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New Book Explores British Attitudes Toward the Civil War
*LSU Press to Release **Ambivalent Nation** by Hugh Dubrulle in June*

Baton Rouge— In *Ambivalent Nation*, Hugh Dubrulle explores how Britons envisioned the American Civil War and how these conceptions influenced their discussions about race, politics, society, military affairs, and nationalism. Contributing new research that expands upon previous scholarship focused on establishing British public opinion toward the war, Dubrulle offers a methodical dissection of the ideological forces that shaped that opinion, many of which arose from the complex Anglo-American postcolonial relationship.

Britain's lingering feeling of ownership over its former colony contributed heavily to its discussions of the American Civil War. Because Britain continued to have a substantial material interest in the United States, its writers maintained a position of superiority and authority in respect to American affairs. British commentators tended to see the United States as divided by two distinct civilizations, even before the onset of war: a Yankee bourgeois democracy and a southern oligarchy supported by slavery. They invariably articulated mixed feelings toward both sections, and shortly before the Civil War, the expression of these feelings was magnified by the sudden emergence of inexpensive newspapers, periodicals, and books. The conflicted nature of British attitudes toward the United States during the antebellum years anticipates the ambivalence with which the British reacted to the American crisis in 1861. Britons used prewar stereotypes of northerners and southerners to help explain the course and significance of the conflict. Seen in this fashion, the war seemed particularly relevant to a number of questions that occupied British conversations during this period: the characteristics and capacities of people of African descent, the proper role of democracy in society and politics, the future of armed conflict, and the composition of a durable nation. These questions helped shape Britain's stance toward the war and, in turn, the war informed British attitudes on these subjects.

Dubrulle draws from numerous primary sources to explore the rhetoric and beliefs of British public figures during these years, including government papers, manuscripts from press archives, private correspondence, and samplings from a variety of dailies, weeklies, monthlies, and quarterlies. The first book to examine closely the forces that shaped British public opinion about the Civil War, *Ambivalent Nation* contextualizes and expands our understanding of British attitudes during this tumultuous period.

Hugh Dubrulle is professor of history at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, New Hampshire.

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Civil War / British History

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