti-Catholics would attempt to mobilize and organize under various guises throughout the nineteenth century. But in this period of a resurgence anti-Catholic spirit, popular secret society organizations such as the American Protective Association were launched. The association contained over 2.5 million members nationally and attracted adherents across the South and in Georgia, with a particular popularity throughout middle Georgia. Although the American Protective Association lasted for almost two decades, it collapsed during the 1890s during America’s victorious involvement in the Spanish-American War. However, by 1905, there was a resurgence of American nativism that included not only anti-Catholicism, but an increasingly racial nativism, and efforts to promote legislative immigration restriction.⁸³

During the 1910s, the period of which Watson’s anti-Catholic writings began, less than 2% of Georgians were immigrants or self-identified as Catholic. But despite representing such a negligible percentage of the region’s populace, the South became one of the most anti-Catholic

⁸² Barton Shaw, *The Wool-Hat Boys: Georgia’s Populist Party* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 121-122; Rowland Berthoff, “Southern Attitudes Towards Immigration, 1865-1914,” *The Journal of Southern History* Vol. 17 Issue 3 (1951): 334-343, 347.

⁸³ Donald Kinzer, *An Episode in Anti-Catholicism: The American Protective Association* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 16, 35, 191-2; *Atlanta Constitution*, May 4, 1894, p. 2; May 9, 1900, p. 6; Shaw, *Wool-Hat Boys*, 121; K. Gerald Marsden, “Father Marquette and the A.P.A.: An Incident in American Nativism,” *The Catholic Historical Review* Vol. 46 Issue 1 (1960): 1-21.

regions in the country. The perception was that because of unrestricted European immigration, the number of American Catholics was growing and with the potential to do so exponentially. Historian Charlton Moseley asserted that “second only to prejudice against Negroes in Georgia was the morbid fear of Catholicism.”⁸⁴ Throughout the period of Watson’s writings, the Georgia press was interested in virtually every issue that involved the Catholic Church. From the contents of the articles published, it is clear that there was more than just suspicion about local Catholics but also a level of general interest in Church beliefs and customs. Countless articles appeared in the state press that were dedicated to the local Catholic meetings, church projects, beliefs, and customs. The state press reported on new church builds, the formation of Catholic societies, and national issues that involved the Church.⁸⁵

Although Watson’s anti-Catholicism was most often expressed in broader national terms, at times he did focus on more local issues involving the Catholic church. Although Catholics represented a clear minority of Georgia’s population, in certain areas of the state, Catholics represented a much larger percentage of the population, particularly in middle Georgia. From 1870-1917, the Catholic Church in Georgia underwent a series of transformations that contributed to the church’s increasing conservatism and renewed Roman influence. As Brendan Buttimer has described, these changes included: “more conservative bishops, the importation of European orders of Priests, the marginalization of secular clergy,” and most significantly a “general change

⁸⁴ Charlton Moseley, “Latent Klanism in Georgia, 1890-1915,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 56 Issue 3 (1972): 371.

⁸⁵ Mixon, *Religion in the Southern States*, 92; Berthoff, “Southern Attitudes Towards Immigration,” 342; Moseley, “Latent Klanism in Georgia, 1890-1915,” 365-386; *Athens Banner*, February 28, 1908, p. 1; March 6, 1909, p. 1; *Macon Telegraph*, November 25, 1901, p. 1; *Atlanta Georgian*, October 30, 1909, p. 1; October 4, 1911, p. 18.

in temperament from an institution devoted to American and Catholic values to one devoted to Rome...” Many Georgian’s expressed alarm at these changes within the church and expressed an increasingly hostile resentment towards American Catholics. But most Church related issues discussed in the Georgia press involved more national and international issues. Concerns over the Spanish-American war, the American Catholic population, and the French-Catholic crisis, were of special interest. With American control of the Philippines, an overwhelmingly Catholic region, many American Catholics and Church officials expressed concern about American attempts to convert Filipino Catholics.⁸⁶

But there is also evidence that there was more than a just a sense of interest by Georgia readers, but also fear and anxiety about the Church. One of the most reoccurring issues in the press was the concern about the growth of the American Catholic population. As early as 1901 the *Athens Daily Herald* reported statistics concerning the growth of the American Catholic population, which was reported at ten million people and described as “a surprising figure for those that have not kept up with Church growth.” Just a little over a year later, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported that over 400,000 American members were added to the Catholic Church during the preceding year and that increase had made Americans Catholics nearly half of American church members. The *Atlanta Georgian* reported in 1909 that the American Catholic population had risen to over twelve million members and the rate of growth was “more than twice that for all the

⁸⁶ Brendan Buttimer, “Turning Away from Georgia Toward Rome: The Diocese of Savannah and the Growth of the Anti-Catholic Movement in Georgia, 1870-1970,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* Vol. 21 Issue 4 (2003): 17-35; *Atlanta Georgian*, December 13, 1906, p. 8; December 15 1906, p. 1; *Macon Telegraph*, August 11, 1902, p. 1; July 12, 1902 , p. 1; July 23, 1902, p. 1; January 1, 1907, pp. 1, 7.

Protestant bodies combined.” Less than two years later, the *Georgian* estimated the number was over fourteen million or one-sixth of the total American population.⁸⁷

Although considerably less sensational, many of the accounts concerning the growth of the American Catholic population greatly mirrored some of Watson’s editorials. Readers of the *Atlanta Constitution* were often confronted with published articles that detailed some of the same fearful predictions that Watson often described. Perhaps some of the most dramatic of these articles offered forecasts such as “All America to be Catholic” and that the “whole English speaking world” would be converted. Like Watson’s editorials, some of the most popular newspapers in Georgia consistently published articles that were influenced by the dramatic increases in immigration and the rise of the American Catholic population. Readers across the state, whether subscribers to Watson’s periodicals or of the state’s most popular newspapers, were exposed to ostensibly credible articles that detailed a fear-inducing phenomenon that were helpless to stop.⁸⁸

Central to fears concerning the growth of the American Catholic population was a widespread concern over the loyalty of American Catholics. Reports of these concerns increased in conjunction with the rise of the Catholic population. By 1909 the *Atlanta Constitution* reported claims in Britain that “Church Controls Catholic Votes,” and by the next U.S. presidential election reported that “Catholic Vote Needed in Presidential Race” by both candidates and their political parties. The *Athens Banner* reported in 1916 a report titled “Denial that Catholics Give Divided Allegiance to the U.S.,” based off of comments made by a cardinal, who denied allegations Catholics were “scheming for government” control at the latest meeting of the American Federa-

⁸⁷ *Athens Daily Banner*, February 19, 1901, p. 2; *Atlanta Constitution*, May 1, 1902, p. 4; August 1, 1908, p. 4; *Atlanta Georgian*, August 19, 1909, p. 4; February 16, 1911, p. 1.

⁸⁸ *Atlanta Constitution*, July 12, 1902, p. 2; September 18, 1902, p. 5; September 1, 1907, D8.

tion of Catholic Societies. In the next day's issue, the *Banner* reported that American Catholics were urged "to united and cast their influence at the polls" for the principles for which "Catholics stand." Similarly, just over a year later, an article was published in the *Athens Daily Herald* which stated, "Catholics Declare Loyalty to America" with "undeviating loyalty" during the American war effort. For many Georgians, this contributed to the concerns expressed over the loyalty of American Catholics.⁸⁹

In the decade the preceded national immigration restriction, numerous articles appeared throughout the Georgia press that discussed the issue. By 1911 articles titled such as "Why Restrict Immigration," which was published in the *Atlanta Georgian*, began appearing in the state press. This particular article was written by former Harvard University President Dr. Charles Eliot. He argued that restriction was necessary to prevent Catholics from becoming "unduly powerful in the United States." Similar articles appeared in other issues of the state press. In that same year, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported on efforts of American Catholic organizations to reform Catholic immigration. According to the article, Priests were moving to "control immigration to the United States" through a variety of initiatives that aimed to direct immigrants to agricultural opportunities, prevent "undesirable immigration," and better develop immigrant Catholic communities or "colonies."⁹⁰

The various articles published throughout the Georgia press during the period are evidence for a growing immigration restriction movement that was building throughout the nation. Calls for immigration reform persisted throughout the series of American nativist impulses dur-

⁸⁹ *Atlanta Constitution*, December 19, 1909, p. 4; May 13, 1912, p. 6; *Athens Banner*, August 22, 1916, p. 8; August 23, 1916, pp.1, 9; *Athens Daily Herald*, August 27, 1917, p. 1.

⁹⁰ *Atlanta Georgian*, May 24, 1911, p. 6; *Atlanta Constitution*, January 8, 1911, p. A5.

ing the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Fears concerning the growth of the American Catholic population were consistently central to immigration restriction proposals. From 1910-1915, during the period of Watson's anti-Catholic crusade, there was an overwhelming resurgence of calls for immigration reform. Efforts to restrict the immigration of undesirable groups were promoted by calls to subject immigrants to a literacy test. But efforts to restrict immigration once again failed, as political leaders were wary of the political implications of immigration restriction initiatives, considering the number of Americans with foreign ties. But the temporary defeat of immigration restriction did little to quiet the renewed currents of American nativism, as the anti-Catholic crusaders continued their campaign through the press, in demonstrations, and in various organizations.

In the interlude between the first and second incarnations of the Ku Klux Klan, southern whites participated in anti-Catholic organizations, demonstrations, and in violent actions. As early as March 1901, the *Atlanta Constitution* reported anti-Catholic demonstrations were being held. But during the time of his anti-Catholic crusade, Watson helped found an anti-Catholic organization known as the Guardians of Liberty. Although the Guardians of Liberty was not specifically formed as an anti-Catholic organization, by 1912 the Guardians had assumed a deeply anti-Catholic prejudice. Like Watson, The Guardians questioned the loyalty of the American Catholic population and feared an international Catholic conspiracy within the United States government. Although the organization's popularity largely subsided by the onset of America's involvement in World War I, after the second Ku Klux Klan was formed in 1915, the Klan would continue propagating the anti-Catholic sentiment. As Nancy MacLean has argued, the Klan developed an effective public campaign that relied on existing racist, anti-Catholic, anti-Semitic, and nativist sentiments that Watson and organizations like the Guardians of Liberty had

championed for years. Although there is little evidence to suggest that the violence the Klan perpetuated towards African Americans was replicated in a violent vigilantism towards Catholics, anti-Catholicism was a foundation of the Klan's agenda, and the organization funded various anti-Catholic organizations and publications.⁹¹

All of this makes clear that Tom Watson was hardly alone in spreading anti-Catholicism through print media. Throughout the 1910s anti-Catholic crusaders waged war through the American press. Watson's periodicals were joined by journals such as *The Menace*, *The Peril*, *The Crusader*, *The Liberator*, and others dedicated to exposing the Catholic threat. As historian Justin Nordstrom discusses, this peaked precisely during the period of Watson's anti-Catholic writings. From 1910 until the end of WWI, "American society witnessed a tremendous outpouring of books, pamphlets, journals, and, especially, newspapers espousing virulently anti-Catholic themes and calling on readers to emerge from their myopic state and recognize Catholicism's danger to the American republic." These publications thrived within the context of a renewed anti-Catholic American spirit.⁹²

Some of the nation's most popular Progressive Era anti-Catholic publishers were based in the South. In addition to Watson's periodicals that were published in Georgia, other anti-Catholic journals such as *The Peril* and *The Yellow Jacket* were based in North Carolina, while other publications such as *The Mountain Advocate* were based in Kentucky. Perhaps the most popular an-

⁹¹ *Atlanta Constitution*, March 1, 1901, p.5; March 12, 1912, p. 1; June 14, 1915, p. 2; *New York Times*, September 11, 1912, p. 1; Nancy MacLean, *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 12, 17, 49-50, 89, 116, 131, 144, 177-178.

⁹² Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 2-15, 57, 82.

ti-Catholic publication from the period was *The Yellow Jacket*. *The Yellow Jacket* had an estimated circulation of 200,000 by 1917, a number well above the highest circulation estimates of 80,000 for Watson's periodicals. Like Watson's periodical, most subscribers to *The Yellow Jacket* lived in the South and Midwest, with relatively few readers living in the North. Like Watson's writings, these papers often employed similar alarmist rhetoric and presented themselves as the ardent defenders of Americanism, in what Justin Nordstrom has described as a "dramatic uniformity in their nativist agenda."⁹³

Like Watson, in their denunciations of the Catholic menace, the anti-Catholic press questioned the loyalty of American Catholics, expressed fears concerning the growth of the American Catholic population, and promoted efforts to restrict immigration. However, they often employed gender related fears. Nordstrom points out the importance in the loss of local male autonomy for many of these male publishers. As a result, articles within the anti-Catholic periodicals, like Watson's, commonly insisted that Catholic Priests targeted "the weak," such as women, children, the elderly, and the sick, and that it was the job of the press and Protestant men to offer protection for the perceived weaker elements of society. Throughout the early 1910s, the anti-Catholic press enjoyed an unrivaled period of popularity. Like Watson's own periodicals, many of these anti-Catholic papers enjoyed large readerships with circulation figures for anti-Catholic publishers such as *The Menace* estimating almost 1.5 million subscribers in 1915.⁹⁴

Although these periodicals were popular for much of the 1910s, as the United States entered World War I, the American anti-Catholic spirit briefly subsided. As the press became

⁹³ Ibid., 56, 64-65, 82, 348.

⁹⁴ Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 56, 104-107, 204; Justin Nordstrom, "A War of Words: Childhood and Masculinity in American Anti-Catholicism, 1911-1919," *U.S. Catholic Historian* Vol. 20 Issue 1 (2002): 57-81.

flooded with wartime stories and the emergence of a true foreign enemy, fears related to a potential Catholic menace lost its appeal. As a result, the anti-Catholic press endured a steady and irreversible decline that cemented the demise of the industry. Even subscriptions for the nation's most popular and influential anti-Catholic journal, *The Menace*, plummeted. Over the next few years, Americans turned their attention to America's enemies in the Great War, most notably the German Kaiser and his followers. Even in the war's aftermath, new issues of securing lasting international peace and the America's involvement in a proposed global League of Nation's dominated the national conversation for much of the late 1910s and early 1920s.⁹⁵

But by 1928, the anti-Catholic spirit once again "flared up violently" throughout the South and the nation. This was a direct to response to Governor of New York Alfred E. Smith, who was the first Roman Catholic presidential nominee. Although Smith was widely perceived to be an effective executive, his candidacy was limited by what was dubbed "the silent issue" of the campaign: his Roman Catholic beliefs. But this was far from a new political issue; throughout the early twentieth century, many of the nation's most prominent politicians recognized anti-Catholicism as a political issue. A series of minor controversies between the Catholic Church and prominent American politicians occurred during the period. The press described accounts such as an incident with Charles Fairbanks, former Vice President during the Theodore Roosevelt Administration, who had been slighted by the Pope after the Pontiff had abruptly canceled a scheduled meeting with Fairbanks. A few years later in April 1910, former President Theodore Roosevelt made national headlines when he declined an opportunity to meet with the Pope under the conditions that had been set by the Vatican. The popularity of anti-Catholicism at the time is apparent by observing the contemporary reports of the incident that predicted "a wider following

⁹⁵ Ibid.

for Mr. Roosevelt as the result of his stand,” who had acted, according to Roosevelt himself, “the only way an American could.”⁹⁶

In the immediate postwar period, anti-Catholicism continued to be a force throughout the nation, particularly as immigrants continued to pour into the country and with existence of anti-Catholic organization such as the Ku Klux Klan. Throughout the 1920s, many American Catholics responded to the hostility of nativists with expressions of unity and strength, which contributed to the political mobilization of many American Catholic. This contributed to Al Smith’s success as the Democratic nominee in the 1928 presidential campaign. Smith’s nomination resulted in a resurgence of anti-Catholicism in print media. Periodicals throughout the country raised question regarding the sovereignty of the nation under a potential Smith presidency. Periodicals such as the *Register* informed readers that Catholics were required to be subservient to Roman rule. It was in the South, as Edmund Moore has argued, that “the vast reservoir of ‘No-Popery’ spirit” propelled a “protestant crusade” of “salacious and vulgar propaganda” that “flooded the land” of time-honored accounts of various Catholic horrors.⁹⁷

It was within this renewed anti-Catholic spirit that the Tom Watson Book Company was launched in 1928, several years after Watson’s death. After “several unsuccessful business ven-

⁹⁶ Allan J. Lichtman, *Prejudice and the Old Politics: The Presidential Election of 1928* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979), 5, 40-41; Edmund A. Moore, *A Catholic Runs for President: The Campaign of 1928* (New York: Ronald Press Co, 1956), 22-23, 30, 40-41, 76-77; Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 179; *Atlanta Georgian*, April 4, 1910, p. 1.

⁹⁷ Edward Cuddy, “The Irish Question and the Revival of Anti-Catholicism in the 1920s,” *The Catholic Historical Review* Vol. 67 Issue 2 (1981): 236-255; Lynn Dumenil, “The Tribal Twenties: ‘Assimilated’ Catholics’ Response to Anti-Catholicism in the 1920s,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* Vol. 11 Issue 1 (1991): 21-49; Lichtman, *Prejudice and Old Politics*, 42, 52, 57-65; Moore, *Catholic for President*, 88-90.

tures,” Walter J. Brown and his wife, Watson’s granddaughter Georgia Lee Brown, were forced to move into her grandfather’s former home. Having inherited the rights to all of Watson’s publications, the couple launched the Tom Watson Book Company and *The Watsonian*, a monthly magazine devoted to “keeping her grandfather’s memory alive.” Brown noted, “there continued to be a wide demand for all of Watson’s writings for a number of years after his death, especially those on the Roman Catholic church.” Many of the recycled articles from “The Roman Catholic Hierarchy” series included many of the more outrageous titles such: “Maria Monk and Her Revelations of Convent Crimes,” “Roman Catholics in America Falsifying History and Poisoning the Minds of Protestant School Children,” “Rome’s Law or Ours -- Which?,” and “The Italian Pope’s Campaign against the Constitutional Rights of American Citizens.”⁹⁸

Walter Brown initially wrote for the *Watsonian* during the campaign, before some of his writings, “especially those opposing Al Smith,” caught the attention of James Vance and led to a job covering the South in the election for *The Fellowship Forum*. The *Forum* had achieved national renown during the campaign for its opposition to the Smith candidacy. During the campaign Brown practiced “advocacy journalism” with his opinion that “it would be unfortunate for the country if one of Smith’s political background and connection were elected president.” Brown was particularly frustrated with what he perceived to be the efforts of the Smith campaign and the Georgia press to suggest that if Watson were still living, he would have supported Smith. He even claimed: “the people of Georgia and other southern states did not relish voting Republican, but they were going to do so to ‘save’ their party.” After the election, Walter Brown managed to obtain a full-time position with *The Fellowship Forum*. The November 1928 edition of

⁹⁸ Walter J. Brown, *J.J. Brown and Thomas E. Watson: Georgia Politics, 1912-1928* (Macon, Ga: Mercer University Press, 1988), 111-118.

The Watsonian would be the final issue of the publication's brief existence and the Tom Watson Book Company too ceased publication.⁹⁹

Thanks in part to the efforts of the anti-Catholic press, companies such as the Tom Watson Book Company, and organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, "the silent issue" of the campaign would become of the most decisive in the election. As Allan Lichtman has argued, "religion powerfully influenced the choice between Herbert Hoover and Al Smith among diverse groups of Protestant voters," throughout the nation. Although Smith would ultimately win in Georgia, he would lose in Democratic strongholds like Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida and Texas, breaking the half-century tradition of the Solid Democratic South. The importance of the religious issue in the campaign was not lost on contemporary observers. As Lichtman noted, contemporary observers blamed the anti-Catholic bias for Smith's loss. Even in Georgia and other southern states that Smith carried in the general election, he had faced strong opposition by anti-Catholic forces and received significantly fewer votes than other Democratic presidential nominees during the period. This episode in southern history perhaps best reveals the prevalence of an overwhelming anti-Catholic resentment so deep that it represented a brief threat to the total political dominance the Democratic Party enjoyed in the South.¹⁰⁰

When Tom Watson reflected on the start of his publications in a brief memoir published in a collection of his speeches, he described the great financial strain of establishing his periodicals. "It was an uphill task to push the two *Jeffersonians* into public confidence, and the financial strain was great." With an eye towards such practical goals, Watson had a great interest in

⁹⁹ Brown, *Georgia Politics*, 112-115.

¹⁰⁰ Lichtman, *Prejudice and the Old Politics*, 42-43, 52.

providing a product that would gain “public confidence” and remove some of the financial difficulties of operating the enterprise. In his efforts to stabilize his enterprise, Watson relied on instincts possessed by any successful politician and effectively gauged the public mood and shifted his rhetoric accordingly. After Watson’s shift on the “negro question,” which was in line with his audience’s desire to strike against the alleged black political, social, and economic threat, Watson and his readers needed a new menace.¹⁰¹

As historians of the South have argued, African Americans, Catholics, and Jews represented scapegoats for many angry and disillusioned southerners who sought to blame someone for the litany of problems they faced. Watson successfully recognized and reinforced a resurgence of an overwhelmingly anti-Catholic prejudice in the South and the nation. As a historian who by this time had published numerous books on American and French history, Watson was well aware of the history of American anti-Catholicism. Likewise, throughout the period, the series of reports and articles about American Catholics, the growth of the Church in the United States, and the concern for the loyalty of American Catholics, that appeared throughout the national and regional press, in addition to a vast anti-Catholic genre of periodicals, illustrated the tremendous anti-Catholic nativism of the period. Catholics were perceived by many southerners as foreigners and perhaps most importantly, different, in a region where tradition and conformity were celebrated. As a profit-driven publisher, Watson operated within a cultural context that was favorable to anti-Catholic literature and that was what he provided. For this he was rewarded with dramatic increases in the circulation of his weekly and monthly periodicals. These increases

¹⁰¹ Thomas E. Watson, *The Life and Speeches of Thos. E. Watson* (Self-Published: Nashville, 1908), 26.

allowed Watson to enjoy what he described as his “handsome clear profits” and live a far more lavish lifestyle than many of his readers could imagine.¹⁰²

¹⁰² Thomas E. Watson to Dr. John N. Taylor, October 5, 1910; Woodward, *Tom Watson*, 344; Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep*, 56.

CHAPTER III: WATSON'S ANTI-SEMITISM

It was during Tom Watson's anti-Catholic crusade that one of the most significant and controversial events of the New South transpired. For almost a century, historians have been fascinated with Mary Phagan, Leo Frank, the incredible anti-Semitic reaction that the case prompted, and the effects of that reaction on the reformation of the Ku Klux Klan. On the morning of Sunday, April 27, 1913, thirteen-year-old Mary Phagan was found dead in the basement of Atlanta's National Pencil Company. Officers at the scene had discovered two notes near Phagan's body that implicated a "long tall black negro," but the authenticity of those notes was never validated. Instead, from the onset, the focus of the investigation centered around the superintendent of the National Pencil Company, Leo Frank. Frank, a twenty-nine-year-old, was born in the North, educated at Cornell University, and was Jewish. Over the next few years the unquestioned certainty held by many Georgians about Frank's guilt triggered events that would have national implications.¹⁰³

By the time of Phagan's funeral, Frank had been arrested and the case had caught the attention of Georgians throughout the state. Journalists covering the case revealed a strong bias against Frank, whom they assumed to be guilty. All of the state's most popular newspapers exploited the most sensational issues of the case. As Frank's trial became a daily headline for years in the state press, Georgians became obsessed with the case and certain of Frank's guilt. Even initially Frank's supporters believed it was impossible for him to receive any semblance of a fair

¹⁰³ Steve Oney, *And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003), 3-22, 60; Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (Athens, Ga: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 1-4.

trial in such a hostile region. Only the *Atlanta Journal* supported the concern for a fair trial, albeit briefly. On March 10, 1914 the *Journal* published an editorial titled, “Frank Should Have a New Trial,” as the widespread outrage over the murder had created “a degree of frenzy almost inconceivable” that demanded a scapegoat. This motion was seconded by the *New York Times*. Readers throughout the state responded so intensely that the *Journal* was forced to retract their editorial almost immediately.¹⁰⁴

After almost a year of silence on the issue in his periodicals, Tom Watson entered the fray as part of the incredible statewide backlash to the editorial by the *Atlanta Journal*. From that moment until the conclusion of the entire affair over a year later, Watson dedicated countless issues and editorials towards proclaiming Leo Frank’s guilt. For Watson, Frank’s Jewish ancestry and northern origins were as integral to his guilt as any courtroom evidence that the prosecution could supply. As Frank was ultimately found guilty by his peers and sentenced to death, some within the state struggled to reconcile Frank’s guilt with the scapegoat mentality of the Georgia masses. This negligible percentage of the population included Governor John M. Slaton, who chose to commute Frank’s sentence to life in prison. Watson and thousands of others expressed outrage at the Governor’s actions. Frank was eventually captured by a band of local vigilantes who dubbed themselves “The Knights of Mary Phagan,” and was taken near Phagan’s home in Marietta and lynched.¹⁰⁵

This tragic episode of southern history revealed many of the fears and anxieties of the Georgia masses amidst the evolution of the regional power structure. Throughout American his-

¹⁰⁴ *Atlanta Journal*, March 10, 1914, p. 8; Oney, *The Dead Shall Rise*, 60-70.

¹⁰⁵ Oney, *The Dead Shall Rise*, 380-382, 503-505, 561-572; Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 94-98, 126-133, 139-142.

tory there were episodes of anti-Semitism, particularly as substantial waves of European immigration dramatically increased the Jewish American population in the late nineteenth century. The considerable increase in the American Jewish population throughout this period, particularly in urban centers like Atlanta, contributed to rising anti-Semitism that was expressed throughout the nation. In the South, immigration was only a piece of broader transformations that industrialization and urbanization had stimulated. This new industrial order of the New South did much to displace the generations old power structure. Industrialization, in addition to a series of agricultural disasters, had forced many within the state to abandon agricultural employment. For many, however exploitative the new industrial wage economy was, it offered an alternative to the struggles of the agricultural economy. But workers often expressed suspicion and resentment towards the new industrial power structure, particularly in situations when minorities were in positions of authority.¹⁰⁶

Many families, like that of Mary Phagan's, suddenly found themselves dependent on the income of not just the father, but also the mother, and often times even the children of the family. Industrial employers typically offered a family wage for such circumstances. But the enormity of such a transformation for southern male patriarchs should not be discounted. These men resented the loss of male autonomy within their households and the workplace where they were employees, now under the direction of supervisors. The context for Watson's anti-Semitic response was part of a broader reaction to the transformations of the period and the dramatic increase of immigrant groups in the country. For many southerners, Mary Phagan's death offered an opportunity

¹⁰⁶ John Higham, "Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age: A Reinterpretation," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* Vol. 43 Issue 4 (1957): 562-568; Clifford Kuhn, *Contesting the New South Order: The 1914-1915 Strike at Atlanta's Fulton Mills* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 17-18, 62-64, 77-78, 95-100.

to lament these broader transformations, their exploitation, and the dangers of nonwhite power.¹⁰⁷

Watson's Anti-Semitic Crusade in the Leo Frank Case

Despite Tom Watson's centrality in the media frenzy that surrounded the Leo Frank case, it would be an overstatement to describe Watson as a lifelong anti-Semite. Even during his scathing public denunciations of Leo Frank in such anti-Semitic terms, Watson privately denied being an Anti-Semite. In his denial, Watson even cited his involvement in a case, where he had acted as the defense attorney for a Jewish man who had been accused of murder. The case Watson referred to occurred during the interlude between his last political campaign and the beginning of his publications. At that time, Watson had returned to practicing law in order to relieve some of the debts he had incurred during his time in politics.¹⁰⁸

The case was a result of a financial dispute that occurred in November 1900 in Adrian, Georgia between local Jewish storeowner Sigmund Lichtenstein and angry customer John Welch. The dispute center around Lichtenstein's refusal to refund a previous purchase made by Welch. Later in the day, as Lichtenstein left the shop, he encountered an alleged drunken and belligerent John Welch. A physical altercation developed and in the midst of the chaos, Welch shot Lichtenstein in the thigh and Lichtenstein fatally stabbed Welch. Unfortunately for Lichten-

¹⁰⁷ Nancy MacLean, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 78 Issue 3 (1991): 917-948.

¹⁰⁸ Louis E. Schmier, "No Jew Can Murder": Memories of Tom Watson and the Lichtenstein Murder Case of 1901," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 70 Issue 3 (1986): 436-440.

stein, John Welch was the first cousin of Mayor Wilbur Curry. Upon hearing about the incident, Curry and a group of locals quickly gathered around Lichtenstein's house, demanding justice for "the Jew killer." By November 12, Mayor Curry arrived at the Lichtenstein residence with a warrant for Sigmund's arrest.¹⁰⁹

As the trial approached, it was evident that public sentiment was overwhelmingly against Lichtenstein, and his family worried about securing the defendant a fair trial. Louis Schmier has asserted that Watson "had resumed his legal career only in order to alleviate the substantial debt he had incurred during the previous six years in politics." According to Schmier, Watson only reluctantly agreed to take on the case after he received a sizeable payment of \$500. The prosecution presented a case that presented the victim, John Welch, as a typical, moral, Christian, hard-working-southerner. The prosecution also cast doubt on the credibility of the Lichtenstein family with implicit anti-Semitic remarks. Watson's and Gamble's defense of Lichtenstein relied on a portrayal of Lichtenstein as a honest and reputable businessmen and utilized the testimonies of numerous esteemed local citizens. Watson argued that Sigmund Lichtenstein was innocent because of his ethnicity as a descendent of a noble race that included the blood of Moses, David, and the prophets. An eyewitness claims Watson stated that these special Jewish traits: "made him strictly law-abiding and wouldn't allow him to kill anyone on purpose." According to the eyewitness Watson concluded the defense with: "No Jew can murder. And you know I am not telling you anything that is not true." Ultimately Lichtenstein was acquitted by the jury.¹¹⁰

With his renewed dedication as a publisher, Watson would make only sporadic and infrequent returns to the courtroom. As a publisher, Watson's anti-Semitic writings were never as

¹⁰⁹ Schmier, "No Jew Can Murder," 436-440.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 443-447, 450-452.

central to the publications as that of his racism or anti-Catholicism. But when the opportunity presented itself, Watson had little trouble offering a similar public disdain, but that viewpoint sharply contrasted with his defense of Sigmund Lichtenstein. The Frank episode occurred in the midst of Watson's war on Catholicism. Yet for all his scathing indictments of Leo Frank's guilt in his analysis of the case, it is important to note that Watson had remained silent on the issue for over a year after Frank's arrest. Watson began his coverage of the case after the public fallout over the controversial editorial published by the *Atlanta Journal* that called for a retrial. Amidst the public outcry surrounding the editorial, the *Atlanta Journal* experienced a loss in circulation and readership, and unsurprisingly quickly dropped their defense of Frank. Soon thereafter, Tom Watson entered the debate and in his first discussion on the Frank case, Watson stated: "If the Atlanta politicians and editors are crazy enough to make war on Dorsey, *because he did his duty in the Frank case*, LET THE WAR START."¹¹¹

For Watson, the war had begun and his anti-Semitic crusade consumed almost every issue of Watson's weekly and monthly publication until the affair's tragic climax. But Watson chose not to wage this war until the overwhelming public sentiment on the issue was well apparent. For Watson, one of the most crucial factors in determining Frank's guilt was his Jewish heritage. Throughout his analysis of the trial Watson described Frank as a "detestable Sodomite," a "Jewish hunter of Gentile girls," a "lascivious person," and a "Jew Pervert" of the "Jewish aristocracy." He even captioned photographs of Frank with racial comments such as: "study the

¹¹¹ *Atlanta Journal*, March 10, 1914, p. 8; Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, 378-380; *Jeffersonian*, March 19, 1914, pp.1, 8-9; June 11, 1914, p. 1.

mouth, nose, and adverted eyes,” or “those bulging, satyr eyes...the protruding fearfully sensual lips; and also the animal jaw.”¹¹²

Watson also offered an analysis that was inundated with class-based concerns and lamented the alleged influence of “Jew Money” on Frank’s defense. Watson offered statements such as the following from the June 24, 1915 edition of the *Jeffersonian*: “*spending half-a-million dollars to save the rich Jew from the legal consequences of premeditated and horrible crime.*” Watson’s anger was only fueled with the news of Governor Slaton’s communication of Frank’s sentencing from the death penalty to life in prison. Watson stated: “*Our grand old Empire State HAS BEEN RAPED!*” Watson continued with a passage that summarized the perceived Jewish conspiracy and the sense of impotence that many of his readers felt:

Jew money has debased us, bought us, and sold us—and laughs at us. Bought and Sold! Cried off at the auction block, and knocked down to Big Money! *ONE LAW FOR THE RICH, AND ANOTHER FOR THE POOR*... with their Unlimited Money and Invisible Power, they have established the precedent *in Georgia* that no Jew shall suffer punishment for a crime committed on a Gentile. In the name of God, what are the people to do?¹¹³

Unlike his war against “Popery,” Watson actually perpetuated many of the events that led to Frank’s lynching. During the affair, Watson often made calls to his audience to take the law into their own hands. This was especially true when news came of Governor Slaton’s communication of Frank’s sentence. Watson blasted, “RISE! PEOPLE OF GEORGIA,” in his editorials and at times even suggested that perhaps “another Ku Klux Klan should be organized to restore HOME RULE.” Even further, Watson suggested mob vigilantism may be initiated by predicting

¹¹² *Jeffersonian*, March 19, 1914, pp. 1, 8-9; June 11, 1914, p. 1; *Watson’s Magazine*, January 1915, p. 143; *Watson’s Magazine*, March 1915, pp. 240, 257-258; *Watson’s Magazine*, September 1915, p. 251; Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, 431-450.

¹¹³ *Jeffersonian*, June 24, 1915, pp. 1-3.

that “THE NEXT JEW WHO DOES WHAT FRANK DID, IS GOING TO GET EXACTLY THE SAME THING THAT WE GIVE TO NEGRO RAPISTS.” When local Georgians had taken the trial into their own hands with Frank’s capture and lynching, Watson praised the vigilantes. He publicly defended those who had participated in Frank’s lynching by stating: “When the constituted authorities are unable, or unwilling to protect life, liberty, and property, *the People must assert their right to do so.*”¹¹⁴

The Rise of New South Anti-Semitism

The anti-Semitism that was expressed by Watson and many other Americans during the Leo Frank case has occurred in various instances throughout United States history. Like the period of Watson’s anti-Semitic outburst, other examples of popular American anti-Semitism occurred during times of social, political, and economic, turmoil and as the American Jewish population increased. In the initial settlement of the American colonies, Jewish immigrants were of the smallest ethnic groups. Throughout much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the population of Jewish settlers continued to be inconsequential. During this time, historian John Higham has argued that Jews experienced, “a regime of freedom” that “flourished so profusely that intermarriage was frequent and socially acceptable.” By and large Jews in the American colonies enjoyed acceptance by the majority of other settlers, although there were sporadic instances of hostility. For many, the inherent antagonism between Judaism and Christianity, and the belief

¹¹⁴ *Jeffersonian*, June 3, pp. 1-2; August 12, pp.1-3, 6, 9; September 2, 1915, pp. 1-5; *Watson’s Magazine*, January 1915, p. 267, September 1915, p. 1; October 1915, p. 323; Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel*, 431-450.

by the region's Christian majority that ancient Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus Christ fostered a bigoted attitude towards contemporary Jews. But while Americans Jews represented such a negligible portion of the region's populace, most American Jews experienced little prejudice.¹¹⁵

Within this context, as Louis Schmier has observed, "Georgia proved to be a fertile landscape in which Jews could successfully take root."¹¹⁶ Many of the first Jewish immigrants settled in the American South. By 1820, approximately half of the American Jewish population lived in the South, yet Jews never accounted for more than one percent of the region's total population. In Georgia, Jewish settlers, although a statistical minority, were among the first settlers of the Georgia colony. In the changing American landscape with the onset of the American industrialization, Jewish immigration settlement patterns altered significantly as more immigrant groups settled in urban areas. As a result, the Jewish population would continue to be a insignificant percentage of the region's total population, but would increasingly concentrate in urban centers like Atlanta.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ John Higham, "American Antisemitism Historically Reconsidered," in *Antisemitism in the United States* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), 69; Robert Michael, *A Concise History of American Antisemitism* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), 10, 100-101. Mathew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 171-176.

¹¹⁶ Louis Schmier, "This 'New Canaan': The Jewish Experience in Georgia Part I," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 73 Issue 2 (1989): 351.

¹¹⁷ Schmier, "This 'New Canaan,'" 349-363; Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978), 3. Leonard Dinnerstein, *Uneasy at Home: Antisemitism and the American Jewish Experience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 83-85.

By the 1840s, latent anti-Semitism, became more pronounced in conjunction with immigration waves, economic instability, and social chaos. As Lenard Dinnerstien has noted, “from the end of the Civil War until the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States witnessed the emergence of a full-fledged anti-Semitic society.”¹¹⁸ Throughout the nineteenth century, the American Jewish population would rise from approximately 15,000-50,000 in 1840, 250,000 in the 1870s, to 500,000 and rising by the end of the century. Even by the American Civil War, there were numerous examples of anti-Semitism from both Confederate and Union supporters, as terms such as “Jew” and “traitor” were used commonly. Both Union ranks and Confederate supporters often unfairly blamed many of the period’s social changes and economic disruptions on Jews and other immigrant groups.¹¹⁹

Anti-Semitism was espoused by many of the South’s struggling agrarians, the same demographic that would constitute the vast majority of Watson’s readership. In the aftermath of the Civil War, perhaps no other economic group suffered more those engaged in southern agriculture. With the devastation of the region, the emancipation of the slave population, the largest investment for the majority of plantations, and expansion of the global cotton market, the Civil War severely disrupted the southern economy. This, in conjunction with a series a crop failures and the rise of a new industrial economy, did much to shift the balance of power in the nation to an emergent capitalist class. As Leonard Dinnerstein has noted, in response to these enormous social, political, and economic changes, “no economic group in the United States was angrier or better articulated its goals,” than southern agrarians; “a scapegoat was clearly needed” for the

¹¹⁸ Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 35.

¹¹⁹ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 177-179; Robert Michael, *History of American Antisemitism*, 10, 88-97.

numerous difficulties they experienced and anti-Semitism became something of an outlet for relieving their frustrations.¹²⁰

As economic circumstances continued to worsen, agrarians across the nation began to mobilize politically under the leadership of Tom Watson and others. Organizations such as the Grange movement and the Farmers' Alliance sought to mobilize struggling farmers and proposed numerous government reforms to aid their plight. Ultimately, disappointed with the level of influence they had within the established political structure and inspired by the outpouring of support from agrarians, they would launch a third party political movement with the formation of the People's Party in 1891. As a party, the Populists promoted a series of reforms intended to alleviate many of the agrarian's problems. They promoted the unlimited coinage of silver to inflate the money supply and reduce the value of the substantial debts farmers had incurred. Likewise, there was a clear distrust by those engaged in the agricultural economy of the rise of corporations, industry, Wall Street, lawyers, and the influence of banks. Unfortunately for many American Jews, these were sectors of the increasingly urban economy where they had obtained success, much to the chagrin of many resentful agrarians.¹²¹

There was an inherent urban-rural divide in the minds of the legions of Populist followers. The mobilization of agrarians was a direct response to the contextual changes of the period

¹²⁰ Barton Shaw, *The Wool-Hat Boys: Georgia's Populist Party* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984), 178-181; Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in American History*, 48.

¹²¹ Edward Shapiro, "Antisemitism Mississippi Style," in David Gerber, *Antisemitism in American History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 129-130; Oscar Handlin in Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in the United States* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), 51-57; Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 31-36.

that had relegated the once prominent sector of the economy behind a new emerging industrial economic order. As a result, farmers were often deeply resentful, but often struggled to fully comprehend the complexity and variety of factors that influenced their new economic and social positions. As Richard Hofstadter once noted, many Populists were prone to “account for relatively impersonal events in highly personal terms.” Typically uneducated and almost always living in relative isolation, many Populists were naturally suspicious towards outsider influence, financiers, and creditors.¹²²

Within this worldview, many Populists, including Watson, expressed a distain for the new urban centers in the nation. There were implicit suggestions that there were international financial conspiracies that involved Jewish immigrants. Prior to the 1890s, anti-Semitism had largely been rooted in financial issues and with the series of national economic calamities from the Civil War to the end of the nineteenth century, this perception increased. As Hofstadter stated, “it was chiefly Populist writers who expressed the identification of the Jew with the usurer and the ‘international gold ring’ which was the central theme of the American anti-Semitism of the age.” Although Populist leaders never proposed purely anti-Semitic reforms, some leaders did occasionally express anti-Semitism. But the anti-Semitism of the movement should not be overstated, and appears to be part of a broader urban antagonism that was expressed by the Populists.¹²³

Immigration and the growth of the American Jewish Population did not inspire an anti-Semitic reaction just among southern agrarians. Although often implicit and purely rhetorical,

¹²² Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 31-36; Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R* (New York: Random House, 1955), 72-76.

¹²³ Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 77-81; Shaw, *The Wool-Hat Boys*, 178-181.

the anti-Semitism of the Populist did much to foster the perception of the international Jewish conspiracy. As a result, at the end of the century, Americans throughout the nation expressed a distrust of Jewish immigrants. John Higham has stated in the *Gilded Age*, “Jews...lost in reputation as they gained in social and economic status” and “Jews during this period met a distrust that spread along with their increasing assimilation.” Questions of national loyalty and discrimination towards Jewish immigrants and the abounded in the period. Jews were often the victim of their own success; an unintended consequence of their success was that it often created economic jealousy. It was a misfortune for the Jewish Americans who found economic success in a period of economic turmoil and social and political unrest.¹²⁴

During his coverage of the Leo Frank case, Tom Watson consistently lamented the influence of “Big Money” and “the rich Jews,” but these stereotypes Watson employed were far from new. By the end of the nineteenth century, many Americans perceived Jews as a threatening influence of financial power with questionable national loyalty. One of the earliest historians of Jewish Americans, Oscar Handlin argued that by the 1890s, “the conception of Jewish interest in money deepened into the conviction that Jews controlled the great fortunes of the world.” For the “injured groups of American society...Searching vainly for the means of relief, they could scarcely believe that the source of their trials was a change in the world of which they lived.”

¹²⁴ John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns in American Nativism, 1860-1925* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 26; Jonathan Sarna, “The Mythical Jew,” in David Gerber, *Anti-Semitism in American History* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 57-74; Higham, “Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age,” 562-568.

Instead, “if all trade was treachery and Babylon the city, then the Jew...stood ready stood ready to be assigned the role of arch-conspirator.”¹²⁵

This resentment and suspicion shared by Watson and much of the general public had transformed the perception of American Jews, in the popular imagination. As Eric Goldstein has noted, “to white Americans of the pre-World War II era, Jews were a racial conundrum, a group that could not be clearly pinned down according to the prevailing racial categories.”¹²⁶ In his analysis of the Leo Frank case, Tom Watson had offered racial arguments about Jews. Watson had noted, that every “student of Sociology knows that the black man’s lust after the white woman, is not much fiercer than the lust of the licentious Jew for the Gentile.”¹²⁷ During the early twentieth century, the public perception of American Jews was increasingly influenced by racial science. American eugenicists such as Madison Grant lamented the influx of immigrants and the diversification of the America populace. Grant and other eugenicists who proclaimed Anglo-Saxon superiority, warned that immigration of inferior races, such as Jews, could risk the purity of the “great race.” This new strain of race-science influenced government initiatives, the scientific community, the media itself, and the American public. But the prevalent racial categories of the period were often in flux. As Mathew Jacobson has described, by the end of the nineteenth century, “Jews, by common consensus, did represent a distinct race; but by the mid-twentieth century such certainties had evaporated.” For Tom Watson and thousands of other southerners

¹²⁵ Higham, “Anti-Semitism in the Gilded Age,” 562-568; Oscar Handlin in Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in the United States* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), 48-51, 57.

¹²⁶ Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 1.

¹²⁷ *Watson’s Magazine*, January 1915, p. 143.

who had found solace in racial categories that had confirmed their belief in Anglo-Saxon superiority, this was an unsettling dynamic.¹²⁸

It was during the Progressive Era that periodicals like those Tom Watson produced were most popular. Dubbed “muckrakers” by the President Theodore Roosevelt, this type of journalism enjoyed an unrivaled period of influence during the early twentieth century. These typically reform-minded journals attempted to expose various government plots, conspiracies, instances of corruption, and any other perceived menaces to American society. Most of these periodicals expressed a deep concern about the growth of business and advocated reforms to limit its influence. Likewise, for many of these journals, the influx of Jewish immigrants was a problem and they sought to expose the American Jewish threat. As a result, publishers such as *McClure’s Magazine*, published countless articles produced by academics that examined issues such as “The Jewish Invasion of America.” University of Wisconsin sociologist E.A. Ross examined Jewish immigration at length in his 1915 work *The Old World in the New*. Academics like Ross, while relying on largely irrefutable statistical data and immigration patterns in their arguments, often suggested the racial inferiority of Jews.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 1-3, 12-16; Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race or the Racial Basis of European History* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1916); Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 181-187, 199.

¹²⁹ Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in American History*, 61-77; Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, 186; David Chalmers, “The Muckrakers and the Growth of Corporate Power: A Study in Constructive Journalism,” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* Vol. 18 Issue 3 (1959): 295-311; Justin Nordstrom, *Danger on the Doorstep: Anti-Catholicism and American Print Culture in the Progressive Era* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 57, 91-92.

Anti-Semitism was not just limited to Watson's periodicals or the muckraker press more generally. Some of the most popular newspapers in Georgia, the South, and the nation, featured articles that negatively portrayed Jews, raised concern over Jewish immigration, and questioned the loyalty of American Jews. As early as the 1880s, the *New York Times* published articles that described the "Undesirable Immigration" of Jews and other ethnic groups when the country is already "overstocked." In the Georgia press, articles likewise reflected anti-Semitic assumptions. The *Atlanta Constitution* often featured articles such as "Can a Jew be Saved?" and articles that detailed the alleged abilities of Jews to adapt "to all climates and conditions." But the most common theme within all of these papers was the concern expressed the rising Jewish American population. Countless articles detailed the "The Wandering Jew," "The Power of the Jew," and the rising influence of Jews in the twentieth century.¹³⁰

By the first decades of the twentieth century, Atlanta contained one of the largest Jewish settlements in the American South. As Steven Hertzberg describes, "by 1915 the Gate City contained one of the three largest Jewish communities in the South." It was during the first decade of the twentieth century that Jewish immigration throughout the nation reached a new peak. As a result, with the influx of potential laborers that inflated the job market even more, examples of labor unrest occurred throughout the nation. In Georgia, there appeared to be steady currents of nativist sentiment within the state, especially for those that found themselves competing with immigrants for industrial employment. "By the 1900s fear of subversive aliens was endemic in

¹³⁰ *New York Times*, June 21, 1884, p. 4; October 22, 1904, p. 8; January 4, 1907, p. 6; *Atlanta Constitution*, October 25, 1885, p. 2; October 16, 1887, p. 2; May 27, 1894, p. 16; November 19, 1906, p. 4; September 6, 1913, p. 4; June 28, 1914, p. A14; *Sunny South*, April 9, 1892, p. 6; *Atlanta Georgian*, December 19, 1906, pp. 6, 13; January 15, 1907, pp. 1, 6.

Georgia,” as Hertzberg states, and many Georgians were deeply suspicious of all immigrants, including Jews. Yet despite their suspicions, Jews had found success in Atlanta’s thriving industrial economy and many resentful Georgians were forced to work under their employ.¹³¹

Atlanta Jews found employment in various sectors of the local economy and some Jews enjoyed unprecedented levels of social, economic, and even political success in the city. Hertzberg even argues that southern Jews “participated extensively in the affairs of the general community and achieved a level of integration that their northern cousins could well envy.” Despite such tremendous population growth, Atlanta Jews in the early twentieth century were never more than three percent of the city’s total population. Despite this, Atlanta Jews were often involved in the community and often because of the proximity of Jewish settlement patterns in the city, they often represented an important voting bloc in local politics. Yet, limitations to their total assimilation were also apparent. By and large, Jewish political candidates experienced little success, social equality was often restricted, and a latent anti-Semitism in the city was evident.¹³²

The superintendent of Atlanta’s National Pencil Company Leo Frank was representative of the successes that Jewish immigrants had obtained in Atlanta. Frank married into a prominent family and lived a respectable middle-class lifestyle. But these ostensibly positive achievements revealed nearly every aspect of both the rural-urban and nativist-immigrant animosities. This antagonism was so fierce that it even superseded the typical prevalent fears and concerns over Af-

¹³¹ Hertzberg, *Strangers in the Gate City*, 7, 83; Kuhn, *Contesting the New South Order*, 10-16, 37-39; Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness*, 37-45, 52.

¹³² Hertzberg, *Strangers in the Gate City*, 100-113, 155-157, 178-180; Lucian Lamar Knight, “The Twentieth-Century and the Jews,” in Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson, *Jews in the South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973), 206-214.

frican American freedom of the period. One of the most ironic facets of the case against Frank was the prosecution's reliance on the testimony of Jim Conley, an African American janitor of the pencil company with a criminal record. But it is important to note that within this context, African Americans were not considered the greatest menace to southern whites. Significant steps had been taken throughout the first decades of the twentieth century that had removed the African American threat. Leo Frank, as an educated northerner, a Jew, and successful industrial business leader, represented many of the transformations of an increasingly industrial, urban, and diverse southern economy and society. Rural whites, who had struggled to sustain themselves through agriculture, were often forced to seek low-wage industrial employment. But the wages were often so low that it was impossible to survive on the income of just husbands and fathers, forcing white women and children to seek employment, often in the same factory where they received a family wage. They were resentful of both the loss of autonomy and the tradition of agricultural labor, forced to adjust to an urban environment and industrial employment with a supervisor, and the social stigma that often accompanied their employment.¹³³

These factors all contributed to a situation that fostered a resentment towards the overall transformations of the period that Watson and his readers expressed in their reaction to the case. As historian Jeffrey Melnick has argued, as a northern Jew and factory boss, "poor white Georgians found in Frank a living representation of all that was making their lives miserable..." For many rural whites, Leo Frank was representative of this new industrial order that in their minds exploited them and had removed their social prominence, economic power, and denied their right

¹³³ Jeffrey Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations on Trial: Leo Frank and Jim Conley in the New South* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000), 7-13, 21-28, 70-91; Oney, *The Dead Shall Rise*, 237-257; Dinnerstein, *Leo Frank Case*, 40-47.

to male autonomy. When considering these factors it becomes less confounding to understand the negative public reaction towards Frank that developed in the days that followed Mary Phagan's death despite any substantive evidence. Mary Phagan, as a young underpaid female in the workforce, represented the issues that poor whites obsessed with, and according to Melnick, it was "a common move to blame the hurts of industrialization on alien Jews."¹³⁴

Throughout the coverage of the trial and in the proceedings of the court itself, Frank's Jewish heritage was of central importance. As historians of the trial such as Melnick, Steve Oney, and Nancy MacLean have all noted, the trial became about not only Frank's guilt, but about the new frontier of a diverse industrialized urban society without the establishment of clear racial and gender boundaries. Although the case was a murder trial, Phagan's wages and sexual agency became some of the most discussed issues of the case. The question of Phagan's virginity and the unfathomable potential for her to independently assert her own sexual agency became a cornerstone of the prosecution's case against Frank. Southerners who proclaimed Frank's guilt, asserted that given the evidence that Phagan was not a virgin, she must have been assaulted by Frank. This prompted a deeply prejudice evaluation of Frank's Jewish heritage by members of the press, local citizens, Tom Watson, and even the prosecution itself.¹³⁵

The Leo Frank case was a boiling point for Jewish relations in the South. According to John Higham, "the fear of a Jewish money-power in the 1890s and Georgia's emotional debauch at the height of the Frank case in 1914 were merely preludes to the much more widespread and tenacious anti-Semitism that developed after the World War."¹³⁶ One of the key components in

¹³⁴ Melnick, *Black-Jewish Relations*, 9-19, 30.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 30, 79; Oney, *The Dead Shall Rise*, 312-366; MacLean, *Leo Frank Case Reconsidered*, 917-948.

¹³⁶ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 278.

the rise of anti-Semitism was the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan. After Governor of Georgia John Slaton commuted Frank's sentence, a mob of some of the most prominent local men captured Frank from prison and lynched him near Phagan's home in Marietta, Georgia. Proclaiming themselves the Knights of Mary Phagan, this expression of mob action did much to foster the resurrection of the Ku Klux Klan in 1915. Tom Watson provoked the Klan's resurrection in his commentary on the Frank trial. Watson consistently warned that if the court's ruling was not consistent with the belief of the local majority of Frank's guilt, then the local citizens should punish Frank themselves. Although anti-Semitism was not as central to the Klan's agenda as racism or anti-Catholicism, in the years that followed the Klan's second incarnation, members of the organization engaged in anti-Semitic activities. Often times, the Klan would dedicate its resources towards spreading anti-Semitic propaganda, most commonly in periodicals. These articles often described the Jewish threat by describing in the most bigoted terms the alleged vices of Jews and nativist concerns over their loyalty and immigration numbers.¹³⁷

The literature that the Klan supported greatly resembled the anti-Semitic writings of Watson and others during the Progressive Era. One of the most prominent anti-Semitic periodicals during the 1920s was the *Dearborn Independent*. This weekly newspaper was owned by Ford Motor Company founder Henry Ford and was published for most the 1920s with an incredible circulation. The anti-Semitism that Ford espoused through this publication was such that it prompted a series of lawsuits by Jewish organizations that ultimately forced Ford to shut down the *Independent*. But his anti-Semitic beliefs would continue to circulate in the republication of

¹³⁷ Higham, *Strangers in the Land*, 278, 286-289; MacLean, "Leo Frank Case Reconsidered," 946-948; MacLean, *Under the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 90, 133-138.

his articles in pamphlet and book form, with the republication of the articles in a volume *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*. Editions of the *International Jew* even reached Germany where Adolf Hitler was so influenced by Ford that he quoted Ford's passages in *Mein Kampf*. Throughout this period, the *Dearborn Independent* featured countless anti-Semitic articles that sought to reveal the Jewish menace, to examine Jewish characteristics, and to ascertain if the Jews controlled the world press. Consistent themes in the articles were allegations of Jewish obsession with money, the association of Jews with power over credit, finance, and merchants, and conspiracy theories of an international effort to control the world's finance.¹³⁸

Even into the 1930s, during the midst of Great Depression, other figures in the period would achieve public renown in part because of their anti-Semitic expression. Roman Catholic Father Charles Coughlin had a weekly radio audience of perhaps 30 million Americans. But unlike most priests, Coughlin's popularity was in large part a result of his commentary on political and economic issues. Within this commentary, Coughlin consistently and unequivocally expressed an anti-Semitism that was embraced by his millions of listeners. Following in the footsteps of Watson in the 1910s and Henry Ford in the 1920s, Coughlin was the most influential Anti-Semite of the 1930s. In his radio broadcasts and editorials, Coughlin often expressed anti-Semitic fears similar to what Watson and other anti-Semites had argued in the Progressive Era. But Coughlin also offered a portrait of "Soviet-loving Jews" that was consistent with contemporary anti-Communist concerns. But with America's growing involvement in World War II, the increasing knowledge of Nazi atrocities, and Coughlin's growing radicalism, by the end of the

¹³⁸ Henry Ford, *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem* (Dearborn, Michigan: The Dearborn Publishing Co., 1920); Victoria Saker Woeste, "Insecure Equality: Louis Marshall, Henry Ford, and the Problem of Defamatory Antisemitism, 1920-1929," *The Journal of American History* Vol. 93 Issue 3 (2004): 877-905.

decade, Church leaders decided to silence Coughlin by ceasing his publications and broadcasts. Coughlin, like mainstream American anti-Semitism, faded from relevancy and spent the remainder of his life engaged in the daily operations of the National Shrine of the Little Flower in Royal Oak, Michigan.¹³⁹

The popular anti-Semitism expressed by Father Charles Coughlin represented both the height and conclusion of mainstream American anti-Semitism. The arguments offered by Tom Watson in the 1910s, Henry Ford in the 1920s, and Coughlin in the 1930s, had more similarities than differences and all featured the same central concern over the national loyalty of Jewish immigrants. Although Jewish immigrants had settled in the Americas since the formation of the colonies, it was not until the nineteenth century that significant numbers of Jews immigrated to the United States. Jews immigrated to the United States to escape the economic issues that much of Europe had experienced. Likewise, the United States had an unprecedented appeal with the tremendous growth of industry and the government's often favorable position on immigration.

But the tremendous economic, social, and political changes that resulted from the growth of industry often created turmoil. The late nineteenth century was a period of immense economic turmoil, social unrest, and political chaos. This was especially true in Georgia and in much of the South, where agriculture still remained the primary occupation of the region's inhabitants. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the agricultural economy would never again return to its importance in the antebellum era. The expansion of the global cotton market, the disruption of the work-

¹³⁹ Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and Great Depression* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 269-273; Ray Wortman, "Coughlin in the Countryside: Father Charles Coughlin and the National Farmers Union," *U.S. Catholic Historian* Vol. 13 Issue 3 (1995): 97-120.

force, in addition to multiple environment related crop failures, all contributed to the struggles southern agrarians experienced in the post-war period. Disillusioned by their struggles, many farmers deeply resented the industrialization of the American economy and its effects on the society.

As political leaders such as Tom Watson offered a rhetorical appeal that championed the antebellum era's social tenets, economic structure, and political system, southern agrarians often embraced nostalgic worldviews that celebrated the sacrifice of the Lost Cause and lamented the conditions of late nineteenth century American society. These sentiments would be echoed throughout the final decades of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth. Increasingly, southerners began to connect the industrialization of the economy, the urbanization of society, and the immigration with the increasing diversity of the region. Even worse, agricultural conditions were so difficult that many southerners who had spent their lives engaged in the agricultural economy were forced to abandon agriculture and seek employment within the new industrial sphere. There they competed in the labor market and had a level of intimacy with diverse peoples that would have been unfathomable in the more rural areas of the South.

To southerners, the Leo Frank case represented many of the most contentious issues that accompanied urbanization and industrialization. In his analysis of the case, Watson expressed these concerns. Watson argued that as a Jew, Leo Frank was inherently a suspicious character with perversions, immoralities, and an obsession with money. By the time that the Leo Frank case became a daily headliner in the local press, Watson had earned a reputation as something of a spokesman for the common people and he offered a commentary on the trial that his audience appreciated. But the anti-Semitism that Watson espoused during his life, appears to be almost exclusively limited to his analysis of the Frank case. The importance of Watson's anti-Semitism,

like that of his racism and anti-Catholicism was the context in which he operated. As historians have argued, by this time Jews had become a scapegoat in the minds of southerners for the drastic social and political transformations of an increasingly industrialized economy. Leo Frank, as a northern Jew and superintendent of a local factory was perhaps the best possible representation of these issues.

EPILOGUE: “A PERSONAL VICTORY”

By the end of the 1910s, Tom Watson had reached the height of his popularity among Georgians. After his racism helped rally support to disfranchise African American voters, his anti-Catholic crusade had exposed the “evil menace” of the Catholic Church, and his anti-Semitic campaign had contributed to the lynching of Leo Frank, in the minds of many southerners, Watson had helped restore order in Georgia and the South. In the years that followed, Watson emerged as a leading isolationist and critic of America’s involvement in World War I. For his controversial anti-war writings, Watson’s periodicals were ultimately banned by the federal government. But the issues of securing lasting postwar peace continued to dominate the national discussion at the close of the decade. Silenced by the government’s suppression of his publications, Watson returned to the political stage with unexpected eventual success.¹⁴⁰

Watson returned to politics as a candidate in 1918 in another failed attempt to reclaim his seat in Georgia’s tenth congressional district. But in grieving the deaths of both of his adult-aged children, Watson did not actively campaign for the office. He was only on the ballot because his supporters paid the entrance fee and Watson did little to attract support for his candidacy. His opponent, Carl Vinson, campaigned against Watson by using a similar racist, bigoted, and nativist appeal. But by 1920, Watson surprisingly reemerged as a political candidate. In that year’s state Democratic Presidential primary, Watson joined the ballot after his endorsed candidate, James Reed, withdrew. Although Watson did not actively campaign, he defeated his opponents Georgia Senator Hoke Smith and U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer in the popular vote

¹⁴⁰ Fred Ragan, “Obscenity or Politics? Tom Watson, Anti-Catholicism, and the Department of Justice,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* Vol. 70 Issue 1 (1986): 17-46.

count. Although Palmer won the most county-unit votes and therefore the primary, Watson's unexpected high vote count prompted him to enter the upcoming senate campaign.¹⁴¹

Despite Watson's own popularity, Watson faced opposition from two of the state's most successful politicians. His opponents included Governor Hugh Dorsey, who had served as Solicitor General during the prosecution of Leo Frank, and Hoke Smith, who was the former editor of the *Atlanta Journal* and had served as Secretary of the Interior, Governor, and was the incumbent Senator. The most discussed issue of the campaign was the debate over America's involvement in the League of Nations. In the senate campaign, Watson continued his critique of the administration and voiced his nativist worldview. While campaigning, Watson described President Wilson as "an egotistical maniac" and a "tyrant" who had utilized "despotic power" with the Espionage and Sedition laws. Likewise, Watson charged that Wilson had donated American money to foreign nations and alleged that the government had compensated "thousands of useless employees, the majority of whom are negros and Catholics."¹⁴²

Throughout the campaign, Watson's renewed popularity was seen by the attendance of his speeches by incredible crowds. This prompted James A. Hollomon of the *Atlanta Constitution* to call Watson's followers "clannish," and he likened their relationship to Watson as a "soldier following his general." In rural areas such as Tennille, Georgia, Watson opened the campaign before an audience of over 3,000. Likewise, in Swainsboro, Georgia, Watson spoke before

¹⁴¹ Reed, "Fighting the Devil with Fire," 451-479; Dewey W. Grantham, *Hoke Smith and the Politics of the New South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 346-357; C. Vann Woodward, *Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 466-470; *Atlanta Constitution*, April 4, p. A3D; April 21, 1920, p. 1.

¹⁴² *Atlanta Constitution*, July 25, 1920, p. 1; July 30, 1920, pp. 1, 5; *Atlanta Journal*, July 25, 1920, p. 1; July 30, 1920, pp. 1, 4; Grantham, *Hoke Smith*, 311-322, 328, 337-343.

an estimated 1,000 people, and an appearance in Dublin, Georgia was attended by an estimated 5,000 people. Watson's speech at the Atlanta Auditorium-Armory was said to be attended by "the largest audience that has been seen at a political meeting in Atlanta in years." Likewise, the final campaign appearance for Watson, also a celebration of his 64th birthday held at his home in Thomson, drew one of "the largest crowds gathered for any event that has ever happened there."¹⁴³

But Watson's participation in the campaign was not without controversy. On the night of Wednesday, August 18th, Watson, while on the campaign trail, was spending the night in a hotel in Buford, he was disturbed from his rest by a group of men engaged in a card game. In response, Watson cursed the men, threw a book at them and shouted a profanity filled tirade, accusing the men of being paid by his political opponents to disturb his rest, all while in the presence of the hotel's female proprietress. Watson was subsequently taken into custody for creating a disturbance and using profanity in presence of a woman. A search warrant was issued and the authorities uncovered a pint of corn whiskey in Watson's room, which was a violation of federal prohibition law. Although bail was paid by some of the local citizens, Watson refused to leave and spent the night of August 18th in the county jail. After cancelling his speeches for the remainder of the week, Watson was overcome by an illness and forced to further abandon many of his final speaking engagements of the campaign.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ *Atlanta Journal*, August 1, 1920, p. 7; September, 1 1920, p. 5; September 3, 1920, p. 1; September 5, 1920, p. 1; *Atlanta Constitution*, July 30, 1920, p. 5; August 1, 1920, p. 6B; August 11, 1920, p. 4; August 17, 1920, pp. 1, 3, 8; September 2, 1920, p. 1; September 3, 1920, p. 1; September 4, 1920, p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ *Atlanta Constitution*, August 19, 1920, p. 1; *Atlanta Journal*, August 19, 1920, p. 1; *New York Times*, August 21, 1920, p. 5.

Despite Watson's arrest and illness, Watson recorded an astounding 105,409 votes to Dorsey's 71,907, and Smith's 59,425. In their assessment, the *New York Times* published an article titled "A Personal Victory," which described the influence of Watson's enormous popularity in the state, and his "idol" like status to his followers, on the results of the election. Although Watson's victory allowed him to return to Washington D.C., his tenure was brief and he achieved few legislative accomplishments. Instead, Watson devoted hours of his oratory in the Senate chambers towards expressing his rage and ridicule of anything that resembled the League of Nations, the American Legion, and Wilsonianism. He also expressed a volatile temperament with frequent challenges to physical combat. Watson succumbed to a cerebral hemorrhage on September 26, 1922, at the age of sixty-six, after less than two years in the Senate. The Atlanta press described Watson's passing as "A Blow to All Georgians" and described how "A Unique Monarchy" had lost its "King." Thousands paid their respects at Watson's funeral, held at his home in Hickory Hill and just over a decade later, Watson was enshrined by state leaders with a statue at the footsteps of the state's capitol that described Watson as: "A CHAMPION OF RIGHT WHO NEVER FALTERED IN THE CAUSE."¹⁴⁵

For almost a century, Watson's bronze statue sat at the footsteps of the Georgia state capitol building. Although largely ignored for the better part of its existence, recently Watson's statue has been the center of controversy. Organizations such as thomaswatsonmustgo.org have raised awareness of Watson's most bigoted and controversial statements about African Americans, Catholics, and Jews. Although Georgia Governor Nathan Deal refused to acknowledge the influence of the recent controversy over the statue, he announced in October 2013 plans to move

¹⁴⁵ Woodward, *Tom Watson*, 475-486; *Atlanta Constitution*, September 27, 1922, p. 1; December 4, 1932, p. 1.

the statue as part of a renovation project of the capital building. On November 29, 2013 the statue was quietly removed from the capital and placed in a more secluded position at an adjacent park. As these recent events indicate, despite his death almost a century ago, Tom Watson continues to be discussed in Georgia politics.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Joeff Davis, "Thomas Watson Must Go: Statue Honoring a Racist Georgian has no Place in Front of the Capitol," *Creative Loafing*, March 20, 2013, <http://clatl.com/atlanta/thomas-watson-must-go/Content?oid=7828231&showFullText=true>; *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, October 22, October 31, November 29, 2013.

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