

Instant History: The Spanish–American War and Henry Watterson’s Articulation of Anti–Imperialist Expansionism

Emma Snowden

The two contradictions encompassed in the title of this essay reflect those to be found in Henry Watterson’s *History of the Spanish–American War, Embracing a Complete Review of Our Relations with Spain*. Published in 1898, with a preface dated a full two months before the signing of the Treaty of Paris that officially concluded the war, this “history” is one that Watterson freely admits was written concurrently with the events it purports to describe impartially. Watterson himself was something of a contradiction: a Confederate war veteran who supported a strong and undivided Union; a fervent southern Democrat who advocated expansion, though not imperialism, as a means of attaining free trade; and a longstanding editor of the *Louisville Courier–Journal* whose colorfully-worded and impassioned editorials impacted political discourse on a national level, but who scorned the trends of sensationalism and yellow journalism. Indeed, it should be noted that initially Watterson’s own opinions on the war and the acquisition of overseas territories were far from the crystallized viewpoint he presents in his not-unsubstantial 660–page volume. Nor were they as coolheaded as the book’s clear attempts to offer balanced accounts of motivations and causes of events in the war, which certainly tones down the enthusiasm Watterson had progressively developed for the war and the expansionist opportunities it presented.¹

¹ Henry Watterson, *History of the Spanish–American War, Embracing a Complete Review of Our Relations with Spain*, (New York: Werner Company, 1898), ix; Allen Johnson and

Nonetheless, the overall value of Watterson's work is without question more historiographical than historical. Interestingly, this view is shared by a contemporary review of the book, which predicts that its chief merit in the future would be its insight into the national mindset at one of the most significant turning points in the history of the United States.² The aim of this paper is to examine the conception of imperialism presented by Watterson in his book, and to identify the place this conception occupied in the larger scheme of national imperialist policymaking. Furthermore, discussion will be devoted to the extent to which the book was in a position to influence public opinion in the United States, and to what extent the ideologies and interpretations promoted in the book were or were not comparable to those being disseminated in political discourse, in other similar contemporary works, and even in later historical works. Ultimately, such an examination would seem to suggest that in a number of respects, the interpretations of Watterson and his contemporaries prevailed to a significant extent in the twentieth-century historiography of the Spanish-American war.

Watterson's book constitutes an important and unique part of the historiographical and ideological movement towards United States imperialism, in that it was illustrative of the emerging ambitions of overseas colonialism, while also attempting to foster in the larger population a particular understanding of the war that supported these same ambitions. This "history" must necessarily be viewed as distinct

Dumas Malone, "Henry Watterson," *Dictionary of American Biography, Authors Edition* vol. XIX, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936): 552; Daniel S. Margolies, *Henry Watterson and the New South: The Politics of Empire, Free Trade, and Globalization* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 14, 139.

² Alfred Shaw, review of *History of the Spanish-American War*, written by Henry Watterson, *The American Monthly Review of Reviews* 20 (1899): 120, *Google Books*, accessed October 9, 2013.

from a large portion of Watterson's editorials and orations in the sense that it was written for, and indeed reached, a more geographically and ideologically varied readership. Notwithstanding this, it seems clear that the idea of the United States taking a more active supervisory role, not in world affairs so much as in a limited colonial context that nonetheless had broad international implications, was not one that would necessarily have surprised U.S. citizens—though certainly there were those who objected to it. Imperial and colonial ambitions of course often masqueraded behind republican paternalistic rhetoric, and their proponents absolutely split hairs and skewed traditional interpretations of history (perhaps not entirely inaccurately—the new trend of viewing manifest destiny as the establishment of a continental empire, which was certainly embraced by Watterson, is a prime example), but it was nonetheless in the last years of the nineteenth century an increasingly familiar and even favorable concept to a considerable and influential body of politicians and the public. And indeed even after the war, Watterson continued to agitate for maintaining a presence in the United States' newly acquired territories, because he believed that to do otherwise was “antagonistic to Jefferson and Jackson, both ‘apostles of National expansion.’”³

Watterson's *History of the Spanish–American War* is structured largely chronologically, and consists of thirty-two chapters, beginning with a discussion of the causes and the declaration of war and ending with a summary of the peace negotiations. The former is simplified almost to the point of distortion, skating over events prior to 1898, and mentioning only that the U.S. public had sympathized with Cuban

³ Margolies, *Henry Watterson*, 124; Theodore Roosevelt, *Colonial Policies of the United States*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc.: 1937), 39–40; “Watterson's Warning,” *New York Times*, September 19, 1899, pg. 6.

attempts at insurrection “as a general thing, and in a general way.” In fact, Cubans had been making active attempts to enact revolution at various intervals as early as 1825, including a number of filibustering expeditions, and upon the renewal of such efforts in 1895, the U.S. press began to maintain a significant presence in Cuba.⁴ As editor of a prominent newspaper that covered in-depth events leading up to the war, it is inconceivable that Watterson would not have been capable of conveying in more detail the historical and political context of the struggles of the *independentistas* against Spain, had he chosen to do so. Moreover, the U.S. government had a long diplomatic history of expressing its interest in Cuban affairs, dating as far back as John Quincy Adams. As Henry Cabot Lodge made a point of noting, “the Cuban question is not a new one.”⁵

It is highly significant, then, that Watterson chooses instead to emphasize the sense of surprise following the explosion of the *Maine*, rather than to establish a more detailed chronology of Spanish-U.S.-Cuban relations. And indeed, throughout the book it is his marked tendency to underline instances in which the U.S. government and public were taken by surprise in the face of both the actions it deemed as necessary to undertake, and the (colonial) responsibilities which resulted from these actions. Without necessarily making a statement on the genuineness of this surprise, it can be viewed as a clear attempt to minimize the impression of a calculated imperial policy. Such is certainly the case with regard to what Watterson refers to as “the Philippines question,” which is his first real mention of

⁴ Watterson, *History*, 22; Charles H. Brown, *The Correspondents' War: Journalists in the Spanish-American War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), 6.

⁵ Henry Cabot Lodge, “Our Duty to Cuba,” *The Forum* XXI (1896): 278; Amos S. Hershey makes the same point in “The Recognition of Cuban Belligerency,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 7 (May 1896): 76.

imperialist ambitions. (Here, additionally, it is noteworthy that Watterson chooses to devote considerable discussion in the same vein to another question—the “Eastern” one, which concerned the balance of power between European nations, China, and Japan following the Shimonoseki treaty and its implications for these powers to become involved or intervene in the Spanish–American War. It also concerned the possibilities for establishing U.S. trading rights, a point Watterson does not fail to make. Incidentally, this same situation led to the Russo–Japanese War in 1904, in the peace negotiations of which the United States under Theodore Roosevelt played a significant role.)⁶

This is all in line with Louis A. Pérez’s conception of the historiography of 1898. Pérez holds that historians and contemporaries posited one of two versions of the sequence of events following the infamous explosion. According to one version, public opinion was galvanized towards war immediately; in the other, the U.S. public waited calmly for the verdict of the naval inquiry before bowing to the necessity of war with Spain. Watterson presents somewhat of a combination of these two ‘versions.’ He praises the military and administrative leaders for their prudence and restraint in not taking immediate action, but also notes that “whilst the trend of public opinion was not long shaping itself, and falling into the theory of treachery, the more thoughtful among the people of the United States could not bring themselves to believe this possible.”⁷

An understanding of overall trends in the historiography of the war, beginning as early as 1898, is especially important given that

⁶ Watterson, *History*, 404–407.

⁷ Louis A. Pérez, *The War of 1898: the United States and Cuba in History and Historiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 67; Watterson, *History*, 37.

Watterson's book is far from the only one of its kind. A goodly number of other "histories" of the Spanish-American War were published in the two years after the war, and Watterson is not even unique in having published a history the same year as the war itself—a feat he only managed by omitting the finalization of peace terms, as will be discussed.⁸ In the July to December 1899 issue of the *American Monthly Review of Reviews*, three of sixteen books in the history and biography section were explicitly about the war. While this number in itself may not seem especially significant, another two books in this section were about the recently annexed Hawaii (which was very relevant to the Spanish-American War in several ways that will be discussed below), one discussed U.S. "prospects, problems, and duties" in the Pacific, and yet another concerned the beginnings of the colonial system. Furthermore, under the travel and description section, three books were devoted to the nation's new possessions in

⁸ Examples include but are by no means limited to: Elridge S. Brooks, *The Story of Our War with Spain*, (Boston: Lothrop Publishing Company, 1899); Henry Cabot Lodge, *The War with Spain*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1899); Nathan C. Green, *The War with Spain and Story of Spain and Cuba*, (Baltimore: International News and Book Co., 1898); Prescott Holmes, *Young People's History of the War with Spain*, (Philadelphia: H. Altemus Co., 1900); Henry F. Keenan, *The Conflict with Spain*, (Philadelphia, C. W. Ziegler & Co., 1898); Fitzhugh Lee, Joseph Wheeler, Theodore Roosevelt, and Richard Wainright, *Cuba's Struggle Against Spain*, (New York: The American Historical Press, 1899); James Rankin Young, *History of Our War with Spain*, (Philadelphia: National Publishing Co., 1898); Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1899); John Randolph Spears, *Our Navy in the War with Spain*, (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1898); Trumbull White, *Our War with Spain for Cuba's Freedom*, (Philadelphia: Monarch Book Co., 1898); Marrion Wilcox, *A Short History of Our War with Spain*, (New York: F. A. Stokes, 1898). It is interesting to note the overwhelming similarities in many of the titles of these works, and their implicit understanding of the war as "ours," that is, being the domain of the United States against Spain, often without any mention of Cuba or other affected territories.

the Caribbean and the Pacific. Four books were also about the recent discovery of gold in the Klondike. Overall, U.S. writers (and, it seems safe to assume, readers as well) in 1898 and the years immediately after displayed a notable preoccupation with not only the war, but also with newly acquired territories and the economic possibilities they offered. With regards to both the Spanish–American War and the Klondike, the element of adventure as a source of interest should not be overlooked either.⁹

Watterson’s final chapter does not even mention the peace treaty in its official document form, which was signed in Paris on December 10, 1898—likely after the book had already been sent to the printers. Instead, Watterson closes his narrative with an account of the treaty terms verbally agreed upon on November 28, followed by a brief reiteration of the main arguments for and against imperialism, which he also summarizes earlier in the book subsequent to his description of the victory at Manila Bay. It is of note that in each case, Watterson makes a clear effort to present both sides, without explicitly expressing support for either, and observing that only time would tell which arguments were more valid. Nonetheless, in his final paragraph, Watterson employs rhetoric reminiscent of earlier proponents of manifest destiny when he expresses his confidence that

the untoward events of the war with Spain were brought about for some all-wise purpose by the Supreme Ruler of men, and that that hand which has

⁹ Shaw, *Review of Reviews*, 118–120; Frank Freidel, *The Splendid Little War* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1958), 10.

led American manhood through every emergency to the one goal of the American Union, has in store for that Union even greater uses and glory than irradiated the dreams and blessed the prayers of the God-fearing men who gave it life.¹⁰

Indeed, ideological polemics surrounding the imperialist debate are one of the few pertinent divisive categories of classification within the United States Watterson addresses in any depth. Others are scarcely mentioned, or are omitted entirely, throughout *The History of the Spanish-American War*. These include distinctions between southerners and northerners, between Democrats and Republicans, and between whites and racial minorities. Watterson's regional and party identity as a southern Democrat are readily identifiable in the vast majority of his writings; what can be deduced from their scant presence in this volume is the scope and diversity of his intended audience.

The book was in fact published in a variety of locales throughout the United States. Watterson's own *Courier-Journal* Press printed copies in Louisville, but in 1898 no less than thirty-one other companies also printed the book in at least seventeen other cities ranging as far from the South as San Francisco. Nor can one ignore Watterson's status as a prominent opinion leader whose editorials were sought out by New York newspapers upon which the rest of the country's periodicals were typically modeled.¹¹ In fact, tickets to a

¹⁰ Watterson, *History*, 623–24.

¹¹ "Formats and editions of 'History of the Spanish-American war; embracing a complete review of our relations with Spain,'" *WorldCat*, accessed October 9, 2013; Margolies, *Henry Watterson*, 2.

speech he gave to the Patria Club on the issue of colonial expansion were so sought after that the club was compelled to “depart from its custom,” charging for a limited number of guest tickets. The same speech was also written up in a *New York Times* article, further underlining the interest Watterson’s opinions held for the reading public.¹² Watterson’s prominence as a writer and an orator, along with the widespread publication of his *History*, therefore demonstrates the extent to which the U.S. public would have been conscious of, and had access to, the book. Its collection of seventy photos and illustrations, some in full-color foldouts, accentuate the impression of a book intended to inform a large and varied readership in an entertaining and persuasive manner. It is thus unsurprising that Watterson would have moderated his rhetoric somewhat with this in mind, so as to avoid alienating readers from his overall attempt to chronicle the events of the war and their significance for the nation’s future.

Divisions between North and South are mentioned only in order to represent them as a thing of the past. Watterson makes direct reference to the Civil War and praises the emergence of a “regenerated Union” no longer torn apart by sectional controversy; moreover, he characterizes the Spanish–American War as an ideal opportunity to demonstrate, to the world and to the nation itself, the strength of a unified democratic population. Rather oddly, he describes the nonpartisan feeling of cooperation that accompanied the massive rush of voluntary enlistment following the declaration of war as “exhilarating and at the same time pathetic.” Thus it can be inferred that Watterson was perhaps not so unequivocally in favor of

¹² “Henry Watterson on Expansion,” *New York Times*, (December 6, 1898): 11; “Watterson on Expansion: Great Questions of External Policy May Lure the American Spirit Away From Money Worship,” *New York Times*, (December 10, 1898): 3.

political unity as he may have liked to affect. Moreover, this discussion is immediately followed by the contradiction-laden declaration that

the swaddling clothes of National babyhood were gone. The giant stood forth in all the pride of his manhood...arrayed on the side of liberty and humanity, ready, willing, and able to give battle to all comers who might challenge his supremacy, wherever he might plant the star-spangled banner or set up the standards of free government.¹³

The United States is thus characterized as seeking to establish liberty and humanity along with supremacy, free government along with territorial claims. The use of flag-planting imagery is especially strong in its imperialistic associations. Nonetheless, what is perhaps most significant about the views presented in this passage is the fact that, to Watterson (and perhaps to many of his readers and contemporaries as well) they do not appear to have been perceived as necessarily conflicting.

Race as a divisive category is mentioned in the *History*, but only in the context of relations with Britain, and as a means of asserting the homogeneity and Anglo-Saxon origin of the population of the United States. When Watterson makes a point of praising U.S. democracy for its inclusion of "any male child born in the United States" in the political process to the point of being eligible for the presidency, in contrast to the prevalence of "privileged castes" under

¹³ Watterson, *History*, 79-80.

the monarchical government in Britain, he rather blatantly ignores the racially motivated political oppression of black Americans and other minorities.¹⁴ This is a tactic Watterson employed not only in his *History of the Spanish–American War*, however. In a speech he gave at the seventy-fifth anniversary of General Ulysses Grant’s birthday, he asserted, “it has taken but a few weeks to impress upon the reunited section of the Union that we are the most homogeneous people on the face of the globe.” Watterson’s expression of a U.S. identity constituting part of a larger Anglo–Saxon racial and cultural heritage was by no means unique for this period.¹⁵

On the other hand, however, many anti-imperialists in the United States worried that to follow Britain’s example in establishing overseas colonies was to abandon the country’s traditional commitment to republican values, and with this in mind they invoked arguments of national exceptionalism. Watterson’s twofold solution to this is a most interesting one. First of all, rather than accepting this view of the United States following Britain, he reversed the model and contended that, in fact, “the British people have studied the United States, and have themselves erected a great republic attired in the robes only of monarchy and imperialism.” Secondly, he maintained that any empire built on the foundations of free trade was naturally also a free empire.¹⁶

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 393.

¹⁵ “Grant Birthday Dinner: Monument Association Honors the Memory of the Dead Soldier and Statesman,” *New York Times*, (April 28, 1898): 5; Paul A. Kramer, “Empires, Exceptions, and Anglo–Saxons: Race and Rule between the British and United States Empires, 1880–1910,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 4 (March 2002): 1315–16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1339; Watterson, *History*, 398.

Watterson was certainly an ardent supporter of free trade, which he viewed as the means of “achieving prosperity and stability through expanding global markets and the open door.”¹⁷ Even before 1898 and the opportunities it offered for overseas markets, Watterson was quite vocal against a number of tariffs, asserting his belief in 1896 that “the American manufacturer no longer needs protection.”¹⁸ This part of his political program was very much rooted in his desire to see the South come into its own economically. Watterson was in a way quite anticipatory in his understanding that this would require a number of modern elements, including the incorporation of as many free trade markets as possible, though it is of note that he was not always an advocate of U.S. colonial expansion. Some evolution of opinion is only to be expected from a man with as enduring a career as Watterson. Indeed, his role as a regional and national opinion leader in the model of earlier ‘personal journalists’ began with his transition into newspaper editing following his service in the Confederate Army, included a brief foray into elected officialdom as a Democratic congressman in 1876, and was marked a year before his retirement by his being awarded a 1917 Pulitzer Prize for his editorials.¹⁹

Watterson in fact exhibited a similar shift in opinion concerning the question of the annexation of Hawaii, which was in many ways connected to various crucial issues of the Spanish-American War. Thomas Osborne refutes the traditional military explanation for Hawaiian annexation, which holds that the United States viewed Hawaii as strategically necessary to the war effort

¹⁷ Margolies, *Henry Watterson*, 14–15.

¹⁸“Watterson on Politics: Union of Republicans and Democrats Cannot Last,” *New York Times*, November 29, 1896, pg. 5.

¹⁹ Johnson and Malone, “Henry Watterson,” 552–555.

because of its location between the continental U.S. and the Philippines, and because it could be used to defend the West Coast during and after the war. Moreover, Osborne asserts in its place a less direct explanation that has its roots in trade. He demonstrates that overall it was the desire to control more markets for U.S. manufacturers, so as not to glut the domestic market, which motivated the annexation of Hawaii even before a decision had been made with regards to the Philippines.²⁰

Of course, the small islands of Hawaii themselves would not be the location of these new markets, but rather would facilitate opening up trade with China and other Asian nations. Watterson's similar concern with this possibility has already been discussed in the context of the "Eastern question," and Daniel Margolies asserts that Watterson's shift to support annexation illustrated the salience of his free trade ambitions over his reservations about the racial dissolution of the United States that could accompany annexation of a nation of peoples he perceived as being inferior. In his *History*, Watterson understandably makes no mention of such concerns, and represents the need for annexation on terms very similar to those used by the McKinley administration in its (intentionally misleading, in Osborne's analysis) attempts to win Congress over to its cause—that is, he argues that "if the Philippines were to be held, the annexation of Hawaii was logically necessary for strategic and economic reasons." It would seem, then, that the long-held historical view of the annexation of Hawaii as a military expedient, rather than as commercially motivated, cannot be entirely separated from

²⁰ Thomas J. Osborne, "Trade or War? America's Annexation of Hawaii Reconsidered," *Pacific Historical Review* 50, no. 3 (August 1981): 287, 298.

contemporary attempts in 1898 to make it understood in that context.²¹

In his assessment of the motivations for the Spanish–American War, Louis Pérez makes an important distinction between U.S. policymakers and popular sentiment. As demonstrated above, at times Watterson very knowingly represented situations in the same ways as U.S. policymakers, and for the same reasons. For the most part, however, his *History of the Spanish–American War* anticipates the marked trend in U.S. historiography of 1898 to attribute the movement of war to public opinion as a kind of overwhelming force that was in many ways influenced by the press.²²

Interestingly, a good deal of the historical literature on the war is either unaware of, or chooses to ignore, the well-established historical precedent of U.S. interest in Cuba. As previously mentioned, both Henry Cabot Lodge and Amos S. Hershey, writing in 1896 in favor of U.S. support of Cuba, demonstrate a clear understanding of this aspect of U.S. interests. Cabot Lodge, of course, was a long-term player in U.S. foreign policy, while Hershey was a Harvard-educated political scientist. As such, both were clearly in a position to comment on the motivations of the administration for involving itself in the Cuban struggle against Spain.²³

Watterson's portrayal of the U.S. popular response, on the other hand, presents a public opinion that was overwhelmingly in favor of war for the purpose of liberating Cuba. Such a portrayal should by no means be viewed as inaccurate or disingenuous—as

²¹ Margolies, *Henry Watterson*, 190; Watterson, *History*, 418; Osborne, "Trade or War?", 290.

²² Pérez, *The War of 1898*, 35–36.

²³ "Dr. A. S. Hershey, Educator, Is Dead," *New York Times*, June 13, 1933, pg. 19.

Pérez notes, contemporary popular narratives and music provide ample evidence of the genuine desire on the part of many individuals in the U.S. to see Cubans freed from what they perceived as the despotic and oppressive rule of the Spanish. Nonetheless, it is essential to understand that in many ways the views presented by Wattersson and his contemporaries, of the war having been entered into on Cuba's behalf, have been perpetuated despite only representing partial truths. (In this vein, the advent of the Anti-Imperialist League will also be examined below.)²⁴

Pérez also points out, rightly, that the name given to the war itself is not without significant implications regarding the United States' motivations for, and popular conception of, the war (and indeed, it is no doubt for this reason that he chooses to refer to it instead as the "war of 1898"). The construction "Spanish-American War" makes no reference to any of the territories acknowledged as falling under the control of the United States in the 1898 Treaty of Paris. Moreover, its use even before the advent of the war anticipates to some extent its expansion out of the domain of Cuba and into Pacific territories distributed over a wide geographic expanse. That is to say, it rather conveniently allowed for the acquisition of territory on the sole basis that such territory was previously under Spanish control. Jill Lepore makes the same point in her study of the 1675 King Philip's War, asserting that "acts of war generate acts of narration, and...both types of acts are often joined in a common purpose: defining the geographical, political, cultural, and sometimes racial and national boundaries between people." This idea is central to

²⁴ Pérez, *The War of 1898*, 24.

this paper's approach to studying Watterson's *History* in the larger context of the historiography of the Spanish–American War.²⁵

And indeed, even the choice of title of Watterson's history of the war has similar implications that are worth examining. It of course includes the name of the war itself—which, incidentally, most contemporary books on the war did not (see footnote 12). But beyond that, its subtitle is also of interest, claiming as it does to embrace a complete review of the United States' relations with Spain. One could argue that the book simultaneously achieves a great deal more and less than that. It displays an impressive consciousness of international politics and relations involving various European powers, to be discussed in more detail below, while also presenting a decidedly United States–centric and narrow impression of Spain's government and population. The former is perhaps surprising, the latter most certainly is not.

Throughout the *History*, Watterson makes use of a wealth of international and historical examples and parallels. For the most part, these display Watterson's broad knowledge base of world power relations. His understanding of the intricacies of Russo–Anglo–Sino–Japanese relationships and their implications for U.S. trade interests are notable, and have already been mentioned. Nonetheless, his examples are not always historically accurate. His claim that in Manila, “at a distance of 6,000 leagues from Toledo and Granada, the same ancient hatreds have brought European Spaniards and Asiatic Saracen into the same relentless antagonism that swayed them in the days of the Cid and Ferdinand the Catholic” shows a basic ignorance (or disregard) of, for one, the cultural and ethnic differences between

²⁵ *Ibid.*, xii; Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998), x.

Filipinos and medieval Arab and Berber conquerors. For another, having made this erroneous equivalence, it ignores the fact that in the cases cited it was the Iberians who were the conquered and the “Saracens” the conquerors who were eventually driven out, an ironic reversal (according to Watterson’s own assumptions, of course) one might expect him to make more of.²⁶

Relevant to his assessment of the significance of the Spanish–American War is Watterson’s characterization of the battles of Waterloo, Gettysburg, and Sedan as “incidents of locality” and “mere skirmishes” compared to the Battle of Santiago. He does concede that “Waterloo was, perhaps, greatest of all,” but immediately mitigates this by adding “but the world of 1814 was much smaller than the world of 1898.” Perhaps more precisely, the United States was involved in the world on a much larger scale in 1898 than in 1814. (It is also worth noting, of course, that the battle of Waterloo took place in 1815, not 1814.) Nonetheless, the (rather inappropriately) grandiose nature of this assertion provides valuable insight to the weight given to the outcome of the war by Watterson, and presumably by many of his contemporaries.²⁷

Certainly other countries were aware of the import of the U.S. victory in 1898. As has been discussed, Britain’s involvement and promotion of an exercise of Anglo–Saxon imperialism by the United States certainly demonstrates its awareness of the possibilities of U.S. success against Spain. Other European nations such as Germany, Russia, and France made moves to intervene in the conflict before British support of the United States made this diplomatically undesirable. That the United States became a consideration in this

²⁶ Watterson, *History*, 86–89.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 382.

tendency to defend the status quo and maintain a balance of power with known quantities was a shift of which the European powers unquestionably took note. In Spain, a new literary movement known as *la generación del 98* (“the generation of ’98”) emerged in response to the loss of territory and imperial status that resulted from the war. This movement was characterized by a disenchantment with and sharp criticism of Spanish political, literary, and educational institutions, all of which were seen as being in crisis. A similar literary movement can be seen even in France, where the Spanish defeat by the United States “triggered a wave of books warning that all of European civilization was now threatened by the rise of foreign ‘barbarians.’”²⁸ Apparently even Pope Leo XIII was “much affected by the Spanish–American war,” and the *Times* of London reported, “in view of his advanced age and the nervous condition in which his Holiness has been for some time past, his entourage feel some anxiety.”²⁹ And of course it goes without saying (though it should not) that those territories which now found themselves subject to U.S. occupation and oversight were unquestionably aware of the significance of the war. In many cases, this significance was not one of liberty or humanity, as proclaimed by Watterson and other idealists.

²⁸ “Lord Salisbury’s Speech,” *The Times* (London), November 11, 1898, pg. 3; Watterson, *History*, 439–465; Manuel Durán, “La técnica de la novela y la generación del 98,” *Revista Hispánica Moderna*, 23 no. 1 (January 1957): 15; Jeremy D. Popkin, *A History of Modern France, Fourth Edition* (New York, Pearson: 2013), 188.

²⁹ “Court Circular,” *The Times* (London), June 30, 1898, pg. 6. Incidentally, the article goes on to assure readers that “his Holiness’s physician declares, however, that there is no ground for alarm,” and indeed Leo XIII’s lengthy and productive pontificate, having begun in 1878, was to last five more years until his death in 1903; for a discussion of his reforms and encyclicals, see: Robert P. Kraynak, “Pope Leo XIII and the Catholic Response to Modernity,” *Modern Age* 49, no. 4 (September 2007): 527–536.

The Spanish–American War represented not only the physical expansion of U.S. territory, but also the ideological expansion of the nation’s perception of its role in the larger world. Just as Anglo–Saxonism proved to be a remarkably short–lived phenomenon, so too was the public consciousness of U.S. attempts to engage in direct oversight of colonial possessions. Nonetheless, affairs in the newly acquired territories remained intimately tied to U.S. policymaking for decades after the end of the war. Cuban elections in 1900 saw an overwhelming victory by the *independentistas*, which was recognized by the U.S. Even so, political ‘autonomy’ was contingent on conceding to U.S. economic interests, and this state of affairs lasted until Castro’s 1959 revolution. The Platt Amendment, which in 1901 nullified the earlier Teller Amendment (which prohibited the annexation of Cuba and guaranteed Cuban autonomy) and established a precedent for U.S. oversight in Cuban commercial, foreign policy, and military affairs, was the embodiment of this arrangement.³⁰ The Philippines, having been directly purchased by the U.S. government, fought for several years against a colonial authority which refused to recognize its status as a Republic, was the site of substantial U.S. missionary efforts, and only gained full independence in 1946, after having been invaded and occupied by the Japanese during WWII. Puerto Rico, of course, remains a U.S. commonwealth.³¹

³⁰ Julian Go, *American Empire and the Politics of Meaning: Elite Political Cultures in the Philippines and Puerto Rico during U.S. Colonialism* (Durham, Duke University Press: 2008), 7–10; Pérez, *The War of 1898*, 129–131.

³¹ Sharon Delmedo, *The Star–Entangled Banner: One Hundred Years of American in the Philippines* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 10–11; Shinzo Hayase and David Levinson, “Philippines—History” *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia* 4 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2002): 505–508; Susan K. Harris, *God’s Arbiters: Americans and the Philippines, 1898–1902* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33–37.

Significantly, however, initial moves towards imperialism in 1898 did provoke widespread political discourse and debate on the matter from various elements in the United States, as is amply evidenced for example by the significant contribution of women to the efforts of the Anti-Imperialist League. The League was also supported by such diverse and prominent members as former president Grover Cleveland, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie, and American Federation of Labor president Samuel Gompers.³² Moreover, the question of what to do with the newly-acquired territories of 1898 was a highly polemical one in electoral politics immediately following the war, and even prompted some individuals to consider voting against their party affiliation. This was the case with Carnegie—though he ultimately supported a second term for McKinley, he freely admitted to having some initial doubts on this point, and in a *New York Times* interview in 1900 rated the question of imperialism as rather higher priority than the infamous silver issue, which he considered “a back number.”³³ While Watterson’s *History* does address the arguments both for and against imperialism, without explicitly favoring either, he does not discuss the demographics of support for either side, and certainly does not give the impression that the debate was so polemical. And ultimately, as has been discussed, Watterson’s own political views, his use of Anglo-Saxon rhetoric, and his depiction of the United States as a major power and player in world affairs all certainly placed him

³² Erin L. Murphy, “Women’ Anti-Imperialism, ‘The White Man’s Burden, and the Philippine-American War: Theorizing Masculinist Ambivalence in Protest,” *Gender and Society* 23, No. 2 (April 2009): 245; “Anti-Imperialist League, Mr. Cleveland Consents to Serve as Vice President,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1898, pg. 1.

³³ “Mr. Carnegie Stands by His Own Party: Believes Americans May Trust it to Retrieve Errors,” *New York Times*, September 30, 1900, pg. 4.

squarely on the side of imperialism, even if he preferred to euphemize it as “expansionism.”³⁴

Another interesting rhetorical device present in pro-war arguments of the last years of the nineteenth century, and certainly also evident in Watterson’s *History*, exists in the new conceptualization of “American manhood.” Kristin Hoganson notes the way politicians in the 1890s began to play up any war experience they may have had, and that a new category of classification emerged before the war for those who had not served and were perceived as having become overly effeminate as a result of the comforts of their wealth. This category was the “dude,” and such dudes were typically found in the Northeast. A distinction between “manly” and “moneyed” was often drawn, and it became more desirable for politicians to portray themselves as “manly” and “rough.” Theodore Roosevelt’s increased political prominence in the years and decades following his role as leader of his “Rough Riders” attests to this quite well, and his autobiographical writings clearly serve to remind the voting public of his “manliness.”³⁵ Interestingly, Admiral George Dewey also entered the presidential lists in 1900, but unlike Roosevelt he was not successful in turning his brilliant reputation after the war into political capital. Watterson was in fact the first to propose Dewey as a potential presidential candidate, but by April 1900 his enthusiasm for this idea had cooled and he was quoted in the *New York Times* saying that “Admiral Dewey’s time to come out was two years ago, when his praises were on every lip.” One rather wonders if this did not also

³⁴ Watterson, *History*, 619–624.

³⁵ Kristin L. Hoganson, *Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish–American and Philippine–American Wars*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 118; Theodore Roosevelt, *The Rough Riders*, (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1899).

have something to do with Dewey committing a number of political blunders, and his loss of support from most quarters as the campaign progressed.³⁶ To be sure, his autobiography, published in 1913, made no mention of his failed political aspirations, and it of course came too late to have the same kind of impact as did Roosevelt's memoir.³⁷

Certainly Watterson, as a Colonel who had served in the Confederate army and hailed from the South, would not have been considered a dude. It is quite easy to find references to both "American manhood" and "dudes" in his *History*, as Hoganson herself points out, as well as in his orations, such as the speech he gave at a Board of Trade Banquet in 1897. In a sense, the use of such rhetoric in Watterson's *History* can be viewed as a more oblique means of asserting both imperialistic aims and his desire for the South to resume a leading economic role, both within the country and internationally.³⁸

Though Watterson does not include a discussion of the peace treaty itself, having apparently finished work on the book before the document's official promulgation, he does provide an outline of the main points agreed upon in Paris on November 28. These points included the cession of Puerto Rico, the Philippines, the Sulu Archipelago, and Guam by Spain to the United States, the

³⁶ "Western Leaders' Opinions," *New York Times*, April 5, 1900, pg. 2; "Dubious Outlook for 'Dewey Arch' Fund," *New York Times*, April 21, 1900, pg. 1; "McLean Deserts Dewey? States Positively in Columbus that the Admiral's Candidacy is to be Gradually Abandoned," *New York Times*, May 5, 1900, pg. 1.

³⁷ George Dewey, *Autobiography of George Dewey, Admiral of the Navy* (New York: Ams Press, 1969).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 121; Watterson, *History*, 79–80, 623–24; "Board of Trade Banquet: Henry Watterson's speech," *New York Times*, January 21, 1897, pg. 2.

unconditional relinquishment of sovereignty of Cuba, and the understanding that the United States would pay \$20,000,000 to Spain in return for the cession of the Philippines. Furthermore, no indemnity would be obtained from Spain by the United States. All these provisions were indeed included in the December 10 peace treaty. Watterson's discussion is solely focused on territorial concessions and monetary concerns, however, and omits any mention of Spanish efforts to protect the personal, civil, religious, and property rights of its citizens residing in the conceded territories. These concerns are the subject of no less than seven of the treaty's seventeen total articles; another two articles address the merchant and commercial rights of both countries, and one article addresses Spain's right to establish consular offices in all of the conceded territories.³⁹

Indeed, Watterson's emphasis on the monetary implications of the peace negotiations merits further discussion. In a chapter titled "Interesting Facts About War," more than two pages are devoted to establishing the historical precedent for exacting indemnities from a defeated nation. The subsequent seven pages involve a series of calculations attempting to approximate the total U.S. expenditure on the war—including such minutiae as the fact that, apparently, "to fire one 13-inch armor-piercing shell costs \$560; to fire an 8-inch shell costs \$134," followed up by the somewhat less precise observation that "many thousands of the latter and hundreds of the former were discharged during the war." The subtext of such a discussion seems clear: the United States had invested heavily in the war, and would have been perfectly justified in requiring Spain to pay a hefty

³⁹ Watterson, *History*, 618; "Treaty of Peace Between the United States and Spain; December 10, 1898," *The Avalon Project*, 2013, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/sp1898.asp, October 9, 2013.

indemnity. That it did not do so, and in fact paid Spain for the privilege of assuming control of the conceded territories, was to be a sign of the nation's largesse and fair dealing; moreover, it distinguished the United States from European tradition and in so doing reinforced their moral high ground. No mention is made of Cuban expenditures or loss of life.⁴⁰

Watterson certainly seems to fall into the category of historical writers who lauded the conduct and preparedness of the U.S. military in the war, and viewed the U.S. victory as the result of a combination of U.S. strengths and Spanish weaknesses. Cuban participation is hardly mentioned, and disparaged when it is mentioned, as Pérez notes is characteristic of the vast majority of the historiography of the war. Watterson equates the massive enlistment of volunteers with army preparedness, and fails to mention at all the fact the short amount of time available to train these volunteers did not lend itself to the formation of a particularly effective fighting force. Indeed, recent historiographical reassessments of U.S. army and navy performance in the Spanish–American War have not been especially favorable. Watterson's inclusion of an anecdote from Camp Wikoff, in which it takes General Chaffey a mere three minutes to have a gun-shy young soldier "fighting like a veteran and cool as a cucumber," demonstrates a rather idealistic outlook of the process of training and preparing soldiers for war. The Spanish, on the other hand, Watterson characterizes categorically as a "race...skillful only in the cunning of cruelty and deception." To be fair, he does make a point on several

⁴⁰ Watterson, *History*, 575–584, the quote is from pg. 581.

occasions to note the bravery of the Spanish officers and soldiers but always follows this with an assertion of their “utter incompetence.”⁴¹

An examination of Frank Freidel's *A Splendid Little War* can be interesting and useful as a comparison to the narrative of the war set out by Watterson, and in the context of Louis Pérez's assertion that historiography of 1898 remained relatively static over time and underwent few significant revisions. Freidel's book—long a classic in the field, reprinted as recently as 2002—was published exactly fifty years after the Spanish–American War and Watterson's book, but there are some interesting parallels that can be noted. Freidel, too, presents the war as “basically...a popular crusade to stop a seemingly endless revolution which was shattering Cuba.” If anything, Freidel's account of events leading up to the war, and even of the infamous explosion of the *Maine*, is even more brief (and, frankly, reductionist) than is Watterson's. Unlike Watterson, he does not describe U.S. public opinion as waiting on the results of the naval inquiry, but rather paints a picture of an immediately “enraged” populace pointing its finger at Spain. *A Splendid Little War* takes even more advantage of the opportunity to depict the war visually, and includes more than three hundred photographs and illustrations.⁴²

Perhaps one of the most striking similarities between Freidel and Watterson's depictions of the war is their nearly complete omission of any mention of the Cuban contribution to campaigns following the U.S. entrance into hostilities. Both tend to attribute the U.S. victory to the qualities and preparation of Spanish and U.S.

⁴¹ Pérez, *The War of 1898*, 83; Joseph Smith, “The ‘Splendid Little War’ of 1898: a Reappraisal,” *Historical Association* (1995): 23–24; Watterson, *History*, 77, 100, 594–595.

⁴² Pérez, *The War of 1898*, 109; Freidel, *A Splendid Little War*, 5, 8.

soldiers, officers, governments, and vessels. Watterson is more glowing in his assessment of U.S. preparedness than is Freidel, to be sure, but even Freidel asserts a general competency on the part of the Navy that more recent scholars have disputed to some extent. Both authors also cite Spanish weakness as a major factor; Freidel claims that “only the incredible ineptitude of the Spaniards and the phenomenal luck of the Americans kept it from stretching into a struggle as long and full of disasters as the Boer War became for the British.”⁴³

A more specific and very telling example of this tendency to neglect and diminish the import of Cuban contributions exists in the case of the Daiquiri landing. Pérez observes that Freidel and other historians of the Spanish–American War tend to view this event with some puzzlement, questioning why the Spanish failed to prevent the U.S. landing. Indeed, Freidel begins his chapter on this event by stating that, “if the Spanish army had displayed even moderate initiative, it could have turned the landing at Daiquiri into one of the most costly and painful military disasters in United States history.” Pérez stresses the importance of the Cuban role in securing the landing site, and makes much of Freidel’s failure to acknowledge this. Interestingly, Freidel does in fact acknowledge this contribution, asserting that General Shafter chose to make the landing on the basis of information provided by the Cubans that Daiquiri was only lightly defended by the Spaniards, and with regards to these “a Cuban regiment had promised to drive them out.” Nonetheless, his repeated characterization of the lack of Spanish opposition to the landing as “almost miraculous” does demonstrate the relatively little weight he gave to this Cuban contribution, and Pérez’s point holds even if it is

⁴³ Smith, “A reappraisal,” 23; Freidel, *A Splendid Little War*, 3.

perhaps overemphasized. Watterson, for his part, mentions the ease of the Daiquiri landing, noting that “the troops were disembarked without meeting the slightest resistance,” but he does not make as much of this fact as does Freidel. Nor, for that matter, does he make any mention whatsoever of the role played by the Cubans in securing this landing.⁴⁴

Another significant similarity in the works of Freidel and Watterson is the distinction each makes between U.S. goals in Cuba and the Philippines, respectively. As has been discussed, Watterson introduces the idea of imperialist motivations or territorial ambitions only with what he calls the “Philippines question.” Freidel does the same, asserting at the beginning of his book that the declaration of war was in no way motivated by expansionist concerns, but stating rather plainly that “already [in July] in Washington there was a disposition to feel that although the war was being fought to free Cuba, the Philippines would be legitimate spoils.” Watterson’s *History* was of course published too soon to include a discussion of post-1898 developments, but Freidel certainly could have devoted more analysis to the fate of the Philippines, not to mention Cuba or any of the other acquired territories. Instead, he spares little more than a paragraph to mourn the money and time necessary to put down the Filipino insurrection (ironically similar to the Boer War he cites as a contrasting image of the Spanish–American War at the beginning of his book), and the cruelty U.S. soldiers resorted to in so doing. Still, he characterizes even this as merely “the sad prelude to the establishment of a model colonial administration and a slow preparation of the Filipinos for self–government,” and he goes on to

⁴⁴ Pérez, *The War of 1898*, 86, 102–104; Freidel, *A Splendid Little War*, 81–88; Watterson, *History*, 196.

say “the insurrection did little to mar the great victory celebrations when Admiral Dewey finally returned home.”⁴⁵

Though of course Freidel is only one example of a historian of the Spanish–American War, it is striking to see the similarities between his treatment of events and that of Watterson. Indeed, it is remarkably difficult to find a U.S. history of the war, regardless of when it was written, that gives a detailed account of the process by which the United States assumed and relinquished administrative authority in its new territories after the Treaty of Paris was signed. The “legacy” of 1898 inevitably seems to be interpreted as referring narrowly to the subsequent military restructuring or more generally to the U.S. assumption of a new place in world affairs and international politics. The specifics of the nation’s foray into overseas colonialism are ultimately neglected, and perhaps contemporary historians have not moved so very far from the basic assumptions and interpretations present in the kind of instant history written by Henry Watterson in 1898. More so even than imperialist rhetoric and aims, the legacy of the Spanish–American War in United States historiography seems to be the prevalence of an almost exclusively U.S.–centric treatment of events.

In conclusion, then, Henry Watterson’s *History of the Spanish–American War* is interesting primarily for two reasons. First of all, it differs considerably in tone and approach from Watterson’s stridently opinionated editorials and orations, omitting mention of or skating over divisive categories related to race, region, and party affiliation. In so doing, Watterson aligned himself with the general—though by no means uncontested—trends in contemporary efforts to explain the war’s causes, its relatively quick success, and its implications for

⁴⁵ Freidel, *A Splendid Little War*, 280, 304–306.

foreign policy in the future. Specifically, emphasis was placed on the entrance to the war as something of a spontaneous occurrence, on the decisive nature of U.S. contributions to the war effort, and on the country's responsibilities (rather than opportunities) in the administration and oversight of acquired territories. The second main point of interest exists in the appearance of many of these same themes, relatively unchanged, in the work of later prominent historians such as Frank Freidel. Indeed, to this extent it would seem that Henry Watterson and his contemporaries were successful in branding as "history" their take on events that were at the time still quite current.