The Fictions of Whiteness:
Transatlantic Race Science, Gender, Nationalism,
and the Construction of Race in
Nineteenth-Century American Fiction
(1823-1867)

by

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Abstract

*Fictions of Whiteness* argues that political beliefs preceded and determined the race science theories which nineteenth century American white novelists applied or invoked in their work, the inverse of the current critical consensus. For issues ranging from Indian removal to slavery and Reconstruction, and utilizing theories from of Condorcet, Buffon, Camper, Louis Agassiz, James Pritchard, Johannes Blumenbach, and George Borrow these authors shifted allegiances to divergent race theories between and within works, applied those theories selectively to white, black, and Indians characters, and applied the same scientific race theories to politically divergent rhetorical ends. By analyzing shifting application of different theories of race across an author’s body of work, I conclude that Cooper, long labeled the “first anti-miscegenationist” in American literature, actually came to praise race mixing between whites and Indians as a means of acquiring for whites nativeness in North America, and that Stowe, long associated with the romantic racist depiction of African American racial character seen in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* later came to parse African Americans by their tribal origins in order to depict Mandingo-descended slaves as capable of violent revolt while maintaining a general notion of their non-Mandingo peers as naturally submissive. By comparing the use of a body of related race science theories about the charming inferiority of “exotic” European races, such as gypsies and Italians, and their resemblance to race science ideas about American mulattoes in the works two novelists, I reveal the proslavery
Hentz as a feminist chaffing at the patriarchal restrictions of antislavery ideology and Child, long celebrated for her progressive ideas on race, as a firm believer in Saxon supremacism and the most thoroughly versed in transatlantic scientific theories of racial inequality of any novelist of the period. Ultimately, however, the single race science theory that went unchallenged and was shared by all of these politically diverse white writer was that of Saxon supremacism and the naturalness and rightness of Saxon hegemony in the United States.
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Epigraph

“… the disposition everywhere evident, among [whites] to separate the Negro from every intelligent nation and tribe in Africa, may fairly be regarded as one proof… that they have aimed to construct a theory in support of a foregone conclusion.”

Frederick Douglass, “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered.” (July 12, 1854)
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Introduction: The Flexible Strength of American Racism

American racism seems depressingly consistent at the moment.

On June 17, 2015, twenty-one-year-old white supremacist Dylann Roof shot nine African-Americans in a historic black church in Charleston, South Carolina. A Web site attributed to the shooter brimmed with racial paranoia and defended both segregation and the kind of attack Roof went on to commit as straight out of the nineteenth century. A manifesto on the shooter’s Web site asks rhetorically of “white and black people,” “How could our faces, skin, hair, and body structure all be different, but our brains be exactly the same?” (“Dylann Roof: FBI probes website and manifesto linked to Charleston suspect”). Deep into the second term of the nation’s first African-American president, a steady and seemingly endless succession of questionable deaths of African-Americans at the hands of police officers continues. Social protest movements such as #blacklivesmatter have propelled these sadly not-uncommon incidents into public consciousness, and troubled the complacency of a society that, only a few years ago, celebrated itself as “post-racial.” Beneath these now-high-profile incidents are the facts of the mass incarceration of African-American men and the persistence of African-American poverty, despite the growth of the black middle class and the widespread adoration of black entertainers by Americans of all races.

Perhaps the most pernicious feature of American racism, however, is not its resistance to change but rather its changeability. How else can it persist in an evermore diverse nation, one headed toward the end of white majority in just a few decades, one that has made so many strides towards racial equality and social justice? This dissertation
is centrally about the adaptability of American racism, as revealed in the relationship among scientific theories of race, politics, and nineteenth-century American literature.

Cultural and literary critics have long understood that America’s racial present arises from its racial past; that scientific theories of racial inequality have been central to claims that nonwhites were less than fully human and hence undeserving of the full privileges of American citizenship; and that literature has been a primary transmitter of racism in our culture. Most critics of the past fifty years have looked back to the early nineteenth century’s twin original sins of slavery and Indian removal and seen a consistent through line in American racism across American culture from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries.

Looking back at pre-Civil War statements about and depictions of race in American literature through the lenses of Nazism, apartheid, Jim Crow, social Darwinism, and eugenics, late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century critics have presumed that they recognized what they were seeing. These critics have perceived in American literature before the 1870s what appeared to be the continuous existence of the same noxious mixture of science, race, and politics with which they were familiar from post-Civil War culture. However, although racism has been a perennial aspect of American culture since precolonial days, different racisms (plural) and different politics were at work in this period.

Understanding the enormous changes in American racial thinking since the pre-Civil War period, and especially the dynamism with which American racialism responded to changing political circumstances, allows us to perceive the mutability that often renders American racism effectively invisible to so many white Americans today.
Understanding the innate tensile strength of American whiteness’ relationship to race and science in the nineteenth century opens possibilities, I hope, for understanding and undoing its operations in our own time.

My dissertation argues that while nineteenth-century American culture became evermore dominated by racialism (the belief in the reality and inequality of human races) individual scientific racial theories themselves wielded far less cultural authority than has been generally imagined in contemporary criticism. Instead, American authors’ use of individual scientific theories of racial inequality was primarily determined not by the cultural authority of any theory per se, but rather by the usefulness of a particular interpretation of a given theory as a rhetorical tool within the shifting political debates of the period. Many nineteenth-century works of American literature long understood by critics as transmitting a consistent American racism are, in fact, highly idiosyncratic in their use of race science. Which scientific theories of race were invoked and how those theories were applied and interpreted varied enormously not only from author to author, but also between works by the same authors and even within individual works themselves.

As an analogy to aid understanding the role of scientific theories of race in nineteenth-century American literature, let us briefly consider a seemingly unrelated challenge facing American society in the twenty-first century: the advent of climate change. We are sadly all too familiar with the way that the so-called “debate” over climate-change science has stalled many significant efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate-change deniers cherry-pick convenient scientific theories and studies that support their contention that climate change is either a fiction or is a natural and cyclical event that requires no regulatory restraints on industry or commerce. It doesn’t
seem to matter that a vast majority of scientists have stated that there is overwhelming
evidence that climate change is both real and dangerous, and that humanity is its cause.

Despite the nominal acknowledgement of scientific authority among most
Americans, climate science has become the object of endless amateur invention and
political manipulation that has stymied most efforts to deal with the crisis. America’s
history of morally compromised science, ranging from the Tuskegee syphilis experiments
to Big Tobacco’s denial of the link between smoking and lung cancer, has spawned
suspicion of science even as science has in most ways increased in power and cultural
authority. What results is a contradictory situation in which science is both authoritative
and suspect, and, in terms of political decision-making, seems to have been reduced to
just another rhetorical weapon in an endlessly unresolved political tussle for public
opinion and power.

Racism has historically been characterized by the same politicized and
rhetorically strategic handling of science that we see today in relation to climate change.
Although questions of race and racism are today discussed and disputed in terms of
competing claims of social science (sociology, anthropology, political science, social
psychology), from the late eighteenth through mid-twentieth centuries most American
discussion of race grounded itself in what passed for hard science. “Race science” was a
branch of the Western sciences that combined biological, historical, religious, and
ethnological discourses to define the supposed characteristics and capabilities of races.
From the early eighteenth through the middle of the twentieth century, race science
occupied the same position of (nominal) scientific authority relative to the “race
questions” as environmental sciences do for the “climate debate.” Over the past half
century, a canonical view within literary criticism was established that assumed that scientific theories of race wielded a more determinative authority over American literary works in the nineteenth century than we see environmental sciences wielding over our culture today.

In fact, the complexity of the politically convenient deployment of scientific theories in nineteenth-century American literary discussions of race far exceeded that of the contemporary climate debate. The early to mid-nineteenth century was chockablock with competing, overlapping, and contradictory scientific theories about race with which much contemporary literary and cultural criticism is unfamiliar. The pre-Darwin race science that contributed to debates about race in the first decades of the nineteenth century and remained in the rhetorical armory of American writers for decades after the publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859 does not conform to contemporary conceptions of nineteenth-century racism or science. If an inexact analogy from physics may be forgiven, the science of race before Darwin, and the American politics of race before Jim Crow, operate under discursive limitations nearly as different from their later counterparts as the familiar Newtonian laws that govern the movement of the planets are from the peculiarities of quantum physics.

The racialism rhymes, one might say, but is not identical, and the shifts themselves and especially the existence of such shifts is vital to understanding the operation of American racial discourse and the perpetuation of white supremacism and white hegemony. Firstly, almost all pre-Darwinian race science accepted the biblical account of creation, so that there was no inherent conflict between science and the Bible necessarily on the matter of race. Secondly, almost all pre-Darwinian race science
therefore accepted that racial differences represented variations within a unitary human family, a theory profoundly different from the presumption of essentially eternal differences between the races akin to species differentiation that defines the “race science” that post-Second World War critics have perceived in nineteenth-century American works. Thirdly, the social and scientific category of whiteness had a very different meaning in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century. American whiteness in this period included only Anglo-Americans, persons who thought of themselves as Saxons, and pointedly did not include the Irish, Germans, or Dutch, to say nothing of Italians, Jews, Greeks, Russians, et al. Fourthly and consequently, concepts of race purity and taboos against race mixing had not yet developed into the forms familiar to us from the social and legal systems of the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries.

At the same time, the political pressures that I will argue shaped writers’ interpretations and choices of particular race-science theories in the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century were also very different from those that shaped the racisms of the subsequent hundred years. In the 1820s, for instance, American authors were preoccupied with establishing a national identity for white Americans within the terms of European nationalism, for which racial-science arguments followed close behind political philosophy. In this political environment symbolic claims of cultural and racial affinities between Indians and Anglo-American whites, extending all the way to racial amalgamation between the two races, were central elements of American culture. Before the advent of the radical abolition movement of the 1830s threatened the existence of slavery, taboos and laws against racial amalgamation between whites and blacks were predicated on notions of good taste, class, and economic necessity rather than on the
biological necessity of race purity that underlaid Jim Crow segregation, eugenics, Nazism, etc.

Similarly counterintuitive for readers over the last half century, antebellum and Reconstruction-era white antislavery and anti-prejudice writers believed in neither true human equality between the races nor in the supremacy of “whites” as that category would be understood in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Instead they labored under the political and rhetorical requirement to imagine a place for African-Americans in America (or somewhere else in the world) outside of slavery that did not challenge the racial superiority of Anglo-Saxon Americans, instead integrating African-Americans into an elaborate racial hierarchy in which demi-whites such as the Irish occupied an intermediate category. The result was a complex scientific-political discourse about race within early- to mid-nineteenth-century American literature that has gone largely unnoticed by critics, but which offers opportunities to resolve long-standing questions regarding, and synthesize long-competing theoretical interpretations of, American literature in this period.

The Flexible Rhetoric of Scientific Racialism and the Construction of American Whiteness

In this dissertation I will argue that a group of white nineteenth-century novelists reinterpreted, switched between, recombined, and/or selectively applied numerous European scientific theories of race in their work in order to fashion scientific rationalizations of political positions regarding race in America tailored to shifting political exigencies. Even as these authors exercised a hitherto-unrecognized freedom in
the use of scientific theories generally imagined as determinative by contemporary criticism, Saxonism went unchallenged. Despite highly disparate political views on issues such as slavery and Indian removal, belief in the righteousness and scientific inevitability of Saxon hegemony over other races and ethnicities in the United States served as a shared foundation upon which all of their race-science improvisations were performed. My thesis contradicts the model of deterministic influence wielded by race-science theories over nineteenth-century Anglo-American writers prevalent in much late-twentieth-century criticism and contemporary criticism. However, it is consistent with Michel Foucault’s theorization that discourses restrict the scope of possible thought in part by allowing a limited range of argument (in this case, the use and reinterpretation of various race theories) while leaving unthinkable challenges of certain “verities” that serve as the bedrock of a political system, in this case the reality of race in general and the righteous hegemony of Saxons in the United States.

I call this handling of racialist ideas “rhetorical racialism” to emphasize the extent to which racialist claims are employed as flexible, and to a large extent interchangeable, rhetorical tools by which white authors rationalized white “Saxon” hegemony over other races in the United States in the face of contradictory and changing political exigencies. My rhetorical-racialist approach in this dissertation offers a theory to explain contradictions within and between literary works as well as to explain unstable political meanings of scientific theories of racial inequality, and synthesizes disparate and sometimes opposing critical interpretations of authors and works.

This dissertation will examine the operation of rhetorical racialism in the works of James Fenimore Cooper, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Caroline Lee Hentz, and Lydia Maria
Child. I have limited the authors considered to those writing between the 1820s and the late 1860s, from the period of Indian removal through the advent of radical abolitionism, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. In this pre-Darwinian, pre-Jim Crow era rhetorical racialism seems to have been particularly rampant, and the mixture of science, race, politics, and literature is particularly misunderstood in much current criticism. I have limited my scope to white authors in order to emphasize rhetorical racialism as a coping mechanism that provided tensile strength and flexibility to Saxonist white supremacism in American culture. This dissertation is the first half of a larger project whose second half will feature nineteenth-century African-American and American Indian writers’ use of transatlantic race-science theories and discourses to resist and accommodate American Saxonism’s cultural hegemony. My afterword’s discussion of Stowe’s attempt to override Frederick Douglass’s interpretation of African ethnology and his own family history gestures towards the broader book to come.

**Methodology**

This dissertation is structured to model two methodologies for detecting rhetorical racialism in texts. The first half of this dissertation, chapters two and three, models longitudinal studies of multiple works by a single author (James Fenimore Cooper and Harriet Beecher Stowe, respectively) in search of changes in the interpretation of individual race-science theories, discrepancies in the application of these theories to different racial groups, and the substitution of one theory for another across the author’s oeuvre. This parsing of race theories must be accompanied by awareness of the shifting priorities and strategies of American politics, social movements, public debate, etc.,
related to race, and the relationship between the race-theory formulations and the political exigencies of the period of composition. The second half of this dissertation, its final pair of chapters, models the study of the use of a single race-science theory and cultural discourse in individual works by different authors with an eye towards the differing interpretations and political-propagandistic uses to which works with divergent political agendas may apply the same theory-discourse. This method reveals the interpretative agency with which authors in this period approached race-science theories that brings into question the supposed deterministic authority of those theories.

**Chapter Summaries**

Chapter one, “Behind the Scrim: Transatlantic Race Science Before Darwin and American Race Politics Before Jim Crow,” details the scientific, political, gender, and nationalist context in which Cooper, Stowe, Child, and Hentz wrote. Since surface similarities to American racial discourses of the late nineteenth century and after have mislead later critics and readers, this chapter describes the in fact very different race science before Darwin and race politics before Jim Crow segregation. In the process I will propose various intersections between cultural and literary theories of gender, nationalism, race, and the history of science.

Chapter two, “The Pro-Amalgamation Anti-Miscegenationist: James Fenimore Cooper’s Shifting Theorizations of Race,” reveals the complex truth behind James Fenimore Cooper’s critical reputation as either the United States’ “first anti-miscegenationist novel[ist]” or an ahead-of-his-time multiculturalist by reading for their use of race science seven works from 1823 to 1833, the first decade of Cooper’s writing
career. I map the author’s shifting use of a pair eighteenth-century French racial theories: Buffon’s theory of racial adaptation to environment and Condorcet’s theory of the gradual, linear progression of the civilized development of peoples and nations. Far from being a dogmatic apostle of authoritative theories, Cooper applied each of these theories selectively and in different combinations to whites, Indians, and African-Americans, and in the process he moved towards an increasingly positive portrayal of race mixing. Nevertheless, Cooper’s maneuverings all served his primary political goal of establishing national legitimacy; racial nativeness; and political, economic, and social hegemony for American Saxon whites. Cooper’s shifting deployment of race science from 1824 through 1833 reflects his shifting political projects within American Saxonism, from framing Anglo-Americans as inheriting nativeness from Indians in the mid-1820s to defending the United States from European criticism of slavery in the later 1820s to bemoaning the polluting influence of Irish and German immigrants in the early 1830s. I argue that these shifts in his politics stem, in part, from Cooper’s experience moving from the United States to Europe in 1826, where he composed works that must be seen in quite literal conversation with European ideas about America, and his later return to the U.S. in 1833, when he encountered a nation transformed by immigration.

Chapter three, “‘We Will Slay Them Utterly’: Dred and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Shift from Romantic Racialism to Mandingo-Saxonism,” traces the startling transformation of Stowe’s depiction of African-American character between her famous first novel and her much-maligned and largely forgotten second. Whereas Stowe’s literary reputation, for good or ill, is almost entirely based on her depiction in her 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin (UTC)*, of African-Americans as natural Christians, innately
forgiving and nonviolent, Stowe’s novel *Dred* (1856) features a nascent slave revolt brewing among a community of armed escaped slaves in a Southern swamp. Stowe’s depiction of the rebel slaves, and particularly of their leader, Dred, would have been biologically impossible according to the race theories of Alexander Kinmont, now dubbed romantic racialism, which have been accepted by critics since the 1980s as the theoretical basis for Stowe’s depiction of African-Americans in *UTC*. Because the slave revolt never comes to fruition in the novel, *Dred* was long dismissed by critics as both a political and literary failure. In this chapter I argue that Stowe’s depiction of African-Americans as capable of violent rebellion against slavery represents a shift from romantic racialism to another, previously unrecognized racial theory that better fit her shift in 1856 from believing that slavery could be ended through moral suasion to believing it could only be defeated by violent resistance. That theory, which I have dubbed Mandingo-Saxonism, parses African-Americans by their African ethnic-tribal origins, attributing to the Mandingos of West Africa (from whom Stowe says Dred is descended) traits of pride, intelligence, energy, and masculinity that she, according to American Saxonist orthodoxy, otherwise reserved for American Saxons. Other African ethnicities, according to this theory, conform to American racist stereotypes as submissive. I trace Stowe’s new theorization of African-American character to a Mandingo-Saxonist discourse extending back at least to the early eighteenth century, and popularized by the two leading ethnologists of Stowe’s time, James Cowles Prichard and Louis Agassiz. I argue that Stowe’s embrace of Mandingo-Saxonism and the failure of the novel’s slave revolt represent Stowe’s ultimately failed struggle to construct a vision of African-Americans as
(nearly as) fully human as Saxons in the face of the overwhelming pressure of Saxonist cultural hegemony.

Chapter four, “Euphemizing the Mulatta: Exotic European Races and the (Re)Racination of the Mulatta in Lydia Maria Child’s A Romance of the Republic,” is devoted to antislavery writer Lydia Maria Child’s use of the racial parallels between American mulattas and another set of exotic European races: Circassians, Italians, Spaniards, and Jews. I argue that Child cherry-picks more positive aspects of European scientific and literary discourse about these so-called exotic peoples, focusing on artistic sensitivity and beauty paired with intellectual inferiority to serve as a model for Americans of a lesser but charming race among whom a superior race can live without threat to its political and economic hegemony. She accomplishes all this while radically deemphasizing the blackness and Africanness of her “tragic mulatta” heroines, pushing to its furthest extreme the racial trope she is credited with having invented. Child was the most thoroughly grounded in transatlantic race theory of all the authors covered in this dissertation, either naming or alluding to the ideas of Blumenbach, Camper, and Kinmont. Child constructed her variation on mulatta-exotic European race parallels in the aftermath of emancipation, arguing for greater inclusion of African-Americans within Anglo-American society without threatening Saxon hegemony, per se, by offering exotic European races as models of charming subaltern races who can live among a dominant race without threatening their rule.

Chapter five, “The Mulatta’s ‘Gipsy Hue’: Transatlantic Gypsy Discourses and the (Re)Racination of the Mulatta in Caroline Lee Hentz’s The Planter’s Northern Bride,” demonstrates how pro-slavery novelist Caroline Lee Hentz deployed parallels
between the scientific and literary discourses regarding American mulattas and the “exotic” European race of the Gypsies (and to a lesser extent their fellow exotics, Italians) to address problematic aspects of slaveholding, race mixing, and Hentz’s own barely suppressed feminist outrage. Integrating a wide range of racial, ethnological, literary, and contemporary political discourses regarding Gypsies and Italians that paralleled those constructed in America regarding mulattoes, Hentz struggles to allude to black-white race mixing without acknowledging that it occurs within the institution of American slavery. The gender heterodoxy associated with Gypsy women in nineteenth-century European literature allowed Hentz to channel onto her Gypsy character a feminist rebellion present in her other novels but incompatible with the necessarily patriarchal genre requirements of 1850s pro-slavery plantation fiction. Hentz utilizes both sides of European culture’s conflicted vision of exotic European races, employing Gypsies as both figures of liberating freedom and, primarily, threatening agents of chaos. Hentz constructed PNB’s combination of racial theories and tropes in response to Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, written two years earlier, in 1852, balancing her own proto-feminist views with an increasingly limited range of permissible opinion within the South after *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

My Afterword, “Counter-Ethnologies & Counter-Counter-Ethnologies: Competing Interpretations of African Ethnology in Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, and Harriet Beecher Stowe,” describes the efforts by African-American writers Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany to practice counter-ethnology, appropriating European scientific, ethnological, and historical discourses in order combat American racism. I focus on Douglass’s and Delaney’s attention to both Egyptian and Mandingo
accomplishments and character as a means of disputing claims of African racial inferiority. To illustrate the difficulty of these efforts to combat American-Saxon supremacism, I also describe Harriet Beecher Stowe’s effort at what I call counter-counter-ethnology. In rejecting Douglass’s assertion that his own mother resembled an ancient Egyptian statue and instead asserting that she must have been a Mandingo, Stowe sets a glass ceiling on black ability by cutting off Douglass (and by extension all African-Americans) from the accomplishments of ancient Egyptians. Stowe’s effort to redirect Douglass’s auto-ethnology from Egyptian to Mandingo heritage accomplishes, through the discourse of Mandingo-Saxonism, the subtle trick of elevating him above most other blacks while leaving Saxon supremacy unchallenged. The fact that even African-American writers felt the need to engage with transatlantic scientific theories of race demonstrates the power of scientific racialism as a rhetorical tool in the mid-nineteenth century. African-American writers of the period understood that to remain within the loop of American racialist discourse they had to attempt to refute transatlantic race science on its own terms, drawing from competing strains of European science and contradictory accounts within European historical and ethnological accounts.

Critical Context

For the literary critics who pioneered the archeology of race-science theories present in literary works from the 1950s to the ’80s, the pernicious power of scientific claims of racial inequality was abundantly clear and provided a moral imperative to their scholarship. The snarling brutality of Southern segregation’s resistance to the civil-rights movement, the persistence of antimiscegenation laws predicated on scientific claims that
African-Americans were an inferior species, the specter of Nazism and shameful memories of America’s long enthusiasm for eugenics, and the stubborn persistence of South African apartheid: all of this formed the context in which scholars turned to the literature of America’s nineteenth century. It is hardly surprising, then, that when those critics saw claims of racial inequality and hostility to race mixing that they felt that they were looking upon the same beast that had wreaked such havoc in their own time. In August, 1856, American antislavery novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a frenzy of rage and inspiration. All through the grey Atlantic passage she was furiously rewriting her new novel, her first since the worldwide success of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin (UTC)*, six years earlier. The new novel was due to her British publishers as soon as she reached London, but Stowe was now determined to deliver a very different novel from the one her publishers, and her public, expected. As the ship pitched and rolled in the rough seas, Stowe exhausted her daughters with epic sessions of dictation in a new voice, prophetic and wrathful, inspired by the shocking political events of the previous months.

As Stowe completed the initial version of this new novel, the simmering tensions of pre-Civil War America had finally exploded into violence between whites. The near-fatal beating of her friend and abolitionist mentor Rep. Charles Sumner by a pro-slavery congressman had been swiftly followed by the sacking of the antislavery town of Lawrence, Kansas. Stowe promptly abandoned the strategy of attempting to end slavery through “moral suasion,” a strategy that had animated *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and began to believe that only violent resistance could destroy the institution of American slavery. In the weeks before her departure, she raised funds for “Beecher’s Bibles,” the rifles that her
brother Rev. Henry Ward Beecher was sending to embattled Kansas abolitionists, but she knew that her greatest weapon was her writing. As her daughters struggled to transcribe the transformed narrative, the woman who had created Uncle Tom conjured up a very different black hero: Dred, an escaped slave plotting a bloody slave revolt. In a highly symbolic move, Stowe scrapped the title her publishers expected to print on the new work; rather than being titled *Canema* after the slaveholder’s plantation, the novel would now be called *Dred*, a textual reversal that reflected the brewing revolution that Stowe portrayed with such sympathy in her startling new draft. In stark contrast to the forgiving Christlike martyr Uncle Tom, Stowe’s Dred prophesies this future for white slaveholders: “We shall slay them utterly from the earth” (460).

However, according to much late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century criticism it should have been not merely unlikely but in fact impossible for Stowe to write a book like *Dred*, and a character like Dred.

Decades of recent Stowe criticism have been predicated on the determinative influence on her work of the scientific-theological theory of romantic racialism, according to which African-Americans were innately Christian: forgiving, docile, and spiritual. In the 1970s and ’80s, critics traced Stowe’s romantic racialism to the ideas of Alexander Kinmont, a scientist-theologian who lived, lectured, and published in Stowe’s hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio (Frederickson 110). Critics have noted the rhetorical utility of Kinmont’s pseudoscientific claims of African-American racial character for Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. These claims helped Stowe win white readers’ sympathies by putting America’s enslaved population on the right side of the nation’s nominal family and Christian values, while downplaying white fears of black retribution (Tompkins 122-
This genealogy of race-science influence in Stowe not only became an axiomatic critical assumption about Stowe in particular but has also stood as one of the iconic examples of what seemed to be the determinative influence of race-science theories over American authors in the nineteenth century.

The assumption that Kinmont’s romantic racialism is at the root of all of Stowe’s work has persisted even as the critical methodology of tracking genealogies of race-science influence fell out of fashion in the early 1990s. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics have, to the extent that they have addressed *Dred*, generally fixated on Stowe’s decision to not bring the slave revolt to fruition. They have characterized Stowe’s snuffed-out revolt as either a “failure of political imagination” (Hedrick 260-61) or a savvy political move to garner sympathy for the righteousness of black rage while avoiding the depiction of blacks (rather than whites) as the relevant agents of violence (Rowe 2002; Newman 1992; Grant 2000). In the meantime, critical appraisals of Stowe have settled into divergent camps that condemn her as a retrograde racist or praise her as presciently multiculturalist while generally ignoring the role of race science in her thinking.

By extending to *Dred* the historicist methodology that revealed Kinmont’s influence over *UTC*, I have discovered that rather than abandoning race science altogether in order to be able to portray a rebelling African-American hero, Stowe in fact shifted allegiance to another race theory more congenial to her new political stance. In *Dred*, Stowe for the first time in her work began to parse African-Americans by their African ethnic-tribal heritage, and to attribute very different racial traits to different African ethnicities. Specifically, Stowe attributes Dred’s fearsome pride and refusal to
submit not to a general human impulse but instead to his Mandingo heritage. In doing so, Stowe adopted a theory that I have dubbed Mandingo-Saxonism. In this theory Mandingos were framed as superior to other African ethnicities for supposedly possessing traits that paralleled those for which British and American writers praised Saxons like themselves. Mandingo-Saxonism allowed Stowe to depict the rebellion she wanted to add to her novel as a racial trait possessed by a small minority of African-Americans, leaving racialism and Saxon supremacism undisturbed. Stowe discovered Mandingo-Saxonism, my research suggests, in the works of the leading ethnologists of the mid-nineteenth century, the British James Cowles Prichard and the Swiss Louis Agassiz. Mandingo-Saxonism had the political-rhetorical benefit, for Stowe, of elevating some Africans and African-Americans to (near) Saxon status without threatening the idea of Saxon supremacism itself.

In short, I discovered that scientific theories of race did not determine Stowe’s politics and her portrayal of African-American character, but instead that Stowe’s politics determined the scientific theories (and related gender and religious discourses) she employed, and that she switched between and customized divergent theories from one work to another to suit the rhetorical needs of her shifting political positions. Furthermore, the European theorists whose ideas Stowe employed in Dred, a novel partly composed in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, reveal that the transatlantic nature of Stowe’s career, much discussed in terms of the reception of Stowe’s work, was more thorough and complex than previously recognized. The supposedly determinative influence of an individual scientific theory of race, romantic racialism, proves to be far weaker than
previous critics have imagined, and yet Stowe clearly seemed to feel compelled to justify her new political position in terms of some kind of scientific theory of race.

My dissertation identifies a similar phenomenon of politically motivated rhetorical flexibility in the deployment of transatlantic scientific theories of race in American writers across the political spectrum, from the supposedly anti-miscegenationist James Fenimore Cooper to the antislavery novelist Lydia Maria Child and the pro-slavery novelist Caroline Lee Hentz. Stowe’s dropping of romantic racialism in favor of Mandingo-Saxonism demonstrates that individual scientific theories of race did not wield an unassailable authority for American authors of this period, while her switch to Mandingo-Saxonism shows the deterministic pressure of racialism more broadly, the need within the pervasive discourse of racialism to explain everything in terms of race. The existence of a similar shifting between racial theories in Cooper, the other most widely cited example of the influence of race theory in American literature, reveals that scientific racialism operated more complexly than thought in works where critics already identified the influence and deployment of race science. Scientific racialism’s presence in Hentz’s *The Planter’s Northern Bride* (1854) and Child’s *A Romance of the Republic* (1867), politically opposed works that use the same set of race-science theories to make opposite political arguments, demonstrates the pervasiveness of transatlantic race science in American prose addressing race and the rhetorical flexibility with which it was handled.

What emerges from these texts is a rhetorical flexibility in the handling of scientific theories of race and their literary cousin-discourses to suit political expediency for which there seems to have been a single exception: Saxon supremacism. A
comparative historicist reading of these authors’ works for the use of race science tends to synthesize the views of opposing critical interpretations, and opens new avenues for transatlantic, gender, nationalist, critical-race, and whiteness criticisms.

The Ur-moment for the archeology of race science in American literature was Leslie Fieldler’s 1960 declaration that James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) was “the first anti-miscegenation novel in our literature” (204-05). Published almost a decade before America’s Supreme Court would finally declare antimiscegenation laws unconstitutional, Fielder was convinced that Cooper’s depiction of the tragic mulatta woman Cora Munro and her romance with the Indian Uncas, both of whom die before their love can be consummated, was as clear a case of anti-miscegenationist propaganda as, say, D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*. Indeed, Cooper’s novel was perceived in this manner by twentieth-century readers. However, the word “miscégenation” was not coined until forty-some years after the publication of *Mohicans*. The assumption that races represent different and unequal species built into the term “miscégenation” (“misc”=mixed + “genus”=species), familiar to Fiedler from twentieth-century American and Nazi racism, was not widely accepted in early- and mid-nineteenth-century America, and Fiedler’s lack of familiarity with the specific intersecting scientific and political ideas of that period resulted in his projecting the discourses of his present onto a rather different past. Fiedler provided a vital innovation in seeking out the role of American literature as a vehicle for racist ideology, but he did not attempt to trace the racism he perceived in Cooper back to specific scientific sources. That historicist step would be taken a decade later by George M. Fredrickson in his groundbreaking 1971 work, *The Black Image in the White Mind*. 
Fredrickson’s analysis of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Toms Cabin* was the first, and remains the best known, tracing by a critic of an American author’s theorization of race to a specific race-science theory. Fredrickson identified American theologian-scientist Alexander Kinmont as the source of *UTC*’s portrayal of African-Americans as natural Christians, supposedly loving, forgiving, and disinclined to rebel against oppression. Fredrickson dubbed this theory romantic racialism and found it employed in the works of a number of abolitionists of the period. However, Fredrickson, engaged in a monumental and encyclopedic project, did not extend to other Stowe works this innovative methodology of tracing race-science influence. As a result, Fredrickson perceived as fixed and static what were, I will argue, *iterative* rhetorical constructions of race-science theory, gender, sexuality, and national-identity formulations constructed to suit the specific propagandistic needs of changing political circumstances. Without perceiving the shifts in Stowe’s allegiance to and interpretation of various race-science theories that I shall describe in this dissertation, Fredrickson’s otherwise laudable scholarship portrays Stowe as being under the sway of a powerfully authoritative scientific theory that determined her theorization of African-American character.

Another influential critical work of this period, the feminist critic Jane Tompkins’s *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (1986), *did* argue that Stowe had engaged in rhetorical strategizing in her use of romantic racialism in *UTC*. Tompkins argued for the valuable “cultural work” represented by Stowe’s rhetorical use of Kinmont’s romantic racialism to reposition African-Americans in the minds of Northern whites in terms of American discourses of Christianity, sentimentality, and the cult of motherhood. Tompkins provides a valuable model for
thinking about the political- and religious-rhetorical quality of the deployment of scientific theories of race in literature. However, Tompkins’s critical focus in that work was the cultural work of sentimentalism (of which Stowe’s use of Kinmont’s theories was merely a single example) rather than a systematic application of this insight into the operation of scientific theories of race in literature.

Meanwhile, cultural and literary criticism of the 1990s and early 2000s has generally been far less interested than preceding generations of critics in tracing the significance of scientific theories of race in American literature, with a few important exceptions. What interest there was in pursuing the ideas of specific race theorists in these years has occurred primarily in criticism of Cooper, probably because almost uniquely among writers of the period Cooper foregrounded and even named specific race scientists in his novels. In 1995 James D. Wallace was the first critic to identify the ideas of French eighteenth-century race theorists Buffon and Condorcet in Cooper’s work, and he challenged Fiedler’s well-established characterization of Cooper as an anti-misegenationist by pointing out how sympathetically Cooper portrays white-Indian race mixing in both Mohicans and The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish (1829). In a 2010 article Matthew Wynn Sivils convincingly argues that Cooper’s novel The Prairie is essentially a book-length fictional response to Buffon’s claims regarding the supposedly deleterious effect of the American climate, and provides an initial effort to understand Cooper’s engagement with race science as a transatlantic conversation with Europe (Sivils 2010).

My work on Cooper in this dissertation builds upon these scholars’ work by taking a longer and more thoroughly comparative view of the handling of Buffon and Condorcet in seven works across the first decade of Cooper’s career, and mapping
Cooper’s uneven application of these theories. I have uncovered a complex pattern of racial theorization shifting from one work to the next as Cooper applied theories inconsistently to whites, Indians, and blacks, and to combinations of racial mixtures between the three. My interpretation of Cooper’s racial theorizing moves away from a dichotomy between Fiedler’s anti-miscegenationist Cooper and Wallace’s multicultural Cooper to posit a complex political and rhetorical positioning within Cooper’s work.

My critical approach has been influenced by and should be seen in conversation with the work of a variety of recent critics whose conclusions and/or methodologies I attempt to integrate. Historian Nell Irvin Painter’s analysis of the influence of English Saxonist Thomas Carlyle on Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Emerson’s role as what Painter calls the “philosopher king of American white race theory” (151), served as a model for tracing these discursive and ideological transatlantic connections (PAGE). To accounts like Painter’s of the authoritative power of race-science theories like Saxonism my research contributes documentation of nuances in the interpretation and application of such theories in the work of Emerson’s contemporaries. The work of recent literary criticism that most closely resembles that of this dissertation is Carolyn Sorisio’s *Fleshing Out America* (2002), which maps various literary responses on the part of nineteenth-century American writers to the elevation inherent in the rise of scientism of bodily (racial, gender) difference over religiously based presumptions of universal humanity (PAGE), to which my detection of individual scientific theories of race is complimentary.

Vital to my critical approach have been the insights of historians and cultural critics regarding the essential role played by the presence of both African-Americans and
Indians in the construction of American whiteness and national identity. In this dissertation I attempt to integrate critical-race theory on the use of Indians in constructing American national identity, from critics such as Philip J. Deloria, Susan Scheckel, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, which parallels criticism on the central role of what Toni Morrison calls the “Africanist presence” in the construction of American whiteness (4). My work contributes to these streams of criticism more detail regarding specific scientific theories used to justify the political, national, and social positioning of blacks and Indians in nineteenth-century American literature.\(^2\)

My examination of the relationship between European and American racial ideas and literatures in the nineteenth century contributes to more than one nascent offshoot of transatlantic criticism. For one, as an examination of transatlantic race theory in the nineteenth century my research joins such works as Susan Scott Parrish’s *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (2006), which focuses on the late sixteenth through late eighteenth centuries, in assembling a picture of the complex mutual influences between European and American scientific ideas. Stowe and Cooper, in particular, with their popularity in and journeys to Europe, have been the subject of a substantial amount of transatlantic criticism, and my research reveals additional layers of transatlantic interaction. Similarly, the mutual influence between the American trope of the tragic mulatta and the European one of the (Jewish) tragic muse theorized by Kimberly Snyder Manganelli mirrors the “racial rhyming” between mulattas and exotic European races (Gypsies, Italians, Spaniards, Circassians, Jews) that I identify in this dissertation.

My interpretation of the Italian-Gypsy Claudia, a coded mulatta figure in Hentz’s
The Planter’s Northern Bride, draws from and contributes to a range of current streams of literary criticism. Firstly, it joins the ongoing reappraisal of uses of the tragic-mulatta trope in nineteenth-century American literature by such critics as Cassandra Jackson and Eve Allegra Raimon. Reading the Gypsy in American literature this way adds a nominally nonblack character to further widen the spectrum of the trope’s usage, as these two critics have documented its very different usage by black and white authors. My interpretation of the complexity of Hentz’s portrayal of Claudia integrates insights from feminist and plantation-literature criticism, reaffirming Nina Baym’s claim that Hentz was a proto-feminist (in Claudia’s racially based “gender heterodoxy,” to borrow the phrasing of Deborah Nord) while also reaffirming the conclusions of critics of plantation literature of Hentz’s rhetorical efforts to defend the peculiar institution from a variety of Northern attacks (Stanesa 1992; Hunt 1996; Cuence 1997). Finally, I bring Claudia, whose name means “lame” in Latin, into disabilities studies, drawing from the insights of disabilities scholars such as Rosemarie Garland Thomson, part of an ongoing project extending beyond this dissertation in which I’ve found race often conflated with disability, seen as a disability, in nineteenth-century American literature.
Chapter One

Behind the Scrim:

Transatlantic Race Science Before Darwin and

American Race Politics Before Jim Crow

The notion of race and the nation of the United States appeared on the world stage nearly simultaneously, arising from many of the same historical forces. The early-eighteenth-century European “Enlightenment” was characterized by the simultaneous rise, on the one hand, of political discourses of equality and liberty and, on the other hand, of European global colonialism predicated on oppression and exploitation. Enlightenment culture was simultaneously obsessed with both the human equality of Europeans and the human difference of non-Europeans. European race science synthesized the two by means of the third major element of Enlightenment culture, science (or reason). European Enlightenment science was tasked with explaining the variety of human difference in a manner that would justify the subjugation of non-European peoples. The notion of race was itself a product of this process, and the eighteenth century saw the formulation and naming of the races by European race-science theorists. The American “Declaration of Independence” in 1776 followed by only forty-one years the publication of Carl Linnaeus’s *Systema Naturae*, in 1735. Linnaeus’s work established the modern scientific classification of relationships between living creatures and gave birth to the modern concept of human races. As both our history and current news reports attest, America never resolved the conflicts, inherent in its foundation, between the incompatible notions of universal human liberty and racial inequality. The fact that scientific discourses of
racial inequality have been used throughout much of American history to justify social, political, and economic injustices has often led critics to the false conclusion that both the science and the justifications have remained consistent over the past two-hundred-plus years.

The central insight from which this dissertation springs is that race science and its political implications in the early and mid-nineteenth century were very different from those that shaped the assumptions of most of the last half-century of literary criticism. Reading American works from the early and mid-nineteenth century in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, critics have encountered racialist homophones, familiar-seeming terms, and narratives about race composed in a very different scientific, political, and religious context. The result has been a long streak of critical misunderstandings conflating antebellum and postbellum scientific and political ideas about race in America that have fostered an insufficiently dynamic view of the development and operation of American racism.

I will argue that the racism that most of us are familiar with, and its particular relationship to scientific ideas, dates only from the second half of the nineteenth century. The combination of the spreading acceptance of Darwinian evolutionary theory, its skewed application in social Darwinism, the social-political policies of Jim Crow segregation, the eugenics movement, and Nazism have formed a scrim obscuring the very different scientific, religious, and political contexts in which American literary works were composed prior to the end of American slavery.

European culture offered nineteenth-century Anglo-American writers a large variety of overlapping and sometimes contradictory monogenesist scientific theories
explaining human difference from which to choose. These theories offered a range of answers to the era’s major questions regarding human difference: the origin of differences in physical appearance; whether or not these differences corresponded to unequal moral, intellectual, and spiritual capabilities; evaluations of the relative degree of “civilized development” in different races; these races’ relative capacity for change and improvement; and the pace of that possible improvement. While claims regarding the attributes of different ethnic groups and explanations for physical differences among human populations have existed in all culture at all times, the modern conception of race was a product of the European Enlightenment and the rise of colonialism and nationalism. European powers sought to distinguish themselves from the populations on whom their growing global colonial enterprises preyed even as they sought to distinguish themselves from their European neighbors and render eternal national identities that in many cases were only decades old.

Modern European race science\(^1\) begins with Swede Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) and his invention of species classifications in 1735’s *Systema Naturae*. Linnaeus created five categories of human types: “Europæus albus,” or white European; “Americanus rubescens,” or red American; “Asiaticus fuscus,” or brown Asian; “Africanus Niger,” or black African; and “monstrosus,” a catchall category for everything from unknown peoples to congenital deformities. Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon (1707-1788), who has been called “the father of all thought in natural history in the second half of the 18th century” (Anderson 272), influenced a century of transatlantic racial thinking with his multivolume *Histoire Naturelle* (1749-89). Buffon believed in a widely accepted theory called degeneration, a kind of devolution, which explained human difference as
the result of various kinds of degeneration from the physical perfection of Adam and Eve in paradise. Buffon expanded upon centuries-old speculation that these differences were caused by environmental conditions with a complex theory in which flora and fauna, including human beings, are shaped in similar ways by heat, moisture, altitude, and other environmental factors. In 1775, the German Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840) created his own highly influential five racial categories and color associations: Caucasian (white), Ethiopian (black), American (red), Mongolian (yellow), and Malay (brown). Blumenbach coined the term “Caucasian” and “white race” and identified the Caucasus region between the Black and Caspian seas as the origin point of the white race based on his study of skulls from the region (Painter 72).

In the late eighteenth and first half of nineteenth century, Euro-American scientific consensus on human origins (shared divine creation), the division of humanity into races (although the number and diving lines were debated), and the cause of physical differences between races (physical and cultural-environment) were essentially those of Buffon and Blumenbach. Blumenbach’s use of comparative skull measurements, known as craniometry, to distinguish races was extended by the Dutchman Petrus Camper, famous in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century transatlantic world for his theory that races and species were defined by differing “facial angles.” Although Camper himself was ambiguous on the question of whether or not the differing facial angles

Fig. 1. Camper’s angle as visualized by Ransom Dexter (1874) (Dexter 589).
corresponded to differing degrees of intelligence, the visual meme of facial-angle images was a widespread visual shorthand for racial hierarchies through the later nineteenth century (as evidenced by the 1874 rendition above).

Perhaps the greatest contributor to American culture’s intense interest in the relationship between skull shape and character was phrenology, today the best-known (and most widely mocked) antebellum scientific theory of human character. Phrenology was not primarily a racial theory, but instead was part of a related stream of European science known as physiognomy, familiar to readers of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European and American literature from its claims that internal character can be read on the human body. In the theories of its founders, the Germans Franz Joseph Gall and Johann Gaspar Spurzheim, the human brain consisted of distinct regions that controlled specific intellectual, moral, and emotional functions, and as such was a precursor of modern brain science. Phrenology was distinct from racial biometric theories in that it viewed humans (at least white humans) as improvable. Phrenology practitioners proliferated in U.S. cities and towns in the 1830s and ’40s, profiting from what became a health and self-improvement fad among American whites “certainly at least as influential in the first half of the nineteenth century as psychoanalysis was in the first half of the twentieth” (Horsman 56-57).

It should be noted that, as with race science generally, phrenology was widely accepted by Americans of very different political opinions regarding race. While American phrenology strayed from its European roots in increasingly interpreting supposed differences in skull shapes between races as signs of permanent racial characteristics (and it is in this crossover towards race science that phrenological
language will be included within the scope of this dissertation’s literary analysis), it was also employed by those in the antislavery movement when it suited them. For instance, when a phrenologist called by a Connecticut court to testify in regard to the identity and character of the enslaved Africans in the famous Amistad trial reported favorably on the captives’ skull shapes and assumed moral and mental capacities, this testimony as well as reproductions of the profile drawings of these men were included in an antislavery pamphlet (A History of the Amistad Captives 9).

The greatest debates in race science and race science’s greatest impact on transatlantic societies from the late eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries was the question of whether the physical differences ascribed to different races corresponded to intellectual and moral differences, and to what extent and under what circumstances members of different races might increase or decrease in these capacities. Much of this discussion arose in the face of the conflicts between the Enlightenment’s rhetoric of human liberty and European powers’ conquest, enslavement, and exploitation of non-European peoples. In what is now known as Romantic historicism, the Frenchman Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas de Caritat, the marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794), envisioned in his 1794 work, Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind, the inevitable progress of human civilization advancing through linear stages of development, which culminate in democratic freedom. Condorcet’s theories were often interpreted through the lens of racialism, resulting in the notion that different races and nations may
move at different paces through those stages, and thus may need to be ruled and
dominated by more advanced groups. Condorcet’s theories were well known among
educated Americans, having influenced and then been promulgated by Thomas Jefferson,
with whom Condorcet corresponded (Urken 1991).

Late-twentieth-century American critic George Fredrickson identified the
surprising discontinuity between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century transatlantic
scientific discourses about race, noting that before the early nineteenth century there were
no systematic scientific theories of permanent racial inequality (3-50). Eighteenth-century
justifications of European conquest of Native American peoples were primarily religious
(Providence, the spread of Christianity, the establishment of a New Jerusalem, etc.) rather
than racial. Similarly, American justifications of slavery were economic and embarrassed,
rather than racial and self-righteous. Slavery was defended as a “necessary evil” without
which the new nation might perish, a position famously summed up by Thomas Jefferson,
who wrote in an 1820 letter that, “We have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold
him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other”
(“Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes”).

Carolyn Sorisio, building upon Karen Sanchez-Eppler, has aptly described the
transition from eighteenth- to nineteenth-century discourses about race and rights as the
shift from the universal human to the human defined by bodily difference, be it that of
race or gender, to “demarcate the body of the nation” (2). The huge profits that came with
the advent of the cotton gin ended the widespread Southern abolition movement and
slaveholder apologies. In 1837 John C. Calhoun famously defended slavery and shifted
the terms in which slavery was discussed when he declared it a “positive good” for the
protection and gradual improvement of Africans (631), citing the supposed “intellectual” and “physical” differences in races of “different origins.” Calhoun’s retheorization of the relative human development of blacks and whites in turn helped inspire the radical abolition movement in the 1830s that in turn produced Alexander Kinmont, the Cleveland, Ohio, minister whose romantic-racialist lectures and essays of the early 1850s are believed to have shaped Harriet Beecher Stowe’s theorization of race in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. In framing enslaved Africans as Christ figures, Kinmont and Stowe countered Calhoun’s “positive good” by framing slavery as the greatest possible evil in an overwhelmingly Christian nation.

The character and relative capabilities of different races was the central concern of ethnology, the forebear of anthropology that reached a pinnacle of cultural authority in the transatlantic world in the 1840s and ’50s. Ethnological texts proliferated in the nineteenth century along with European colonial expansion and its collection of data on its subject populations and prospective subject populations. The practice of ethnology in this period consisted in the encyclopedic amassing of the accounts of European travellers, explorers, traders, slavers, and missionaries, and works of history and science dating back to the ancient Greeks; and the collection and measurement of human specimens, primarily in the form of bones. Although ethnology aspired to the status of objective science, the political and economic stakes of ethnological conclusions in the nineteenth century made plain the politicization of this particular branch of science, as ethnologists split into pro-slavery and antislavery camps. In the case of the nineteenth-century British ethnology that influenced American ethnology, the “camps” were quite literal, as the pro-imperialist and pro-slavery Anthropological Society of London broke away in 1843 from
the antislavery and pro-“aboriginal” monogenesist Ethnological Society of London, itself an offshoot of the pioneering international human-rights organization the Aborigines’ Protection Society.

The most prominent member of both the Ethnological and Aborigines’ Societies was the Welshman James Cowles Prichard (1786-1848), the leading monogenesist and antislavery scientist of the nineteenth century. His major lifework, *Researches Into the Physical History of Mankind*, published in various editions between 1813 and 1847, was widely cited by abolitionists and widely derided by slavery’s supporters. Prichard came close to declaring “race” a fiction, a hundred years before transatlantic culture began to arrive at that conclusion. Prichard argued that there was no permanent inequality between human groups, but that instead the development of physical and cultural traits was largely determined by environment. Prichard asserted that nothing “in the organization of the brain of the Negro…affords a presumption of inferior…intellectual or moral faculties” (353-54). However, Prichard eventually reinvented race in the form of what he called “permanent variety,” and was sufficiently trapped by the discursive limits of his time that he was incapable of seeing nonwhites as fully equal to whites in intellectual and moral capacities in the present. For all his respect for various nonwhite peoples, Prichard believed that ethnicities and races did differ in moral and intellectual character, and, contradicting himself, conceded that Europeans and Euro-Americans were superior to Africans and other nonwhites, if only by temporary happenstance of geography and cultural advantages.

Prichard’s chief professional and political rival was Louis Agassiz, a prominent Swiss biologist who was converted to the American School of ethnography and took up
positions at Harvard University, founding and heading both their Scientific School, in 1847, and their Museum of Comparative Zoology. Agassiz lent a great deal of cultural authority to the theory of polygenesis through his participation in numerous publications with Nott and the other leading men of the movement, particularly their tome *Types of Mankind* (1854). The portion of Agassiz’s work that is best known today are the series of ethnographic photographs of enslaved African-Americans that Agassiz had commissioned during his visit to South Carolina plantations in 1850. These images, intended by Agassiz to document the physical “types” of different African ethnicities within the American slave population, are now regularly used in films and books about American slavery, and bring a heartbreaking human reality to the abstract knowledge of our history (see, Rogers’ *Delia’s Tears: Race, Science, and Photography in Nineteenth-Century America* 2010).

European culture generated a huge variety of ways to frame the supposed superiority of European peoples through invidious comparisons with “othered” peoples. One variant produced orientalism, which contrasted the reputed traits of “Western” or occidental (that is, European) peoples against the tyranny, subservience, perversity, etc. attributed to “Oriental” or Eastern (primarily Near Eastern and North African) peoples (see Said). Orientalism resulted in the attribution of inferior capabilities not only to Ottoman, Arab, and Persian peoples, but also to “exotic” Eastern-associated races present
in Europe, such as Gypsies and Jews (for the last of whom modern racial prejudices were compounded with centuries-old religious prejudices). Although orientalism would seem, on the face of it, of little use to Anglo-Americans, as we shall see Anglo-American writers drew upon these discourses to craft highly creative analogies to American race relations in the nineteenth century.

Even more thoroughly embedded in European race science than orientalism, and of far more immediate use to Anglo-American race propagandists, was the attribution of superior traits to Northern over Southern peoples. Race theorists from Buffon to Prichard claimed that Northern climates fostered enterprise and intelligence in their human populations, while Southern climates fostered indolence in theirs. Thus, these race theorists explained, the supposedly unequal development of European and non-European civilizations. This North-South racial inequality was particularly useful for Anglo-Americans in arguing for the racial inferiority of enslaved Africans.

The nomenclature of several racial discourses about the identity and history of “white people” are still familiar to us today, in the twenty-first century, and are significant in the extent to which they conflict with the discourse of whiteness developed by Anglo-Americans from the eighteenth through mid-nineteenth centuries. Blumenbach’s category of “Caucasian” was less appealing to Anglo-Americans in this era, since it lumped them together with everyone from the Irish and the French (God forbid!) to the Finns, the Arabs, and the far-flung tribesmen of the Caucuses mountains. The identification of Germanic peoples (including the Saxons) with an “Aryan master race” by Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1816–1882), was even more ethnically promiscuous in its vision of a people spreading to Europe from India, and thus even less
appealing to antebellum American whites. The term “Aryan” had been given to an ethnic-linguistic group that nineteenth-century German linguists theorized had left India for the Middle East and Europe in prehistoric times, seeding the so-called Indo-European family of languages. The nineteenth-century American authors discussed in this dissertation almost never employ the terms “Caucasian” and “Aryan.” Instead, these white American authors either use the term “white” or, increasingly as the century progresses, “Saxon.” This American disinclination, before the late nineteenth century, to identify as Caucasian is consistent with the tension within transatlantic white supremacism between nationalist and pan-national white-supremacist discourses. White Americans in the early to mid-nineteenth century saw themselves as Saxons, and viewed American whiteness as a form of Saxon-ness.

Saxonism⁴ was the belief in the superiority of Saxons, that is, the English descendants of the Saxons, a Scandinavian tribe who invaded England beginning in the eighth century. The nature of that superiority, however, was initially presumed to be cultural rather than racial. Saxonism began in the fifteenth century in response to the English church’s break with Roman Catholicism, justifying Henry VIII’s marriage-minded revolt by claiming the cultural superiority of supposedly democratic and independent Saxon culture over the subservience of Roman Catholic Europe. Eighteenth-century transatlantic Saxonism shifted from focusing narrowly on the cultural practices of the Anglo-Saxons towards ideas of a culture shared with a more broadly conceived Germanic culture, although it naturally assumed that Saxons were an expression, the highest expression in fact, of Germanic character. This shift was influenced by the German Romantic concept of Volksgeist, a special and consistent national spirit of people,
that reached back to the Roman historian Tacitus’ first-century account of the warlike and independent character of the Germanic tribes of northern Europe who refused to submit to Roman conquest (Horsman 1960; Painter 2010). The Roman Tacitus’ own characterization of Germans as masculine and rugged as compared with citified and feminized Romans was happily adopted by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German Romanticists and Saxonists (as they would be later by Nazi propagandists). Tacitus’ work *Germania* was widely available in colonial America and closely studied by such founding fathers as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, helping to give rise to the derivative racial theory of American Saxonism (Horsman 16). According to American Saxonism, the new United States was a Saxon nation, and the American Saxons living in a kingless democracy were superior to the English originals.

Consistent with the trajectory of European scientific and political discourses generally, both the British and American varieties of Saxonism became thoroughly racialized over the course of the nineteenth century as “Americans were to share in the [transatlantic Saxonist] discovery that the secret of Saxon success lay not in the institutions but in the blood” (Horsman 24). The military and economic success of first the British and then the Americans was taken as evidence of the racial superiority of the Saxon race. According to racial Saxonists, Saxons were characterized by the traits of independence, masculinity, energy, beauty, and intelligence. Amid the swirl of race-science theories available to Anglo-Americans in the early and mid-nineteenth century, Saxonism would become a kind of racial-civic religion. In this dissertation I argue that other race theories were open for debate, subject to modification, available to be employed or abandoned as rhetorical needs required, but that Saxonism was the bedrock
foundation of essentially all Anglo-American writing on race in this period and stood unmolested as authors did what they willed with other theories.

The relationship between religious doctrine, science, and ideas about race in antebellum America was as different from its twentieth-century counterparts as the old solely-Saxon whiteness was from its more inclusive Jim Crow-era descendant. In contrast to the famous conflicts between evolution and Judeo-Christian beliefs famous in the twentieth century, there was no inherent conflict between religious dogma and most scientific discourses about race before the 1850s. European race scientists before Darwin contrived their theories to conform to biblical accounts of creation, from the age of the Earth to a single shared human origin in Adam and Eve to the origins of the major races in the dispersal of Noah’s sons after the flood. As a result, although race theorists argued over the extent to which racial differences might mirror species differentiation, nearly all of these theorists agreed that all races were part of the same human family and that supposed differences in appearance, intellect, or morality between the races were explained as somehow occurring within a single human family within the roughly six thousand years since the biblical creation. The overwhelming majority of these theories did not claim that whatever inequalities they might perceive between races were permanent. Instead much argument centered on the time frame and circumstances required for races to reach equality of capabilities.

The biblical imperative in pre-Darwinian science in America has been obscured by the largest exception to the rule: polygenesis. This theory claimed that human races had arisen from multiple and distinct moments of divine creation. The traditional biblical account to which other race-science theories attempted to adhere was then given the
retronym of “monogenesis,” or single creation. The implications of polygenesis were immense, since polygenesis declared that racial difference amounted to species difference. This meant that the races should not be considered members of the same human family with the same intellectual and moral capabilities, the same feelings and desires, and the same moral obligations. Polygenesis thus in a stroke rendered moot nearly all objections to the enslavement of African-Americans. Unsurprisingly, polygenesis was an American innovation, the central thesis of what became known as the “American School” of ethnology.

The scientific foundation of polygenesis was the craniometry of Philadelphia physician-scientist Samuel Morton, who compared the skull measurements of various races, including Indians, whites, African-Americans, and even ancient Egyptian mummies, and unsurprisingly “discovered” that “Caucasians” did then and had through all human history possessed larger brains than any other race, even as Africans had always had smaller brains. Morton’s work was augmented and lent international credibility by the conversion to the “American School” of Louis Agassiz, the eminent Swiss-born Harvard biologist and ethnologist. Agassiz was aided in the promotion of his theories by polygenesis’s energetic pitchman, Dr. Josiah Nott of South Carolina, with whom he published various polygenesist tomes. (For more on polygenesis and monogenesis, see Stanton 1960, Painter 2010).

Polygenesis was America’s great contribution to nineteenth-century race science. Yet for all of the entirely appropriate critical attention to polygenesis from historians, the American School theories are curiously absent from American literature. That none of the American authors covered in this dissertation embrace or even acknowledge
polygenesism in their polemical fiction is a testament to the extent to which that anti-biblical theory was considered beyond the pale in the overwhelmingly Christian culture of nineteenth-century America. Despite the obvious rhetorical advantages of polygenesism, and despite its most active proponent, Nott, being a Southerner and die-hard pro-slavery man, polygenesis is absent from the pro-slavery fiction of writers like Hentz. The scientism and anti-biblical nature of polygenesist theory seems to have been useless, even anathema, to writers seeking to portray Southern slavery as a benign and righteous institution. Polygenesism’s primary contribution to proving my overall thesis is its plainly self-serving politics, in that some pro-slavery Americans were willing to sacrifice the respectability of Christian theological belief in order to invent a creation account that would support the economic institution of slavery.

However, the greatest proof of the editorial discretion exercised by authors deploying pre-Darwinian racial theories is not their lack of interest in polygenesis but, rather, the absence of Darwinism itself in their works. Darwin’s ideas spread rapidly in the United States after the publication of The Origin of Species in 1859, effectively ending the careers of numerous scientific theories of human development among the scientifically inclined. Even Josiah Nott, the great advocate of polygenesis, ceded victory to Darwin and accepted a shared, if enormously distant, origin for all human beings. Of the works covered in my dissertation, only Child’s A Romance of the Republic (1867) was published after Origins appearance. However, Darwin’s was only the most recent and most convincing iteration of theories of animal and human evolution that had been in circulation in the middle decades of the nineteenth century (Darwin’s own grandfather had proposed an early variant), yet neither Cooper, Stowe, Hentz, Child, or Douglass
make the slightest references to the notion of human evolution. It seems that they avoided Darwinism for the same reason that they avoided polygenesis, namely that in an overwhelmingly Christian nation espousal of theories that contradicted the Bible was rhetorical suicide for authors who wished to win over the public. Nott capitulated to Darwin’s theory of human evolution with a shrug since, in his interpretation, it offered no threat to the institution of slavery in the United States—“forms that have been permanent for several thousand years, must remain so at least during the life time of a nation” (Stanton 187)—another manifestation of what I call the tensile strength of American white supremacism that reveals the rhetorical and political rather than scientific motivation behind polygenesis.

To understand the sustaining flexibility of whiteness in pre-Jim Crow America we must understand the peculiar and shifting political circumstances of the period that acted upon authors’ handling of scientific theories of race.

Political Context

The political crisis that motivated most Anglo-American interpretation and deployment of race science in the first two decades of the nineteenth century was the need to develop a rationale of American national identity. Anglo-Americans sought to be recognized as a legitimate nation within the terms of European political, scientific, and religious thought. Their task was to construct what Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has called a “new American subjecthood” (1) triangulated between Europeans and the Native Americans and African-Americans who also resided within the new nation. It is from the particular formulations that developed that American “whiteness” arose.
Anglo-Americans sought, on the one hand, to distance themselves from the British by condemning British tyranny and constructing America as the home of a particularly freedom-loving people. On the other hand, Anglo-Americans were eager to retain the imagined status that came with being identified in the transatlantic world as Europeans and, especially, as Saxons. In 1776, Jefferson suggested that the national seal of the new United States should include two mythical Saxon brothers, Hengist and Horsa, “the Saxon chiefs from whom we claim the honor of being descended, and whose political principles and form of government we assumed.” Jefferson characterized American democracy as a “return [to] that happy system of our [Saxon] ancestors” (Horsman 22). In the decades immediately after the revolution, Americans conceived of themselves in Saxonist terms but often avoided explicitly Saxonist language.

Scientifically literate Anglo-Americans like Thomas Jefferson sought to combat European disparagement of the American climate, particularly Buffon’s claim that the supposedly excessive humidity of North America resulted in the shrinking of plant and animal species, a thesis proved, Buffon claimed, by the supposedly small size of Indian penises (5: 130). For his part, Jefferson was so nettled by Buffon’s depiction of American smallness that he shipped Buffon the carcass of a very large moose in an effort to defend the honor of the American continent, and arguably of the Saxon-American phallus, as well (Sivils 354).

As critics from Morrison to Deloria have theorized, American whiteness was discursively constructed through selective identification with Indians and carefully crafted contrast with both Indians and Africans. During the colonial period Indians were often depicted as dangerous opponents to the expansion of benevolent Christian
civilization and as savages who threatened white women and children. The Indian-captivity narrative genre that arose in that period made such images common in American culture. After the American Revolution, and particularly after the War of 1812 (where Indians fought with the British against the Anglo-Americans), Anglo-American culture began to depict Indians as noble, Saxon-like savages vanishing from the American landscape that they ceded to their Anglo-American heirs. Defense of the native people of America also became central to the construction of Anglo-American whiteness through the 1820s. This reframing of Indian character was rhetorically useful as a means of combating two major problems in the establishment of Anglo-American national legitimacy: racial nativeness to the North American environment and legal inheritance of the land from the English and Indians (see Deloria 1998).

To join the ranks of nations according to the terms of European discourses, the new American nation needed political, legal, and scientific (racial) legitimacy. Anglo-Americans argued for the political legitimacy of their seizure of power from the British by calling themselves more Saxon than the Anglo-Saxon English in their revolt against tyranny. Americans sought legal legitimacy through narratives of symbolic adoption of Saxon-Americans by Indians, for which purpose Indians were often transformed into admirable near-Saxons. This produced the odd spectacle of early-nineteenth-century Saxon-Americans regularly dressing up as Indians at public events, inventing faux-Indian organizations such as the Tammany clubs, and spawning a popular genre of stage drama and novel depicting the noble Indian vanishing before the inevitable superiority of his adopted Saxon son (see Deloria 1998). The relationship between Cooper’s white Natty
Bumppo and the Mohicans Uncas and Chingachgook is only the most famous of these symbolic adoptions.

Anglo-Americans sought to refute claims that they could not thrive in North America because they were not native to the region by depicting Saxons and Indians as equally well adapted to the American environment. Cooper invokes Buffon’s theories of environmental adaptation as he regularly depicts Anglo-Americans as just as physically well adapted to North American climate as Indians, while blacks suffer from the cold due to racial incompatibility with Northern climates. This is consistent with a general trend in American racial discourse in this period that depicted Anglo-Americans as native (they even called themselves native, as in the case of the Know Nothing “nativist” political parties opposed to Irish immigration), while African-Americans were consistently framed as forever foreign, despite their many generations of residency here. The degree to which white Americans in the nineteenth century perceived American blacks as inherently foreign can be seen in the consistent interest in antebellum antislavery discourse in “colonizing” freed Africans to Africa or South America. This mapping of habitat adaptation adds a further scientific layer to what Toni Morrison has dubbed the “Africanist presence” without which American whiteness is impossible (Morrison 1992).

Particularly startling to anyone familiar with the poisonous history of Jim Crow anti-miscegenationism are the diverse ideas about race mixing in antebellum American culture. America never had national laws against race mixing, many states never had any race-mixing laws at all, and even some Southern states did not ban interracial marriage nor accept the so-called one-drop rule until the eve of the Civil War. Louisiana, with its Creole culture, history of being ruled and populated by the French and the Spanish,
complex tripartite racial system more akin to the Caribbean and South American mestizo cultures, and culture of “plaçage” mixed-race extralegal marriages held onto its own traditions until the pre-Civil War pressure to conform to homogenizing Southern practices overwhelmed their local culture. Virginia planters had a custom of freeing their mixed-race children by enslaved black mothers and designating them among their heirs, of which only the most famous is Thomas Jefferson’s mulatto children by Sally Hemings. The research of Joel Williamson suggests a great deal of racial amalgamation occurred between enslaved Africans and indentured Anglo servants in the nascent American culture of the seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century British colonies through the many references to cases of mixed marriages in eighteenth-century colonial legal records.

In eighteenth-century Anglo-America and the Anglo-Caribbean, Africans shared the category of unfree labor with Europeans sentenced to bonded servitude, from poorhouse and prison English to Gypsy “vagrants” to Irish rebels (Jordan 2008). Although eighteenth-century enslaved Africans bore the weight of cultural and predominantly religious prejudice from Anglo-Americans, the equation of slave status with color and race developed only gradually. American whiteness was born out of the desire by the Anglo-American ruling class to discourage class solidarity between bonded-enslaved Europeans and to ensure the creation of a permanently enslaved workforce by manufacturing a legal and social class distinction between the “white” and “black” working classes, what David R. Roediger has famously called the “wages of whiteness” (Roediger 13). American whiteness and blackness were begun but were not yet framed in the species-differentiated, scientific terms of later American racialism.
Before the advent of mid-nineteenth-century concepts of races as biologically distinct species or subspecies the taboo against black-white amalgamation was one of social and economic class, and of taste. For instance, it was Jefferson’s poor taste—and therefore doubt cast on his good sense— that was the basis of attacks on his relationship with Hemings during his election campaign in 1800 (Lemire 2009). As the nineteenth century progressed, the increased profitability of slaveholding after the invention of the cotton gin, the increased financial value of enslaved African-Americans after the ban of the transatlantic slave trade, and the rise of radical abolitionism inspired the South to double down on claims of absolute racial difference.

While the antimiscegenation laws and social taboos of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries came to encompass in their opprobrium the mixture of whites with any nonwhite race (state laws banned, variously, marriages with blacks, “Hindoos,” Filipinos, Chinese, and Indians), antebellum laws and social taboos fixated primarily on mixture with African-Americans. Despite our cultural memory of the disgust and distrust heaped on persons with mixed Indian-white heritage (“half-breeds”) in early- and mid-twentieth-century Western movies and novels, early-nineteenth-century American culture was rather enamored of the idea of amalgamation between whites and Indians. In the 1780s, Jefferson boasted that “proofs of genius given by the Indians of N. America, place them on a level with Whites in the same uncultivated state,” and urged Indians to take up farming and private property, promising that “you will become one people with us; your blood will mix with ours; and will spread with ours over this great island…. You will unite yourselves with us, and we shall all be Americans (Jefferson 234)."
Anglo-American flexibility on the question of racial purity in pursuit of biological nativeness and/or legal inheritance of America was extended, to a lesser degree, to the Dutch. Cooper happily referred to the residents of New York State as a “thorough amalgamation…[of] Dutch quietude and English aristocracy” (Notions 90), of Anglo-Americans with the descendants of their Dutch predecessors. The Dutch, like the Indians in the Northeast, had the virtue of being small in number and posing no political or military threat to Anglo-American rule.

At its core, Saxonism is a form of parsing European peoples into superior and inferior types, and the explosion in popular interest in Saxonism among the Anglo-American public came with the waves of non-English European immigration in the late 1820s and 1830s. An American whiteness primarily constructed against “black” and “red” racial identities was sufficient for the promulgation of Anglo-Saxon hegemony only until the arrival of significant numbers of German and, especially, Irish immigrants. This increase in the non-English European population came at an awkward moment for the still-developing culture of whiteness in the United States. Just a few years earlier the Jacksonian revolution brought about what has been called the First Expansion of American whiteness, namely the extension of voting rights to all white men, dropping the property requirement that had limited the voting franchise to a small elite (Murrin et al. 282). Suddenly, propertyless Anglo-Americans saw their hard-fought place at the table being potentially offered to “foreigners,” and justifications both racial and religious were hastily constructed for their exclusion.

Prejudice against Roman Catholics that the Protestant Anglo-Americans had inherited from British culture was prominent in anti-Irish anxiety. The Reverend Lyman
Beecher, father of Harriet Beecher Stowe and Henry Ward Beecher, decried the Irish Catholic immigration as “the very scum and dregs of Human nature,” and a series of anti-Irish sermons by Beecher Senior in Boston inspired mobs to burn down a convent school in Charlestown (qtd. in Painter 136). Protestant Anglo-Americans worried over the possibility of “mob rule” if the Irish were allowed to vote, citing their un-Saxon-like obedience to the Pope. The anti-immigrant Know Nothing party, tellingly calling themselves “nativists,” invoked racial stereotypes of the Irish developed by their English colonizers that closely resemble American stereotypes of Africans and American blacks. Nineteenth-century British culture regularly described the Irish as chimpanzees and likened them specifically to Africans (see Nie 2004). According to transatlantic Anglo-American culture, the Irish were ignorant, unintelligent, violent, natural servants, and incapable of independence and yet prone to a disorderly rebelliousness that was somehow distinguished from the Saxon virtue of rebellious independence.

In 1829 a young Emerson lumped the Irish with various other non-Caucasian races when he noted that:

The African [race] have [never] occupied [nor do they] promise ever to occupy any very high place in the human family…. The Irish cannot; the American Indian cannot; the Chinese cannot.

Before the energy of the Caucasian race all other races have quailed and done obeisance. (qtd. in Painter 139)

The Irish were the subject of sympathy and defended by abolitionists like Garrison and Douglass, the latter of whom visited Ireland during the famine and drew parallels between their oppression and suffering and that of African-American slaves. Irish
Americans generally rejected parallels between them and American blacks made by their attackers and defenders, clearly perceiving that the key to attaining American whiteness was not to be linked to American blackness.

The rising self-identification of Anglo-Americans as Saxons spurred by non-English immigration in the second quarter of the nineteenth century lead to a profound Anglophilia that is startling considering the postrevolutionary Anglophobia of just a few decades prior. This Anglophilia, however, was a form of self-regard for Anglo-Americans, exemplified in the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson. In 1848, Emerson concluded that, “Only the English race can be trusted with freedom,” and within a few years was declaring that Americans were “double distilled English,” that is, more Saxon than the Anglo-Saxons, and hence they were the only race that could be trusted with freedom, that is, full American citizenship and identity, in the United States (Emerson *English Traits* 172). It is the implications of statements such as these that led historian Nell Irvin Painter to describe Emerson as the “philosopher king of American white race theory” (151), and non-English European immigrants were nearly as much of a focus of that theorizing as blacks and Indians.

The tenets of American Saxonism embedded in antebellum white American culture were shared by both pro-slavery and antislavery Americans. This unquestioned certainty of the superiority of Anglo-Americans served as a shared discursive foundation beneath all of the disagreements between the two wings of Anglo-American culture, yet it also proved to be troublesome to each side. As tensions between the North and South escalated, the conflation of ethnicity and race with moral character lead many in both regions to racialize their differences. A mutually appealing theory arose that traced the
differences between the two regions, and the two peoples, as rooted in the English Civil
War of the sixteenth century and, further still, in racial and cultural differences dating
back to the Norman conquest. According to this theory Northern culture, with its
independent farmers and industry, was settled by “Puritans,” in other words the
descendants of Saxon yeoman farmers, while the pseudo-feudal Southern culture had
been fashioned by Norman-descended aristocrats, or “Cavaliers” (see Watson 2008).

Saxonism exerted pressure on Northern antislavery and anti-prejudice writers to
construct more positive characterizations of non-Saxons like blacks, Indians, and the Irish,
without suggesting that these groups possessed the sacrosanct combination of traits (pride,
intelligence, masculinity, and energy) central to the American Saxon self-image and
central to rationalizations for Saxon hegemony. The prospect of a post-slavery American
society provided new political pressures on antislavery Anglo-American writers to
imagine a new American culture in which American blacks would become an
unthreatening minority group, which by dint of their supposedly natural limitations could
not challenge Saxon hegemony. Many white abolitionists advocated the extension to
American blacks of what were called “natural rights” (life, liberty, and the pursuit of
happiness) but not necessarily citizenship rights (voting, holding office, etc.). For
example, Abraham Lincoln was ever an ardent supporter of the natural rights of
American blacks but in 1858 the future “great emancipator” stated that “I am not, nor
ever have been, in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to
hold office, nor to intermarry with whites” (Lincoln 159).

Horsman comments in his great work, *Race and Manifest Destiny* (1981), that
American Saxonists “ignored” their theory’s “logical inconsistencies and contradictions”
(20), but my research reveals that dismissing those inconsistencies took some heavy discursive work. Rather than merely ignoring American Saxonism’s “inconsistencies and contradictions” Anglo-American authors engaged in a reimagining of race theories that responded dynamically to the shifting political circumstances, in an effort to resolve cognitive dissonances within the ideology of Saxon whiteness, that inevitably revealed new contradictions in the fiction of American racial categories. The shifting quality of these white authors’ use of race science is consistent with Homi Bhabha’s theorization that the nation is not merely a fictional “imagined community,” à la Benedict Anderson, but a fiction that is always and constantly full of gaps and holes that reveal its fictionality and threaten to undermine it, and that national cultures must constantly respond to new breaks in the surface of the national lie.

Sorisio astutely notes that the rise of the scientific expert and race science meant a greatly reduced “latitude for dissent” on social issues for nonscientist writers than had the “premodern racial concepts” of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (18). Nonetheless, Sorisio’s work has documented the efforts of authors in this period to “imagine through literature a space in which to reshape the politics of the body that shaped the politics of their times” (13)—that is, to contest the political power of scientific claims about bodily difference through literary technique rather than scientific argument. However, my research reveals that the “latitude for dissent” open to nonscientist authors in nineteenth-century America in fact included complex racialist-rhetorical improvisations that remade and reinterpreted the supposedly determinative authority of race science while struggling to stay within the bounds of Saxonist orthodoxy.
Among the most challenging aspects of this rhetorical high-wire act was gender. The European racial categories inherited and adapted by Anglo-Americans reflected the patriarchal nature of transatlantic culture, attributing greater masculinity to white races and femininity to nonwhite races. Hyper-masculinity was central to the American Saxon self-image, putting antislavery and anti-prejudice writers in a double bind. On the one hand, the femininity associated with the supposed submissiveness of blacks was a primary element of white contempt for blacks, and indifference or approval of their enslavement. Consequently antislavery writers, white and black, had to construct a more masculine portrayal of black character to win the respect and sympathy of Northern white readers. (Think, for instance, of the rhetorical importance in abolitionism of accounts of slave revolts like the *Amistad*, and, most iconically, Frederick Douglass’s fistfight with the “slave-breaker” Edward Covey in his *Narrative.*) On the other hand, it was taboo to depict blacks, particularly black men, as possessing an equal degree of masculinity and pride to that claimed by American Saxons. Challenging the uniqueness of American Saxon masculinity was a nonstarter in nineteenth-century American culture, and depictions of assertive and rebellious black masculinity risked invoking the racist stereotypes of the dangerous savage.

This double bind was particularly challenging for women writers. All of the women authors of the early and mid-nineteenth century can be considered, to varying degrees, feminists. Merely by dint of publishing their work and addressing the public sphere, especially in piercing in any way the masculine domain of politics, a nineteenth-century American woman author was challenging patriarchy. A popular antislavery rhetorical strategy was to acknowledge the racist claim that blacks were by nature
feminine but to then connect a positive portrayal of black character to an assertion of the value of “feminine” domestic and Christian religious virtues. The Christlike martyrdom of Stowe’s Uncle Tom is the most famous instance of this rhetorical move. As I will discuss in my chapter on *Dred*, the most radical aspect of Stowe’s second novel was her depiction of a black man whose masculinity and rhetoric was emphatically “Saxon”: hyper-masculine, armed and ready to kill to protect his freedom and his women. The collapse of Dred’s planned revolt, the suggestion that Dred my be insane rather than merely proudly masculine, and ultimately the “failure” of the novel so often noted by critics is evidence of the profound struggle Stowe faced between her moral outrage against slavery, her feminism, and the pressures to conform to an American Saxonist worldview. The patriarchy-reinforcing gendering of white and black in American culture was even a challenge for a pro-slavery writer like Hentz. On the face of it this is surprising, since the pro-slavery argument depended on the claim that blacks were a naturally childlike and dependent race whose white masters served as benevolent father figures. However, Hentz’s novels were generally characterized by active and assertive women characters. The political pressure to toe the pro-slavery line in *The Planter’s Northern Bride*, her response to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, left Hentz struggling to square the inherent patriarchalism of pro-slavery arguments with her own feminist impulses.

The preceding summary of nineteenth-century American culture’s preoccupation with race science confirms the conclusion of the *American Whig Review* in 1850 that “the scientific study of humanity, from being a century back the theme of a few speculative philosophers, is become at last a topic of general and even popular interest” (qtd. in Horsman 139). This is all well and good, a skeptic might say, but how can we know to
what extent, if at all, the specific novelists discussed in this dissertation were familiar with the various race-science theories with which I will connect them?

Indeed, the connection drawn between race-science theories and nineteenth-century American authors by mid-twentieth-century critics was essentially inferential, since most of those critics hadn’t found explicit references to race-science theories or theorists in these authors’ fiction. However, for the majority of the novelists I analyze in this dissertation one need not rely on inference alone because their nonfiction writing (and in the case of Cooper his fiction as well) is replete with unambiguous references to transatlantic race theories, their creators, and their terminology.

In an 1821 essay, Cooper demurred on the task of making “subtle distinctions which involve national character, or national enterprise or aptitude,” and declared that he would “leave such nice distinctions for greater ingenuity than we can pretend to” (“Clark’s Naval History of the U.S.” 19). Nonetheless, race science appears both explicitly and implicitly in his subsequent works. Cooper goes out of his way to mock the anti-American theories of Buffon, invoking Buffon by name and depicting both Buffon and one of his American apostles as, well, buffoons. Extended passages of speculative debate in Pioneers pit Buffon’s evaluation of America Indians against that of Condorcet’s romantic historicism. (Although Condorcet is not named in this passage, savvy readers would have recognized his ideas.)

Conversely, neither Stowe, nor Child, nor Hentz name, in their fiction, the race scientists whose theories I will argue that they deploy in those works, nor make explicit and technical references to those theories. However, Stowe and Child were not shy about discussing such matters explicitly in their nonfiction writing. Stowe’s very first book, a
children’s geography primer, *Primary Geography for Children* (1833), coauthored with her sister Catherine, consists almost entirely of a hodgepodge of assertions borrowed from European and American ethnology. The Stowe sisters explained to America’s children that “[S]outhern races…in the southern part of Europe” are “gay and lively with very strong feelings—they love and hate and do everything else with all their hearts,” but warned that although children might find southern Europeans “most agreeable to talk and play with,” it was Northern races who were “the best to advise and instruct” (qtd. in Gossett 78).

Stowe’s rhetorically complex spin on Saxonism is clear on the very first page of *UTC*, in the preface to which she praises blacks’ Christian, martyr-like submission as “essentially unlike the hard and dominant Anglo-Saxon race” (v). Consistent with the escalating prominence and prestige of race science in American culture in mid-century, Stowe’s clearest and most extensive engagement with race science came sixteen years after her publication of *UTC*, in her 1868 work, *Men of Our Times*. In her introduction to this collection of short biographical sketches of the “leading patriots of the day” (title page), Stowe notes that:

> The question of inherited traits is becoming yearly one of increasing interest, and most striking results come from a comparison of facts upon this subject…. It will always be both interesting and useful to know…the quality of the family stock…of men who have acted any remarkable part in life. (v)

Far from ceding all conclusions regarding heredity, race, and character to race-science experts, Stowe presents herself in the role of literary race scientist and boasts of technical
acumen when she assures her readers that, “Whenever the means have been at hand, the family stock from each man has been derived, has been minutely traced” [emphasis added] (v). Stowe’s Saxonism is on display when she notes proudly that of the men (and they are all men) she chose to celebrate “full one-third are direct lineal descendants of the Pilgrim fathers” (vi).

It is in *Men*, as well, that Stowe’s debt to the race scientist-ethnologist James Cowles Prichard, from whom I argue in this dissertation Stowe derived the variant of the theory of Mandingo-Saxonism that she employs in her novel *Dred*, is made explicit. Stowe cites not merely Prichard’s name, nor merely the name of his most famous work, *Researches Into the Physical History of Mankind*, but in fact cites specific pages in *Researches* and challenges Frederick Douglass’s interpretation of an illustration from the book (385). It is worth noting there is far better evidence establishing Stowe’s knowledge of Prichard than has ever been discovered in regard to her widely accepted link to Kinmont, for which no concrete evidence beyond inference has yet been discovered.

Like Stowe, fellow antislavery novelist Lydia Maria Child refrained from explicit references to scientific theories of race in her fiction while employing them freely in her nonfiction writing. Indeed, of all the writers considered in this dissertation Child was the most thoroughly versed in a wide range of transatlantic scientific theories of race (with the possible exception of Frederick Douglass, who features in my afterward) and certainly the most publicly avid consumer and amateur practitioner of such theories among them. Child’s feminist encyclopedia, *The History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations* (1833), like Stowe’s *Geography* published the same year, repeats Saxonist ethnographic appraisals of the characteristics of various peoples around
the world. Her hybrid private-public *Letters from New-York* (1843) includes praise for Kinmont and a defense of the “fatalism” of phrenology, arguing that:

Assuredly, we are all, in some degree, the creatures of outward circumstance…. Our responsibility consists in the use we make of our possessions, not on their extent…. The idiot is as happy playing at Jack Straws, or blowing bubbles all the live long day, as Newton was in watching the great choral dance of the planets. (277)

Venturing into quantitative territory rarely breached by her fellow novelists, Child then shifts from the range of skull shapes and mental capacities within a family to that between races. In response to an exhibition of living Indians at Barnum’s American Museum, Child launched into an extended disquisition on the effect of physical and civilizational influences on the skull shapes and subsequent mental capabilities of different races in *Letters*. Child completes her account of the racial exhibit with numerical data on the supposed facial angles of each race (à la Petrus Camper) that ranks them across a spectrum from white to ape: “Caucasian: 85 degrees, Asiatic: 78, American Indian: 73, Ethiopian: 70, Ourang Outang: 67” (278). In *Romance of the Republic*, published over twenty years after *Letters*, Child merged *Letters’* phrenological analogy and its racial discussion of relative mental capabilities of each race, having a New England matron declare of a young mulatta character, “It is a hopeless undertaking to educate her after the New England patterns. One might as well try to plough [sic] with a butterfly, as to teach her ancient history” (209).

Explicit references by Hentz to race-science theories and/or theorists have yet to emerge, but may likely emerge from the archives in due time. Hentz was, like Stowe, a
resident of the city of Cincinnati during the very years of Kinmont’s public lectures that critical consensus supposes so influenced Stowe. Indeed, Hentz and Stowe were both members of same intellectual club, the Semi-Colon Club. As my analysis of Hentz’s novel *The Planter’s Northern Bride* will demonstrate, she was thoroughly immersed in the literary expression of race theories in European literature, which she remade in her take on the plantation novel: Gypsy and Italian race theories, folklore, etc. Her husband, Charles, was a Northern-trained doctor who would doubtless have been exposed to contemporary scientific debates about the nature of race. Charles Hentz’s medical files reveal that he treated both white and black patients in the course of his medical career in Florida, Alabama, and other parts of the South. Most tantalizing, the catalog of Hentz’s family papers includes “a phrenological character analysis” (Hentz Family papers).

Cynical self-interest might seem to be the most obvious explanation of the “debate” over race science in the nineteenth century, as it is tempting to conclude regarding the climate-change debate today. However, insights into the operation of that century’s pseudoscience may perhaps be gleaned from twenty-first-century science. Contemporary neuropsychology’s insights into what it calls “motivated reasoning” indicate that conscious intention may not be required for persons to engage in politically expedient rhetorical manipulations of science. Although a common response to those whose interpretation of politicized science differs from one’s own is to accuse the other side of ignorance, Yale University researcher Dan Kahan finds that, “Science literacy promoted polarization…not consensus…because people tend to use scientific knowledge to reinforce their worldviews” (Aschenbach “Why Science is So Hard to Believe”). Neuropsychologists also emphasize that “confirmation bias,” a subconscious process that
causes us to put greater faith in evidence that supports our existing beliefs, renders it extremely difficult to actually appraise new information in a purely rational manner divorced from our preexisting beliefs.

University of Virginia psychologist Jonathan Haidt offers a particularly apt analogy when he explains that when we use scientific evidence to support a political argument, “We may think we’re being scientists, but we’re actually being lawyers” (Mooney “The Science of Why We Don’t Believe Science”). Furthermore, Kahan concludes that “incorrect” scientific ideas and the political beliefs that seem to spring from them cannot simply be combatted with new information. As a recent article in Mother Jones magazine summarized, “The study subjects weren’t ‘anti-science’—not in their own minds, anyway. It’s just that ‘science’ was whatever they wanted it to be” (Mooney “The Science of Why We Don’t Believe Science”). Kahan worries that, “We’ve come to a misadventure, a bad situation where diverse citizens, who rely on diverse systems of cultural certification, are in conflict” (Aschenbach “Why Science is So Hard to Believe”).

It is tempting to imagine, as have numerous recent newspaper editorials, that the false climate-change debate represents a dangerous collapse in the authority of science in American culture. In fact, as my research into the politics of race science and literature in nineteenth-century American culture reveals, the “misadventure” Kahan describes has been going on, and may well be the rule rather than the exception.
Chapter Two

The Pro-Amalgamation Anti-Miscegenationist: James Fenimore Cooper’s Shifting Theorizations of Race

Within literary race-science criticism, the work of American novelist James Fenimore Cooper is doubly marked as a progenitor. Cooper was both an early and highly influential case of the literary use of race science in an American novel and also the subject of the first significant critical analysis of an American novel’s role as propaganda for science-based white supremacism. In 1960, critic Leslie Fiedler famously labeled Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826) the “first anti-miscegenation novel in our literature” (Fiedler 204-05), setting the mold for decades of Cooper criticism that viewed Cooper as an ardent defender of white supremacism and racial purity and as evidence of the consistency of American racism. More recently, critics in the late 1990s and early 2000s have framed Cooper’s positive statements about and depictions of Indians to construct an image of Cooper as essentially a multiculturalist, celebrating racial and cultural diversity and even *race mixing* (see Wallace 1995 and Sanborn 2012). The result has been a dichotomy between contradictory interpretations not only of Cooper’s work in particular but more broadly of the operation of scientific racism within American literature and culture overall.

The resolution of these inconsistent critical appraisals of Cooper lies firstly in the fact that Cooper was himself inconsistent, and secondly in the fact that the race science and racial politics of the nineteenth century underwent profound transformations unaccounted for in most Cooper criticism. If one maps Cooper’s handling of specific theories of racial inequality; his inconsistent application of those theories to whites,
blacks, and Indians; his depiction or discussion of race mixing between specific races; and the political-scientific conversation about America in transatlantic culture over the course of the first decade of Cooper’s career (1823 to 1833), what is revealed is a complex and contradictory record that corresponds to and contradicts tenets of both critical camps. To begin with, Cooper was not, could not have been, an “anti-miscegenationist” for the simple reason that the word “miscegenation” would not be coined until 1864, two decades after the publication of *Mohicans*, and the assumption that races represent distinct species that is the etymology of the word wouldn’t become ascendant in transatlantic culture until mid-century.

Further evidence that Cooper was not an anti-miscegenationist can be found in the fact that his portrayals of race mixing between 1823 and 1833 move from sympathetic but tragic mixed-race persons and attraction, and celebrations of symbolic interracial adoptions, to increasingly positive depictions of or discussions about racial amalgamation (the term used in Cooper’s time). The key distinction is that Cooper was primarily interested in amalgamation, symbolic or reproductive, between whites and Indians, although he displays a subdued but persistent sympathy for black-white amalgamation, as well. This discrepancy between the treatment of Indians and blacks in Cooper’s work extends, as well, to his use of the race theories of two eighteenth-century French theorists, Comte de Buffon and Condorcet, that appear throughout the works of this decade but are applied inconsistently to whites, Indians, and blacks, and inconsistently between one book and another. (See Table 1.) This complex dance of theories and identities derives, I argue, from the fact that Cooper’s primary concern was not white-race purity (as the charge of anti-miscegenationism implies) but instead the construction of a scientific
argument to bolster a new national-racial identity for America’s Saxon ruling elite. These scientific arguments seeded in literary origin myths would defend against European criticisms while justifying the continued economic, political, and social hegemony of Saxons in the U.S. (hardly the goals of a multiculturalist).

Cooper selectively applied Buffon’s theories of human adaptation to physical habitat in order to deflect European arguments that Europeans could not thrive in the Americans because they were not native. Cooper settled on the same rhetorical-scientific solution to this challenge as many Americans of his day by implying that Anglo-Americans acquire nativeness from Indians. Cooper accomplished this in his texts first through symbolic adoptions but increasingly as the decade passed through racial amalgamation, but also to justify Indian exclusion from the privileges of American whiteness by claiming that they had not yet advanced to the sufficient level of civilization but one day would do so. Similarly, Cooper selectively applied Condorcet’s theory of romantic historicism to deflect European attacks on the hypocrisy of a slaveholding democracy by imagining a (far-off) day when the advance of black accomplishment and retreat of white prejudice would allow blacks, too, to join both Americanness and whiteness.

The individual shifts in race theory and treatment of race mixing in Cooper’s writings of the 1820s and ’30s very often come in response to specific literary or scientific works, mostly European but sometimes American, whose influence on the transatlantic image of the Saxon the American Cooper sought to counteract. That Cooper composed half of these works while living in France and England, where he moved his family in 1826 after the success of Mohicans, emphasizes the centrality of the
transatlantic context to understanding his shifting take on race, science, and nationalism in this period. Cooper’s handling of race, then, was neither determined wholesale by dominant nineteenth-century theories of racial inequality nor by a precociously twenty-first-century multiculturalism. Instead, race theory served Cooper as flexible rhetorical tool in pursuit of his ideological and political agenda to legitimize an American national subjecthood and American national hegemony that was emphatically and solely white.

**The Critics and Cooper’s Theories of Race**

In retrospect it is not surprising that Fiedler, writing in the late 1950s, would have interpreted pejorative statements regarding race mixing and narratives in which mixed-race couples are killed off as expressions of the same antimiscegenation discourse that undergirded Jim Crow segregation in his own era. According to Fiedler’s highly influential\(^2\) interpretation of *Mohicans* and the novel *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish* (1829), these novels reflected Cooper’s belief that “the color line is eternal and God-given” (206-07). Fiedler famously declared that Cooper had penned “the first anti-miscegenation novel in our literature” (204-05). However, although theories of racial inequality and taboos against racial amalgamation had existed in America in various forms and in varying degrees since the colonial era, when Cooper wrote the works in question the discourse of “anti-miscegenation” per se did not exist, since the term would not be coined until 1864, and it implies a conflation of race with species that did not gain prominence until mid-century.\(^3\) Furthermore, taboos against race mixing had in the 1820s-’40s not yet acquired the consistent virulence they would take on in response to abolitionism in the 1850s.\(^4\) It was a different set of theories of race left over from the eighteenth century that dominated discussions of racial difference and race relations in the beginning of the
nineteenth century and that appear in Cooper’s work.\textsuperscript{5}

James D. Wallace provided a useful start to parsing the actual race theories evident in Cooper’s work when Wallace identified in \textit{Wept} references to and invocations of two pre-“miscegenation” racial theories: Condorcet’s romantic historiography (195) and Buffon’s environmental adaptation (193, 198).\textsuperscript{6} Wallace demonstrated that Fiedler’s identification of anti-miscegenationism in Cooper’s work was an example of unintentional “presentism” by which Fiedler mistook Cooper’s cultural and historical context for that of the mid-twentieth century.\textsuperscript{7,8} However, Wallace’s conclusion that Cooper was therefore essentially a multiculturalist falls into the same presentist trap as Fiedler, contributing to a wave of criticism depicting Cooper as a progressive multiculturalist that began in the mid-1990s and continues to this day in various forms (see Gustafson 2012, Smith 2006, Lambert 1996). These multicultural interpretations offered a valuable corrective to the view of Cooper as an anti-miscegenationist, but do not account for the hostility and ambivalence regarding race mixing in Cooper’s work and the political conservatism of an author who supported the status quo of white hegemony in America, while refusing to support either the Indian-protection or abolition movements that sought to make the United States more respectful of, and more just towards, its multiple cultures.

Building upon Wallace’s discovery of Buffon and Condorcet in \textit{Wept}, however, my research reveals that Cooper applied the ideas of both theorists in numerous works. Reading for evidence of Buffon’s and Condorcet’s ideas across these works reveals that while their ideas, and even references to them by name, appear often, their theories were applied very selectively, and the evaluation of their veracity shifted dramatically. As the
chart accompanying this chapter illustrates, Cooper applied Buffon’s idea that races thrive best only in their native environments to Indians and Africans but not to whites, so that Indians and whites can both physically thrive in North America while Africans cannot. Inversely, Cooper generally applied Condorcet’s theory of civilized development more consistently to Indians than to Africans, stressing repeatedly that Indians will one day achieve the same degree of advanced civilization claimed by whites, while far less often granting any such hope of future improvement to Africans. Cooper endowed these theories with shifting degrees of authority and ambiguity as they appeared in one place in the voice of the narrators and in others in the voices of characters, and then began to both abandon and mock theories of racial inequality as he increasingly portrayed racial amalgamation in a more positive light. Understanding the logic behind this complex pattern requires historicist attention to the three major discourses of white American cultural identity that I will argue shaped that pattern: American national subjecthood, Saxonism, and “playing Indian.”

*The Pioneers* (1823): Cooper’s First Attempt at Racial Theorizing

Theories of race emerge first in Cooper’s work in *Pioneers*, the first of his Leatherstocking novels, which depicts relations between English colonists, Indians, and African-Americans in a small rural community in upstate New York in 1793. The novel *Pioneers* was, in part, a response to Longfellow’s call for authentically American literature drawing from uniquely American subjects. It was modeled self-consciously on Sir Walter Scott’s historical romances to construct an origin myth for the new nation, a clear example of Benedict Anderson’s concept of the manufactured nature of the
“imagined community” of the nation. From this very first work of the long Leatherstocking series, Cooper infused race-science ideas into his national myth.

The example of *Pioneers*’ racial theorizing most often cited by critics is the physical suffering of the slave Aggy, who, as an African, is not physically adapted to northern cold:

His face, which nature had coloured with a glistening black, was now mottled with the cold, and his large eyes filled with tears; a tribute to its power, that the keen frosts of those regions always extracted from one of his African origin. (12-13)

Fiedler cited this passage as an example of Cooper’s racism without identifying the particular race theory behind it, while Wallace identified it as Buffon-like environmental adaptation (193) that contradicted Fiedler’s claim that Cooper was an anti-miscegenationist (since antimiscegenation was predicated in part on the notion of permanent racial difference). This explicit analysis of racial-environmental adaptation is not extended to whites or Indians, however, so that from the very start Cooper’s use of this supposedly universal theory explaining the physical traits of races is selectively applied only to Africans. Indians and whites thrive in the cold woodlands of upstate New York, but the physical adaptation to that climate to which Buffon would attribute their relative physical comfort in that environment goes unspoken of. This shared comfort in northern climates amounts to an implicit claim that both Indians and whites (English and Dutch colonists) are well adapted to the climate of New York and by extension of North America. Thus environmental-adaptation theory is emphasized primarily to establish the supposed physical unsuitability of Africans for life in northern latitudes while linking
Indians and whites together as sharing a fitness for this environment so thorough that it goes without saying.\(^9\)

However, Cooper’s depiction of African incompatibility with American society was not based entirely on innate racial traits. Unlike other racial theorists and writers of his own and later times, Cooper in *Pioneers* does not portray submissiveness—a disqualifying trait for American subjecthood—as an innate racial trait in Africans. A free but socially marginalized African-American, Brom demands fairness in a shooting contest whose prize is his own turkey, defending his economic interest with cries of “Gib a nigger fair play!” and demanding justice with the passion of a “madman” (255).

Cooper’s characterization of Brom refutes a belief that the supposedly innate submissive and servile character of Africans made them *morally* incapable of thriving in an American democracy and free market. However, Brom’s self-assertion is met with Natty Bumppo’s threat, in mock negro dialect, that “Natty Bumppo hit a nigger” (255) and although the white crowd rules against Bumppo in a rule of the contest, Brom still loses his turkey in the course of the contest and owes his monetary compensation to the whim of a white woman, as Brom has no legal standing to defend his property legally, it seems. The self-assertion that Cooper might admire in an African in Africa\(^{10}\) makes Brom incompatible with an American society that will not treat him fairly. Cooper seems to imply that Africans’ capacity for self-assertion may be insufficient to enable them to adapt to America’s *social* environment, as well, because of prejudice against them by both whites and Indians. Thus Cooper’s application of theories of racial inferiority is both applied narrowly in terms of physical constitution to Africans (rather than universally across all races) and also undermined in terms of African character, but these seemingly
opposed takes on innate racial inferiority arrive at the same conclusion that Africans are
unsuited to both North American climate and American society.

The question of the proper place of Indians in American society arises in a scene
in Pioneers, much cited by critics, in which two white men debate whether or not Oliver
Edwards, a man they believe to be an Indian-white “half-breed,” will quite literally have
a place at the table (267). One white man, Sheriff, is shocked at the suggestion that
Edwards should eat in the cellar with the negroes rather than with the whites in the dining
room; Sheriff assumes not only a relative social equality between Indians and whites in
comparison to African-Americans but also an antipathy towards African-Americans
shared by both whites and Indians:

You surely would not make the youth eat with the blacks! He is
part Indian, it is true, but the natives hold the negroes in great
contempt. No, no—he would starve before he would break a crust
with negroes. (267)

Ultimately, the master of the house wins out, arguing that Edwards “is to fill the station
of [a gentleman]; let him receive the treatment that is due to his place, until we find him
unworthy of it” (267), since “here, all are equal who know how to conduct themselves
with propriety” (268). This passage suggests that Indians, and an Indian-white half-breed,
are assumed to be capable of sharing America’s table with whites while implying that
African-Americans’ place in the cellar of American society has somehow been earned by
their failure to “conduct themselves with propriety.” Doolen argues that Cooper
perceived racial prejudice as a social evil that threatened the ideal republic that this town,
he argues, otherwise represented within Pioneers. However, an important aspect of
Pioneers’ seating-arrangement scene has escaped the notice of previous criticism: the first appearance of the romantic historicism that would play a major role in Cooper’s work during the rest of the 1820s.

Romantic historicism makes a brief but telling appearance in Pioneers. Sherriff, appalled at the notion of elevating (literally) an Indian to dine at the white man’s table above the cellar-bound African-Americans, opines that “you will find it no easy matter to make a gentleman of him. The old proverb says, ‘that it takes three generations to make a gentleman’” (267). While this line refers most directly to British class hierarchies, in the context of a multiracial American population where the most significant “class” distinctions are racial categories, this line suggests a merging of class-mobility debates with racialized romantic historicism. The Sherriff’s suggestion that, for the time being, Indians are closer to Africans than to whites was precisely the racial formulation against which Cooper argued throughout his career-long efforts to link Indians and whites.

Importantly, this conversation does not include any discussion of how long it might take Africans to “join the table,” despite the freedman Brom’s near-instantaneous loss of his slave’s servility. The assumption seems to be either that Africans will never advance, or that American prejudice will never allow them access to “the table” regardless of their characters and capabilities.

It must be noted, however, that in Pioneers romantic historicism is invoked indirectly and is voiced by an unsympathetic character rather than the authoritative narrator, and fails to win the seating-arrangement argument. What’s more, the open-minded host gently mocks the Sheriff’s claims of his supposedly noble forebears, saying, “Here is a true American genealogy for you” (268), mocking the very American self-
invention in which Cooper, in his own way, participated. The conclusion seems to be that aversion between races (whether between whites and Indians, or Indians and Africans) is based on prejudice rather than the kind of natural aversion to other races claimed by the antimiscegenation theories of the mid-nineteenth century and attributed to Cooper by mid-twentieth-century critics. *Pioneers* sets a pattern in Cooper of celebrations of a very circumscribed form of multiculturalism, one restricted to the mixture and association of Anglo-Saxons and Indians (and not Africans or African-Americans) in the limited historical moment that has now passed.

Given the centrality of “miscegenation” in Cooper criticism, it is curious that the planned interracial marriage between the Indian-white “half-breed” Edwards and Marmaduke’s white daughter, Elizabeth, has received relatively little critical attention. Critics’ neglect of this interracial romance is likely due to the fact that Cooper resolves the crisis by revealing at the last moment that Edwards is in fact not half-Indian at all, but the long-lost all-white heir of a local white landholder. Nonetheless, it is significant that racial amalgamation and intermarriage is included from the very start among the issues with which Cooper’s frontier novels must contend. Within *Pioneers*, the primary significance of confusion over Edwards’s identity is the multivalent conflation of whites and Indians just short of biological amalgamation. In his guise as an Indian-white half-breed, Edwards lives for a time with Bumppo and Chingachgook (Indian John), a symbolic son to the mixed-race homosocial friendship between the white man and the Indian. And when Edwards is revealed to be, in fact, of pure white descent, this erstwhile half-breed, still suffused with an aura of Indianness, is revealed to be the heir to his (white) father’s land titles, conflating white and Indian forms of legitimate possession of
the land. For good measure, while in his half-breed identity he is called Oliver Edwards, his revealed “true” name, Edward Oliver Effingham, is merely a reordering of the same elements, a further suggestion, perhaps, that Indians and Englishman can be so similar as to be mistaken for each other.\textsuperscript{13}

In \textit{Pioneers}, Cooper subtly satirizes another theory of race related to racial amalgamation when he has a white character declare of Edwards, “When did you ever know a half-breed…who could bear civilization…. They are worse than the savages themselves. Did you notice how knock-kneed he stood…and what a wild look he had in his eye?” (266-67). The character suggests both that the taint of Indian blood overpowers white blood’s capacity for civilization and that mixing the races results in a physically inferior being.\textsuperscript{14} Cooper introduces into \textit{Pioneers} a variety of racial theories under discussion in his day, and gently ridicules all of them except that of environmental adaptation applied to Africans.

In his first novel to address questions of race Cooper already displayed the rhetorical use of theories of racial inequality that would characterize his work over the following decade. \textit{Pioneers} includes racial theories ambiguously and ambivalently applied differently to Indians and Africans, with skepticism about racial difference and acknowledgments of unjust social prejudice against those groups subsumed under the desire to rhetorically support an American subjecthood acquiring nativeness from Indians while distinguishing itself from the supposed servility of African slaves. Given that \textit{Pioneers} contains the death of the actual last of the Mohicans, “Indian John,” or Chingachgook, \textit{Pioneers} doesn’t offer much hope of Indians surviving long enough to fulfill their romantic-historicist potential.\textsuperscript{15}
The Last of the Mohicans (1826): Romantic Historicism Solves the Problem of Natives and Nativeness

The first shift in Cooper’s deployment of theories of race in his work can be seen in 1826’s *Mohicans*, the second of the Leatherstocking novels and Cooper’s most famous, influential, and critically examined work. The novel does not engage in the kind of explicit claims of racial adaptation to native climate that appeared in *Pioneers*, largely because within the temporal and geographic location Cooper chose for this novel (the French and Indian War of 1757 in upstate New York) the sole group to which Cooper applied those explicit claims, Africans, are themselves almost entirely absent from the novel. *Mohicans*’ only character of (partial) African ancestry is Cora Munro, the mulatto daughter of the Scottish Colonel Munro, whose African blood does not stop her from being far better suited in body and in character than her all-white sister, Alice, to their trials in the American wilderness. This likely reflects the then-widespread notion that blacks were less sensitive to physical and emotional pain. While Cora attributes the suffering and servitude of Africans to “the weight of heaven’s displeasure” (365), Cooper’s narrative implies that African enslavement and social marginalization may be attributed to human prejudice rather than innate inferiority. In a passage much analyzed by critics, Coronel Munro upbraids Duncan Heyward for preferring Alice over Cora because of bigotry, a charge that Heywood denies. However, Cooper’s narrator renders the message of this episode ambiguous by characterizing Heywood’s “prejudice” against a transracial union as being “as deeply rooted as if it had been engrafted in his nature” [emphasis added] (193).
On the other hand, the physical capability of both Indians and whites to live in northern climes can be interpreted as an implicit argument of shared environmental adaption, but since *Mohicans* gives us neither an explicit claim that this is so nor the opposing maladaptations of Africans against which to build inferences about whites and Indians, Cooper *seems* to have left that particular theory of race behind.\(^\text{16}\) The only explicit reference to the concept of racial adaptation to the natural environment appears not in the body of the novel itself, but rather in Cooper’s 1831 introduction to a British edition. In disputing the “general belie[f]” that “the aborigines of the American continent have an Asiatic origin,” Cooper admits that “[t]here are many physical as well as moral facts which corroborate this opinion” but stresses “some few that would seem to weigh against it.” Seeking to establish Indians as genuinely “aboriginal” to the American continent rather than “adapted” Asians, Cooper acknowledges that “climate may have had great influence on” the “color of the Indian,” which “is peculiar to himself,” ceding the possibility that Indian skin color might have resulted from Asian adaptation to the American environment. However, Cooper argues that “while [the Indian’s] cheekbones have a very striking indication of a Tartar origin, his eyes have not,” and “it is difficult to see how [climate] can have produced the substantial difference which exists” between the eyes of “Tartars” and Indians. Nonetheless, Cooper claims that the “imagery of the Indian, both in his language and his oratory, is Oriental,” by way of praising the “richness” with which “the North American Indian clothes his ideas…which is different from that of the African” (xxvii). Cooper kills two birds with one stone in this brief passage, attempting simultaneously to establish Indians as genuinely “aboriginal” to America (and thus possessing a true nativeness that could then be passed on to American whites) and to
distinguish the intellectual capabilities of Indians as superior to Africans, who, while also living in “savagery,” do not share the category of “energetic and imaginative race” in which Cooper placed Indians and whites.17

Within the main body of Mohicans, the only reference to the adaptation of races to their environments comes obliquely, in the novel’s epigraph, a quote from Shakespeare’s Merchant of Venice. “Mislike me not for my complexion,” goes the epigraph, the entreaty of the dark-skinned Moorish Prince of Morocco asking Portia to consider him as a suitor, seemingly a rejection of racial prejudice and the idea that race carries innate moral traits. Yet that same passage concludes by characterizing the Moor’s “complexion” as “the shadowed livery of the burnished sun” (Mohicans title page), and the next unquoted line, “to whom I am a neighbor and near bred” (Shakespeare 186), conforms to a pre-Buffonian theory of environmental adaptation in circulation in Europe since the time of Herodotus. Cooper invokes the supposed moral traits of races in another quotation from Merchant, used as an epigraph for chapter XIX, in which the aggrieved Shylock demands bloody revenge to the shock of the Venetian Christians:

Salar.—Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wily not take his flesh,
what’s that good for?

Shy.—To bait wish withal; if it will feed nothing else, it will feed
my revenge. (Mohicans 231)

Shylock here displays the bloodlust for revenge and incapacity for forgiveness for which he is “misliked” in the play, traits that parallel the lack of the sympathy which Cooper’s narrator repeatedly claims is one of the “gifts” that distinguished Indian civilization.
By drawing a parallel between Indians and the Jew Shylock, Cooper offers the Jew as a model of a despised and abused “race” for whom transatlantic readers had nonetheless learned to feel sympathy, at least while watching Shakespeare’s play. This rhetorical move, offering an “exotic” European race as a model for thinking about the racial others of America, is one that is central to both Child’s *A Romance of the Republic* and Hentz’s *The Planter’s Northern Bride*. Bumppo sums up this view succinctly in response to Chingachgook’s scalping of an enemy, observing that, “Twould have been a cruel and an unhuman act for a white-skin; but ’tis the gift and natur [sic] of an Indian” (166). Bumppo, then, bases his call for Indians to not be “misliked” not on the claim that Indian actions conform to European notions of morality, but on the claim that the seemingly immoral actions of Indians are predetermined by an innate moral character adhering to different values. Bumppo does not clarify whether the difference between Indian and white morality is a matter of biology or culture. Cooper, however, makes it clear that these differences are due to the races having achieved different levels of civilized development in romantic-historicist rhetoric greatly expanded from its first oblique appearance in *Pioneers*.

Cooper’s narrator refers to precisely the lack of sympathy noted in Chingachgook when he declares that Uncas’s love for Cora has “elevated him far above the intelligence, and advanced him *probably centuries before the practices of his nation*” [emphasis added], since the young Mohican warrior’s eyes “had already lost their fierceness, and were beaming with…sympathy” (138). This is a much more explicit invocation of romantic historicism than that which appeared in *Pioneers*, and is spoken with all the authority of the narrator rather than by a character of questionable wisdom.\(^\text{18}\)
romantic-historicist implication is clearly that Indians lag behind whites in a linear progression of civilized development, and since once cannot arrive “before” anyone in a location to which that other is not travelling it would seem that Indians will, in Cooper’s formulation, eventually arrive at a level of civilization equal to whites.

A similar romantic-historicist implication has heretofore gone unrecognized in one of *Mohicans*’ most cited passages, Tamenund’s speech over Uncas’s grave fatalistically accepting that whites will dominate formerly Indian lands. Critics have long noted the pronouncement at the novel’s conclusion by the impossibly old mythical chief that “[t]he pale faces are the masters of the earth, and the time of the red men has not yet come again” (424) as only the most famous of a host of similar literary scenes in dramas and fiction of the 1820s in which tragic, noble but doomed Indians cede the continent to whites. Such pronouncements have served as the model for an enduring trope in American literature and cultural mythology. Unnoticed in Tamenund’s famous line is the romantic-historicist implication of that line’s concluding clause: “the time of the red men has *not yet come again*” [emphasis added]. Although the preponderance of Indian deaths in *Mohicans*’ final scene does not leave much hope that Indians will survive long enough to “come again,” Tamenund’s words amount to a prophesy that Indians will one day assume a role of power in America, which, given the narrator’s comments in the previously cited passage, seems to predict that Indians will proceed eventually through romantic-historicist stages and either supplant or join with whites in ruling an elevated American civilization.

As in *Pioneers*, the theory of romantic-historicist development applied to Indians in *Mohicans* is not extended to Africans. Within *Mohicans*, Africans exist outside that
theory of inevitable human progress, and are offered no hope or prophesy of African freedom, to say nothing of Africans “rising” to an equal state of civilization with whites or Indians, despite Cooper’s implication that prejudices against them are unjust. Africans’ static, degraded position, their presence in America, and the existence of African-white race mixing serve rhetorically to draw lines between European and (white) American identities. As Cassandra Jackson observes, Cooper “deflects American responsibility for slavery, casting the institution as the fault of British aristocrats” (19-20), as Col. Munro characterizes slavery as “a curse entailed on Scotland by her unnatural union with a foreign and trading people” (Mohicans British Edition 161), and his liaison with an African-white mulatta slave occurs not in the American South but in the British Caribbean. By extension, this argument frames Africans themselves as foreign and alien in America, accidental residents outside of the “real” story of America’s origin, a story of whites and Indians, as Cooper wishes to tell it in this and other works. Furthermore, Cooper places the location and responsibility for African-white race mixing outside of the United States, as Cora was conceived by a Scotsman and a mulatta in a British Caribbean colony; Cooper thus removes the “guilt” for such mixtures from his Americans and further attempts to disentangle Africans from his preferred cast of characters in an American national-origin myth (Jackson 11).

The imperative to establish nativeness for whites as a prerequisite for American subjecthood helps explain Cooper’s innovative addition of romantic historicism to the trope of the vanishing Indian that other authors in this genre seemed to find sufficient for the task. The convention of the vanishing Indian naturalized the exclusion of Indians from the new (white) nation as the result of the (supposedly) nearly complete and
(supposedly) inevitable extinction of the Indian race, and the sentimental portrayals of Indians that emerged in literary works beginning in the 1820s reframed Indians from being brutal savages conquered by whites to admirable but doomed magical figures from whom the patrimony of the continent was received in a spirit of kinship. Cooper seems to have seen the problem in white Americans drawing their national (and essentially racial) legitimacy from a permanently benighted and irredeemably inferior race. Romantic historicism allowed Cooper to construct Indians as eventual racial peers who nonetheless can be excluded (not so much by whites as by God or nature) from American territory and society for the indefinite future.

The seemingly irreconcilable contradictions of Cooper’s treatment of race and race mixing in *Mohicans* that have bedeviled Cooper criticism in the past half-century can be reconciled by viewing them in light of this nexus of romantic historicism and American subjectivity. While Fiedler mislabeled Cooper as an anti-miscegenationist, the plot elements and passages that he and subsequent critics have cited as evidence of Cooper’s seeming hostility to race mixing are very real. The tragic and childless death of the interracial lovers Uncas and Cora, the mixed tribal heritage of the villain Magua, the celebration of the tribal purity of the Mohicans, and Bumppo’s anxious insistence on his unsullied whiteness all signal that in the present (of both the colonial-era narrative and Cooper’s postrevolutionary readers) the races cannot unite and white hegemony will be the rule of the day.

Similarly, the elements of *Mohicans* that have caused some critics to frame Cooper as a multiculturalist are also both clearly present in the text and consistent with Cooper’s romantic-historicist construction of American subjecthood. Cooper indeed
celebrates contact, mutual influence, and affection between white and Indian cultures in *Mohicans*. Fiedler himself recognized the symbolic importance of the relationship between Bumppo, Chingachgook, and Uncas, theorizing it as part of a pattern in American literature of male camaraderie between whites and their racial others (Indians or, as with Huck Finn’s Jim, African-Americans), which binds them in the wilderness. *Mohicans* is built around a pair of chases that amount to exercises in interracial cooperation between whites and Indians (and a mulatta, to boot). As Juliet Shields and Lindsey Claire Smith have noted, not only is Natty Bumppo a cultural hybrid—a white man living an Indian lifestyle with an adopted Indian family—but the other heroic leading characters, Uncas and Duncan Heyward, each absorb lessons from the other’s culture, gesturing toward a new American culture, and a new American masculinity, that tempers the Indian masculinity with sympathy for women and girds a dreamy, sentimental chivalric European masculinity with an Indian realism and adaptability. It is significant that while Uncas dies, and the readers of *Pioneers* knew that Bumppo will ultimately have no place in the new America and no progeny, it is Heyward who survives and marries. As with Oliver Edwards in *Pioneers*, it is the symbolic son of a homosocial bond between a white and an Indian man who will ascend to power in a white America. What Cooper celebrates is a discrete and already-past moment of cultural influence and its result: the ascendancy of a reborn white man imbued with Indian authenticity and patrimony but free of having to share his new nation with Indians. However, Cooper’s romantic-historicist interpretation of Indians leaves unspoken but implied a possible racial amalgamation between whites and Indians in that distant future when Indians will have caught up with white civilization.\(^23\) This move offered white American readers
moral cover for Anglo-America’s treatment of Indians, momentarily resolving the
cognitive dissonance between Anglo-America’s desire for hegemony and its desire for a
clear conscience.

**Cooper Moves to Paris: The Prairie (1827) Refutes American “Degeneracy”**

Cooper’s engagement with European criticism of the U.S. and the European race
theories upon which these criticisms were often based intensified after he moved to
Europe with his family, in 1826. Cooper moved to Europe, eventually settling in Paris, in
search of greater income from his writing and better education for his children, an
indication of the extent to which he saw his primary audience as European rather than
American and of his eagerness to be accepted in European society. Cooper would stay in
Europe for seven years, and his works written during this time are very much in
conversation with European works and grow out of literal conversations with Europeans
in the salons of Paris and London. Many of Cooper’s works in the years immediately
following *Mohicans* were written in response to individual scientific, literary, or political
works regarding America and Americans that did not conform to Cooper’s iteratively
developing formulation of American identity.

A snapshot of Cooper’s dialogic relationship with European scientific theories
within the large “filmstrip” of the pattern I have identified can be found in Matthew
Wynn Sivils’s argument that *The Prairie* (1827), Cooper’s next installment in his
Leatherstocking novels, was constructed primarily as a narrative rebuttal of Buffon’s
theories about the supposedly degenerative effect of the American environment. Buffon’s
theory, which Cooper likely encountered regularly in Paris, claimed that an unhealthy
moist climate in America caused all creatures to diminish in size and strength. Cooper describes the male members (so to speak) of the Bush family of white settlers as “sturdy men” who moved “with the stride of a giant,” and were endowed with the “unwieldy, but terrible, strength of the [old continent] elephant” (11, 363, 12), invoking just the sort of large mammal species whose absence in the Americas Buffon interpreted as a sign of continental inferiority. Similarly, Prairie’s Sioux chief, Mahtoree, is an “athletic” “warrior of powerful frame,” a member of a “dangerous race” (38, 45, 40). Cooper’s depiction of large, masculine, and aggressive Indians served to contradict Buffon’s claims that the unhealthy American climate unmanned Indians as it would eventually unman whites. In fact, Buffon claimed that in “the American savage…the organs of generation are small and feeble. He has no hair, no beard, no ardour [sic] for the female…. His sensations are more acute, and yet he is more timid and cowardly” (5: 130). To prove that white Americans will not be and have not been emasculated by their environment, Cooper, then, feels compelled to defend both the American environment and the native peoples who inhabited it long before the arrival of Europeans.

In Prairie Cooper again enlists romantic historicism along with environmental-adaptation theories in the rhetorical task of rebutting Buffon’s idea of American degeneracy. Specifically, this theory of race was invoked in order to undermine a central tenet upon which Buffon had predicated American degeneracy: the supposed youth of the American continent. Instead, Buffon, in a stunning bit of cultural narcissism, presumed that the Americas had existed for a far shorter period of time than the “Old Continent,” and that it was the supposed immaturity of the American continents (as well as the supposed failure of Indians to modify and “improve” the land) that made America so
degenerative. To undermine this notion, Cooper invoked in this novel an aspect of romantic historicism that had not appeared in his previous work: the cyclical rise and fall of civilizations. Romanticism had a preoccupation with evidence of the ephemeral nature of worldly power, epitomized in Shelley’s poem “Ozymandias” and the recurrence of ruins in romantic art. To counter Dr. Bat’s argument that the lack of evidence for what Europeans would recognize as advanced civilization (contemporary or ancient) was evidence of the immaturity and youth of the continent, Cooper transforms Bumppo into a mouthpiece of romantic-historicist supposition. Bumppo proposes that the “primitive” Indians of his day might be the barbaric remnants of a more advanced early civilization, and imagines that “multitudes…once peopled these Prairies” and that their “Kings” had once raised “Palaces” (240). When Dr. Bat demands, “Where are the monuments, that would prove the truth of so vague a theory,” Bumppo replies:

They are gone. Time has lasted too long for them…. This very spot of reeds and grass on which you now sit, may, once have been the garden of some mighty King. It is the fate of all things, to ripen, and then to decay. (240-41)

Cooper turns the romantic-historicist idea of degeneracy, that civilizations rise and fall cyclically in natural cycles, back upon Buffon and other European critics of America, using the very absence of such “monuments” to argue that perhaps America is older than the old world.

Although this speculation indicates that Bumppo can imagine Indians capable (at some point in time) of such civilized accomplishments, Cooper’s rhetorical purpose here is less to praise Indians than to invent a scenario in which the continent might acquire the
gravitas and status of antiquity that would refute the notion that American civilization and the American phallus will be stunted by their environment. I would argue that, although nothing is said in *Pioneers* about a resurrection of Indian civilization, the explicit expression of the idea of cycles of rising and falling civilizations suggests that Indians will join with or replace white American civilization when, as Cooper’s Tamenund says in *Mohicans*, their time “come[s] again.” Reading across multiple Cooper works for the use of race theory sheds new light on Sivils’s observations. *Prairie* can be seen as part of an arc in which Cooper’s rhetorical need to defend both whites’ ability to thrive in the climate of North America and the masculinity of Saxon Americans drives him from employing Buffon’s theories in *Pioneers* to deemphasizing them in *Mohicans* to, in *Prairie* and subsequent works, a seemingly emphatic rejection of Buffon’s ideas. In light of his handling of racial theory in other works, moreover, we can see that Cooper’s rejection of Buffon in *Pioneers* is carefully selective, rejecting aspects of Buffon’s theories that interfere with Cooper’s political aims and embracing those that aid them.

*Notions of the Americans* (1828): The Utility of Indian-White Racial Amalgamation in the (Distant) Future

The following year, in 1828, Cooper was asked by the Marquis de Lafayette, the French aristocrat who had aided the American revolution, to write something to counteract the letters criticizing United States institutions and society reaching Europe from various traveling Europeans (*Cooper Letters*, 242). Cooper responded by penning a fictional travelogue, *Notions of the Americans, Picked Up by a Travelling Bachelor*, nominally written by an imaginary European aristocrat. Once again, Cooper marshaled
his knowledge of European racial theories to construct a counterargument to European anti-Americanism.

To defend the United States against European charges of political hypocrisy in its treatment of Indians and Africans, Cooper makes explicit romantic historicism’s implications for future racial amalgamation and social integration between whites and formerly less-civilized races that were only hinted at in previous works. *Notions*’ narrator (from whom Cooper establishes no discernible satirical distance from his own authorial voice) first establishes the supposed inferiority of Indians to whites in his own time, claiming that “[a]s a rule, the red man disappears before the superior moral and physical influence of the White” (277). The narrator further claims that Indians east of the Mississippi River, Indians living near “dangerous point[s] of communication [with whites,] are all alike a stunted, dirty and degraded race” (281), arguing that Indians “degenerate” not from some unhealthy quality of their native climate but instead from contact with a civilization with which they are not yet mature enough to cope. This is a rhetorically acrobatic inversion of Buffon’s claims that whites could not thrive in America, as the Native Americans are now physically and morally shrinking in an environment transformed by whites, who by implication are now the race that is most adapted to their American habitat. The *Notions* narrator supports the removal of Indians to western territories, a safe space in which “they may continue to advance in civilization to maturity” (286). This is Cooper’s first explicit claim that Indians will not merely go extinct in the face of a “superior” white race but instead, in romantic-historicist fashion, “advance in civilization to maturity.”
For the first time Cooper openly predicts the previously only hinted at possibility that a likely consequence of the romantic-historicist maturation of Indian civilization would be the racial amalgamation of Indians with whites. *Notions*’ narrator argues that:

> [a]s there is little reluctance to mingle the white and red blood, (for the physical difference is far less than in the case of the blacks, and the Indians have never been menial slaves) I think an amalgamation of the two races [white and Indian] would in time occur. (287)

This prediction frames American taboos against race mixing as social prejudice based on differing levels of civilized development rather than as an innate biological aversion, a far cry from anti-miscegenationism. Acknowledging that Indians and whites have already been amalgamating for two centuries, the narrator observes that “[t]hose families of America, who are thought to have any of the Indian blood, are rather proud of their descent, and it is a matter of boast among many of the most considerable persons in Virginia that they are descended from the renowned Pocahontas” (287). Thus Cooper acknowledges the long-standing selective identification with Indians that confers authenticity in U.S. culture, frames Indian-white amalgamation as both the past and the future of white Americans, and attributes a lag in romantic-historicist development as the reason for the supposedly temporary exclusion of Indians from the new nation and its racial body.

Perhaps responding to the increasing European criticism of slavery in the 1820s, in *Notions* Cooper for the first time applies the romantic-historicism model to Africans. Its narrator speculates that whites will eventually amalgamate with Africans, too, once
that race has advanced sufficiently. This application of romantic historicism to Africans is harder to detect, however, since it is indirectly suggested rather than explicitly stated, and couched among more disparaging racial characterizations. Cooper’s narrator cites as the primary barrier to black-white amalgamation the “general and deep prejudice against this unfortunate class of human beings” (268), rather than the claims of permanent moral and intellectual inferiority upon which anti-miscegenationist discourse would depend.

Among those prejudices was one of class, a social stigma adhering to those who are or have been “menial slaves” (287), a particularly strong stigma in a nation whose self-image is predicated on freedom and independence and for which the primary and supposedly only class marker was the division between the enslaved and the free. The narrator cites, as well, a “deep reluctance to see one’s posterity exhibiting a hue different from one’s own” and observes that it must “be overcome, ere any extensive intercourse can occur between the blacks and whites” (269), which again is a social prejudice rather than a sign of permanent biological incompatibility between whites and Africans.

Cooper’s backhanded indication that Africans are capable of progressing to higher levels of civilization, rather than being a race whose capacity for civilization is static, comes when Notions’ narrator claims that “[w]ith few exceptions the blacks of America belong to an ill educated and inferior class” (269) and therefore “the time of the intermingling of the races to any great extent is still remote” (275). The fact that there are “exceptions” seems to indicate that the difference is not a matter of racial incapacity but instead the dearth of education available to this “class.” Most importantly, the narrator presumes an eventual “time of the intermingling of the races,” however “remote” it might be.
Anti-miscegenationism this is not. However, close examination reveals that neither is it multiculturalism. The idea that one day Africans will have caught up with and amalgamated with whites is made nearly meaningless by the claims that “[t]here is no doubt, that the free blacks, like the aborigines, gradually disappear, before the superior moral and physical influence of whites” (286). The extension of romantic historicism to Africans allowed Cooper to take a liberal posture while portraying this race, too, as on the verge of extinction within the United States. The claims that Africans are maladapted to a northern climate returns to underscore how distant the time of black-white mass amalgamation would be, as the narrator claims that, “It is well known that cold is not congenial to the physical temperament of the black,” and adds a footnote that says, “All experience proves, that ages and generations must elapse before the descendants of Africa can acquire habits of endurance which shall enable him to resist frost, if, indeed, it can ever be done” (287).

While *Notions*’ positive characterization of racial amalgamation seems to indicate an increasingly antiracist political opinion in Cooper, in fact Cooper shifted towards these more liberal-sounding ideas in order to achieve thoroughly conservative rhetorical ends. As Doolen observes, in *Notions* “Cooper invents a nation seemingly unfazed by racial difference and whose Constitution is sufficiently capacious to contain the contradictions of slavery” (152). *Notions* characterizes Indian removal as the inevitable outcome of Indians’ supposedly slower civilized development, and disputes claims of Indians being cheated of their lands by asserting that fair prices are paid for their lands (282). *Notions* denies that the United States is made unstable and untenable by conflict and tensions between the races, asserting that there is no risk of a mass slave uprising because:
While they remain ignorant, their efforts must always be feeble and divided, and as they become enlightened they must see the utter impossibility of any continued success in rising against a force numerically and morally so superior. (269-70)\textsuperscript{31}

The narrator acknowledges that slavery is immoral and antithetical to American political principles, and predicts that “unless the Christian world recedes, [the abolition movement’s] final success [is] inevitable” (613). The narrator also notes that prejudice against “blacks” is “is rapidly disappearing in the north” (284), suggesting that all will be better in due time. However, the narrator also argues that the suffering of the slaves in America is greatly exaggerated and admonishes Europeans for suggesting that slavery in American be ended precipitously.

Ultimately, Cooper’s primary rhetorical aim in \textit{Notions} was not so much to claim that America was morally superior to Europe as to neutralize Europeans’ attempts to hold themselves up as morally superior to Americans. When the narrator claims that Indian lands are bought for a fair price, he comments in an aside that “these bargains are quite as just as any that are ever driven between the weak and the strong, the intelligent and the ignorant” (282).\textsuperscript{32} This implicit gesture towards European tyranny is followed up by explicit claims that African slaves are better cared for than European peasants and the return of Coronel Munro’s argument in \textit{Mohicans} that, after all, slavery was introduced to America by Europeans. While defending American culture, \textit{Notions} reaffirms the racial hierarchy in which white Americans selectively identify with Indians and distance themselves more from Africans. Cooper has shifted positions to recognizing the rhetorical usefulness of purely symbolic racial amalgamation. White-Indian symbolic
racial amalgamation offered far greater rewards in bolstering the nativeness of white Americans, and Cooper would take this strategy further in his next Indian-themed novel, *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*.

**The Borderers, or the Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish (1829)**

The interpretation of *Wept* is the crux of the disputed interpretations of Cooper’s views on race and race mixing. The novel is set in the seventeenth century among the first Puritan colonists in New England and features a marriage between a white woman, Ruth, and an Indian, Conanchet, from the tribe that had kidnapped her in a raid years earlier. The interracial marriage produces a child, the first white-Indian mixed-race character in Cooper’s work. Cooper’s portrayal of the marriage of Ruth and Conanchet is ambiguous, and it is not surprising that radically different critical interpretations have arisen in response to it. In 1960, Fiedler had labeled *Wept* “the first anti-miscegenation novel in our literature” (204-05). Fiedler saw *Wept* as the key to understanding what he viewed as Cooper’s violent hostility to all racial amalgamation, for which *Wept* was the apotheosis. This influential interpretation of *Wept* as anti-miscegenationist was based primarily on what Fiedler regarded as an unambiguous condemnation of the union of the Indian Conanchet and his white wife, Ruth, by Conanchet himself. Fiedler cites Conanchet declaring to his wife that “the Great Spirit was angry when [we] grew together” (357). Fiedler perceived further evidence of Cooper’s supposed hostility to their union in the fact that both the Indian husband and his white wife are dead by the end of the novel, just as the unconsummated interracial couple of Cora and Uncas die in *Mohicans*.
The Fielder-debunking critics of the mid-1990s, however, have found holes in the antimiscegenation interpretation of *Wept*. Wallace points out that Conanchet’s declaration of the “Great Spirit’s disapproval of their union” can be understood as a noble attempt to convince his wife to leave him on the battlefield where he lies mortally wounded, so as to protect herself and their child from the ongoing Indian-on-Indian battle still ranging around them. Wallace cites as evidence of Cooper’s sympathetic view of Indian-white racial amalgamation both the seemingly genuine affection Cooper depicts between Conanchet and his white wife and Cooper’s decision to allow this interracial love to produce offspring, in contrast to the childless love between *Mohicans*’ Uncas and Cora (190). As Stephen Lambert notes, Cooper never explicitly attributes the deaths of Conanchet and his wife to their interracial union (80). Conanchet dies in an Indian-on-Indian war unrelated to his marriage. His white wife dies of grief, which I would add was perhaps the greatest testament to the value of their union possible in an era when sentiment was the trait most esteemed in literary characters, and the supposed lack of which was among the most widely cited evidence of Indian savagery.

How are we to understand *Wept*’s seemingly radical, taboo-breaking move of depicting a loving union between an Indian man and a white woman and the production of a mixed-race child? In fact, the taboo had recently been broken by works published in the years immediately before Cooper penned *Wept*. The subject of Indian-white racial amalgamation was already a feature of the transatlantic conversation about America thanks in particular to the publication in 1824 of a memoir from a woman, Mary Jemison, who had lived most of her life among Indians, marrying and raising a family with her Indian husband. Unlike most other examples of American “captivity narratives,” Jemison
was openly admiring of Indian culture and did not see herself as a victim of savagery. The memoir was a sensation in America, and inspired two popular novels, Catherine Maria Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie* (1827) and Lydia Maria Child’s novel *Hobomok* (1824). Both novels featured white-Indian marriage or romance, and *Hobomok* includes the first mixed-race child in American literature. Thus between Jemison’s memoir, and Sedgwick’s and Child’s novels, racial amalgamation between American whites and Indians had already been introduced as a topic in the transatlantic debates over American identity.

The first clue to Cooper’s intentions in *Wept* is that, like Sedgwick and Child, he transposed the story of white-Indian love and procreation to the semi-mythical colonial past. None of these writers, for all of their ostensible sympathy for Indians, chose to set their novels in the American present, where they would have to deal with the continued presence of Indians in New England, the reality of ongoing racial amalgamation between whites and Indians, and questions of justice for living Indians within American society in the 1820s, when President Jackson was warring with the Seminoles in Florida and the Trail of Tears Indian-removal programs were only a few years away. Instead all three authors shifted the interracial romances to the earliest days of English colonization in New England. And all three ended their tales with the interracial couples separated. The implication shared across all of these works is that while there are natural affinities between whites and Indians, their union is impossible at present. *Wept* and the other novels present this as a romantically tragic separation, but one that was, by the 1820s, thoroughly established in the culture as an issue of the past rather than the present.34
Again, reading closely for the handling of scientific theories of race in *Wept* illuminates the ambiguities and contradictions of the novel. In the lines preceding the one upon which Fielder based his conclusions (“The Great Spirit was angry when they grew together”), Conanchet attempts to convince his wife to flee the scene of battle to save herself and their child by stating that a racial difference predicated on racial habitats, parallel to the theories of Buffon but voiced in the allegorical language of literary Indians, determined that their interracial union was wrong:

> [God] has known where to put the hemlock, and where the oak should grow…. Conanchet is a tall and straight hemlock, and the father of [Ruth] is a tree of the clearing, that bears the red fruit.

(357)$^{35}$

Regardless of whether one interprets this as a heartfelt conclusion or a rhetorical statement made to save his family, the environmental-adaptation discourse is unmistakable. Conanchet’s theorizing positions Indians (hemlocks) as occupying the opposite end of a graduated spectrum of arboreal-human types from whites (apple trees). Since hemlocks grow wild in forests while apple trees are cultivated in orchards, Conanchet’s argument seems to hint, as well, at an unbridgeable gap of civilized development reminiscent of romantic historicism. But this, too, can be interpreted as a rhetorical move by Conanchet to convince his wife to flee to safety with their child.

However, beyond this brief moment, *Wept* in fact attacks notions of significant innate racial differences in numerous ways. For instance, Cooper mocked notions that Indians possessed innate and semimystical skills akin to animal instincts that allowed them to survive and thrive in the wilderness. One of the Connecticut frontiersmen
describes delegates from the English court as having “the most abject and ludicrous apprehension of the prowess” of Indians, essentially thinking that their culturally acquired skills are biologically innate, then corrects this notion, declaring:

that the white man, when placed in situations to acquire such knowledge, readily becomes the master of most of that peculiar skill for which the North American Indian is so remarkable, and which enables him, among other things, to detect the signs of a forest trail, with a quickness and an accuracy of intelligence that amount nearly to instinct. [emphasis added] (73)

While dismissing ideas of profound racial differences between Indians and whites, these assertions of whites’ ability to thrive in this new wilderness reinforce the idea of whites acquiring nativeness, of being fit and appropriate for the land that the nation will occupy. What’s more, the novel’s plot consists of a sequence of Indians and whites living with and quickly adapting to each other’s ways, and developing affection for members of the other race and some appreciation for and understanding of their respective cultures, which conflicts with the idea that the two races are too different to mix.

Cooper’s discomfort with theories of racial difference and inequality peaks in Wept with his satirical portrayal of another foolish scientist, the self-described race-theory expert Dr. Ergot, who brings racial theory itself again explicitly to the surface of Cooper’s fiction. Ergot apes Buffon when he opines that, “Now it is known in philosophy, that the stature of man hath degenerated, and must degenerate in these regions, in obedience to established laws of nature” (198). Cooper’s intention to satirize Buffon’s
ideas is made clear when Ergot, like Dr. Bat before him, repeatedly proves to be comically inept in his observations of nature.  

In his satire on scientific theories of racial inferiority in *Wept*, Cooper expanded his reach to include a theory that was gaining popularity already in the late 1820s and came to dominate American racial discourse for the next century: “anthropometrics.” This trend in transatlantic race science claimed that racial differences between human beings could be defined through the measuring of body-part sizes, shapes, and proportions to create taxonomies of racial difference.  

When Ergot and a group of white men come upon a dark-skinned boy in Indian garb, Ergot asserts his knowledge of the physiognomic distinctions between Indians tribes, claiming to know “the differences in formation, which occur in the different families of man.” Ergot opines about the boy that:

> The forehead…is retreating and narrow, the cheek-bones are unusually high, and the olfactory member, as in the natives, inclining to Roman…. I pronounce the fellow to be a Narragansett [Indian]. (202)

Cooper’s contempt for anthropometrics is made immediately clear as the “Indian” boy whom Ergot and his companions have discovered is revealed to be Whittal, the long-lost white son of the Heathcote family and Ruth’s brother, who had been captured by the Indians years earlier. Ergot then amends his analysis, saying, “I spoke merely of his secondary or acquired habits…. The man is assuredly a White” (221).  

Again, Cooper emphasizes that whites and Indians can be indistinguishable.

> The most important aspect of Cooper’s new depiction of white-Indian relations in *Wept* was the conception of Conanchet and Ruth’s “half-breed” child, and the absorption
of that child and his “Indian blood” into the white American family. Ruth’s father, Content, accepts his long-lost daughter and her half-Indian child when she returns after Conanchet’s death, saying, “It is [God’s] will that one of heathen lineage shall come beneath my roof, and let his will be done! My child, and all that are hers, are welcome” (333). Cooper adds this pious pilgrim’s invocation of divine will to bless the introduction of this half-breed child’s Indian blood into the “body” of American whiteness.

Despite all his other moves away from theories of racial difference in *Wept*, Cooper’s decision to allow a seemingly loving Indian-white marriage to produce a half-breed child who is then accepted back into his mother’s white family constitutes a rhetorical move that gave white Americans the blood nativeness whose absence so troubled American subjecthood (Deloria 1998). This strategic amalgamation represented essentially a positive inversion of the “one drop” rule by which anyone with any amount of African-American heritage was long categorized in American society as “black” and stripped of American subjecthood’s requisite whiteness. Contrarily, this “one drop” of Indian bestowed symbolic nativeness on whites, and avoided any implication of criticism of the Indian removal of Cooper’s troubled present, keeping this symbolic amalgamation with Indians safely in the mythical colonial past.

The rhetorical value to white American authors in the 1820s of a discourse of symbolic amalgamation with Indians set in the mythical colonial past can be seen in the fact that Cooper was neither the only nor the first of his peers to strike upon this solution to the paradoxical requirements of American subjecthood. Novelist and progressive activist Lydia Maria Child featured a similar plotline and the first interracial marriage in American literature in her 1824 novel, *Hobomok*, in which a mixed-race child results
from the marriage of a white woman, Mary Conant, and an Indian man, the eponymous Hobomok. Child’s *Hobomok* has been interpreted by some critics as a radically egalitarian feminist and antiracist work pointedly in contrast with the supposedly patriarchal and racist Cooper, and there is much to this argument. However, it is instructive to note that, like Cooper, Child sets her feminist message within, and arguably establishes, a discourse of Indians ceding America to white men, a discourse whose purpose was the legitimization of white patriarchal hegemony on the American continent. Upon the return of Child’s heroine’s white former husband, thought to have died, Hobomok cedes to the white man his wife, his child, and his territory, “nobly” fading away into the woods forever. In both *Hobomok* and *Wept*, a liaison between a white woman and an Indian man ends with the production of a white child absorbed back into the white community and the disappearance of the Indian husband from an American landscape that will now be ruled by white men. What’s more, the cultural meaning of Child’s earlier rendition of American whiteness taking in a magical drop of Indian blood is far more explicitly rendered in *Hobomok* than in *Wept*, as the “half-breed” boy is accepted into his mother’s family and then promptly deracinated. The boy is named Charles Hobomok Conant, but Child’s narrator informs the reader that the Indian middle name was quickly dropped, and the boy is eventually sent to university (186). There is no lasting multiculturalism in Child’s version of Indian-white amalgamation, either.

The complex and paradoxical gender politics of *Wept* and *Hobomok* illustrate the discursive contortions that resulted from nineteenth-century white American authors’ attempts to reconcile political, social, racial, and nationalist discourses in the 1820s. As much as Child challenges patriarchy with her independent-minded heroine, she
nonetheless participates in the project of acquiring for whites a nativeness that is not just Indian but emphatically masculine. As much as *Hobomok*’s heroine’s liberated sexual choices empower her as a woman, the discourse of American subjecthood in which Child and Cooper participate prioritizes the acquisition from Indians of what must be a masculine nativeness. Thus it is no accident that both authors construct an Indian-white racial amalgamation around an Indian man and white woman, rather than the reverse. For most of American history racial mixtures between Indians and whites occurred between the white men who made up the vanguard of white incursion into Indian lands and native women, circumstances that rendered Indians feminine in a way consistent with colonial- and early-republic-era gendering of Indians.

That gendering Indians female was *inconsistent* with the rhetorical aims of 1820s American subjecthood helps explain, I argue, the gender reversal enacted by *Wept* and *Hobomok*. Just as the requirements of the discourse of American subjecthood drove the otherwise proto-feminist Child to elevate the value of the symbolic phallus, in *Wept* the patriarchal Cooper was driven to uncharacteristically embody American whiteness as female in order for whiteness to take into itself a masculine Indianness.\(^43\) Child engages in the same proto-Walter Scott project of national mythification as does Cooper, and setting her tale of a one-off interracial union in the distant colonial past safely distances it from any suggestion of social, political, or economic equality between whites and Indians in the author’s present moment. For all the radicalness of Child’s later political and social views,\(^44\) in *Hobomok* she joins *Wept* in employing a seemingly anti-prejudice plot to ultimately uphold Anglo-American hegemony.
Conclusion: Clues in Cooper’s Works of the 1830s and 1840s

Criticism on Cooper’s handling of race, race mixing, and race science has focused primarily on his works of the 1820s, and for the most part ends with either Notions or Wept. However, a number of Cooper’s works from the 1830s and 1840s shed some oblique light on the logic behind Cooper’s views on these issues. For instance, a surprising recent reinterpretation of a largely forgotten Cooper work of the 1830s illustrates the extent to which Cooper’s handling of race mixing was structured by his preoccupation with the discursive demands of American subjecthood rather than either a firm adherence to racial theories or a deep animosity towards Africans. In 2012, Geoffrey Sanborn proposed that Cooper’s 1833 novel, The Headsman, although set in eighteenth-century Switzerland, was intended as an allegorical defense of racial amalgamation (4).

45-47 Cooper is certainly an unlikely candidate to have penned a novel condemning prejudice against black-white intermarriage and by extension sympathetic to black-white racial amalgamation. Although he disliked the institution of slavery, Cooper was emphatically for states’ rights to retain it, opposed to abolitionist agitation to speed the end of a practice that he imagined would wither away some day on its own, and on record as believing that Africans did not suffer under slavery the way whites would.48 Nonetheless, the issue of slavery was in the air, as Headsman’s 1833 publication accompanied and presumably responded to the suddenly increased anxiety over slavery and the relationship between African-Americans and whites that erupted in American culture two years prior from the twin sparks of the bloody Nat Turner uprising in Virginia and the first appearance of William Lloyd Garrison’s Liberator, whose calls for immediate abolition were (erroneously) perceived as that uprising’s inspiration.49-51
Headsman certainly amounts to neither a full-throated defense of black-white racial amalgamation nor a clear call for racial justice, as Cooper seems to have backed away from the controversial position. Nonetheless, even a failed allegory of prejudice against black-white intermarriage is quite a stunning discovery in the oeuvre of the author once held up as the chief anti-miscegenationist in canonical American literature. There is a significant disparity between Headsman’s veiled and hedging sympathy for black-white amalgamation and the repeated and increasingly explicit endorsement of Indian-white amalgamation (albeit relegated to the distant past and more-distant future) in Notions and Wept. That disparity reflects the contrast between the rhetorical value of white selective identification with Indians and with Africans to the model American subjecthood whose propagation was Cooper’s primary motivation in his handling of race.

Conceptions of Cooper as a thoroughgoing appreciator of culture mixing are, in turn, undermined by a close reading of Cooper’s works from the 1840s. Reflecting the seeming collapse of his faith in grand theories of racial inequality, Cooper wrote dismissively of “theorists” who claimed “the inferiority of all…who [are] not white” and concluded that there existed no “general national superiority” (Deerslayer 59), and that “moral tone...depend[s] more on…moral agencies, than on birth-place, origin, or coulour” (Two Admirals 65). However, this explicit skepticism, even mockery, of theories of racial inferiority was not accompanied by a celebration of the growing ethnic diversity of the United States in these years, nor an abandonment of ethnic stereotypes. Despite Cooper’s reputation as a relative progressive for his unwillingness to openly join in the anti-immigrant nativist Know-Nothing Party, upon his return to the United States from
Europe, in 1833, Cooper was alarmed by the presence of non-Anglo European immigrants (Irish, Germans, Poles, etc.) who had arrived in his absence.

The rising political power of urban immigrants in the new Jacksonian democracy was a far cry from the largely rural nation whose white population was overwhelmingly of English heritage and dominated by a landed elite like Cooper’s own family, and Cooper’s anxiety over these changes can be seen in his writing. Cooper worried in 1845 about the advent of a “new race” of Americans “who will neither understand nor appreciate colonial society and its construction,” the work of “our ancestors” (*Satanstoe* 1, 495). It is hard to see anything resembling multiculturalism in Cooper’s admonition that same year that, “Our immigrant friends should remember one thing…he who migrates is bound to respect the habits of those whom he joins” (*The Chainbearer* 127). Cooper fretted over the danger to democracy posed by “Romanists [since] monks, nuns, and Catholics revere authority” (*Oak Openings* 229), and longed to see only “the true, native portion of the population, and not the throng from Ireland and Germany, who now crowd the street” (*Afloat* 57).

Cooper’s contempt for and suspicion of non-Anglo white immigrants was not merely a matter of simple ethnic bigotry, since Cooper had praised and aided some of the very nationalities and ethnicities over whose presence in America he fretted when those groups were in their nations of origin.54 “In other words,” as Thomas S. Gladsky aptly expressed it, “Cooper’s fondness for ‘other’ Americans seemed inversely related to their numbers, social class, and geographical distance from New York” (45). This observation helps reaffirm that Cooper’s primary concern is not claims of racial or ethnic superiority, per se, but their impact on American society. A hint of romantic historicism’s fascination
with the rise and fall of civilizations and nations returns in Cooper’s lament that “real” Americans—that is, “not an Irishman nor a black, but a regular, old-fashioned” Anglo-American—stood “in the confusion of tongues that pervade that modern Babel [Manhattan]...like monuments of the past scattered along the Appian Way” (Hour 10).

Cooper, then, was not a universal fan of culture mixing, but instead fetishized only the particular multicultural moment depicted in *Mohicans* and *Wept*, the colonial frontier moment of contact and mutual influence between English, Indians, French, and Dutch that produced the Anglo-American elite. Cooper valued this moment not as a model for a persistently multicultural America but instead as an always-already-past moment of mythical origin, a crucible in which a new national subjecthood and a new ruling class were forged, and after which America resembled more closely the later metaphor of the “melting pot” in which immigrant cultures were burned away and their members were recast as members of an Anglo-American culture.

Cooper’s highly selective appreciation of multiculturalism, then, mirrors his increasingly skeptical stance on scientific theories of race. In both cases Cooper took stances which twenty-first-century critics would largely view as progressive and enlightened and applied them to the same ultimately conservative agenda of legitimizing and defending an American subjecthood predicated on the hegemony of an Anglo-American ruling class. The breadth of racial theories in his works—those with which he at some points agreed, at others mocked or abandoned—illustrates the complex stew of discourses contending in early nineteenth-century American culture. The freedom with which Cooper selectively applied and shifted among these theories demonstrates the power of rhetorical racialism to make adjustments in defense of ideological and political
agendas that would persist, unacknowledged, throughout the nineteenth century even as theories of racial inequality became an ever-more-dominant aspect of American culture. Paradoxically, the symbolic racial amalgamation with Indians that Cooper employed to acquire nativeness for American whites—a move that required Cooper’s rejection of scientific theories of permanent racial inferiority—reinforced the concepts of racial ties to national territory and the conflation of race and national identity.
Chapter Three

“We Will Slay Them Utterly”: *Dred* and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Shift from Romantic Racialism to Mandingo-Saxonism

The black population of America is not one race…. The Mandingo has European features…is intelligent, vigorous, proud and brave [while] the Guinea negro has a coarse, animal head, is stupid, dirty, cunning. Yet the argument on negro powers is generally based on some such sweeping classification as takes the Guinea negro for its type.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Men of Our Times*

Introduction

Harriet Beecher Stowe’s depiction of African racial character in *Dred, A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856), her first novel written after *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), upends a number of critically accepted paradigms about Stowe’s views on gender, religion, and race. Thanks to her portrayal of African-Americans as natural Christians in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin (UTC)*, Harriet Beecher Stowe is without doubt the American author most thoroughly associated in criticism with a single specific theory of race, in her case the theory known as romantic racialism. To many critics, Stowe’s use of this racial theory accounts for much of UTC’s success; she accomplished the “cultural work” (Tompkins xi) of reframing African-Americans as superior to whites in the Christian and feminine virtues that her culture esteemed while leaving whites in uncontested possession of the “Saxon” traits of pride, energy, and masculinity upon which American subjecthood was truly constructed (Smith-Rosenberg 841-3).
Furthermore, since critics first traced the romantic racialism Stowe voices in *UTC* to the influence of theologian-scientist Alexander Kinmont (Fredrickson 104), Stowe has served as an exemplar of the way one scientific theory of race can influence a nineteenth-century American author. Indeed, the Christlike Uncle Tom is consistent with Kinmont’s theory, bravely submitting to the murderous cruelty of white slaveholders without retaliation; however, the eponymous hero of *Dred* (a guerilla leader preparing for a bloody slave revolt) promises to “slay [white slaveholders] utterly, and consume them from off the face of the earth!” (460). In *Dred*, Stowe presents African-American characters whose traits would have been racially impossible under the Kinmontian race theories that are supposed to have exerted such deterministic influence over Stowe. The rebel African-Americans of *Dred* are emphatically masculine, ready to strike back with violent retribution, and at times explicitly anti-Christian.

Critics have identified various motivations for Stowe’s movement from the martyr Uncle Tom to the rebel Dred, including her loss of faith in moral suasion and turn towards supporting armed resistance to the Slave Power (Fredrickson 112) and her post-*UTC* encounters with such impressive African-Americans as Frederick Douglass, Martin Delany, and Sojourner Truth (Levine, “Introduction” 144-76). That Stowe changed her portrayal of African-Americans to suit her shifting political views and the new rhetorical exigencies that accompanied those shifts seems clear. Robert S. Levine has even singled out *Dred* as “critical to an understanding of [the range of views expressed across] Stowe’s career” (*Martin Delany* 147). Left unanswered, however, is what one is to make of Stowe’s seeming abandonment of a theory of race thought to be so determinative of her previous and most famous work. I will argue in this chapter that Stowe abandoned
romantic racialism in favor of another racial theory more suited to the rhetorical exigency of her evolving political convictions. Rather than abandon the concept of race altogether and concede that Africans and their American descendants possessed the same range of capabilities as whites, Stowe came to believe that “the black population of America is not one race” (385-86), as she would state in her own voice in her 1868 collection of biographical sketches, *Men of Our Times*.

Stowe shifted theoretical allegiances to a previously unrecognized racial theory that I have dubbed Mandingo-Saxonism—a transatlantic discourse that attributed to the Mandingo tribe of West Africa character traits that American Saxonism claimed to be the sole possession of Saxons and the sine qua non for American subjecthood, while other African ethnicities possessed the inferior traits attributed to “negroes” generally in the prevailing racial stereotypes of her time. Mid-nineteenth-century Mandingo-Saxonism’s stark dichotomy between Mandingos and their supposedly inferior fellow Africans allowed Stowe to theorize a small subgroup of Africans capable of violent revolt against slavery and closer to the American-Saxon self-image without abandoning either the general concept of race or her theorization of the character of most African-Americans. Mandingo-Saxonism’s emphasis on masculinity and pride (meaning violent retaliation) reflected Stowe’s religious and gender crisis in the face of the failure of moral suasion as a means to end American slavery; furthermore, this new racial theory allowed Stowe to both express and contain views radically subversive to her previous positions on race, gender, and religion. Stowe’s willingness to switch loyalties from a theory of race with which she is so thoroughly associated provides the most dramatic illustration of the extent to which political exigency and expediency trumped adherence to individual
theories of race in nineteenth-century American literature. (See Table 2.)

**Dred Criticism**

The increased critical interest in *Dred* in recent decades has largely focused on interpreting the failed slave revolt at the center of the novel. For many critics in the 1970s and 1980s, the failure of the revolt renders *Dred* a failed work. Fredrickson, in the same work in which he traced the race-theory genealogy of *UTC*, says of *Dred* that Stowe’s attempt to “deal with a different kind of black man, a rebel modeled on Nat Turner,” was, “to say the least, hindered…by her assumptions about Negro character and her basic revulsion to the idea of black retaliation against whites” (112), but he did not extend his intellectual-genealogical approach to *Dred*. Biographer Joan Hedrick was more sympathetic than many in the “failed work” camp, arguing that Stowe was flummoxed by “the hardening climate of the 1850s” in which “neither evolutionary reform nor slave rebellion appeared a feasible solution to Stowe” but that nonetheless “the failure of her plot reflected a failure of her political imagination” (260-61).

Since 2000, a group of critics have claimed that the failure of the revolt was part of a rhetorical strategy intended to avoid confirming ideas of African savagery (Rowe 2002; Newman 1992), to privilege white advocacy for slaves over the direct speech and action of enslaved Africans (Delombard 2002), or, paired with the failed legal challenges and reform efforts of the novel’s white Clayton family, to establish the need for external (that is, Northern) political action to end slavery, making *Dred* essentially a “campaign novel” (Grant 2000) for John Charles Frémont’s run as the first Republican presidential candidate, in 1856. Stowe’s extended attack on Southern courts and slave law has been
the other topic most often addressed in recent criticism on Dred (Delombard 2002; Korobkin 2007; Noguchi 2010). None have addressed the puzzling fact that Stowe had, in Dred, abandoned the theorization of race that played such a large role in the propagandistic and commercial success of UTC, and with which Stowe is so thoroughly associated in the criticism of the last hundred and fifty years.

The first major evidence of this transformation in Stowe’s moral framing of African-American violent resistance to tyranny appeared one year prior to writing Dred, in Stowe’s introduction to William C. Nell’s The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution (1855). In that brief introduction Stowe signaled the direction of her thinking when she stated that, “The colored race have been generally considered by their enemies, and sometimes even by their friends, as deficient in energy and courage. Their virtues have been supposed to be principally negative ones. This little collection…will redeem the character of the race from this misconception, and show how much injustice there may often be in a generally admitted idea” (5). It is worth noting that Stowe characterizes the “virtues” that she had herself ascribed to African-Americans in UTC as “negative,” that “energy and courage” were Saxonist code words, and also the equivocation in her concluding “may often.” The Mandingo-Saxonist direction of her thinking and its ambiguities are both visible here the previous year.

Gender and Religious Reversals

In 1856, as Stowe wrote the novel that would become Dred, Stowe was in the midst of a crisis of faith. Moral suasion such as UTC had failed to weaken the peculiar institution, and antislavery forces faced ever-escalating violence. That violence included
the May 21 sack of Lawrence, Kansas and, the very next day, the near-fatal beating of her friend and hero Senator Charles Sumner, of Massachusetts, in the Capitol building. Those attacks appear to have occasioned a radical change in her plans for her second novel. The sudden appearance of the previously unmentioned Dred in the middle of the novel seems to represent a mid-composition change of course to emphasize this radically new African-American hero and the righteous threat of slave insurrection. Stowe went so far as to rechristen the novel-in-progress *Dred* after her publisher had already filed trademarks for the novel’s original title (Meer 228).

Judging from the transformation of Stowe’s portrayal of race, gender, and religion between *UTC* and *Dred*, Stowe had begun to doubt the political, religious, and gender strategy upon which she had relied in her most famous work and in managing her career thus far. Stowe’s conversion to supporting violent resistance to slavery\(^5\) pushed her to revise both her own gendered behavior and her gendering of Africans in her fiction. Stowe had already risked her social respectability by writing *UTC*, in that the gender codes of her time made it taboo for women to involve themselves in or comment publicly upon political matters, but had at least restricted herself to moral suasion through fiction.

Four years later, though, with conflict over slavery rising, Stowe spoke openly and directly on political matters in her newspaper column. She called now for the arming of abolitionist forces in Kansas with rifles known as “Beecher’s Bibles” (after her brother, famed preacher Henry Ward Beecher, who from his Brooklyn church organized the shipment of arms to Kansas) (Hedrick 258) and expressed support for John C. Frémont, the first Republican presidential candidate (Wilson 417). Stowe’s new novel would upend *UTC*’s carefully constructed gendering of Africans by applauding masculine traits in
Africans in *Dred* after what has been called her “radical substitution of feminine and maternal values for masculine ones” (Mullaney 146).\(^6\)

Stowe rehabilitates the traditionally masculine traits with which she imbued her rebel hero, creating a masculine African hero utterly lacking in feminine attributes, previously unseen in her work. Although Stowe had described Uncle Tom as a “large, broad-chested, powerfully-made man,” she had immediately stressed that Tom’s face was “characterized by an expression of grave and steady good sense, united with much kindliness and benevolence” (40-41), thus crafting a complexly gendered figure in line with feminine sentimental Christian virtues. Dred, however, is unambiguously, even excessively, masculine, as in this description of his attire when he first appears out of the woods:

His nether garments, of coarse negro-cloth, were girded round the waist by a strip of scarlet flannel, in which was thrust a bowie-knife and hatchet. Over one shoulder he carried a rifle, and a shot-pouch was suspended to his belt. (198)

Dred’s hatchet, rifle, and knife (the latter “thrust” into the “scarlet” cloth of his belt), combined with his “shot-pouch” full of lead balls, essentially endow Dred with a triple phallus and an excess of testicles all dangling beside the “negro-cloth” that makes up his “nether garment.” Stowe describes Dred’s physique in sexualized terms: he has a “neck and chest of herculean strength” and the “muscles of a gladiator.” Dred’s body’s “magnificent stature and proportions” are revealed in a kind of striptease by “a loose shirt…opened very wide at the breast [giving] a display” and “sleeves rolled up nearly to the shoulders.” Stowe even arguably invokes an exposed erection in her description of
Dred springing out of the underbrush, his sweaty skin glistening over turgid muscles
“polished like marble” topped by a “large and massive” head that she says “rose” and
“jutted” (198).?

Dred’s first appearance in the novel is occasioned by a crisis in the life of Harry
Gordon, an enslaved mulatto, when Harry’s white half-brother and now new master, Tom,
sexually menaces Harry’s wife, Lisette. Materializing out of the forest like the
embodiment of all of Harry’s masculine impulses repressed under slavery, Dred taunts
Harry to perform his challenged masculinity, taunting Harry as femininely submissive to
his master: “Don’t fret about your wife! Women always like the master better than the
slave! Why shouldn’t they? When a man licks his master’s foot, his wife scorns him —
serves him right” (199). In these lines, Dred equates servile submission with a loss of
masculine identity and the masculine claim to female bodies, and presupposes a
masochistic, submissive feminine nature and a domineering, sadistic masculine nature.
This passage also contains homoerotic implications. Dred’s mocking instruction to
Harry—“Bend your neck and ask to be struck again!—won’t you? Be meek and lowly!
That’s the religion for you!… Take it meekly, my boy!” (199)—suggests a threat of rape,
of losing masculine status by being put in the feminine position of being entered by the
phallus, with a hint of submissive erotic thrill. When Stowe links the boasts that “No man
whips me!” and “No man touches my wife!” (199), she expresses a definition of
masculinity that requires control of access to female sexuality.

Remarkably, Dred even manages to reframe enslavement as luxurious and feminine.
Dred tells Harry, “You are a slave, and you wear broadcloth, and sleep soft,” in contrast
to the Spartan, masculine sacrifice of the slaves who resist and escape to the wilderness
of the swamp rather than submit to enslavement. “You sleep in a curtained bed,” Dred continues, “I sleep on the ground, in the swamps! You eat of the fat of the land. I have what the ravens bring me!” (199). In contrast to the privileging of feminine domesticity in UTC, *Dred* privileges the masculine space of the wilderness. Importantly, Dred is a creature of the same wilderness linked in Saxonist discourse to manly capability and independence that runs from Cooper’s Natty Bumppo back to the ancient Roman historian Tacticus’ contrast between the manly wilderness-living Germani and the effete Roman city dwellers (Painter 28) cited as evidence of consistent Germanic character by the German Romantics and their Anglo-American Saxonist protégés.

This combination of proud refusal to submit to tyranny; willingness and ability to violently rebel; tough, manly sacrifice; and wilderness living all link the African Dred to the self-image of American Saxonism, and demonstrate that this African, at least, possesses the traits required of American subjecthood. Ralph Waldo Emerson’s *English Traits*—a collection of Saxonist lectures dating back to the 1830s published the same year as *Dred* and advertised on the flyleaf of *Dred’s* first volume (Wilson 416)—imagined white Americans as “double distilled English” (*Major Prose* 182) and conjured visions of the Viking Saxon ancestors of the English as endowed with “beastly ferocity” and an “excess of virility,” “a rude race, all masculine, with brutish strength” “What are the elements of that power which the English [read: Saxons] hold over other nations?” Emerson asks rhetorically. “[They] show great vigor of body and endurance. Other countrymen look slight and undersized beside them, and invalids” (*English Traits* 69, 43, 65), or, in other words, Saxons are gendered as masculine, while non-Saxons are gendered as feminine, particularly Africans whose submissiveness had become axiomatic.
It is significant, then, that Stowe’s very first move when introducing Dred is to assert that “[h]e was a tall black man, of magnificent stature and proportions” (198), remaking the unimposing and disabled physique of Nat Turner, on whom Dred is otherwise primarily modeled, into a towering he-man resembling Emerson’s fantasy Saxons. Frederick Douglass understood the importance of re-gendering Africans when he argued, in language remarkably similar to Stowe’s description of Dred, that African-Americans be allowed to fight for the Union in the Civil War:

The opportunity is given us to be men [emphasis added]…. Once let the black man get upon his person the brass letters U.S….and a musket on his shoulder, and bullets in his pocket; and there is no power on earth…which can deny that he has earned the right to citizenship in the United States. (Douglass 50)

It is in this spirit that Stowe has Harry Gordon say of Dred’s rebellion-leader father, “Denmark Vesey was a man!” (435).

The conflict between masculine and feminine virtues is embodied in Dred’s battle with Milly, a kind of female Uncle Tom figure within Dred, for Harry’s heart and mind. In a scene reminiscent of the religious allegories of The Pilgrim’s Progress, Milly appears beside Harry immediately following his electrifying encounter with Dred. Milly acts as the voice of Christian morality, pulling Harry back to bedrock Christian principles of love, forgiveness, and nonviolence (201). This rhetorical and moral contest between Dred and Milly seems to have been inspired by and to reference a real-life argument between Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth. At an 1852 antislavery rally Truth responded to Douglass’s call for violent resistance to slavery by invoking Christian
principles just as Stowe has Milly respond to Dred.\textsuperscript{9} Although Milly succeeds in calming Harry in this moment, just as Truth did the gathered abolitionists riled up by Douglass, Stowe nonetheless has introduced in her second slavery novel a powerful and compelling competing model of a gendered response to American slavery.

Stowe’s new privileging of masculinity seems to position Dred and his fellow African rebels outside of the feminine religious values that had been the crux of her rhetorically successful cultural work in \textit{UTC}. This change represents a radical theological realignment for Stowe, who in \textit{UTC}, as David S. Reynolds points out, rejected the harsh judgments of Calvinism in favor of an interpretation of Christianity that privileged the gentler, more forgiving “new covenant” with the loving, feminine, self-sacrificing Jesus over the “old covenant” with the wrathful, masculine God of the Old Testament (\textit{Mightier Than the Sword} 16). But following the violence against abolitionists in 1856, Stowe aligns Dred instead with old-covenant Old Testament prophets, saying of the phrenological traits of his skull, “the whole combination was such as might have formed one of the wild old warrior prophets of the heroic ages” (198), with whose diction, cadences, and thundering condemnations Stowe endowed her African voice in the wilderness. In his religious posture Dred is clearly modeled on Turner, known as “the Prophet” by his followers, whose scripture-infused invective melded masculine revolt and militant religiosity, a combination that served Stowe’s rhetorical aims well.\textsuperscript{10}

Stowe links her imaginary African rebel to Oliver Cromwell’s example, just as John Brown, too, would be widely celebrated as a latter-day Cromwell.\textsuperscript{11,12} This rhetorical repositioning was undertaken across the abolition movement in these years, as sterner Puritan patriarchs like Cromwell were lauded and seen as models by opponents of
slavery frustrated with the failure of moral suasion. When told that his revolt is hopeless and he will die, Dred invokes Christ’s death saying, “Die?—Why not die? Christ was crucified! Has everything dropped out of you, that you can’t die—that you’ll crawl like worms, for the sake of living?” (341). It is a Cromwellian[^13] (Saxon[^14]) warrior Christ, then, whom Dred takes as his model, rather than the sacrificing Lamb of God whom Uncle Tom took as his.

It is clear from the moment of his first appearance that Dred is like no pure African yet seen in Stowe’s fiction: he is physically dangerous, capable and prepared for violence. When he appears from the dense foliage to confront the mulatto slave Harry Gordon, Dred is festooned with weapons, including a knife, rifle, and hatchet (198). When Stowe describes Dred’s “neck and chest of herculean strength…the muscles of a gladiator” (198), her comparisons are to European pagan warriors, one a demigod and the other an enslaved mortal, rather than to Christ. Whereas Tom’s strength serves to contrast a physical capacity for resistance with a moral capacity for submission, Dred’s armed might demonstrates that he in fact will resist. Later in the novel Dred describes the violent measures that the slave insurrection he plots will require, vowing that:

> When the Lord saith unto us, Smite, then we will smite! We will not torment them with a scourge and fire, nor defile their women, as they have done with ours! But we will slay them utterly, and consume them from off the face of the earth! (460)

Harry asks, “What can we do?” Dred responds, “Do? What does the wild horse do? Launch out our hoofs! Rear up, and come down on them! What does the rattlesnake do? Lie in our path, and bite!” (341). Dred invokes both divine righteousness and natural
animal instinct in his assertion that enslaved blacks possess the same “pride” that
American Saxonists had long maintained they lacked, which justified and explained their
very enslavement.

Remarkably, Stowe has Dred denounce central Christian values, an act that
threatened the foundations of sentimental Christianity and, by extension, her own public
respectability. Stowe’s subversive daring is most evident when she has Dred mock
Harry’s submission to his brutal master (and half-brother) Tom Gordon:

Bend your neck and ask to be struck again!—won’t you? Be meek
and lowly! That’s the religion for you!… Take it meekly, my boy!
‘Servants, obey your masters.’ Take your master’s old coats—take
your wife when he’s done with her—and bless God that brought
you under the light of the Gospel! (198)

Stowe manages in a single brief passage to mock Christ’s turning of the other cheek and
privileging of the “meek”—much-quoted by defenders of Southern slavery—and, in fact,
the “Gospel” itself.

These sentiments extend beyond the novel’s project of critiquing and ridiculing
Southern churches’ complicity in slavery’s evils that occupies a significant portion of the
last quarter of the novel. In fact, in these passages Stowe offers not a Christian critique of
Christian hypocrites, but a condemnation of Christianity itself. Of course, one must not
mistake a character’s statements with the author’s opinions, and Stowe had demonstrated
a powerful dialogic capacity in her work, as in the powerfully argued proto-Marxism of
St. Clare in UTC. But the consistently anti-Christian statements of her title character
represented a rhetorically untenable position in Stowe’s America, thereby introducing a
dangerous instability into her new formulation of race that potentially threatened the propagandistic and commercial success of her new novel.

Stowe’s shifting gender and religious framing of African-Americans was subversive, ultimately, because it undermined the foundational justifications for Saxon hegemony. Stowe endeavored in *Dred* to leverage the contradictions between the democratic rhetoric of American national mythology and the enslavement of Africans, drawing parallels between the American Revolution and the desire of African-Americans for freedom. This rhetorical move had racialist connotations, however, given Stowe’s adherence to Saxonism. It was not a simple thing to invoke America’s democratic ideals to argue against the enslavement of Africans when a central tenet of American Saxonism was that Africans, with their supposed lack of Saxon pride, energy, and intelligence, lacked the character traits that made democracy an expression of Saxon genius.

Stowe has Harry Gordon, in a letter to reform-minded Clayton, argue that Africans have far more justification for revolt, and, “if it were proper for your fathers to fight and shed blood for the oppression that came upon them, why isn’t it right for us? They have not half the provocation that we have” (435). Clayton acknowledges the parallel, admitting “the right of an oppressed people to change their form of government if they can [and] that your people suffer under greater oppression than ever our fathers suffered” (435). Gordon notes that the slave revolt lead by Dred’s ostensible father, Denmark Vesey, was inspired by overhearing the American Revolution’s principles of liberty, and thus he “conceived the hopeless project of imitating the example set by the *American race* [emphasis added], and achieving independence for the blacks” (204). The “American race,” of course, refers to Saxons, and Stowe was not the first fiction writer to
draw explicit parallels between African and Saxon desires for freedom.¹⁵,¹⁶

For all of the shifting claims regarding the gender and religious nature of Africans that Stowe makes between *UTC* and *Dred*, she never wavered in her adherence to Saxonism, which precluded the capability to fight for and achieve democratic freedom in non-Saxons. Thus Stowe found herself in a double bind. It was in answer to this need to create some parallel between Africans and Saxons *without* discarding either discourse that Stowe began parsing Africans by their tribal-ethnic heritage, abandoning the dominant American racial discourse that conceived of black slaves as possessing a limited range of moral and intellectual capacities.

**Parsing Races**

In *Dred* Stowe begins to parse black Americans by their supposed tribal-ethnic ancestry. The central idea behind this parsing, implied in *Dred* but not explicitly stated by Stowe until 1868, was that “[t]he black population of America is not one race” (*Men of Our Times* 385). This parsing assumes tribal identity to represent racially distinct groups (rather than cultural or political entities) with differing physical traits and intellectual-moral capabilities, mirroring the European conflation of nationality and ethnicity with race upon which Saxonism was predicate.¹⁷ In *Dred*, Stowe accompanies her parsing of African ethnicity with an increasingly fine-grained parsing of European ethnicities.

In *UTC* Stowe equates American whiteness with Saxon identity, is silent on the subject of non-Saxon whites, and does not much discuss the national origin of American Saxons. However, in *Dred*, Stowe reminds her readers of this model by subjecting whites to the same finer-grained parsing of subgroups that she now found it politically and
rhetorically useful to apply to Africans. Although Stowe repeatedly assures the reader that “full half the blood in [mulatto slave Harry Gordon’s] veins is the hot and hasty Saxon” (303), she parses his heritage more finely by claiming that it is Harry’s possession of “the thoughtful, forecasting temperament derived from his Scottish parentage [emphasis added]” (38) that makes him chafe at a life of bondage, which his African blood supposedly tolerates. Stowe’s increased interest in parsing Saxons can be seen in her treatment of the source material behind UTC’s George Harris. In A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1854), Stowe describes the real-life model for George, an escaped slaved named Lewis Clark, as “a quadroon, a fine looking man, with European features” and the son of a “Scotchman” (263-64). Nonetheless, Stowe repeatedly characterized George’s white blood as “Saxon” rather than “Scottish.”18 A distinction that was not rhetorically significant in 1852 had become so by 1856.

Even more significant than Stowe’s parsing of Saxon subgroups is her attention to defining non-Saxon whites. The task of defining or “limning out” (to use Toni Morrison’s phrase) the boundary between Saxons and other whites falls to Lisette, Harry’s enslaved paramour and “a mixture of the African and French blood” (52). The French were categorized at this time as a Celtic race, and it was against the Celtic French and Irish that Saxonism had first defined itself in England. Stowe declares the French a distinct “race,” and equates that race with “Africans” (grouping all Africans together despite the diversity of African races and racial traits to which Stowe has devoted so much energy in this novel). It is both parts of Lisette’s racial heritage, Stowe tells us, that create in her “a nature of everlasting childhood” and a “thoughtless, unreasoning fearlessness of the future,” and render her so unintelligent that she burns herself on a hot kettle and declares,
“Who knew it was so hot?” (52, 57). In light of the vigorous resistance to slavery of Saxon-blooded mulatto women like Eliza and Cassie in UTC, Lisette’s passivity and stupidity are given a primarily racial rather than gender explanation.19

Whereas the characterization of mulattos in UTC and so many other abolitionist or “progressive” works serves to “limn out” the racial traits of blacks and whites, Stowe in Dred charges them with the additional task of “limning out” the difference between Saxons and other white subgroups. Although they are both mulattos, Harry is not, like Lisette, described by Stowe as a “fanciful, exotic combination” (52), because the Scot-Saxons are not “fanciful”; rather they are supposedly pragmatic, prideful, domineering. Despite being half-white, Harry is not endowed with the “hazy, dreamy languor” of Lisette’s eyes that Stowe informs us is nonetheless somehow “so characteristic of the mixed races” (52). Stowe clearly has not worked out all of the implications nor clarified the terminology of her new racial taxonomy, but one thing is clear. Lisette herself says to Harry, “You are like the white man” (59), and French-African Lisette clearly is not.

Having established a model with the racial parsing of Europeans, Stowe then applied the same technique to Africans. Whereas UTC made no reference whatsoever to African tribes or ethnicities, and drew no racial distinctions between Africans, Dred’s early chapters are peppered with references to “tribes” such as Eboes and Ethiopians. These tribes, however, are referred to only in passing, and while they create a patina of ethnological knowledge that seems to reflect Stowe’s reading since composing UTC, they play no important role in these early chapters.20 However, Stowe’s new system of parsing African tribal origins is not universally applied in Dred. In fact, most of the novel’s black characters get no such treatment; their tribal identities are left unexplored. Curiously,
Stowe does not enumerate the tribal ancestry of Tiff, or any of the innately peaceful and forgiving blacks that correspond more closely to the romantic racist vision of Africans. She leaves that half of the equation blank, for the time being.

The chief aim of Stowe’s parsing of African tribes was to establish her conception of the Mandingo tribe. When the fugitive slave and guerilla fighter Dred first appears in the novel, Stowe informs the reader that his mother was a “Mandingo slave-woman,” and that:

The Mandingos are one of the finest of African tribes, distinguished for intelligence, beauty of form, and an indomitable pride and energy of nature. As slaves, they are considered particularly valuable by those who have tact enough to govern them, because of their great capability and their proud faithfulness; but they resent government of brute force, and under such are always fractious and dangerous. (208)

Stowe infers that Milly, too, may be Mandingo when she explains that this formidable woman “was a fine specimen of one of those warlike and splendid races, of whom, as they have seldom been reduced to slavery, there are but few and rare specimens among the slaves of the South” (49). Although Mills is never identified specifically as a Mandingo, the Mandingo is the only African ethnicity that Stowe frames in these terms in Dred. Stowe immediately and succinctly attributes nearly all of the traits that Saxonism claimed as the sole possession of Saxons and the basis for Saxon hegemony in America—intelligence, beauty, pride, energy, and a fierce resistance to tyranny that amounted to an innate talent for democracy—to Mandingos. In the process, she
challenges one of the central tenets of Saxonist discourse. Stowe had framed Uncle Tom, too, as an exemplar of his race, emphasizing Tom’s purity of African blood by noting his “full glossy black” skin and face with “truly African features” (40-41), but defined a Kinmontian vision of “Christian” African character from which Dred clearly diverged. Dred diverges, as well, from the Saxonism that Stowe had grafted onto Kinmontian romantic racialism, in that this armed guerilla fighter is clearly not, as Stowe said of the African race in the first paragraph of her preface to UTC, “essentially unlike the hard and dominant Anglo-Saxon race” (v).

Stowe sought to imagine more Saxon-like Africans, yet she was unable or unwilling to abandon her era’s master discourses of racial essentialism and Saxonism. Given this dilemma, the rhetorical exigency for Stowe to parse African ethnicity and elevate some subgroup of Africans to mirror Saxons is clear enough, but why was that group the Mandingos? I argue that Stowe’s raising up of Mandingos was not a random improvisation, but instead made use of a racial discourse well established in her time but largely forgotten since: the discourse of Mandingo-Saxonism.

**Mandingo-Saxonism**

“Mandingo-Saxonism” is a term I’ve coined for a previously unidentified Anglo-American discourse that ranked the Mandingo tribe of West Africa above all other “black African” tribes or ethnicities in terms that paralleled the self-praise by which Saxons declared themselves superior to all European races, and by extension all non-European races as well. The Mandingo are a largely Muslim ethnic group spread across West Africa, having spread west from Mali during the Mali Empire (1230-1600). The
Mandingo continued to exercise economic and political power throughout the region in the following centuries. Mandingo-Saxonism praised Mandingos for supposedly possessing a set of physical, moral, and intellectual traits that Saxonists otherwise claimed as the sole possession of Saxons and the basis of that group’s claim of racial superiority, namely: pride, intelligence, energy, and masculinity. Mandingo-Saxonist discourse originated in travelers’, traders’, explorers’, missionaries’, and slavers’ accounts of contact with African peoples beginning in the sixteenth century, and continued in slaveholder, ethnographic, and abolitionist texts concerning Africans in the Americas. This discourse continued on into twentieth- and twenty-first-century American literary and popular culture. Stowe drew from the Mandingo-Saxonist discourse of her time to build precisely the kind of African that her newly bellicose political views required.

Mandingo-Saxonist claims are encapsulated nicely in a passage from a biographical profile of Frederick Douglass in Stowe’s *Men of Our Times* (1868). In his 1855 version of his autobiography, *My Bondage, My Freedom*, Douglass had noted that an image in James Cowles Prichard’s *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* (1851) resembled his mother (*Men of Our Times* 385), and Stowe concluded that since:

[T]he profile is European in its features…we have supposed that the

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![Mali Empire Map](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mali_Empire)
mother of Douglass must have been one of that Mandingo tribe of Africans who were distinguished among the slaves for *fine features* [a coded phrase in this period indicating Caucasian features], *great energy, intelligence and pride* [emphasis added]. (385)²⁴

Here Stowe summed up the central attributes that Mandingo-Saxonism claimed were common to the two groups; cited Prichard’s *Researches*, arguably the premier work of Mandingo-Saxonist ethnology; and made explicit the connection between Mandingos and Douglass that had been implicit in her depiction of Dred.

Mandingo-Saxonist texts often claimed that the facial features of Mandingos were more European than negroid, which corresponds to Stowe’s assertion that Aunt Milly’s hair “without approaching to the character of the Anglo-Saxon, was still different from the ordinary woolly coat of the negro, and seemed more like an infinite number of close-knotted curls, of brilliant, glossy blackness” (49).²⁵ Employing a term, “energy,” instantly associated with Saxons in Anglo-American culture of the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, these texts consistently claim that “Mandingos are remarkable for their industry and energy” (*Ripley* 139) and that “[f]ew people work harder…than” (Park 426) these “industrious agriculturalists” (Jobson and Moore qtd. in Prichard 58). This aspect of Mandingo-Saxonism can be seen in Stowe’s claim that Mandingos are characterized by an “indomitable pride and energy of nature” (208); in her description of Milly’s mouth, which, Stowe tells her readers, “was large, and the lips, though partaking of the African fullness, had, nonetheless, something decided and *energetic* in their outline” [emphasis added] (49); in her description of Dred’s lieutenant Hannibal, who works his farm in Canada at the novel’s conclusion with Saxon “energy” and Yankee “thrift” (544). The
possession of “energy” by any Africans was very significant in the context of American racial discourse, which generally claimed that it was precisely Africans’ supposed lack of energy that meant that free Africans could never successfully compete with whites (Saxons), and thus that the only options were either slavery or colonization to another place where they would not be outmatched.26

Stowe’s characterization of Mandingos as “intelligent” echoes a common theme in Mandingo-Saxonist literature. Much of this impression of Mandingo intelligence seems to derive from the fact that the Mandingos were predominantly Muslim and therefore literate and monotheistic whereas their neighbors were largely illiterate and pagan. Anglo-American conceptions of the Mandingo alternately saw Islam as the dominant factor in Mandingo identity or ignored Islam and attributed the literacy and relative sophistication the tribe drew from Islam to innate racial capabilities (Schaffer 324-25).

Although Stowe did not associate Mandingos with Islam directly in her work, Stowe seems to allude obliquely to Mandingos’ reputation for literacy (Schaffer 337) when she claims that:

The development of this child’s [Dred’s] mind was so uncommon as to excite astonishment among the negroes. He early acquired the power of reading, by an apparent instinctive faculty, and would often astonish those around him with things which he had discovered in books. (208)

In this passage Stowe, like other Mandingo-Saxonist authors, racializes abilities that in fact reflect cultural knowledge, in a way not dissimilar to the much-noted tendency in contemporary American culture to ascribe the athletic abilities of African-Americans to
“natural ability” while ascribing those of white athletes to “intelligence” and “hard work.”

Stowe claims in *Dred* that “[a]s slaves, [Mandingos] are considered particularly valuable by those who have tact enough to govern them” (208), and indeed there is evidence that slaveholders and buyers in that region preferred enslaved people taken from the Senegambia region and the Gambia river where Mandingos predominated. Thus it seems that Stowe not only drew from an existing Mandingo-Saxonist discourse, but was familiar with it in sufficient detail to set *Dred* in a region, the Carolinas, that particularly valued Mandingos for knowledge of rice production and that had in fact been home to Dred’s purported father, Denmark Vesey.

Mandingo-Saxonist claims that Mandingos possessed “pride” derived partly from slaveholder accounts that literate enslaved Mandingos held themselves aloof from their illiterate pagan peers (Schaffer 338). “Pride” was a central element in the racialist case against African emancipation, in that a supposed lack of pride kept Africans from rebelling violently against their captivity. Thus it was particularly significant that Mandingo-Saxonist texts depicted the Mandingo as aggressive warriors “perpetually at war with…surrounding nations” (Schaffer 337-38), conquerors of large swaths of West Africa (Schaffer 337-38). Stowe’s desire to maintain the masculine association with Mandingos may perhaps explain why it is only male characters in *Dred* that are definitively identified as Mandingo (other than Dred’s mother, who is merely alluded to rather than appearing as a character in the narrative). Stowe informs her readers that Milly, the formidable “mammy” of the Canema plantation, “was a fine specimen of one of those warlike and splendid races, of whom, as they have seldom been reduced to
slavery, there are but few and rare specimens among the slaves of the South” (49), yet leaves the name of this “warlike and splendid” race unspoken\(^3\) and *Dred*’s Mandingos all male.

All this praise of Mandingos in Saxonist terms threatened to imply that the stereotypes about African inferiority were false, and that indeed the whole concept of racial hierarchy and race itself might be false as well. Mandingo-Saxonism developed a solution to this discursive dilemma by contrasting the supposedly superior Mandingo to other “negroes” who possessed all of the worst stereotypical traits attributed by Europeans and Americans to Africans, epitomized in Mandingo-Saxonist discourse by the “Guinea negro.”

**“Guinea Negroes” Limn Out the Near-Whiteness of Mandingos**

Mandingo-Saxonism depends, of course, not only on the elevation of the Mandingo but on the necessary devaluation of other African tribes in the same manner that Saxonism devalues all non-Saxon Europeans. In *Dred*, Stowe never named the African tribes or ethnicities whose supposedly inferior characters and capacities set Dred and the Mandingos in such stark relief. Stowe did, however, hint at the lower capabilities of non-Mandingo Africans in *Dred* when Harry thinks to himself, after his half-French, half-non-Mandingo-African wife burns herself on a kettle that she can’t remember will be hot, “Poor little thing!… Why should I try to teach her anything?” (56). And the proto-Uncle Tom loyal slave Old Tiff (about whose tribal heritage Stowe is silent) declares, even after years of “freedom” in the North continuing to serve his old masters, “Why, no, honey, I don’no as ai can rightly say dat I’s larn’d to read, ’cause I’s ’mazing slow at dat ar” (579),
a stark if unemphasized contrast with the Mandingo Dred, who, by “instinctive faculty” (208), is very quick with “dat ar.”

However, in 1868 Stowe offered a more fully worked-out version of the racial theory structuring *Dred*. In a biographical sketch of Frederick Douglass in *Men of Our Times*, Stowe attributed his greatness to the confluence in him of Mandingo and Saxon blood, and offered the following dichotomy:

The Mandingo has European features, a fine form, wavy, not wool hair, is intelligent, vigorous, proud and brave. The Guinea negro has a coarse, animal head, is stupid, dirty, cunning. Yet the argument on negro powers is generally based on some such sweeping classification as takes the Guinea negro for its type.

(385-86)

The term “Guinea negro” refers, in Anglo-American ethnological discourse, narrowly to residents of “Guinea,” from the southern coast of West Africa (a region spanning present-day Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Togo, Ivory Coast, and Nigeria) to the south of the “Senegambia” region (present-day Senegal, The Gambia). (See map above.) However, the term “Guinea negro” was also used imprecisely to refer to a variety of dark-skinned,
negroidFeatured pagan peoples in the region south of Senegambia. Their physical
proximity to Mandingos meant that European explorers and slavers often encountered
(and enslaved) both groups on the same voyages, facilitating comparisons between the
two groups.

European ethnology believed, over-simplistically, that the Senegambia-Guinea
region represented the southern limit of Islamic culture in Africa at that time, so that the
culture and relative level of civilization between neighboring groups could be dramatic.
Similarly, the region was a transitional zone for physiological traits as Northern- and
Central-African groups mixed to greater or lesser extents. There was a precedent in Euro-
American ethnographic discourses for singling out the “Guinea negro” for special
contempt as the negroest negroes. “Negro” traits were said to be “exemplified in the
natives of Guinea in Western Africa...who are in the greatest degree remarkable for
deformed countenances, projecting jaws, flat foreheads, and for other Negro peculiarities,
and are the most savage and morally degraded” (Prichard 319, 97).32 Although Stowe
would go on to adopt this kind of language to describe “Guinea negroes” in Men of Our
Times in 1868, in Dred she neither used the term “Guinea negro” nor submitted any of
her black characters to quite this kind of insulting description. However, Tiff, the kindly
and loyal slave utterly devoted to his socially fallen masters, is described in terms that, in
retrospect, suggest that Stowe already had the Guinea negro-Mandingo dichotomy in
mind. Stowe tells her reader that Tiff’s:

Countenance presented, physically, one of the most uncomely specimens
of negro features...positively frightful.... His face was of an ebony
blackness, guarded by clumsy lips, revealing teeth a shark might have
envied. (83)

The final detail perhaps alludes to the practice of teeth filing that Europeans and Americans found to be such an emblem of “savagery,” and Stowe again employs the scientific term “specimen” regarding Africans, reflecting her immersion in race science. For all of the affection with which Stowe portrays Tiff in *Dred*, in his moral character and physical appearance he “limns out” the supposed superiority of Mandingos, and indicates the direction of Stowe’s racial theorization of Africans.

**Likely Sources of Stowe’s Mandingo-Saxonism**

As to the question of where Stowe may have encountered and absorbed Mandingo-Saxonism, there are numerous likely possibilities, beginning with the regular commentary on Mandingos in West Africa that appeared in the reports and publications of American missionaries and adventurers in Liberia.  

Given the household in which Stowe grew up and the antislavery circles in which she lived her adult life, it seems certain that Stowe was familiar with the 1839 Connecticut trial of the enslaved Africans, identified in newspapers and abolitionist tracts as Mande speakers, who had seized control of the slave ship *La Amistad*. The dichotomy in which Mandingos represented the top of a hierarchy of African tribes and Guinea negroes represented the bottom does not appear until the mid-nineteenth century, relatively late in Mandingo-Saxon discourse. But the Mandingo-Saxonism of Stowe’s time was peppered with dismissive remarks about “Guinea negroes” in comparison with Mandingos, as, for instance, in certain hinterland reports from Liberian missionaries (d’Azevedo 219). However, the particular formulation of Stowe’s Mandingo-Guinea dichotomy suggests a pair of specific sources for the
racialized Mandingo-Saxonism of *Dred*: the ethnographic works of both the Welshman James Cowles Prichard and the Swiss-American Louis Agassiz, who together did the most to spread the concept of the Mandingo-Guinea dichotomy in American culture.

James Cowles Prichard (1786-1848)\(^{36}\) was the leading scientific defender of “monogenesis,” the theory that humanity consists of a single species (Haller 70).\(^{37}\) This retronym for the ancient account of human creation was occasioned by the theory of *polygenesis*, a theory that posited multiple divine creations of unequal races, a central concept of what became known as the “American school” of anthropology used to justify the enslavement of Africans. Prichard refuted claims of the general intellectual inferiority of Africans, declaring emphatically that there was nothing “in the organization of the brain of the negro which affords a presumption of inferior…intellectual or moral faculties” (Prichard 353-54). Prichard was the scientific authority most often invoked in antislavery speeches and publications on both sides of the Atlantic, and as such Stowe was almost certainly exposed to his ideas in America, and if not is sure to have been in England (as has been documented of Frederick Douglass) (Chaney 396) during her post-*UTC* European travels.

In essence, Prichard attempted to debunk race as a category of permanent difference and inequality.\(^{38}\) Paradoxically, however, Prichard’s struggle to reconcile his belief in human equality with the differences in culture and appearance between peoples, which he nonetheless perceived, led him to essentially reinvent race in his concept of “permanent variety.”\(^{39}\) This tricky idea claimed that while all humans were the same species, subsets of humanity settled into essentially unchanging physical, intellectual, and moral characteristics that rendered them unequal, if still all human. Unfortunately, on a
practical level, unequal “permanent varieties” that change over millions of years serve just as well as polygenesis as justifications for slavery, colonization, and everything else to which Prichard objected. Prichard subdivided Africa’s human population into five distinct “permanent varieties”: “Negro, Sudanian, Bushmen (Kaffirs and Hottentots in southern Africa), Ethiopian, [and] Egyptian” (Prichard 292).

Prichard identified Mandingos as members of a “Sudanian” variety originally from the African interior, and praised them in a manner consistent with the Mandingo-Saxonist claims of European explorers from which his knowledge of West Africa is exclusively drawn. In contrast to Mandingos, Prichard identifies “negroes” as the lowest type of African and “the natives of Guinea” as the epitome of negroness, and contrasted them to tribes like the Mandingos. Prichard claimed that the racial category of negro “is exemplified in the natives of Guinea in Western Africa, and in their descendants in America and the West Indies” (319), and that “[tribes] who are in the greatest degree remarkable for deformed countenances, projecting jaws, flat foreheads, and for other Negro peculiarities, are the most savage and morally degraded.” “The converse of this remark,” Prichard goes on to explain, “is applicable to all the most civilized races…. Mandingos…have…nearly European countenances and a corresponding configuration of the head [and are] more intelligent [and] physically superior” (97). The paradox of Prichard’s stance on the capacities of Africans can be seen in assertions that defend “black men,” presumably including Guinea negroes—“[N]o person, who has been in the habit of personal intercourse with Mandingos, can entertain the slightest doubt of the equality of intellect between white and black men” (58)—while emphasizing and making explicit the special similarity between Mandingos and whites (Saxons). Thus although
Prichard did not believe that the supposed moral and intellectual differences between varieties of Africans, or between Africans and Europeans for that matter, were permanent, he nonetheless did believe that those differences were real and, for the time being, biologically embedded. He helped establish in Euro-American discourse the idea that the Mandingo and the Guinea negro represented, respectively, the apex and the nadir of the current developmental range of black Africans.

One indication of the pervasiveness of the concept that a dichotomy existed between Mandingos and Guinea negroes is its prominent appearance on both sides of the mono- vs. polygenesis debate. In 1854 Louis Agassiz, the Swiss Harvard anthropologist and preeminent scientist advocating polygenesis, in making his argument that human “races” represent essentially different species, claimed that:

The chimpanzee and the gorilla do not differ more one from the other than the Mandingo and the Guinea Negro: they together do not differ more from the orang [sic] than the Malay or white man differs from the negro. (Agassiz et al. lxxv)\(^41\)

Thus although Agassiz’s and Prichard’s theories were diametrically opposed on the question of the unity of humanity, both had so thoroughly absorbed the notion of a Mandingo-Guinea dichotomy that they each treated it as a given.\(^42,43\)

**Stowe Adapts Prichard and Agassiz**

Stowe’s adaptation of Prichard’s and Agassiz’s theories was nearly as creative as her previous adaptation of Kinmont’s theories in UTC. Whereas a thorough expression of Prichard’s theories would have mapped out a confusing range of “permanent varieties”
among African slaves, Stowe limited herself in *Dred* to the elevation of the Mandingo to meet her need for a Saxon-like category of Africans. Furthermore, if Stowe’s Mandigo-Saxonism indeed sprang from Prichard then Stowe pointedly refrained from naming the other tribes against whose servility, femininity, ugliness, and lack of intelligence her Mandingos distinguished themselves. In *Dred*, Stowe seems reticent to heap derision on the category of “negro” to which her Christian paragons Tom and Tiff belong. However, she had overcome such compunctions by the time she penned *Men of Our Times* and blamed the negro, with his “coarse, animal head,” for misleading Americans into a false understanding of “negro powers” that did not include the more Saxon-like “powers” she attributed to Mandingos. Stowe simplified Prichard’s ambiguous and contradictory claims for greater rhetorical potency. Whereas Prichard both thought the Mandingo more intelligent than their neighbors and believed the chief cause of this was exposure to Islamic civilization rather than permanently different racial capacities, Stowe re-racialized Prichard’s Mandingos, making the transmitted culture of Islam into an “instinctive faculty” that reinforced the notion of racial difference upon which her depiction of Dred depended.

In adapting Prichard and Mandingo-Saxonism, Stowe struck upon a rhetorical move nearly as brilliant as her earlier identification of Africans with feminine Christianity. In order to render some negroes more Saxon-like, she not only declared that they were *not negroes after all*, but she went so far as to give them their own negroes against which to define their supposed superiority. Stowe seized upon the Mandingo-Guinea dichotomy codified and popularized in both Prichard and Agassiz and employed it to create a rhetorically useful dualism, a dualism that helped manufacture a division of
Africans modeled on the structure of American whiteness. The flexibility of racialist discourse is dramatically illustrated by Stowe’s use of a concept (the Mandingo-Guinea dichotomy) popularized in its starkest form by the foremost scientific champion of polygenesis and of arguments of negro inferiority, Agassiz, to craft a category of Africans nearly equal to Saxons and capable, seemingly, of full participation in American subjecthood. Dispensing with the confusing clutter of Prichardian permanent varieties and tribes, Stowe placed Mandingos in a version of the dualistic system that Toni Morrison, in her influential 1992 book, Playing in the Dark, argued was the sine qua non of American whiteness.

Morrison’s “Africanist Presence”

In Playing in the Dark, Morrison argued for the integral importance within American culture of what she called “American Africanism,” a discourse by which whiteness defined itself in contrast with the qualities it imagined or imposed upon Africans. “Africanist character,” Morrison theorizes, was “used to limn out and enforce the invention and implications of whiteness” (52). Morrison theorizes that the primary functions of Africanism accomplished these tasks, suggesting that:

Africanism is the vehicle by which the American self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution, but a progressive fulfillment of destiny. (52)

Since Africans could not be admitted into an American subjecthood predicated on the
presence of a defining darker race, Stowe employed Mandingo-Saxonism to split
America’s black population and allow Guinea negroes to fulfill nearly all of these
functions (except non-enslavement) for Mandingos who are brought to ever more closely
resemble “the invention and implications” of Saxonness.

Although Morrison’s theory is binary and does not take into account the role in the
shaping of American whiteness of what one could call the “Indianist presence,” Stowe
brings Mandingos into the triangulated position between blacks and Indians that, as
explored in my chapter on Cooper, established Saxon-American identity and legitimized
its hegemony over the American continent. Stowe in fact positions the Mandingo Dred in
the Saxon rather than the black position relative to Indians when she has Dred declare,
“Why did they make slaves of us? They tried the wild Indian first. Why didn’t they keep
to them? They wouldn’t be slaves, and we will! They that will bear the yoke, may bear
it!” (341). The contrast drawn between Indian resistance—noble, if doomed—and
African acquiescence to enslavement had long been used to justify African slavery in the
Americas. By positioning Dred’s character as more Indian than African—and after all,
Dred is depicted as a wilderness hunter adapting to the American wilderness at least as
well as Cooper’s Natty Bumppo—Stowe also set the stage for endowing at least some
Africans with the required symbolic nativeness that American-Saxonist subjeckhood
required.

**Backing Away from the Implications of Mandingo-Saxonism**

What, then, is one to make of the failure of the insurrection of which Stowe had
worked so hard to make *Dred’s* Africans capable? Whatever interpretation one might
give to the failure of this particular rebellion, Stowe’s reconceptualization of the moral and intellectual capabilities of at least some Africans would seem to leave open the possibility that another future rebellion might succeed. And beyond that, the Saxonness of Mandingos would seem to suggest that Mandingo-descended African-Americans (if perhaps not their Guinean comrades) might make excellent and fully equal American citizens in some future post-slavery America. In fact, if taken to its full logical conclusion, Stowe’s depiction of Dred suggests that perhaps racially superior Saxons and Mandingos might amalgamate to form a new American race while excluding racially inferior Celts, Guinea negroes, and the like. However, Stowe undermined Mandingo-Saxonism even as she invoked it, producing in the end a highly ambiguous theorization of Dred’s insurrection that further complicates its interpretation. Seemingly at cross-purposes with herself, Stowe called into question each of the claims underlying the novel’s Mandingo-Saxonist reconstruction of African character.

The central pillar of Stowe’s Mandingo-Saxonism in Dred is the claim that Dred’s Saxon-like traits of pride, energy, and intelligence are racial traits derived from his Mandingo blood. Yet throughout the novel Stowe repeatedly suggests in her narration that Dred’s un-negro-like character might be the result of individual mental illness rather than shared racial character. These speculations are present from Dred’s first appearance in the novel, when in the midst of her Mandingo-Saxonist description of the rebel leader Stowe informs the reader that “there burned in [Dred’s eyes]…a subtle and restless fire that betokened habitual excitement to the verge of insanity” (198). Stowe peppered nearly all of Dred’s scenes with similar ambiguous hints at insanity, leading Fredrickson to conclude that “Dred himself is portrayed as literally insane, or very close to it—
presumably only madness would drive a Negro to violence” (112) and to speculate that “under more favorable circumstances, Dred might have been an Uncle Tom” (113). However, Stowe has the reformist slaveholder Clayton speculate that with the advantage of a broader education Dred’s “name might have been…with Toussaint [L’Ouverture, the leader of the Haitian revolution]” (516), suggesting that Dred was a natural rebel impeded by circumstances rather than a natural submissive perverted by madness to rebel.

Adding to the ambiguity, while Stowe denies her plotting African rebels an actual revolt (as had Child in “The Black Saxons”) and kills Dred off midway through the novel—seeming to indicate that she was backpedaling from her depiction of African violent retribution—Stowe nonetheless capped her narrative with Nat Turner’s confessions of his real-life bloody insurrection. Perhaps Stowe sought cover in history from potential charges of inciting a slave revolt and the murder of whites, providing documentation of a famous slave revolt that actually occurred while declining to conjure a fictional one in her novel. The novel’s extensive appendices form a kind of Key to Dred built into the novel itself that parallels the Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin that Stowe published to provide documentary and historical evidence. Thus the Nat Turner rebellion documents provide a “key” to the bloody retribution that she demurred from depicting in the novel but had invoked in the minds of her readers nonetheless.

Similarly, Stowe cast doubt upon her religious reframing of Dred and his fellow rebels as later-day biblical prophets whose righteous wrath, while contrasting with the Christian forgiveness of Uncle Tom, was nonetheless given Judeo-Christian justification. At one point Stowe’s narration suggests that Dred may have acquired his spiritual powers, or the appearance of such, not from the Judeo-Christian God but instead from
his grandfather, a “reputed African sorcerer” who had “taught [Dred] snake charming, and had possessed his mind from childhood with the expectations of prophetic and supernatural impulses” (274). Furthermore, Stowe’s narration suggests that Dred’s religious visions might merely be superstitious delusions facilitated by the fact that “the African race,” with whom Dred’s Mandingos are now once again lumped, “are said by mesmerists to possess, in the fullest degree, that particular temperament which fits them for the evolution of mesmeric phenomena” (274). Stowe was herself a believer in spiritualism (Reynolds, Mightier Than the Sword 18-19) and refused in Dred to conclude whether such powers are definitively false (274-75). Adding an additional layer of complication to the ambiguity, Stowe likened Dred’s prophetic powers to “highland seers” (274), linking this Mandingo again to the Saxons of Sir Walter Scott. Nonetheless, these associations of Dred with sorcery and mesmerism weaken the religious theorization of Dred’s Mandingos within the Judeo-Christian context required for social acceptability in Stowe’s America.46

There are indications that Stowe’s ambivalence about her depiction of Dred continued well after she finished writing the novel. Stowe removed Dred’s name from the novel’s title in subsequent editions, retitling the novel Nina Gordon after the novel’s white heroine, only to later restore the title of Dred later in her life (Wilson 127), perhaps a sign of Stowe’s continued ambivalence about her depiction of this very un-Uncle Tom African hero.

**Conclusion**

It is difficult not to conclude that Stowe lost her nerve and thought better of the radical implications of the Mandingo-Saxonism that she expressed in Dred. Two-thirds of
the way through the novel, Stowe not only killed off the novel’s namesake and central
exemplar of Mandingo-Saxonism, nipping his insurrection in the bud, but also abandoned
completely the parsing of races that made Mandingo-Saxonism possible. After the death
of Dred, Stowe makes no further reference to African tribes or ethnicities, nor to any
distinctions in character or capability among Africans, nor, for that matter, to traits
distinguishing Saxons and Celts. Stowe need not have abandoned Mandingo-Saxonism to
have Dred’s revolt fail, and thus to meet the rhetorical aims attributed to her by recent
sympathetic critics, that is, to avoid confirming stereotypes of African savagery and to
demonstrate that only Northern political action—rather than either slave revolt or internal
reform—would end slavery. I would speculate that Stowe recognized that in adapting
Mandingo-Saxonism to resolve one political-rhetorical problem in Dred she had moved
beyond the pale of respectable opinion even among most abolitionists, and in response
backpedaled on her Mandingo-Saxonist claims by leavening them with ambiguity and
then quietly setting them down by the end of the novel.47

However, Stowe did not abandon Mandingo-Saxonism permanently. In fact, she
made her clearest declaration of Mandingo-Saxonism in Men of Our Times, twelve years
after publishing Dred. By that time African-American soldiers had played a crucial role
in defeating the Confederacy and bringing slavery to an end. The Saxon-like qualities of
these African-Americans was an established theme in progressive writing during and
after the war, and it was perhaps less shocking for Stowe to make such claims. Critically,
though, it is in Stowe’s postwar Mandingo-Saxonism that the Mandingo-Guinea
dichotomy appears explicitly for the first time. Thus breaking off a subgroup of Africans
for praise in Saxonist terms ultimately made Stowe’s views of African-Americans more
conventional, since her appraisal of the Guinea negroes, from whom she states that most African-Americans descend, contains the most viciously contemptuous and insulting characterizations of Africans of her whole career. Stowe’s postwar experiences even seem to have poisoned Stowe’s opinion of mulattoes, whom she had depicted in UTC as the peak of African-American capability thanks to their Saxon blood. Reflecting on her experiences shortly after the war teaching African-American children in Florida, Stowe claimed that, “The black children get on just as fast as the white children [but] the mixed race is weaker,” to which her husband added that, “The mixed die out soon” (Stanton 191), views akin to those of pro-slavery race theorist Josiah Nott.

While Stowe’s appreciation for a select few highly accomplished African-Americans bordered on the hagiographic, her general opinion of the vast majority of their population plummeted in the years after the war. While I have not (yet) discovered a further explicit emphasis of Mandingo-Saxonist racial theories in Stowe’s works after Men of Our Times, the presumption that the majority of African-Americans are racially incapable of the gendered moral character traits required for full American subjecthood inherent in Mandingo-Saxonism must be taken into consideration when considering Stowe’s work and views after 1856. This phenomenon calls out for further research beyond the scope of this chapter. However, I would offer the following observation: Stowe’s central project, like that of the vast majority of white antislavery activists, was the destruction of slavery rather than the establishment of absolute political, social, and economic equality between the races. Stowe never ceased believing in race and maintained utter faith in the tenets of American Saxonism, as did all of the other white authors within the scope of this dissertation. It is worth noting that for all of her advocacy
on behalf of African-Americans after emancipation, there is no third African-American-centered novel from Stowe.

More broadly, Stowe’s adaptation of Mandingo-Saxonism offers several insights into both Stowe in particular and the nineteenth-century American adaptation of European racial discourse more generally. In Mandingo-Saxonism the transatlantic quality of Stowe’s work, much discussed in contemporary scholarship, clearly extends to her theorization of race, and further reinforces our understanding of the complex interweaving and mutual influence of European and American culture in this period. In Stowe’s theoretical switch from romantic racialism to Mandingo-Saxonism we see a prime example of the rhetorical motivations that preceded and shaped her espousal of racial theories, and of the situational flexibility with which Stowe, like other American writers of the period, shifted between racial theories previously supposed to have been bedrock principles that determined her political views and narrative choices. What’s more, the very same quality of inconsistency for which Dred has long been condemned demonstrates that rhetorical flexibility ever further, as Stowe shifted racial theorizations not only between but within works to suit the conflicting rhetorical exigencies of her era’s complex racial politics.
CHAPTER FOUR

The Mulatta’s “Gipsy Hue”:

Transatlantic Gypsy Discourses and the (Re)Racination of the Mulatta

in Caroline Lee Hentz’s The Planter’s Northern Bride

Figure 1 (left): “Claudia and Eulalia.” Illustration of the gypsy Claudia attempting to kidnap her Anglo-gypsy mixed race daughter from the home of her Anglo ex-husband, the slaveholder Moreland. (The Planter’s Northern Bride http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/hentz/ill3.html)

Figure 2 (right): Gypsy husband and wife and the blonde girl whom they were arrested for kidnapping from a non-gypsy family in 2013. The couple was released when genetic tests revealed that the child was the daughter of a Bulgarian gypsy who had asked the couple to adopt the child. (“Eleftheria Dimopoulou…”)

Introduction

Caroline Lee Hentz’s 1854 proslavery novel The Planter’s Northern Bride (PNB) features as a central character an Italian Gypsy named Claudia, an incongruous figure in a plantation romance. I argue that Hentz, in a variation on the bodily re-categorization as discursive resistance noted by Socicio in other works of the period, employed the racially liminal figure of the gypsy to displace two subversive elements that threatened to undermine her proslavery narrative (see table 3): her own resentment of patriarchal
domination of women and the presence of sexual exploitation within Southern slavery (symbolized by the fathering of mixed race slaves by white slaveholders) that contradicted Hentz’s framing of the peculiar institution as a benevolent patriarchal family consistent with the values of sentimental Christianity. Importing the incongruous figure of the Italian gypsy into her anti-Tom novel allowed Hentz to skirt two problematic requirements of the anti-Tom genre.\(^1\) Firstly, Hentz introduced the gypsy woman into \textit{PNB} as a means of channeling into a safely contained ancillary character the resistance to patriarchal authority which characterized the heroines of her other work, exploiting the reputation of gypsy women as assertive, passionate, and usurping of patriarchal authority and prerogatives. This strategy allowed Hentz to express her proto-feminism through Claudia while rendering the novel’s nominal heroine, the planter’s new bride, Eulalia, as fully submissive to patriarchal authority as the proslavery genre required. Secondly, as a salutary benefit, the gypsy woman’s marriage to and production of a mixed-race child with an Anglo-Saxon planter allowed Hentz to safely reclaim anti-amalgamationism for an anti-amalgamationist genre ironically unable to acknowledge or address interracial sex when it occurred within the supposedly benevolent “family” of Southern slavery.

Hentz does not employ explicitly scientific language in her descriptions of gypsies, nor reference specific theories or theorists, instead basing her portrayal of gypsies on European literature. However, European literary tropes regarding gypsies were themselves rooted in and entwined with a long scientific and religious discourse about the nature and origin of the gypsies and their relationships to “pure” European peoples. European scientific works on gypsies greatly influenced transatlantic culture, seeding ideas in American culture through the European literature upon which which nineteenth
century American writers were weaned. Major Europeans works about gypsies in this period included the Englishman George Borrow’s proto-anthropological travelogues about gypsies from England and Spain to Russia, the German Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellman’s philological theory of gypsy’s axiomatically-mysterious origins springing from India, and the numerous instances in European authors from Buffon to Immanuel Kant pairing gypsies with Africans as supposedly the most degenerated of human races.

However, the gypsy figure that Hentz deploys in order to write a proper anti-Tom novel ultimately undoes her efforts. The sympathy with which Hentz portrays Claudia’s anti-patriarchal complaints is too compelling, and her lionizing of the submissive Eulalia too unconvincing. Moreover, Claudia’s outrage at being treated like a slave merely because of her biological identity positions women as potential allies with African-Americans against the hegemony of white men. Having introduced the gypsy into *PNB* for the sake of one trait attributed to that group in transatlantic racial discourses (anti-patriarchal self-assertion), Hentz doomed her novel’s supposed rhetorical aim with the preponderance of traits attributed in those discourses to both Africans as well as gypsies (musicality, sexuality, irrationality), as well as the long-standing association of gypsies with child stealing in European folklore and the fact, well publicized in the United States, that gypsies were themselves held in a form of slavery in Eastern Europe though the middle of the nineteenth century. Particularly when combined with a Gothic plot of secret wives, the character of the gypsy Claudia evokes the sexual exploitation of enslaved Africans to a degree rhetorically fatal to any attempt to depict slavery as consistent with sentimental familial values. Hentz’s conflicting uses of gypsy discourse in *PNB* offers an opportunity to bring together the siloed critical views of Hentz as either a pioneering
feminist or a defender of slavery, revealing the author struggling with the fact that she was both.²

**PNB’s Trans-Atlantic Gypsy Discourses**

The gypsy in question in *PNB* is Claudia, the child of Italian gypsies who is the mistress of a slave plantation that she inherited from the childless Southern planter who adopted her.³ Her marriage to Anglo-Saxon Southern aristocrat Moreland ends in divorce and disgrace when she is assumed to have committed adultery. Moreland retains sole custody of their daughter, Effie, with whom Claudia is allowed no contact. In *PNB*’s gothic subplot, the existence of Moreland’s first wife comes as a shock to his second wife, Eulalia, the daughter of a Northern abolitionist who accompanies Moreland back to his plantation as his new and, it turns out, second wife. Throughout the novel, Claudia menaces Eulalia, rails against Moreland, and attempts to kidnap Effie. Claudia’s passionate and seemingly immoral character is attributed both explicitly and implicitly to her ethnicity.

Claudia’s ethnicity was from the start already hybrid and ambiguous. Although I have described Claudia as an “Italian gypsy,” in fact Hentz never pairs the terms in that way. Hentz alternates between referring to Claudia as “Italian” and as “gypsy,” making her precise ethnic identity uncertain (as we shall see, a highly “gypsy” trait already). Hentz often emphasizes the Italian over the ambiguous gypsy as the defining agent of Claudia’s character. Claudia’s partial Italian identity link her to the discourse on exotic southern- and eastern-European ethnicities seen in works such as Child’s *A Romance of*
the Republic, but ultimately it is her gypsy-ness that does the greatest political work, what Jane Tompkins calls “cultural work,” for Hentz (Tompkins xi).

Although actual Romanny people were almost entirely unknown in the United States in the 1850s, “gypsies” were entirely familiar to American readers from the English culture with which American culture was thoroughly entwined. The ethnic/cultural group known in English as gypsies and today referred to as the Roma people had been a presence in Eastern Europe since the tenth century, and in England since the fifteenth century. Gypsies had long been Europe’s ultimate “other,” occupying a status below but in many ways similar to that of Jews in European society. In the nineteenth century, as the societies on the margins of which gypsies lived transformed into industrial capitalist economies, gypsies became symbols of resistance to that new economic order and the object of an immense outpouring of speculation, documentation, condemnation, and celebration. European gypsy discourse split, then, into gypsy-philic and gypsy-phobic branches, depending on the writers’ views of modern capitalism and industrialism and gypsies’ seeming resistance to being pulled into either of them.

Modern European gypsy discourse begins with German philologists Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellman’s 1787 analysis that the gypsy language originated in Hindi, and hence that the gypsies themselves had originally come from the Indian subcontinent (Mayall 323). News of Grellman’s theory quickly spread throughout Europe, providing a disturbingly concrete origin for a group whose embodiment of ‘mystery’ was a well-established and artistically and politically useful element of European cultural discourse. For Anglo-American culture, the surge in popular and literary interest in gypsies is universally attributed to Englishman George Borrow, who documented gypsy culture in a
series of travelogues, treatises, and novels that blended proto-ethnology with literary
romance in a manner that riveted his generation. Wealthy Englishmen adopted “gypsy”
dress and travelled in their own ersatz gypsy wagons, employing the freedom given to the
English and Anglo-American subject to temporarily assume non-white identities as part
of a “Bohemian” pose. (‘Bohemianism’ was itself merely the French incarnation of this
impulse, deriving its name from gypsies recently arrived in France from Bohemia, a
region in what is now the Czech Republic). The imitation of gypsy style by non-gypsy
artists presaged the cultural appropriation of Walt Whitman’s street-tough posturing,
Norman Mailer’s “The White Negro,” and other examples of hipster cultural
appropriation). European government reports fretted over gypsies as a criminal threat,
and as a threat to the economic and social order. Missionaries went among gypsies in an
effort to convert them to Christianity and drive them to conform (this is what Borrow
claimed as his motivation for travelling among gypsies for so long, a respectable cover
for his attraction to their lifestyle).

Gypsy characters, storylines, and images featured prominently in the European
cultural works that Americans avidly consumed in the nineteenth century. Such major
works of the period include Sir Walter Scott’s *Guy Mannering* (1815), Jane Austen’s
*Emma* (1816), Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*
(1847), Wordsworth’s “Gypsies” (1807), Verdi’s opera *Il Trovatore* (1853), and even
such iconic late century works as George Bizet’s *Carmen* (1875). The depictions of
gypsies in these works range from admiring and desirous to fearful and loathing, and
many works combined both of these attitudes as gypsies provoked profoundly ambivalent
and contradictory reactions. Central to the English preoccupation with gypsies in the
nineteenth century was their efficacy as a symbol of preindustrial life. These writers drew upon the association of gypsies with the English countryside that they had by that time wandered for hundreds of years, bolstered by the notion that gypsies, resistant to acculturation, were a people outside of time and hence immune to the troubling advent of modernity. These works fell into gypsy-philic and gypsy-phobic categories, depending on authors’ views of that disconnect from the modern world.

Gypsy-themed works, both imported and domestic, were quite popular in early and mid-nineteenth century America. For instance, Irishman Michael Balfe’s Gypsy-themed opera *The Bohemian Girl* was a huge success, playing hundreds of nights in New York and Boston after it arrived from London in 1844 (Dizikes 93-4). Ralph Waldo Emerson, that preeminent American tastemaker, reviewed and praised Borrow’s ethnological gypsy novel *The Zincali* in a prominent magazine (“Zincali Review” 127). Furthermore, Emerson acknowledged Zincali as the source for his poem, “The Romany Girl” (1857), in which he praised a gypsy girl for her naturalness, freedom, and sexual fidelity. Emerson wrote that, “our list of tribes in America indigenous and imported wants the Gypsies,” as the Flora of the western hemisphere wants the race of heaths” (“Zincali Review” 127).

The Appeal of Gypsy Gender Heterodoxy

Given that transatlantic gypsy discourse carried so many associations that would prove subversive to a proslavery plantation novel, the key question is why Hentz chose to introduce the dangerous figure of the gypsy woman. I believe that the primary answer lies not in Hentz’s proslavery views, but in her proto-feminism. The anti-patriarchal
nature of much of Hentz’s work was observed early on in the resurgence of critical interest in Hentz in the 1970s. Critic Nina Baym set the tone for a Feminist interpretation of Hentz in *Women’s Fiction* (1978), her groundbreaking work rescuing American women authors from literary obscurity, when she characterized Hentz as a “flagrant transgressor” of “unwritten laws constraining the woman author” (Baym 110). Hentz was herself an ambitious career woman. Bucking the expectations of gender roles in this period, Hentz became the primary breadwinner for her family when her husband fell ill in 1849, eventually selling hundreds of thousands of copies of her books as publishing began to offer American women a new kind of economic freedom, self-determination, and voice in the culture they had not previously been granted (Ellison x).

Seemingly unable to restrain her feminist views despite the increased pressure to celebrate feminine submission to patriarchal authority in proslavery novels, Hentz appears to have turned to the unlikely gypsy as a familiar and rhetorically harmless vessel for a rebellious voice within the novel. Baym observes that *PNB’s* Eulalia, the dutiful and submissive Northern bride, is Hentz’s “most conservative and traditional heroine, fulfilled in the most traditional kinds of wifely behavior and happy to be ruled by Moreland” (Baym 136). “Hentz recognizes,” Baym speculates, “that patriarchy is an institution affecting women as well as slaves; but since she is defending it for the slave, she must defend it for women as well” (Baym 136). Nonetheless, Baym recognized the essentially feminist sympathy of Hentz’s portrayal of Claudia, whom she describes as Moreland’s “vicious first wife” and who “unable to accept his patriarchal marriage attitudes and chafing under what she considered restraints on her freedom, had behaved indiscreetly as a means of rebelling” (Baym 136).
However, Claudia can be viewed as an expression of suppressed resistance to patriarchy within her gothic sub-plot. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1984) theorized a subversive feminist content in gothic plots, which serves as a kind of counter-genre within the patriarchy-reinforcing genre of anti-Tom fiction. In Gilbert and Gubar’s well-known formulation, although Gothic narratives often ended with reassuring romantic denouements, the genre was primarily an expression of anxiety over female vulnerability and unequal power relations within patriarchy, and it often included doppelgangers who enacted the rebellious impulses of their heroines. In this way, Claudia and Eulalia can be seen to closely mirror the subtextual affinity Gilbert and Gubar theorized between Jane Eyre and Bertha Mason. Bertha’s otherness makes her a useful doppelganger for Jane, since Bertha’s status as a racially ambiguous Creole suggests some combination of French, Spanish, and/or African “blood” that each carried discursive associations with sexuality, passion, and spontaneity useful for expressing Jane’s repressed urges.

Similarly, Hentz’s decision to make Claudia a gypsy intensifies her gothic plot’s anti-patriarchal subtext. A major element of European gypsy discourse was the supposedly willful and assertive character of gypsy women, what critic Deborah Nord calls the “gender heterodoxy” with which they are associated in European literature (Nord 12). Nord has documented the proliferation of gypsy women characters in the literature of this period who defy male authority, behave outside the restrictive bounds of Victorian female respectability, are sexually assertive, emotionally expressive, exemplified by the recurring figure of the “queen of the gypsies” ruling in place of a patriarch (Nord 12).14
Consistent with these depictions of the willful character of gypsy women, Claudia’s “evil qualities” consist almost entirely of pride and a lack of proper feminine submissiveness (Hentz 377). Although prone to the same kind of “abandoned” and “unprincipled” behavior as her gypsy mother, Claudia may never have been unfaithful to her husband, the alleged sexual transgression that cost her marriage, reputation, and child (Hentz 375). When Eulalia repeats her husband’s accusations against Claudia, the furious gypsy responds:

he believes [the accusations]… I wanted him to. I would not undeceive him. I trampled him in the dust of humiliation,—willing to endure the obloquy and disgrace myself, since shame and dishonor rested on him! (Hentz 366)

If her claim is true, then Claudia’s sin is not adultery, but pride. Unlike Eulalia, Claudia will not submit to her husband’s patriarchal authority, saying:

[H]e turned into my master, my tyrant!—he wanted me to cringe to his will, like the slaves in the kitchen, and I spurned his authority!—I defied his power! He expected me to obey him,—me, [sic] who never obeyed my own mother! He refused me the liberty of choosing my own friends, of receiving them in my own house! He even had the audacity to command me to shut the doors upon my mother’s face! (Hentz 366)

The power of Hentz’s seeming identification with Claudia and the gusto with which she communicates Claudia’s rebelliousness likely reflects Hentz’s ongoing conflict between her conservative support for Southern slavery and her restiveness with the limitations on
women in her time. Claudia provided Hentz with an opportunity to very sympathetically voice the outrage of a woman frustrated by patriarchal restriction. Yet the racially (biologically) inherent traits of gypsy identity by which she accentuated this aspect of Claudia’s character also undermined the central demand of pioneering women professionals to not be circumscribed in their action by the supposed limitations of their (gendered) biology (a trait that she shares, interestingly, with antislavery women writers who denied the limited capacities attributed to white women by their biology but nonetheless patronizingly attributed a limited, if praise-worthy, range of capacities for African-Americans in their work). Most significantly, when Claudia declares that her husband “turned into [her] master [and] wanted [her] to cringe to his will, like the slaves,” Hentz draws on the radically subversive potential for solidarity between women and African-Americans in their resistance to white male hegemony. With this monologue Hentz brings this womanly solidarity in defiance of patriarchal domination, otherwise left latent closest, closest to the surface of her text. This confrontation between Claudia and Eulalia is the most ideologically dangerous moment in the novel as Hentz’s feminism threatens to overturn every aspect of her conformation to the tenets of patriarchal American subjecthood, including Saxonism.

Hentz turns the patriarchal language of Saxon supremacy on its head when Claudia proclaims that, “the spirit of the Italian is resilient and will not be held down” (Hentz 366). Here Claudia appropriates the language of Saxonist rhetoric for her Southern European heritage. In a radical rhetorical appropriation and reinterpretation of the premier tenet of American racial discourse, Claudia condemns Eulalia in these terms:
the daughter of a Northern clime, without impulse of passion, cold as
your wintry snows,—[You] may wear the yoke without feeling it, and
yield the will without knowing it. (Hentz 366)

If we assume for the moment that Hentz was voicing her own proto-Feminist outrage in
this passage, then we have the remarkable oddity of a proslavery white woman seeing
identification with an Italian Gypsy as the only path to possession of the pride and
independence required for American subjecthood, attributes denied Saxon women within
their own culture. This is a clear illustration of the limitations of what has been called
“American subjecthood,” which is presumed to be both male and Anglo-Saxon, and
whose necessary characteristic of “pride,” that is resistance to oppression and domination,
is unavailable to women under the period’s code of feminine deportment (Smith-
Rosenburg 841-50).

The most compelling aspect of the gypsy figure for Hentz, then, may have been
its potential to contain Hentz’s own gender heterodoxy and subversive proto-feminist
critique of the patriarchy underlying the peculiar institution. However, the gypsy figure
provided other rhetorical benefits for a proslavery novelist.

**Gypsy as Proxy for Black/White Amalgamation**

Making Claudia a gypsy offered Hentz a unique rhetorical solution to a curious
ideological double-bind in anti-Tom fiction. Despite the loathing with which proslavery
Americans regarded racial amalgamation, despite the ardor with which they embraced the
one-drop rule and the maintenance of white privilege (and retention of slave labor) that it
represented, and despite the fact that the threat of a wave of racial amalgamation in the
North was a key rhetorical argument used to temper Northern abolitionism, proslavery writers could not inveigh against race mixing when the peculiar institution was, in fact, the location of its most extensive practice. The sexual exploitation of enslaved women and the subsequent enslavement of a white master’s half-white children so offended sentimental family values, and those values were at least nominally so preeminent in American culture North and South, that writers of anti-Tom fiction operated under an enforced and awkward silence on what was otherwise a favorite topic (Gossett 234-235).

These crimes proved so impossible to integrate into PNB’s fantasy of slavery as having “never been pained by an inhuman exercise of authority, or a wanton abuse of power” that they appear to have been beyond Hentz’s powers to refigure (as they were for most proslavery writers) and thus to have been excised almost completely from the novel (Hentz 5). This excision corresponds to a rhetorical problem faced by all proslavery writers, illustrating Joel Williamson’s observation in New People that, “The fact that slavery was getting whiter, that in reality many slaves were more white than black, was a fact with which the proslavery argument could not cope (Williamson 73).” In fact, the risk-taking and often subversive Hentz had featured moments of attraction between the races, or at least teased her readers with veiled references to such, in her previous novel Marcus Warland. Thus PNB is, on the surface at least, not only Hentz’s most conservative treatment of gender but also her most conservative handling of white sexual desire for African Americans.

In a passage in which Moreland opines on the natural inequality of the black and white races, he describes the supposedly natural sexual abhorrence of each race for the other as “an inherent principle of the human breast… why should anyone wish to violate
this great law of nature—this principle of homogeneity” (Hentz 203)? Moreland implies that this “principle of homogeneity” results in black-white sex and amalgamation being a rare occurrence within Southern society. He attempts to establish that the taboo against racial amalgamation in Southern white society further limits the practice, arguing that the:

- white woman who marries a negro, makes herself an outcast, a scorn and a byword. The white man who marries a negress forfeits his position as a gentleman” (203).

While this was certainly true, especially by the 1850s when Southern taboos hardened in the face of Northern antagonism, PNB never acknowledges the existence of slaveholder rape of enslaved women outside of marriage.21

However, in Claudia, Moreland had himself married a woman who was not quite ‘white’ by the racial categorizations of the period. Claudia’s racially liminal identity as a gypsy means that she can both displace and represent the African sexual partner of the white slaveholder in PNB, just as other exotic European ethnicities had displaced the African-ness of mulattas, for very different ideological purposes, in Child’s A Romance Of The Republic. Previous critics have noted that Claudia herself seems to serve as a kind of miscegenation figure but have passed over the novel’s most explicit condemnation of race mixing: Moreland’s half-white, half-gypsy daughter, Effie.

Moreland explains to Eulalia that, despite his best efforts, he “cannot love” Effie, his dark-haired daughter, because she reminds him physically and temperamentally of Claudia (377). Hentz merges the physical, moral, and emotional traits into something hereditary, saying in the voice of her narrator, “evil qualities, like physical diseases, are
often hereditary, and descend, like the leprosy, a clinging, withering curse, ineradicable and incurable. The taint was in Claudia’s blood” (377). It is not merely that Effie reminds Moreland of his disastrous first marriage, but also that she is biologically tainted with her mother’s traits.

Despite all of the advantages of being raised by a principled and honorable adoptive mother Effie begins “to display those violent and passionate traits of character” that the new mother strives to erase (Hentz 375). Claudia “had transmitted to her child her passionate and willful temper,” and the girl is only saved by the counterbalancing influence of Moreland’s Anglo-Saxon blood, the virtuous influence of Eulalia, and finally Claudia’s death, which frees her forever from her mother’s influence. The battle of the racial blood can be seen on Effie’s face where:

the features of both parents are singularly combined, giving her a two-fold and varying expression. Sometimes she looks at you with a bold, mischievous, wicked glance, as if she mocked the very thought of restraint; then again, an exquisite softness will steal over her countenance, and a gentle, winning smile beam with hereditary sweetness. (Hentz 211-12, emphasis mine)

Effie’s inherited gypsy traits are held in check, to the extent that they are, by the good influence of Moreland and Eulalia’s temperate Saxon ways (another element borrowed from Jane Eyre, in which Jane’s influence makes respectable Rochester’s half-French bastard child Adele).

Gypsy-phobia: Agents of Social Chaos
The full richness of Hentz’s employment of the incongruous literary gypsy figure can be seen in the resonance of gypsy associations with dangerous mobility and fears of social disruption from waves of immigrants who were, if not ethnic gypsies, certainly “gypsy” in their mobility (distinguishing between the narrow ethnic noun and the broad not-necessarily-ethnic adjective). The itinerancy associated with the gypsy figure Hentz had imported into her proslavery novel served as a useful plot element in her defense of the slave system, leveraging American readers’ familiarity with the gypsy-phobic strain of nineteenth century European culture for which social, physical mobility and refusal to integrate into the reigning economic system served as the primary irritant of a people who “called no one master and could afford to ignore the work-discipline of industrial capitalism” (Behlmer 231). This was the same characteristic that poet Matthew Arnold celebrated in his 1853 poem “The Scholar-Gypsy,” in which an Oxford scholar adopts a gypsy lifestyle and joins a gypsy community as a cure for “this strange disease of life/With its sick hurry, its divided aims” (Arnold “The Scholar-Gypsy”). Similarly, William Wordsworth’s poem “Gypsies” (1807) depicts gypsies as immune to progress and improvement, “by nature transient,” stuck in a “torpid life,” a people who “are what their birth and Breeding suffer them to be; Wild outcasts of society” (Wordsworth “Gypsies”). This construction of gypsies as axiomatically “un-modern,” as a people “out of time,” parallels Romantic historicist ideas about Africans and Native Americans discussed in my first chapter (on Cooper), since all three peoples were depicted as essentially “retarded” in terms of civilized development. This supposedly shared and persistent ‘primitiveness’ between gypsies and Africans will prove essential to the ethnic shell game that Hentz attempts in *PNB*. 
Even though the burgeoning English industrial economy that these anti-gypsy laws sought to protect resembled the American North far more than the South, Hentz appropriated gypsy-phobic discourse to defend the South’s essentially feudal slave-based agricultural system which, even more than industrial England, sought to limit the physical and social mobility of its workforce. Claudia’s social elevation to planter aristocracy illustrates the dangers of class mobility. The childless plantation owner who adopted Claudia is punished for thus raising the girl up the class hierarchy by the gypsy’s wild behavior, and the punishment extends to the plantation, which falls into decline due to Claudia’s inept management (that decline represented by the social chaos of her home, in which saucy black slaves do not know their place). *PNB*’s narrator’s condemnation of Moreland’s marriage to Claudia in terms of social class extends beyond the scope of policing racial boundaries, warning the reader in withering, Biblical language:

> Let the man who, infatuated by passion, is about to marry a woman taken originally from the dregs of social life, beware, lest he entail upon his offspring the awful judgment by a jealous God. (Hentz 377)

The gypsy usefully evokes the specter of chaos springing from social and physical mobility, persons lower down in the social hierarchy not knowing and keeping their place. The only-just-barely-averted massacres of the slave uprising fomented on Moreland’s plantation by the evil abolitionist Brainard show the dire effects of a failure of persons to accept and respect their places in the social hierarchy and submit. Claudia herself seems, at first consideration, to defy the peripatetic gypsy stereotype, since she is ‘rescued’ from the wandering gypsy life of her parents by her adoption by the old widow. Inheriting her
new mother’s estate, however, leaves her with the financial resources to ‘move’ out of her marriage and avoid having to curb the habits that offend Moreland. It is by those habits themselves that Claudia opened Moreland’s domestic space to outsiders, mobile and ‘immoral’ dissolute men.

Although Claudia and her parents are the only ethnic gypsies to appear in PNB, the novel also features a parallel theme of the dangers of a working class possessing a gypsy-like physical mobility and choice of employment and employer. Betsy, the loyal white housekeeper of Eulalia’s New England family, complains of the malignant effect of waves of (largely Irish) immigrant labor flooding the North and the narrator makes it clear that Betsy was “an uncommon instance of unchanging devotion to one family, in the midst of general fluctuation” (by “fluctuation” Hentz means the disruptive mobility of immigrant labor) (Hentz 548).

Ultimately, the rare exception of Betsy among Northern servants is explained by the fact that the Hastings live “in a small inland town, where the tide of emigration does not come flowing in” (Hentz 548, emphasis mine). Hentz characterizes urban immigrant populations as possessed of “the spirit of change,” prone to “rolling, like the stone that gathers no moss, from door to door” and lacking the “steady, domestic habits” of Betsy and, more importantly, of Moreland’s slaves (Hentz 548). The peripatetic immigrant workers, Hentz informs her readers, are “Irish and German servants” who were “constantly changing their forms—the black haired cook of one day being a red-haired one the next,” and who “for the slightest cause of dissatisfaction… would relinquish their office”(259-260). Clearly those being served are ill served by the mobility of free labor, and Hentz makes clear through Moreland’s slave Crissy that so too are those doing the
serving. Crissy refuses the opportunity to take her freedom because “poor, working folks can’t be free anyway. Long as I got to work I’ll work for my own master and missus, ‘cause they care for me” (265). Thus, the ‘fluctuation’ of new immigrants, their economic and physical mobility, is identified as a threat to the kind of sentimental family of race and class that Hentz advocates as best for the nation and exemplified by Southern slavery.

Gypsies Linked to Africans, Mulattos, Miscegenation, and Slavery

For all the rhetorical advantages that Hentz acquired by making Claudia a gypsy, ultimately PNB’s proslavery agenda is fatally undermined by the depth and variety of discursive resemblance between gypsies and mulattas. Gypsies were thoroughly associated in transatlantic racial discourse with, respectively, Africans, mulattas, racial amalgamation, and slavery.25 Hentz could not have found an ethnic proxy more guaranteed to bring consistently to her readers’ minds, in a return of the repressed, the third rail of proslavery propaganda: the sexual exploitation and degradation of enslaved women.

The notion that Claudia might serve as a “miscegenation figure” has received scant attention in Hentz criticism, which has focused in recent years instead on parsing Hentz’s defense of Southern slavery.26 The issue did, however, spark a brief disagreement between two critics in the mid 1990s. In 1994, [first name] Roberts observed that “the terms in which Hentz condemns [Claudia] insinuate miscegenation,” only to have the notion dismissed three years later by another Hentz critic, Carme Manuel Cuence, who insisted instead that the gypsy woman merely served Hentz’s
“dramatization of the embodiment of two Victorian icons” of femininity, the “angel of the plantation” and the “fallen angel” (Roberts 56; Cuence 101). In response to Cuence, I would simply suggest that discourses of gender and race converge in Hentz’s depiction of this gypsy woman, as my examination of the novel’s conflicted gender politics illustrate. Roberts’ observation that “the dark-haired, dark-eyed, sexually-charged Claudia… has much in common with conventional fictional representation of mulattas” is undeniable, and just scratches the surface of the profound and complex web of associations linking the gypsy Claudia to enslaved mulattas (Roberts 56).

As Roberts recognized, Hentz’s description of Claudia’s physical appearance and temperament immediately signal the resemblance between gypsies and the enslaved mulattas the novel represses. Hentz tells us that Claudia possessed “raven black hair,” “pale olive cheek[s],” and “sultry,” “large, black, resplendent, yet repelling eyes,” “red lips of scorn… [a] bold, yet classic brow” and a “willful, passionate temper” (362-3).

Hentz’s description of the “stormy electrical splendor of Claudia’s beauty, her impassioned gestures, and wild paroxysms of mirth or anger” echoes the simultaneously alluring and threatening literary descriptions of the mulatta in nineteenth century literature (377). Indeed, Claudia’s role as a figure of displaced black-white miscegenation is reinforced by the repeated description of her complexion in variations on “bright” and “brilliant,” a coded descriptor associated with mulattos in the literature of the period (Hentz 315; 316). Hentz similarly endows Claudia with an (African-like) musicality combined with sophisticated European musical skills when she describes Claudia’s piano playing as “a wild, passionate burst of harmony, in which a minor note of wailing softness strangely mingled, then, dashing into a gay, reckless strain” (367).
It is instructive to consider, however, that mulattas share all of these traits (skin and hair color, temperament, musicality, sexuality) not only with gypsies but also with other Southern- and Eastern-European exotic ethnicities. Had Hentz chosen to make Claudia merely an Italian, full stop, or for that matter a Spaniard rather than an Italian gypsy, it would still have constituted a risky move, given the danger of invoking a practice (sexual predation on enslaved women) that had the potential to undermine all of her carefully constructed reformulations of the peculiar institution. Making Claudia Spanish, Portugese, or Italian would have been a more natural narrative move, given the existing trope of African-Americans passing for those swarthy “white” ethnicities in numerous works of American literature, as well as in the well-publicized real-life escape methods of fugitive slaves. None of these ethnic identities carried the multiple associations with Africans and enslavement that gypsies did.

**The Gypsy-African Association**

European culture had been drawing parallels between gypsies and Africans as supposedly lowly races since at least the mid-eighteenth century. In part this occurred through the gypsies and Africans shared ‘blackness,’ for example in Borrow’s claim that gypsies refer to themselves as being of “black blood” and non-gypsies being of “white blood” (Borrow 81). Beyond this there is, however, an extensive record of explicit pairing of the two groups in transatlantic ethnographic literature. Gypsies and Africans were placed at the bottom of transatlantic racial hierarchies, and their mutual ‘inferiority’ was presented in various scientific and literary works as, paradoxically, alternately the embodiment of the *permanence* of racial traits over time and the *degeneration* of racial
traits over time. Africans were cited by Buffon, Blumenbach, and others as the ‘race’ most degraded from humanity’s original and perfect form by the physical environment in which they developed. Emmanuel Kant, for one, paired Africans with gypsies as the nadir of human physical, moral, and intellectual degradation.²⁷ It is yet another example of the rhetorical prioritizing of conclusions over evidence in transatlantic racial theories that the a priori low status of Africans and gypsies served as the ‘proof’ of diametrically opposed theories of the permanence of racial traits and categories.

Hentz need not have been conversant with the minutia of competing European racial theorists since the proslavery Southern literary set in which she participated included an avid proselytizer and popularizer of European race theories: South Carolinian proslavery race theory propagandist Josiah Nott. In 1868, Nott would deploy the axiomatic racial degeneration of gypsies to back up his claims about the depths to which Africans were capable of descending when he claimed that in West Africa “there exist inferior grades of negroes, lower than anywhere else known, … ‘degenerate branches’—a sort of negro-gypsies” (Nott 551 emphasis added).

In fact, the gypsies’ supposed inability to develop as a race over centuries came to be seen as the touchstone example proving the permanence of racial inequality. German scholar Heinrich Moritz Gottlieb Grellman,²⁸ the single greatest influence on nineteenth century European gypsy discourses, concluded from his analysis of the Roma language that gypsies originated in India rather than in Egypt, as had been previously assumed throughout Europe. Grellman traced gypsies back to the lowly Indian “pariah” caste who had migrated to Eastern Europe as mercenaries in the Ottoman army in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Willems 22; 60).²⁹ In addition to launching his philological answer to
the question of Gypsy origins, Grellman introduced a concept that would come to have great significance in racial theories not only about Gypsies but about the concept of race itself: that Gypsies remained an undiluted race and retained an essentially unchanged culture during 450 years in Europe. Grellman famously claimed of gypsies that,

Africa does not make them blacker, Europe not more white; in Spain they do not learn to be dishonest in Germany not to be diligent,
among the Turks not to worship Mohammed, among Christians not Christ. (quoted in Willems 28)

The significance of this construction of Gypsy identity lies in its contradiction of theories of human adaptation to new environments, by which European thinkers from Aristotle to Buffon had explained the variations in human appearance and culture, arguing instead for the permanence of racial inequalities.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the notion of unequal racial capabilities persisting over time became central to the claims of polygenesists, who claimed that differing races represented biologically distinct species created in multiple divine creations. Constructed as rhetorical support for American slavery, polygenesis was used by proslavery writers to claim that African-American slaves were biologically incapable of being free persons in America, arguing that Africans had never developed a sophisticated civilization and had been slaves for much of their history. Hentz voices this view of Africans through PNB’s narrator, who declares that Africa has not taken:

…one solitary step… in the great march of civilization… in the depth and darkness of ignorance, slothfulness, sensuality, and
heathenism in which it was sunk four thousand years ago, it still
exists. (296-98)

PNB’s narrator further asserts that two-thirds of the population of “negroes” in Africa are
themselves enslaved. Samuel Morton’s tome Crania Aegyptiaca (1844) claimed to prove
through measurements of skull size that the slaves of ancient Egypt had been negroes
while the Egyptian master class had been Caucasians. His conclusions were used by Nott,
Louis Agassiz, and Glidden to argue that the master-slave relationship between
Caucasians and Africans was a permanent and ancient one. The Egyptomania that
gripped the U.S. in the early and mid-nineteenth century owed a large part of its appeal to
the ongoing debates over American slavery (Trafton 42-53).

The propagandistic value of the gypsy/African parallel to proslavery writers can
be seen in Nott’s extended quotations from Borrow in an 1844 lecture, later republished
in an 1850 article. Borrow had observed, Nott informs his readers, that gypsies’
complexions are, “not unfrequently[sic]… as dark as mulattoes present themselves, and
in some instances, almost of negro blackness (Zincali 445, emphasis mine). Nott linked
the claims of Indian origins, race science craniometry, and the gypsy/African connection
to drive home his central argument:

If 450 years… has not transformed [gypsies] into Europeans [and if]
Negroes…existed, two thousand years before the Christian era, as
distinct as now…. What reason is there to believe that any effort of
man… can reverse the law of God, and raise an inferior up to the
standard of a superior race? (445-47)
Nott was among the most prominent defenders of Southern slavery, and Hentz can reasonably be presumed to have had some familiarity with his use of gypsies as a primary example of the reality of racial inequality and more broadly the pairing of gypsies and Africans in such arguments.\textsuperscript{30}

\textit{PNB} is replete with references to traits and associations that exceed those shared by stereotypes of Italians and gypsies and push beyond the ambiguity of Claudia’s dual ethnic identity. Claudia was, Hentz’s narrator explains, “trained from her childhood for public exhibition in the song and the dance,” conforming with stereotypes of gypsies earning their livelihood in part from such entertainments and paralleling Africans’ supposedly innate talents for “song and the dance,” carrying the disreputable taint of “public exhibition” of a young girl that implied a lack of Victorian propriety and decency also associated with both gypsies and Africans (373). Little girl Claudia is dressed in “fantastic and gaudy attire,” a taste for which was viewed as essentially an innate racial trait among both gypsies and Africans, the suggestion of prostitution, of which gypsies were also accused underlined by the “degradation in which she would inevitably plunge” since she was “doomed to such a reckless, vagabond life” from which the “widow lady of wealth and high standing” “yearned… to rescue her (373; 371). Stereotypes of Africans claimed that they, too, were naturally slatternly and lacked sexual modesty and decency as defined by Victorian codes of conduct. Even the spellbinding attractiveness of the child-Claudia may be suggestive of gypsies, as the remarkable beauty of young gypsies was a commonplace of gypsy discourse, usually framed by contrast to the supposed stupendous ugliness of older gypsies (Borrow 8).
Hentz further establishes Claudia’s implicit gypsy-ness by repeatedly associating her with the black magic which gypsies been accused of practicing against European livestock and persons for centuries, a heathen practice also attributed to ‘primitive’ Africans in transatlantic racial discourses. Gypsies’ long association with magic in the European imagination—think, for instance, of Rochester’s absurd masquerade as an elderly female Gypsy fortune-teller in Jane Eyre—was often linked to the alluring sexual power of Gypsy women. When Moreland first meets Claudia he is in “the first glow of manhood” and finds “irresistible” the dark-haired girl’s “wild charm,” yet the “violent and passionate traits of character” she reveals after their marriage leave Moreland:

almost believing he had been the victim of an evil spirit, who,
assuming the form of a beautiful woman, had ensnared his heart,
and was seeking the destruction of his soul (Hentz 374-375).

Hentz gets right to the heart of the matter by directly tying Claudia’s sexual powers to gypsy magic.

Hentz participates in a well-established European discourse in doing so, since throughout history accusations of female magic commonly made women targets of the lust of men in authority. When apologists for Southern slavery did acknowledge the occurrence of interracial sex and amalgamation within slavery they often attributed these rare (they claimed) occurrences as evidence not of the sexual predation of white slaveholders but of the sexual wantonness and preternatural sexual allure of African women. In fact, before white anxiety about the prospect of abolition in the 1850s made the supposedly dangerous sexuality of black men the justification for continued oppression of African-Americans, and proslavery arguments often highlighted the
supposed sexual voraciousness of black women to explain away cases of interracial sex. This discourse, though, would hardly allow for the sexless, sinless sentimental family of slavery Hentz was constructing, so it had to be jettisoned. Claudia’s Gypsy identity served perfectly to simultaneously displace and allude to the myth of African sexual magic.

**The Gypsy-Mulatta Connection: Gypsies Symbolize Racial Impurity**

Beyond the association with Africans generally, the gypsy Claudia and her half-gypsy daughter, Effie, are repeatedly discussed in *PNB* in coded language associated with mulattas. When Moreland tells Eulalia that he “cannot love” Effie, the narrator explains that he “did not, could not love [Effie]; because its mother’s spirit flashed from its eyes of *gipsy hue and brightness*”(Hentz 211, emphasis mine). Eye color was clearly a racial/ethnic trait, rather than one of moral character or parental livelihood. Among the physical traits attributed to Gypsies were eyes that were simultaneously “dark” and yet characterized by a mysterious and indescribable “brightness” (Mayall 125). This paradoxical darkness/brightness appears again in Hentz’s description of Claudia as a “dark, bright, avenging angel or demon”(316). This parallels racial discourse about Africans, for example “the unfathomable blackness and darkness” which Harriet Beecher Stowe said was “often a characteristic of the African eye,” and “brightness” was a coded term used to describe light-skinned mulattos (Stowe *Dred* 198). Effie seems to have inherited physical and temperamental traits from her mother’s Gypsy “blood,” confirming Roberts’ observation that Claudia “bears a ‘taint’ in her blood” and notes that, “the notion of a genetic curse is… common in tragic mulatta novels” (Roberts 56).
Beyond the inferior traits assigned to Africans, the children of a European/African mixture were said by Nott and other Southern physicians to be “a degenerate Hybrid Race, and subject to much greater mortality and lower average duration of life span than either blacks or whites” whose fertility and general health were ruined by the racial mixture (Weiner 97). Claudia’s name (Latin for “lame’) may even gesture towards this gypsy/mulatta “taint” in the blood, essentially an inheritable disability.

Transatlantic gypsy discourse generally asserted that gypsies were especially clannish and loath to intermarry with other groups (another trait that gypsies were said to share with the Jews). The supposed racial purity of gypsies made them, oddly enough, symbols of ‘race’ itself, since gypsies were then used as the prime example of racial traits unmuddied by admixtures of other racial ‘blood.’ Gypsies were therefore used to prove both the existence of race and the persistent and unchanging reality of racial inequality. Nonetheless, recent critics have argued that gypsies also served Euro-American culture as alluring and disturbing symbols of racial mixing.

Mysteriousness of origin (of heritage and parentage) was a primary component in the European cultural construction of gypsies, and in the context of a plantation novel an olive-skinned woman of mysterious parentage carried dangerous implications for a work of proslavery propaganda. The most widely held European view until the late eighteenth century was that the group was the remnant of Egyptians (hence “gipsy” in English) who had fled a biblical curse associated with the Exodus story, and been condemned to wander the earth. 31 Although gypsies were generally darker than the European peoples among whom they lived, their populations have long included members with fair skin, blond hair, and blue eyes. Gypsy-discourse scholar David Mayall speculates that this fact
generated persistent myths of gypsies stealing European children or swapping a gypsy baby for a European one expressed in literature and folk tales. The swapping of a gypsy child for a European one occurs as a plot element in numerous tales, novel, and operas, and was passed on in legends like the supposed childhood kidnapping of the economist Adam Smith.32 Deborah Nord succinctly summarizes Mayall’s theories that these myths grew out of the need to account for… Gypsy children, who simply did not fit the swarthy, raven-haired stereotype… and reflect the myth of group homogeneity, as well as the belief in absolute distinctions among racial, national, and ethnic types that all groups—especially dominant ones—hold dear. (Nord 11)

Mayall’s theory goes on to say that these myths likely have provided cover for the sexual relations (exploitative, involuntary, or consensual) between gypsies and “white” Europeans. Thus, the myth of gypsy child stealing represented European “nervousness about intermingling… accounted for… in a manner that apparently seemed more reassuring than the specter of willed miscegenation” (Nord 23). Most important, however, is Mayall’s identification of the usefulness for European culture of a gypsy-ist presence (to borrow Toni Morison’s formulation), a racially liminal other upon whom anxieties regarding the disturbing physical heterogeneity of European nations imagined as racially distinct from each other could be channeled. (The power and persistence of these myths can be seen in the gypsy child stealing hysteria that swept Europe in the fall of 2013).33

In this way, the literary gypsy can be seen to function very similarly to the literary mulatto, as a locus for anxieties over race and class distinctions. Thus gypsies like
mulattoes were constructed as both dark others and liminal racial figures who embodied the threat and the thrill of sexually transgressing racial and social boundaries. The possibility of baby swapping (the fact that members of gypsy and non-gypsy families can share features) itself marked the degree to which this other was disturbingly similar. As the longstanding mystery of the geographic/national origin of the gypsy race was compounded with the ‘mysterious’ origins of individual light-skinned gypsies and dark-skinned Europeans, gypsies came to embody the disruptive potential (whether feared, welcomed, or a bit of both) of uncertain class, racial, and paternal origin in class stratified European societies.

Hentz enacts the myth of gypsy child stealing in the scene in which Claudia bursts into Moreland’s home in an effort to steal back her daughter. As such, Hentz uses this myth to reverse the association of Southern slavery with child stealing, with both human trafficking generally and the separation of enslaved children from their enslaved parents in the practice of slave trading within Southern slavery. However, this is a highly risky strategy of reversing antislavery claims, particularly since the child Claudia attempts to ‘steal’ is, after all, her own flesh and blood. Similarly, introducing a gypsy character into a plantation novel represented a rhetorically risky move, since for readers in 1854 knowledge of the two groups’ respective enslavements could have made it a quick associational leap from secret gypsy wife to secret African-American ‘wife,’ the very topic Hentz seems to have gone to so much trouble on PNB to avoid.

Gypsy Slavery
Gypsies had themselves been enslaved since the fifteenth century in Eastern European serfdom, a circumstance that occasioned some of the most extended and specific examples of Europeans equating gypsies with Africans. In 1826, Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine observed that gypsies in the Romanian principality of Wallachia:

“[are] slave[s], purchased and disposable… They hate work, regular habitation, and obedience to law… It is remarkable… to find in Europe the actual equivalent to the Negro (‘Wallachia and Moldavia’).

Considering the widespread excerpting of British newspaper and magazines and the republication and outright pirating of British books in the U.S., such views can be assumed to have been included in the transatlantic discourse about gypsies from which Hentz drew in PNB. Although no evidence has yet emerged proving that Hentz had read material on gypsy slavery in Eastern Europe, the topic was certainly one with which many of Hentz’s reader might have been familiar.

Figure 3: A Romani poster from 1852 advertising the sale of gypsy slaves (“Selavi Tiganesti”).

Gypsy slavery in Romania resembled American enslavement of African-Americans, too, in being the subject of an abolition movement. The Romanian abolition of slavery took place in stages from the 1830s to its completion in 1864 (Beck). In addition to the association of Claudia’s gypsy identity
with enslavement, Hentz associates Moreland’s first wife with slavery in numerous ways throughout the novel. For instance, Claudia recounts that she was not simply adopted by the childless white planter, she was purchased like chattel. What is more, Hentz describes Claudia’s parents as “willing” to sell their child for “the sake of the gold [that the childless slave mistress] so liberally bestowed on them” (Hentz 374). The old white woman extracts a promise from the Gypsy parents to “relinquish all claim to and intercourse with” their daughter so that she could “rescue her from the degradation in which she would inevitably plunge” (Hentz 374). Thus, Claudia is purchased like a slave, separated permanently (it seems) from her biological family as many slaves were, separated from a family whose emotional ties to each other were weak (a common proslavery claim that appears throughout the novel), and is ultimately better off in the new circumstances into which she’s been sold than in her native condition. In this way, the gypsy Claudia’s condition directly parallels PNB argument that Africans are better off by far in American slavery than suffering poverty, heathenism, and genuine cruelty under African slave masters (Hentz 84).

Claudia’s association with Africans continues as her horror and outrage at Moreland’s attempts to control her once they are married mirror a standard moment within tragic mulatta fiction in which the heroine discovers that her marriage is legally void and the man she has thought her husband is in fact her owner. “I thought I married a lover!” Claudia relates to Eulalia during their first tense meeting, “[but he] turned into my master, my tyrant!—he wanted me to cringe to his will, like the slaves” (Hentz 366). The language seems lifted straight from Child’s “The Quadroons” or another tragic mulatta text. Claudia is further linked to enslaved African-Americans by having been
thrice severed from her biological family at the whim of wealthy whites: first when bought from her parents by the childless planter, second when her husband bans her mother from their home, and third when her divorce leaves her child, Effie, in the sole custody of her ex-husband, who then makes every effort to keep the mother and child apart.

These parallels between Claudia and Effie and the condition of enslaved African-Americans become clear when Claudia returns to Moreland’s estate to reclaim her daughter. Claudia’s effort to take Effie is characterized as a violent kidnapping foiled by Moreland’s loyal slaves, since Effie belongs properly to Eulalia by the logic of the sentimental family of affinity. Effie weeps and begs to remain with Moreland and Eulalia. Effie’s choice of Eulalia over her birth mother also reinforces Hentz’s argument that affection trumps biological relation, again paralleling proslavery arguments justifying the separations of slave families (a circumstance never depicted in *PNB*).

According to this line of argument, African-Americans with innately weak family bonds end up loving the whites slave owners who ‘adopt’ them more than their own blood relations. In her preface to *PNB*, Hentz quotes an unnamed slave woman’s supposed declaration that she “loved ‘em [her ‘master and mistress’] better than I done my own [her own biological parents]” (Hentz 7). It is an ambiguous moment in the narrative, however. On the one hand, this scene brings to a crescendo Hentz’s portrayal of Claudia as a woman ruled by violent passions, incapable of respectable behavior, and possessed of unfeminine aggression. On the other hand, Claudia’s display of wrath is occasioned by the forced separation from her daughter, ordinarily the surest source of sympathy for a female character in a work of sentimental fiction. To the extent that Claudia registered
with readers as a stand-in for African-Americans, her powerful maternal bond upends proslavery arguments of innately weak family bonds among their enslaved population. Despite Eulalia’s sympathy for Claudia’s situation, Hentz frames the dark character as the kidnapper rather than the kidnapped.

**Conclusion**

Ultimately, Hentz’s introduction of a gypsy figure as a proxy for black/white amalgamation proved subversive to *PNB*’s nominally proslavery rhetorical agenda. The associative links between gypsies and enslaved Africans outweighs, I would argue, the rhetorical benefits gypsies provided, especially when one considers that one of those supposed benefits was the rechanneling of Hentz’s anti-patriarchal feelings which were themselves subversive to slavery. In fact, taken together the proto-feminist call for sympathy between women across racial lines, the jeremiads against limiting someone’s freedom because of a biological trait, and the emulate-like appearance and doomed nature of Claudia make her essentially a *proslavery* tragic emulate. While Hentz would not be the first or only American writer to employ what was traditionally an antislavery literary trope in defense of slavery, the conflicting ideological messages within *PNB* reveal the potentially subversive effects of this choice. 35

The use of such a popular antislavery trope in an anti-Tom novel confirms and extends the trend in recent scholarship (particularly that of Eve Allegra Ramón and Cassandra Jackson) which recognizes the huge range of rhetorical purposes (ideological and political) the tragic emulate stereotype was made to serve in nineteenth century American literature. 36 The presence of the a tragic-emulate-by-proxy in *PNB* and the
ideological ambivalence and contradictions she reveals within what has become an iconic proslavery text, bolsters arguments for the existence of various subversive strains of literature within Southern slavery. Reading Hertz’s *PNB* for the rhetorically flexible and inconsistent deployment of transatlantic theories of race and racial discourses helps bring together the twin, conflicting strains of Hertz’s ideological concerns. Doing so reveals a conflicted and ambivalent Hentz who was both proto-feminist and proslavery and suggests that the former ate away at the latter.

Pulling back even further to consider the pretzel-like contortions into which both Hentz and Child bent transatlantic discourses regarding exotic European ethnicities demonstrates four final things: first, the enormous latitude nineteenth century writers took in interpreting racial theories; second, the shared American culture that inspired each author (although each was aligned with radically opposed views of the nation) to attempt to erase (different) troublesome aspects of African-American racial identity through an exotic European proxy; third, the profound influence of European racial discourses and theories of race on nineteenth-century American culture; and finally, the benefit of examining the use of similar racial theories or discourses in works by different authors as a means of revealing the rhetorical manner in which those theories and discourses were handled.
CHAPTER FIVE

Euphemizing the Mulatta:
“Exotic” European Races and the
(Re)Racination of the Mulatta in
Lydia Maria Child’s A Romance of the Republic

Lydia Maria Child’s 1867 novel A Romance of the Republic is another example of a nineteenth-century American novel to which critics have attributed diametrically opposed political meanings, and which reading for the use and modification of race science provides an opportunity to evaluate and often synthesize these opposing interpretations. This is perhaps unsurprising for a work that both positively depicts interracial marriages and ends with a tableau of African-Americans kneeling at the feet of whites. The novel tells a variation on the “tragic mulatto” narrative, following sisters Rosa and Flora Royal from a happy life in which they do not know that they have any black ancestry to sudden enslavement. Rather than having her mulatta heroines die from the shame of enslavement and sexual exploitation, as was the common convention in the tragic-mulatto genre, Child’s narrative follows the young women into escape to freedom and happy marriages to white men. As an example of a “tragic mulatto” narrative, in 1937 Romance came in for the condemnation of Sterling Brown, the critic who first identified the genre, as “a dangerous concession” to “race snobbishness” because “the superiority wished upon the octoroons was easily attributed to the white blood coursing in their veins, and the white audience [was] thereby flattered” (144). More recent critics have argued, respectively, that the novel was “the most radical of miscegenation texts because of its advocacy of interracial marriage” (Jackson 49) as a new model for the
country, and was racially conservative for ending the narrative with African-Americans in a dependent status to whites.¹ The white-supremacist interpretation of the novel’s plot is particularly difficult to square with Child’s reputation as arguably the most radical of antislavery writers for her positive depiction and outright advocacy for interracial marriage, first between whites and Indians in her 1824 novel, *Hobomok*, and then between whites and African-Americans in her 1833 treatise, *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*.

The political meaning of *Romance* becomes clearer, however, if one considers the political moment in which it was composed and the full range of racial ideas deployed in the novel, and compare both to those of her earlier works that address race mixing, which include not only *Hobomok* and *Appeal* but also the short stories through which Child helped to invent the tragic-mulatto genre itself, 1842’s “The Quadroons” and 1843’s “Slavery’s Pleasant Homes.” *Romance*, written two years after emancipation, must be viewed not as an antislavery novel so much as an anti-prejudice novel. Child said of *Romance* that “[h]aving fought against slavery till I saw it go down in the Red Sea, I wanted to do something to undermine prejudice” (*Collected Correspondences* fiche 67, letter 1789). The novel’s primary function is to postulate a potential social place for African-Americans within a post-slavery American society, which in large part explains the survival of Rosa and Flora beyond their enslavement.

Furthermore, any conclusion regarding the meaning of *Romance* in terms of race politics will be clarified by a close examination of her engagement with both specific scientific theories and literary discourses of racial inequality. My research reveals that Child possessed a more thorough and detailed knowledge of transatlantic scientific
theories of race than any of the other writers considered in this dissertation, and that despite her progressive views on interracial marriage she believed that African-Americans (and Indians, for that matter) were intellectually inferior to Saxons. Child’s opinion of African and African-American capabilities and her knowledge of European theories and discourses of race appear in Romance in the form of her pervasive comparisons of the mulatta sisters to “exotic” European races such as Circassians, Italians, Spaniards, and Jews, whose charms and accompanying intellectual and moral inferiority were axioms within northern European science and literature of the period.\(^2\)

Pre-emancipation antislavery narratives often employed the tragic-mulatta trope to separate their attack on the institution of slavery from Northern white racism towards blacks by making their heroines as nearly white as possible. This rhetorical move, whatever one may think of its morality, was easier to make when most African-Americans were still trapped in slavery. After emancipation, when African-Americans were a real or imminent presence in the lives of Northern whites, Romance employed “exotic” European races as an alternative model in which African-Americans might be considered an inferior yet charming and ultimately unthreatening race that could live among Saxon whites without threatening their political, economic, or social hegemony. Similarly, the race mixing which Child seems to advocate in Romance as a solution to the challenges of post-emancipation America offers tinctures of each race to the other to ameliorate their deficiencies without creating a race-blind egalitarian society. Both rhetorical moves leave Saxons firmly in possession of American political, social, and economic power.\(^3\) Over a decade after Caroline Lee Hentz’s The Planter’s Northern Bride (1854) had displaced the troubling African-ness of mulattos by using gypsies as
proxy figures, Child’s *Romance* leveraged parallels between the framing of mulattos and “exotic” eastern- and southern-European ethnicities in transatlantic racial discourses to deemphasize the African-ness of American mulattos. It is particularly striking that prominent anti-slavery and pro-slavery novelists struck upon the same seemingly incongruous element to introduce into their plantation narratives.

*A Romance of the Republic: Radical or Conservative?*

Initially, *Romance* follows rather closely the pattern of the tragic-mulatta genre that Child had helped create with her early stories “Quadroons” and “Pleasant.” The novel’s protagonists—the “octoroon” sisters Rosa and Flora Royal—live in a protected home environment with their father in New Orleans. The Royal sisters are aware neither that they have any African heritage nor that they are legally their father’s slaves until their father’s death results in their being threatened with being sold on the auction block to pay their father’s debts. A seemingly loving young man, Mr. Fitzgerald, swoops in and “marries” the older girl, Rosa. Only later in the novel does Rosa learn that such a marriage is legally invalid in the South, and that she, her sister, and her child are the slaves of her husband, who has married a new white wife and hidden Rosa away in a remote cottage. All this is standard tragic-mulatta plotting.

However, *Romance* departs from the model of tragic-mulatta narrative when, rather than dying of shame, insanity, and grief at the end of the story, Rosa and Flora individually escape from slavery. Rosa becomes a famous and very successful opera singer in Europe, Flora is adopted by a kindly Boston matron, and the sisters end the novel reunited in Boston, each married to white husbands and producing mixed-race
children. However, although their white husbands know their racial heritage, both sisters pass as white, revealing their mixed-race status to neither their community nor their children. Clues to the significance of the ambiguous politics of Romance’s conclusion can be found in the language and analogies by which Child described her mulatta heroines.

Throughout Romance, Child de-emphasizes Rosa and Flora Royal’s blackness. Making African-American characters light skinned was, of course, the central and defining rhetorical move of the classic tragic-mulatto narrative, making them appear as white as possible to gain sympathy and identification of white Northern readers. Child refers to them as “slaves,” when they are in that condition, emphasizing the evils of the institution over the blackness that white Americans associated with slavery. She refers to the sisters as “octo-roons,” and their mother as a “quadroon,” terms for racial mixture America inherited from French-Spanish New Orleans, but that were also the American terms by which the subject’s Africanness was the most attenuated. The terms “black,” “negro,” or “African” are never applied to the sisters.4 Child employs coy hints of the mulattas’ African heritage in her description of the girls’ appearance, stating, for instance, that Rosabella’s “complexion was like a glowing reflection upon ivory from gold in sunshine,” and describing the “lustrous dark brown hair [that] shaded her forehead in little waves, slight as the rippling of water touched by an insect’s wings” and her “full, red lips” (3). Such indirection early in the novel could perhaps be attributed to the author’s desire to withhold that information before it has been revealed in the course of her narrative. But in fact neither “African,” nor “negro,” nor “black” are spoken even at the moment when Rosa and Flora’s racial status is revealed.5 These kinds of strategic
uses of language to de-emphasize the otherness of African-American slaves to Northern white readers were a common element in many tragic-mulatta narratives, and appear in Child’s stories “Quadroon” and “Pleasant.”

What is new in Child’s description of the mulatta heroines in the postwar novel *Romance* is the author’s persistent and pervasive association of them with exotic European races. In place of direct references to Rosa and Flora’s African heritage, and any racial traits that Child might believe were transmitted to them, Child provided copious references to European peoples framed as “exotic,” that is to say Southern Europeans (Spaniards and Italians), Eastern Europeans (Circassians), and Jews. These “exotic” Europeans occupied racial middle ground that proved rhetorically useful to Child, offering a model of a racially liminal category of people who were ranked safely lower than Anglo-Saxons but were not held in as profound contempt as Africans. A variant of European orientalism, the discourses around exotic European races are predicated on the assumption of Northern and Western “normality.” Rather than attempting to convince her readers that African-Americans were the same as Anglo-Saxons, Child’s invocations of these European peoples served to offer instead the model of racially inferior yet charming peoples Anglo-Saxon Americans might learn to accept in their midst. Child seems to have set out to offer exotic European races as an alternative, an *other* other.

**Child and the Science of Racial Inequality**

Before examining Child’s use of ideas about the racial inferiority of exotic European races and their relationship to African-Americans, let us first establish that
despite being far more liberal minded than most of her white peers Child did not believe in racial equality. Like the rest of American culture, Child became far more familiar with and accepting of scientific theories of racial equality in the mid-nineteenth century than she had been decades earlier. Child’s writings of the 1820s and 1830s contain various assumptions about Indians, blacks, and whites that can be traced to scientific theories of race, but scientific language and the names of race scientists do not appear in her work. However, between her writing of Hobomok, in 1824, Appeal, in 1833, and Romance, in 1867, Child had become very well versed in the variety of scientific theories of race that circulated ever more prominently in the culture by mid-century. Her complicated combination of radical egalitarianism and faith in nineteenth-century scientific theories of racial inequality are most clearly visible in a letter she wrote in March 1843. After a visit to a display of “fifteen Indians fresh from the western forest,” at P. T. Barnum’s American Museum in Manhattan, Child invoked phrenology when she described the “organ of destructiveness” atop the head of one supposedly fierce “chief” (“a more enormous bump I never saw in that region of the skull”). Child went on to reproduce in her letter a chart of “facial angle[s]…. Caucasian: 85 degrees, Asiatic: 78, American Indian: 73, Ethiopian: 70, Ourang Outang: 67” (278). Such charts entered the popular imagination from the work of Dutch scientist Petrus Camper (1722-1789), who posited in a pair of lectures in 1770 the existence of measurably different slopes between chin and crown in different human races and primate species. Although Camper himself never definitively claimed that these cranial differences corresponded in a simple fashion to relative intelligence, the facial-angle concept combined with phrenological ideas tying
the size of the forehead to intelligence and Darwin’s concept of evolution to create the era’s most powerful visual meme of racial inequality (Haller 9).

In this same letter, Child states plainly, “That the races of mankind are different, spiritually as well as physically, there is, of course, no doubt.” She links these differences to that fact that “the facial angle and shape of the head is various in races and nations…but these are the effects of spiritual influences, long operating on character,” Child explains, by which she means that the minds and skulls of less capable races have been shaped by the cultures in which they have developed. Child takes this ideas further to argue for a feedback loop in which these effects “in their turn becom[e] causes; thus intertwining, as past and future ever do” (281). Her clarification that the difference between races “is as the difference between trees of the same forest, not as between trees and minerals,” is ambiguous (281). It is important to remember that the traits Child describes as affected by environmental influence and facial angle, “spiritual[ity]” and “character,” were highly politically loaded in the racial discourse of America in the nineteenth century. Saxonists claimed that Saxon moral character, their “pride” and “independence,” uniquely qualified them for American subjecthood, and the supposed lack of these traits precluded African-Americans from sharing in the full identity and privileges of Americanness.

At first glance it seems to be a monogenesist statement of the unity of the human species, and yet the difference between types of trees in in fact *precisely* a difference of species. Child offered a condescending sympathy for races less “developed” than Anglo-Saxons, the “younger members of the same great human family” (“Appeal for the Indian” 220). Child explains that:
Some theorists say that the human brain, in its formation, ‘changes through a steady rise, through a likeness to one animal and then another, till it is perfected in that of man, the highest animal.’ It seems to be so with the nations, in their progressive rise out of barbarism. (286)

Child’s theorization of race, then, is an amalgam of monogenesist “one species” theory, “facial angle” craniometric theories, and Buffonian-Prichardian environmental adaptation that represents a more thoroughly biologized variation on Condorcet’s romantic-historicist notion of the progress of civilizations and peoples.

Child explains that the lower facial angle and hence greater intelligence of Europeans was not innate but due to the salutatory influence over thousands of years of being exposed to the civilization of the Jews, the classical Greeks and Romans, and the accreted accomplishments of European civilization. Making clear that she includes Africans along with Indians in her conjectures about facial angle and mental capacities, Child asks:

But what have the African savage, and the wandering Indian in their past? To fight for food, and grovel in the senses, has been the employment of their ancestors. The past reproduced in them, mostly belongs to the animal part of our mixed nature. (280-81)

Child means that Africans and Indians are biologically and mentally closer to animals than Saxons. She goes on to infuse this assumption of the environmentally influenced mental and physiological inferiority of Indians and Africans into her sympathy and advocacy for both groups in this letter and, I would argue, less directly in Romance.
**Southern-Northern European Dichotomy**

Responding to Rosa and Flora’s father’s contemplation of moving his (secretly enslaved) mulatto daughters to New England, King declares that, “They are tropical flowers. There is nothing Northern in their natures” (18). The common trope of associating female characters with flowers\(^{11}\) in *Romance* implies biological habitat and environmental limits to where they can thrive derived from race. Rosa and Flora are marked as Southern, and even once they have settled in New England are marked as distinct from Northern people. Child’s ideas about Northern and Southern peoples is most clearly laid out in her *History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations*, an 1836 feminist work that also amounted to an extended work of ethnography and which voiced a dichotomy between northern and southern Europeans that was common in Anglo-American racial discourse. Antislavery writers were not immune to this form of bigotry, which featured, for instance, in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s very first book, a geography textbook for schoolchildren called *Primary Geography*.\(^{12,13}\) Nonfiction works were the most likely to include openly stated race-science ideas, as nonexperts such as Child and Stowe reproduced the pronouncements of “experts.”

In *History*, Child turned to the ancient Roman historian Tacitus to establish the persistence of the differences between northern and southern Europeans, among those differences, importantly, a persistently greater morality (marital fidelity, sexual chastity, etc.) ascribed to the Northerners. She quotes Tacitus as saying, in his first century A.D. work *Germania*, that among the Germans “marriage was regarded with the utmost reverence” (2: 79), while
[a]fter the conquest of Rome, [fellow Northerners the Goths] were accustomed to say: “Though we punish profligacy in our own countrymen, we pardon it in the Romans; because they are by nature and education weak, and incapable of reaching to our sublimity of virtue.” (2: 80)

Child’s use of Tacitus’ *Germania* is significant in that this work was a foundational text for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German Romanticism’s construction of a superior and historically consistent German identity, which would develop eventually into Aryanism and Nazism. It should be remembered that Anglo-American Saxonists considered Saxons to be Germans, and nineteenth-century racialized Saxonism was built upon the concepts and claims of German Romanticism. Child’s *History* helps establish a discursive chain of influence linking Child’s theorizations of race to German Romanticism, since in that work she not only quotes at length from Tacitus but also praises the French intellectual Madame de Staël—“It seems to be universally conceded that Madame de Stael was intellectually the greatest woman that ever lived” (2: 157)—credited with bringing the ideas of German Romanticism and its racial theories into English-speaking culture (Painter).¹⁴ Child expresses contradictory views of the ancient Romans as alternately exemplars and degenerates, reflecting the conflicting goals of Saxonists and German Romantics to claim their place as successors of the Roman Empire while also establishing their superiority to Southern peoples.
Frenchness and Spanishness

However, nineteenth-century Anglo-American culture also romanticized Southern European peoples. Even as some British writers (Thomas Carlyle, for instance) framed Southern European peoples as inferior to Saxons, British Romanticism was besotted with the refreshing spontaneity, naturalness, and passion attributed to those same nations and ethnicities. Furthermore, the traits that they romanticized in Southern Europeans were just those that paralleled romanticized portrayals of Africans and African-Americans. The phenomenon that this chapter addresses can be seen in a passage early in the novel when Alfred King dismisses his shock at learning of the girls’ partial African heritage by immediately drawing a parallel to Southern European peoples: “Octoroons! He repeated the word to himself, but it did not disenchant him. It was merely something foreign and new to his experience, like Spanish or Italian beauty” (14).

It is otherwise striking, though, that Child made relatively little use of the two Southern European ethnicities, French and Spanish, she had included in Rosa and Flora’s multiracial heritage. While the “polyglot” (32) girls speak French (as well as Spanish and English) and are well versed in high-brow French opera and poetry, and despite the fact that their mother was seven-eighths French and educated in Paris once she married Señor Gonzalez (20), Child never attributes any of their traits of character, temperament, or ability to the French “blood” derived from their octoroon mother sired in the “French West Indies” (19). I would speculate that the reason for this omission is in part the reputation of the French, among Anglo-Americans, for lax sexual morality and disregard of marital fidelity, an attitude plainly stated as an ethnological fact in her History (151). After a period of solidarity with the French against the British in the Revolutionary
period, American culture developed a pronounced Anglophilia, as many Americans again identified with England and readopted English culture’s ambivalence towards the French, with prejudice and disapproval mixing with respect. Child’s ignoring of the sisters’ French heritage may also be attributable to the fact that the French were themselves a liminal people, largely Northern (“Norman” being a derivation of “Norsemen”) despite their Mediterranean coastline.

In contrast to Child’s silence as to any racial influence from the sisters’ French blood, she did acknowledge some impact from their Spanish heritage. This is to be expected since, beyond the actual Spanish ancestry Child gave Rosa and Flora through their father, Spanishness and mulatto-ness had been conflated throughout American literature in terms of describing mixed-race persons, and various slave narratives and novels of the period depict mulattos adopting a Spanish identity as a means of escaping from the South, including episodes in Stowe’s *UTC* and William Wells Brown’s 1853 novel *Clotel*.\(^\text{15}\) However, beyond Mr. Royal’s explanation that his daughters, unaware that their mother was a quadroon, “attributed her olive complexion to a Spanish origin” (21), Child only rarely attributes any of the girls’ African-like traits to the parallel traits associated with Spanishness. In one instance, Child has Fitzgerald liken the sisters’ octoroon mother to Maria Malibran (13), an early nineteenth-century Spanish soprano famous for her stormy personality and vocal range (“Maria Malibran”).\(^\text{16}\) Child implies that the passionate musicality evident in both sisters—which will allow Rosa, once she has escaped enslavement, to enjoy success as an opera singer as the supposedly Spanish “La Señorita Campaneo” (253)—may have passed as a racial inheritance from their
father and that it imbues Rosa with “Spanish taste [for]…strong contrast in bright colors” in her stage attire, a “Southern” taste widely attributed to Africans, as well (234).

In a particularly complex bit of racial cross association, Child repeatedly emphasized a Spanish haughtiness—“The carriage of [Rosa’s] head was like one born to a kingdom” (3)—in order, I would argue, to imbue the girls with the Saxon trait of pride through an ethnic proxy. This connection between her Spanish pride and Saxonishness appears when Rosa is told that she is a slave, and the narrator informs the reader that she “turned very pale…. But she held her head erect, and her look and tone were very proud, as she exclaimed, ‘We becomes slaves! I will die rather’” (54), so that Rosa becomes whiter to the extent that she shows pride and a refusal to accept enslavement.

Interestingly, even in a work condemning the practices of American slaveholders, Child places the initial act of racial amalgamation that sets the story going (the siring of Rosa and Flora’s mother) not in the U.S. but instead in the colonial Caribbean. This seems to have been adopted from Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), in which Col. Munro, like Mr. Royal in *Romance*, is driven to a union with a mixed-race woman in the colonies after being rejected by the father of the English girl he’d loved because of his social and economic inferiority. The choice of New Orleans as the novel’s initial setting and the home of the Royal family offered the example of the plaçage system as an example of sometimes-loving mixed-race households, but it also compounds the distancing of slavery from Saxon America. Although New Orleans was part of the U.S., the city and its racial practices had been shaped by French and Spanish mestizo culture that Anglo-Americans held in high contempt. Setting the novel, and Rosa and Flora’s conception, in New Orleans exoticizes racial amalgamation within slavery, placing it at
the periphery of the American landmass and far from the heart of Anglo-American culture. Even the novel’s villain, Fitzgerald, bears a foreign name, his Irishness distancing him and his crimes from what Saxonist America imaged to be the nation’s English origins.

In deciding not to employ the girls’ Frenchness, and to only sparingly employ their Spanishness as proxies for the Africanness of these mulattas, Child ignored the racial heritages with which she had herself endowed them and that were major presences in the Americas. Significantly, both French and Spanish colonial societies were mestizo cultures in which whites mixed more freely with Indians and Africans than in Anglo North America and generated a third, intermediary racial and social class of mixed persons. Child did not connect mulattas to nations that were regional rivals to the United States, perceived to be more advanced in current civilization and lower in moral character than some other Southern European peoples and thus did not suit Child’s rhetorical purposes. Instead, Child’s racial sleight-of-hand is accomplished by means of a Southern European people more exotic and harmlessly literary to Americans: Italians.

**Italian-ness Stands in for Africanness**

Child’s use of Italians as the swarthy Southern European proxy for the Africanness of mulattas in *Romance* is notably creative given their absence as a colonial power in the Americas and their virtual nonexistence in the United States population. Adding to the complexity of the layered racial discourses at work in *Romance*, Child’s notion of Italians is itself bifurcated between a romanticized association with high culture and an equally romanticized peasant simplicity. The first aspect of Italian-ness can be
seen in Alfred King’s thoughts as he moves in the same sentence from the veiled Africanness of Rosa’s secret “connection with a proscribed race” to his observation that her sister, Flora, “seemed like a beautiful Italian child, whose proper place was among fountains and statues and pictured forms of art” (14). The dancing of both Flora and her mother are likened to Marie Taglioni (1804-1884) (13), a world-famous Italian-Swedish ballet dancer who pioneered dancing on pointe, becoming an icon of Romanticism for the ethereal effect of her dance style (Kassing 131), while the narrator likens Flora to “Canova’s Dancer in Repose,” referencing a sculpture by Antonio Canova (1757-1822), an internationally renowned Venetian sculptor known for the sensuality of his figures (“Antonio Canova”).

In turn, we are told that Rosa “sang […] in very pure Italian” (10), and a visitor notices laid open in the parlor of her father’s house where she performs for guests the sheet music to Cenerentola, an 1817 opera by Italian composer Gioachino Rossini (1792-1868), whose name is invoked repeatedly in establishing the sophistication of the household in which the girls were raised (25). The quality of Rosa’s voice is attested to by Signor Papanti, her Italian music teacher, who declares that Rosa “can’t make a false note” (33), and Rosa’s later triumph as an opera singer is achieved in the opera house of Rome. Again, Child invokes positive views of Italian music and temperament, and ignores the opprobrium directed against Italian opera by some Anglo-American critics (Pal-Lapinski 112). That Italian opera, and the work which Rosa is shown performing in an Italian theater—Vincenzo Bellini’s Norma—were characterized by explosively emotional and technically virtuosic displays of vocal technique known by the Italian term
coloratura (meaning “to add color”) (Pal-Lapinski 115) added to the discursive layering Child brings to the mulattas in *Romance*.

Beyond allusions to Italian culture, Child emphasized the Italian-ness of the mulattas by transporting both sisters to Italy later in the novel. Flora’s “vivacity redoubled when they entered Italy,” Child’s narration informs us, because:

[S]he was herself composed of the same materials of which Italy was made²¹; and without being aware of the spiritual relationship, she felt at once at home there. She was charmed by the gay, impulsive people, the bright costumes, the impassioned music, and the flowing language. (207)

Flora is attracted to dancing peasants, or *contadinos*, who, “pleased with an exuberance of spirits akin to their own” (208), teach the mulatta girl a peasant dance called the *saltarello*, which she picks up intuitively and quickly performs “with an agility almost equal to that of the nimble Contadina from whom she had learned it” (211). The *saltareo* dance that Flora adores at first sight and picks up so naturally (209, 211, 214-15) was an Italian folk dance dating back to at least the fourteenth century (Sutton 43) characterized by “lively hops and leaps” (Kassing 81). The dance seems to bear some resemblance to the hopping dance of the American minstrel character whose song describes how “Eb’ry time I weel about I jump Jim Crow” (Lhamon 96).

At the time of *Romance*’s composition, in 1867, the great waves of Italian immigration to the U.S. were still decades away, and Americans were most likely to encounter actual Italians either in an American opera house or on a tour of Europe. The mid-nineteenth century saw the huge popularity of Italian opera (Rossini, Verdi) in the
U.S. and England, so that between opera and ballet Italians were associated in America primarily with a high-status and highly sophisticated—if highly emotional—art form favored by wealthy and bourgeois audiences. Poet Walt Whitman was a passionate opera lover, and is reported to have claimed that “but for the opera, I would never have written *Leaves of Grass*” (qtd. in Skaggs 7). Perhaps the best known example today of mid-nineteenth century America’s idealization of Italians is Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, in which one of the sisters declares, in discussing the sensitive, musical, and half-Italian boy next door, Laurie, “That’s why he has such handsome black eyes and pretty manners, I suppose. Italians are always nice” (59).

Even Italian peasants were included in this sophistication, to the extent that they were literary figures encountered in high-status entertainments rather than on the street or in the field. But affluent Americans at mid-century were also apt to take on a grand tour of Europe modeled on those of their British counterparts and might even have had their own encounters with Italian peasants. Alfred King says of hearing Rosa’s singing, “I felt as I did in Italy, listening to a vesper-bell sounding from a distance in the stillness of twilight” (10). Finally, there is even a suggestion that the girls mistake each other for Italians. At one point in the novel both girls, unbeknownst to each other, are both in Rome at the same moment and staying just a few houses apart, though they will not meet (knowingly) until later in the narrative. However, Rosa “had seen a young Italian girl who strongly reminded her of her lost sister” (227), a girl who might very well have been her sister after all, but whose mulatta-ness is indistinguishable from Italian-ness even to her own sister.
Orientalizing the Mulatta: Harems and Circassians

Although Italian-ness and Southernness were the most commonly deployed forms of racially liminal whiteness in *Romance*, Child also evoked European discourses of orientalism in her effort to euphemize the Africanness of the mulatta. Among the cultural signposts with which Child densely packed the Royal family’s parlor is a copy of “Lalla Rookh,” Irish poet Thomas Moore’s 1817 orientalist tale of a Persian maiden afraid of being married off to an old king, and Child’s narrator describes how Rosa’s “glowing Oriental beauty and stately grace impressed” (26) the Northerner Alfred King. Upon arriving in New Orleans, King is dazzled by the exoticism of this balmy, multiracial, interracial, and polyglot city, “which is so different from our Northern towns that it has for me the *attractions of a foreign land*” [emphasis added] (2).

What the “attractions” of an oriental “foreign land” might be to a white American man is voiced by the novel’s villain, Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald speaks wistfully of what he might be empowered by law and custom to do with these girls who he still thinks are white that he is prohibited from doing in America as long as they are deemed white. Fitzgerald says of Rosa and Flora, “If I were the Grand Bashaw, I would have them both in my harem” (12).²³ A great deal of Western European orientalism focuses on its vision—half condemning and half envying—of the harem, a Muslim custom of separating women from the public realm of men viewed in the West as essentially a brothel. Child not only foreshadows his nefarious intentions (he will in fact sexually enslave Rosa) but also connects the sisters to the image of harem girls (Said 1978).

Critics have speculated that a significant part of the appeal of the tragic-mulatta figure in Anglo-American literature was the dark fantasy fulfillment of white men being
freed from the moral and legal restrictions on their lust for and desire to control white women. Many mid-nineteenth-century works capitalized on the mulatta figure’s salacious appeal, ranging from popular novels more concerned with sensationalism than abolition to the works David S. Reynolds has called “Dark Reform” literature that offered lurid tales of sex and violence under the cover of high-minded reformist intentions. Mulatta figures in even the most earnest antislavery works triggered the same kind of fantasies (Beneath 55).

Child linked her mulatta heroines to another figure of white female enslavement that fascinated mid-nineteenth-century Euro-American culture and arose out of accounts of Ottoman harems: the “Circassian beauty.” Newspaper reports on the Crimean War brought to American readers accounts of women from a region of the Caucasus known as Circassia who were reported to be considered the most beautiful women in the world and the most highly sought after sex slaves in Turkish harems. The Circassian region had been a source of slaves in the Mediterranean-Black Sea world since antiquity (Painter). These enslaved women were not only Caucasian in the general sense of phenotypic “whiteness,” but literally were residents of the Caucasus region of Western Asia between the Black and Caspian seas. To make things even more convoluted, Circassians had been the source of the term “Caucasian” itself. The long-standing reputation of the women from that area as the most beautiful in the world had in fact led Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840), the race theorist who chose the term “Caucasian” for the white race, to imagine them as the epitome of whiteness, and the Caucasus as the origin point of the white race after admiring the “Caucasian” skulls he acquired for study (Painter 72).
Thus for an American culture that conflated Caucasian with white and white with free these enslaved Caucasians were discursively impossible and all the more alluring for it.

Western fascination with Circassian sex slaves was a major component of European orientalist art. Though it is rarely referenced in discussions of these works, the pale-skinned and European-featured “odalisques” so beloved of French artists of the nineteenth century are based, in fact, on the idea of accounts of Circassians in Turkish harems. In U.S. culture, the multivalent figure of the Circassian sex slave was codified and promulgated by showman P. T. Barnum’s exploitation of public interest in this jarring racial figure. Barnum created popular exhibits of “Circassian beauties,” and may indeed have been responsible for that phrase becoming the title by which these figures were referred to in America. As Linda Frost has documented, Barnum displayed “Circassian beauties” with little concern as to whether or not they were ethnically Circassian, had in fact been enslaved, or were anything other than American performers taking on a new role. Most significantly, perhaps, to the electrifying effect these exhibits had on American audiences
was the fact that while his “Circassian women” had pale skin they were most remarkable for their huge bushy mass of frizzy dark hair: essentially, these supposedly whitest of women looked much like mulattas, and this unacknowledged resemblance to the attractive and repulsive figure of the mulatta was largely responsible for the success of these exhibits (259).

Child inserted an allusion to Circassians that would have been caught by those of her contemporaries familiar with European music when she mentions among the works in the Royals’ parlor the work of “Auber” (26), referring, it seems safe to say, to Daniel Auber’s 1861 opera “La Circassienne.” More explicitly, Child has Fitzgerald draw a parallel between the mulatta sisters and Circassian sex slaves when, after he has achieved his goal of enslaving Rosa and Flora, but before they have realized that this is so, he says, “I don’t envy the Grand Bashaw his Circassian beauties [emphasis added]. He’d give his biggest diamond for a dancer such as Floracita” (84). Child links Circassian beauties and mulattas explicitly when her narrator informs the reader that:

\[
\text{Nature had indulged in one of her freaks in the production of Eulalia}
\]

[emphasis added], a maiden of fifteen summers, the only surviving child of Mrs. and Mr. King [that is, Rosa’s daughter]. She inherited her mother’s tall, flexible form, and her long dark eyelashes, eyebrows, and hair; and she had her father’s large blue eyes, and his rose-and-white complexion. (302)

In the same passage, a character to whom the girls’ partial African heritage is unknown describes Eulalia as “a very peculiar-looking young miss, with sky-
blue eyes and black eyelashes, like some of the Circassian beauties I have read of” (306).

For all of her sympathy for her mulatta characters and her long-standing support of racial amalgamation, Child nonetheless declares this girl a “freak” of nature, and links her to a figure, the Circassian, who was best known to Americans by being exhibited among Barnum’s “freaks.” (See accompanying photograph of “Circassian beauties,” at left, grouped with such “freaks” — “giants,” “midgets,” an albino, a “thin man,” and a “fat woman”—in an undated mid-nineteenth-century promotional image by renowned photographer Matthew Brady.)

This fad for “Circassian beauties” in American cultural products of the mid-nineteenth century coincided not merely with a long-established sexual exploitation of a subjugated people, but in fact with their near annihilation at the hands of Russian ethnic cleansing. In the mid-nineteenth century—beginning in the 1830s and culminating in the 1864, just three years before the publication of Romance—the Circassians were subject to what has been called a genocide, as the tsar’s army extirpated them from their homeland on the northeast shore of the Black Sea. One historian estimates that over a million Circassians “perished whether directly, or indirectly, as a result of the Russian military
campaign and their subsequent forced removal,” and perhaps another million were
deported elsewhere in the Russian empire or pushed into neighboring Turkey (Levene
301), in a campaign of mass ethnic cleansing that presaged the very similar genocide that
the Turks would commit against their Armenian population in the same region just a few
decades later.

It is particularly shocking to think of the lascivious leering of American audiences
at a figure representing a nation in the process of near extermination. But this may, in fact,
have added to the dark thrill and enactment of buried fears in the Circassian beauty
exhibits, as American whites beheld a white woman27 who was not only individually
enslaved and sexually vulnerable but also representative, perhaps, of a white race
rendered entirely abject, murdered, kidnapped, stripped of their homeland, and rendered
thereafter a wandering, homeless people. In this aspect Circassians resemble Jews and
Gypsies, as well as the Africans uneasily held in bondage in America.

One recent critic has, in fact, proposed a link between Romance’s mulattas and
the Jews. Kimberly Snyder Manganelli links the American figure of the tragic mulatta to
a parallel and perhaps mutually influential literary type both European and Oriental: the
Jewish “tragic muse,” a mid-nineteenth-century European literary figure. The tragic muse
was a beautiful Jewish young woman who adopted a theatrical career both glamorous and
disreputable as a means of gaining financial and social independence and “came to
embody artistic genius, sexual agency, and financial autonomy, a dangerous combination
that garnered both praise and condemnation in the press” (Transatlantic Spectacles 6).
The tragic muse was a racially liminal figure, a swarthy, sexy, publically and perhaps
sexually available woman, a woman breaking norms of social propriety, a figure whose
social vulnerability provoked simultaneous desires to protect and to sexually exploit in European male readers and audiences.

Manganelli argues that Romance is one of a number of works in which the two types converge. She argues that Rosa’s career as an opera singer, under the alias La Señorita Rosita Campaneo, was perhaps modeled on and meant to evoke the figure of the tragic muse (Transatlantic Spectacles 142-45). Although the connection between Child’s Rosa and the tragic-muse type is tenuous, if, as Manganelli posits, “The fusion of the Tragic Mulatta and the Tragic Muse motifs in what Paul Giles describes as the ‘transatlantic imaginary’ emphasizes the ways in which literatures create and disseminate racial concepts across cultures” (“Tragic Muse” 502), then if nothing else it offers a model of a mutual influence between parallel liminal racial types on both sides of the Atlantic that resembles my central thesis.

The Limits of Identification

What are we to make of the cavalcade of racial proxies by which Child displaced the Africanness of the mulatta women at the center of Romance? At first glance, this move seems to be a further extension of the strategy long presumed to underlie the tragic-mulatta narrative itself: crafting African-American characters as similar as possible in appearance, education, morality, and sentiment to the white women to whom antislavery fiction was primarily aimed. Just as mulatta characters could allow white readers to move beyond the seemingly unbridgeable difference of color prejudice to more easily imagine that they could be enslaved and exploited (as has been theorized, and largely condemned, by generations of critics), Child’s deployment of exotic peoples familiar from European
culture arguably did serve to extend just such a bridge of identification incrementally farther. Rhetorically, Child urges readers to think that just as they can have sympathy, appreciation, and identification for “races” just a few notches down the Euro-American scale of racial hierarchy from Saxons (Italians, Circassians, Jews), that sympathy might then be extended to the mulattas who so resembled them (though they occupied a place lower still on that racial hierarchy) and, by further extension and perhaps to a more limited degree, to their darker African-American and African relations at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. However, Child’s objects of identification are not, in fact, “white,” as her American readers would have understood themselves to be.

The mixture of identification, sympathy, and contempt inherent in this formulation can be seen in a passage in which Alfred King recounts his father’s tale of “having met a number of Turkish women when he was in the environs of Constantinople.” King expresses Protestant New England’s contempt for “oriental” cultures as he repeats his father’s description of the women wrapped up like bales of cloths, with two small openings for their eyes, mounted on camels, and escorted by the overseer of the harem. The animal sound of their chatter and giggling, as they passed him, affected him painfully; for it forced upon him the idea what different beings those women would have been if they had been brought up amid the free churches and free schools of New England.

[emphasis added] (24)

This quotation shows both contempt for Muslim culture and a sense of Christian, really American Christian, superiority with regard to the treatment of and respect for women.
Moreover, it presupposes that the character of these women, and perhaps all persons, is largely circumstantial, since if these Turkish women (racially distinct from Anglo-Saxons) might have been very different if “brought up” in America, might not Anglo-Saxon Americans be very different if “brought up” elsewhere? Yet ultimately Child did not, in fact, argue that all differences of character and intelligence were merely the product of culture. As suggested by the description of the “animal sound of [the Turkish women’s] chatter” [emphasis added], and as stated clearly in her letter of 1843, biological racial difference was very real for Child. Although she did not believe, as did many or most Americans, that those inequalities were permanent and eternal she did believe that those inequalities were *racial*, were biologically embedded, and would take a great deal of time to disappear.

**Child’s Saxonist Pro-Amalgamationism**

At first glance, Child seems an unlikely candidate to have employed a device to displace or disguise the Africanness of mixed-race characters. The very existence of mulattos within slavery was long considered too shocking for respectable discussion among Northern whites. Far from avoiding the topic of racial amalgamation, Child featured it in her work regularly throughout her career, and in fact had launched her literary career by portraying the semi-scandalous interracial marriage between a white woman and an *Indian* man in her novel *Hobomok*, a marriage that produced what seems to be the first interracial child in American literature.

Not content to restrict her sympathy for mixed-race persons and couples to her fiction, Child advocated the right for people to marry whomever they choose regardless
of race in her 1833 work, *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans*. Child asserted that “the government ought not to be invested with power to control the affections, any more than the consciences of citizens. A man has at least as good a right to choose his wife, as he has to choose his religion” (196). This public defense of white-black intermarriage and amalgamation brought her career as a mainstream writer to a crashing halt, leaving her from then on a marginal reform writer for the causes of abolition, Indian protection, and women’s rights (*Hobomok* xiii). Child was in the vanguard of white abolitionist thought, ahead of the vast majority of her more timid or more thoroughly racist antislavery peers, who were deeply uncomfortable with mixed-race sexual and romantic relationships, and carefully avoided alienating the general public by seeming to support the violation of the taboo against racial amalgamation.

Why was it, then, that an author so associated with positive attitudes towards racial amalgamation would, in a novel whose central characters are mulatto and whose entire plot depends on their mulato-ness, seek to de-emphasize the very Africanness at the core of the entire enterprise far more than in her early tragic-mulatta works? For an answer we can look more closely at the nature of Child’s pro-amalgamation works, with special attention to not equating it automatically with contemporary ideas of human equality.

As I discussed in my chapter on Cooper, Child’s novel *Hobomok* should be understood as among other things an exercise in American-Saxon national myth-building rather than a work of political propaganda aimed at changing political relations between living Indians and Saxons in the United States in the 1820s. The primary rhetorical aim of the Saxon-Indian marriage and interracial child in *Hobomok* was to provide American
Saxons with a symbolic nativeness that—a claim critical to this triangulated discourse—
*Africans* supposedly did not possess despite the widespread intermarriage and racial
amalgamation of Indians and Africans since the earliest days of the post-Columbus
Americas. Child’s Hobomok flees West, ceding the land of the United States to whites.
His half-Indian son is swiftly deracinated, dropping his Indian name, attending
Cambridge, and passing on his nativeness to his American-Saxon community.

Raimon’s ultimate conclusion regarding *Hobomok*—that “Child’s ability to
conceive of a liberational potential for miscegenation in this early work cannot sustain
itself against the powerful parallel discourse of American nationalism and expansion, in
which there is little room for cultural difference” (36)—is equally true of *Romance*. It is
emblematic of the different posture of American white society towards Indians and
Africans that the depiction of racial amalgamation between a white woman with an
Indian in the colonial past launched her literary career with just a hint of naughty frisson,
while her defense of the actual intermarriage of Africans and whites in the present and
future destroyed her career as a popular writer for the general public.

However, even in *Appeal* Child had not encouraged wholesale racial
amalgamation nor claimed intellectual and moral equality between whites and blacks.
Instead she objected to the prohibition on black-white marriage on principle while
maintaining that “this law is a *useless* disgrace” since “under existing circumstances,
none but those whose condition in life is too low to be much affected by public opinion,
will form such alliances; and they, when they choose to do so, *will* make such a marriages,
in spite of the law” (196). Significantly, when Child wrote *Appeal*, in 1833, she made no
claims that black-white amalgamation would have salubrious racial benefits for either
race from the acquisition of the other’s better traits. Child seems to have become much more well versed in scientific theories of racial inequality in the decade between *Appeal* and her 1843 letters. Certainly, the political exigency to imagine such a benefit was far less in the 1830s than it would have been by the time she wrote *Romance*, in 1867.

For all the sympathy Child evinces for her mulatta characters, she makes clear again and again in *Romance* that they are biologically distinct from Anglo-Saxons and possessed of different artistic and intellectual capabilities. As one critic has noted, Child implies a “profound innate difference” (Raimon 56) between mulattos and “pure” Anglo-Saxons when the New Englander Mrs. Delano responds to Flora’s suggestion that she, Delano, could have been the girl’s mother: “You call me the Java sparrow, and Java sparrows never hatch gay little hummingbirds or tuneful mocking-birds” (103). Child is explicit about the implications of these innate differences, saying of Flora, “It is a hopeless undertaking to educate her after the New England patterns. One might as well try to plough [sic] with a butterfly, as to teach her ancient history” (209). This condescending appraisal of the mulatta girl’s intellectual capabilities does more than establish her as essentially a different, if charming, species from New England Anglo-Saxons. Mulattas, as “butterfly[ies]” incapable of pulling a “plough,” are thus declared incapable of the self-sufficiency grounded in industriousness and the Protestant work ethic that American Saxonism claimed as the basis for the righteousness of Saxon hegemony and that was central to the “free labor” ideology behind the Republican party’s antislavery position. It is a tortured and absurd argument that claims that the mulattas’ “blackness” limits them from being capable of Anglo-Saxon intellectual feats, and that somehow girls descended from an enslaved and endlessly laboring people were somehow
such delicate flowers that they were incapable of either intellectual or physical labors! As one critic observed, “For Child, as for many others, racial equality meant disregarding innate difference [which she accepted as a given] rather than the eradication of racial essentialism” (Raimon 56).

By the end of the novel, Rosa and Flora—whose racial essence renders them, for Child, charming but intellectually inferior—are under what seems to be the permanent guardianship of their white benefactors, as Alfred King and Mrs. Delano support them financially, organize their affairs, and even determine whom they should marry (Flora’s union to a young German immigrant requires the approval of her benefactress, Mrs. Delano) (Jackson 58). I concur with Jackson’s appraisal that Romance’s “enthusiastic belief in the potential for America to become an egalitarian nation” is ultimately undermined by “its failure to imagine a social system that did not mimic the master/slave roles of slavery” (61).28

Like the son of Child’s Hobomok before them, Rosa and Flora are absorbed into the white society of New England. They both marry white men and both hide their African heritage not only from society at large but also from their own children, who do not know that by America’s one-drop rule they too are negro. Their children are, naturally, even “whiter” in appearance than they are themselves, so that, as Jackson observes, Child’s “vision of interracialism as a means to racelessness is problematic [since] Child’s version of this emerging racelessness looks an awful lot like phenotypic whiteness” (57-58). Until such time as their residual blackness disappears completely, mulattos are set up as a mestizo class between Saxon whites and dark-skinned blacks,
while both mulattos and blacks are expected to be submissive under the paternalistic control of American whites.

For all of Romance’s progressiveness, Child’s vision of post-emancipation life does not offer much for darker-skinned African-Americans. The efforts on the part of Alfred King and Mrs. Delano, their white benefactors, to educate and elevate Rosa and Flora and their children are not extended to any of the darker-skinned characters that accompanied them North. The Royals’ old house slave, darker-skinned Tulee, who saved Rosa’s life and stood by her loyally during years of tribulations, is rewarded not with education, social equality, or opportunities for economic advancement, but instead simply with the honor of continuing to serve the same household she always did, if now for wages. Even the darker-skinned wife of Rosa’s long-lost son seems little able to absorb such education, and ultimately he and she are sent off to Europe to make their fortunes removed from the prejudices of the United States (Jackson 59).

In the tableau vivant with which she ends the novel, Child freezes the action to describe a symbolic tableau in which Rosa’s and Flora’s light-skinned daughters are bedecked in red, white, and blue ribbons and carrying the shield of the Union. Kneeling at their feet is a dark-skinned young African-American girl whom this secretly biracial family has recently taken in. Thus despite Child’s radical celebration of the multiracial family—whom Flora describes as “a good-looking set...though they are oddly mixed up” and composed of an amalgamation of “African and French, Spanish, American, and German” (432)—by the end of the novel, as Karcher observes, “a hierarchy of color has reasserted itself” (526).
Karcher attributes this failure of such a radical plot as a pro-amalgamation romance to envision a truly equal relation between peoples largely to the “manifest inequality” (527) of the patriarchal marriage into which a marriage plot must deliver her heroines. Rosa and Flora arrive in freedom only to disappear as legal persons, subsumed under their husbands’ white male identities. But Child could envision no autonomous American life for her male African-American characters in *Romance*, either; instead, she either kills off or banishes abroad every one of them. However, while a Saxonist influence as inescapable for Child as patriarchal ones can explain the “reassertion” of color hierarchy at *Romance*’s conclusion, it alone does not explain why Child would have so scrupulously avoided ever referring to African-Americans in the language used to designate them in her time.

Julie Cary Nerad, the only critic to comment on Child’s curious reluctance-refusal to refer to Rosa and Flora as “black, “negro,” or “African,” argues that Child did not refer to the girls as black because she did not see them as black. Nerad speculates that Child completely rejected the “one drop” rule by which anyone with any African heritage was rendered “black” and thus that Child rejected the existence of race entirely (2003). However, this view is, I believe, inconsistent with Child’s stated racial views. For all the seeming radicalness of Child’s views on racial amalgamation, her statements on the cranial, moral, and intellectual inferiority of Indians and Africans in her 1843 letter makes very clear both race and racial inequality were very real to Child. The key to *Romance*’s racial politics lies in understanding what interracial reproduction meant to Child both scientifically and politically. Again, Child’s *Letters from New-York* offers an answer, if a muddled one.30
In her 1843 letter responding to the Barnum exhibit of live Indians, Child pondered what it would take to improve the cranial capacity and mental abilities of both Indians and Africans. After having attributed the supposed expanded skull size and concomitant mental capacities of Europeans to the long influence of Greek, Roman, and Jewish civilizations, and attributed the supposed limitation of Indians and Africans to stunting limited cultural environments, she initially theorizes that:

> Similar influences [to Greek, Roman, and Jewish culture] brought to bear on the Indians and the Africans, as a race, would gradually change the structure of their skulls, and enlarge their perceptions of moral and intellectual truth. (282)

Child starts out by arguing, then, both that the red and black races are capable of improvement (without going so far as to say that they can achieve equality with Europeans) and that the enlargement of their “perceptions” could only be accomplished in the long timescale of physiological adaptation. While Child’s estimation of the inferiority of Indians and Africans (however theoretically temporary) will strike us today as thoroughly racist, it at least seems to hold out the possibility of these groups rising to be the equals of Saxon Americans through the influence of Saxon-American culture.

However Child thinks better of this idea in her letter’s very next sentence. She corrects herself, writing that, “The same influences cannot be brought to bear upon them for their past is not our past; and of course never can be” (282). Child thus dismisses the notion that exposure to Saxon-American civilization could improve the Indians’ and Africans’ skulls and minds. Rather than being changed by Greek, Roman, and Jewish culture as reflected in contemporary Saxon-American culture, she moves to the belief that
only the precise environmental and cultural experience of Europe’s history could produce something so wonderful as a European-ish Indian or African. Child then settles on the solution for which her writing has been so unusual, racial amalgamation, saying, “But let ours mingle with theirs, and you will find the result variety, without inferiority. They will be flutes on different notes, and so harmonize the better” (282).\(^3\)

Child in this passage proposes a kind of Mendelian transfer of traits between the races for the benefit of Indians to achieve a closer approximation of white capability than Indians could ever achieve otherwise. This amounts to the engineering of a more acceptable and more charming race that might be able to live among whites with greater “harmony.” Although her line of reasoning in this letter has lumped Indians and Africans together, Child does not complete the pairing by extolling the benefits of white blood to Africans or African-Americans.\(^3\)

Reviewing works in which Child dealt with the topic of racial amalgamation reveals important variations in her handling of what kind of traits might be transferred between the races in such a situation. In her novel *Hobomok*, Child does not mention any transfer of Indian traits to the mixed-race son the Indian Hobomok sires with his white wife. Child’s priority in this case seems to have been to establish the biological and moral compatibility of Saxons and Indians to augment the symbolic acquisition of nativeness for Saxons in their new nation. *Appeal* features a civic argument for the right of blacks and whites to marry but no talk of beneficial transfer of traits in either direction. *Letters from New-York* discusses facial angles and the notion of intermarriage with whites to improve blacks and Indians with Saxon traits, but never suggests that these effects would in any way improve whites. Given the increasing influence and prevalence of race
science over the course of the nineteenth century, it is quite likely that the fact that Child’s *Letters* in 1843 featured a sudden explosion of detailed use of race-science terminology indicates that such in-depth knowledge of such theories may have been a recent acquisition. Marshaling such ideas to argue that African-Americans could be improved was a strategy to win over greater sympathy for the cause of abolition from whites with very low opinions of the enslaved race. However, the explicit invocation of race-science theories and jargon that characterizes Child’s Barnum letter is absent in *Romance*, and the notion of the beneficial transfer of traits between the black and white races appears only once in explicit form.

*Romance*, for all its sympathy for African-Americans, makes no claims that the race has been made more Saxon-like by its mixture with whites. Quite strategically, Child has concocted mulatta heroines whose “white” blood is Spanish and French rather than English or American Saxon. Child noticeably avoids the formulation of the mulatto character employed by Stowe in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *Dred*, in which the pride and energy with which Stowe endows her mulatto characters, meant to win the admiration of Saxonist-American culture, was attributed to their admixture of Saxon blood. Child attributes Rosa Royal’s pride instead to her Spanish blood, endowing her heroine with a trait admired by Saxonist Americans without making Rosa’s seventh-eighths white blood Saxon. Instead, in *Romance* Child briefly alludes to an improvement that an addition of African blood might make in the character of Saxon Americans. Ms. Delano, the white New Englander who becomes Flora’s guardian, speculates that, “The warm African character will make up for a deficit of warmth in the cold and conquering Saxon” (281).
Thus *Romance* contains only one reference to beneficial traits transferred between the white and black races, and that benefit is bestowed on *whites* rather than blacks. This makes rhetorical sense in the context of this post-emancipation novel if one views Child’s primary rhetorical objective in this work as reassuring Northern whites that freed African-Americans can live among Saxon whites without threatening Saxon hegemony.

Child’s chief tool in *Romance* for reframing free Africans as a benevolent presence that does not threaten Saxon hegemony is not the clinical language of race science that appears in her letters, but instead an extended chain of ethnic analogies that indirectly associate Africans and African-Americans with the model of the subaltern “exotic” races of Europe. Child’s vision of a racially amalgamated United States was not a vision of multiculturalism, and hence of the erasure of racial distinctions and hierarchies. Instead, it consisted primarily in the absorption into Saxon whiteness of races that would then be elevated in their capacities, adding a dash of color, exuberance, and affection to the dour Saxon temperament.

That the same adaptation of discourses of exotic European races displacing the Africanness of mulattos had been employed in Hentz’s *Planter’s Northern Bride* a little over a decade before *Romance* to justify the enslavement of African-Americans helps to illustrate both the huge rhetorical license with which authors of the period manipulated supposedly authoritative theories of race—the “various and sometimes antithetical ways” in which rhetorical racialism operated (Raimon 12)—and the extent to which both pro-slavery and antislavery writers reflect a common underlying American racial discourse. Thus the antislavery, anti-prejudice Child leveraged the same resemblance between mulattos and European scientific and literary discourses regarding exotic races as had the
pro-slavery Hentz[^33] to displace the troublesome Africanness of enslaved people in America to suit an opposing political agenda. Underlying their seemingly irreconcilable political goals, in the end, was a shared commitment to American-Saxonist ideology and Saxon supremacy.
Afterword:

Counter-Ethnology and Counter-Counter-Ethnology:

Frederick Douglass’s and Martin Delany’s

Afrocentric Reinterpretation of Transatlantic Race Science

and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Mandingo-Saxonist Response

Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany

Nineteenth-century African-American authors swiftly realized the rhetorical importance of scientific theories in debates over the continued existence of slavery and the degree of civil rights they would be afforded in “freedom.” Numerous works from the period reflect the ways in which African-Americans responded, ranging from dismissing all scientific claims entirely in favor of biblical accounts of the unity of the human species to homegrown African-American theories of the racial inferiority of Europeans to Africans. Responding to claims of scientific evidence of black inferiority that arose within the national political conversation, Frederick Douglass and Martin Delany both joined other African-Americans in what has been called by recent critics “autoethnology” (Chaney 292), challenging race science on its own scientific terms and using other elements of Euro-American scholarly and scientific discourses against those used to support anti-black racist claims. Beyond various piecemeal responses to race-science claims, Douglass and Delany each penned works dedicated to an extended rebuttal of race-science claims that required significant and extended study of Euro-American scholarly and scientific sources.
Reading their work for examples of rhetorical racialism offers new insights. Both Douglass and Delany are candidates for longitudinal studies of their handling of race science rhetoric. Without having embarked yet on such a longitudinal study, I have noted some salient points that stand out in a quick comparison of the dates and content of the respective Douglass and Delany works rebutting or reinterpreting race science. Douglass’s 1854 work, “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered,” is the better-known work today, having been the subject of numerous critical treatments in the past few decades. In it, Douglass demonstrates a thorough knowledge of most of the major race science theorists cited in mid-nineteenth-century arguments over race in the United States. With a lacerating combination of logic, erudition, and barbed wit, Douglass knocks down their arguments one by one, moving from polygenesis (calling out Agassiz, Prichard, Nott, and Morton by name) to a host of biblically and physiologically based claims about the supposed racial inferiority of Africans and African-Americans.

Delany, on the other hand, did not devote an extended work to debunking Euro-American scientific race-theory claims of African inferiority until 1879, when he published the “Principia of Ethnology: The Origin of Races and Color.” Unlike Douglass’s “Ethnologically Considered,” Delany’s “Origin” names Nott and some other polygenists only to dismiss them and their theories in a single line (9). This might be explained by the decline in the influence of polygenist ideas in the 1870s, by which time Darwinism had already for the most part won the day on the issue of human origins. Yet Delany’s “Origin” dismisses Darwinism, too, promising in his first chapter to proceed “without an allusion to the Development theory,” not deigning even to mention Darwin by name (9). Instead, Delany devotes the entire work to establishing the “negro” identity
of the ancient Egyptian pharaohs, employing as his primary evidence the Bible and Egyptology.

The question arises, then, as to why Douglass’s and Delany’s respective race theory related works came so far apart in time, and why the two men were so far apart in their rhetorical approach to taking on scientific-historical theories of African racial inferiority. The beginnings of a possible answer emerge from mapping the timing of the publication of “Ethnologically Considered” and “Origin” against each author’s strategic political approach, and historical and political developments in the United States. Douglass was an integrationist, devoted to winning a place for African-Americans as equal citizens within American society, and as such had greater rhetorical exigency to publicly debunk at length theories of racial inequality that influenced white public opinion. Delany, in contrast, was a black nationalist convinced that the future hopes for African-Americans lay in independence from American white society, from whom he expected no meaningful acceptance and towards whom he generally did not bother to direct his writing. As “Ethnologically Considered” demonstrates, Douglass clearly devoted significant time and effort in the 1850s to familiarizing himself with the range of scientific, ethnological, physiological, and historical discourses from which the race theorists of his time drew in building their arguments for the racial inferiority of Africans and African-Americans. The timing of Douglass’s 1854 speech “Ethnologically Considered” coincides both with the apex of polygenesis and the penultimate phase of pre-Civil War political debate over the slavery issue.

Delany, however, did not pen “Origin” until a generation later. If extended public debunking of theories of racial inequality by African-American writers is understood to
be directed primarily at the white Americans most likely to believe in them then it should not be surprising that Delany eschewed that task in the pre-emancipation period when he put no stock in white America’s willingness to be convinced. In the 1850s Delany concerned himself with African-American self-empowerment and schemes of creating an African colony in the Niger River valley to be founded and ruled by African-Americans. The timing of Delany’s publication of “Origin,” in 1879, suggests that his turn to refuting Euro-American race science came as a response to both the failure of his plans for an African colony for African-Americans and the betrayal of Reconstruction by Northern politicians in 1877. For “Origin” seems to be directed not only to increasing the self-esteem of African-Americans, but also to changing the minds of white Americans upon whom rested any hopes of bettering the circumstances of African-Americans in the United States, in light of the loss of African-American political power achieved during Reconstruction.

While the timing of Douglass’s and Delany’s works on race science clearly suggests political calculation, their timings also seem consistent with the political reputation of each author. More surprising, however, is the fact that Douglass did not write a sequel to “Ethnologically Considered” in the subsequent decades in which the authority of scientific racism only increased in American culture. Douglass certainly protested against the rise of Jim Crow, but why didn’t he mount another large-scale assault on the scientific notions that served both as segregation’s fig leaf and its foundation? Equally puzzling is the fact that Delany, a physician with a far more extensive scientific education than the self-taught Douglass, avoided mounting a scientific challenge to polygenesis or Darwinian evolutionism. (Delany did draw upon his
doctor’s knowledge of anatomy to propose a theory of skin color based on the function of
different layers of skin cells (22).) Biblical arguments were relatively passé by the 1870s,
and in restricting himself to them Delany made himself rhetorically less effective in
influencing his contemporaries than he might have been. A possible answer suggests
itself from an even more startling element of “Origin”: Delany’s celebration of Saxons in
the final pages of this work in which he has labored to establish both the blackness and
the greatness of the ancient Egyptians. Delany asserts that the African race should not be
“adjudged by those portions of that race found out of Africa” since:

Untrammeled in its native purity [in Africa]…it is a noble one, and
worthy to emulate the noble Caucasian and Anglo-Saxon, now at the
top round of the ladder of moral and intellectual grandeur in the
progress of civilization. [emphasis added] (94)

This deference to and praise of Anglo-Saxons as pinnacles of “moral…progress” is
particularly startling coming from Delany, and yet it is consistent with the work’s equally
surprising dedication. Delany dedicates this work of Afrocentric auto-ethnology to the
“Right Honorable…Earl of Shaftesbury,” a British aristocrat who had aided Delany in a
earlier moment of his life. Delany’s dedication
dare(s) to claim the moral aid of His Lordship, in this his second
adventure, in the regeneration of his Race and Fatherland, and that
Race the attainment of a promised inheritance.

The proud and defiant Delany ends his dedication stating that he “begs to remain His
Lordship’s most obliged, grateful, and very humble servant” (4).
Two details of the elaborate title page Delany crafted for “Origin” suggest a political context and rhetorical strategy behind the surprising elements of this work. The first is that at the end of a long list of titles and accomplishments that Delany appends to his name on the title page, Delany described himself as “now one of the Justices of Charleston, by Commission of the Governor.” The second clue is the date of publication, 1879. Delany wrote “Origin” while holding a government position that he likely recognized would soon be stripped from an African-American such as himself as Reconstruction gave way in the late 1870s to all-white rule in the South. Two years before publishing “Origin,” Delany founded the “Liberia Exodus Joint Stock Steamship Company,” which began shipping African-Americans to Liberia in response to the rise of Jim Crow (Tillery 37), and Delany’s choice to engage with race theory in the manner that he did in this work suggests a strategic pivot towards a new source of economic patronage for ventures founded on a further loss of faith in the hopes for African-Americans in the United States.

**Mandingo-Saxonisms, Auto-Ethnography, and Counter-Auto-Ethnography**

My most significant preliminary insight into the work of Douglass and Delany arises from combining the techniques of rhetorical-racialist criticism with the discovery of Mandingo-Saxonism to which those techniques led me in the course of my dissertation. My research reveals that African-American writers, too, engaged in the discourse of Mandingo-Saxonism, although with important distinctions from the Mandingo-Saxonism of white writers.
The most explicit association of African-American Mandingo identity with the traits claimed by American Saxonists appears in the 1868 biography of Delany written, at Delany’s request, by Frances Anne Rollin. (This work, *The Life and Public Service of Martin R. Delany*, was the first full-length biography written by an African-American.)

Rollin informs her reader that Delany’s “pride of birth is traceable to his maternal as well as to his paternal grandfather, native Africans—on the father’s side, pure Golah; on the mother’s, Mandingo.” Rollin explains that Delany’s family came from African royalty on both sides, and in particular that he “heard in the chants of a Mandingo grandmother, depicted with all the gorgeous imagery of the tropics…the story of their lost and regal inheritance.” Rollin invokes the central linkage of Mandingo-Saxonism when she says of African-American Union soldiers such as the part-Mandingo Delany that “they were found enlisting, fighting, and even dying under circumstances from which the bravest Saxon would have been justified in shrinking” (9). Of cases of African-American bravery, Rollin explains:

> Ethnologists apologize for this violation of their established rules, charging it to some few drops of Saxon blood commingling with the African. But [Delany] stands proudly before the country the blackest of the black, presenting in himself a giant’s powers wrapped in chains, and evidencing in his splendid career the fallacy of the old partisan theory of negro inferiority and degradation. (10)

Further research may reveal whether Delany himself discussed his Mandingo heritage so explicitly as a refutation of Saxonist claims to sole possession of martial virtues, but clearly he conceived of himself and framed in large part his public identity around his
Mandingo identity. While we can take Delany at his word that knowledge of his Mandingo ancestry and culture survived in his family, he must also have been influenced at least in part by American cultural associations with the Mandingo, given his intense engagement with public discussion of the slavery issue.

Douglass repeatedly and consistently sought to establish that African-Americans, and he himself, possessed the Saxon traits of pride, masculinity, and energy required for acceptance as full American citizens. Examples include the episode in his autobiographies in which he fights back against the slave breaker Covey, his depiction of Madison Washington in his novel *The Heroic Slave*, and his advocacy for allowing black men to serve in combat against the Confederacy in the Civil War. Although my research thus far has not uncovered any explicit references to Mandingos in Douglass’s writing, my preliminary research has uncovered examples of praise for the Mandingo in Saxonist terms in the newspaper that Douglass owned and edited.

On July 15, 1853, *Frederick Douglass’ Paper* reprinted an article from the *National Era* (the antislavery newspaper in which Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had first appeared, running as a serial) that compared one H. W. Ellis—“a slave, of pure African blood, (his grandfather was an imported Mandingo)” (“Negro Intellect. Ellis and Douglass, and Uncle Tom”)—to Stowe’s Christlike martyr Tom. The *National Era* article author stated that, “We venture to predict that a different style of heroism will be demanded, before the black race shall be redeemed from chattel slavery in this country.” Noting that “Patient and pious endurance is not the sort of moral that blunts the edge of tyranny,” the reprinted article offered this Mandingo-descended man as a better model of an ideal African-American than Uncle Tom. Although Douglass did not write this article
himself, it is interesting to note that he chose to reprint an article that not only praised Mandingos in a Saxonist manner but lumped Douglass himself in with the Mandingo Ellis, saying, “Ellis and Douglass and their like, are more nearly the pattern men after which the caste may be moulded [sic] into freemen.”

Douglass does not seem to have claimed Mandingo ancestry for himself, but twenty-first-century critics have attempted to do so (Schaffer), suggesting (whatever Douglass’s African ancestry might have been) the continuing appeal of associating this exemplary African-American with the Mandingo.

The contested interpretations of Egyptian and Mandingo identity converge in a brief moment in Douglass’s 1855 version of his autobiography, entitled *My Bondage and My Freedom*. Douglass added a touching detail that has since become the object of significant scholarly interest. Douglass describes finding this image of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II in an 1848 book of ethnography by British scientist and race theorist James Cowles Prichard titled *Researches Into the Physical History of Man*, one of the best-known works of nineteenth-century race science. Douglass describes:

> The head of a figure [a statue of ancient Egyptian pharaoh Ramses the Great] the features of which so resemble those of my mother, that I often recur to it with something of the feeling which I suppose others to experience when looking on the pictures of dear departed one. (qtd. in Stowe, *Men* 385-86)

This would have been a particularly poignant moment for Douglass, who recounts in his autobiographies that he had been allowed to spend almost no time with his mother, who was put to work in the fields while he was left in the care of an older slave, and who was subsequently sold away to another master, never to be seen again.
To be clear, Douglass was not claiming in *My Bondage and My Freedom* that he was literally personally descended from the ancient Egyptians, but the observation of a resemblance could not help carrying a certain Afrocentric political significance, even if Douglass did not dwell on the matter on this occasion. (Douglass had devoted a section of “Ethnologically Considered” to asserting that the ancient Egyptians had been “negroes” and wittily debunking the claims of Nott, Morton, and Agassiz.) While the Ramses-mother episode has been the object of a great deal of critical debate centered on Douglass’s appropriation of or capitulation to European ethnological discourses (see Chaney), critics have previously not noticed Stowe’s reinterpretation of Douglass’s observation of his mother’s Egyptian appearance.

Thirteen years after Douglass wrote about the image of Ramses in his 1855 autobiography, the world-famous white abolitionist novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe discussed this moment in Douglass’s autobiography in a biographical sketch of Douglass in her 1868 work, *Men of Our Times*, an anthology of short biographies of the men she most respected in her era. After pages of fulsome praise, Stowe takes up the question of Douglass’s ancestry. Stowe relays
Douglass’s description of his mother as “tall and finely proportioned,” and reproduces Douglass’s description of his reaction to the resemblance he saw between Ramses and his mother. Stowe condescendingly notes the “effecting simplicity” of the resemblance Douglass claimed to see before offering her own ethnographic correction:

The face alluded to is copied from a head of Ramses the great Egyptian king of the nineteenth dynasty. The profile is European in its features, and similar in class to the head of Napoleon. From all these considerations, we have supposed that the mother of Douglass must have been one of that Mandingo tribe of Africans who were distinguished among the slaves for fine features, great energy, intelligence and pride of character. (385)

Stowe moves swiftly and without apology to substitute her own ethnographic interpretation of the resemblance Douglass saw to his mother in the Ramses statue. Her characterization of the Mandingos, and by extension of Douglass, is radically progressive for its time in its attribution to an African ethnicity of traits reserved for Saxons in American Saxonism, upon which the edifice of white privilege was founded. Lest her readers perhaps recall her own explanation, in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, that the willingness to fight for independence on the part of mulattos should be attributed to their portion of Saxon blood, Stowe informs her readers that despite the fact that

the father of Frederick Douglass was a white man…there is reason to believe that those fine intellectual gifts, that love of liberty, and hatred of slavery which have led him to the position he now
occupies among freemen, were due to the blood of his [Mandingo] mother. (389)

Yet Stowe’s ethnology here is less egalitarian than it at first might appear.

Stowe’s assertion that Douglass’s mother must have been Mandingo excludes her, and by extension all Africans and African-Americans, from the connection to ancient Egypt that was such a central pillar of nineteenth-century African-American auto-ethnology. The addition of (presumably Caucasian) Egyptians to Stowe’s taxonomy of African ethnicities completes the picture and allows us to understand the limiting function of white praise of Mandingos. Stowe in these brief lines seems to establish the Egyptians as defining a kind of glass ceiling in the potential capabilities of black Africans, just as Mandingo-Saxonism used its characterization of “Guinea negroes” to define the nadir of black African degeneracy. Mandingos may resemble Saxons in various ways, in other words, but they are not on par with the ancient Egyptians with whom American Saxons imagined that they shared the status as great civilizations and great races.

Comparing the parallels between Mandingos and Saxons found in works by African-Americans and Anglo-Americans reveals details about the different rhetorical uses to which each group applied the discourse. Thus far my preliminary research indicates that African-American Mandingo-Saxonism tends to cite the Mandingo ethnic group as examples of Africans possessing exemplary traits, that is, as representative of the capabilities of all Africans and African-Americans, rather than as members of a hierarchically superior racial subgroup, as the Mandingo-Saxonism of whites so often did. For instance, Delany’s account of his ethnic heritage seen in Rollin’s biography does not
privilege his Mandingo forebears over his Golah ones, nor does it belittle other African ethnicities.

Although extensive further research will be required to corroborate my current hypothesis, comparison of white and African-American varieties of Mandingo-Saxonism suggests that the underlying American Saxonist discourse upon which Mandingo-Saxonism depends itself consists of two related but distinct claims emphasized differently by white and black authors. Racialized American Saxonism posits that Saxons alone possess the distinct combination of pride, masculinity, energy, and intelligence that supposedly distinguish them as a race. A civic American Saxonism posits that those traits attributed to Saxons are also those required to achieve full American national subjecthood. White American Mandingo-Saxonist, it seems thus far, tended to attribute the excellence of individual African-Americans to Mandingo racial traits that parallel the supposed racial traits of Saxons, but which are not possessed by most African-Americans—the implication being that if African-Americans therefore lack the necessary traits to be American then it was a matter of science and nature rather than one of prejudice. African-American writers, in contrast, generally emphasize civic Saxonism, recognizing that the nation valued the traits of pride, energy, and intelligence and employed Mandingos as evidence that Africans can possess the traits required to be “real Americans” without suggesting that African ethnicities other than Mandingos lacked those traits.

The relevance of the political interpretation of science to our own time is evidenced in current debates over topics ranging from climate change and vaccines to water fluoridation and the question of when human life begins. Serendipitously, as I prepared my dissertation manuscript for final submission, a Washington Post article,
“Why Science Is So Hard to Believe,” reported the difficulty in reaching public consensus regarding the interpretation of science related to such vital public concerns. The article focused on contemporary neuropsychology’s insights into “motivated reasoning” as possible explanations of intransigently incorrect interpretations of controversial scientific issues as well as political claims and conspiracy theories. Yale University researcher Dan Kahan finds that, counterintuitively, “Science literacy promoted polarization on climate, not consensus.” According to Kahan, that’s because “people tend to use scientific knowledge to reinforce their worldviews” (Aschenbach).

A similar article in Mother Jones magazine in 2011 cited the work of neuropsychologists on confirmation bias (which causes us to put greater faith in evidence that supports our existing beliefs), a subconscious process that renders it extremely difficult to actually appraise new information in a purely rational manner divorced from our preexisting beliefs. University of Virginia psychologist Jonathan Haidt offers a particularly apt analogy when he explains that, “We may think we’re being scientists, but we’re actually being lawyers” (Mooney). Furthermore, Kahan concludes that “incorrect” scientific ideas and the political beliefs that seem to spring from them cannot simply be combated with new information. As the Mother Jones writer summarizes, “The study subjects weren’t ‘anti-science’—not in their own minds, anyway. It’s just that ‘science’ was whatever they wanted it to be.” Kahan worries that, “We’ve come to a misadventure, a bad situation where diverse citizens, who rely on diverse systems of cultural certification, are in conflict” (Aschenbach).

As this dissertation illustrates, we have in fact been in this “misadventure” for quite some time. Stowe, Cooper, Child, and Hentz all believed that they were committed
to science, but the specific race science they incorporated into a given work was also “whatever they wanted it to be.” Like contemporary Americans debating climate change, they too acted as lawyers even as they posed as scientists, or at least impartial interpreters of science. These authors chose to “use scientific knowledge to reinforce their worldviews” regarding race and American subjecthood, and, in the process, they illustrated the flexibility with which Americans past and present employ scientific discourses when we engage in pertinent public debates.

Significantly, the Washington Post and Mother Jones articles share a faith in the truth of certain scientific facts, marvel that anyone might doubt them, and worry (with good reason) about the consequent risks to the climate, disease prevention, and other concerns. However, some Foucauldian skepticism regarding the political, social, and economic presumptions behind science creates an even more complex, but I would argue more accurate, picture of the muddle that occurs at the intersection of science, politics, and literature. The examples of nineteenth-century race science that I consider in this dissertation were each far from “unbiased” and were rooted in pernicious prejudice and their own forms of political positioning.

My research into nineteenth-century scientific discourse convinces me of the need to be more skeptical of every invocation of science in political and social contexts, including, and perhaps especially, those with which I agree. Even when science is not explicitly invoked, or when we are not aware of its operations, politically shaped scientific ideas are likely at work structuring our thoughts regardless. The insights of cognitive science may help to resolve the critical conundrum of authorial intentionality by essentially laying the issue aside. Whether we know it or not, we pick and choose the
scientific theories we make use of in political debates. Political, religious, gender, and myriad other political forces are at work in our perceptions, and the authors need not have acted with cynical intention to have engaged in the discursive acrobatics in which my dissertation reveals them to have been engaged. My theorization of rhetorical racialism seems to correspond to current neuropsychological findings about “motivated reasoning” and its relationship to the political use of science, and suggests to me fruitful paths of future research integrating cognitive science and humanities scholarship. What my study can contribute to these observations is a call to be skeptical about the science itself. It is not simply that the public chooses to believe one scientific theory over another, but that scientific ideas themselves have proven, over the centuries, to be profoundly shaped by political, economic, and social forces.
### Table 1: Use of Race Science in Portrayals of Black-White, Black-Indian, and White-Indian Mixtures in Six Works by James Fenimore Cooper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title &amp; Time Set</th>
<th>Written in</th>
<th>Wh/Ind Mix</th>
<th>Wh/Bl Mix</th>
<th>Bl/Ind Mix</th>
<th>Buffon/ Environmental Adaptation</th>
<th>Condorcet/ Romantic Historicism</th>
<th>Responding to...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pioneers</strong></td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Adoption of White by Indians, positive depiction</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Black characters physically incapable of thriving in North, Indians &amp; Whites well adapted</td>
<td>One white character claims that Indians need generations to catch up with white civilized, this idea is mocked by white leader who is ready to have a “half-breed” marry his daughter</td>
<td>Longfellow call for American literature, modeled on Walter Scott’s nationalist romances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1823)</strong></td>
<td>Early 19th century</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mohicans</strong></td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Adoption of White by Indians, positive depiction</td>
<td>Sympathetic but doomed (Cora)</td>
<td>Sympathetic but doomed (Cora/Uncas)</td>
<td>Ambiguous references to the “gift” of Indians ad Whites, unclear if those gifts are biological or cultural</td>
<td>Implies that although Indians are now inferior to whites and must vacate American land they will develop separately and perhaps return and merge with whites in future</td>
<td>Longfellow call for American literature, modeled on Walter Scott’s nationalist romances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1826)</strong></td>
<td>Mid-18th century</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prairie</strong></td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Adoption of White by Indians, positive depiction</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Buffon mocked by name, mock his claim that American environment is unhealthy and breeds weak, small creatures</td>
<td>Suggestion that Indians may have already gone through a cycle of civilized development and collapse and only appear “primitive”</td>
<td>Buffon’s Scientific writing about America, used to denigrate America in European culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1827)</strong></td>
<td>Late 18th century</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bachelor</strong></td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Amalgamation in future</td>
<td>Amalgamation in FAR future</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Little reference to Buffonian ideas</td>
<td>Predicts that in relative near future Indians will have developed, in necessary isolation out West, enough to join whites as equals, and that in a longer period of time eventually Africans may be able to do the same</td>
<td>de Tocqueville’s <em>Democracy in America</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1828)</strong></td>
<td>Far Future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wept</strong></td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Marriage &amp; Amalgamation, but doomed in “present”</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Buffonian claims of species-like differences between races mocked, yet heroic Indian says white habitat is civilization and Indians’ is the wild, hopeless for them to mix.</td>
<td>Indians and whites seem to be easily able to adapt to each other’s cultures when adopted or kidnapped, suggesting that they are very close in capacity for civilization, without a significant gap that would require centuries to be filled.</td>
<td>Narrative of the life of Mary Jeminson (1824) and novels <em>Hobomok</em> (1824) and <em>Hope Leslie</em> (1827). White-Indian marriage and children now part of discourse about America and Americans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1829)</strong></td>
<td>17th century</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Headman</strong></td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>+ Amalg. in Future</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>European criticisms of American hypocrisy and false democracy, reflects back on Europe its own history of prejudices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1833)</strong></td>
<td>Medieval</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table Notes:**
- **Wh/Ind Mix**: Use of White by Indians
- **Wh/Bl Mix**: Use of White by Blacks
- **Bl/Ind Mix**: Use of Black by Indians
- **Buffon/ Environmental Adaptation**: References to Buffon’s environmental views
- **Condorcet/ Romantic Historicism**: Influence of Condorcet’s and Romanticism’s ideas on character development
- **Responding to...**: Literary influences and historical context
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 2</strong>: Scientific Race Theories, Gender, and Religion in Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Dred, and Men of Our Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNCLE TOM’S CABIN</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepts Saxonism, Saxon traits and Saxon Hegemony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacks with Saxon traits of pride &amp; energy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of African Race(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of worst traits of some Africans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Hero Moral Character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Hero Religious Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Hero Gender Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Hero model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race Theorist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References to historical black revolts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Race Science, Literary, and Folklore Discourses Regarding Exotic European Races (Gypsies, Italians, Spaniards, Jews, & Circassians) in Hentz’s *The Planter’s Northern Bride* and Child’s *A Romance of the Republic*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hentz’s <em>Planter’s Northern Bride</em></th>
<th>Child’s <em>Romance of the Republic</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Character(s)</strong></td>
<td>Italian Gypsy character, Claudia</td>
<td>Mulatta characters, Rosa and Flora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cross-ethnic Associations</strong></td>
<td>Implicit resemblance to mulatta</td>
<td>Explicit comparisons to and Implicit resemblance to Italians and Spaniards, Implicit resemblance to Circassians and Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical traits</strong></td>
<td>Swarthy complexion, dark hair, dark eyes</td>
<td>Explicitly and implicitly linked to Italians and Spaniards, implicitly linked to Circassians and Jews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abilities</strong></td>
<td>Music, dancing</td>
<td>Music, dancing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender heterodoxy</strong></td>
<td>Rebelliousness of white women evident in other Hentz works but incompatible with anti-Tom patriarchal orthodoxy displaced onto gypsy</td>
<td>Downplayed, the sisters are generally compliant and dependent on men, be they good or bad men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Passion” characterized as...</strong></td>
<td>Dangerous rage, nearly demonic seductive powers, but also attractive to white women trained to be passive</td>
<td>Lively enthusiasm and charming expressiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gypsy Itinerancy</strong></td>
<td>Analogy for dangers of social mobility in aristocratic slave society, but also appeal of mobility to trapped white women</td>
<td>Not emphasized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slave Associations</strong></td>
<td>Physical appearance, personality, and “secret wife” plot device dangerously suggestive of sexually exploited African women Hentz seeks to erase from proslavery novel</td>
<td>Association with Circassians, for centuries “white” slaves in Mediterranean region, blurs American association of slavery with skin color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rhetorical Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Displace feminist rebelliousness of white women and allow indirect condemnation of black-white amalgamation</td>
<td>Seeks to render African-Americans less foreign to whites by analogies with “whiter” exotic types</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes

Introduction

1. The victims of this hate crime must, in my view, be named when their killer is discussed. The following people lost their lives that day: Rev. Sharonda Singleton, Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Myra Thompson, Tywanza Sanders, Ethel Lee Lance, Cynthia Hurd, Rev. Daniel L. Simmons Sr., Rev. DePayne Middleton Doctor, and Susie Jackson.

2. The complexity of the intersections that my work reveals can be seen, for instance, in my addition of Cooper’s celebration of Anglo-American “amalgamation” with Dutch-Americans to the full picture of Anglo-American efforts to establish legitimate legal and biological title to the North American continent.

Chapter 1

1. The following summary of the history of European race science is not intended to be encyclopedic, but instead will touch on major figures and theorists whose work is particularly relevant to the American authors discussed in my dissertation.

2. “I hold that in the present state of civilization, where two races of different origin, and distinguished by color, and other physical differences, as well as intellectual, are brought together, the relation now existing in the slaveholding States between the two, is, instead of an evil, a good—a positive good” (Calhoun 631).

3. These theories anticipated and developed into the early-twentieth-century racial categories of Nordics, Alpines, and Mediterraneans developed by Madison Grant and embraced by eugenicists and Nazis.

4. The terms “Saxon” and “Anglo-Saxon” mean essentially the same thing in Saxonist discourse, in that they both refer primarily to the Saxons of England and their descendants in the United States rather than to the ethnic Saxons in mainland Europe. Although the term “Anglo-Saxon” was the more common term in the later nineteenth and early twentieth century, in the early to mid-nineteenth century the term “Saxon” was in greatest usage, and thus “Saxonism” is used to refer to the discourse overall.

5. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century “adulation of the Anglo-Saxon period as a golden age of free institutions [and a] belief in Anglo-Saxon freedom, used to defend popular liberties, had by the middle of the nineteenth century been transformed into a rationale for the domination of peoples throughout the world…. The Anglo-Saxonism of these early centuries was in large part nonracial. Although Anglo-Saxon institutions were praised, there was generally little interest in specific racial characteristics, in innate physical or intellectual attributes separating the Anglo-Saxons from other peoples” (Horsman, 387-88).

6. However, the novelists discussed in this dissertation drew from many of the same European scientific and literary discourses as the polygenesiasts, as when, for instance, Nott, Stowe, Hentz, and Child employed the same theories of Gypsy and southern European character and origins. (See my chapters on Stowe, Hentz, and Child.) As long as these novelists were unburdened by the rhetorical poison of polygenesis’s anti-biblicalism, per se, they relied on many shared sources and assumptions.
7. Although the theories of the Englishman Darwin were not picked up by the writers I will discuss, it is important to note that the scientific theories of race with which these American writers did engage were almost exclusively European. This is significant because the mid-twentieth-century literary criticism that sought the fingerprints of race science in American literature perceived only the American-generated theories of romantic racialism and miscegenation. My dissertation should be understood as, among other things, contributing to transatlantic criticism the interaction of American and European scientific and literary-racial discourses.

8. “[God] endowed his creatures with the faculty of TASTE, accompanying it with entire freedom of choice, thereby forming a perpetual and insurmountable barrier to the execrable amalgamation [of the races]” (qtd. in Lemire 80).

9. To be clear, this positive attitude towards white-Indian race mixing was essentially symbolic and rhetorical and did not reflect attitudes of white communities in contact with Indians communities, where taboos against mixing with Indians and views of Indians as irredeemable savages persisted. For a sense of the marginalized existence of actual living Indians in New England during the 1820s and '30s even as figurative Indians were being praised and lionized in American plays and novels, see William Apess’s 1829 autobiography, A Son of the Forest.

Chapter Two

1. In 1995, critic James D. Wallace interpreted both Notes of a Travelling Bachelor: or, Notions of the Americans (1828) and The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish (1829) as positively disposed to Indian-white racial amalgamation, and recently, in 2012, critic Geoffrey Sanborn argued that Cooper’s little-studied 1833 novel, The Headsman, was a sympathetic allegorical representation of African-American-white amalgamation and racial passing, both of which will be discussed in this chapter.

2. This view of Cooper’s work as anti-miscegenationist was reflected in surveys of the depiction of race mixing in nineteenth-century American literature published from the mid-1980s through the early 2000s. See, James Kinney’s 1985 Amalgamation!: Race, Sex, and Rhetoric in the Nineteenth Century American Novel and Cassandra Jackson’s 2004 The Barriers Between Us: Interracial Sex in Nineteenth Century American Literature.

3. The word “miscegenation” was coined in 1864. Assembled from the Latin “misc-“ (to mix) and “-genus” (species), the term was literally built from an assumption that racial differences were equivalent to the differences between species (Croly ii), a concept that developed only in the early nineteenth century and did not reach a tipping point of popular acceptance until the 1850s and 1860s (Lemire 4). Embedded in “antimiscegenation” were theories of race that equated racial categories to species distinctions and viewed racial inequality as permanent. These concepts of race, and the extremity of taboo against race mixing that went with them, were new in the 1820s and had not acquired the cultural (and legal) dominance that they went on to acquire from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries. By 1960, when Fiedler published Love and Death in the American Novel, antimiscegenation discourse carried with it the moral weight not only of Jim Crow segregation, but of Nazism, eugenics, and apartheid, as well, since all of these systems had been premised on the need to separate permanently unequal races.


5. Although Cooper in an 1821 essay demurred on the task of making “subtle distinctions which involve national character, or national enterprise or aptitude” and declared that he would “leave such nice distinctions for greater ingenuity than we can pretend to” (“Clark’s Naval History of the U.S.” 19), in fact
his subsequent works of the 1820s are suffused with both racial theorizing and commentary on such theorizing.

6. Wallace’s attention to the development of theories of race built upon a stream of historical research, also originating in the concerns of the Civil Rights era, which revealed the very different theories of race and less rigid prohibitions and taboos against racial amalgamation that existed before the mid-nineteenth century. See William Stanton’s *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America: 1815-59*; and Joel Williamson’s *New People: Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States*.

7. Wallace’s original insights into the racial theories in Cooper’s work arose as a preliminary to the main thesis of the article in which they appeared, namely that captivity (of whites by Indians and vice versa) offered in *Wept* an opportunity for the two people to realize how similar they were to each other and to develop affection for each other that was otherwise made difficult or impossible by prejudice and suspicion, and not as part of a focused survey of this issue.

8. Wallace made no distinctions between the employment of these theories across the works he considered nor their application to Indians vs. Africans.

9. Another of *Pioneers’* African-American characters, Brom, suffers very similar disfiguration from being ill suited to both the North American climate and American freedom. This free African-American’s features take on a frightening and horrific aspect from a combination of cold weather (“overcoming his native dread of cold”) and anxiety when one of his turkeys (upon which he is dependent, as a free man, for his survival) is made the prize in an impromptu shooting contest by whites. Brom’s skin “became mottled with large brown spots that sullied the lustre of his native ebony most fearfully, while his enormous lips gradually compressed…. His nostrils, at all times the most conspicuous feature of his face, dilated, until they covered the greater part of the diameter of his countenance” (253-54).

As Doolen observes, “this caricature reinforces an ideology of African-American inferiority, but more importantly it depicts an African-American deformed by his self-possession, as well as [by] his attempted assimilation into American society” (142-43). Cooper’s depiction of the bodily distress induced in Africans’ by both northern climate and liberty corresponds to a basic element of the American subjecthood that developed in the early-republic period, which framed Africans as foreign. The physical deformations suffered by both Aggy and Brom confirm a vision of Africans, common in white culture at this time, as not only inassimilable into the (white) American polity, society, and economy, but physically incompatible with any part of the United States other than the southern slave zone that, supposedly, resembled the African climate to which the slaves were adapted. A shared acclimatization linking Indians and northern Europeans suggested that North America was an appropriate racial habitat for Anglo-Americans, and suggests a white ease of acquiring “nativeness” in America that Africans supposedly did not possess. The combination of notions that Africans are not compatible with a democratic free-market society and that prejudice against them makes it socially impossible for Africans to succeed in America underpinned the Colonization movement to ship freed Africans slaves back to Africa.

10. This supposition is inspired by critic Thomas S. Gladsky’s observation that Cooper voiced admiration and sympathy for various non-Anglo-Americans in their home countries (Germans, Irish, etc.) while fretting over their presence in a U.S. society that, this critic argues, Cooper wished to keep ethnically and culturally homogenous.

11. Doolen places *Pioneers* in the context of the rise of the Colonization movement and the Missouri Compromise, and sees the novel as an exploration of the dangers of racial tensions and prejudices to the new nation: “Cooper, an astute and active public commentator, neither sidesteps nor ignores the contradictions of a putative American liberty. The representation of white hegemony in *Pioneers* does not come easily; Cooper repeatedly demonstrates in *Pioneers* an underlying current of racial violence that unsettles the formation of an ideal republic” (133).
12. Nonetheless, it is significant that Cooper flirts with the prospect of an Indian-white marriage, particularly if, as many scholars have concluded, the novel is modeled on the history of Cooper’s family, and that Elizabeth Cooper was modeled on his own sister.

13. It is also worth noting that Edwards’s secret racial identity is just the first instance of a recurring motif in Cooper’s work in which whites are mistaken for Indians (as we shall see in Mohicans and Wept), a phenomenon that emphasizes the similarity between the two races, although, significantly, Cooper’s Indians are never mistaken for whites.

14. Claims that mixed-race persons suffered from physical weakness, greater susceptibility to disease, increasing infertility, and insanity would be promulgated in the 1840s and 1850s by Josiah Nott and other advocates of polygenesis, the theory that human races were created by God separately and represent different species that should not mix (Stanton 66-67).

15. Aged Chingachgook dies as the result of a fire carelessly started by whites and allows himself to be killed in the fire so that his friends can rescue a white woman (405). Critic Davis interprets Chingachgook’s death as the act of a noble savage who returns to his native ways after having adopted many white ways in his later years, but the circumstances of Chingachgook’s death in Pioneers echoes that of legendary Lenape chief Tamunund, famed in American mythology for handing over land peacefully to whites and who will appear as a character in Mohicans. Aged Tamunund, in a well-known legend, died in a fire caused by careless young Indians and declined to rescue himself (Cabeen 437). I would argue that Cooper’s layering of the Tamunund death story into Chingachgook’s reinforces the symbolic message of Cooper’s last Mohican as a figure of the Indian fatalistically giving up in the face of the inevitability of white conquest and Indian extinction.

16. Mohicans is full of a confusingly imprecise discussion of the various “gifts” and “natur6s” (sic) of Indians and whites, concerned more with moral and cultural development than with physical difference.

17. In his 1831 British introduction to Mohicans, Cooper also wittily took a swipe at the nascent theory of polygenesis (in which races were said to have been created separately and thus possessed of different natures) as well as indicating his own skepticism about theories of racial inequality when he commented: “Like nations of high pretensions, the American Indian gives a very different account of his own tribe or race from that which is given by other people. He is much addicted to overestimating his own perfecti6ons, and to undervaluing those of his rival or enemy; a trait which may possibly be thought corroborative of the Mosaic [that is, the biblical] account of the creation” (xxviii).

18. Cooper never fully explains the logic of Uncas’s transformation. Would Uncas have been advanced even more centuries if the object of his affection were fully white? If contact with white women catapults Indians towards higher plains of civilized development, might not the solution then be to provide them with plenty of such white women?

19. Tamunund had ceded Indian lands to whites peacefully and by doing so had become “Saint Tammany,” who embodied the righteous transfer of America into white hands.

20. Uncas is already dead, readers of Pioneers would already know that Chingachgook will die without any additional children, and Tamunund, the mythical chief on whose death scene Cooper had based Chingachgook’s, is dejectedly asking why he should go on living now that his people are so decimated.

21. After voicing romantic historicism through his narrator, Cooper then invokes the authority of the mythical Tamunund only to very subtly undermine it by observing and gently mocking the very literary appropriation of Tamunund by Americans in which he is at that moment engaging. When Tamunund first appears in Mohicans, Cooper explains that the ancient chief’s fame “has since transmitted his name, with some slight alteration [meaning the ignorant use in white culture of the name “Tammany”], to the white usurpers of his ancient territory, as the imaginary tutelary saint of a vast empire” (356). Although Cooper may be congratulating himself for getting the name right, this reference to ignorant and self-serving
appropriation of an Indian figure by whites in order to manufacture a national mythology seems a very self-aware and winking moment for Cooper as he, at this very moment in the novel, begins to do the same.

22. The celebration of tribal purity in Indians links them yet again to Saxons, since Saxonism was part of a larger discourse of Germanic supremacy (the Saxons were originally a Germanic peoples), which celebrated the supposed purity of the German bloodline. This claim was built upon the fourth-century Roman descriptions of their “Germani” adversaries in the work of the historian Tacitus, who claimed that the Germani were not only taller and stronger and fiercer warriors than the Romans, but that they disdained to mix with other peoples (Painter 29-33). Paradoxically, it is in part this parallel racial purity that, along with the other parallels between ancient Germani-Saxons and the “noble” Indian savage, made possible Cooper’s rhetorical move of employing racial amalgamation between the two races as a means of accomplishing American subjecthood. For example, Cooper’s 1831 British introduction to Mohicans repeatedly refers to Indians as “chaste” (xxvii), an attribute attributed to German warriors by Tacitus (Painter 29-33).

23. This theory was advanced in Barbara Mann’s 1998 article, ”Man with a Cross: Hawkeye Was a ‘Half-Breed,’” on the basis of his many anxious protestations to whiteness and arguments about the light skin of many northeastern American Indians. Critic Lindsey Claire Smith speculates that Bumppo’s Moravian heritage may have been intended to invoke for his readers that group’s supposed reputation for living farther out in the wilderness than other whites and taking Indian wives, and anxiety over being outed as a half-breed explains Bumppo’s recurrent assertions of his pure-white racial status (Smith). While there is no corroborating evidence to prove Smith’s speculation that Cooper intended readers to believe Bumppo was biracial, Cooper’s introduction to Mohicans cites an account by a Moravian missionary who indeed had lived in close contact with Indians far from white settlements—John Gottlieb Heckewelder’s 1819 History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighboring States—as a primary source for his depiction of Indians.

24. Buffon imagined America, which he never visited, as a humid swamp in which “all the animals are much smaller than those of the Old Continent” (5: 115) and where even Old Continent creatures “shrink and diminish” (5: 129). Buffon’s notion of American degeneracy “prov[ed] a resilient…way for those who despised America to criticize the fledgling nation” (Sivils 346) and amounted to a form of taxonomical phallic measuring at America’s expense. Thomas Jefferson had offered an extended rebuttal of Buffon’s characterization of America’s natural environment in Notes on the State of Virginia (Sivils 355). Jefferson went so far as to send Buffon a gift of impressively large and erect antlers from American moose, elk, and caribou to prove his point (Sivils 354).

25. Beyond this fictional embodiment of the falseness of American degeneracy, Cooper introduces a character who both ridicules Buffon by name and simultaneously embodies what Cooper sees as the foolish errors and arrogance of scientists. Dr. Bat, a naturalist traveling in the Great Plains, again and again derides Buffon (“Buffon! a mere compiler! One who flourishes on the foundations of other’s labours” (69)), and boasts that his findings will “put the sneering imitators of the Frenchman de Buffon to shame!” (70). Dr. Bat, however, proves to be an inept and unreliable analyzer of American fauna, as he repeatedly misidentifies and exaggerates the creatures he sees, most comically when he mistakes his own “ass” (donkey) for a gigantic and terrifying beast with horns, serrated teeth, and huge talons (71-72). Cooper introduces a hint of self-mockery with Dr. Bat, since Cooper, like Buffon, is also a mere “compiler,” given that he relies on other people’s accounts of the Great Plains, and Cooper is also, in Prairie, exaggerating the size of the (human) creatures of the Great Plains. Nonetheless, Cooper’s counter to Buffon does not argue against environmental adaptation per se, but instead argues that the American environment is healthier and more varied than Buffon claimed.

26. “The inferiority of the American environment and its plants and animals could be seen as symptoms of the failure of its indigenous people to actively modify it to meet their needs” (120).
27. Cooper’s concern was with North American Indians in the lands that Americans either occupied or held title to, so that, when Dr. Bat claims that Indians have created no pyramids, no mention is made of the pyramids and impressive stone ruins of the Aztecs and Maya in Central America.

28. One of the most commonly cited measures in this period of supposed Indian degradation caused by contact with whites was the susceptibility of Indians to alcohol abuse and addiction, and the collapse of social customs and moral character that was supposed to attend this addiction. For an excellent review of the treatment of this issue in American literature in this period, see: Davis, Randall C. “Fire-Water in the Frontier Romance: James Fenimore Cooper and ‘Indian Nature.’” *Studies in American Fiction* 22.2 (1994): Print.

29. Cooper backpedals on the subversive premise that African-Americans will one day be the intellectual and moral equals of Anglo-Americans by suggesting that they will “disappear” before that ever occurs. That backpedaling resembles that which Lydia Maria Child would employ in her generally radical *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called African*, in which she supported the right for blacks and whites to intermarry if they so chose but then quickly assured her readers that, “Under existing circumstances, none but those whose condition in life is too low to be much affected by public opinion, will form such alliances” (*Appeal* 209-10).

30. *Notions*’ narrator opines that, “The free blacks are found hovering as near as possible to the slave States, because the climate of the south is what they crave” (287).

31. While assuring readers that slavery does not destabilize American society in the present or near future, Cooper’s narrator suggests that this won’t necessarily always be so: “I do not think that slavery under any circumstances can entail very serious danger on the dominion of the Whites, in this Country, *for at least a century or two* [emphasis added]. Districts might be ravaged beyond a doubt, but the prodigious superiority of the Whites in every thing that constitutes force is the pledge of their power” (613).

32. “That neither the United States, nor any individual State, has ever taken possession of any land that, by usage or construction, might be decreed the property of the Indians, without a treaty and a purchase, is, I believe, certain. How far an equivalent is given, is another question: though I fancy that these bargains are quite as just as any that are ever driven between the weak and the strong, the intelligent and the ignorant. It is not pretended that the value of the territory gained is paid for; but the purchase is rather a deference to general principles of justice and humanity, than a concession to a right in the Indians, which itself might admit of a thousand legal quibbles” (282).

33. Cooper’s next work on Indian-white relations, *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*, set in the seventeenth century among the first Puritan colonists in New England, brought Indian-white racial amalgamation from the distant theoretical future into the mythical past of his fiction for the first time, and depicted an actual interracial relationship with genuine sympathy.

34. Cooper’s move to bring Indian-white amalgamation from the distant future into the present of one of his novels is accompanied by a corresponding absence of the romantic historicism that had persisted through all of Cooper’s previous Indian-related works. In this work, Cooper never claims any inferiority of moral or intellectual capacity among Indians caused by a slower rate of civilized development than whites. The differences between the races in *Wept* are clearly cultural rather than racial, and the novel is full of examples of those cultural gaps being bridged through cohabitation. Even before Ruth learns Indian ways and learns to love Conanchet after she is captured by his tribe, Conanchet had himself been captured by her family as a boy in the course of a battle between whites and Indians, learning some white ways and developing affection for his captors.

35. “The Spirit that made the earth…is very cunning. He has known where to put the hemlock, and where the oak should grow. He left the moose and the deer to the Indian hunter, and he has given the horse and the ox to a Pale-face. Each tribe hath its hunting-grounds and its game. The Narragansetts know the taste of a clam, while the Mohawks eat the berries of the mountains…. The leaf of the Hemlock is like the leaf of
the sumach; the ash, the chestnut; the chestnut, the linden; and the linden, the broad-leaved tree which bears the red fruit, in the clearing of the Yengeese, but the tree of the red fruit is little like the Hemlock! Conanchet is a tall and straight hemlock, and the father of Narra-mattah is a tree of the clearing, that bears the red fruit. The Great Spirit was angry when they grew together” (357).

36. Wallace suggests that the name “Ergot” suggests not the “disease of rye…but rather the eighteenth-century usage to ergotize, to quibble and quarrel” (193).

37. While Wallace interpreted this satire as reflective of a total rejection of Buffon (193), in fact it is Buffon’s claims of American degeneracy that are mocked rather than necessarily the entire theory of environmental adaptation, and Wept is arguably consistent with Cooper’s anti-Buffonian characterization of Indians in Prairie and Buffonian characterization of blacks in Notions.

38. Anthropometrics had been a stream of race-science discourse since the mid-eighteenth century. The most famous form of anthropometric racial parsing was craniometry, the measuring of the exterior and interior dimensions of sample skulls from various races. Craniometry was popularized initially by German physiologist and anthropologist Johan Friedrich Blumenbach (1752-1840), who proposed a highly influential division of humanity into five races (Caucasian, American, Ethiopian, Malaysian, and Mongolian) based on a taxonomy of skull shapes. Blumenbach’s major work, On the Natural Variety of Mankind (1776), also introduced the notion that the purest and most beautiful variant on the white race was to be found in the Caucuses, whence Blumenbach proposed the race originated, and from which the concept of the “Caucasian” race derives (Painter 86). A highly popular variant on craniometry was the craze on both sides of the Atlantic for phrenology, which claimed that the shape of particular areas of the skull represent moral, intellectual, and spiritual capacities. As Cooper wrote Wept in Europe, racial craniometry was about to surge in popular acceptance in what became known as the “American School” of ethnology. In the late 1820s, Philadelphia doctor Samuel Morton was preparing to publish his extensive (but deeply flawed) comparison of Indian and European skulls, Crania Americana, which would be published in 1839. This tome, armed with copious charts and thousands of “scientific” measurements, concluded that Indians consistently had smaller interior skull capacities (and hence brain sizes) than Europeans. Cooper may very well have been aware of Morton’s work even before the publication of Crania Americana, but regardless such anthropometric notions were in the air in the 1820s. For a brilliant analysis of the influence of unconscious racism on Morton’s interpretation of his skull-measurement data, see Stephen Jay Gould’s The Mismeasure of Man (1981).

39. “I spoke merely of his secondary or acquired habits…. The man is assuredly a White…as may be seen by divers particulars in his outward conformation, viz. in the shape of the head, the muscles of the arms and the legs, the air and gait, besides sundry other signs, that are familiar to men who have made the physical peculiarities of the two races their study” (221).

40. While Cooper’s Wept may have been influenced by Hobomok, both novels ultimately derive from the controversial narrative of Mary Jemison, whose story of her life lived voluntarily with Indians, with its sympathetic portrayal of Indians and interracial love, contradicted the conventions of the Indian captivity narrative in which white women suffered during involuntary captivity by Indian “savages.”

41. Significantly, Hobomok was not just any Indian. He was, along with the more well-remembered Squanto, one of the real-life Indians whose generosity helped the Plymouth pilgrims survive their first years in Massachusetts. The kindness of Hobomok and Squanto, like that of Tamunund, metamorphosed in American national mythology from a generous welcome, or at least a generosity to helpless guests, into a genial forfeiture of the continent.

42. While Child’s was a more radically explicit rendition of Indian-white amalgamation that Cooper’s, Karcher aptly notes that Child’s “conception of assimilation amounts to cultural genocide. Only if Indians cease to be Indians, it implies, can they earn a place in the society that is dispossessing them. That is why Hobomok must go away, leaving his half-English son the questionable honor of joining white society” (xxxii-xxiii). Karcher notes the consistency of Child’s underlying concept of assimilation as cultural
genocide in her novel *A Romance of the Republic* (1867), as I will explore in my chapter on Child and Caroline Lee Hentz: “Child would never fully transcend the limitations her first novel *Hobomok* betrayed when it integrated Hobomok’s son into American society at the price of his Indian Heritage. Even where she pictures a reciprocal influence taking place between the quadroon heroines and their white benefactors, Child articulates an ideal of assimilation that remains profoundly ethnocentric. America’s people of color, it posits, must melt into the predominant white culture, enriching that culture in the process, but losing their own distinctive identity” (xxxiii-xxxiv).

43. Cooper’s feminizing of the American frontier body in *Wept* adds an intriguing wrinkle to the insights of feminist critics like Nina Bayne and, more recently, Denise Mary MacNeil, who have insightfully contrasted Cooper’s patriarchal frontier tales with the strong female characters and wider range of female character in frontier stories (both fictional and autobiographical) in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. See: MacNeil, Denise Mary. *The Emergence of the American Frontier Hero, 1682-1826*. Gender, Action, and Emotion. 2009.

44. *Hobomok* was written four years before the start of Child’s career of advocacy (Karcher xi), which began with the Indian-rights movement and eventually led to her long career as an abolitionist. Although both novels’ inclusion of Indian-white amalgamation and marriage tested the limits of cultural taboos, neither author’s career was damaged by it, and in fact *Hobomok* launched Child’s career. It is significant that neither the fictional Indian-white amalgamation in *Hobomok* nor Child’s eventual public advocacy on behalf of living Indians was sufficient to scuttle her rising literary career, but her advocacy of social equality for African-Americans, including the right to marry whites, resulted in a scandal that cost her a lucrative career as a mainstream popular writer, although she went on to be an influential and widely read writer within the abolition movement (Karcher xi) whose use and development of the tragic-mulatto genre cemented her association with this taboo topic. For Cooper, on the other hand, penning a fictional racial amalgamation between Indians and whites in the mythical colonial past was not a signal of the beginning of a career of progressive advocacy for America’s living racial “others.” Cooper continued to have a long career in the literary mainstream and, not coincidentally, kept his distance from political advocacy for living Indians and African-Americans, and, upon his return to the United States in 1833, became known for an increasingly panicked conservative response to Jacksonian democracy and ethnic and cultural diversity in a country he no longer recognized. “Although contemporary scholars such as Karcher argue that Child’s subversive vision of a racially egalitarian future is contravened in Cooper’s work, nineteenth-century critics regarded the miscegenation motifs in *Hobomok* and in *The Wept* as equally seditious. An anonymous *North American Review* commentator characterized Child’s plot as ‘a train of events not only unnatural, but revolting...to every feeling of delicacy in man or woman.’ And Hugh Swinton Legare, writing for *The Southern Review*, perceived in Cooper’s novel an attempt to ‘reconcile those who can be reconciled to the revolting union of red and white.’ See Rev. of *Hobomok* 263 and Legare 223” (Lambert 81-82).

45. The association of the Magi with individual races would have been well known to biblically literate nineteenth-century American readers, and the biblical names stand out from the otherwise Germanic character names in the novel. Balthazar’s family repeatedly refers to themselves as a “race,” alluding to the “calamity of our race” whose stigma has “humiliated our race for generations” (299).

46. Sanborn proposes that *Headsman* be seen as an allegory for black-white amalgamation in the U.S. (based primarily on the race-associated Magi after whom Cooper names each family); however, the novel’s story line also parallels another marginalized and exploited racial-ethnic group: Gypsies. The source of the Balthazar family’s social ostracism in *Headsman* is their status as members of a reviled hereditary occupation, that of executioner. The seminal eighteenth-century work on European Gypsies (see Grellman) claims that Gypsies were bound into just this occupation in Hungary and Transylvania, among the “infamous professions” that a recent scholar has proposed “offered a partial explanation for the social aversion with which Gypsies have been confronted throughout history” (Willems 52).

47. In the novel, a man named Balthazar (named after the New Testament Magus traditionally said to represent the African race) is trapped in the socially stigmatized role of executioner and seeks to help his
family escape his socially marginalized position by taking on a new family name and passing for a higher social class, making *Headsman*, in Sanborn’s argument, the first American novel of racial “passing” (4). A romance ensues between Balthazar’s son and the daughter of Melchior (the Magus representing the European race), a young woman of a higher class whose family is scandalized by the groom’s true heritage.

48. In *Notions*, Cooper wrote that blacks do not display “animal suffering,” suggesting that Africans experience even less pain in bondage that mules or oxen, to say nothing of whites (598).

49. There is no evidence that Turner or any of his fellow rebels knew anything about Garrison.

50. Sanborn convincingly argues that *Headsman* is just the sort of literary response to the issue that Cooper would have written, one reflecting his abstract notions of human equality, his insistence that literature not depict contemporary political issues too directly (10), and his minimal personal and ideological investment in the issue.

51. However, if *Headsman* was indeed intended as an allegory of American intolerance it is a remarkably muddled one. Melchior’s decision to consent to his daughter’s marriage to Balthazar’s son occurs offstage, and only after it has been revealed that the groom is not, in fact, Balthazar’s son, and thus not, in the allegorical terms of the novel, “black.” Thus Cooper reverts in *Headsman* to the same narrative move he used in *Pioneers* to resolve the tension caused by a proposed interracial marriage, in the process undermining what seemed to be the rhetorical mission of the work.

52. Among *Headsman*’s lost opportunities is the novel’s lack of an allegorical equivalent to race science. Having seemingly abandoned theories of racial inequality, Cooper did not take the opportunity to make them a target of either satire or condemnation, leaving the discrimination against the family of headsmen purely a matter of social prejudice, and one that is ultimately rendered moot by the last-minute de-blacking of the young groom. *Headsman* reveals that Cooper was far enough from being the anti-miscegenationist that Fiedler imagined to have penned such a work.

53. For a discussion of Cooper’s characterization of Irish “bogtrotters” and German criminals, see Gladsky 51.

54. Cooper had praised and aided Poles involved in an uprising against the Russian czar and participated in relief efforts sending food to Ireland during the famine (Gladsky 44-45).

55. Cooper praised the “amalgamation” of English and Dutch colonists into a new American character (*History of the Navy of the United States* 3), but mocked Dutch-Americans who did not acculturate to Anglo-American language and culture and praised those who did (Gladsky 49).

**Chapter Three**

1. Fredrickson noted that, although there is no record of Stowe mentioning Kinmont or having read or known his work, Stowe lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, when Kinmont gained fame through controversial public lectures in 1837-38, published the next year as *Twelve Lectures on the History of Man* (1839) (Fredrickson 104). Fredrickson’s argument rests primarily on the similarity between Kinmont’s ideas and those that structure Stowe’s handling of race in *UTC*.

2. Subsequent attempts to create a genealogy of Stowe’s racial ideas—for instance the speculation that Kinmont derived his ideas from the philosopher Swedenborg (Donovan 1995)—have not substantially changed our understanding of Stowe.
3. The increased critical interest in *Dred* in recent decades has largely focused on interpreting the failed slave revolt at the center of the novel. For many critics in the 1970s and 1980s, the failure of the revolt renders *Dred* a failed work. Fredrickson, in the same work in which he traced the race-theory genealogy of *UTC*, says of *Dred* that Stowe’s attempt to “deal with a different kind of black man, a rebel modeled on Nat Turner” was “to say the least, hindered...by her assumptions about Negro character and her basic revulsion to the idea of black retaliation against whites” (112) but did not extend his intellectual-genealogical approach to *Dred*. Biographer Joan Hedrick was more sympathetic than many in the “failed work” camp, arguing that Stowe was flummoxed by “the hardening climate of the 1850s” in which “neither evolutionary reform nor slave rebellion appeared a feasible solution to Stowe” but that nonetheless “the failure of her plot reflected a failure of her political imagination” (260-61). Since 2000, a group of critics have claimed that the failure of the revolt was part of a rhetorical strategy intended to avoid confirming ideas of African savagery (Rowe 2002, Newman 1992), to privilege white advocacy for slaves over the direct speech and action of enslaved Africans (Delombard 2002), or, paired with the failed legal challenges and reform efforts of the novel’s white Clayton family, to establish the need for external (that is, Northern) political action to end slavery, making *Dred* essentially a “campaign novel” (Grant 2000) for John Charles Frémont’s run as the first Republican presidential candidate in 1856. Stowe’s extended attack on Southern courts and slave law has been the other topic most often addressed in recent criticism on *Dred* (Delombard 2002, Korobkin 2007, Noguchi 2010). None have addressed the puzzling fact that Stowe had, in *Dred*, abandoned the theorization of race that played such a large role in the propagandistic and commercial success of *UTC*, and with which Stowe is so thoroughly associated in the criticism of the last hundred and fifty years.

4. The revelation of Stowe’s surprising theoretical switch through the longitudinal comparison of racial theorization in Stowe’s work provides additional evidence of the efficacy of my methodology. And recognition of *Dred*’s Mandingo-Saxonism offers an opportunity to bring the strategy of tracing genealogies of race-theory influence, a strategy that has languished in recent criticism, together with the lively contemporary discussion of Stowe as a transatlantic author.

5. The first major evidence of this transformation in Stowe’s moral framing of African-American violent resistance to tyranny appeared one year prior to writing *Dred*, in Stowe’s introduction to William C. Nell’s *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (1855). In that brief introduction Stowe signaled the direction of her thinking when she stated that, “The colored race have been generally considered by their enemies, and sometimes even by their friends, as deficient in energy and courage. Their virtues have been supposed to be principally negative ones. This little collection...will redeem the character of the race from this misconception, and show how much injustice there may often be in a generally admitted idea” (5). It is worth noting that Stowe characterizes the “virtues” that she had herself ascribed to African-Americans in * UTC* as “negative,” that “energy and courage” were Saxonist code words, and also the equivocation in her concluding “may often.” The Mandingo-Saxonist direction of her thinking and its ambiguities are both visible here the previous year.

6. William P. Mullaney notes that, “In the four years between the publication of [UTC] and *Dred*, an undercurrent of uncertainty seems to have developed in Stowe’s abolitionism, one that implies that the woman-centered agenda of the first novel is no longer a feasible strategy to achieve the end of slavery. In *Dred*, it appears that the problem of violence between male slave owners and male slaves had escalated to the point where it could no longer be solved in the kitchens across the country, but Stowe seems at a loss to suggest other possible remedies for the conflict. This confusion regarding the problem of race-slavery exposes significant flaws in Stowe’s widely accepted feminist agenda and illustrates how the factor of race further complicates Stowe’s already problematic construction of masculinity” (146-47).

7. Stowe’s descriptions of Dred echo Emerson’s swooning homoerotic fantasies of “broad-fronted, broad-bottomed Teutons” (*English Traits* 299), a vision of Saxon masculinity Emerson picked up from Thomas Carlyle.

8. A reward notice published in the Washington, D.C., newspaper the *National Intelligencer* on September 14, 1831, between the revolt and Turner’s capture, describes him as “5 feet 6 inches high, weighs between 150 and 160 pounds...broad shoulders...rather knockkneed [sic]” (qt. in Aptheker 294).
9. Levine points out numerous ways in which Stowe crafts Milly to resemble Truth, beyond the content of their arguments. Stowe endows Milly with a tall and strong physique like that for which Truth was famous (the essence of her famous “Ain’t I a Woman” speech is, after all, that she has done every labor a male slave was put to) and a distinctive head wrap that was a kind of trademark for Truth, and, most tellingly, she transfers to Milly Truth’s experience of a mistress selling away her last child after promising not to, and of a murderous rage that the grieving mother is only barely able to suppress with Christian principle (181; Levine, Martin Delany, 165-68). Stowe’s embodiment of these two warring impulses within the free African-American community in the veiled but recognizable figures of Douglass and Truth further strengthens Levine’s argument that Stowe’s encounters with forceful and impressive African-Americans whom she met after the publication of UTC contributed significantly to the changing ideas about the character of African-Americans evident in Dred. Stowe herself wrote about the confrontation between Douglass and Truth in an 1863 article for the Atlantic (Levine, “Introduction” xxiv).

10. In fact, Stowe herself adopted precisely this style and tone of righteous religious anger and threats of bloody divine retribution in the introduction to the British edition of Dred (the first edition to be published). Stowe offered a far more genteel and conciliatory introduction in her subsequent American edition. One can only speculate on the combination of political and commercial impulses that led to this change.

11. “Although John Brown's contemporaries compared him to many historical figures...Cromwell was mentioned most often. To Frank Sanborn, Brown was ‘a Puritan soldier, such as were common enough in Cromwell's day, but have not often been seen since’; to George Steams, he was ‘a Cromwellian Ironside introduced in the nineteenth century for a special purpose’; to Mary Steams, ‘some old Cromwellian hero suddenly dropped down’; to Mary Steams, ‘some old Cromwellian hero suddenly dropped down’; to Wendell Phillips, ‘a regular Cromwellian, dug up from two centuries’; to Richard Hinton, ‘a Puritan brought back from the days of Cromwell’; to James Hanway, ‘the Oliver Cromwell of America’; and so on” (Reynolds, John Brown 230).

12. Demonstrating her shift towards more militant, sterner models of Protestant Christianity, Stowe also compares Dred to the Valois (210), a group of persecuted seventeenth-century Protestants besieged by Catholic forces in the Italian alps, whose cause was advocated by Oliver Cromwell, the Puritan revolutionary who overturned the English king and whose bloody religious wars in England were increasingly taken as a model of Puritan crusading by American abolitionists in the years leading up to and including the Civil War.

13. That the Cromwell whom abolitionists admired was essentially a Saxon-like Christian (whose revolt against the “tyranny” of both pope and king sprang from the natural “pride” and fierceness of his racial character) was no coincidence. As critic David S. Reynolds has pointed out (John Brown 231), American abolitionists knew Cromwell primarily through the interpretation of Englishman and vicious Saxon-supremacist Thomas Carlyle, one of the most ardent and influential advocates of a Saxon superiority originating not merely in culture and democratic institutions but in a Saxon genius for independence.

14. The desire to reconcile the conflicting twin Anglo-American values of Christianity and Saxonist “manliness” would spawn, in this same period, the “muscular Christianity” movement’s “commitment to health and manliness,” a mixture of Christianity, sports, and clean living that contributed to the founding of the YMCA and athletic programs in various religious schools and universities (N. Watson 81-82).

15. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century “adulation of the Anglo-Saxon period as a golden age of free institutions [and a] belief in Anglo-Saxon freedom, used to defend popular liberties, had by the middle of the nineteenth century been transformed into a rationale for the domination of peoples throughout the world.... The Anglo-Saxonism of these early centuries was in large part nonracial. Although Anglo-Saxon institutions were praised, there was generally little interest in specific racial characteristics, in innate physical or intellectual attributes separating the Anglo-Saxons from other peoples” (Horsman 387-88).

16. One such literary effort offers a revealing contrast with Stowe’s Dred. Lydia Maria Child’s short story “The Black Saxons” (1841) engages in a very similar literary project, but with an important distinction. In
Child’s story, a slaveholder fond of reading tales of the Saxon Robin Hood’s rebellion against England’s despotic Norman aristocracy comes to recognize that African slaves are bound to similarly rise up against their oppression with equal or greater justification. Reflecting on the gathering of slaves debating escape or murderous uprising, Child’s slaveholder ponders, “Was not the spirit that gleamed forth as brave as…the Saxon Robin Hoods?” (204). Child’s Saxonism, unlike Stowe’s, was based on a pre-racial early form in which the specialness of Saxons lay in their culture and institutions rather than in innate racial traits. Child makes a universal, humanist argument in this story, granting Africans equal humanity to Saxons and making no claims of innate racial traits. Child’s “Black Saxons” was included within a chapter of the book *Colored Patriots of the American Revolution* (1855) for which Stowe wrote the introduction, increasing the likelihood that she would have been familiar with this work.

17. Stowe links her African parsing to its European model when she draws the following analogy: “If slaveholders and kidnappers had been busy for years in Europe stirring up wars in different countries, and sending all the captives to be sold in America, the mixture of Swedes Danes, Germans, Russians, Italians, French, might have gone under the head of Whitemen. The negroes of this country are a mixture torn from tribes and countries quite dissimilar” (*Men of Our Times* 385).

18. Stowe’s choice to make the Gordon family of Scottish rather than English ancestry may reflect her post-UTC friendship with the Duchess of Argyle, and perhaps the assertions by Thomas Carlyle that the Lowland Scots, his ancestors, were Saxons rather than Celts.

19. By making Lisette’s white blood French rather than Irish, Stowe provides a Celt to reinforce the supposed superiority of Saxons while avoiding the rampant Irish-bashing of nativist politics, and against whose presence in the Americas (along with the Spanish) American Saxonism had long defined itself.

20. Stowe tells us everything she has to say about the “Eboe” tribe when describing the mixed heritage of Harry, the novel’s mulatto hero, who “was the son of his master, and inherited much of the temper and constitution of his father, tempered by the soft and genial temperament of the beautiful Eboe mulatress who was his mother” (38). And when a (relatively) progressive Southern planter, who plans to educate his slaves for future freedom, opines that, “There is a wonderful and beautiful development locked up in this Ethiopian race” (23), the term seems to be a more complimentary stand-in for “African” or “negro,” rather than a reference to the East African Christian kingdom.

21. The Mandingos are a largely Muslim tribe that originated in Mali, part of a larger Mande-language group that in the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries swept into West Africa as part of a religious-military jihad. Present either as rulers, traders, or learned advisors in a huge swath of West Africa that includes the territories of present-day Liberia, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Burkina Faso, and the majority of the population along the Gambia river, in particular, Mandingos were among the first sub-Saharan tribes or states encountered by European explorers working their way south along the Atlantic coast, and resided in a region that provided approximately a quarter of the African slaves brought to the Americas (Schaffer 325).

22. The degree to which individual manifestations of Mandingo-Saxonism actually suggested something approaching racial equality between Saxons and Mandingos, rather than merely elevating Mandingos above other Africans, varied enormously in the discourse across the centuries. Stowe’s Mandingo-Saxonism is characterized by the smallest gap between the claimed capabilities of Mandingos and Saxons of any white author adopting the discourse that I have yet encountered. For African-American appropriation and reinterpretation of Mandingo-Saxonism, see this dissertation’s afterword.

23. The primary vehicles for Mandingo-Saxonist rhetoric were English-language firsthand narratives of African travels such as Scottish explorer Mungo Park’s 1816 *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* and collections of “voyage” narratives and ethnographic texts culled from many European and classical sources. The primary English-language compilations were Astle’s 1745 multivolume *Collection of Voyages*, Prichard’s ethnological work *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* (first published in 1813, revised and expanded through 1840), and Louis Agassiz’s contributions to *Types of Mankind* (1854), which drew upon similar works in French such as Xavier Goldberry’s 1802 *Fragments d’un voyage en Afrique*. 


The original sources need not have been Anglo-American in their accounts of Mandingos to resonate with nascent Mandingo-Saxonism in Anglo-American ears.

24. The significance of Stowe’s assertion of a Mandingo identity for Douglass’s mother despite the fact that the image Douglass refers to is that of an Egyptian pharaoh is addressed in this dissertation’s coda.

25. One critic has interpreted Stowe’s characterization to mean that Stowe believed Mandingos in fact had “some white blood” (Gossett 68) and therefore were not pure African, making them essentially mulattoes and their possession of Saxon-like traits no different from Stowe’s depiction of mulattoes in UTC. However, I believe that Stowe’s characterization of Mandingos reflects not merely the notion that they are a “mulatto race” but rather her acceptance of Prichard’s theory of multiple African races, of which Mandingos were grouped among the “Sudanians” rather than the “Negroes.”

26. Significantly, because both the British and Americans attributed their growing mercantile success and dominance of world trade to native Saxon “energy,” Mandingo-Saxonist texts regularly referred to the Mandingo as “shrewd merchants” (Prichard 58) and claimed that “the principle trade of that part of W. Africa which lies between the equator and the great desert is in their hands” (Ripley 139).

27. This is consistent with a general tendency in Anglo-American Mandingo-Saxonism to see the supposed superiority of Mandingos as deriving from race (and relatively closer resemblance to Caucasians) rather than to the culture and religion of Islam. However, Dred does include passages praising Muslims for their unembarrassed acts of daily devotion: “I believe Protestant Christians are the only people on earth who are ashamed of the outward recognition of their religion. The Mahometan will prostrate himself in the street, or wherever he happens to be, when his hour of prayer comes. The Roman Catholic sailor or soldier kneels down at the sound of the vesper bell. But we rather take pride in having it understood that we take our religion moderately and coolly, and that we are not going to put ourselves much out about it” (295). The Mandingos’ status as followers of an Abrahamic religion elevated them above their pagan neighbors in the eyes of many Christian Europeans, and they were admiringly called “the most zealous and rigid Mohammedans in Africa; they observe all the precepts of Islam.” The fact that one of those precepts meant that Mandingos supposedly “drink no intoxicating liquors” must also have raised them in the estimation of an Anglo-American culture infused with the temperance movement (Prichard 58).

28. A 1756 letter written by South Carolina planter Henry Laurens stated that “[t]he slaves from the river Gambia are preferred to all others with us save the Gold Coast” and that they were prized particularly for their height, strength, and intelligence (Pollitzer 41-42). However, a contemporary scholar of slaveholder practices, noting that “South Carolina planters…preferred above all to have slaves from the Senegambia” (Curtin 156-57), attributes this preference to a desire by owners of South Carolina rice plantations for African knowledge and not merely African flesh, citing a 1785 South Carolina advertisement for slaves that boasted, “Negroes from this part of the coast of Africa [Senegambia] are well acquainted with the cultivation of rice” (qtd. in Pollitzer 88-89).

29. Despite the fact that Stowe has been chided by some scholars for her ignorance of the nuances of Southern slavery, these scholars assert that Stowe’s claim that South Carolina was then controlled by owners of large plantations was incorrect and applied more to the Deep South than to the South Carolina, where smaller landholders predominated.

30. In a civic expression of pride, Stowe’s claim that Mandingos “resent government of brute force, and under such are always fractious and dangerous” (Dred 208) endows them with the same characteristics that supposedly made Saxons incline towards democracy and made Saxons alone supposedly capable of living as citizens in a democracy. Certain Mandingo-Saxonist writers, interpreting the preponderance of independent chiefdoms among the Mandingos, concluded that “[t]he Mandingo states are federal republics” (Prichard 62). In this characterization, constructed Mandingos resemble not only the United States, but also the supposed independence of the ancient Germans described by the Roman historian Tacitus, which the German Romanticism that helped shape Saxonism took as evidence of the supposedly consistent Germanic character across the centuries (Painter 27-33).
31. It is significant that this description of Milly appears very early in the novel. Stowe was halfway through her draft of the novel that would become *Dred* when the attack on Senator Sumner and other violence against abolitionists pushed her to the new politics and an embrace of Mandingo-Saxonism. Stowe did not specify Milly’s tribal identity in this passage (though the traits attributed to her certainly resemble the characterizations of Mandingos late in the novel, and no other bellicose African tribe is named in the novel), and does not further emphasize this aspect of Milly’s identity. It seems that either Stowe forgot to revise this passage to name Mandingos specifically in her rush to publication, which would suggest that even before her full radicalization her racial-theory ideas had shifted to understanding African tribal differences to include a fierce bellicosity utterly outside her romantic racialist characterizations in *UTC*; or Stowe intentionally or unconsciously left the identity of Milly’s tribal origins vague in order to not pollute Mandingo-ness with her femininity, however fierce it was.

32. The notion of the axiomatic ugliness of the “Guinea negro” can be found as far back in European race science as Blumenbach, who invoked the concept in the following line meant to prove that the human race was a single species since even the most extremely different varieties (beautiful Circassians and ugly Guinea negroes) can interbreed: “Take, of all who bear the name of man, a man and a woman most widely different from each other; let the one be a most beautiful Circassian woman and the other an African born in Guinea, as black and ugly as possible” (363).

33. Beyond the Mandingo-Saxonist works that Stowe might have encountered in her research, Stowe may have absorbed some of the discourse in antislavery publications. For instance, accounts sent to America by the American Colonization Society of the ongoing efforts to establish the freed-slave colony of Liberia were full of reports of the fearsomeness of the region’s Mandingos. These reports stated that the Muslim Mandingos were nearly impossible to convert to Christianity, compared with their pagan neighbors. More significantly for my purposes, astonished Americans sent back reports that a mighty Mandingo empire in the interior of the country stymied Liberian-American efforts to establish direct access to the rich trade routes connecting West Africa to the Mediterranean, reinforcing the notion that in the Mandingo the Saxon had encountered a kind of rival and peer (d’Azevedo 197-209).

34. Slave-ship rebellions were a favorite topic in abolitionist literature, illustrating that Africans did indeed desire to be free and would fight to gain their freedom when the opportunity for a successful revolt presented itself. Frederick Douglass wrote his short novel *The Heroic Slave* (1853) as a defense of another slave-ship rebel.

35. Although Stowe did not reference the *La Amistad* revolt directly in *Dred*, her description of Dred’s skull—that the “predominant” phrenological “organs” “were those of ideality…veneration, and firmness” (207)—reproduces exactly the report on the revolt-leader Cinque’s skull by the court-appointed phrenologist that was included in the widely published abolitionist pamphlet on the case (*History of the Amistad Captives* 9-10). Stowe’s extended and detailed celebration of the landscape of Dred’s skull

The head, which rose with an imperial air from the broad shoulders, was large and massie, and developed with equal force both in the reflective and perceptive department. The perceptive organs jutted like dark ridges over the eyes, while that part of the head which phrenologists attribute to the moral and intellectual sentiments, rose like an ample dome above them (207)

attributes to a Mandingo rebel a set of skull-shape characteristics understood to be markers of higher human development and commonly claimed as Saxon attributes confirming Saxon superiority, and these descriptions Stowe herself otherwise reserved for only the most admired white heroes in her fiction (need citations). Stowe essentially says of Dred what the *Amistad* phrenologist says of Cinque: “The head is well formed and such as a phrenologist admires…. Such an African head is seldom to be seen [emphasis added]” (9). Thus, regardless of whether Stowe had read the *Amistad* report or not, both she and the *Amistad* case phrenologist cite skull shape to establish that their respective Mandingos are rare exceptions both physically, morally, and intellectually among Africans.
36. Prichard spent decades compiling his *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, releasing revised editions for decades after its first publication, in 1813. This text combined accounts of world peoples from dozens of sources ranging from the classical to the then-contemporary, including travelers, soldiers, missionaries, colonists, and other ethnologists.

37. Monogenesism was embraced by the abolition movement in the U.S. and England, and Prichard became oby far the most influential ethnologist [in England and the U.S.] in the first half of the nineteenth century” (Horsman 397). Monogenesism, long the de facto theory within Judeo-Christian culture, was formulated in the early-nineteenth century in response to the theory of polygenesis in the U.S. and England, and according to polygenesis there was no shared universal human character or capabilities, and not every race was due the moral treatment prescribed by Judeo-Christian theology.

38. Convinced of the ultimate unity of mankind, Prichard was an opponent of slavery and a member of the Aborigines’ Protection Society, a human-rights organization founded to defend the rights and cultures of native peoples in colonized regions (Brantinger 36).


40. A fact acknowledged by proslavery white-supremacist polygenesist evangelist Josiah Nott, who after decades of promoting polygenesist theories accepted the victory of Darwin’s theory of evolution with surprising equanimity since it would have no impact on slavery if “forms that have been permanent for several thousand years, must remain so at least during the life time of a nation” and the Freedman’s Bureau would “not have vitality enough to see the Negro experiment through many hundred generations” (Stanton, 187).

41. Like Prichard, Agassiz seems to never have visited Africa nor spent a great deal of time with Africans, and thus, again like Prichard, his opinions derived primarily from prior Mandingo-Saxonist sources and the examination of skulls and skeletons. However, Agassiz had one brief “direct” experience that influenced him greatly: his 1850 examination of plantation slaves with various tribal heritages on South Carolina plantations. This examination occurred in the process of commissioning now-infamous daguerreotypes (below) of African “types” (Wallis 276-77) augmented by the learned opinion on tribal characteristics of local slaveholders. (These images, now perennial favorites in films, books, and magazines about American slavery, sat unknown to the public in Agassiz’s files for over a century until they were rediscovered and brought to public attention in 1976-77 (Schneider 240).) Thus Agassiz’s “scientific” insights into the differences between Mandingos and Guinea negroes came to him from the tradecraft of a Carolina slaveholder steeped in the tribal parsing and Mandingo preferences documented earlier in this chapter. Agassiz’s Mandingo-Guinea dichotomy received extensive republication, debate (Stephens 200), and discussion in the early 1850s beyond the immediate publication of *Types of Mankind*.

Fig. 3. J. T. Zealy, “Fassena (Carpenter), Mandingo 1850,” Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
42. There is as of yet no direct evidence that Stowe had read Agassiz’s essay from *Types of Mankind*, but it was widely republished in magazines and newspapers across the country and his zinger about Mandingos, Guinea negroes, chimpanzees, and gorillas became perhaps the single most important vehicle for the meme of the Mandingo-Guinea dichotomy. As for Prichard, although Stowe did not cite him as a source for her Mandingo-Saxonist ideas she is on record as having read at least enough of Prichard’s *Researches* to analyze the Egyptian image in that work that Douglass had said resembled his mother in *Men of Our Times* (1868). Furthermore, Stowe’s statements in *Men of Our Times* about American blacks consisting of multiple races, and her parsing of Mandingos from Guinea negroes, followed immediately after her passage on the image in Prichard’s *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* (1851), which is strong circumstantial evidence of her exposure to Prichard’s theories at least by the time *Men* was published, twelve years after she wrote *Dred*. Since these ideas were peculiar to Prichard, the favorite race scientist of the antislavery movement, and Stowe is shown to have read his work by a later date, the conclusion that Stowe derived her Mandingo-Saxonism in *Dred* from Prichard and Agassiz has at least as much evidence in its favor as the identification of Kinmont as the source of *UTC*’s romantic racialism.

Fredrickson noted that, although there is no record of Stowe mentioning Kinmont or having read or known his work, Stowe lived in Cincinnati, Ohio, when Kinmont gained fame through controversial public lectures in 1837-38, published the next year as *Twelve Lectures on the History of Man* (1839) (Fredrickson 104). Fredrickson’s argument rests primarily on the similarity between Kinmont’s ideas and those that structure Stowe’s handling of race in *UTC*. Further attempts at intellectual genealogy have speculated that Kinmont, in turn, derived his ideas from the philosopher Swedenborg (Donovan 24-34). As to Stowe’s exposure to Mandingo-Saxonism more broadly, she may have come across slaveholder tradecraft in the course of her extensive research for *UTC*, although significantly it does not appear in her *Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. (Stowe’s *Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which enumerated her research material
for that novel, contains only one passing mention of Guinea negroes and none of Mandingos (97).) Stowe was certainly aware of the race-science debates that were a key element of the slavery debates, as indicated by her adoption of Kinmont’s theories. What’s more, as one of the world’s most famous opponents of slavery Stowe did not need to work very hard to keep up on these theories, since they were not only discussed in her family, social, and literary circles, but were also sent to her unsolicited. See De L’homme Et Des Races Humaine, a treatise on race by one Henry Hollard, a gift from the author to Stowe inscribed with a worshipful note to Stowe, in the Stowe House library, Hartford, Connecticut.

In fact, a variation on Mandingo-Saxonist discourse can be found even in African-American publications of the period. Frederick Douglass’ Paper cited its Mandingo-associated namesake and another former slave “of pure African blood…[whose] grandfather was an imported Mandingo…[who] are more nearly the pattern of men after which the caste may be moulded [sic] into freemen” and pointedly contrasted them with Uncle Tom-style “[p]atient and pious endurance [that] is not the sort of moral that blunts the edge of tyranny” (July 15, 1853).

43. However and whenever Stowe was exposed to Mandingo-Saxonist discourse, she did not employ it in her work before Dred. The argument that Stowe’s adoption of Mandingo-Saxonism was occasioned by the anti-abolitionist violence of 1856 is bolstered by considering a work Stowe published just one year earlier: First Geography for Children (1855). Stowe’s praise for African-American soldiers in the Colored Patriots of the American Revolution demonstrates that by 1855 she had had already begun rethinking her theorization of African-American character, yet significantly Mandingo-Saxonism is entirely absent from Stowe’s revision that year of her 1833 Primary Geography for Children. Like other works of “geography” in her time, Stowe’s geographies contained characterizations of the world’s races as well as its mountains and rivers. In Stowe’s 1855 Geography, whites are the only race depicted thriving beyond their native geography and slaves were the only Africans she acknowledged living in North America (Ben-Zvi PAGE). Stowe made no mention of Mandingos or Guinea negroes, nor any effort to establish any variety of African as in any way equal to whites. For all her antisalvery sentiment, before proslavery violence against abolitionists shocked her in 1856, Stowe did not turn to Mandingo-Saxonism. But once she did, Stowe adapted Prichard’s and Agassiz’s concepts to fit her narrative requirements.

44. In a further parallel to the issues discussed in my Cooper chapter, in Dred the Gordon plantation, Canema, derived its name from a mythical Indian who guided the Scottish-Saxon Gordon to the spot and then disappeared (37), conferring legitimate title to the land reflected in the plantation bearing his name, as well as hint of romance. And to the extent that Dred—who dies having failed to defeat the whites by force of arms—becomes a noble yet doomed heraldic adversary striking out of the wilderness, he takes on the ideological role of the “Indian,” a complex racial hopscotch in which Africans approach closer to whiteness, in part, by approximating Indians who resembled ancient Germans.

45. Stowe tells us that, “[Dred’s] psychological condition…seemed to be that of a human being who had been seized and possessed, after the manner related in ancient fables, by the wrath of an avenging God,” implying that he is not possessed by the genuine Holy Spirit but mythical false gods (496). Clayton describes Dred’s jeremiad from the treetops at a revival meeting as that of a “crazy fanatic…heated almost to the point of insanity by the scene” (284). Stowe goes so far as to compare Dred to a man possessed by a demon, cast out by Jesus (“[H]e could no more have been taken, or bound, than the demoniac of Gadara” (275)), hardly a ringing endorsement of Christian virtue. Stowe goes on to invoke proto-psychiatric jargon when she says that when experiencing a vision Dred’s “frame assumed the rigid tension of the cataleptic state” (341).

46. Dred’s protégé, Harry, on the other hand, retains his Judeo-Christian association by becoming a Moses figure, leading his people to freedom in the North. Harry’s trek north is, as far as Stowe relates it, peaceful, lacking the violence with which UTC’s Harry defended himself and his escaping comrades during their parallel run for freedom. As such, Harry’s choice to lead an escape rather than to continue Dred’s rebellion after Dred’s untimely death seems to be an ultimate victory of Milly’s feminine Christianity over Dred’s masculine and Saxonist violent retribution, as some critics have argued (“Introduction”, Levine xi). Perhaps Stowe means the reader to attribute Harry’s more feminine Christian actions to the fact that his Scottish blood is mixed not with that of the manly Mandingo but instead of his Eboe mother. Be that as it
may, in terms of racial theorization of the key Saxon traits with which Stowe’s Mandingo-Saxonism endowed Dred and the Mandingo “race,” only masculinity is left fully intact. And masculinity alone does not a Saxon make.

47. Stowe’s ambiguity about racial traits in *Dred* is doubly interesting given that it was specifically a lack of ambiguity for which early-twentieth-century critics devalued Stowe in favor of writers like Melville and Hawthorne. For more on this parallel, see Levine’s introduction to the 2000 edition of *Dred*.

**Chapter 4**

1. Anti-Tom novels were a sub-genre of plantation literature in which pro-slavery writers attempted to match the enormous propaganda and literary success of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) through pro-slavery narratives. The genre often mirrored *UTC*’s characters and events rather closely, and attempted to reproduce Stowe’s highly successful mix of melodrama, sentiment, adventure, humor, and political/religious sermonizing.

2. In the more than forty years since Caroline Lee Hentz’s 1854 novel *The Planter’s Northern Bride* was rescued from critical obscurity by Feminist and Black Studies scholars in the 1970s, criticism on this work has siloed into parallel strains in which Hentz is either praised as a progressive feminist (Baym) or (increasingly) condemned as a defender of Southern slavery (Castronovo, Cuenca, Clymer, Hunt, Stanesa). Both interpretations seem to me correct. As a professional author supporting her husband and children, and one prone to featuring bold heroines, Hentz was certainly one of the “damned mob of scribbling women” about whose trespasses upon the privilege of male authorship Hawthorne famously groused (qtd. in Frederick 231). As an author of proslavery plantation novels, and particularly as the author of *PNB*, an “anti-Tom” novel written explicitly in to the antislavery propaganda coup of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s 1952 novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, Hentz very clearly supported the peculiar institution. However, Hentz’s puzzling addition of a gypsy into the stock cast of characters of the plantation novel reveals an opportunity to integrate the two critical understandings of this complex author. Although various critics have speculated in passing on Claudia’s role as a figure of miscegenation, none has previously examined the role of Claudia’s gypsy identity in the novel’s depiction of black/white relations within American slavery. This interpretation of *PNB* has implications for two major genre categories, since this famous proslavery anti-Tom novel must also be considered potentially as an example of subversive antebellum literature, and since the role of the tragic gypsy Claudia as a proxy for a mulatta means that *PNB* must be added to the growing roll of surprisingly diverse examples of the tragic mulatta narrative.

3. Hentz keeps the two ethnicities distinct, never pairing the terms as “Italian gypsy,” a parsing of exactly which gypsy community her parents belonged to. Nor does Hentz frame Claudia clearly as ethnically gypsy and Italian by national citizenship, as descended from ethnic Italians who live a gypsy lifestyle, or as produced by a mixed marriage between an Italian and a gypsy. Although ultimately Hentz plays more upon Claudia’s gypsy identity, the author essentially alternates between the discursively overlapping ethnicities as it suits her from one moment to the next, as when Hentz has Moreland say to Eulalia about Claudia, “Your unhappy predecessor was destitute of [the] restraining influence [of piety], and became a slave of her own wild passions. Born of an Italian mother, and inheriting from her a warmth and vehemence of character that nothing but religion could control” (344-45).

4. Gypsies are not believed to have been present in the U.S. in any substantial numbers before the 1880s, when various Rom groups arrived as part of increased Balkan and Central European immigration (“Gypsies in the United States”). However, records do suggest that English Romanichal gypsies were among the “criminals” and “vagrants” impressed by the British government into indentured service of the empire’s North American and Caribbean colonies in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Dobson, Hancock Ch. XII “British Shipment to the Americas”). A small group of Romanichal are reported
to have come to the United States in the 1850s to participate in the expanded sale of horses (“Gypsies in the United States”).

5. Jews were in fact a presence in the South, particularly as peddlers and merchants. Making Claudia Jewish would certainly have been a more realistic move. However, doing so would not have provided the particular discursive advantages that Hentz found in the figure of the gypsy, nor posed the same associative dangers.


7. Borrow’s proto-ethnological travelogue *The Zincali, or The Gypsies of Spain* (1841), recounted his years travelling with Roma in England, Spain, Italy, Russia, and elsewhere in Europe, and became the era’s primary authority on gypsies. Borrow’s attitude towards gypsies was complex, shifting from starry-eyed admiration to offhanded contempt, attempting to convert them to Christianity and bourgeois respectability and lamenting that their unique and separate lifestyle was disappearing.

8. More on the British aristocratic fad for driving “gypsy wagons” can be found in Willems, 93-105. Americans did a similar kind of performance when they practiced blackface minstrelsy and “played Indian.” See Eric Lott’s *Love and Theft* and Philip J. Deloria’s *Playing Indian*.

9. For more on the British framing of gypsies as anti-modern and anti-industrial, see Behlmer p.237 and Trumpener p.860.

10. For instance, gypsy discourse penetrated the childhood imagination of Lydia Maria Child. By way of explaining the extent to which she felt alienated from her undemonstrative New England family, Child recounted that when “quite a little girl, [she] remember[ed] imagining that gypsies had changed [her] from some other cradle, and put [her] in a place where [she] did not belong” because she herself “ought to have been a foreigner” since she was “partial to the[ir] excessive warmth” (quoted in Jerng 75-76). While Child’s commentary on her childhood fantasy emphasizes the “warmth” of gypsies and other “foreigners” it also repeats without any self-consciousness or sense of contradiction the old European myth of gypsy child stealing.

11. It was a commonplace in American culture in this era to draw parallels between gypsies and American Indians. Indians’ proverbial itinerancy and presumed doom in the face of industrial capitalism mirrored and perhaps was modeled in part upon the similar framing of gypsies in Europe.

12. Nonetheless, Emerson expressed some doubt about Borrow’s presentation of Gypsies even as he was attracted to that portrayal, saying:

   [W]e suspect the walls of separation between the Gypsy and the surrounding population are less firm than we are here given to understand [and] [W]e think that a traveler of another way of thinking would not find the Gypsy so void of conscience as Mr. Borrow paints him…(Emerson “Zincali Review” 127-28)

   Yet in his journal the next year wrote, “Are you not scared by seeing that the Gypsies are more attractive to us than the Apostles? For though we love goodness & not stealing, yet we also love freedom & not preaching” (Emerson Journals vol. 8:223)

13. My analysis suggests that Hentz can be seen as an author struggling to sufficiently contain her subversive views in order to retain respectability within antebellum Southern culture. This claim is consistent with recent scholarship on subversive antebellum Southern literature. Paul C. Jones’ *Unwelcome Voices: Subversive Fiction in the Antebellum South* (2005) identifies as “subversive” works by James Heath, Frederick Douglass, Edgar Allen Poe, John Pendleton Kennedy, and E.D.E.N. Southworth (Jones).

14. Other examples include Victor Hugo’s Esmerelda in *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831), Meg Merilles in Walter Scott’s *Guy Mannering* (1815), and the heroine of George Eliot’s poem “The Spanish Gypsy” (1854) published the same year as *PNB*. 
15. PNB’s defense of Claudia from charges of sexual promiscuity suggests that Hentz may have been familiar with Englishman George Bellows’ debunking of the European notion of slatternly gypsy women. Bellows claimed that gypsy society greatly valued the chastity and fidelity of its women, and severely punished any infractions against those codes. Emerson’s poem “The Romanny Girl” also features a female gypsy who knows that non-gypsies imagine that she is sexually promiscuous and available to them but in fact is interested only in her own kind, and faithful to her gypsy lover (Emerson “Romanny Girl”).

16. Here Hentz emphasizes the Italian half of the compound ethnic/national identity she created for Claudia, perhaps thinking of the First Italian War of Independence, fought in 1848-49 against the Austrian Empire and still potentially fresh in the mind of an American newspaper reader.

17. See Roberts 56.

18. Moreland acknowledges the origin of “the mulatto, in whose veins the blood of the white man is flowing and brightening their dusky tide…[and who] partakes of the beauty and intelligence of our [white] race,” but never comments on the origins of his own mulatto manservant, just as PNB never addresses the possibility that this manservant might well be Moreland’s half-brother (Hentz 85).

19. Hentz had, in fact, acknowledged an attraction between white men and mulatta women in her earlier novel of Marcus Warland, whose eponymous white hero is attracted to ambiguously colored women who serve as “narrative replacement[s] of the mulatta” and models for PNB’s Claudia (Clymer 115). It seems that, post UTC, Hentz now no longer felt free to play with the racy thrill of slave-slaveholder sexual attraction and instead felt rhetorically obligated to erase it from PNB, at least on the novel’s surface.

20. The notion of a “principle of homogeneousness” was accepted as a commonplace in European and American racial discourse, although as Elise Lemire has observed it shifted from a matter of taste in the early nineteenth century to, by mid-century, scientific claims of innate biological preferences between races equated with species (Lemire 2009).

21. Employing a rhetorical tactic common among the defenders of slavery, Hentz claims that the “horror” of amalgamation not only rarely occurs within slavery but also would be a result of emancipation, which would unleash the rapacious sexual urges of unrestrained African-Americans on the white women of America (Roberts 56).

22. Whereas England’s mid-sixteenth century laws decreeing that all gypsies in the nation be either expelled or executed were a response to the anxieties of an early modern society, this early nineteenth-century legal attack on gypsies was an artifact of its industrializing, modernizing modern moment. In England, the nineteenth century saw a resurgence of laws aimed at controlling and policing gypsies in the countryside, particularly the 1824 Vagrant Act (Behlmer 232). Gypsies were portrayed as a social menace, supposedly thieving and cheating, but largely as unproductive and uncontrolled social elements. Various critics have argued that this spike in social anxiety over ‘gypsies’ reflected a struggle by ruling classes to control the working classes during a period of huge social and economic upheaval as common grazing lands were enclosed in the countryside and peasants were driven into cities to serve as wage slaves for the new industrial economy. Just as ethnic Gypsies had been conflated with each nation’s itinerant and uncontrolled native criminal classes (rogues, thieves, bandits, and whores) across Europe in the early modern period, in nineteenth century England, at the vanguard of industrialization, their name was applied to an ethnically heterogeneous class of persons displaced from country agriculture and perhaps resistant to being herded into cities to man the new machines.

23. Other examples of gypsy-phobia in nineteenth-century English literature include Jane Austen’s Emma (1815), which features a young English woman’s somewhat hysterical fear of gypsies passing in the street, and Walter Scott’s Guy Mannering (1815), in which gypsies steal the child of an aristocrat. Guy Mannering’s storyline mirrored and reinforced a famous legend that economic theorist Adam Smith had himself been kidnapped by gypsies as a child, invoking the possibility of the founding theorist of modern
capitalism disappearing into the primitive superstition and ignorance that gypsies represented to English culture.

24. The disastrous results of a gypsy coming to control the Anglo-Saxon family into which he has been adopted echoes Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights*. Bronte’s identification of Heathcliff as a gypsy is highly ambiguous, since it is unclear whether ‘gypsy’ is meant to be a definitive ethnic identification or merely a catch-all category of social and racial otherness. But a recent critic Maja-Lisa von Sneidern has suggested that Heathcliff might in fact have been a mulatto, or at least that the novel includes that possibility. Mr. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff home from Liverpool, a major port of the slave trade, “where he picked it up and inquired for its owner—not a soul knew to whom it belonged” (*WH* 45). The mysteriousness of his origins renders Heathcliff both less definitively Romanny and even more ‘gypsy’.

25. Roberts notes that Claudia “bears a ‘taint’ in her blood” and that “the notion of a genetic curse is also common is tragic mulatta novels” (Roberts 56).

26. From defending slavery as the will of God rather than a question of individual conscience (Stanesa), to depicting it as a form of political economy superior in benevolence and stability to Northern capitalism (Hunt, Cuence) and more in tune with the values of sentimental domesticity (Cuence).

27. Kant claimed that “negroes” and “gypsies” are disinclined to work because, “the much smaller needs in those lands [the ones in which they first developed] and the little trouble required to satisfy only them requires no great predisposition for keeping oneself busy” (Sikka 153). Kant also grouped the two ethnic/racial groups with women and “Americans” among those “who cannot realize [rationality and moral autonomy] because of the human type to which they belong” (Sikka 156).

28. Grellman was the single greatest influence on nineteenth century Gypsy discourses. Grellman’s 1783 treatise codified ideas about Gypsy origins, racial character, physical characteristics, and language that became the basis of nineteenth century gypsy studies.

29. Although twenty-first-century philologists agree that there is a relationship between the Roma language and Sanskrit, the simple conflation of language and race made by nineteenth century thinkers—that related languages prove biological relationships between groups in a straightforward manner—is no longer taken seriously. Instead, it is recognized that languages influences each other, that peoples of various ethnicities adopt and discard languages over time.

30. In *PNB*, the term “African” is closely associated with the traits of a gypsy-descended character only once. When Effie is returned to Moreland’s home after being kidnapped by Claudia, Hentz’s narrator informs us that the little girl has been polluted by the experience, having become a “little willful being, whose childish prattle was vulgarized by African phrases, learned by constant association with the negroes” and whose “course, violent language” shows that she has “transformed into [a] miniature vixen” (Hentz 479, emphasis mine). Effie’s racialized willfulness, otherwise attributed to her gypsy blood, is now explicitly tied to “association with the negroes” and showing her on her way to becoming a “vixen” like her mother.

31. This is an erroneous attribution that would in mid-nineteenth century America have carried an association with disputed racial origin, as pro- and antislavery factions carried on an extended dispute over whether the ancient Egyptians themselves had been negroes or Caucasians, a proxy battle over claims of the supposed wealth or dearth of ‘negro’ accomplishment (Trafton 63).

32. For more on the motif of gypsies kidnapping children in Victorian children’s literature, see Matthews, in British literature more generally see Nord, and for this myth throughout European culture see Mayall and Willems.

33. Persistent European myths of gypsy child stealing exploded into world headlines in October 2013 when a continent-wide Gypsy panic was sparked when Greek authorities seized a blond haired child found
in the custody of two dark haired, dark-skinned gypsies who were then charged with child stealing and human trafficking (the adults claimed that they had adopted the child at the request of her mother, a Bulgarian Gypsy too poor to raise another child. The story was corroborated by journalists who found the birth mother in a small Bulgarian village, but the Greek authorities persisted in accusing the couple of human trafficking (“Test”). The case inspired police in Ireland to seize a similarly fair-haired Romanny child and arrest its similarly swarthy parents on the strength of a neighbor’s suspicion that the child had been kidnapped. The child and parents were promptly reunited once DNA tests revealed the child was, in fact, the biological child of the parents with whom he lived.

Figure 4: Greek Gypsies and the adopted (Gypsy) daughter whom they were accused of kidnapping from a non-gypsy family. (“Test proves Bulgarian woman mother of mystery girl from Gypsy camp.”)

Figure 5: Bulgarian Gypsy siblings (with a variety of colorings) of girl at center of Greek case. Their mother confirmed that she had given her daughter to the Greek Gypsy couple to raise. (“A Roma Family in Nikolaevo, Bulgaria.”)

34. For more information on Romanian Gypsy slavery, see Beck 1989.

35. As recent criticism has argued that Walt Whitman did in his early temperance novel Franklin Evans (1842).

36. Jackson, for instance, has identified Frances E.W. Harper’s refiguring of the tragic mulatta trope in Mini’s Sacrifice (1869), in which the mulatta does not die from shame but instead survives enslavement and goes on to help her brethren after emancipation. Harper’s use of the tragic mulatto trope to encourage more privileged African-Americans to identify with and aid darker, poorer, and less educated African-Americans rather than merely take advantage of their relatively superior opportunities in post-Civil War America demonstrates that this trope, like racial discourse and scientific theories, were employed in a wider range of ways than has been previously understood by critics (Jackson 48-7).
Chapter 5

1. Despite Child’s radical position on racial amalgamation in the novel, during much of the twentieth century Romance shared in the general condemnation of tragic-mulatta narratives that followed Sterling Brown’s identification and naming of the type in his highly influential 1937 essay, “The Negro in American Fiction.” Brown called the tragic-mulatta narrative “a dangerous concession” to “race snobishness” (144) because “the superiority wished upon the octoroons was easily attributed to the white blood coursing in their veins, and the white audience [was] thereby flattered” (qtd. in Raimon 15). The advent of feminist criticism brought Child more critical attention and the beginning of a more nuanced analysis of Romance. In her 1994 cultural biography of Child, Carolyn Karcher acknowledged Romance’s ahead-of-its-time progressiveness in supporting interracial marriage, and framed the book’s failings in terms of gender politics, concluding that, “As a metaphor for equal partnership, [Child’s portrayal of] interracial marriage founded on the manifest inequality of [the] patriarchal institution [of marriage]” (527). Romance has since become a central text among critics arguing for a more nuanced understanding of the tragic-mulatta narrative, which has “too often been dismissed as politically unacceptable without a detailed analysis of its historical and narrative function” (Hazel Carby qtd. in Raimon 12). This new tragic-mulatta criticism has revealed heretofore-unrecognized variations on this narrative and the variety of political and rhetorical purposes to which they were applied.

Cassandra Jackson, for instance, notes that despite Romance’s taboo-breaking praise for racial amalgamation, the novel’s light-skinned mulatta characters nonetheless align themselves socially and economically with whites and show little solidarity with darker African-Americans. Illustrating the range of rhetorical aims to which the tragic-mulatta narrative was applied, Jackson goes on to contrast Romance with Frances Ellen Watkins Harper’s Minnie’s Sacrifice (1869), in which a privileged mulatta aligns herself with darker and less privileged African-Americans, going South to “uplift the race,” and ultimately dies a martyr to the cause of African-American solidarity at the hands of the Klan. Thus although both Reconstruction-era novels change the classic tragic-mulatta narrative to allow the mulatta to escape slavery, these are very different visions of postwar race relations. On a similar note, Raimon acknowledges that tragic-mulatta narratives often “encouraged identification along the axis of gender at the same time as [they] ultimately disavowed cross-racial allegiances” (26-27). Nonetheless, Raimon argues that we should appreciate Child’s radical vision of the American family as potentially a multiracial family, albeit one in which light-skinned mulattas take on a patriarchal role over subservient darker African-Americans while remaining under the patriarchal wing of white authority.

2. In Romance, the allusions that Child employs in regard to the race of her protagonists are drawn primarily from literature and the visual arts rather than race science, per se. However, Child openly traffics in race-science talk in her nonfiction writing, from letters to encyclopedias.

3. Child’s rhetorical sleight of hand in reframing how Rosa’s and Flora’s bodily selves are perceived by the reader, from black to “exotic,” corresponds to Soricio’s argument that numerous nineteenth-century authors sought to reframe the bodily identities of their subjects or characters to suit their political-rhetorical needs and to evade the tyranny of a culture that increasingly sought to constrain women and nonwhites with discourses of bodily difference that put them outside the “universal humanity” increasingly reserved for Saxon men.

4. The terms “negro” and “black,” as racial designations, are reserved for darker-skinned African-Americans, while the color “black” is applied to Rosa and Flora solely to describe their eyes, eyelashes, or hair. The word “African” is actually completely absent from the novel, and “Africa” appears only once and not in connection with Rosa and Flora (270). Instead, the sisters’ social status is indicated with the term “slave,” which, in the context of the American South, implied but did not make explicit their African heritage. The only terms Child only infrequently applies to her mulatta heroines indicated their partial African heritage. Rosa and Flora are referred to twice, respectively, with the words “mulatto” (341, 394) and “octoroon” (192), while the term “quadroon” is attached to their mother sixteen times (13-15, 17, 21, 39, 50, 61, 112, 155, 161-63, 176, 389, 390).
5. Within the book’s first twenty pages, Fitzgerald reveals to Alfred King, a young man from Boston, that the girls’ father had not been married to their mother because “she was a quadroon” [emphasis added] (13). The girls’ father soon thereafter acknowledges to King that the girls’ grandfather, “Señor Gonzales, a Spanish gentleman in St. Augustine, “had formed an alliance with a beautiful slave, whom he had bought in the French West Indies” [emphasis added] (19), and with whom he had produced the sisters’ mother. And when Child reveals the thoughts of Alfred King upon learning the secret of Rosa’s partial African heritage, she tells us that he “could not make these peculiarities [their skin and hair color and texture] seem less beautiful to his imagination, now that he knew them as signs of her connection with a proscribed race” [emphasis added] (14). The Africanness and blackness of these mulattas remains understood but unspoken throughout the novel.

6. While “Quadroons” contains brief reference to the “Spanish” name given to an octoaroon daughter by her white father-slaveholder, these stories otherwise do not reference exotic European races at all.

7. One of her New York letters contain a complimentary passing reference to “Kinmont[’s] admirable book, called The Natural History of Mankind” (267), demonstrating a familiarity with the work that most influenced Stowe’s “romantic racist” theorizing in Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Child describes in this letter an obscure passage from Kinmont that praised the respect in which women’s opinions were held in ancient German society (267), linking Kinmont and Child to the rhetoric of German Romanticism’s interpretations of Tacitus’ account of the ancient Germani, and, again, the Germans (and by extension Saxon-Americans) to the values of American sentimental domesticity and True Womanhood.

8. “For our past, we have the oriental fervor, flowing imagery, and deep reverence of the Jews, flowing from that high fountain, the perception of the oneness and invisibility of God. From the Greek we receive the very Spirit of Beauty, flowing from all forms of philosophy and art, encircled by a golden halo of Platonism…reproduced through the classic strength and high cultivation of Rome, and the romantic minstrelsy and rich architecture of the middle ages. Thus we stand, a congress of ages, each with a glory on its brow, peculiar to itself, yet in part reflected from the glory that went before” (279).

9. “Because these have failed to produce a high degree of moral and intellectual cultivation, we coolly declare that the negroes are made for slaves, that the Indians cannot be civilized; and that when either of the races come in contact with us, they must either consent to be our beasts of burden, or be driven to the wall, and perish” (280-81).

10. Child makes Europeans and Americans partly responsible for the supposedly hobbled mental development of Africans and Indians: “They have indeed come in contact with the race on which had dawned higher ideas; but how have they come in contact? As victims, not as pupils. Rum, gunpowder, the horrors of slavery, the unblushing knavery of trade, these have been their teachers!” (280-81).

11. For more on the flower imagery in Romance, see Rosenthal.

12. Stowe and her co-author, her sister Catherine Beecher, explained to America’s (presumed white) children that “[S]outhern races…in the southern part of Europe” are “gay and lively with very strong feelings—they love and hate and do everything else with all their hearts,” but warned that although children might find Southern Europeans “most agreeable to talk and play with,” it was Northern races who were “the best to advise and instruct” (qtd. in Gossett 78).

13. As tensions escalated between the Northern and Southern states, some on both sides began to think of their white populations as themselves representing different races, emphasizing the supposed descent of New Englanders from yeomen Saxons (and Puritans) and Southern planters from Norman-descended aristocratic Cavaliers (see Watson).

14. Nell Irvin Painter’s The History of White People (2010) provides a succinct and insightful summary of the importance of classic sources such as Tacitus to the construction first of the discourse of German
Romanticism and from it Saxonism, as well as Madame de Staël’s role as a conduit for these ideas to nascent British and American Saxonists.

15. In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, George Harris escapes North when “a slight change in the tint of the skin and the color of his hair had metamorphosized him into the Spanish-looking fellow he then appeared” (93), while in William Wells Brown’s 1853 novel, *Clotel*, a light-skinned African-American slave escapes by passing as “an Italian or Spanish gentleman” (161).

16. Child took some risk in associating her mulatta heroines, whom she so strenuously sought to associate with the respectability of True Womanhood, with Malibran, a singer with a reputation for extramarital affairs. And while many Anglo-Americans admired Malibran’s passionate singing style, others were appalled and scandalized by it, one British reviewer saying that her singing was characterized by a “vehemence too entrenched in frenzy to be true” (Pal-Lapinski 113).

17. The war with Mexico was justified on the grounds that “the degraded Mexican-Spanish” were morally incapable of receiving” the virtues of the Anglo-Saxon race” (Raim 28-29; John O’Sullivan qtd. in Stephanson 44-45).

18. A system in which white men entered into socially accepted extralegal marriages with mulatto women in French and Spanish colonies in the New World, particularly in New Orleans.

19. The period of mass Italian immigration began in the 1870s-80s, only 80,000 having immigrated to the United States between 1800-1880, compared with millions in the later decades of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth (Cavaioli 213).

20. In contrast to the demonic portrayal of the overwhelming emotional power of Italian operatic singing in Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s 1842 novel, *Zanoni*.

21. Echoes a line in *Wuthering Heights*: “Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton’s is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire” (Brontë).

22. Child’s positive view of opera in *Romance* and her association of it with her mulatta characters is consistent with her view that American-Saxon culture was, essentially, too uptight and would be improved by an increased emotionality that she saw in both African-Americans and Southern European “foreigners.” After having given temporary shelter to a young Spanish woman, Child wrote in a letter that she herself “ought to have been a foreigner” and was “partial to the excessive warmth of foreigners” and commented that when she “was quite a little girl, I remember imagining that gypsies had changed me from some other cradle, and put [me] in a place where [I] did not belong” (Jerng 75-76).

23. Rare spelling of “pasha,” a high-ranking Ottoman official.

24. Child references the “sale of Circassian girls in the Turkish markets” in her *History of the Condition of Women* (2: 270). For a contemporary critical take on the phenomenon of the Circassian beauties, see Linda Frost’s chapter “The White Gaze, the Spectacle of Slavery, and the Circassian Beauty.”

25. Child introduced some ambiguity as to the truth of the legends of Circassian beauty in the section of *History of the Condition of Women* devoted to that group, acknowledging that although “Circassian women have been celebrated throughout the world for their beauty. Some modern travellers have denied their claims to such celebrity. Dr. Kimmel says, ‘I have met with none of extraordinary beauty; and officers who have long commanded in the Caucasus have informed me that Circassian beauties are extremely rare.’” However, Child displays some faith in the legend, speculating that it must be remembered that women of the higher classes are rigorously excluded from the sight of a traveller; and in a country where the feudal system prevails to its utmost extent, the handsome daughter of a serf would be immediately claimed by her noble
26. P. T. Barnum letter to European representative instructing him to bring back anyone who can approximate a Circassian slave girl: “I still have faith in a beautiful Circassian girl if you can get one very beautiful. But if they ask $4000 each, probably one would be better than two[...]. So one of the most beautiful would do, but be sure & get a decent-looking chap of 16 years old or more. If you can also buy a beautiful Circassian woman [...] so if you think best; or if you can hire one or two at reasonable prices, do so if you think they are pretty and will pass for Circassian slaves. But in any event have one or two of the most beautiful girls you can find, even if they cost $4000 or $5000 in gold. Don’t fail to have rich-looking costumes for her and the eunuch, & bring one girl alone with eunuch if you think they will be attractive enough to pay. But of course one or two additional girls will help it if they can be hired right & are pretty, especially if one can pass for a Grecian. But after looking the thing over, if you don’t find one that is beautiful & possesses a striking kind of beauty, why of course she won’t draw and you must give it up as a bad job & not get them, for there is nothing in her to attract & fascinate, and the papers would cry her down & it would prove a loss.” (Frost “Circassian Beauty” 248).

27. Another variation on enslaved white womanhood that enthralled, so to speak, white American audiences was Hiram Powers’s sculpture “The Greek Slave,” a classically styled work depicting a beautiful young woman rendered in snow-white marble, stripped naked and manacled to a post, meant to depict a Greek girl captured by the Ottoman Turks and bound for sexual slavery in the harem. “The Greek Slave” was the most popular artwork of mid-century America, touring the U.S. to great acclaim and sent as a representative American artwork to the 1851 London World’s Fair in the Crystal Palace.

28. The mulatto helplessness that Child imagines begins to seem like a mirror image of Josiah Nott’s theory that white-African racial amalgamation results in defective hybrids, a theory he proposed as part of his campaign to convince Americans that, according to the tenets of polygenesis, Africans and whites constitute different species. Nott claimed that while the immediate result of black-white amalgamation might not be sterile (as is the case with mules, the horse-donkey cross from which, it is speculated by some, the term “mulatto” itself derives) mulattos were “less capable of endurance and are shorter lived than the whites or blacks…. That the mulatto women are particularly delicate….are bad breeders and bad nurses.” Nott prophesied not only that these “hybrids” would die out in time, but, as the subtitle of his 1843 article in the New England Journal of Medicine makes plain, “the Probable Extermination of the Two Races if the Whites and Blacks Are Allowed to Intermarry” (2). Oddly enough, Child seems to have had a similar vision of mulattos as a temporary group that would soon disappear, along with their darker brethren, by being absorbed utterly into American whiteness.

29. A clue to Child’s patronizing attitude towards the future of African-Americans in America can be seen at the very start of the novel, as well. Child dedicates Romance to “the Father and Mother of Col. R. G. Shaw,” the white Massachusetts leader of the first African-American army regiment, a martyr for abolition but a symbol, perhaps, of the benevolent white guidance she believed was required for African-American
achievement. How different a novel might have followed a dedication to the African-American soldiers themselves?


31. The logical-grammatical construction of the paragraph in which this sentence appears is tellingly incorrect since the subject of the previous sentence, the “past” of African peoples, cannot be “mingled with ours,” as she herself had just stated. The unstated or omitted subject of “mingled,” then, seems to refer to a mingling of “blood,” that is, to racial amalgamation. Child will go on to employ this language of racial traits transferred through racial amalgamation in Romance. One could speculate that perhaps Child stumbled over the taboo nature of the suggestion unconsciously, despite the fact that she was a once-and-future defender of racial amalgamation.

32. For a more extended treatment of Child’s Letters from New-York, her reaction to Barnum’s Indian exhibit, and her complex engagement with scientific theories of racial inequality, see Foster.

33. Although Romance did not employ Gypsies as Hentz had, Child’s understanding of exotic European races was profoundly shaped by Gypsy discourses in transatlantic culture. Myths about Gypsies had permeated Child’s mind sufficiently that, as she later described in a letter to a friend, as a “quite little girl” she fantasized “that gypsies had changed me from some other cradle and put me in a place where I did not belong,” imagining a “foreign” birth because she “ought to have been a foreigner” because she was “partial to the excessive warmth of foreigners” (qtd. in Jerng 75-76). Child documented her reading of certain key works of European literary Gypsy discourse in her letters, making specific reference to Scott’s Guy Mannering, “admiring[ing]” the “wild enthusiasm” of the novel’s Gypsy character, Meg Merrilies; referencing the “spells of the gypsy”; admitting that “I should be almost tempted to leave sober history, and repair to these Scottish novels for instruction” (Letters 2); and, the year following the publication of Romance, penning what she described as a “rhapsodical letter” (Letters 197) about George Eliot’s “The Spanish Gypsy.”

Child expressed more pejorative views of Gypsies, as well as a familiarity with ethnological discourses in her 1835 History of the Condition of Women, in Various Ages and Nations. Her section on “African Women” explained the existence of a “people called Laobehs, whose manners bear a great resemblance to those of the gypsies” (emphasis added),” having “no fixed residence,” and whose “women pretend to tell fortunes; and though short, ugly, and sluttish […] are much sought as wives, on account of a superstition that such connections bring good luck” (246). Elsewhere, Child had similarly noted the “gypsy charm” (qtd. in Lubbers 71) of a Native American village, and expressed the wish that Sir Walter Scott—whose Guy Mannering, we will recall, she had read with such enthusiasm—had been there to help her sketch the scene more perfectly. And Child employed a charge of baby stealing and baby murder made falsely against gypsies as a plot point in a short story (“Mary Howard” 259)

Afterword


2. “The theory of Champollion, Nott, Glidden, and others, of the Three Creations of Man; one Black, the second Yellow, and the last White, we discard, and shall not combat as a theory, only as it shall be refuted in the general deductions of this treatise” (Delany 9).

3. Scott Trafton, in Egypt Land: Race and Nineteenth-Century American Egyptomania, argues that the Euro-American theories that the pharaohs had been Caucasian to which Delany, Douglass, and other African-Americans responded in the mid-nineteenth century had, in fact, themselves been responses by whites to African-American auto-ethnology earlier in the century that pointed to the accomplishments of ancient Egypt to refute claims of African incompentence.
4. Rollin’s portrait of Delany is itself a prime candidate for analysis of its rhetorical use of racialism. The work’s very first line immediately suggests a highly complex rhetorical amalgamation of Saxonism, patriarchy, homophobia, and social Darwinism when Rollins declares that:

At the close of every revolution in a country, there is observed an effort for the gradual and general expulsion of all that is effete, or tends to retard progress; and as the nation comes forth from its purification with its existence renewed and invigorated, a better and higher civilization is promised. (7)

It is significant that the first biography published by an African-American (like auto-ethnology an appropriation of a Euro-American discourse and genre), and one by an African-American woman, to boot, frames her biographical project as an argument that African-Americans possess Saxon traits (are masculine rather than feminine, “proud” rather than submissive) and should therefore not be “expelled” from the postwar nation. Rollin’s social Darwinism and acceptance of bellicose hyper-masculinity as a central element of American national identity read like predictions of Teddy Roosevelt.

5. “We venture to predict that a different style of heroism will be demanded, before the black race shall be redeemed from chattel slavery in this country. Patient and pious endurance is not the sort of moral that blunts the edge of tyranny; nor is physical resistance, the heroism of blood, an allowable or promising scheme of self-emancipation for our slave. Ellis and Douglass and their like, are more nearly the pattern men after which the caste may be moulded into freemen.”

6. Douglass had responded to this argument in an 1854 speech titled “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered.” In this speech Douglass demolished numerous racist theories of African and African-American inferiority. Douglass mocked,

the disposition [among white race theorists] to separate the Negro race from every intelligent nation and tribe in Africa [“and especially of separating them from the various peoples of Northern Africa”] may fairly be regarded as one proof…that they have aimed to construct a theory in support of a foregone conclusion…. But Egypt is in Africa! (288)

Douglass particularly attacked the work of Samuel Morton, the American race scientist whose book *Crania Aegyptiaca* (1844) concluded from measuring the number of seeds he could pack into ancient Egyptian skulls that the pharaohs had indeed been Caucasian and the slaves negroes. Douglass cites Morton’s description of the Egyptian as follows:

“Complexion brown. The nose is straight, excepting the end, where it is rounded and wide; the lips are rather thick, and the hair black and curly.” This description would certainly seem to make it safe to suppose the presence of…”Negro blood.” A man, in our day, with brown complexion, “nose rounded and wide, lips thick, hair black and curly,” would, I think, have no difficulty in getting himself recognized as a Negro!! (288)
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