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Introduction by Andy DeRoche

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Introduction by Andy DeRoche, Front Range Community College

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Andrew Zimmerman has written an impressive and interesting study of German efforts to employ the Tuskegee model for agricultural development in the West African colony that later became the nation of Togo. German officials attempted to utilize ideas promoted by Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, such as growing cotton for the international market and training black people to grow and process the crop. Zimmerman's archival research in the United States, Europe, and Africa is admirable. The story he tells is insightful, and should appeal to a wide range of scholars including specialists in sub-fields such as African-American, intellectual, and African history as well as foreign relations.

As someone who coincidentally taught a course on African-American history for the first time during the fall of 2012 while reading *Alabama in Africa*, I found Zimmerman's re-assessment of the contributions to U.S. relations with Africa at the turn of the twentieth century by Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois to be helpful and enlightening. The Washington/DuBois split widened more gradually and was more nuanced and complex than it has often been portrayed, and Zimmerman captures this clearly. The intellectual history aspects of Zimmerman's book were occasionally challenging for me to comprehend, but that is not necessarily due to any fault on his part. My only formal foray into that academic arena was struggling through Mark Pittenger's seminar at the University of Colorado back in 1994, so I am hardly qualified to comment on matters such as an analysis of German social science.

Zimmerman's discussion of the international affairs aspects of colonial Togo, on the other hand, is a topic within my general scholarly jurisdiction. I found his argument that German authorities sought to utilize racist New South ideas to create a profitable cotton-growing colony to be convincing and tragic. Moreover, while of course none of the story surprised me, the specific details were previously unknown to me. I have a close friend from Togo, follow Togo's soccer players closely, and know a bit about the nation's history during the Cold War era; but, the earlier period of German involvement described by Zimmerman was a story I had not previously learned, and thus it was quite fascinating. Similarly, the information presented in *Alabama in Africa* about the agency of Togo's people, both before and during the German colonization, was also new to this historian, and it impressed me as being an important contribution to the history of foreign relations.

The three reviewers participating in this roundtable all found much to praise about Zimmerman's book. Professor W. Fitzhugh Brundage offers comments which are generally positive. Brundage commends Zimmerman's "compelling fusion" of micro and transnational history, his "enviable erudition," and the fact that he was "unintimidated by conventional disciplinary boundaries." Brundage does offer some mild yet constructive criticism of Zimmerman's tendency to claim too much significance for the Tuskegee in Togo episode, contending convincingly that domestic southern American politics had more influence on Booker T. Washington's decision to revise the Tuskegee curriculum than did the Togo project.

Paul Kramer also reviewed Zimmerman's book quite positively overall. He describes *Alabama in Africa* as being "truly remarkable," "powerful and illuminating," and a "model of global history." Kramer echoes Brundage's point that Zimmerman greatly overstated the impact of the Togo experiment on the Tuskegee curriculum. Kramer offers other criticisms, finding that Zimmerman's explanation of the "dynamics of transfer" could be more explicit and direct. Kramer also wonders why the book's main title only mentions Alabama, when German views about Polish immigrant workers were at least as influential on their Togo policy. Kramer ends his review on a high note, though, concluding that Zimmerman has produced "urgent, necessary, and exemplary history."

Natalie Ring provides perhaps the most glowing comments of the three. She praises Zimmerman strongly for his nuanced discussions of Washington and DuBois. She seconds Brundage's admiration for Zimmerman's blending of micro and macro history. She is impressed by Zimmerman's attention to gender, and found his narrative regarding the evolution of the social sciences to be "fantastic." Her only criticism of *Alabama in Africa* is that it is "overly ambitious," and at times "a tough book to grapple with." Nevertheless Ring in the end judges Zimmerman's tome to be "meticulously researched" transnational history which represents "the best this scholarship has to offer."

The only suggestions I would add to these thoughtful review essays by Ring, Kramer, and Brundage would be that Zimmerman could have included a few additional secondary sources in his otherwise extremely impressive bibliography. One surprising omission, for example, is Walter Rodney's *A History of the Upper Guinea Coast* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). Zimmerman also could have insightfully compared the events in Togo in the early 1900s with simultaneous occurrences in Panama, where the United States government applied racist New South ideology (especially segregation and lower pay for workers of color) during the construction of the canal. For this he could have drawn profitably from Julie Greene's *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal*.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, perhaps a brief contrast of the negative impact of the globalization of New South ideology in Togo in the early 1900s with the positive impact of the globalization of progressive southern racial politics on U.S./Africa relations in the late 1900s would have been an interesting addition to Zimmerman's already mind-boggling display of academic acumen.<sup>2</sup> Overall, though, I share the three reviewers' enthusiasm for the importance of Zimmerman's book. *Alabama in Africa* should be widely and carefully read, and will inspire other scholars to undertake equally ambitious and enlightening transnational projects.

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<sup>1</sup> Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> See Andy DeRoche, "Andrew Young and Africa: From the Civil Rights Movement to the Atlanta Olympics," in James Cobb and William Stueck, editors, *Globalization and the American South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 185-208.

## Participants:

**Andrew Zimmerman** is professor of history at the George Washington University. He earned his Ph.D. from the history department at the University of California, San Diego, in 1998. He is the author of *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago, 2001) and *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South* (Princeton, 2010). He is currently working on a global history of the American Civil War, provisionally titled "Slaves and Soldiers in the Red and Black Atlantic: A Transnational and Revolutionary History of the American Civil War.

**Andy DeRoche** teaches history at Front Range Community College and international affairs at the University of Colorado. He currently serves as an H-Diplo editor for African topics. His major publications include a study of US/Zimbabwe relations and a biography of Andrew Young. He is working on a book about Zambia's relations with the United States during the Kaunda era.

**W. Fitzhugh Brundage** is the William B. Umstead Professor of History at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. He received his BA at the University of Chicago and his Ph.D. at Harvard University. He most recently contributed to and edited *Beyond Blackface: African Americans and the Creation of American Popular Culture, 1890-1930* (2011). He is currently writing a history of torture in America from 1500 to the present.

**Paul A. Kramer** is an Associate Professor of History at Vanderbilt University, having received his Ph.D. from Princeton University in 1998. He is the author of *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States and the Philippines* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006), as well as numerous articles, including "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 116, No. 5 (December 2011), pp. 1348-1391. He is co-editor of "The United States in the World," a series published by Cornell University Press. He is currently at work on a book-length project on the geopolitics of U. S. immigration policy across the twentieth century. His website is [paulkrameronline.com](http://paulkrameronline.com).

**Natalie J. Ring** is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Texas at Dallas. She is the author of *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State, 1880-1930* (University of Georgia Press, 2012) and co-editor of *The Folly of Jim Crow: Rethinking the Segregated South* (Texas A & M Press, 2012). She is currently at work on a history of Angola Prison in Louisiana that spans two centuries.

**A** *Alabama in Africa* is an uncommonly ambitious and broadly conceived work. It is a compelling fusion of micro and transnational history. Andrew Zimmerman redirects our attention to an obscure agricultural experiment in Togo at the dawn of the twentieth century and then traces from it the contours of a transnational dialogue over civilization, labor, and race that would dictate, to a considerable degree, the subsequent development of the colonized southern hemisphere, in particular Sub-Saharan Africa. With enviable erudition in disparate historiographies and exceptional clarity of exposition, Zimmerman reveals connections, traces influences, and assigns consequences amidst the swirling events on three continents during a period of furious transformation. His accomplishments as a prose craftsman and researcher are impressive, and, I hope, will inspire subsequent scholars to attempt similar works.

It may seem curious, counter-intuitive, or even absurd to compare Zimmerman's global perspective to a micro history. I do so only to draw attention to a methodological/interpretative assumption that I discern in both *Alabama in Africa* and many micro histories. An inescapable challenge all narrative historians face is the conceit of their narrative. With a disciplinary predisposition to locate and ponder the specific, the particular, and the exceptional, historians simultaneously aspire to discern broad patterns in the course of human events while also examining the particular. The tension between these ambitions has vexed and energized historians for centuries (if not longer). In recent decades, historians have employed micro history to resolve this dilemma in a manner consonant with our current interest in inclusive ("bottom up") history with broad conclusions. Earlier modes of historical narrative, such as the case studies favored by social science historians of the 1950s and 1960s, fostered historical research on the particular to test broad historical narratives. In other words, the broad narratives existed *a priori* and were verified by case studies. More recently, the attraction of micro history seems to be the possibility of using close, circumscribed studies to generate broader narrative claims. The usefulness and appeal of this approach is clear; it offers historians a method by which to find meaning in and bring coherence to vast topics that defy or are overlooked by older sub-disciplinary boundaries (for example, economic history, political history, intellectual history, social history). Zimmerman is unintimidated by conventional disciplinary boundaries and displays an omnivore's palette.

Employing research and narrative methods analogous to the commodity chain method used by some economic historians, Zimmerman and like-minded scholars now routinely identify a convenient historical nexus and then trace their way outward from that starting point to the broadest possible historical implications. In Zimmerman's case, the arrival of four African Americans, trained at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, in the German colony of Togo is the pebble dropped in the ocean of history that propels him outward to discussions of, among other topics, German racial ideology, American industrial arts pedagogy, African modes of labor after the slave trade, and the transnational dialogue about civilization and the White Man's burden.

Zimmerman excels at the transnational intellectual currents that informed and linked debates throughout the imperialist West about race, civilization, and economic progress. That W. E. B. Du Bois in the United States, Max Weber in Germany, Maurice Evans in South Africa, among others, were all wrestling simultaneously with this Gordian knot is not news. Zimmerman, however, demonstrates how much direct and meaningful intellectual cross-pollination occurred between the ideas of these and other participants in the colonial project. His account of the circulation of ideas about peasantry and labor between Du Bois, who studied in Berlin under economist Gustav Schmoller, Robert E. Park, who also trained in Germany but was most profoundly influenced by Booker T. Washington, and Weber, who was a close observer of post-emancipation labor in the American South, is revelatory. The value of this transnational perspective is clear. Zimmerman convinces me that American historians have paid too much attention to Du Bois' apparent Hegelianism and not enough attention to the intellectual currents in the influential German *Verein für Sozialpolitik*. Likewise, Zimmerman make a persuasive case that when the industrial education pedagogy linked to Booker T. Washington is understood in a transnational perspective both its origins and its implications are far more complicated than scholars often acknowledge. Washington and his ilk were moving with and trying to harness international intellectual currents of their age. The emancipatory potential of industrial education cannot be fully understood as long as historians shoe-horn the debate over it into the conventional and absurdly narrow Du Bois vs. Washington narrative. For these reasons, among many, *Alabama in Africa* deserves a place beside Daniel Rodgers' *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*,<sup>1</sup> another masterful account of the trans-Atlantic exchange of ideas during the early twentieth century.

Transnational history along the lines of *Alabama in Africa* is, of course, beset with challenges. There are so many strands to keep track of that not even the most nimble fingers or mind can weave all of them into truly tidy whole. In Zimmerman's case, his narrative conceit – the transfer of New South intellectual capital and technology in the hinterland of a German colonial outpost in Africa – is deceptively tidy and overly schematic. The momentum of Zimmerman's argument suggests that the Tuskegee experiment in Togo held comparable significance for all of the parties and nations touched by it. Were such claims isolated to a few passages in the book, they might be dismissed. But they seem to be embedded in the architecture of the book and its narrative.

One of Zimmerman's main contentions is that Tuskegee's modest and short-lived agricultural project, begun in 1901, and also the grander European colonial project in Africa played "a central role in the movement from the New South to the global South" (248). Zimmerman makes a compelling case for the importance of the transfer of technology and know-how from the United States to the German colony. But he is asserting a much larger claim; he posits a transfer of political, racial, and economic ideology as well. Here I perceive a conceptual slippage that implies a closer historical relationship than Zimmerman in fact establishes. The global South to which Zimmerman refers is a

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998).

reification of a cluster of ideas about labor exploitation, race, and capitalism. The “New South,” by way of contrast, is a convenient (although admittedly arbitrary) label for a specific historical period in the history of a region of the United States. Zimmerman recasts a term of historical periodization so that it becomes a codeword for an ideology that presaged twentieth-century colonial ideologies. Admittedly, historians of the American South do speak about a New South ‘creed’ or ideology, but what they refer to with this term is distinct from what Zimmerman defines as the “New South.” Zimmerman, of course, is free to infuse old labels with new meanings. But in this instance, he does so by winnowing out much of the nuance of both the era of the New South and the so-called New South ideology. To the extent that a New South creed existed, it was a jumble of contradictory and sketchy aspirations and assumptions rather than a prescriptive ideology fit for export. In this passage, I can almost hear the sound of Zimmerman’s hammer as he bangs the two concepts of the “New South” and the “global South” into complimentary shapes.

Even more significant, however, is his claim that the Togo experiment played a central role in the emergence of the “global South.” Here again, I contend, is an instance of interpretative overreach. Causation is asserted when only correlation seems demonstrated. Zimmerman’s book persuades me that German colonizers and their intellectual allies were voracious (if selective) students of contemporary agricultural and post-agrarian labor relations. As technocrats, they looked for expertise where they could find it. Tuskegee was a valuable resource, but it was only a small part of the German or European colonial project. They imported expertise from Texas and elsewhere to Togo, Kenya, the Sudan, and other colonial outposts. It is a large step from the details of the Tuskegee agricultural extension work in Togo, as it were, to the claim that “The global effects of the Tuskegee expedition suggest how the historically minuscule can transform the historically enormous.” (247) To make this claim really stick Zimmerman would need to have provided a much fuller account of what the Tuskegee experts actually did on a day-to-day basis during their sojourn in Togo. Zimmerman in fact provides little more detail about the Tuskegee expedition than did Louis Harlan in a brief article published almost a half century ago.<sup>2</sup> Admittedly, Zimmerman is mainly interested in the transfer of knowledge among colonizers, rather than the tedious work undertaken by Tuskegee’s field agents. Even so, how did the science of cotton cultivation taught at the Tuskegee experiment circulate within Togo once the Tuskegee representatives left or died? What became of the Togolese boys who were ‘educated’ at the model plantations and the school that the Tuskegee experts directed? Did they disseminate their cotton know-how or did they leave the land for other careers? In the absence of these crucial details, I must conclude that “Tuskegee in Togo” was much more significant as an idea than as a practical transformative model of colonization.

Another example of Zimmerman’s tendency to overstate the significance of Togo venture for his subjects is his claim that Booker T. Washington’s brush with the German colonial project in turn shaped Washington’s program. One reverberation of Washington’s colonial

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<sup>2</sup> Louis R. Harlan, “Booker T. Washington and the White Man’s Burden,” *American Historical Review* 71 (Jan., 1966): 441-467.

foray, according to Zimmerman, was a revision of Tuskegee's curriculum and mission to make it more consonant with the colonial ideology that the school came to represent in the eyes of white European colonizers. Zimmerman repeatedly points out that the reforms that blunted the emancipatory potential of the pedagogy at Tuskegee coincided with Washington's deepening involvement with Togo. I must confess that I had never previously noticed the coincidence of these two developments. But Zimmerman, I believe, fails to adequately acknowledge other, arguably more influential pressures at work on Washington. Zimmerman makes little of the fact that Washington ran a state chartered institution of higher education. Yes, he raised impressive sums of money from private donors, and, as a result, could undertake initiatives that few of his university peers, white or black, could. But unlike virtually every other institution with which Zimmerman compares Tuskegee (for example, Atlanta University, Fisk, Hampton), Washington's school was dependent on legislative support. Through much of the first decade of the twentieth century, and in particular from about 1905 to 1910, Washington was fighting a rear-guard action to defend all public education for blacks in Alabama and the American South in general against attacks by leading white southern politicians who sought to defund it. These unrelenting attacks on black education, far more than any influence that colonial discourse may have exerted, explain the apparent narrowing of Tuskegee's mission. Similar curriculum "reforms" happened at virtually all other state-funded black public colleges in the South, none of which had any significant involvement in colonial Africa.

Zimmerman's penchant for forced symmetry also is evident in his assertion that there were parallels between Weber's ideas about German colonization of East Prussia and Washington's ideas about Togo. Perhaps the two men did share certain general assumptions and conclusions. But Weber was immersed in debates over rural Prussia in addition to having had first-hand experience with the region. Washington, in contrast, never made a systematic study of African colonization, never visited the region, and voiced opinions about Africa that were at once both inchoate and conventional. The Tuskegee experiment in Togo, moreover, was a minor undertaking for Washington and his institution. Tuskegee made only a small investment of time and resources in it. It is worth reminding readers that Booker T. Washington's papers are one of the largest collections in the Library of Congress (and they do not include the significant body of correspondence that remains in the archives at Tuskegee). Washington seemingly corresponded with everyone of note about a staggering range of public issues. Only a minuscule portion of his papers touch on the Togo experiment. Yes, Washington periodically liked to boast about the role of Tuskegee in Africa, etc., but, as a practical matter, his attention was focused on domestic politics and his organizational initiatives, and on undermining his critics and rewarding his allies. Put another way, Zimmerman has the tail (i.e., Togo) wagging the dog (i.e., Tuskegee). Tuskegee's foray into Togo had, I suspect, much less influence on Tuskegee and Washington than Zimmerman acknowledges. Indeed, *Alabama in Africa* highlights how comparatively uninvested Washington was in Africa and the state of the African diaspora outside of the United States. Despite being an international black celebrity with unprecedented influence, Washington displayed little sustained interest in the plight of people of color outside the United States or in building institutional ties to activists in the Africa diaspora. The puzzle remains, then, as to why Washington didn't make more of the opportunity that the Togo venture might have offered.



Let me conclude by stressing that my reservations about some of Zimmerman's conclusions are moderated by my respect for his impressive accomplishment. He has navigated thickets of scholarship on topics ranging from the science of cotton cultivation to the gendered division of labor in colonial Africa and written an engaging and important work that will hold interest for historians of at least three continents. His conclusions, even those with which I differ, are cogent and deserve careful consideration by specialists. *Alabama in Africa* is a testament to the potential of transnational history to recast the familiar and reveal the overlooked.

Review by Paul A. Kramer, Vanderbilt University

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Andrew Zimmerman's *Alabama in Africa* is a truly remarkable achievement, one of the most powerful and illuminating works to emerge so far in the effort to recast historical thinking beyond national scales. At its core, it is an inter-imperial history of German colonialists' attempt to transplant New South cotton varieties and labor regimes to Togo in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but Zimmerman embeds this project in rich, wide-ranging, multilayered intellectual, social and political contexts, weaving this story into an account of the violent conjunctures of racial ideology and globalizing capitalism and the historical roots of modern social knowledge. Elegantly wrought, subtly argued and carefully researched, it is a model of global history writing that provides one of the most convincing histories available of the forging of racialized power in the modern world. As Zimmerman demonstrates, the racial commonplace that German and New South ideologues constructed in dialogue—that Africans and their descendants in the New World possessed both an exceptional capacity for agricultural labor and an exceptional absence of self-disciplining morality—authorized exceptional exercises of state power on both sides of the Atlantic, while leaving an imprint on the conceptual vocabulary that scholars of society—including historians—bring to their work.

The book, which reconstructs linkages between actors, discourses and institutions in motion between Germany, the U. S. South and Togo, can be usefully seen as undertaking three tasks that are both distinct and seamlessly interlaced. Fundamentally it is a transfer history: the story of German colonialists' efforts to reproduce the New South's cotton regime—a regime they understood simultaneously as racial, material, and political—in their African colonies with the aid of a Tuskegee Institute not lacking in imperial ambition. More broadly, it is the history of the contrapuntal relationship between racial ideology and labor coercion in an era of globalizing capital. As Zimmerman shows, the Tuskegee cotton experiment in Togo was both enabled by and in turn provided raw material for contentious debates about race, labor and migration: about how modern states and corporate powers could successfully mold labor forces that were free but subordinated, mobile but captive. Finally, it engages the history of social thought itself, as an account of key figures—especially Karl Marx, Max Weber, W. E. B. Du Bois and Robert Park—whose theories were both foundational for many twentieth-century historians and social scientists and forged in precisely the contests over labor and freedom that Zimmerman places at the center of his inquiry.

Three particular strengths of the book are worth highlighting. First, it represents a triumph of historical scaling. It would not be inappropriate to call it a work of transnational history for its refusal to conform to national-territorial charts, but the term would also reduce its intricate cartographies. Better to think of it as an innovative exercise in inter-imperial history, a tracking of the borrowing and translation of techniques of control, production and order-building between imperial formations. Importantly, Zimmerman's imperial systems are not coterminous with nation-states: his German colonialists and social scientists focus not on the United States as a whole, but on a specific set of strategies at the core of what can be seen as the United States' *imperium in imperio*—

the brutal system of Southern labor coercion, underwritten by essentializing hierarchies, that secured agricultural commodity production and regional and national industrialization. Rather than framing his story in terms of nations—even interconnected nations—Zimmerman lets the idiosyncratic channels dug by his actors structure his account, tracing their travels, collaborations, networks, imaginaries and citations. He has been peripatetic in his research, carrying out archival research in Germany, the United States, Tanzania and Slovenia, and the work has a remarkably deep focal length, seeming to lose little sharpness as it shifts between German, U. S. and Togolese settings. Notably—and agreeably—absent is a sense of inherent connection between this broadened historiographic scale and emancipatory (or even cosmopolitan) politics as such, a puzzling but surprisingly common feature of the charters and prefaces of transnational historiography during its first self-conscious decade. Alongside other recent and emerging works, Zimmerman’s book reveals the ways that the “transnational” was a space that belonged not only to migrants, subalterns and liberationists, but to traffickers in hierarchy and subordination.

Second among the book’s chief accomplishments is the subtlety and power of its account of race-making. While many historians detach racial imaginaries from the specific material and institutional contexts that shape them and are shaped by them (often exaggerating their temporal and geographic portability in the process), Zimmerman insists on grounding the German-Togolese-American politics of racial difference in a distinct historical situation, specifically, the problem of labor discipline in a capitalist world that enabled, required and was simultaneously troubled by the fact of formally emancipated and mobile workers. As he shows, racial knowledge moved along global routes carved out by the aspiration to translate exceptional politico-legal status and exceptional exploitation into each other, whether this project unfolded in settings of formal colonial rule (as in Togo), apartheid citizenship (as in the United States), or migratory subordination (as in Eastern Germany). In this way, “the Negro” emerged simultaneously—and inseparably—as a set of essentialized understandings of the character, capacities and limitations of Africans and African-descended peoples, and an array of coercive technologies intended to channel their labor towards the dependent production of agricultural commodities (here, cotton) for the global market. This contrapuntal analysis of the interplay between essentialized and laboring bodies in the imaginaries of German colonialists, Jim Crow ideologues and connected German and American social scientists makes *Alabama in Africa* indispensable reading for historians of racialized power working at local, sub-national and national scales, as well as imperial and global ones.

Third, the book re-historicizes key figures in modern socio-political and historical thought in compelling ways. As Zimmerman shows, Max Weber, Karl Marx, W. E. B. Du Bois and Robert Park were deeply immersed in transatlantic dialogues over the meanings of race, labor, and state in the post-emancipation era, and their thought—which generated many of the twentieth century’s core paradigms of social knowledge—cannot be understood apart from the conditions of its origins. Weber appears here as an anxious racial nationalist preoccupied with the degenerating influence of the German East’s migratory Polish workers, the *Sachse* many in the book will compare to African-American sharecroppers and who, Weber feared, would bring proletarianization, class conflict and

revolution in their wake. Marx, to the contrary, emerges as a fierce partisan of free labor beyond capitalism, who sees in African-American emancipation a decisive turn in the global struggle for workers' freedom. Du Bois reports on New South agriculture before the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* as a student, eagerly adopting its approach to instrumental expertise and social reform, while remaining wary of its racial enthusiasms. It is arguably Robert Park whose trajectory most densely crisscrosses Zimmerman's linked worlds of the German East, the American South and colonial Africa, as a student of agricultural sociology in Germany, a publicist for Tuskegee-style industrial education as the alternative to King Leopold's vicious rule in the Congo, and founder (along with William I. Thomas, a scholar of Polish *Sachse*) of the Chicago school of sociology. Readers get to eavesdrop on some amazing moments that, while perhaps well-known to biographers and specialists, take on new meaning when placed on Zimmerman's epic canvas: Max Weber's minstrel-style imitation of black speech during a visit to distant relatives in Mount Airy, North Carolina stands out here. By building these actors into his story, Zimmerman provides deep and understated insight into the need to situate our very categories in the historical moments that gave rise to them, and points to the challenge of reconstructing the past with the conceptual tools inherited from it. Zimmerman's way through this dilemma involves historicizing social categories themselves, while pushing beyond their limits: while clearly drawn to materialist analysis, for example, he distances himself from Marx's sense of race as epiphenomenon. In situating the book's own analysis, one might say that it represents a conversation between the radicalizing, race-conscious Du Bois of the early twentieth century and the liberatory Civil War-era Marx (a different version of which, of course, occurred within Du Bois' own thought following his Marxian turn.)

A book of such vast and largely achieved ambitions necessarily has some limitations. On several occasions, Zimmerman corrects his historical actors for what he identifies as logical and/or moral consistencies in their thinking in a way that comes across as ahistorical, implicitly positing as it does a true rationality outside of history against which these logics can be gauged, and foregrounding inconsistency itself as an ethical lapse. The evidence for one of the book's strongest causal claims—that Tuskegee's imperial turn promoted its conservative pedagogical shift in the early twentieth century—is relatively thin, ultimately hinging on a chronological correlation. The claim itself is also given undue rhetorical emphasis: a book that covers as extensive ground as this one would lose none of its power if it turned out that forces other than collaboration with German colonialists directed Tuskegee away from whatever insurgent potential it may have once possessed.

One of the principle risks of a materialized approach to race, such as Zimmerman's, is functionalism, whether strategic (race as a convenient divide-and-rule instrument of capital) or ideological (race as the always-available means for naturalizing capitalist social hierarchies.) In his admirable effort to fasten racial and material histories, Zimmerman can sometimes approximate functionalisms of these kinds. On occasion, the articulation between German and American cotton regimes and "Negro" ideology can seem too tidy (did German colonialists really not refer to Togolese as "Negroes" prior to the Tuskegee cotton experiment (14), for example?) and Zimmerman's firm connection of racial difference to labor control raises the question of why the race/labor complex he studies survived (in

mutated form, at least) far beyond the historical eras of both sharecropping and colonialism.

Finally, there is the question of the core transfer narrative. Throughout the book, Zimmerman refers to the race/labor formation under study as a “New South” entity, encapsulated in the “Alabama in Africa” title, and he provides plentiful evidence that post-emancipation American debates on the ‘Negro problem’ were central to German understanding of colonial governance and exploitation in Togo. But in such a thickly-connected historical universe, why privilege a transatlantic, New South axis over an intra-European, *Sachse* one (even understanding, as Zimmerman vividly shows, that these imaginaries were themselves co-produced)? If Togolese people were imagined by German colonialists in terms of both “the Negro” and the Polish migrant worker, why is this ultimately the story of “Alabama in Africa”? Here the challenge is one of talking about relative depths, degrees and kinds of discursive-political influence in ways that are both sophisticated and synoptic. Still, the book’s title in some ways betrays the complexities of the terrain the work actually maps.

As a way to both signpost and aerate its dense analysis, the book might have also engaged in a more explicit discussion of the historical dynamics of transfer itself. Zimmerman has achieved a model history of multidirectional discursive and institutional transmission, but he provides little methodological guidance, leaving readers to ponder (and ponder we should) how he pulled it off. Such a guide might have enlisted the well-developed field of transfer history to explore the interacting forces that promote, shape and constrain the movement of ideas, practices and institutions between societies: the intellectual contact zones where perception of sameness can be assembled; the trans-societal lingua franca through which potential interlocutors can discover and recognize each other; the tissues of constructed commonalities with the capacity to render unlike phenomena similar or even identical; and the hard wires of transport, communication and production that render some mobilities possible and profitable, while pre-empting, compromising or defeating others, for example. These inquiries all animate and enable the book, but only tacitly; a more direct address might have eased the way for scholars inspired to adopt Zimmerman’s mode of connective historiography.

At first glance, the sugar beet on the dust jacket of *Alabama in Africa* seems an odd choice. But upon further reflection, it condenses remarkably well (as would a cotton boll) Zimmerman’s themes and methods: as a global commodity, as the offspring of agrarian science and, most of all, as the toil of uprooted workers shut off from other productive possibilities. It may also speak to Zimmerman’s insistence on bringing large-scale structures and histories—of capital’s global enclosures, of race’s iron cages—to ‘ground.’ In its nesting of local, imperial and world-wide scales, its nuanced account of the entanglements of labor discipline and essentializing thought, and much else, Zimmerman has provided an urgent, necessary and exemplary history of a divided, integrated global condition.

In his magnum opus *Black Reconstruction in America* (1935), W.E.B. DuBois wrote "like Nemesis of Greek tragedy, the central problem of America after the Civil War, as before was the black man: those four million souls whom the nation had used and degraded, and on whom the South had built an oligarchy similar to the colonial imperialism of today, erected on cheap colored labor and rising raw material for manufacture."<sup>1</sup> DuBois' book on the post-Civil War South was not only significant because it highlighted the importance of freedmen and portrayed them as heroes, but also because it established connections between global capitalism, western imperialism, and the exploitation of the proletariat in the wake of emancipation. Andrew Zimmerman's *Alabama in Africa* shows us how decades earlier DuBois reached this point in his thinking by way of interaction with Booker T. Washington, his training in German social science, his interest in Pan-Africanism in the context of empire, and his study of Karl Marx. Zimmerman's research offers a more nuanced portrait of DuBois' career than one usually finds.

But Zimmerman's book is much more than a tale about DuBois. *Alabama in Africa* relates Booker T. Washington's collaboration with German imperialists to establish a colonial cotton program in Togo, Africa to the New South ideology of labor control surrounding the "Negro question." This partnership evolved into and reflected what he calls a "colonial political economy of the global South." (1) The Tuskegee expedition links three continental histories together--American, German, and African--and reveals what historian Sven Beckert has identified as a "global empire of cotton structured by multiple and powerful states and their colonies and worked by non-slave labor."<sup>2</sup> Zimmerman argues that German imperialists were attracted to Booker T. Washington's philosophy of industrial education because both Germany and the United States underwent a shift from bonded labor to free labor over the course of the nineteenth century--in 1807 with the end of serfdom and in 1865 with the abolition of slavery respectively. In due course, the parallels between German and American ideas and policies about agriculture, labor, race, and education unmistakably shaped the pattern of German colonial settlement in Africa in the early twentieth century.

Early on in his study, Zimmerman illustrates how the experience of German social scientists and policy makers with Polish laborers cultivating sugarbeets in the eastern part of the Prussian state made them more receptive to a New South patriarchal form of labor coercion involving small farming. German social scientists saw many similarities between the Prussian East and the U.S. South in the broad search for a capitalist alternative to serfdom in the last few decades of the nineteenth century. Over time these professionals developed a particular interest in how white southerners established a plantation-based

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<sup>1</sup> W.E.B. DuBois, introduction by David Levering Lewis, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (New York: The Free, Press, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Sven Beckert, "Emancipation and Empire: Reconstructing the Worldwide Web of Cotton Production in the Age of the American Civil War," *American Historical Review* 109 (December 2004), 1405.

economy that relied on racism to control free black labor. Leaders of the Settlement Commission advocated a state-sponsored plan of "internal colonization" designed to set up Polish workers on small plots of land in contract-bound households (16). They argued that this ethnic group was cut out for the grueling labor that sugarbeet cultivation required. As Zimmerman stresses, "concerns about free labor in eastern agriculture thus included fears that Polish residents threatened the ethnic, and even racial purity of Prussia." (82) As racial politics escalated on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1890s, and later, when the thinking of Booker T. Washington and German colonialists came together in mutually reinforcing ways, the U.S. South and the Prussian agenda became the colonial models for the colonization of Africa.

During the past decade an increasing number of scholars in history and literature have paid more attention to the global South, and indeed many deem this body of scholarship a burgeoning new field.<sup>3</sup> Some of this recent work has found a home in a relatively new journal entitled *The Global South*.<sup>4</sup> Taken as a whole, the new global approach runs the gambit from being exploratory in nature to theoretically abstract. Frequently, scholarship on the global South focuses on the back and forth movement of people, models of governance, and racial, economic, and social scientific ideologies both within the South as well as between the South and the broader Atlantic world. The words 'global' and 'transnational' are often used interchangeably and do not always involve a direct comparison between seemingly analogous places. Works that do embrace a comparative framework may place multiple locales or texts side by side to 'compare and contrast' but they often struggle to identify deep and unequivocal connections that provide more than a superficial assessment.<sup>5</sup> Zimmerman's meticulously researched book displays the best this scholarship has to offer. It is successful at tracing the broad transnational traffic of ideas and people while providing a rigorous and compelling comparison of three locations. It is simultaneously macrohistory and microhistory. By employing a comparative methodology that identifies discernable linkages between people, ideologies, and colonial strategies of

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<sup>3</sup> The number of books and articles published on the global South in the past decade or more is too extensive to list. For important examples of this scholarly turn in literature see Deborah N. Cohn, *History and Memory in the Two Souths: Recent Southern and Spanish American Fiction* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1999); Jennifer Rae Greeson, *Our South: Geographic Fantasy and Rise of National Literature* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2010); and Jon Smith and Deborah N. Cohn, *Look Away! The South in New World Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). For some recent work in history see Matthew Pratt Guterl, *American Mediterranean: Southern Slaveholders in the Age of Emancipation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008); Natalie J. Ring, *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State, 1880-1930* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012); and Erin Elizabeth Clune, "'From Light Copper to the Blackest Lowest Type': Daniel Thompkins and the Racial Order of the Global New South," *Journal of Southern History* 76 (May 2010): 275-314.

<sup>4</sup> The journal *The Global South* is published by Indiana University Press and issued its first volume in 2007.

<sup>5</sup> For an example of a provocative comparative analysis that struggles to move beyond a more side by side comparison see Rebecca Scott, *Degrees of Freedom: Louisiana and Cuba after Slavery* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2008).

control, Zimmerman demonstrates how transnational history can broaden our understanding of seemingly settled historical narratives.

For example, we learn that the sharp distinction between the philosophies of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois only emerged slowly as an outgrowth of their contact with the German empire. Zimmerman suggests that from 1895, at the time of Washington's Atlanta Exposition address, until the foray into Togo after 1900, the Tuskegee leader instilled in his students a more emancipatory promise of economic improvement. Furthermore, this vision might have contested the oppressive social and economic features of the New South. Zimmerman notes that "Washington himself rejected the segregationist understanding of the speech that emerged soon after he delivered it." (50) In fact, he corroborates the revisionist portrait offered by Robert J. Norrell in a recent biography of Booker T. Washington.<sup>6</sup> Zimmerman explains how the Tuskegee program included both industrial education and a fair amount of academic schooling in sociology and political economy, notwithstanding the one-sided face Washington presented to the public. In 1899 Washington offered DuBois a job on the Tuskegee faculty to engage in social scientific research. The faculty and students of Tuskegee championed the academic component of the school which actually mirrored the standard conservative education provided to whites in the South. Not until Washington began conferring with Baron von Herman, the agricultural attaché of the German Embassy, did he embrace fully the form of "colonial Pan-Africanism" that presented the South as a prototype for colonial "civilizing missions" (63, 9). Washington's expanding contact with German imperialists and the ensuing project in Togo engendered a more conservative platform of racialized labor control that flowered in the concept of industrial education.

Likewise, Zimmerman presents a layered picture of DuBois. In his account, DuBois did not become truly militant until the early twentieth century. DuBois congratulated Washington on the general thrust of the Atlanta Exposition address, approached Washington about establishing a program in sociology at Tuskegee, trained with conservative social scientists at the University of Berlin in the 1890s, and initially viewed the "Negro problem" not so much "a racial problem about black people, but rather a political and economic problem of the United States to which African American sociologists should devote themselves." (60) According to Zimmerman, DuBois began to challenge racism more openly and directly criticize western imperialism after he attended the first Pan-African Conference (1900) in London which reinforced his belief that questions of race must always be considered in a transnational context.

*Alabama in Africa* wades into many historiographical and theoretical debates, aside from the conventional interpretation of the philosophical split between Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois. Zimmerman rejects the static idea of "peasant essentialism" and James C. Scott's analysis in *Weapons of the Weak* that views class struggle in rural societies

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<sup>6</sup> See Robert J. Norrell, *Up From History: The Life of Booker T. Washington* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).



through everyday small acts of resistance.<sup>7</sup> (259) Instead, Zimmerman maintains that any resistance by agricultural workers must be considered part of the dynamic system of class conflict as articulated by Karl Marx. In addition, the author's analysis invokes the decades-old disagreement among southern historians regarding the extent to which the agricultural South followed the 'Prussian Road' (a phrase coined by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin) or took the American path of capitalism in the post-Emancipation period. In the former, the planter class or "reactionary landed elite" retained their rural political and economic power through the coercive control of agricultural labor and in the latter, a new "emerging bourgeoisie" came to power and advocated industrialization and urbanization.<sup>8</sup> Zimmerman concludes, "In fact, the path of the New South was more Prussian, and the Prussian path more Southern, and both more African, than most historians have realized." (238)

Zimmerman's assessment of the convergence of a New South ideology of labor control, the German exploitation of Prussian peasants in the sugar beet industry, and the German colonial cotton programs in Africa is somewhat at odds with more fashionable interpretations in colonial and postcolonial studies "that give causal primacy to culture and ideas." (256) Although he does not specifically cite those who adopt a "monocausal" approach in their attention to empire, Zimmerman is likely referring to scholars such as Ann Laura Stoler, Nicholas B. Dirks, Amy Kaplan, and Donald E. Pease.<sup>9</sup> This scholarship on the 'culture of colonialism,' with its focus on colonial discourse as a vehicle of power, the idea of the 'Other,' and the colonial gaze, has been influenced immensely by highly theoretical books such as Edward Said's *Orientalism* and Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes*.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, colonial and postcolonial studies, with their principal attention to culture and rhetoric, inform a lot of the scholarship on the "global South."

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<sup>7</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

<sup>8</sup> Quotations are from Steven Hahn, "Class and State in Postemancipation Societies: Southern Planters in Comparative Perspective," *American Historical Review* 95 (February 1990), 76-77. For examples of these competing arguments, especially see Jonathan M. Weiner, *Social Origins of the New South: Alabama, 1860-1885* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978) and Dwight B. Billings, *Planters and the Making of a "New South": Class, Politics, and Development in North Carolina, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> See Ann Laura Stoler, ed., *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Nicholas B. Dirks, *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993); and Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (1978, Reprint, New York: Vintage, 1994) and Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

However, *Alabama in America* does not ignore the role ideas or culture played in western imperialism even though the book employs a basic political-economic framework. Zimmerman states that he is interested in a multi-layered interpretation. For instance, he considers the role gender played in patterns of colonial domination, how education was used as both a tool of reform and control in imperial settings, and how colonial state authorities generated new bodies of respected knowledge on such topics as race or social science. The book details the efforts taken by German colonial authorities in Prussia and Africa to promote heterosexual monogamous relationships within agricultural households as well as to regulate the sexual and reproductive practices of Polish migrants and African cotton growers. Their greatest fear was that sexual debauchery would undermine the power of the Prussian state and weaken allegiance to a homogeneous patriarchal national identity. Ironically, Zimmerman's investigation into the gendered nature of small farming and its accompanying racial politics is reminiscent of Ann Stoler's look at the power of personal and carnal intimacies in colonial Indonesia.<sup>11</sup>

Zimmerman's book must also be called an intellectual and institutional history. He provides a fantastic genealogical narrative of the transatlantic field of social science that links together such diverse figures as Gustav Schmoller, W.E.B. DuBois, Booker T. Washington, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, Max Weber, and Robert E. Park. The *Verein für Sozialpolitik* (established in 1872), was an authoritarian body of economists and social scientists who founded the discipline of German sociology, and influenced considerably the course of American social science. This group included the preeminent economist Gustav Schmoller and the sociologist and theorist Max Weber. In the 1890s when DuBois came to Berlin seeking a graduate degree in social science, he also joined the organization, took classes with Schmoller, and wrote a thesis on farmholding under Schmoller's guidance. Zimmerman speculates that German social scientists must have received DuBois as an expert on the African American experience in the U.S. South, even though DuBois and his cohorts disagreed with one other on many subjects. DuBois advocated small farming as a path to economic self-determination and liberation, unlike the German social scientists who considered the labor of rural households a racialized colonial project. In 1904 Weber traveled extensively throughout the southern states and visited Tuskegee Institute. Weber's anti-Polish racism shaped his thoughts on the 'Negro question' and added another element in the "sociology of the global South" (205).

After Booker T. Washington failed to convince W.E.B. DuBois to accept a position at Tuskegee, Washington networked with Robert E. Park, the most important American sociologist in the twentieth century and founder of the Chicago School of Sociology. Park did graduate training at Harvard University and studied with members of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*. Later he went to colonial Africa and visited Tuskegee Institute. Like many other participants in this 'sociology of the global South,' Park saw similarities between the Polish peasantry and southern African Americans. Zimmerman argues that Park and his colleagues "brought the politics of internal colonization" to the discipline of American

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<sup>11</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

sociology which then mutated into a more urban sociology committed to social scientific research on the lives of Polish immigrants and African American migrants to Chicago. (225) The decades-long connections between these transnational social scientists is really quite astonishing.

In short, *Alabama in Africa* is committed to shattering notions of American exceptionalism and southern distinctiveness, challenging the idea of German exceptionalism which has concentrated largely on the role domestic policies played in German colonialism, and situating African history in a global context rather than viewing it as the exception to the rest of the world. The only weakness in Zimmerman's book is perhaps an overly ambitious nature that is burdened by the heavy detail used to weave together so many disparate intellectual traditions, prominent individuals, and events. It is a tough book to grapple with. Yet Andrew Zimmerman has achieved a remarkable feat that advocates of transnational and comparative history might only dream of. The deep archival research leaves no stone unturned and the argument is exceedingly persuasive. The multi-layered complexity and nearly impenetrable nature of the narrative may simply reflect the price one pays for a successful transnational history.

**Author's Response by Andrew Zimmerman, the George Washington University**

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I am grateful for the thoughtful and insightful comments on *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire & the Globalization of the New South* by Professors W. Fitzhugh Brundage, Paul A. Kramer, and Natalie J. Ring, and also to Professor Thomas Maddux and *H-Diplo* for hosting this roundtable. I am delighted by the three positive responses to *Alabama in Africa* -- so delighted, in fact, that it feels strange to quibble with their several criticisms, which I find fair and insightful. These criticisms, however, point not only to weaknesses in my execution of the book, which I of course acknowledge, but also to methodological and theoretical issues related to transnational history generally and to the particular approach to transnational history that I took in *Alabama in Africa*.

Each review points to possibilities and difficulties in transnational narratives, both as presentations of information and as explanations of historical causality. I liked very much Kramer's characterization of my approach when he writes that "Zimmerman lets the idiosyncratic channels dug by his actors structure his account," channels that cross, but are "not coterminous" with, nation states. Yet, abandoning the nation state as a frame means abandoning the structure that conventionally makes historical argument and information intelligible and plausible.

One of the most obvious, and also the most tricky, problems in reading and writing transnational history involves presenting a great deal of information that will necessarily be unfamiliar to every reader. Most readers of a historical work focused on a particular nation are already, or are in the process of becoming, experts in the history of that nation. It is unlikely, however, that many readers come to *Alabama in Africa* already having studied the histories of Germany, the U.S., and Togo. This does not, however, mean that transnational history consists only of juxtaposing interesting episodes without a narrative framework as strong as -- and I would argue stronger (or at least stranger) than -- that present in national histories.

The organization of historical information that is conventionally narrated nationally into transnational explanatory frameworks makes these frameworks themselves stand out more sharply than they do in national narratives. This accounts in part, I believe, for the sense that my narrative is, in the words of Brundage "tidy and overly schematic," or "overly ambitious" in the words of Ring. I agree with Ring that these narrative difficulties may be inherent to transnational history. Of course I blame myself, not transnational history, for shortcomings in my argumentation, but I also want to highlight how rethinking history transnationally produces what might at first appear as explanatory weaknesses.

Brundage gives an insightfully skeptical account of my explanatory framework, one echoed in the critiques by Kramer and Ring. Many of his criticisms rest on his sense that the Global South and the New South were less commensurable than I suggest. Yet, I think that the Global South also fits the characterization of the New South that Brundage offers: "a jumble of contradictory and sketchy aspirations and assumptions" -- compounded and enriched, I would add, by the practical history of their various applications and the various resistances

they encountered. The concept of the Global South is also, as Ring writes, an emerging concept in contemporary scholarship, bringing transnational and other recent scholarly approaches to a region that we might once have identified geographically as the colonies or the Third World.

Brundage, as well as Kramer, notes the difficulty of establishing a causal connection between the Tuskegee expedition to Togo and the emergence of a Global South. The apparent implausibility of this connection results (again, in so far as it is not only from the shortcomings of my own work) from the difficulty of conceiving of historical agency and causality outside the boundaries of the nation state. National histories provide conventional agencies and methods of causation, including the conscious decisions of state actors, the economic interests of social classes, and the ideological statements of intellectuals.

In the terms of national histories, it might seem implausible that a relatively small project carried out in Togo by a handful of graduates and a single faculty member from Tuskegee Institute could play the important role in the history of empires, modes of production, and ideology that I recount in *Alabama in Africa*. I would suggest that the implausibility of this connection is similar to the implausibility of what chaos theorists call ‘the butterfly effect,’ in which a small cause can have large and difficult-to-predict effects: in the famous example, a butterfly flapping its wings in China initiates a cascade of effects that eventually result in a tornado in Texas. There is nothing mystical about this process in history or in nature: as the sociologist of science Bruno Latour has shown, networks give some (small) individuals apparently great power.<sup>1</sup> The historical agency of political leaders like King Agokoli, Kaiser Wilhelm II, or President Theodore Roosevelt involves butterfly effects similar in scalar heterogeneity to those that explain tornados in Texas or the emergence of the Global South. The networks that make, say, Napoleon more powerful than the madman who believes himself to be Napoleon have become so conventionalized in national histories that it might seem pointless or pedantic to question or explain them.

The need to justify historically-effective networks from the ground up is, in my view, one of the advantages of transnational history over national history. The Tuskegee expedition, I argue, both depended on, and helped extend, elaborate, and strengthen, connections among three networks: the racialized political economy of the American New South, West African cash cropping, and German social science and social policy. None of these three networks were independent of each other before the Tuskegee expedition to Togo, for each was a regional variant of a set of larger processes: the decline of bonded labor (serfdom in Germany, slavery in West Africa and the United States), the growth of capitalism, increased possibilities for autonomy by workers, and attempts by elites to devise new ways of extracting surplus from these workers.

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<sup>1</sup> Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, trans. Alan Sheridan and John Law (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

I would thus reject the dichotomy between national and imperial explanations that underlies Brundage's objection to my explanation of Booker T. Washington's conservative turn as being transnationally determined: the New South and the Global South were, as Kramer emphasizes in his own critical remark on this connection, coproduced. The Tuskegee expedition transformed U.S., African, and European networks of race, labor, and social science not by legislating -- that is a way that nation-states achieve their 'butterfly effects' -- but rather through the hall-of-mirrors processes of comparison, imitation, and expertise, combined with local reactions to these processes, and undergirded by political and economic networks.

Kramer and Ring both highlight the tension between the analysis of misunderstandings, misapplications, misrecognitions in *Alabama in Africa* and the epistemological realism that is central to the Marxist methodology that I employ. Kramer is correct that I identify in historical actors "logical and/or moral inconsistencies in their thinking...implicitly positing...a true rationality...against which these logics can be gauged." For Kramer, the "true rationality" -- a term I wouldn't necessarily use -- that I posit is necessarily outside of history, but I would reject the assumption that the logics of history are identical with, and nothing other than, the logics of historical actors in a particular moment. Nonsense, as Sigmund Freud, among others, has taught, is a powerful force, and makes historical sense in terms of its own illogic rather than by being translated by historians (or analysts) into a larger cultural-contextual logic.

The particular nonsense of racist images, moreover, was a component of the political and economic subjugation of many people of African descent. These self-contradictory images did not provide an internally coherent, historically specific logic, but rather their illogic intersected with historical practices to produce forms of white supremacy, imperial rule, and capitalist exploitation. While the various mechanisms of this illogic are too complex to summarize here, one example will perhaps illustrate my point: racist illogic is part of an effort to make every black person a 'problem,' and thus subjected to extraordinary cultural, political, and other interventions (conceived as 'solutions'). W.E.B. Du Bois pointed toward this issue when he discerned in white discourse addressed to blacks the question "how does it feel to be a problem?" I very much appreciate the attention Ring gives to my engagement with Du Bois. The logic of these interventions -- which includes the illogic that incites these interventions -- would be the true rationality I posit, one that is not outside of history, but very much inside of -- perhaps even identical with -- history.

I would thus accept Kramer's characterization of my account of race and racism as being related fundamentally to varying strategies of political oppression and economic exploitation, but I would reject the label functionalist because of its association with the non- or even anti- dialectical sociology of Talcott Parsons.<sup>2</sup> A functionalist account might characterize racism as a "value commitment" essential to the division of labor in a

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<sup>2</sup> See especially Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937) and Parsons, *The Social System* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1951).

particular social organism. Against the “oversocialized conception of man” of functionalist sociology, I seek to emphasize a transnational order of “contradiction and overdetermination.”<sup>3</sup> Racism depends upon a foundational nonsense but is also contradictory in a different, dialectical sense because it is part of a contradictory social formation. Race thus also plays a counterhegemonic role, for example in struggles against slavery, colonialism, and racism itself. This counterhegemonic function of race is not necessarily secondary to its hegemonic role. Indeed, often, if not always, the languages of hegemony are appropriated from the languages of resistance and revolution.<sup>4</sup>

Kramer is correct that I also raise moral -- although I would prefer the term political -- objections to some of the actors I write about. I conceive of this move as more consistent with an entirely historical logic than a detached historicism would be. The moment I wrote about in *Alabama in Africa* is still very much our own, and I consider what I wrote to be the commentary of a contemporary on an extended present as much as an analysis of a distant past. Ahistorical, in my view, would be the analytical position that excluded the historian from history. Of course I am still obliged to comment on this extended present following all conventions of historical scholarship, including accounting for temporal, political, and cultural differences and I surely might have better balanced the two, in my view equally pressing, epistemological commitments.

Ring points to the tension in my method with some cultural studies of imperialism. In the reference she cites, I was specifically concerned to differentiate my approach to German imperialism from George Steinmetz’s splendid (and thoroughly culturalist) *Devil’s Handwriting* (256, n40).<sup>5</sup> As Ring rightly suggests, I am conscious of building on, but also distinguishing myself from, traditions in the study of empire that focus on the culture of the colonizers. I do find that much work on colonial culture exaggerates the agency of those allied with colonizer in comparison with the colonized and too often reduces the histories of empires to histories of European consciousness.<sup>6</sup> However, few, if any, analysts of

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<sup>3</sup> The phrase “oversocialized conception of man” is from Dennis H. Wrong, “The Oversocialized Conception of Man in Modern Sociology,” *American Sociological Review* 26, no. 2 (1961): 183–193. The phrase “contradiction and overdetermination” is from an essay by Louis Althusser of the same title, in Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (1965; London: Verso, 1990), pp. 87-128. I lay out my theoretical approach in Andrew Zimmerman, “A German Alabama in Africa: The Tuskegee Expedition to German Togo and the Transnational Origins of West African Cotton Growers,” *The American Historical Review* 110 (2005): 1362–1398 and Andrew Zimmerman, “What Do You Really Want in German East Africa, Herr Professor? Counterinsurgency and the Science Effect in Colonial Tanzania,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 2 (2006): 419–461.

<sup>4</sup> A point made perhaps most clearly by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. See, most recently, their *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa*, Chicago Studies in Practices of Meaning (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

colonial culture would suggest that their own approach obviates the need for transnational political economic and other materialist approaches. *Alabama in Africa* also makes clear, I hope, that I regard the culture of the colonizers as an essential object of analysis.

I recognize that it might appear strange to conclude a response to three critiques, which are so rich and detailed that I have in no way fully responded to any of them, by pointing out an area that none commented on: the Ewe history that I tried to articulate with German and U.S. histories. Indeed, Brundage writes that I have provided little new information about the Tuskegee expedition when, in fact, I am, so far as I know, the first to connect the expedition with the history of the Ewe, from their exodus from Notsé, through their post-emancipation political, economic, religious, and ethnic forms, and through their encounters with German missionaries, political economy, and colonial state formation. This has been a feature of many responses to the book by commentators who do not specialize in African history.<sup>7</sup> I point this out not to criticize individually any critic of *Alabama in Africa*, for a certain distance toward African history is a widespread and, I believe, a structural feature of our discipline, and one that I worry might not be corrected by transnational approaches to the past. I do not exempt myself from this critique: I did not, for example, include the term Ewe, or even Togo, in the title of my book.

I had hoped that highlighting the entanglement of the history of the Ewe with more familiar histories of the United States and Germany might contribute to the process of normalizing African histories, showing how they are as comprehensible and essential to any understanding of transnational history as any other area of historical inquiry is. What appears to Brundage as my “penchant for forced symmetry” among national historical phenomena reflects, in my view, the dissonance between my own transnational approach and the forced -- by academic disciplines, organization of archives, and conventions of historiographical narrative -- *asymmetry* of national historiographies, especially in regard to African history.

I thank Brundage, Kramer, and Ring for simultaneously kind and critical reviews of *Alabama in Africa* that have also pointed to fundamental problems about theory and method in transnational history in general and about the history of race, labor, and empire in particular. They have each prompted further reflections and self-criticisms that I find

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<sup>6</sup> For an essential intervention in this question, see Paul S. Landau, “Hegemony and History in Jean and John L. Comaroff’s ‘Of Revelation and Revolution,’” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 70, no. 3 (1 January 2000): 501–519.

<sup>7</sup> Our discipline has made great progress since 1963, when Hugh Trevor-Roper, in a series of televised lectures, described African history as the “unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe.” Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Rise of Christian Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1964), 9. Still, much of our discipline distances itself from African history, perhaps for reasons related to our difficulties in thinking the Haitian Revolution except as an echo of French History or a correction of universal history. See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995). For the correction of universal history approach to the Haitian revolution, see nonetheless stunningly good Susan Buck-Morss, “Hegel and Haiti,” *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 821–865.



extraordinarily valuable as I continue to pursue transnational historical research. I hope this roundtable is only the beginning of a long discussion.

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