




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Home > No 9 (2009) > Blake

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### George Augustus Sala and the English Middle-Class View of America

Peter Blake

#### Abstract

*In 1850 the journalist George Augustus Sala appealed to the perceived moral superiority of the English middle classes by satirising American slavery and Southern slave-owners. When Sala first visited America in 1863, as Special Correspondent for the Daily Telegraph during the Civil War, his articles were some of the most pro-slavery, pro-Southern and anti-Union pieces the English public had read. Sala attacked all aspects of Northern life, disputed the North's reasons for war, criticised their treatment of free blacks and maintained that claims of barbarity towards slaves in the South had been grossly exaggerated.*

*Despite his previous pronouncements, Sala returned to America for the Telegraph in 1879 and was greeted favourably wherever he went. He declared that he had been a 'fool' for supporting the wrong side during the Civil War but still maintained that African-Americans had been better off under the slave-system and that they were incapable of practising self-government. He observed that America was now ' a wonderful country and a wonderful people.'*

*Although hitherto neglected in scholarly debates on Anglo-American relations in the nineteenth century, this paper will highlight Sala's importance in this context, not least because of the large readership he commanded. As a journalist for the newspaper with the largest daily circulation in the world, Sala's fluctuating and controversial opinions on America were read by some 250,000 middle class English men and women every day.*

*This essay will also question to what extent Sala's changing perceptions of America were influenced by the contemporary racial discourse of other middle-class commentators like Thomas Carlyle, Charles Dickens and Richard Burton, and by events like the Governor Eyre Affair. Using recent scholarship in the field of racial theory by critics including Catherine Hall, Robert Young and Tim Barringer, this paper will reassess English middle-class views on race, slavery and America during the second half of the nineteenth century.*