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Constructions of 'Race' in American Literature,
1638-1867

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Dana Nelson Salvino

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PROBLEMS OF KNOWING
CONSTRUCTIONS OF 'RACE' IN AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1638-1867

By

Dana Nelson Salvino

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

PROBLEMS OF KNOWING:
CONSTRUCTIONS OF 'RACE' IN AMERICAN LITERATURE
1638-1867

By

Dana Nelson Salvino

This dissertation examines how a variety of early Anglo-American writers attempt to apprehend the concept of 'race,' and how they construct the racial Other. The most specific theoretical assumption of this study is that literature is symbolic action with reference to a real world, and as such should not be abstracted from its material context. Accordingly, this study examines the various perceptual/representational enterprises of the texts it considers as they posit, and position themselves in, a social field (community) of race relations. Its goal is "sociological criticism," envisioned by Kenneth Burke as a criticism of literature which would "seek to codify the various strategies which artists have developed with relation to the naming of [racial] situations" (1973, 301).

The primary texts considered are (in order discussed): John Underhill's Newes from America, Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia (sections XIV and XVIII), Cotton Mather's The Negro Christianized, William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line, James Fenimore Cooper's Last of the Mohicans, William Gilmore Simm's The Yemassee, Robert Montgomery Bird's Nick of the Woods, Catherine Maria Sedgewick's Hope Leslie, Lydia Maria

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Child's Romance of the Republic, Edgar Allan Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym, Herman Melville's Benito Cereno and Harriet Ann Jacobs' Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.

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The past two years that I have spent working on this dissertation have been rich, and full of important relationships--both professional and personal--which have sustained me and for which I am thankful. I am glad to have the opportunity to mention some of my debts of gratitude here.

First, I owe many thanks to the College of Arts and Letters for a Dissertation Fellowship. The time off from teaching responsibilites made it possible to finish this dissertation in record time. With the stipend, I was able to attend conferences and present versions of my work, which provided intellectual stimulus and, I am convinced, enriched my work.

Thanks also goes to Marcelette Williams, who listened to and encouraged me, and who inspired me with her warmly interested professionality. Thank you to Bill Johnsen, who asked "so what?" at a formative point in my dissertation. Lorraine Hart, whose reputation deservedly preceeds her, consistently offered invaluable information, help and reassurance throughout my graduate years.

I am grateful to my committee members: Arnold E. Davidson, Stephan Tchudi and Linda Wagner-Martin. I

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inundated them with reading material throughout my comprehensive exams and dissertation composition, which they bore patiently. Moreover, each offered models for my scholarship and teaching. I hope I can live up to their examples.

For all the time she spent listening with interest, I want particularly to thank Nadine Romero. She was an ideal "outside listener" whose belief in my project and in me both challenged and sustained me. Marcy Bauman gave endless hours listening to the angst associated with a project of this scope, calming me, encouraging me, and offering her indispensibly level-headed perspective. Cecilia Farr offered support in the form of the critical dialogue I needed, and through her example inspired me to train my writing style to a greater precision at a key point in my work.

I owe special debts and thanks to my husband, John F. Salvino, who has become an intrinsic part of my thinking and being during our graduate/married years. If it is difficult to tell where to begin, I know that I will never leave off thanking him.

Finally, I offer heartfelt thanks to my dissertation chair and friend, Cathy N. Davidson. It is hard to put into words the ways I am beholden to her. From Cathy, I learned more than just how to write a dissertation. She has been the kind of "ideal mentor" that Annette Kolodny once

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outlined in an NWSA session I attended early in my graduate program. Her guidance has led me from undergraduate to professional; her example has inspired me to be both a better professional and a better person.

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PREFACE

In a recent talk at Princeton University on the Afro-American presence in American literature, Toni Morrison prefaced her address with a complaint. She questioned the odd circumstance that she is often asked to come to campuses where there have been ugly racial incidents in order to address primarily white audiences on the nature of racism. Her difficulty with this, she explained, is that implicit in such requests is an attitude that "we [blacks] are a problem and it is our job to solve ourselves." She points out that "the survivor [of racism] is assumed to be both patient and physician," so that in many ways the victim is blamable for his/her continued suffering. The accountability for the phenomenon of racism in American culture, however, lies elsewhere, and Morrison's suggestion here is pointed: "Racism <u>should</u> be elucidated--but from the point of view of those who <u>understand</u> its tortures"--understand the motives, not the outcome (all comments delivered at Princeton University, February 14, 1989).

While "race" itself is now a properly "bracketed" concept--bracketed to remind us of its fictionality, its invalidity as a scientific category--<u>racism</u> is still a widespread cultural phenomenon (and is not exclusive to

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those who do not understand "race" in quotation marks). Thus racism, and the dynamic conception of "race" contained in any racist formulation, is not only a valid, but important area of study, both in its historical and contemporary (and academic) contexts. It is the project of this study to examine the construction of "race" in a variety of texts written by white authors in America, from 1638 to 1867. As part of its project, the study will discuss the dynamic relationship between literature and culture, between text and reality.

Racism is a cultural, and therefore also a literary issue. As Arif Dirlik observes, "culture affords us ways of seeing the world, and if the latter have any bearing on our efforts to change the world, then it is essential that we confront our ways of seeing" (13). It is historically and pedagogically essential that we confront as well the "ways of seeing" represented in America's literary legacy. Raymond Williams eloquently summarizes this imperative:

> When the most basic concepts--the concepts, as it is said, from which we begin--are suddenly seen to be not concepts but problems, not analytic problems either but historical movements that are still unresolved, there is no sense in listening to their sonorous summons or their resounding clashes. We have only, if we can, to recover the substance from which their forms were cast (11).

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This study attempts to begin such a project in American literature, reading closely eleven texts for their formulation of "race," and placing the production of those texts in their historical, social, and material context, of evolving American colonialism and (internal) imperialism.

The most specific theoretical assumption of this study is that literature is symbolic action with reference to a real world, and as such, should not be abstracted from its material context. "Literature makes something happen," insists Frank Lentricchia, "the literary is always the taking of position and simultaneously the exercising of position with and upon the social field" (1983, 156). Accordingly, this study will examine the various perceptual/representational enterprises of the texts it considers, as they posit and position themselves in a social field (community) of race relations. Its goal will be a sort of "sociological criticism," posited by Kenneth Burke as a criticism of literature which would "seek to codify the various strategies which artists have developed with relation to the naming of [racial] situations" (1973, 301).

Chapter One, then, will make explicit the necessity of a sociological criticism of literature, examining a broad historical outline and concentrating particularly on two paradigmatic texts: John Underhill's _Newes from America_, and the slavery passages from Thomas Jefferson's _Notes on the State of Virginia_. Chapter Two will discuss Cotton

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Mather's "The Negro Christianized," and William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line, focusing particularly on what I read as textual economies of morality and power. It will discuss the imaginative hold of racial tropes--what Abdul JanMohamed discusses as "manichean allegory"--which undermine these writers' explicitly progressive attempts to support African and Native Americans. Chapter Three will turn to James Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans, Robert Montgomery Bird's Nick of the Woods, and William Gilmore Simm's The Yemassee to discuss the sociological and textual dimensions of the colonial representations of the Self in opposition to the racial Other (following Mary Louise Pratt's suggestion that as colonialists seek to fix a notion of the racial Other they are engaged primarily in a need establish a fixed sense of Self). Additionally, it will examine the authors' use of the novelistic form as a purveyor of Anglo-American "tradition," in light of Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of the ideological function of language in the novel.

Chapter Four will consider Catherine Maria Sedgwick's Hope Leslie and Lydia Maria Child's Romance of the Republic, examining the strategies employed by each woman to present sympathetic versions of the racial Other, as well as their conscious focus on the politics of history-making. Distinguishing, after Tzvetan Todorov, between prejudice of superiority, and prejudice of equality, this chapter will

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question the efficacy of these sympathetic texts in developing knowledgeable versions of Native and African Americans. Chapter Five will read Edgar Allan Poe's Arthur Gordon Pym as a "racist" text that purports at its most conspicuous level to affirm white superiority. This chapter will study the narrative and imaginative structures of Pym and will argue that a marginalized level of the text deconstructs its foregrounded racialist epistemology. Chapter Six will focus on Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno," demonstrating that the text provides an incisive analysis of the ideological (and dominative) underpinnings of racism. Yet while "Benito Cereno" undermines the real value of racial certainty (or racialism), it is finally limited in its radical potential by suggesting the impossibility of knowing the racial Other, given the paralyzing imaginative power of racial tropes.

Finally, in the Afterword, I will summarize through a reading of Harriet Ann Jacob's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. I posit this text as a counterpoint (afterword) to "Benito Cereno" and the other texts considered. Of all the texts considered in the study, Incidents most effectively establishes the possibility of egalitarian, interracial community. It does so by insistently linking racial categories to their social definition, by positing a common denominator--humanity--that links blacks and whites,

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

THE FUNCTION OF COLONIAL LITERATURE

Narrative, and the process of representation, are powerful tools for conceptualization. As Thomas Leitch notes, "stories imitate a world of potential, of coming-to-be" (Leitch, 16), and nowhere more than in the discovery of a New World did the role of story as "coming-to-be" operate formatively. Well before Europeans set sail for the newly-discovered worlds, they were reading, hearing and telling about what they would find. And even when what they found--as in Columbus's case--baffled their expectation, inevitably, as Tzvetan Todorov points out, they fit it into familiar representative modes. Native Americans became "Indians," the unknown brought in line with the known. In this way, Columbus's early accounts of "Cyclops and mermaids, [of] Amazons and men with tails," do no reflect observed phenomena, but rather Columbus's "finalist strategy of interpretation," the conclusions he formed before beginning his travels (Todorov, 15). Todorov underscores the importance of prior conceptualization to interpretation and representation: "In the course of the third voyage, Columbus wonders about the origin of the pearls the Indians

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Like Columbus, the English colonists who contemplated a voyage to the New World over a hundred years later sought the comfort of previous knowledge to shape their expectations of their future destiny, to tell their "coming-to-be" narrative of life in America. Importantly, as Mary Louise Pratt observes, promotionalist and frontier literature operate as a "normalizing force" which "serves, in part, to mediate the shock of contact on the frontier" (Pratt, 121). Faced by a foreign environment, colonial literature gained a measure of control by relying on the familiar to explain the unfamiliar. What counted as familiar governed interpretation of, and action in, the "New World." Promotional tracts served a normative function, offering the writer a sense of mastery and authorship over the (often as yet unseen) New World, and modelling for the reader/explorer a method for gaining material/physical control. Colonial literature in this way both offered and served as a strategy for dealing with life in the New World.

British promotionalists grounded their exploration narratives in two interlocking discourses, religious mission and capital accumulation. Their tracts recommended strategies for converting the alien frontier into a

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recognizable religious and market environment. The twin goals, spiritual and capital advance, functioned symbiotically, one justifying and supporting the other. For instance, as John Cotton elaborates in his "God's Promise to His Plantations":

> "Some remove and travail for merchandise and gain-sake: *Daily bread may be sought from far*, Proverbs 31:14. Yea our Savior approveth travail for merchants ... The comparison from the unjust steward, and from the thief in the night is not taken from the injustice of the one, or the theft of the other; but from the wisdom of one and the suddenness of the other; which in themselves are not unlawful" (Cotton, 8).

Cotton intertwines religious and economic discourse, relying on familiar, biblical knowledge to devise a code of action on the frontier. Strikingly, too, his ethical code here applies to material gain, justifying actions that his own account suggests might be <u>un</u>ethical with an obfuscating cloak of biblical rhetoric.[1]

As "God's Promise" highlights, religious mission provided a certain security and justification to the colonists. As they took, promotionalists reasoned, they would also give: "We shall come in with the good leave of the natives," speculated John Winthrop, of his future neighbors, "who finde benefitt already by our neighborhood

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and learne of us to improve part to more use then before they could doe the whole, and by this meanes we come in by valuable purchase: for they have of us that which we will yield them more benefitt then all the land which wee have of them" (Winthrop, 1629, 423). Despite its apparent promise of mutual benefit, their charity nonetheless records its commoditized vision. Winthrop inscribes the Puritan's value to the native inhabitants of American: they benefit by their social transaction with the Puritans. But alternately, the imagery of transaction and the purpose of the tract itself traces the value of the "purchase" for the Puritans.

As part of its normative enterprise, promotional literature sought to fix a concept of the "Self" in relation to the peoples already inhabiting the discovered world. Promotionalists recognized the importance of America's original inhabitants to the colony's spiritual and financial success. Yet while Native Americans stood in a positive relation to the former, to the latter goal, they presented a significant barrier. Consequently, as Robert Berkhofer has detailed, promotional discourse constructed a bifurcated Indian, at once "tractable" and "trecherous." John Smith's _A True Relation_ documents the typically split stance of the colonists toward the native inhabitants of America. In the space of two paragraphs at the opening of his narrative, Smith portrays the local natives as vigilant and ruthless

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attackers, and, alternately, as generous and attentive followers (see pp. 5-6, paragraphs three and four).

Similarly, though Winthrop portrays the natives of New England as willing neighbors, the suggestion he obliquely offers in his "Model of Christian Charity," the famous sermonic exhortation delivered on the Arbella, contrasts sharply with his earlier version. On the ship, Winthrop speaks of enemies first as those to be loved according to the dictates of the Old and New Testament, as well as by nature: "The law of nature could give no rules for dealing with enemies, for all are to be considered as friends in the state of innocency, but the Gospel commands to love an enemy" (Winthrop, 1630, 9). If the laws of nature do not clearly dictate ethics toward enemies, the New Testament does, Winthrop underscores, employing the more anaesthetized connotations of "enemy" as "stranger." Yet later, as he reaches a high emotional pitch in his sermon, he uses "enemy" in its most violently oppositional sense, promising his listeners that "We shall find that the God of Israel is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies" (20). His message to his auditors is mixed--enemies are at once to be loved and resisted. Yet the former reference clearly pertains to fellow colonists, while the latter use of enemy is apparently in reference to those outside the colonial community, and as such dictates a stance toward the enemies "out there." Those most

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As Winthrop's famous sermon suggests, the sense of religious destiny that the Puritan colonist created for himself placed him in direct, and violent opposition with anyone who interfered with his mission--religious or economic. While the natives became the focus of the Puritans' religious errand to the New World, they also became an important obstacle, one that rightly had to be overpowered to make way for the New Canaan. The fictional contact between colonists and native inhabitants which occurred in promotional and frontier literature shaped the expectations of voyagers to the point that actual contact, however much it contradicted the promotional tracts, managed only to confirm their speculations. A member of Christopher Newport's expedition up the James River in 1607 reported in "A Breif (sic) discription of the People": the Indians "are naturally given to trechery, howbeit we could not find it in our travell up the river, but rather a most kind and loving people" (Nash, 1972, 44). Like Columbus's obstinate refusal to see the real source of pearls, American explorers and colonists refused to see anything but the Indian they had fictively created in advance of contact with him. Thus, the natives' friendliest gestures could only be represented as evidence of their devious (non-English) nature.

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Perhaps influenced by the earlier stories of Spain's conquest and genocide, afraid for their own survival in the colonies, and concerned with the maintenance of an English sense of self in an unfamiliar, un-English environment, English colonists seized on the difference of the natives, in order to establish firmly their relational superiority.[2] This sense of superiority promulgated in the literature at once justified their presence, predicted their success and confirmed their English identity. So in 1620, Thomas Peyton could confidently represent the Englishman's relative status in the colonies:

> The Libian dusky in his parched skin,
> The Moor all tawny both without and in,
> The Southern man, a black deformed Elfe,
> The Northern white like unto God himselfe
> (Vaughan, 920).

The finalist strategies of interpretation and representation that the English colonialists brought to bear on relations with Native Americans in many ways duplicated those employed to justify growing involvement in slave trade. At the same time Plymouth colony was established, the first Africans were landing in Jamestown, to work as servants and slaves.[3] While actual policy toward natives and Africans varied widely--one race was to be assimilated and (later) exterminated, the other separated and cultivated--they could be explained in similar terms. Like

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Indians, Africans were depicted as lacking in culture and religion, and so the English formulated their exploitation as a humane enterprise, offering Africans a chance at figurative, if not literal, enlightenment.

The evolution of the concept of race, of Indianness and Blackness, in the "white" European mind is instructive. Racialism did not emerge in full flower until the mid-eighteen hundreds; indeed, as many carefully note, early European representations of Native Americans had much more to do with cultural, rather than so-called racial, differences. Textual and artistic representations from the period of early contact reflect much more interest in personal ornamentation and social organization than in physiognomy.[4] And while European representations of Africans had virtually always focused on their blackness, which carried a host of negative connotations in every European mind (Vaughan, 920), still, early observers depicted African blackness as something of a marvel, even accepting the fact that the Africans themselves found their blackness beautiful (Jordan, 9-11). The acceptance implied by such observations was also reflected in speculations that the hotter sun, or red-colored oils were the cause for differences in skin color. "Black" and "red" at this early juncture designated a metaphoric difference between groups of human beings.

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During the mid seventeenth century, however, representations of both African and Native Americans began a crucial shift from cultural and climate-imposed physiological difference, to belief in profound and ineradicable racial difference that originated not in climate, but in the moral condition of Indians and Africans. During this period, the tobacco enterprise began to boom; the southern colonists needed more land and a fixed supply of labor to work it. It is not coincidental that in the frontier and colonial literature of this period, the Indian becomes more hostile, while the African begins to seem metaphysically black. The European thus created a sense of religious justification for definitive and harsh action. As Winthrop Jordan establishes, a new usage of the term "white" arose as the Europeans began to see themselves in exact opposition to the black slave, now defined not by social status, but by moral condition (Jordan, 95). Alden Vaughan convincingly demonstrates a similar lexical shift in the use of "red" and "tawny" as adjectives describing the native, to nouns that define the Indian during that period.[5] Thus, colonial literature at once reflects the changing attitudes toward Indians and Africans at the same time it provides a means for inscribing--making possible and permanent--that difference.

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As many scholars have observed, race relations in the New World were influenced by many factors, and can be fruitfully, if not conclusively, viewed from legalistic, economic, philosophic, sociologic, and scientific perspectives.[6] All of these perspectives combined in early America in telling what would become the Ur-narrative of white racial superiority. As Reginald Horsman explains in his weighty study, Race and Manifest Destiny, these attitudes would reach their fruition in the mid-nineteenth century. But an important model for the story formed in the scientific revolution of the middle Renaissance.

In 1543, Copernicus published Of Celestial Motions. This work upset the cosmography which showed man as the focus of the beautifully orchestrated crystalline spheres. Until Copernicus, astronomy had worked together with theology in establishing man as the physical and moral center of the universe. Copernicus, dissatisfied with the inconsistencies of the Ptolemaic system and the elaborate compensations which it forced on astronomers, devised a new interpretation of the skies which upset every supposition of heavenly hierarchies, moving Intelligences and divine schemes to date. Placing the stars at a distance beyond imagination, Copernicus implied without explicitly

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positing an infinite universe (Giordano Bruno was soon to burn at the stake for pursuing the logical implications of this concept). Conceivably, Copernicus's alternate map was the overturning of the way Europeans represented man's place in relation to the world, the heavens and God. This was, perhaps, the most radical and devastating effect of all.

But Europeans were not devastated by Copernicus's theory. In pointing out the fundamental conservatism at the heart of Copernicus's motivations and discoveries, Herbert Butterfield emphasizes that "it would be wrong to imagine that the publication of Copernicus's great work in 1543 either shook the foundation of European thought straight away or sufficed to accomplish anything like a revolution" (Butterfield, 67).[7] Copernicus himself, Butterfield notes, relied more for his revision on Ptolemy's representation of the heavens than he did on his own observation in devising his own system, which was, in fact, only a "modified form of the Ptolemaic system" (Butterfield, 36-39).[8] Hampered in his theorizing by his reluctance to abandon what he had learned to be "true" of the Ptolemaic/Aristotelian universe, the revolutionary astronomer failed, along with others, to pursue the most radical implications of his helio-centric theory. Nearly three quarters of a century passed before Kepler was able to add his

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mathematical genius to the chaos of interpretations and data, devising a more advanced theory for a heliocentric universe.

Even after Kepler, the Ptolemaic system maintained currency among the Europeans. Well over a century after Of Celestial Motions, it was possible for Milton's Paradise Lost to depict a geocentric universe, and mention heliocentricity only in passing.[9] More than a substitution of maps, the heliocentric universe required a literal revolution in thought before it could gain acceptance, which, opposed to the ornate and satisfying aesthetics of the crystalline schemes, was especially difficult to achieve. All of history had been devoted to placing man at the center of God's creation. Suddenly, European man was to understand that he was not the nucleus, and was required to search for other means of self-definition.

As Kepler's insight and Galileo's work became more widely recognized early in the 1600's, the Jacobean melancholy set in. Renaissance man reluctantly set about redefining his place in the new order. In a process of thought parallel to that which had attached epicycles and eccentric circles to compensate for the inconsistencies of the Ptolemaic system, Europeans began working to reconcile heliocentricity with their desire to be the focus of existence. It was an age of caution:

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all radical theorists met opposition, and persecution. And eventually, though geocentricity was abandoned, it was replaced by the Supreme Chain of Being. Seventeenth-century philosophers reassembled forces and turned their confusion into an ode to the complexity of the world, which God had created for their use and glory. The eighteenth-century enlightenment kept European man rationally and squarely at the top rung of the ladder, with or without the sanction of God,[10] and androcentricity/Eurocentricity became entrenched as the story of European man's hierarchical superiority became 'common sense.'

It is this constructed notion of superiority which was crucial to the way in which European man perceived himself, and his role in this world. It is this attitude which in fact brought him to the "new" world, seeking to inscribe physically and textually his mastery over the globe he claimed in his story of superiority. As Edmund Morgan notes of the famous work of Richard Hakluyt (the famous promotionalist who never himself ventured to America): "Principall Navigations, Voiages and Discoveries of the English Nation was not merely the narrative of voyages by Englishmen around the globe, but a powerful suggestion that the world ought to be English or at least ought to be ruled by Englishmen" (Morgan, 1972, 15).

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The foundation of this story was a pervasive conservatism. European action and representation sought new frontiers only to confirm and assert the same superior sense of identity, and their enterprise on all fronts was always threatened by a sense of change. As Pratt succinctly summarizes, "nowhere are the notions of normal, familiar action and given systems of difference in greater jeopardy than on the [colonial] frontier. There, Europeans confront not only unfamiliar Others, but unfamiliar selves" (Pratt, 121). Karen Kupperman, too, underlines the basic challenge to social order that the colonial enterprise presented: "Not only did the colonial effort raise questions about the relevance of traditional skills particularly those of a "better sort," it also appeared to offer a chance for new individuals and groups within English society to rise" (Kupperman, 151). The high ratio of "gentlemen" to common, working-men in the Jamestown settlement marks high-level concern for the continuance of the social order. All the colonies instituted policies to punish individuals who threatened governmental stability: commoners who spoke out against those of higher class were often punished (Kupperman, 154). Despite strict sanctions, there were numerous threats. Nash notes the "frightening rapidity" of challenges to hierarchy issued by "Mortonites, Gortonites, Hutchisonians ... and

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Quakers," all rapidly taken up and defeated with little damage to existing communal paradigms (Nash, 1970, 6).

While French and Spanish colonists adopted social policies of assimilation, English settlers in America worked quickly to duplicate traditional English family arrangements. Colonial authorities quickly shipped in boat loads of British women for the frontiersmen to marry, hoping to lend stability by establishing familiar social patterns. Seeking to ground themselves in a sense of permanence and familiarity, the colonists were particularly disconcerted by the transitory habits of the natives, who were apt to abandon camp, disappearing and reappearing with little warning. As Axtell sums up, "surprise was the last thing the English wanted in the New World" (Axtell, 138).

Some early writers, however, found much to admire in the social arrangements of the natives. Alarmed by the growing trends of mercantilism and commerce, these writers turned to native life as model. Thomas Morton, one the earliest to point to the Indian way, established the general pattern which would culminate in the cult of the noble savage:

> In the yeare since the incarnation of Christ, 1622, it was my chance to be landed in the parts of New England, where I found two sortes of people, the one Christians, the other Infidels; these I found

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> most full of humanity, and more friendly then the other ... I have observed they will not be troubled with superfluous commodities. Such things as they finde they are taught by necessity to make use of, they will make choise of, and seeke to purchase with industry. So that, in respect that their life is so voyd of care, and they are so loving also that they make use of those things they enjoy, (the wife onely excepted), as common goods, and are therein so compassionate that, rather than one should starve through want, they would starve all. Thus doe they passe awaye the time merrily, not regarding our pompe, (which they see dayly before their faces,) but are better content with their owne, which some men esteeme so meanely of (Morton, 123; 178).

Thomas Morton was no friend to the authorities of Plymouth Bay, and it should be noted that his account was primarily concerned with provoking and contradicting his Puritan enemies. Yet as Richard Drinnon convincingly argues, it was Morton's very respect for native ways that initially triggered prosecution by the Puritans. Morton's New English Canaan, Drinnon says, "represented an authentic and almost singular effort of the European imagination to extract a sense of place from this new surroundings or, better, to meet the spirit of the land halfway ... Like the Indians,

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[Morton] loved the wilderness the Saints hated" (Drinnon, 17). Thomas Morton's respect for the "Infidels" was real and profound.

Even such obvious admiration needs to be seen in context. If the "cult of the noble savage" was different in sentiment from the "cult of the ignorant savage," it was not so different in its final vision. Despite the various exhortations to the virtues of savage life, it was clear that Morton, and later writers of the "cult of the savage," never intended to model their society on that of the natives. What these tracts lauded was the Rousseauistic "pre-social" state, a state precisely from which European society was perceived as having descended. The reforms suggested were not a matter of adopting native social patterns, but recapturing desirable traits that the English had previously exhibited (cf. Kupperman, 147-148). This backward-yearning was less a radical, than fundamentally conservative, gesture.

If colonists' attitudes toward natives were governed in part by a profound need to maintain traditional social order, so too, argues Edmund Morgan, were their attitudes toward slavery. The practice came into currency as recourse to the flood of poor indentured servants sent by England who increasingly threatened the social order (i.e., the supremacy of the landed class). Recounting the struggle of the landed class to deal with a growing populace of

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"freedmen" (ex-bondsmen who were "without house and land,"), Morgan suggests that the best available remedy was to stem the influx of English lower-class servants by relying instead on black slavery (Morgan, 1972, 20).

While most Africans were shipped to America as slaves, in the early years of the colonies, "it is equally clear that a substantial number of Virginia's Negroes were free or became free," says Morgan (see esp. 17-18). Freed blacks redoubled the number of indentured English servants who had finished their term, and together presented a mounting problem for the ruling class. The landed gentry needed a steady supply of labor to work their land, yet their social position was threatened by this growing number of freedmen, white and black, who without land or property, were becoming increasingly restive. One solution was to put those without property back into forced labor. The landed class realized, however, that "to have attempted the enslavement of English-born laborers would have cause more disorder than it cured." The "common-sense" path, then, was to "keep as slaves black men who arrived in that condition," instead of granting them the "natural" rights of the Englishman. Thus, argues Morgan, Virginia's magnates arrived at a "solution which strengthened the rights of Englishmen and nourished that attachment to liberty which came to fruition in the Revolutionary generation of Virginia statesmen ... The

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rights of the English were preserved by destroying the rights of Africans" (25; 24).

While Morgan's argument does highlight how the fundamentally protective world-view of the English colonialist planted the seeds of liberal reform and democracy, it does not adequately account for why the English, who heretofore had treated Africans as indentured servants, found them especially available for this new, racial category of lifetime slavery. Morgan insists that slavery grew as a result of economic necessity, not racial persecution: "Winthrop Jordan has suggested that slavery came to Virginia as an unthinking decision. We might go further and say that it came without a decision. It came automatically as Virginians bought the cheapest labor they could get" (24-25). In support of this argument, Morgan points to the Virginian's liberal treatment of African slaves during the early years of colonization, when freed blacks were allowed to take a place in the community at a social and legal level apparently on par with that of freed white men.

But the point that needs to be made in response to Morgan's thesis is that something made the Africans conceptually available as a solution for economic necessity. Morgan's point that it was a recourse to "common sense" to "keep as slaves black men who arrived in that condition" overlooks the fact that those blacks (men <u>and</u> women) were

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originally free, and were enslaved mostly by Anglo merchants and slave traders. Economic interest coincided with racial discrimination, and the seeds of racism made the economic solution of racial slavery feasible. As Edward Said notes in his study of Orientalism, the European's conceptual strategies were always structured by a "flexible *positional* superiority, which puts the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the [Other] without ever losing him the relative upper hand" (Said, 7). If, as Morgan argues, Africans were treated more liberally during the early colonial period, they were, as Morgan is himself careful to observe, never regarded as equals. Morgan's conclusion that economic pressure, not racism, led to the development of a slave institution cannot account for the fact that the white oppressors counted black Africans not as human objects, but as exchange objects, which is precisely why they were conceptually available as slaves. It may be quite true that economic possibilities and social demands gave impetus to racial persecution and enslavement. But it was a cultivated and deep-seated sense of European (*cum* "white") superiority which suggested African slavery as an acceptable solution to Anglo/English economic woes.

As this discussion has suggested, the genesis of racial discrimination and oppression in America rose out of both psychological and economic factors, the two complexly intertwined. Anglo attitudes and actions toward the racial

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Other were defined by a need for superiority at once physical and metaphysical. Two texts, John Underhill's Newes from America, and sections XIV and XVIII of Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia, foreground alternately material and mental motivations of Othering. Both are paradigmatic in their racist and racialist assumptions, and in the ideological processes they share with the promotional literature discussed above.

MERCY DID THEY DESERVE FOR THEIR VALOR

John Underhill's account of the Pequot massacre at the village Mystic, Newes from America, is an extraordinary historical document that seldom receives attention by literary critics. It is problematic in that it is impossible to categorize neatly, at once historical (an account of the Pequot War) and literary (a promotion of the scenic Connecticut countryside). Newes from America emerges as textualized violence and appropriation, much as the Pequot "war" itself emerged materially. The two levels of Underhill's text, like the war, operate synergistically: the need to vanquish antagonistic natives for 'self-protection,' and 'admiration' for the geography of the Connecticut valley that the Pequots inhabit.

The Puritans' pretense for the Pequot war was patently trumped up, as recent historians document. Ann Kibbey explains in her excellent study of Puritan rhetorical

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practice and its consequence for their actual policies and governance, that "despite the Puritan claim of self-defense, the evidence strongly implies that the Pequots, far more than the Puritans, acted in self-defense. Even the governor of Plymouth colony observed at the time ... that the Puritans had "occasioned a war, etc., by provoking the Pequods" (Kibbey, 100).[11] One of the charges made against the Pequots by the Puritans was against their murder of two traders, Stone and Oldham. But as the Puritans clearly knew according to their own records, Niantics had killed Stone, Narragansetts, Oldham (see Jennings, 202-227). And, as Alden T. Vaughan points out, Captain John Stone, notorious among colonists for his hijacking/pirating adventures, had been banished by the Plymouth Colony (Vaughan, 1965, 124). To further the unfairness of the Puritan's consequent warfare techniques, when fellow traders discovered Oldham's body, they killed at least six "Indians."

Stone's death was a result of the Niantic warriors confusing his relation to Dutch traders who only shortly before had brutally murdered their sachem. The war that ensued against the Pequots to "avenge" his and Oldham's deaths was characterized, Kibbey asserts, by the "frequent refusal of Puritan men to distinguish among `Indians,' combined with their declared intent to exterminate the Pequots" (Kibbey, 101). Underhill's text, in fact, duplicates this refusal to distinguish between tribes. In

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his account of Oldham's death, Underhill refers only to "Block Islanders," and "Indians," while he seems perfectly comfortable elsewhere in the text distinguishing between the various groups. With no apparent sense of incongruity, Underhill recounts an Indian ambassador's account of Stone's murder. Dutch traders took the sachem hostage for a wampum ransom; upon payment they returned the sachem, dead. The ambassador explains to the Puritans that when Stone later sailed up river, the natives took their revenge upon him and his crew, and pleads, "Could ye blame us for revenging so cruel a murder? for we distinguish not between the Dutch and English, but took them to be one nation, and therefore we do not conceive that we wronged you, for they slew our king" (Underhill, 58. Either the ambassador or Underhill apparently fails to recount a crucial aspect of this explanation: these "murderous" Niantics gained passage to Stone's ship only because he plotted to hold them for wampum ransom. See Jennings, 189-90). To the ambassador's plea, the Puritans answer was that "they were able to distinguish between the Dutch and English, having had sufficient experience of both nations" (Underhill, 58). Sufficient experience, indeed.

Francis Jennings argues the specificity of the Puritan focus on the Pequots, asserting that their motive was solely economic and proprietary. All evidence points to their knowledge that the Pequots were responsible for neither

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Stone nor Oldham's death; in fact, the irony becomes complete when the colonists enlist Narragansetts--whose fellow tribesmen apparently executed Oldham--to help them vanquish their mutual Pequot enemies. The fact, however, remains that the burgeoning Connecticut settlement was looking for a chance to commandeer land that the Pequots refused to relinquish.

Underhill's account makes the colonialists' interest in the land explicit. He begins the text:

> I shall not spend time (for my other occasions will not permit) to write largely of every particular, but shall, as briefly as I may, perform these two things; first, give a true narration of the warlike proceedings that hath been in New England these two years last past; secondly I shall discover to the reader divers places in New England, that will afford special accommodations to such persons as will plant upon them (49).

According to the explicit plan for Underhill's narration, these two diverse accounts will be "interw[oven] ... in the following discourse." Inseparable issues in the colonialist mind, the account of a brutal massacre and promotion of the paradisiacal setting for English colonists dovetail for Underhill.

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to war" systematically "burn ... and spoil" the very land that he invites, in the next breath, his brethren Englishmen to settle (54). "The truth is," asserts Underhill, "I want time to set forth the excellence of the whole country; but if you would know the garden of New England, then you must glance your eye upon Hudson's river, a place exceeding all yet named" (64). Proceeding to chronicle the various locations that would afford abundant accommodation, he reluctantly concludes:

> In regard of many aspersions hath been cast upon all the country, that it is a hard and difficult place for to subsist in, and that the soil is barren, and bears little that is good, and that it can hardly receive more people than those that are there, I will presume to make a second digression from the former matter, to the end I might encourage such as desire to plant there.
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> There are certain plantations, Dedham, Concord, in the Mathethusis Bay, that are newly erected, that do afford large accommodation, and will contain abundance of people (65-66).

Pointedly, the Connecticut colony, a paradise depleted of Pequots, is now ready for settlement.

<u>Newes from America</u> makes little effort at documenting the "official" reasons for the war: Pequot savagery. Instead, Underhill so much assumes the positional

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superiority of the white as ultimate justification for their actions, that the Indians he depicts are ineffectual buffoons and laughingstocks. Underhill in fact seems very intent on proving the superior potency of the Puritans: they aim to kill, whereas the impotent Indians resort to ridiculous warring practices, hiding among the trees rather than coming out to fight like men. Ironically, however, it is an Indian interpreter voyaging with the Puritans who offers a most pointed example of English virility. Dressed in English clothes, and supplied with an English weapon, this Anglicized Indian provides a "pretty passage worthy observation." When one of the Pequots questions him, "What are you, an Indian or an Englishman?" the Indian translator replies "Come hither, and I will tell you," and as Underhill recounts: "He pulls up his cock and let fly at one of them, and without question was the death of him" (54).

By contrast, in his scoffing reflection on Indian warfare practice, Underhill asserts,

> I boldly affirm they might fight seven years and not kill seven men. They came not near one another, but shot remote, and not point-blank, as we often do with our bullets, but at rovers, and then they gase up in the sky to see where the arrow falls, and not until it is fallen do they shoot again. This fight is more for pastime, than to conquer and subdue enemies (82).

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Yet he generously commends the warriors who are scorched to death defending their flaming village:

> Many courageous fellows were unwilling to come out, and fought most desperately through the palisadoes, so as they were scorched and burnt with the flame, and were deprived of their arms--in regard the fire burnt their very bowstrings--and so perished valiantly. Mercy did they deserve for their valor, could we have had but opportunity to have bestowed it (80).

The Puritans, on the other hand, exercise physical, spiritual and superiority, which accumulates in Underhill's _Newes_ as textual authority. Underhill describes the admiration of the horrified Narragansetts: "Our Indians came to us, and much rejoiced at our victories, and greatly, admired the manner of Englishmen's fight, but cried Mach it, mach it; that is, It is naught, it is naught, because it is too furious, and slays too many men" (84).

The Puritan's divine mission, echoed later by William Byrd II, was to "have blotted every living Soul of them out of the World" (Byrd, 292). After the massacre of the village inhabitants, the Puritans, out of ammunition, returned to their ships. Ironically, the main body warrior Pequots, who were camped some ten miles away preparing for battle, arrived just in time to be useless in defending their village, but to make themselves completely vulnerable

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to the reloaded Puritans. Two hundred surrendered, and were sold into slavery in the Indies. Others fled to join the Mohicans and Niantics. The Puritans returned home, appropriating Pequot land as they erased their name.[12] John Underhill's text not only reflects this, but actively and materially participates in the appropriation: as much as being an account of a war, Newes from America is a promotional tract, with Underhill as Indian breaker/land broker.

Catherine Belsey argues that "the work of ideology is to present the position of the subject as fixed and unchangeable, an element in a given system of differences which is human nature and the world of human experience, and to show possible action as an endless repetition of 'normal,' familiar action" (Belsey, 90). One of the important social functions of Newes from America is to normalize the action that might be contested as unjustified: the slaughter of four to six-hundred sleeping Pequots, most of whom were old people, women and children. Underhill dances around this by recounting the charges made against the Indians on behalf of Stone and Oldham; also, he dwells briefly on the abduction (and recovery) of two English girls by the Pequots. Only once does he explicitly confront the issue in an extended passage worth quoting in full:

> Down fell men, women and children; those that scaped us, fell into the hands of the Indians that

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> were in the rear of us. It is reported by themselves, that there were about four hundred souls in this fort, and not above five of them escaped out of our hands. Great and doleful was the bloody sight to the view of young soldiers that never had been in war, to see so many souls lie gasping on the ground, so thick, in some places, that you could hardly pass along. It may be demanded, Why should you be so furious? (as some have said). Should not Christians have more mercy and compassion? But I would refer you to David's war. When a people is grown to such a height of blood, and sin against God and man, and all confederates in the action, there he hath no respect to persons, but harrows them, and saws them, and puts them to the sword, and the most terriblest death that may be. Sometimes the Scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents. Sometimes the case alters; but we will not dispute it now. We had sufficient light from the word of God for our proceedings (81).

Like promotionalist texts written before passage to America, Underhill's text seeks confirmation in biblical precedent, thereby normalizing, or making 'ordinary' what might alternately be read as extraordinarily brutal action.

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What Newes from America offers is at once containment (of savage Indians) and expansion (of possible action in available land). Precisely, it is description and prescription, telling of past action, and forecasting future acts. Kenneth Burke argues forcefully that literature is "equipment for living," that it functions socially as proverbs do in that it offers "*strategies* for dealing with *situations*" (Burke, 296). Underhill's text, and literature in general (as Burke argues), develop strategies in that they establish a perspective on their object. These perspectives are, as Frank Lentricchia proposes, "modes of knowledge: not in its traditional, disinterested humanist definition, but knowledge as power." And, as he dramatically concludes, "to write is to know is to dominate" (Lentricchia, 146). Thus, Newes from America suggests an effective means of domination (Underhill in fact includes an illustrated mapping of the attack, depicting the relative positions of the village, its inhabitants, the Puritan soldiers and Narragansett reinforcements) as it enacts a textual domination. The representation thereby offers advice on controlling a situation, while at the same time providing a means of, as Burke would have it, "encompassment."

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One of the most pervasively influential considerations of slavery and Africans in American history is Thomas Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia. As Winthrop Jordan notes, "against the backdrop of changing attitudes and actions concerning Negroes and Negro slavery, the writings of one man became a fixed and central point of reference and influence. In the years after the Revolution the speculations of Thomas Jefferson were of great importance because so many people read and reacted to them" (429). In two famous passages, Query XIV, on "Laws"; and XVIII, on "Manners," Jefferson attempted a rational approach to the explosive issue, developing an argument and an aesthetic based on 'right-reason,' and 'common-sense.' Yet hidden in the empiricist rhetoric is a real perceptual/positional dilemma. Critics often favorably cite Jefferson's profound ambivalence over racism and slavery; many point to passage XVIII as its manifestation. Yet, as JanMohamed has observed, ambivalence is not necessarily dynamic: it can be a privileged stasis, self-consciously displayed as evidence for moral recognition, yet valued precisely in that the ambivalence does not promote acting on that recognition (JanMohamed, 60). Thus, the ambivalence manifest in Notes on the State of Virginia over the issue of slavery is finally less interesting than Jefferson's

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attempts to position himself in his discourse, and in his society.

Donald Robinson, noting Jefferson's empiricist stance in Query XIV, has suggested that "where the categories of analysis [in Query XIV] are relatively static and scientific, those [in Query XVIII] are dynamic and moral" (Robinson, 92). Taking his cue, perhaps, from the regretful, even apocalyptic tone of the passage, which culminates in Jefferson's exclamation: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just ... The Almighty has no attribute which can take side with us in such a contest,"[13] Robinson is able to make a fair case. But a careful reading might prove the opposite. Regret does not replace moral action; Jefferson's concern in Query XVIII is, as many have noticed, for "our people" precisely as opposed to the slave. While he observes the moral degradation suffered by the slave ("he must lock up the faculties of his nature, contribute as far as depends on his individual endeavours to the evanishment of the human race, or entail his own miserable condition on the endless generations proceeding from him"), he is much more concerned for the moral and physical threat produced by the slave system for "our people" and "our children"--his white compatriots. The abrupt break in the text which follows his apocalyptic forecast is indicative of his refusal to pursue the consequences of his thought: "--But it is impossible to be

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temperate and to pursue this subject through the various considerations of policy, of morals, of history natural and civil. We must be content to hope they will force their way into every one's mind." The train of thought here is evasive, not dynamic, his optimism (as well as his prose) equivocal and tentative.

By contrast, the permutations that occur in the passage on "Laws" (XIV) provide much more insight into the depth of Jefferson's real perceptual/conceptual dilemmas on the subject of race, and racial slavery. Jefferson's initial empiric observations on the profound differences between the black and white races come in response to his proposal for a law providing for slave emancipation and distant colonization, and indeed, as Robert Ferguson convincingly demonstrates, Query XIV on "Laws" is the "central rationale" of this text ordered on the philosophy of natural law (Ferguson, 401). Its consequent failure (here, as elsewhere) at "rational management" of the issue of slavery is a signpost to the Enlightenment philosopher's profound inability to 'master' the incongruity between slave system and legal contract, between power, and 'natural' authority. We see this most clearly in Jefferson's discussion of thievish slaves (while lengthy, this passage is worth extended attention):

> That disposition to theft with which they have been branded, must be ascribed to their situation, and

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> not to any depravity of the moral sense. The man, in whose favor no laws of property exist, probably feels himself less bound to respect those made in favour of others. When arguing for ourselves, we lay it down as fundamental, that laws, to be just, must give a reciprocation of right: that, without this, they are mere rules of conduct, founded in force, and not in conscience: and it is a problem which I give to the master to solve, whether the religious precepts against the violation of property were not framed for him as well as his slave? And whether the slave may not as justifiably take a little from one, who has taken all from him, as he may slay one who would slay him? (142).

Jefferson here confronts the Enlightenment colonist's dilemma, for he cannot reconcile the "social contract" basis for law and authority, with the slave institution, which as Ferguson underscores, "exists outside the law," becoming, as a consequence, "a structural incongruity in Notes" (Ferguson, 491).

This passage in fact, abstracted from its context, seems much more coherent and progressive than it actually is in place. Indeed, it is not at all clear if this passage is intended to refer to the black American slave. When prior to this passage, Jefferson attempts to document the inherent

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inferiority of the black race, signal in their inability to produce poetry, he turns to the Augustan age of slavery to garner support for his position. Roman slaves were much more harshly treated, argues Jefferson, and yet these slaves "were often the rarest artists." But, he emphasizes, "they were of the race of the whites," which leads him directly to conclude: "It is not their condition then, but nature, which has produced the distinction" (142). He at no point here or subsequently clarifies to which group of slaves his pronouns refer--to white or black--as he proceeds: "Whether further observation will or will not verify the conjecture, that nature has been less bountiful to them in the endowments of the head, I believe that in those of the heart she will be found to have done them justice." Here proceeds the above-quoted passage on thievery and laws, followed immediately by a quote from Homer on the shifting moral imperatives of a slave, to which Jefferson appends, "But the slaves of which Homer speaks were whites" (142). What I wish to suggest is that Jefferson dodges the inevitable conflict of his arguments, alternating between declarations of inherently or environmentally determined racial difference. While he comes very near to an explicit repudiation of his previous statement--"The improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture with whites ... proves that their inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition in life" (141)--he masks it, perhaps even

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for himself, in a tangle of pronouns, and an increasingly vacillatory train of thought.

John Diggins persuasively argues that Jefferson was caught in the contradictions of the Enlightenment principle of equality:

> The problem ... is not only that equality was, and continues to be, a harsh doctrine that could be used against the Negro as much as in support of him--a *conservative* doctrine that demanded that the Negro compete in a white culture and be rewarded only for capacities and talents esteemed by that culture ... The crucial problem is that the Negro's "fundamental equality" --and the white man's for that matter--could not be confirmed by the empirical criteria of the Enlightenment (Diggins, 225).

Jefferson was caught up in the empiricist tautology of equality: Man's equality is "self-evident" because we can see it to be so in nature. As a matter of fact, blacks were not empirically equal; Jefferson and other enlightenment philosophers became trapped in supposing equality to be an empirical proposition when it was in fact a moral imperative.[14]

In this "radical disjunction of ethical sentiment and empirical science" Diggins locates Jefferson's inability to confront the contradictions of slavery. Yet in his

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reflections on morality elsewhere, Diggins notes, Jefferson was able to become "conspicuously subjective," and in his various correspondence, the Virginian statesman represents the quality of morality in a radically different way: "It is not *what* one believes [according to Jefferson], but *how* one honestly avows and acts upon a belief that is held less for its objective truthfulness than for its emotional rightness." Despite this imperative, Diggins continues, "Jefferson could not bring himself to extend his own dictum to the slavery question." Instead, in confronting the slave question, Jefferson, as we have seen, turns doggedly to empiric observations, "becomes an empiricist *par excellence*" (Diggins, 227-228). By this, he inscribes for himself, and prescribes for his audience (white, European, male), a position of static ambivalence, appealing to the authority of 'objective' observation to disguise his subjective unwillingness to relinquish his social superiority and its material advantages.

The function of Jefferson's text was to validate the rightness of the American mission, the centrality of the United States's role on the new continent. In this regard, Notes on the State of Virginia is colonial literature *par excellence*, engaging, as it does, in the demarcation and normalization of what we might call the "right of white." Jefferson's Notes, like promotionalist tracts and frontier literature, inscribed the central role of the Anglo-Saxon

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Europeans in the world. Challenged by their encounters with new lands and new peoples, the white Europeans, and Jefferson in their tradition, worked to incorporate these phenomena into the story of Euro-centricity, documenting their right to dominate as they crossed the continent and circumnavigated the globe.

TOWARD A SOCIOLOGICAL CRITICISM OF LITERATURE

As Thomas Metscher observes, "certain 'knowledge,' certain contents of consciousness, a certain view of the world, certain attitudes, values and norms--whatever they are, however 'right' and 'wrong'--are articulated in and mediated by art" (Metscher, 21). The aesthetic function is, above all, a social dynamic, as Jan Mukarovsky has established, which grows from cultural dialogue. Yet while aesthetic cognition arises as a result of contesting cultural 'voices,' it is the drive of the aesthetic to monologize, to make itself 'universal,' 'common-sensical,' in short, to conceal the social process which sustains it.

If a given culture gains access to control (both symbolic and practical) through a normative process of representation, it is through principles of the 'aesthetic' that it finds an avenue to mastery. And it is precisely the aesthetic's reference to universality that lends it its repressive, political power. In her brilliant analysis of <u>The Pornography of Representation</u>, Susanne Kappeler,

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summarizing from Kant's "From Critique of Judgement," argues that "judgments of taste, of aesthetic quality must have a subjective principle, and one which determines what pleases and what displeases, by means of feeling only and not through concepts, but yet with universal validity" (Kappeler, 54). Such subjectivity, she further notes, operates typically under the aegis of 'common sense.' In fact, it is 'common sense' to which Thomas Jefferson refers in his empirical observations in Query XIV on the "beauty in the two races." Jefferson argues:

> The first difference which strikes us is that of color. Whether the black of the negro resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin, or in the scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the colour of the blood, the colour of the bile, or from that of some other secretion, *the difference is fixed in nature* and is as real as if its seats and causes were better known to us. *And is this difference of no importance? Is it not the foundation of a greater or less share of beauty in the two races?* (my emphasis, 138).

By establishing "nature" as his ultimate authority, Jefferson grounds his aesthetic conclusions in a "difference fixed in nature and as real as if its seats and causes were better known to us" (138). His subsequent catalog of the

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inferior "beauty" of black slaves confirms his mastery aesthetically, morally, and economically.

As Kappeler observes, "the claim to universality stems from the fact of the disinterestedness with which the subject regards the represented object" (Kappeler, 54). The subject of representation is objectified, its qualities abstracted; 'beauty' in fact becomes a sanctuary apart from political struggle. But in fact, as Frank Lentricchia reminds us, "the aesthetic is always traversed by power" (155). 'Beauty' can never be understood outside of its political/social context. Kenneth Burke argues that 'beauty' must be conceived as the site of a struggle, between a "situation and a strategy for confronting or encompassing that situation." Thus, as Lentricchia concludes, "beauty cannot be conceived monistically, but only dialectically as always an act in the world, always involved in the administration of political medicine" (Lentricchia, 156). When pained by the contradictions in his own thinking (all men are created (un)equal), Thomas Jefferson turned to the panacea of 'beauty'--a universal norm located outside of himself, but which he was happily possessed of--for reassurance, and moral and intellectual confirmation. Jefferson's natural law, that which he holds 'self-evident,' must, however, finally face its own contradiction: his 'common sense' is finally a moral dodge.

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Representation, then, is the (concealed) intersection of the aesthetic and the social. Its mission, argues Kappeler, is "not so much the means of representing an object through imitation (matching contents) as a means of self representation through authorship: the expression of subjectivity" (Kappeler, 53). The foundation of Underhill and Jefferson's enterprise is self-confirmation: as authors, they explain and represent the Other and by this act they establish their right/write to dominance. As authors depicting and dominating the Other, they inscribe and confirm their own (superior) identity. It is perhaps worth noting, as Frank Lentricchia reminds us, that the cornerstone of Western representational theory, Aristotle's Poetics, grounds its discussion on the representation of good character in a particular appeal to 'common sense'--the universally acknowledged inferiority of women and slaves. The aesthetic of representation, as Lentricchia's example highlights, is inevitably involved in, acting upon and through, social circumstance.

It is this intrinsic connection between literature and social action that Kenneth Burke explores in his essay "Literature as Equipment for Living." In it, he casts literature in a proverbial role, as an active mediator of social reality, offering "strategies for dealing with situations." He makes here an explicit, even avowedly

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sinister connection here between the strategic value of literature, and militaristic "strategy":

> Surely, the most highly alembicated and sophisticated work of art, arising in complex civilizations, could be considered as designed to organize and command the army of one's thoughts and images ... One seeks to "direct the larger movements and operations" in one's campaign of living. One "manuevers," and the maneuvering is an "art."
>
> Are not the final results one's "strategy"? One tries, as far as possible, to develop a strategy whereby one "can't lose." One tries to change the rules of the game until they fit his own necessities (1973, 298).

Conceived as such, colonial ideology and its manifestations in literature may be viewed as various strategies for "winning" in the new world, a maneuver on the part of "white" Europeans to reclaim and affirm a central role in the universe. Intrinsic to this maneuver is a process of positioning, of naming situations so that they fit European conceptual necessity or expediency. And equally intrinsic to a critical apprehension of the social dynamics of colonial texts is what Burke terms a "calculus of acts," a sociological criticism of literature.

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Burke suggests broad outlines for such an endeavor. Sociological criticism, he proposes, "would seek to codify the various strategies which artists have developed with relation to the naming of situations." While the names themselves may occasionally vary, he speculates, "beneath the change in particulars, we may often discern the naming of one situation." Importantly, the examination should take place across a broad spectrum of literatures, although "it might occasionally lead us to outrage good taste, as we sometimes found exemplified in some great sermon or tragedy or abstruse work of philosophy the same strategy as we found exemplified in a dirty joke" (1973, 301-302).

What Burke proposes is unconventional, but not without its own rigor. His critical method will be based in "classifications, groupings, made on the basis of some strategic element common to the items grouped ... a method of classification with reference to strategies." These classifications, he further urges, must above all be "active," seeking not to codify but to break down traditional, specialized readings of literature:

> The method has these things to be said in its favor: It gives definite insight into the organization of literary works; and it automatically breaks down the barriers erected about literature as a specialized pursuit ... Sociological classification, as herein suggested,

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> would derive its relevance from the fact that it should apply both to works of art and to social situations outside of art ... These categories will lie on the bias across the categories of modern specialization (1973, 303).

Finally, and most explicitly, Burke has this to say:

> What would such sociological categories be like? They would consider works of art, I think, as strategies for selecting enemies and allies, for socializing losses, for warding off evil eye, for purification, propitiation, and desanctification, consolation and vengeance, admonition and exhortation, implicit commands or instructions of one sort or another. Art forms like "tragedy" or "comedy" or "satire" would be treated as *equipments for living*, that size up situations in various ways and in keeping with correspondingly various attitudes. The typical ingredients would be sought. Their comparative values would be considered, with the intention of formulating a "strategy of strategies," the "over-all" strategy obtained by inspection of the lot (304).

Such a methodology would, in fact, be able to accommodate Frank Lentricchia's assertion that "literature makes something happen, that the literary is always the taking of

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position and simultaneously the exercising of position within and on a social field" (Lentricchia, 156).

In what follows, I will test the plausibility of such a sociological criticism as it may be applied to the representation of 'race' in American literature. I will examine 'race,' following Henry Louis Gates, as an always fictional construction, a metaphoric trope. The subsequent chapters will examine a diverse selection of writing and writers from a variety of perspectives, concentrating alternately on a single text, or on a grouping of texts. Throughout, these questions will unify the range of analyses: How do these texts "frame" the representation of the racial Self and Other? How do they position themselves in the social dialogue on "race," and what social action do they mediate? In short, what kind of "social medicine" is offered by the texts?

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1. Cotton here justifies the profit-mission of colonialism. Curiously, his example, taken from Matthew 13:44-46, reverses the direction of Christ's parable, which compares the wise who recognize true value and sell all their material belongings to attain it to good Christians. Cotton utilizes this example to reverse ends, comparing good Christians to those who are "wise... and ... sudden" enough to seize material gain in the New World.

2. Cf. Nash, 1982, 27--39. Nash suggests that Spanish accounts of native genocide may have "suggested that when Europeans met `primitive peoples,' slaughter was inevitable."

3. As Winthrop Jordan points out in White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812, there seems to be a "fog of inconsistency and vagueness enveloping the terms *servant* and *slave* as they were used in England and seventeenth-century America" (52-53), and that the evidence surrounding the usage of those first Africans in Virginia is sketchy at best. However, the wording of legal documents, and evidence of freed Africans indicates an evolving trend from treating Africans as servants, to their very definite status as life-long slaves by the 1640's (see 71-76).

4. Kupperman provides detailed analysis of early colonial writings on this subject. Cf. "Indian Appearance," 133-144. She notes particularly that for the early colonial ethnographers, "color itself was a manipulable attribute. Writers mostly referred to the tan color of the Indians as the "Sun's livery" ... However the color was produced [i.e. by sun or walnut stain], the important fact was that Indians were naturally white ... Their darker color was part of a deliberately produced identity which the Indians chose for themselves, because they considered it beautiful or to protect themselves from the elements" (37).

5. Similarly, Richard Drinnon, in his Facing West, documents a lexical shift in the adjectival use of "brutish" to describe Native Americans, to the nominative "brute" during this period (50).

6. Jordan's comments here are representative: "The concept of Negro slavery there was neither borrowed from foreigners, nor extracted from books, nor invented out of whole cloth, nor extrapolated from servitude, nor

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generated by English reaction to Negroes as such, nor necessitated by the exigencies of the New World. Not any one of these made the Negro a slave, but all" (72).

7. See also, Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolution, who offers a provocative account of the fundamental conservatism at the heart of any scientific "revolution."

8. In fact, as Butterfield further notes, Copernicus was perhaps driven as much by his personal desire to usurp Ptolemy as he was by objective disputes based on observation. Says Butterfield: "It would appear that Copernicus found a still stronger stimulus to his great work in the fact that he had an obsession and was ridden by a grievance. He was dissatisfied with the Ptolemaic system for a reason which we must regard as a remarkably conservative one--he held that in a curious way it caused offence by what one can almost call a species of cheating." (37).

9. John Milton, Paradise Lost, VIII:65-172. As Merritt Y. Hughs notes in his thorough introduction to Milton's work, debate has long rage over whether Milton threw his support to the geocentric camp, or, for the sake of convenience and convention, depicted the geocentric universe while theoretically acknowledging the implications of heliocentricity (see especially 186-188).

10. Carl L. Becker argues for the essential conservatism of Enlightenment rationality and "natural philosophy," establishing its epistemological roots in medieval theological philosophy, in The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers.

11. For a very different reading of the Pequot War, see Alden T. Vaughan, New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1625-1675, 134-138.

12. Cf. Drinnon, 55. John Mason records in his account of the Pequot War that afterwards, when the number of the surviving Pequots was reduced to somewhere between 180-200, the Pequot sachems petitioned the Puritans for mercy in return for their submission. Mason records that "the Pequots were then bound by Covenant, That none should inhabit their native Country, nor should any of them be called Pequots any more" (40).

13. All references to Query XVIII are drawn from Jefferson, 162-163.

14. See Diggins for a fuller discussion, 224-228.

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CHAPTER TWO
ECONOMIES OF MORALITY AND POWER: "RACE" REFORM IN MATHER AND BYRD

COLONIAL DISCOURSE AND RACIALIST MYTH

In a provocative essay, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," Abdul JanMohamed comments on two principles important to colonial/racial discourse: 1) Perception and representation of racial difference are always founded upon economic motives; and 2) Racial discourse is always governed by racial tropes, which turn on the economy of what JanMohamed terms "manichean allegory." He explains:

> The dominant pattern of relations that controls the text within the colonialist context is determined by economic and political imperatives and changes, such as the development of slavery, that are external to the discursive field itself. The dominant model of power- and interest-relations in all colonial societies is the manichean opposition between the putative superiority of the European and the supposed inferiority of the native. This axis in turn provides the central feature of the colonialist cognitive framework and colonialist literary representation: the manichean allegory--a

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> field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, civilization and savagery, intelligence and emotion, rationality and sensuality, self and Other, subject and object (63).

Through the metaphoric function of manichean allegory, the racial Other becomes depleted of its own historical and cultural significance, and becomes a commodified entity, ready for appropriation by the colonial discursive system.

JanMohamed's model for this process calls to mind Roland Barthes' discussion of the mythologizing process in Mythologies. In his closing essay, "Myth Today," Barthes schematizes the semiological system of mythology through his explication of a cover on a copy of The Paris Match:

> On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolor. All this is the *meaning* of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors. I am therefore again faced with a

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> greater semiological system: there is a signifier, itself already formed with a previous system (*a black soldier is giving the French salute*); there is a signified (it is here a purposeful mixture of Frenchness and militariness); finally, there is the presence of the signified through the signifier (116).

In order for this final stage, "the presence of the signified through the signifier" that is the myth, to successfully occur, the signifier must undergo a process of dehistoricizing and depoliticizing. It must become a form, argues Barthes, where "meaning leaves its contingency behind; it empties itself, it becomes impoverished, history evaporates, only the letter remains" (117). The negro soldier thus must lose his individuality, and his cultural history. He becomes both generic and exchangeable, an (almost) empty signifier in a system of communication, ready to be imbued with the concept of the essential goodness of French imperialism. Because of its prior emptying, the signifier becomes transparent to the signified; the saluting Negro <u>stands for</u> French imperialism.

As Barthes is quick to observe, myth, as a "second-level semiotic system" unlike the first level (language), is never arbitrary or uninterested: "Motivation is necessary to the very duplicity of the myth: myth plays on the analogy between meaning and form, there is no myth without

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motivated form" (126). Myth, Barthes underscores, is a *value*, never separable from the system that creates it. It is the location of disguised power, "a perpetual alibi" (123), a "type of speech defined by its intention" (124).

The subtext of colonialist racial representation is always European superiority. The depiction of the native is always "about" white, Western excellence. Through the trope of manichean allegory, the racial Other is deprived of individuality, culture and history, and thus the mythologized form becomes an index to the white, authorizing self, in the same manner that the saluting Negro on The Paris Match becomes the "very *presence* of French imperiality" (128). The duplicity of colonial myth lies in the nature of the mythologizing process: the subtext (of Western superiority) becomes the text through the depleted signifier (the degraded racial Other, or the saluting Negro).

This mythologizing process works always to *naturalize* its subject, that is, to replace history with a natural justification, to be read not as motive, but cause. Barthes further elaborates:

> In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics, with any going back beyond what is immediately visible, it organizes a

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> world which is without contradictions because it is without depth, a world wide open and wallowing in the evident, it establishes a blissful clarity: things appear to mean something by themselves (143).

It is precisely through this process of naturalization that colonial discourse disguises its interest, its economic motivation. In this way, the mythologizing process or manichean allegory of racial trope works as social medicine. "Myths tend toward proverbs," says Barthes (154), and proverbs function, as Kenneth Burke underlines, to chart social relationships. Colonial discourse is above all involved in the charting and naturalizing of social relationships.

Can a colonial author ever write outside the power-motives of colonial discourse? JanMohamed suggests that the imaginative power of the manichean allegory is so dominating that it can in fact override all conscious resistance:

> The power relations underlying this model set in motion such strong currents that even a writer who is reluctant to acknowledge it and who may indeed be highly critical of imperialist exploitation is drawn into its vortex. The writer is easily seduced by colonial privilege and profits and forced by various ideological factors ... to

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> conform to the prevailing racial and cultural preconceptions (63).

Even, then, in writers who demonstrate sympathy toward exploited racial groups, we should expect to find evidence of the "master-discourse" of white, Western dominance.

Two colonial texts, Cotton Mather's "The Negro Christianized" (1706), and William Byrd's Histories of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina (written between 1728-1730), exemplify many of the manichean tendencies outlined by JanMohamed, as well as the mythologizing semiology of Barthes. Typically, both writers are lauded as progressive and open-minded in the racial issues they address. This essay, however, will question closely the motivations of each text, and will focus particularly upon the economy of racial representation in each. Governing the discussion will be two questions: Does the author effectively undermine racial tropes? What 'social medicine' does this text enact?

AN ESSAY TO DO GOOD

In 1706, Cotton Mather published a small pamphlet entitled "The Negro Christianized." The theme of the essay, "as we have opportunity let us Do Good unto all men" (6), anticipates, in many ways, a lengthier pamphlet Mather would publish four years later, "*Bonifacius*: An Essay to Do Good." Both tracts function as an "essay" at two levels: as a

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written text exhorting its audience to "Do Good," the text prescribes social action; as a performance, it becomes a good deed in itself that provides models for those seeking to "Do Good." In this capacity, the essay is social action.

The concept, "Do Good," that links both texts, was one that had long before impressed the Puritan minister. As he explains in his Preface to "*Bonifacius*," there was a "passage, in a Speech from an Envoy from His Britanick Majesty, to the Duke of Brandenburgh Twenty years ago; *A Capacity to Do Good, not only gives a Title to it, but also makes the doing of it a Duty* ... To be brief, Reader, the Book now in thy Hands, is nothing but an Illustration, and a Prosecution of that Memorable Sentence" (v). It would seem, from the subtitle of "The Negro Christianized," that this earlier work was similarly motivated: "An Essay, to excite and assist that Good Work; the Information of the Negroes in Christianity." Mather's good intentions extended beyond the writing of his text, as he recounts in his diary (May 31, 1706): "My Design is; not only to lodge one of the Books, in every Family of *New England*, which has a *Negro* in it, but also to send Numbers of them into the *Indies*; and write such Letters to the principal Inhabitants of the Islands, as may be proper to accompany them" (565).

The argument of "The Negro Christianized" is fairly straightforward. "It is a Golden Sentence," Mather begins, "that has been sometimes quoted from Chrisodem, That for a

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man to know the Art of Alms, is more than for a man to be Crowned with the Diadem of Kings. But to Convert one Soul unto God, is more than to pour out Ten Thousand Talents into the Baskets of the Poor" (1). In his tract, Mather proposes, quite against public sentiment, that it is every Christian slave holder's duty to Christianize his slave. Mather appeals to his audience's reasonableness: "*Show yourselves Men*, and let *Rational Arguments* have their Force upon you, to make you treat, not as *Bruits* but as *Men*, those *Rational Creatures* whom God has made your *Servants*" (4). Mather enumerates his reasons for such a proposal. First, God requires that any man's servants also be His. Second, a man does not deserve the title "Christian," unless he does everything in his power to ensure that all his household are Christian too. Third, Christian compassion requires that the owner do something for the improvement of his suffering and sinful slaves. Fourth, the compassionate owner will see the "incomparable benefit" of Christian consolation for his efforts. "A Good Man," observes Mather, "is One who does all the Good that he can. The greatest Good that we can do for any, is to bring them unto the fullest Acquaintance with *Christianity*" (9).

Mather overtly works to break down racial tropes, which he astutely perceives as a barrier to slave holders' willingness to Christianize their slaves. After presenting his arguments for Christianizing the negro as each slave

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owner's duty, Mather asks, "And now, what Objection can any Man Living Have?" Anticipating and answering to the "idle and silly cavils" of his audience, Mather tackles two major arguments of the day, that blacks do not have rational souls, and that they are marked so completely different by color that they are in fact irredeemable.

Mather answers to both charges simply by asserting their irrelevance:

> It has been cavilled, by some, that it is questionable Whether the *Negroes* have *Rational Souls*, or no. But let that *Brutish* insinuation be never Whispered any more. Certainly, their *Discourse*, will abundantly prove, that they have *Reason*. *Reason* showes it self in the *Design* which they daily act upon. The vast improvement that *Education* has made upon *some* of them, argues that there is a *Reasonable Soul* in all of them (23).

As for their color, which is also made an objection, Mather scoffs: "A Gay sort of Argument! As if the great God went by the Complexion of Men, in His Favours to them!" (24). Mather takes a stance clearly in opposition to his contemporaries who argued that dark skin color was an external manifestation of moral and intellectual degradation.[1]

Despite Mather's good intentions and perhaps revolutionary assertions contradicting determinist racial

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theories, the text is more complicated, and, in the end, much more conservative than it seems at first glance. While establishing what seems to be a common ground between black and white men, Mather yet places their capacity to reason in opposition. Mather's text privileges white sensibility, basing itself from its outset on the reasonable persuasion of his white reader. Yet while Mather has faith in the efficacy of reason upon white men's understanding, he markedly does not expect the same effects upon negroes. Of them, Mather says--shortly after affirming their rational soul--"Indeed, their stupidity is a discouragement," and continues,

> But the greater their stupidity, the greater must be our Application. If we can't learn them as much as we could, let us learn them as much as we can ... And the more Difficult it is, to fetch such forlorn things up out of the perdition whereinto they are fallen, the more Laudable is the undertaking: There will be more of a Triumph, if we Prosper in the undertaking" (25).

The negro may have a rational soul, but it is certainly not qualitatively the same soul as that of the white. In fact it is fixed firmly in a relation inferior to the white soul. This position, coming later in his essay, begins to undermine his initial assertions. Winthrop Jordan is able to conclude that "Mather was completely decided [i.e.,

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favorably] on the Negro's essential nature ... despite his dreadful punning on the Negro's color" (201). Yet if, as JanMohamed urges, "any evident 'ambivalence' is in fact a product of deliberate, if at times subconscious, imperialist duplicity" (61), we should analyze these apparent contradictions, rather than discarding them as irrelevant, since colonialist racial discourse often operates by means of such contradictions.

The color imagery, what Jordan characterizes as "dreadful punning," undermines Mather's explicit intentions to discard categorization by color. The rhetorical device rife through this text--in fact the only trope seemingly available to Mather in distinguishing good from bad, saved from damned--is dark and light imagery. He may affirm the issue of the African's color a "trifle," but the figure of speech he uses immediately after this discussion in considering the difficulties of educating the black is telling: "It may seem, unto as little purpose to Teach, as to wash an Aetheopian" (25). Like the cover of the Paris Match, with its seemingly benign signification of patriotism masking a more insidious apology for imperialism, Mather's text explicitly sponsors a liberal, humane reading of 'blackness' while implicitly proposing a very conservative, commodified figuration.

In fact, Mather's figurative language develops a covert text that works against his overt text throughout. He

introduces slaves as "the Blackest Instances of Blindness and Baseness," associating these qualities by alliteration. And while he reminds his readers parenthetically that it is not "yet" proven that the slaves are not decedents of Cham, he leaves room for doubt, which reinforces rather than undermines a persistent conceptual link in the text between skin color and moral degradation. He continues, "Let us make a Trial, Whether they that have been Scorched and Blacken'd by the sun of Africa, may not come to have their Minds Healed by the more Benign Beams of the Sun of Righteousness," suggestively linking physical to moral condition (1-3). In a stunning passage later in the text, Mather blurs such distinctions, indeed, suggesting rather their conflation:

> We read of, *People destroy'd for lack of knowledge*. If you withold *Knowledge* from your *Black People*, they will be *Destroy'd*. But their *Destruction* must very much ly at *your* door; *You* must answer for it. It was a *Black charge* of old brought in against the *Jewish Nation*; Jer. 2.34. *In thy skirts is found the Blood of souls* ... Surely, Things look very *Black* upon us (16).

We see here particularly the full range of passion that the color imagery is intended to evoke, and its confusing, even counterproductive effects for Mather's argument. It is at this point especially that Mather seems entirely trapped in

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what JanMohamed describes as manichean allegory, as his color imagery of light and dark acquires an apparent momentum of its own which he cannot prevent from taking over his initial arguments.

The covert text of "The Negro Christianized" further works against the overt text by displacing the ostensible subject of the piece--the black--with his white owner as the recipient of benefit. In other words, it is the white Christian who clearly becomes the subject of the text, the black heathen only a means by which the Christian can advance himself on a cosmic scale. The act of Christianizing the black is "the noblest Work, that was undertaken among the Children of men" (2)--"children of men" clearly excluding the African object. The black is an "opportunity," a "trial," a "creature." "Who can tell," queries Mather, "but that God may have sent this Poor Creature into my hands, so that One of the Elect may by my means be Called; and by my Instruction be made Wife unto Salvation! The glorious God will put unspeakable Glory upon me, if it may be so!" (3). The white Christian accrues eternal benefits, through his acting upon the black object--by making them "objects for the Nobles of Heaven to take Notice of!" (20). Important in this process, the "object"--the Christianized negro--will in fact reflect the white master, says Mather: "It cannot but be a vast accession unto your Joy in Heaven, to meet your Servants there and

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hear them forever blessing the gracious God, for the Day when He first made them your Servants" (20). Like the second level of Barthes' mythological semiology, the signifying "subject" is emptied of meaning, becoming, in the process, available for another meaning. Like the saluting negro on the Paris Match, Mather's slaves have no meaning of themselves, but are rather an (eternal) index to white superiority; they stand for their Christianizing master.

Colonialist racial discourse is never innocent. Virginia Bernhard, in her essay, "Cotton Mather and the Doing of Good: A Puritan Gospel of Wealth," observes that Mather's *Bonifacius*, unlike more somber English tracts which focus on the thanklessness of Doing Good, "abounds with optimism and constantly stresses both spiritual and temporal benefits which accrue to the individual who does good" (232). Temporal benefit likewise plays a crucial role in "The Negro Christianized." "Benefits," "revenues," "accounts," "inheritances," "shares" and "recompense" are all metaphors for the heavenly profits available to the Christianizing white. But more emphatically, Mather underscores the temporal, specifically monetary rewards the plan will garner the reluctant slave owner: "Yea, the pious Masters, that have instituted their Servants in Christian Piety, will even in this life have Recompense" (20). The slaves will be more tractable, more dutiful and faithful, hence, more profitable. He observes that slaves "are to

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enjoy no Earthly Goods, but the small Allowance that your Justice and Bounty shall see proper for them" (19), clearly indicating that by contrast, the white man's privilege is the accumulation of worldly goods.

It is curious, then, when Mather at one point begins ardently to chastise those who would object to his plan for the reason that baptism will entitle blacks to freedom, which will represent pecuniary loss for the owner: "Man, if this were true; that a Slave bought with thy Money, were by thy means brought unto the Things that accompany Salvation, and thou shouldest from this tie have no more service from him, yet thy Money were not thrown away" (26). He reprimands the selfish owner/reader severely for several more lines, and then there is a sudden shift: "But it is all a Mistake. There is no such thing. What Law is it, that Sets the Baptized Slave at Liberty? Not the law of Christianity, that allows of Slavery; Only it wonderfully Dulcifies and Mollifies and Moderates the Circumstances of it" (26). Mather considers the possible laws that might interfere, referring to English laws, which allude to the governance of villains as "goods or chattel" and concludes, "The Baptised then are not thereby entitled to their Liberty" (27). Since the charm of Mather's proposal is the financial reward that owners will gain by their benevolent action, Mather's reassurance that such action will result in neither loss of money or property is powerful, and only

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Strikingly, Mather's plan for the actual process of Christianizing the Negro slaves also revolves around economic considerations. He proposes that the busy white owner, who may not have time to devote to schooling his slaves in creeds and catechism, should "employ and reward" (29) white children and servants to perform the task for them. Further, as incentive for the negroes to learn, Mather proposes the owner offer <u>them</u> some small, "agreeable recompenses" as well. Throughout "The Negro Christianized," Christianity and the condition of whiteness are linked to financial gain--not only will the owner recognize a metaphysical acquisition, he will see a physical, tangible benefit as well. Mather's plan is, in short, a scheme of cosmic capitalism. Money becomes the metaphor, <u>and</u> the message. The black slave becomes a figurative as well as literal commodity, becomes commodified in the act of purchase as well as Christianization. Mather's message is less a gospel of Doing Good unto Others, than a Doing Good for the Self, only marginally a gospel of compassion, and more a Gospel of Wealth.

As we have seen, Mather's linguistic choices--racial tropes, loaded figures of speech, and a cost-effective logic--undergird the racialist economy of "The Negro

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Christianized." But larger, extra-textual economies are not irrelevant to the racist subtext of his pamphlet. In fact, Mather's motivation for writing "The Negro Christianized" was neither self-effacing nor self-sacrificing. On 1 March, 1706, Mather records in his diary:

> I am exercised, in my Family, with the want of good Servants ... I plead, that my Glorious CHRIST appeared in the *Form of a Servant;* and therefore the Lord would grant good *Servants* unto those that were alwayes at work for Him, and wanted the Assistences of such living Instruments. I resolve, that if God bless me with Good *Servants*, I will serve him with more Fidelity and Activity; and I will do something that not only my own Servants, but other Servants in this Land, and abroad in the world, May come to glorify Him. I have Thoughts, to write an Essay, about, the Christianity of our *Negro* and other *Slaves* (554).

In one of the bitter ironies of life, God apparently did fulfill His end of the bargain: on 13 December of the same year, Mather records:

> This Day, a suprising Thing befel me. Some Gentlemen of our Church, understanding (without any Application of mine to them for such a Thing,) that I wanted a *good Servant* at the expence of between forty and fifty Pounds, purchased for me, a very

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> likely *Slave*; a young Man, who is a *Negro* of promising Aspect and Temper and this Day they presented him unto me. It seems to be a mighty Smile of Heaven upon my Family; and it arrives at an observable Time unto me (579).

Mather named his slave Onesimus; in subsequent entries, he dutifully notes his children's successful completion of their catechizing the slave.

By no means do I wish to jump on the rickety, Mather-bashing bandwagon. That should be impossible after Kenneth Silverman's excellent biography which sensitively refutes earlier portraits of Mather, for instance those in the tradition of Vernon L. Parrington, who characterizes the minister as "eccentric ... petulant ... garrulous ... oversexed and overwrought" (i:107-108). I do mean this as an example that points up the inevitably political and economic motivation of any racial characterization in colonial America (in fact, in <u>any</u> colonial situation). Mather sets out to undermine racial tropes; that his own text is undermined by the language available to him in color imagery, and by his own pecuniary interest should clue us to the ways in which discourse and institutions--as Michel Foucault points out--constitutes the author, rather than vice-versa. The compelling tension in "The Negro Christianized" results from Mather's attempt to resist colonialist discourse, and his perhaps unconscious

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acquiescence to its financial motivations. His resulting complicity should not obfuscate the difficulty of his gesture: "The Negro Christianized" should be recognized for the social good it proposes and enacts, _along with_ its fundamental prejudice and self-interest.

DIVIDING LINES

While Cotton Mather's text illustrates the imaginative bondage of the manichean allegory, William Byrd's _History of the Dividing Line Betwixt Virginia and North Carolina_ exemplifies the covert economy of power implicit in colonial discourse. Byrd's public text was not published until almost a century after his death in 1744; his more controversial _Secret History_ had to wait until 1929 to achieve public notice. Both texts, however, were circulated among Byrd's friends and acquaintances during his lifetime, and were read after his death by many, including fellow Virginian Thomas Jefferson. Together, the two _Histories_ provide an interesting insight into Byrd's attitudes toward racial issues, one intended for a selected circulation, and one composed for a more general, public audience. Yet, as Donald T. Siebert, Jr. cautions, "it is well to note ... that neither account is purely public or private, that there is no neat contrast in tone or intention between [the two _Histories_], as is often assumed" (537). Both texts provide an account of Byrd's struggle for self-definition among his

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fellows, and among the continent's natives; both serve as well to define new territory for the colonies, and new possibilities for action in those lands. Thus, both the Secret and public History function in a proverbial capacity. They model strategies for social relations in the colonies, and they offer seasoned advice to men setting out to conquer the wilderness. And despite Byrd's apparently liberal attitudes and jocular narrative style, both texts urge a rigid, and finally even violently dominant social hierarchy, which seeks not to modify but to maintain racial distinctions.

At the most immediate level, the Histories operate as a scouting guide. Especially in the public version, Byrd provides a detailed account of how to prepare for such an undertaking in the wilderness, how to negotiate the terrain, how to deal with dietary problems inherent to a backwoods diet, and how to cope with soggy campgrounds. Byrd actually goes to great lengths in the public History to equip his reader:

> Because I am persuaded that very usefull Matters may be found out by Searching this great Wilderness, especially the upper parts of it about the Mountains, I conceive it will help to engage able men in that good work, if I recommend a wholesome kind of food, of very small Weight and

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> very great Nourishment, that will secure them from starving (252).

He proceeds to offer recipes for such "Portable Provisions" that will best outfit the aspiring woodsman/explorer. To as helpful an end, Byrd offers a treatise on the various pests that might be encountered, again listing preventatives for all. He gives trapping advice, hunting tips, and, to improve the vigour of the backwoodsman, he urges eating plenty of bear meat. The importance of promoting and preparing such hardy adventurers are almost inestimable in terms of economic advantage they can provide the burgeoning settlement, as Byrd observes: "Such [continued] Discovery would certainly prove an unspeakable Advantage to this Colony, by facilitating a Trade with so considerable a nation of Indians [i.e., the Cherokees]" (246). And the bear diet, Byrd underlines, will not only facilitate dominion, but will help populate it as well: "I am able to say, besides, for the Reputation of the Bear Dyet, that all the Marryed men of our Company were joyful Fathers within forty weeks after they got Home, and most of the Single men had children sworn to them within the same time" (252).

Perhaps more importantly, although less explicitly, both <u>Histories</u> are guides to the maintenance of social order in the wilderness. As David Smith has noted, the <u>Histories</u> carefully delineate a social and political hierarchy. Previous scholars, presumably drawing on Byrd's request to

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the legislature, have estimated the travel party at about twenty men. Smith, however, has more carefully established a figure of around fifty. This is important, insists Smith, because the number of commissioners, surveyors and servants exceed what we might reasonably assume necessary for such a venture. The basis for such a large complement was social, rather than technical or physical: "The hierarchy, in all its divisions, was not to deteriorate in the Great Woods. Gentlemen were still gentlemen, and needed to be served, and others below that rank needed to see them being served" (303). As the "Dividing Line" physically opened up new land for settlement, it textually delineated and maintained social order, "in relation to the meaning and value placed upon the acquisition of land" (303).

Additionally, the texts offer advice for dealing with the native population. The Histories have been often remarked on for their unusual and candidly liberal focus on white-Indian relations. Byrd feels, and discusses at length several times in the Histories, that the original English settlers had greatly erred in their stance toward the natives: "They had now made peace with the Indians, but there was one thing wanting to make that peace lasting. The Natives coud, by no means, perswade themselves that the English were heartily their Friends, so long as they disdained to intermarry with them" (3). Byrd suggests instead that the early settlers might have found a better

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way to establish harmonious relations with the Indians than by offering gifts of beads and cloth, and a more honorable means of gaining native lands:

> The poor Indians would have had less reason to Complain that the English took away their Land, if they had received it by way of Portion with their Daughters ... Nor would the Shade of the Skin have been any reproach at this day; for if a Moor may be washt white in 3 Generations, Surely an Indian might have been blancht in two (4).

Like Mather, Byrd establishes a conceptual link between the aesthetic and civil (if not moral) value of whiteness. It would, he indicates, have greatly dignified the legacy of the original settlers to have shared their enlightening influence, socially and racially. While this alternative seems to have repelled those settlers, Byrd suggests that the course is not as repugnant as generally depicted, and makes an audacious comparison between the morality of the natives and the first settlers who exploited Indian hospitality:

> The Indians are generally tall and well-proportioned, which may make full Amends for the Darkness of their Complexions. Add to this, that they are healthy & Strong, with Constitutions untainted by Lewdness, and not enfeebled by Luxury. Besides, Morals and all considered, I cant think

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> the Indians were much greater Heathens than the first Adventurers, who, had they been good Christians, would have had the charity to take this only method of converting the Natives to Christianity (3).

In this passage, Byrd strives to dismantle oppositions between white Virginians and native inhabitants at two levels: physical and moral. Byrd confronts powerful contemporary arguments on racial heritage with the same determination that we have seen in Mather. Though his contemporaries accounted for the natives' failure at assimilation as being due to their own deficiencies, Byrd asserts that it is the English settlers who are at fault for their absurd aesthetic scruples, and their immoral lack of Christian honor.

Byrd then extends his argument to politics. He contrasts the shortsighted course of the English settlers with the more politically successful policies of the French, who actually remunerated those who intermarried. By this, says Byrd, "we find the French Interest very much Strengthen'd amongst the Savages, and their Religion, such as it is, propagated just as far as their love" (4). His arguments explicitly contest the popular view of the day, that miscegenation would lead inevitably to the deterioration of the superior race. Racial characteristics, Byrd asserts, are not fixed. Rather, such differences are a

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factor of material and cultural circumstance: "The principal Difference between one People and another proceeds only from the Different Opportunities of Improvement" (120).

Despite his emphasis on native physical and moral dignity and his reassurances that intermarriage will civilize the Indians without tainting the whites, the subtext of his accounts runs counter to these generous assertions. As the Histories progress an alternate message subtly conveys the importance of maintaining racial dominance, even through means of violence, rather than continuing to encourage any enfranchisement of the natives. Both versions of the Histories pay close attention to the Indians encountered on the survey, and invariably, these "portraits of manners" observations reflect conservative, not liberal attitudes. For instance, one Sabbath day on the excursion, Byrd and his fellows question "our Indian"--a Saponi who went by the hunting name of "Bearskin"--about Indian religion. Byrd relates Bearskin's comments to his public reader with a mind open enough to see certain affinities to the Christian religion, observing that Bearskin's account "contain'd ... the three Great Articles of Natural Religion: The Belief of a God; The Moral Distinction betwixt Good and Evil; and the Expectation of Rewards and Punishments in Another World." Still, he more insistently finds in the religion a bent that is yet "a little Gross and Sensual," as much as "cou'd be expected

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from a meer State of Nature, without one Glimpse of Revelation or Philosophy" (202). In fact, Bearskin's account calls to mind the graphic and imaginative cosmologies of Dante and Milton, as Byrd recounts it. Bearskin describes a "Venerable Old Man" who monitors the gates to Paradise, judging between those who deserve admitance, and those who should be sent to the land of perpetual Winter. This land is guarded by a "dreadful old Woman ... whose head is covered with Rattle-Snakes instead of Tresses." Sitting on her "Toad-Stool," she oversees the sufferings of the people there, who are "hungry, yet have not a Morsel of any thing to eat, except a bitter kind of Potato, that gives them the Dry-Gripes and fills their whole Body with loathsome Ulcers, that Stink, and are unsupportably painful" (202). At other points in the Histories, Byrd is willing to consider trans-atlantic cultural parallels which would dismantle racial oppositions. Even when Byrd discusses as repugnant a topic as the native scalping practices, he draws a comparison to a similar practice of the ancient Scythians, suggesting a European (albeit distant) origin for the natives (308). Here, and later, in recounting a native legend that bears striking parallels to Christ's earthly mission, he markedly refrains from drawing any significant connections between Bearskin's story and Christian belief. Rather than using Bearskin's testimony as an opportunity to further his initial tactics

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of undermining racial distinctions by emphasizing commonalities, his account of Saponi cosmology underscores a perceived moral deficiency in the natives. In an account of an enterprise which is often noted for its own sensual bent, Byrd's pronouncement on Bearskin's heaven ("a little Gross and Sensual") contains its own irony.

Carefully, the public History in particular keeps Indian nature in opposition to the white. Byrd notes that, "It must b (sic) observ'd, by the way, that Indian Towns, like Religious Houses, are remarkable for a fruitful Situation; for being by Nature not very Industrious, they choose such a Situation as will Subsist them with the least Labour" (208). Later, he explains at length:

> I never could learn that the Indians set apart any day of the Week or the Year for the Service of God. They pray, as Philosphers eat, only when they have a stomach, without having any set time for it. Indeed these Idle People have very little occasion for a sabbath to refresh themselves after hard Labour, because very few of them ever Labour at all. Like the wild Irish, they would rather want than Work, and are all men of Pleasure to whom every day is a day of rest.
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> Indeed, in their Hunting, they will take a little Pains, but this being only a Diversion, their spirits are rather rais'd than depress'd by

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> it, and therefore need at most but a Night's Sleep to recruit them (262).

Unlike, we should note, the industrious crew of men on the survey, who hazard swamp and storm to stake an imaginary line, "the little Work that is done among the Indians is done by the poor Women, while the men are quite idle" (116).

In keeping with these observations, the public History apparently downplays Bearskin's role as hunter for the survey crew. Bearskin, as both secret and public Histories attest, supplies the party with an abundance of food. In fact, we learn in the "Secret History" that it is only the hunting skill of Bearskin that keeps the party from going hungry on several occasions. But the public History occasionally blurs this reading, by suggesting first that the Saponi's hunting skill was possibly due as much to good luck as to skill (160), and then portraying particular incidents in which the men want for food due to the Indian's native shiftlessness. Immediately after the passage cited above, in which Byrd accuses the Indians of not taking their hunting seriously, he relates how "the Indian had kill'd a fat Doe in the compass he took round the elbow of the River, but was content to Prime it only, by reason it was too far off to lug the whole Carcass upon his Back." He complains that this bit of meat, barely supplemented by the two turkeys his men (all seventeen of them) managed to kill "could only afford a Philosophical Meal to so many craving

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stomachs" (278-280). At the risk of being somewhat ungenerous, we might note the less melodramatic language of the parallel scene in the "Secret History": "The Indian brought us the primeings of a Fat Doe, which he had kill'd too far off for him to carry the whole. This & 2 turkeys that our Men shot, made up our Bill of Fare this Evening" (279). Because of this section's position relative to that condemning native laziness, and the language hinting that the Indian was "content" while the other men went hungry, it seems that the public document somewhat distorts events in order to bring them into line with a more conservative version of "Indian"--one that clearly needs the enlightening influence of the colonists. Insidiously, the Histories create a fictional, mythologized Indian that reflects the drives of white colonial policy, nowhere better enacted than on the survey itself.

As Roland Barthes observes of the mythologizing process: "The world enters language as a dialectical relation between activities, between human action; it comes out of myth as a harmonious display of essences" (142). The Histories' mythologized version of Indian essence contains and naturalizes contradictions so that Indians can be "essentially" lazy when they fail to provide food, and "essentially" savage when they successfully furnish food. For instance, when Byrd acknowledges in the public history the Saponi's hunting prowess, he indicates that Bearskin's

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success is due to a savage nature: "Our unmerciful Indian kill'd no less than two Braces of Deer and a large Bear" (260). And despite his much-noted insistence that Indians are only deficient through lack of opportunity, Byrd in fact goes to some length to suggest the inherent, essential laziness of the natives:

> Tho' these Indians dwell among the English, and see in what Plenty a little Industry enables them to live, yet they chuse to continue in their Stupid Idleness, and to Suffer all the Inconveniences of Dirt, Cold and Want, rather than to disturb their hands With care, or defile their Hands with Labour (116).

Contrary to his assurances to his white audience that racial characteristics are not inborn, the sub-text of the Histories increasingly suggests the opposite, carefully delineating an Indian identity that is distinct from and inferior to the white, and not altered by opportunity.

It is quite possible, as evidenced above, to argue that colonial discourse selects from the "available facts" about the Native Americans only those which support its general political and economic purposes. It is equally possible to argue that every mention of "Indian" in Byrd's texts is politically or economically motivated, never, as JanMohamed insists, innocent of colonial duplicity. The enterprise of the survey itself--staking out new territory

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by demarcating an arbitrary "dividing line"--has an economic and political basis. And Byrd's accounts are ever aware of Indian presence, and, by his own admission, their right to possession of the land. While he carefully avoids granting that right directly in his account of the actual survey, his initial comments about the failure of the earliest colonists to gain title to native lands honorably indicate his awareness of the issue. Given his earlier explicit acknowledgement of that right, we might question Byrd's later, complacent assumption of colonial dominion over the lands he surveys. While he has paid lip-service to fair-dealing with the native populations which occupy the land, the Histories' account of the actual dealings of Byrd's company with the various native Americans they encounter indicates that domination, not fair-dealing, is an acceptable means to "right."

Although Byrd is always attuned to the "picturesque," the Histories are not merely a sight-seeing guide. Throughout his survey of the colonies' boundary, Byrd is attuned to the economic potential of the areas under survey. Even through the awful Dismal Swamp, the vigilant commissioner speculates at the feasibility of draining the land in order to render it usable. And while he plans for colonial appropriation, Byrd remains also aware of the "Indian Menace."[2] Because of the colonists' aversion to intermarriage, they will have to face Indian resistance.

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Byrd points to the Carolinians' violent policy toward Indians, and openly sympathizes with the native's revolt against "Tyrany and Injustice," almost applauding their war on "those little Tyrants" (304).

But his analysis does not extend to Virginia's relations with the local natives. Further, he does not seem to regard continued violence from the Indians against Virginians as a serious threat; but given that he repeatedly depicts Indians as a dying breed, there is perhaps little wonder in his nonchalance. The Histories' portrayal of the steadily decreasing Indian numbers is worth note. In much the same way that these two texts "fix" Indian nature, depoliticizing and dehistoricizing, they also explain the decreasing native population as the inevitable result of Indian savagery and inter-tribal warring (helped along by white disease and liquor). And, like John Underhill's pamphlet which promises empty land while narrating coincidentally the demise of the Pequots, Byrd keeps an eye on the land which becomes available through native depopulation. For instance, Byrd notes that the Usherees were formerly,

> a very Numerous and Powerful People. But the frequent Slaughters made upon them by the Northern Indians, and, what has been still more destructive by far, the Intemperance and Foul Distempers introduc'd amongst them by the Carolina Traders,

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> have now reduc'd their number to little more than 400 Fighting Men, besides Women and Children. It is a charming Place where they live, the Air very Wholesome, the Soil fertile, and the Winters ever mild and Serene (300).

Innocent and apparently objective observations like this, JanMohamed would argue, reveal the extent of colonial duplicity. Byrd's description minimalizes ("little more") while underscoring ("Fighting Men") the degree of the "Indian Menace" at the same time it indicates the real source of concern that motivates the colonists' conceptual need for an "Indian Menace": the availability of fertile lands. The more the native population is "reduc'd," the more "charming Place[s]" are made available.

At points, the public History seems a virtual catalogue of the demise of the various tribes. The public version notes that the Meherin Indians, who were decimated by the Catawbas, had deserted their "Ancient Town" and taken refuge among the English (106). Not that they should be pitied, for "they have ever been reputed the most false and treacherous to the English of all the Indians in the Neighbourhood." The whole number of Indians in Nottoway is reduced to about two hundred, including women and children; these are, Byrd asserts, "the only Indians of any consequence now remaining within the Limits of Virginia" (116).

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As for the Carolinian Tuscaroras, "these Indians were heretofore very numerous and powerful, making within time of Memory, at least a Thousand Fighting Men. Their Habitation, before the war with Carolina, was on the North Branch of Neuse River, commonly call'd Connecta Creek, in a pleasant and fruitful country" (290). Their ranks were decimated, according to Byrd, by their addiction to rum, and war with the whites. Now, he observes, "there remain so few, that they are in danger of being quite exterminated by the Catawbas, their mortal Enemies" (290). For those natives who remain, the public History outlines a course of action: subjugate them through trade--particularly of firearms. Thomas Morton may have been persecuted by the Puritans for selling rifles to the Indians, but Byrd insists it is a good idea, "because it makes them depend entirely upon the English, not only for their Trade, but even for their subsistence" (116). And practically speaking, arrows are silent, and therefore more dangerous--unlike the noisy rifle shot, which alerts the unsuspecting white immediately.

Byrd's observations on the inevitability of Indian extinction are backed in the public History by Indian legend. Earlier skeptical of Indian religion, Byrd can ascribe to it far enough here to relate that the race will inevitably be killed off by "their God," who, having sent to the demoralized natives "a perfect Example of Integrity and kind Behavior ... a holy Person" to redeem them from their

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self-destructive behavior. Curiously, Byrd passes by another opportunity to draw obvious Christian parallels from this native legend of a perfect man sent to model behavior and encourage harmony among a dishonest and impious population. Like Christ, this messenger is scorned, harassed, and finally impaled on a tree. The text works here not to suggest Christian fraternity, but to prophecy the end of a race. The text details how the native god becomes enraged at his people's failure to reform, and their execution of his messenger. As a result, this god will never "leave off punishing, and wasting their People, till he shall have blotted every living Soul of them out of the World" (292). This account of native depopulation transcends political, physical and economic interaction with the whites, and becomes instead mythic. Yet, to return to Barthes, myth is always a "value, never separable from the system that creates it ... a perpetual alibi." Thus, the public History offsets the colonialists' role in decimating native population and habitat. Instead, Byrd ironically attributes the demise of the natives to the vengeance of a god to whom he does not ascribe.

If the natives are not a physical threat to the Virginians, their dangerous influence manifests itself in other ways. Despite his unreserved, and even mischievous banter on intermarriage, his own discussion of the "slovenly" and "tallow-faced" backwoodsmen who have

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intermarried among the Indians and have adopted their customs and habits undermines his own contrary assertions. Byrd suggests that the bounty of the land has lead to traits of slothful sensuality he finds characteristic to the Indians, and implies that the whites who live in the "lubberland" must assert their racial heritage of "Industry and Frugality" as the "two Cardinal Virtues" which will banish such undesirable traits (36).[3] Complaining against the lack of hardiness evident in the backwoods settlements of North Carolina, in the public History Byrd notes that "we observed very few corn-fields in our Walks, and those very small, which sem'd the Stranger to us, because we could see no other Tokens of Husbandry or Improvement" (54). Upon questioning the residents, Byrd learns that they have no urge to grow more than they need for immediate household use. Even the cows and pigs are left to forage their own food, a highly wasteful policy, Byrd notes with scorn. He comments with contempt that "some, who pique themselves more upon Industry than their Neighbours, will, now and then, in compliment to their Cattle, cut down a Tree whose Limbs are loaden with ... Moss ... The trouble wou'd be too great to Climb the Tree in order to gather this Provender, but the Shortest way (which in this Country is always counted the best) is to fell it, just like the Lazy Indians, who do the same by such Trees as bear fruit" (54). The residents who acquire what Byrd regards as affinities to the Indian way of

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life seem to Byrd degenerate and diseased, and he carefully marks the scabs and facial deformities that some exhibit due their lack of initiative in growing vegetables and relying instead in their diet on pork (54).

Richard Slotkin tries to reconcile Byrd's account with his former, more liberal assertions on racial intermarriage by suggesting that Byrd had an agenda for a "proper" sort of intermarriage, as opposed to that which had taken place in the backwoods, among the frontiersmen (222). It seems, however, that Byrd's comments on the honor for whites, and improvement in Indians to be gained by intermarriage are subtly but completely undermined by the subtext of the public History in particular. The public version is much more consciously politicized, its subtext marked by a persistent conservatism, a profound worry over any loss of a superior white identity which must be rigidly maintained against a distinctly inferior red one.

The concept of Indianness presented in the public History, in contrast to Byrd's explicit comments, is finally neither dynamic or liberal, and we might rehearse here the profoundly conservative undertone of Byrd's initial comments on racial union. The scheme for intermarriage includes no recognition of Indian culture or racial characteristics, but instead a desire to "bleach" them--wash them of color--while at the same civilizing them so that they disappear into European appearance and manner. Hand in hand with this

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suggestion is the real motivation: assimilation is not an end unto itself; it does not contain its own moral momentum. Rather, assimilation is a means to peaceful and relatively cost-free procurement of land titles. And, as we have seen, this subtext quickly undermines Byrd's initial assertions of the rightness of assimilation. We are here reminded of JanMohamed's formulation of the manichean allegory as "the dominant model of power- and interest-relations" in colonial discourse. Byrd's stake in colonial acquisition subverts his interest in racial fraternity.

More importantly, the public History indicates that the time for such action is long past: "Had they intended either to Civilize of Convert these Gentiles, they would have brought their Stomachs to embrace this prudent Alliance" (3, my emphasis). And though Byrd alleges that this "alliance" would be "good-natured," the subtext of the public History manifests its worry over racial intermarriage in the subtle, yet pervasive disgust at the backwoods people, who take on Indian characteristics. Like Cotton Mather's admonition against placing pecuniary concerns over Christian duty, Byrd's advice on racial integration remains philosophical, at best. Byrd's comments, like those of Thomas Jefferson on the subject of European and Native American intermarriage, have to be "put down as rhetoric, more of the head than the bed" (cf. Drinnon, 85).

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It is possible, indeed, important, to push Byrd's stance on racial union one step further. Byrd notes that the white man never could bring himself to intermarry with the native women. Nor do the members of Byrd's company find any marriageable Indian women in their venture. Yet, as the company men take frequent and even violent advantage of local "tawnies," it becomes clear that sexual union is not repugnant at all. Rather, what are portrayed as the laughable antics of Byrd's cohorts reaffirm the right of might: Why gain honorably what can be taken by force?

In the end, while both writers make bold attempts to subvert racial tropes of difference, neither fully succeeds. In fact, the most generous impulses of "The Negro Christianized" and the Histories of the Dividing Line are subsumed to the power of colonial discourse and its economic interests. Kenneth Burke suggestively postulates the "bureaucratization of the imaginative" which has striking relevance to the process of subversion we have seen in both texts:

> All imaginative possibility (usually at the start Utopian) is bureaucratized when it is embodied in the realities of a social texture, in all the complexities of language and habits, in the property relationships, the methods of government, production and distribution, and in the development

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By a careful examination of this process, whereby a utopian impulse is corralled in the drives of a given discourse, we can achieve a more sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of racial representation in a colonial setting.

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NOTES

1. For an excellent survey of early theories on the color of Africans, see Winthrop Jordan's White Over Black, especially chpt. VI, "The Bodies of Men," 216-265.

2. See Francis Jennings, who argues that the so-called "Indian Menace" was in fact "a boomerang effect of the European Menace to the Indians" 37.

3. Parrington discusses the social levelling associated with the lubberland in frontier literature, i:139-142. Richard Slotkin, 218-220, provides a reading of Byrd's account of lubberland that, while similar in focus, diverges somewhat from my own.

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CHAPTER THREE
ROMANCING THE BORDER:
BIRD, COOPER, SIMMS AND THE FRONTIER NOVEL

REALITY VERSUS ROMANCE

"The business of a writer of fiction," states Cooper unequivocally in his 1831 Introduction to The Last of the Mohicans, "is to approach, as near as his powers will allow, to poetry" (7). There is an unresolved tension in Cooper's Introduction between his commitment to realism--giving an accurate account of "the Aborigines of the American continent" (5)--and his attraction to romance--"poetically to furnish a witness to the truth" (7). To achieve the latter, Cooper acknowledges, one must fudge a bit on realism: Cooper's Natty isn't quite so vulgar as he might have justifiably been portrayed by a more realistic pen .

Two of Cooper's colleagues in the frontier novel, William Simms and Robert Montgomery Bird, wrestled with the opposing demands of romance and realism in their novels and Introductions. Simms's elaboration on romance in his Preface to The Yemassee is still a touchstone for modern theorists. But Simms also claims his share of realism; his novel purports, he explains, to deliver a "correction" of erroneously "vulgar opinions" the reader might have had concerning "red men" (4). Bird's aims were avowedly the

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opposite of Cooper's, whose depictions of Indians he abhorred. By contrast to Cooper's and Simm's exalted notions of historic Indians, Bird set out to right the record: his Indians were "real Indians" (32). On the other hand, he confesses, his Nick, while based in fact, is "sustained" by "poetical possibility" (34-35).

Many critics have discussed the formalistic implications of the dual impulse toward realism and romance in The Last of the Mohicans, The Yemassee and Nick of the Woods. Fewer, however, have examined the socio-political significance of this authorial/narrative ambivalence.[1] In the case of the frontier novel, "realism" and "romance" could be said to embody two paradoxical drives of the frontier itself, one embedded in real, historical/ material conflict, the other an ideological device which seeks to elide historical culpability on behalf of the culture of the writer. Strikingly, Cooper, Simms and Bird offer a commitment to a realistic depiction of "Indians," while their romantic urges tend toward compatriots in cause and country. A study of historical frontier novels might productively examine the de-historicizing, de-politicizing effects of the "romance" imposed by members of the dominant culture on the "reality" of the American frontier.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORY

All three novels share an interest in America's historical past. Following the lead of Charles Brockden Brown, who "gothicized" the American landscape in Edgar Huntly and found (despite popular sentiment of the day) ample materials in America to draw on for his fiction, the three authors under consideration here also turned to American subjects and landscapes for their writings. In the wake of anxiety provoked by the North American Review's clarion call for a national literature and British skeptics like Sydney Smith, these authors used American events to establish a sense of past, and to prove that there was indeed such a thing as an American book. Cooper drew on the French-Indian wars of 1757, Simms on the Yemassee uprising of 1715, and Bird set his novel in the Kentucky frontier of 1782. All three strove to create a sense of historical depth and of national tradition for a young and anxious America. Simms, in particular, recognized the value of the Native American mythology in reinforcing this sense of historical richness as his account of Yemassee mythology demonstrates, but Cooper and Bird as well utilized the textural value of the frontier legacy, and all characterized the incipient republic in its (Anglo) frontier characters.

Accordingly, the main body of this country's critics have treated these novels as chronicles of America's epic past, sagas of the confrontation of civilization and

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savagery or primitivism in a world that was, by the time the novels were written, under the sway of what Richard Slotkin calls the "metropolis." The frontier novel's exploration of social problems is interesting to these critics--but only in an historical sense, as Richard Chase explains of Cooper's fiction: "Such a culture was momentarily possible in eighteenth-century America. But since it had become all but impossible in the time of Cooper, the myth that enhances and justifies it has perforce to be nostalgic, ironic, and self-contradictory ... its ultimate meaning is anti-cultural" (54). The three novels explore social problems, the solutions of which are foregone, their legacy a matter of historical record. As such, the novels' "larger meanings" are most typically read as attempts to mythologize and symbolize (Mohicans, Yemassee) or psychologize (Nick) the American frontier experience which in turn embody larger, eternal conflicts in human nature, or within the individual.[2]

In The Fatal Environment, Richard Slotkin brings to his earlier mythological thesis of the frontier a post-structural and marxist frame of reference that sees myth in a more socially mediative light. Frontier novels become more than an account of the past that allows individuals to contemplate eternal conflicts and values. Instead, they form a tradition that suggests contemporary social action: "These myths [of the frontier] not only define a situation

for us, they prescribe our response to that situation" (19). Slotkin deftly argues that frontier novels create a myth that is ideologically loaded: they "aim at affecting not only our perceptions but our behavior--by 'enlisting' us, morally or physically, in the ideological program" (19).

In light of their socially mediative capacity, the contemporary significance of these novels should not be overlooked. Granted, New York, the Carolinas and Kentucky no longer bordered "wilderness" at the time the novels were written, but the frontier experience continued further west. Moreover, the Native Americans were an on-going "problem" for white Americans in areas that were now considered "civilized." These novels deal with historical situations, but concomitantly suggest attitudes toward the frontier that had a certain and immediate relevance to the period in which the novels were written. While Slotkin argues the importance of recognizing the importance of the frontier ethos during the period that these novels became so popular, he proposes that the frontier myth was tempered as settlers reached Rockies, and that for this reason the contemporary relevance of the novels written during the twenties and thirties was diminished. The formidable range of mountains was perceived, he suggests, as a "permanent barrier," and America believed, albeit prematurely, that it had reached its "last frontier" (110-111). Yet as Reginald Horsman argues, the frontier spirit did not reach any kind of

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impasse during this period, but instead continued to strengthen. Horsman points out that in the years just before these novels were written, statesmen, journalists and other public figures were predicting the nation's progress past the Rockies. For instance, as early as 1811, John Quincy Adams prophesied that "the whole continent of North America appears to be *destined by Divine Providence* to be peopled by one *nation*, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usages and customs" (quoted in Horsman, 87). Henry Clay made similar predictions in 1820 (cf. Horsman, 93). While the frontier may have slackened its forward march during the period these novels were written, it did not lessen its expectations. Americans in these two decades were forming a powerful narrative about their progress across the continent: Manifest Destiny.

William Dowling suggests that "the world comes to us in the shape of stories," underscoring narrative not as a literary form, but as an "epistemological category":

> Like the Kantian concepts of space and time, that is, narrative may be taken not as a feature of our experience but as one of the abstract or 'empty' coordinates within which we come to know the world, a contentless form that our perception imposes on the raw flux of reality, giving it, even as we

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> perceive, the comprehensible order we call experience (95-96).

Thus, we cannot underestimate the role of frontier literature--stories which order that experience, suggesting strategies of ideological containment--in shaping social reality. Edwin Fussell observes, "the West was won by American literature" (11), a conquest which functions at two levels. First, symbolically, the West was won in history by replaying past victories and claiming them as national tradition. Second, immediately, these stories offered a certain perspective, and encouraged reader identification with the characters who embodied a particular national tradition. Whether, as with Natty Bumppo, the death of Indians was inevitable and regrettable, or, as with Nathan Slaughter, their death was necessary and laudable, the end result was an acceptance of an historical <u>and</u> on-going policy toward living Native Americans, as though it were "natural," and already graven in (tomb)stone.

STORY AND IDENTITY

It is important to examine the rhetorical function of the frontier story in fashioning contemporary attitudes and mediating social reality. Each novel under consideration here demonstrates an awareness of its role in educating its audience in the exigencies of frontier reality. In each novel an important sub-plot is the education of a

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representative of civilization in the actualities of the frontier, including the inevitable 'removal' of Indians.[3] In this respect, we might take Nick of the Woods as paradigmatic. It foregrounds a frontier story as the means by which a nation forms its attitudes about Indians. This important sub-plot details how narrative can operate as social medicine--how in fact the West might be won by American literature--and establishes the importance of frontier literature to the shaping of contemporary attitudes.

Nick devolves around several convoluted plots. Virginian cousins Roland and Edith Forrester are deprived of their inheritance, and come to Kentucky to seek their fortune. Edith and Roland are taken captive and separated from each other by a band of warring Shawnees; Roland is freed by the backwoods Quaker, Nathan Slaughter, and the two together set out to recover Edith. Roland has been portrayed as the city boy who comes to the wilderness to nurse his wrongs. Sulky and imperious, he has foolishly led himself and Edith into a compromising situation. Earlier scornful of the frontiersmens' bloodlust for the Indians, Roland is now in a situation that tests his haughty attitudes. He has personally encountered the villainous and drunken Indians he has heard tell of--in fact, his life was temporarily in their keeping, and might quickly have been extinguished but for Nathan.

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Until this point his rescuer, Nathan, has represented himself as a pacifist who steadfastly refuses to lift his weapon against a human target. Now, however, he must explain to Roland how the three Indians guarding him are killed and Roland set free. At first he adopts a regretful pose of "border necessity" (for which grateful Roland proclaims him an international hero). But shortly after, Nathan becomes so exasperated with Roland's citified foolishness and vain scruples that he sits him down to educate him properly. He tells him a story. Representing the "real" motive behind the backwoodsman's curious behavior, Nathan's story is an education on the frontier.

Nathan Slaughter's tale begins on the Pennsylvanian frontier, in Bradford, when he was married and supporting his mother, wife and five children. One day, the famous Shawnee chief, Wenonga (of whom Roland has not heard, indicative of his city ignorance) and a band of warriors came onto his property. To show him that he was a man of peace, Nathan handed Wenonga his gun and knife. Wenonga proceeded to slay and scalp, with Nathan's weapons, all of the family. He in fact scalped Nathan, as Nathan dramatically reveals to Roland by pulling off his hat.

Enacting the story, reliving it in telling, sends Nathan into an epileptic seizure. Its effects are nearly as powerful for Roland. When he recovers, Nathan questions Roland, "had they done so by *thee*, what would thee have done

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to them?" Roland, "greatly excited by the story," replies: "Declared eternal war upon them and their accursed race!" "Thee is right," affirms Nathan and elevates the lesson to (Quaker-esque) incantation: "Thee would kill, friend, thee would kill, thee would kill!" (236). This episode marks the true beginning of Roland's education. He now perceives Nathan as heroic, and models his own behavior after the Indian-hater's. As he declares in the end, "a braver heart, a truer friend, never served man in time of need" (346). Roland never becomes adept in the woods of the frontier, but he learns to accept frontier "necessity," and to participate in and eventually to condone Indian slaughter. Moreover, when he returns to civilization, he returns equipped with Nathan's story and perspective.

Kenneth Burke discusses the rhetorical function of identification in his Rhetoric of Motives as a means of persuasion, an analysis which is relevant to the rhetorical function of Nathan's story. Nathan's experience has transformed his own life, and his narrative transforms Roland's estimation of Nathan as he tells it--from cowardly pacifist to righteous and heroic Indian-hater. Further, Roland identifies himself with Nathan's experience--he too is in danger of losing his beloved Edith to evil Indians. He in fact models a vow of his own upon Nathan's--eternal enmity--if Edith cannot be rescued. In short, Nathan's story transforms Roland, too. Roland now shares Nathan's

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perspective of undying hatred against the Indians. Even if Roland does not personally enact violence, he participates vicariously by condoning and encouraging Nathan.

In the final step, the reader is asked to identify with Nathan and to consider him heroic. Like Roland, we have heard Nathan's tale, we know it, know "what the Shawnees have done to me--they have killed them all, all that was of my blood!" Nathan's question is put to the reader as well: "Had they done so by *thee*, what would thee have done?" The question requires that the reader identify herself with the narrator, in fact presupposes that alignment, as the rest of Nick of the Woods is oriented around that approval. "Identification" embodies rhetoric's (or narrative's) highest goal, that of "perfect understanding and community" (Lentricchia, 148). Thus, this powerful rhetorical device marks the character of the frontier story as socially mediative in a contemporary sense, offering a political positioning to the reader in the "metropolis" of Bird's day.

TRADITION AS STORY

Frontier myth, as Slotkin argues, links past heroic achievement with "another in the future of which the reader is the potential hero" (19). Through this process, frontier novels invoke "tradition" as a unifying force, an essential experience that a certain group of people react to in a

certain way. As many critics have observed, these early frontier novels self-consciously strove to establish a sense of tradition for America. What those critics often overlook is the contemporary situations that these novels seek to mediate by invoking a distinctly American tradition, or history.

Tradition, observes Frank Lentricchia, is "always already a present and a future." It must never be understood, therefore, as an "entity, a static thing, a completed process," but must be seen as a dynamic and political formation, an on-going formulation: "'the tradition' should be seen as techniques of psychic defense against our own complicity," techniques that have further a "marked disposition to suppress ... material conditions" (124-5). Nathan Slaughter's story seeks to implicate its readers in its drive for revenge precisely by absolving them of complicity in political circumstance. Instead, it offers them a reason to hate Indians that arises from a sense of innocent personal loss. After all, Nathan was a Quaker, living peacefully with his family on the frontier. His story, however, elides the historical, material circumstances that placed Nathan in Bradford on the frontier, and neglects any mention of why the Shawnees were in the area marauding local inhabitants.

Nathan's story is situated within a frame of historical events, which, although not explicitly mentioned, would

indicate that Bird was aware of Shawnee history within the Pennsylvania Region and the Ohio Valley.[4] Briefly, in order to enjoy a peaceful life under the benevolent auspices of Quaker William Penn, a band of Shawnees had joined the Delawares in the Susquehanna Valley of Pennsylvania in the early eighteenth-century. By mid-century however, as Gary Nash documents, frontier families, eager to acquire and cultivate the fertile lands of the region, were becoming increasingly hostile and aggressive toward the native population. Finally, to clear the land completely for agrarian expansion, Pennsylvanian statesmen coerced Iroquois leaders to force the Delawares and Shawnees to leave the valley (Nash, 1982, 98-100). This dispossession would have taken place twenty to thirty years before the action of the story in 1782. Bradford, located in north-central Pennsylvania and in the Susquehanna valley, may well have been vulnerable to the attacks of angry Shawnees who felt again betrayed and increasingly frustrated by white incursion. Nathan's story, however, invites us to overlook these factors, focusing instead on the innocence of Nathan, who hands over his weapons, and the other helpless victims. This rhetorical pattern recurs throughout much frontier literature: historical consciousness of cultural dialectic is elided and replaced with a mythologized Other. The "Indian" is timelessly fixed in his role as enemy; the

author, the reader and their shared dominant culture are relieved of responsibility and guilt.

THE TIMELESS PRESENT

At a basic level, The Last of the Mohicans, The Yemassee and Nick of the Woods serve to inform their white audiences about the Indians that the stories dominate. Much as Thomas Jefferson assiduously collected relics from the dying tribes, these novels eternalize the Indians while they sing a funeral anthem. In fact, all three novels feature sections that serve as descriptions of manners and customs of the various Indians under discussion. As Mary Louise Pratt notes, such descriptions are a common feature of frontier literature, and seldom occur as discrete texts, but are contained within "superordinate genre." The manners and custom portrait is, she observes, a "normalizing discourse, whose work is to codify difference, to fix the Other in a timeless present where all 'his' actions are repetitions of 'his' normal habits" (Pratt, 121).

This perceived quality of the "timeless present" in Indian life was important to a society that prided itself on its "march of progress," and sought to de-historicize and de-politicize its opponents in order to prove a contrast. We have an excellent example of a constructed "timeless present" in The Last of the Mohicans. Richard Slotkin notes the "mythic" qualities of the second volume or section of Mohicans, where Natty and company have pursued the evil

Magua to a Huron settlement. Slotkin argues in his Introduction to the novel that here the novel leaves all pretense of historicity, entering instead an "unchanging and archetypal wilderness" for a fictional purpose (xx-xxxiii). That purpose, he proposes, is to allegorize the course of (Anglo) civilization: "Cooper's Indians are a metaphorical rendering of our own civilization" (xxxiii). While admitting the plausibility of Slotkin's reading, I would like to suggest here an equally meaningful social (as opposed to intellectual) function for the mythic tone of volume II. Slotkin himself notes Cooper's dependence for information here on John Heckwelder's History, Manners and Customs of the Indian Nations (1818). Seen as a portrait of manners, this section so effectively mythologizes the Indian as a means of Othering, as to distract readers from seeing how its timelessness served (and perhaps continues to serve) the Anglo political agenda.

In their rendering of Indian villages, mythology and customs, each author abstracts his portrait from immediate interaction or conflict with white intruders. Pratt summarizes this "very familiar, widespread and stable form of 'othering'":

> The people to be othered are homogenized into a collective "they" which is distilled even further into an iconic "he" (the standard adult white male specimen). The abstracted "he"/"they" is the

> subject of verbs in a timeless present tense, which characterizes anything "he" is or does not as a particular historical event but as an instance of a pregiven custom or trait ... Through this discourse, encounters with an Other can be textualized or processed as enumerations of such traits (120).

Portraits of manners, like all other communicative mediums, are agents of social exchange. But in this case, the exchange excludes the objectified Other, as Susanne Kappeler outlines:

> Social relationships are relations between subjects: if there is exchange and communication, each partner is and remains a subject or agent of action, or a subject of speech and communication. The roles are reciprocal, the situation is one of intersubjectivity. In the structure of representation, the two subjects are author and the spectator/reader, the white man and his guest (50-51).

Representation, argues Kappeler, implies a dominative political structure. While theoretically, the subject should be interchangeable with the object of representation, this "has failed to be realized in the history of culture. In the political realm of reality, very different values adhere to the positions of subject and object: the role of

subject means power, action, freedom, the role of object powerlessness, domination, oppression" (52). The very nature of manners and customs, then, are dominative, establishing intersubjectivity between white authors and white readers who seek to "know" the native, not in a humanistic sense, but instead as a means to power. Literature as agent in the process is crucial, as Lentricchia reminds us: "To write is to know is to dominate" (147). With this perspective in mind, we may turn to specific examples from the three frontier novels.

The Last of the Mohicans combines the genres of travelogue, frontier romance, and novel of manners. In fact, the opening pages of the story introduce all three within as many chapters. In the third chapter begins the portrait of Indian manners and customs that will pervade the novel. As that chapter opens, Leatherstocking and Chingachgook are engaged in a discussion, apparently over the legitimacy of the white presence in America. The narrator introduces and describes the physical appearance of each character, immediately establishing himself as an authority on Indians and the frontier life by footnoting for additional detail exceptional and curious items of dress and habit of the two characters--Chingachgook's scalp-lock, Leatherstocking's hunting-shirt.

Indian (or, more precisely, Delaware) tradition is the subject of discussion at the point that the reader "enters"

the scene, and notably, Leatherstocking (Hawkeye, Natty) is summarizing it. From this early point, the narrator apparently defers to Natty's expertise on "Indians." While the footnotes continue, they are mostly reserved for what we might term "frontier knowledge"--asides on mocking birds, historical events, the nature of the forest--while the Indian asides are left to Natty, who is forever clarifying to his white audience "Indian nature," "Indian skill," "Indian ways," and "Indian gifts." Natty's demonstration of his expertise begins immediately, when Chingachgook subtly questions Natty's use of Delaware tradition to make a point in his (white) favor. Comments Natty, "there is reason in an Indian, though nature has made him with a red skin!" (22). While the actions and motivations of Uncas and Chingachgook are clearly intended to be seen as noble, they are always characterized by Natty as representative, not exceptional, Indian action. For instance, when Uncas makes what is presented as an exceedingly difficult shot with his bow and arrow, Natty does not congratulate him for unusual prowess, but comments, "twas done with Indian skill" (23). In fact, the readers are given to know that there is nothing exceptional at all about Chingachgook and Uncas. Whether the Indian is "good" or "bad," his "gifts" are the same.

Chingachgook is allowed to speak for his tradition, and in his telling, the reader 'glimpses' native history and cosmology. But here, as in depictions of native life and

religious belief in the second volume of the novel, native tradition is insistently called into question, either by a reference to white knowledge, or even by the native characters themselves. In this passage, Chingachgook is explaining why the delta area of the river alternates between fresh and salt water. In Delaware cosmology, the explanation is fluid dynamics. The river runs out to the ocean until an equilibrium is reached. Then the ocean water mingles with the fresh water until the balance is again offset, to the point where the river must run again. A feasible explanation by itself, Chingachgook's theory is called into question by Natty's more authoritative (biblically documented--"the truest thing in nature," 24) tidal theory.

Without space to catalog or even survey the countless occasions on which Natty expands on "Indian nature," we will proceed directly to the most developed exposition on Indian life and manners. Volume II of the book takes place in Indian encampments. In short order, the reader is presented with accounts of Indian village life, tribal government, and social practice--gauntlet-running, executions, exorcism rituals and burial practice. Prominent in this section is what Pratt characterizes as "the very familiar, widespread and stable form of othering." We see this clearly in the first paragraph of chapter twenty three, which is worth quoting in full:

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> It is unusual to find an encampment of the natives, like those of the more instructed whites, guarded by the presence of armed men. Well informed of the approach of every danger, while it is yet at a distance, the Indian generally rests secure under his knowledge of the signs of the forest, and the long and difficult paths that separate him from those he has most reason to dread. But the enemy who, by any lucky concurrence of accidents, has found means to elude the vigilance of scouts, will seldom meet with sentinels nearer home to sound the alarm. In addition to this general usage, the tribes friendly to the French knew too well the weight of the blow that had just been struck, to apprehend any immediate danger from the hostile nations that were tributary to the crown of Britain (244).

Recall Pratt's definition of the Othering process: "The iconic 'he'/'they' is the subject of verbs in a timeless present tense, which characterizes anything 'he' is or does not as a particular historical event but as an instance of a pregiven custom or trait." Here, the narrator presents unchallengeable authority in an apparently objective, fully knowledgeable and empiric description. The timeless "general usage" is that the "Indian generally rests secure," due to his "knowledge" (albeit less "instructed") and

position. We should recall, at this point, that Indian knowledge according to the narrative is not a vaunted empiricism. Rather it is an inherent feature of Indian nature, as Natty exclaims of Chingachgook in the opening pages: "These Indians know the nature of the woods, as it might be by instinct!" (27).

The Indians Heyward encounters and the narrator describes are clearly "homogenized into a collective 'they'" whose actions are often sudden and--curiously for all the authority the narrator assumes--inexplicable. Heyward sees native children as he approaches the village. But suddenly, "the whole of the juvenile pack raised, by common consent, a shrill and warning whoop; and then sank, as it were, by magic, from before the sight of their visitors" (244). This collective and unexplained action prefigures a more frightening and unanimous action to come, as Heyward's negotiations with tribal members are interrupted by a "sudden and terrible" cry. "At the same moment, the warriors glided in a common body from the lodge" and shortly, "the whole encampment, in a moment, became a scene of the most violent bustle and commotion" (248). Unified by their "nature," the Hurons' actions here can only be described, not <u>explained</u> in any way that makes sense to the white reader. In the same manner, Natty had earlier excused Chingachgook's apparently unmotivated murder of the French

guard (140). It is significant that any action that threatens whites is presented as being inexplicable.

Conversely, other less threatening aspects of native life are perfectly explicable. Whereas earlier, Chingachgook lent some authority to Indian cosmology by preferring it to white accounts, the credibility of native spiritual medicine is undermined by the natives themselves. Heyward is called upon to express the good will of his "Great Father" by healing the daughter of an elder warrior. Heyward, who after all has taken no Hippocratic oath, consents to perform an exorcism of the evil spirit in order to further his chances of finding the captive Alice. The description of native belief is here given an odd twist, to be performed by a white, and described through his perspective:

> The impatient Heyward, inwardly execrating the cold customs of the savages, which required such sacrifices to appearance, was fain to assume an air of indifference, equal to that maintained by the chief, who was, in truth, a near relative of the afflicted woman. The minutes lingered, and the delay seemed an hour to the adventurer in empiricism (259).

Duncan's white, scientific perspective casts the ensuing ritual as a fraud from the start; unlike Chingachgook's earlier account of river and ocean currents, there is no

doubt left to the white reader that Indian medicine is sheer "self-delusion" (279). The sham is amplified when Natty appears, doubly disguised as a Huron medicine-man in the costume of a bear. According to superstitious Indian custom, the medicine-man-cum-bear is accorded the respect and fear of a real bear. The two whites are easily able to turn Indian beliefs against the 'weak-minded' natives in gaining strategic advantage.

But not all Indians are so easily fooled. The wily Magua scorns Indian "superstition." He, the readers are told, "is far above the more vulgar superstitions of his tribe" (276) and disdains to humor the conjuror, whom he associates with "women and children." And Hawkeye, so far successful in his disguise, realizes as well its limitations: "At the same time that he had presumed so far on the nature of the Indian superstitions, [Hawkeye] was not ignorant that they were rather tolerated than relied on by the wisest of chiefs" (279). The integrity of native tradition is subverted as the "wisest of chiefs," whether good or bad, understands its fraudulent essence. This strategy places the honor of all knowledge on the side of the white author and reader. The "wisest" of Indians, in other words, manages to know what the white author, characters and readers already know.

As in The Last of the Mohicans, The Yemassee establishes itself as an authority on Indian life and

manners from its opening pages. In his 1853 Preface, Simms explains that "when I wrote, there was little understood, by readers, generally, in respect to the character of red men; and, of the opinions entertained on the subject, many, according to my own experience, I knew to be incorrect" (4). Accordingly, Simms sets out to correct these misconceptions, to "remove that air of mystery which was supposed to disguise their most ordinary actions" (4).

Among the most important to Simms was to correct the "rude portraits of the red man, as given by those who see him in degrading attitudes only, and in humiliating relations with the whites." These, insists Simms, "must not be taken as a just delineation of the same being in his native woods, unsubdued, a fearless hunter, and without any degrading habits, to make him wretched and ashamed" (4). Simms' strategy for depicting the manners and customs of his Yemassee Indians makes a curious departure from Cooper's, whose Indians were relatively unchanging in their behavior. This is not to say, however, that Simms' Indians had a changeable _nature_; they didn't. But their _behavior_ was much more flexible, and was influenced completely (for the worse) by the superior whites.

The opening pages of _The Yemassee_ provide its readers with an historical sketch of the Yemassee tribe. This passage is marked with frequent footnotes, the first of which sets an undeniable tone of authority: "We are

speaking now of authentic history only ..." (n., 9). Subsequent notes document the narrator's extensive knowledge of Yemassee language. (This authority is somewhat undermined however, as Richard C. Shaner observes, when the narrator characterizes the Yemassee tribe as being indigenous to the Carolinas, since they were originally from what is now Georgia and Florida.) Comparable in political savvy to the Romans, the mighty Yemassees had strengthened their own power "by a wise incorporation of the conquered with the conquerors" (10). "Politic ... generous and gallant" were the Yemassee when the whites first set foot on the continent (11).

The Yemassee's astute political dealings with other tribes could not--and this seems to be Simms's sense of the tragedy--extend to its relations with the whites. Sharing the land to the new settlers was "improvident" (10), and they remained for too long blind to their "inferiority to a power of which they, at length, grew jealous" (11). This jealousy, which arises as they realize their thoroughly subordinate nature, marks a change in Yemassee behavior. No longer noble and brave, "their chiefs began to show signs of discontent, if not of disaffection" toward the whites, and worse, "the great mass of their people assumed a sullenness of habit and demeanor, which had never marked their conduct before" (11).

The narrator is remarkably explicit in affixing some share of blame to the white settlers. Characterized as "bold and incursive" (11), the white backwoodsmen, "removed from the surveillance of society, committed numberless petty injuries upon the property, and sometimes upon the person of his wandering neighbor" (20). Further, the narrator questions the religious ideals of the early settlers:

> An abstract standard of justice, independent of appetite or circumstance, has not often marked the progress of Christian (so-called) civilization, in its proffer of its great good to the naked savage. The confident reformer, who takes sword in one hand and sacrament in the other, has always found it in the surest way to rely chiefly on the former (20).

"To sum it all up in a little," the narrator later comments, "our European ancestors were, in many respects, monstrous great rascals" (221). But while the narrator may question some of the actions of those European ancestors, what he never questions is the absolute value of civilization which places the white settlers in a relationship of superiority to the natives. It is the natives' own consciousness of this fact that brings out the worst in their ultimately inferior nature.

Nearly every characterization of Indians in <u>The Yemassee</u>, then, is made in reference to white incursion, for the debased Indian is in some sense a product of his contact

with the white. For instance, the narrator describes Sanutee (the chief of the Yemassee who yet retains strains of nobility although those are increasingly corrupted by jealousy): "The warrior was armed after Indian fashion." He carries a bow, and a tomahawk. Importantly, however, the latter weapon is not "after the Indian fashion." Rather, as the narrator reveals, the "light weapon ... introduced by the colonists," is a "substitute for the stone hatchet" the Indians had formerly carried. Similarly Sanutee's dress "indicated a frequent intercourse with the whites ... The warrior before us had been among the first to avail himself of the arts of the whites in the improvement of costume; nay, he had taken other lessons, of even greater value, from the superior race" (15). The Indian's recognition of white superiority is indicated in both the manner that he clothes and defends himself. Thus the native is dominated by his own recognition and unconscious consent.

Hierarchical relations are important in Yemassee life. As we see in Sanutee's domestic life with his wife, Matiwan, the husband expects complete subservience. Matiwan is characterized as a "fawn" who is afraid even to touch or speak to her husband uninvited (72), and Sanutee loves her "as a child rather than a wife" (70). Just as rigid, but less effectual, is the tribal structure. The tribe government is superficially democratic, as the narrator details:

> The Yemassees were ruled by the joint authority of several chiefs--each controlling a special section with arbitrary authority, yet, when national measures were to be determined upon, it required a majority for action. These chiefs were elective, and from these the superior, or presiding chief, was duly chosen; all of these, without exception, were accountable to the nation (74).

Lest the reader affix positive associations to the account of the structure, the narrator comments, "such accountability was rather the result of popular impulse than of any other more legitimate or customary regulation" (75). And in fact the government, now under the sway of the whites, is completely ineffectual. For example, when the whites try to drive a bargain with the tribal government, purposely avoiding the more powerful chiefs whom they know will oppose further land sales, the Indians have a meeting to discuss the deal. Unlike the tribal councils Cooper depicts, this meeting verges on mayhem, with the chiefs who are corrupted by the whites opposing the chiefs who are jealous of the whites. In the end, the issue is resolved by resort to superstition and brute force.

There are very few individual Indians worth noting, and as the novel progresses, the narrator more and more focuses on the nature of the Indian mob which is characterized as a degraded but dangerous force which can as easily turn on

itself as it can on the whites. The mob is quickly aroused to wreak vengeance on the corrupted chiefs who signed a deal with the whites. In a more pointed example, when the Indian mob rushes out to punish the whites, in their enthusiasm, they mistakenly attack one of their own: "they dashed him to the earth, trampled and nearly tore him into pieces before discovering the mistake" (92). Increasingly, the Yemassee are characterized as an iconic "they" who can easily be classified and understood. The narrator summarizes, "the elements of all uncultivated people are the same" (241).

Harrison, the gentleman-hero of the action, has the opportunity personally to experience the Yemassee mob. Like Natty, Harrison has an especially expert knowledge of the "true nature" (98) of the natives, a familiarity so complete that when in their presence, his caution is characterized as "Indian instinct" (223). Discovered by the Yemassee mob during their preparations for attacking the white settlement, Harrison notices "a generous degree of forbearance ... on the part of the better-looking among the spectators." This comes as no surprise to Harrison, who knows that "the insolent portion of the rabble formed a class especially for such purposes as the present [i.e., his torture]" (246). This emphasis on visible reflection of inner character is important in establishing the continuity of hierarchy among the natives, as well as between Indians

and whites. Just as the uglier Indians are inferior to the better looking ones like Sanutee (cf. 16), so are the "irritably red features" (223) of the Indians generally an index to the superiority of the whites. Thus, while The Yemassee directs some guilt for the denigrated Indian on the whites, the guilt is of the most innocent kind. The whites "do" nothing more than be naturally superior, a crime of nothing more than coincidence.

Bird's Indians are much less complex than Cooper's, and less dynamic than Simms'. Perhaps for this reason, Nick of the Woods devotes comparatively little space to developing portraits of native manners and customs. Rather, Bird from the outset assumes a universalized and unchanging Indian, one who is thoroughly debased and completely savage.

At two points in the narrative the reader is offered a closer look. In the first, Roland, Edith and Stackpole are surprised by the troop of Indians they thought they had escaped. Like the irrational Yemassees, these Shawnees are a bloodthirsty mob. Angered at their own losses, the Indians rehearse their vengeance on the already dead bodies of the whites by mutilating the corpses, "striking the senseless clay repeatedly with their knives and hatchets, each seeking to surpass his fellow in the savage work of mutilation" (201). "Such is the red-man of America," the narrator comments, generalizing a specific and motivated action to an abstract and eternal Indian nature.

Although Bird emphasizes the repulsiveness of these actions, they are at least attributable to grief and rage. But like Cooper's Indians, Bird's Shawnees often act from simple, irrational bloodthirstiness. An old Piankeshaw warrior to whom Roland is given in the division of spoils alternately threatens the captive with death and cajoles him as a "brudder," with apparently no intervening motivation (202-203). Indian religion, as when the Piankeshaw spreads out the scruffy contents of his medicine bag while performing some unaccountable ritual, is equally ludicrous and unexplainable. Their torment of victims is capricious and unpredictable. The narrator summarizes: "It is only among children (we mean, of course, *bad* ones) and savages, who are but grown children, after all, that we find malice and mirth go hand in hand--the will to create misery and the power to see it invested in ludicrous colors" (209). The bad child-like Indian is sure to do only two things: drink himself into a drunken stupor whenever possible, and kill white people at every opportunity.

We might here posit a continuum of Indian statesmanship among the three novels. The Indians in Mohicans gather to conduct debate political issues. In The Yemassee, the Indians gather at least in an attempt to do so. However, in Nick of the Woods, the Indians gather only to form warring parties, to divide plunder, and to boast. Predictably, Bird's depiction of Indian rhetoric differs significantly

from that in the other two novels. No matter how antagonistic Magua was to white interests, his oratorical skills were undeniably admirable even to the whites. When Magua spoke, he was persuasive to tribesmen and white people, as in his much-noted speech before Tamenund. In The Yemassee, the power of Indian rhetoric affects only the natives, and functions only to incite the mob, as the narrator notes of Sanutee's impassioned speech to prevent further sale of Yemassee lands: "the rash, the thoughtless, the ignorant--all were aroused by his eloquence" (84). In Nick, however, Indian speeches are only absurdly garrulous performances. Those who have perceived the Indian as taciturn should be better informed, observes the narrator. Silence on the part of an Indian in front of the whites comes only from his wish to "cover the nakedness of his own inferiority" (264).[5] Among his own people, he gives himself over to "wild indulgence." The chief delivers a speech to the victorious war band, very little of which Roland is able to understand as the chief does not know much English:

> His oration, however, as far as Roland could understand it, consisted chiefly in informing him that he was a very great chief, who had killed abundance of white people, men, women and children, whose scalps had, for thirty years and more, been hanging in the smoke of his Shawnee lodge,--that he was very brave and loved a white man's blood better

> than whiskey, and that he never spared it out of pity ... the whole speech consisted, like most other Indian speeches, of the same things said over and over again, those same things being scarce worth the trouble of utterance (204-205).

Like the Indian speeches, the Indians themselves are in Nick of the Woods "scarce worth the trouble of utterance," even while their presence in the novel is what fuels its narrative economy.

The reader's closest view of Indian life in Nick comes when Nathan enters the Shawnee village to rescue Edith. We see in the narrator's observations the process of Othering already discussed above. As Nathan scouts the village, the reader is told of the "oppressed and degraded women" who water the cornfields in their keeping with tears (264). Nathan manages to avoid the Indian dogs by shaking a string of bells at them. The dogs, expecting to be killed "in the usual summary Indian way" run off immediately (268). When Stackpole gives his white compatriots away, and he along with Roland and Nathan are captured, the reader learns that "we know of no instance where an Indian, torturing a prisoner at the stake, the torture once begun, has ever been moved to compassionate, to regard any feelings but those of exultation and joy, the agonies of the thrice-wretched victim" (329). The Indian is rendered monodimensional. To

know one Indian is to know them all, and by the same token, to have reason to kill one is reason for genocide.

Despite (or, precisely because of) the authority established by each of these narratives on their Indian objects, such accounts are always dominative, and, as Abdul JanMohamed argues, always suspect. "Since the object of representation--the native--does not have access to these texts (because of linguistic barriers) and since the [white] audience has no direct contact with the native, imperialist fiction tends to be unconcerned with the truth-value of its representation" (63). Indeed, Simms' elaborate and extended renditions of Yemassee mythology are complete fakeries, as he passingly admits in his 1853 Preface: "That portion of the story, which the reverend critics, with one exception, recognised as sober history, must be admitted to be a pure invention--one, however, based on such facts and analogies as, I venture to think, will not discredit the proprieties of the invention" (4). Simms, amused at pulling one over on his critics, can at once admit that he made it all up, while still claiming a definite authority therein.

In all three novels, these accounts of Indian life are devoted to developing a perspective on Indian extermination that obscures white involvement. Dorothy Hammond and Alto Jablow rightly point to a "unifying theme of confrontation" between the white and racial Other in colonial and frontier literature (17). Yet it is important to note in these three

novels that the dynamics of that confrontation are never the directly determining factor in the demise of the racial Other. Rather, responsibility is displaced onto the natives themselves. In Nick, the Indians' savage quest to kill whites demands their death through self-defense and revenge. In The Yemassee, the Indians, beside being completely inferior and therefore subject to the "relentless ... onward progress" of civilization (69), are by nature so "capricious" that it is "doubtful whether they can, for any length of time, continue in peace and friendship" (158). Even though Simms earlier manages to locate some of the guilt of the frontier violence on the part of the whites, the ultimate reason for Indian wars rests with the natives themselves. And when we see a white killing an Indian, the action switches curiously into a passive voice. Harrison's role as the "Coosah-moray-te," or Coosaw-killer (he has, apparently almost single-handed, caused the extermination of the majority of the tribe) is invoked only to explain the surviving Coosaws' unwavering resolution to kill him, but is hardly accounted for otherwise. When Harrison gets the best of the last Coosaw chief in the struggle, the Indian, lying at Harrison's feet, urges him to strike. Apparently he does: "The knife was in his heart. Vainly the eyes rolled in a fruitless anger--the teeth fixed for ever ... a short groan ... and the race of the Coosaw was for ever ended. Harrison rose and looked around" (338). In this curious

passage, the reader sees the end of an Indian race without actually seeing the agency of the white hand in the death.

Similarly, in Mohicans, the Indians are guilty of their own demise, but significantly here, not at the hand of the white. In Mohicans we learn that the Chingachgook's lineage is threatened not by contact with civilization, but because of the constant enmity of the Delawares against other Indian nations. As Natty recounts, "'tis not often that books are made, and narratives written, of such a scrimmage as was here fou't atween the Mohicans and Mohawks, in a war of their own waging" (127). The Hurons are similarly ferocious; those taken on by the French commander Montcalm care very little who they fight, so long as they can fight. They are a (presumably inhuman) "engine beyond the power of human control" (176). Indian actions that threaten whites are de-historicized, de-politicized and are therefore inexplicable and mysterious, only attributable to "Indian nature." It is highly significant that the end of the Mohican race comes at the hands of a Mingo, and is lamented by every white person present--including the French aid of Montcalm. Thus, in Dowling's terms, these stories become "strategies of containment," defensive psychic maneuvers that guard the whites against their own sense of continuing complicity.

A NATIONAL IDENTITY

Identifying and fixing the identity of the Indians in frontier novels was prerequisite to another, equally important enterprise: that of establishing a national "white" identity. Pratt succinctly summarizes the importance of this endeavor: "nowhere are the notions of normal, familiar action and given systems of difference in greater jeopardy than on the imperial frontier" (121). Roy Harvey Pearce similarly observes that "the American before 1850--a new man, as he felt, making a new world--was obsessed to know who and what he was and where he was going, to evaluate the special society in which he lived and to know its past and its future" (135). White Americans were simultaneously expanding their borders and trying to define them. The power motive underlying border expansion and the drive to codify a national identity was the same. Frank Lentricchia argues that "we purchase and preserve our identity beyond all change with the currency of a will to power rooted in an ethnocentric idea of community (the 'European mind" ...) that would exclude and silence the voices in conflict with it" (130). Overcoming (without eliminating) class boundaries to conquer and silence the Indians was a fundamental aspect of creating a national identity, and along with it, a national culture and literature: in short, an American book.

As Perry Miller argues in his essay "The Shaping of the American Character," the problem [of the new nation] was to bring order out of chaos, to set up a government, to do it efficiently and quickly" (8). Many scholars, like Miller, have sensed the importance of literature to the project of establishing a national identity, its role in establishing an ideal for white, American readers to identify themselves with--hence the profusion of studies of "the American novel." In fact, the role of literature as social agent is elemental. As Lentricchia elaborates, "to exist socially is to be rhetorically aligned" (149).

Burke's comments on identification pertain directly to the American enterprise in frontier novels. He argues that "identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is a division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity" (1969, 22). The three frontier novels discussed here, while often acknowledging the borders of white social hierarchy, work to resolve class and social discrepancies under the rubric of a a national American or white identity. White Americans become a unified front whose social, material conflicts are displaced into a conflict of Progress versus Nature, or White versus Red.

Henry Nash Smith discusses the relevance of Natty's inferior social status in <u>The Virgin Land</u>. He argues that

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although the issue is shunted aside in action of the Mohicans, it created a "predicament for the novelist by revealing to him that his most vital character occupied a technically inferior position both in the social system and in the form of the sentimental novel" (70). Cooper's affinity to the aristocratic way of life has been immortalized (and perhaps overdrawn) by D. H. Lawrence, and certainly all of the Leatherstocking tales contain explorations of social hierarchy--the ultimate meaning of which are up for debate. It is possible, however, to see Natty as a resolver of white social tensions, rather than as a nagging reminder. Natty's firm insistence on white gifts, for instance, delineates a universally "white reaction" to every frontier situation, often fixed in opposition to a "red" one. Richard Slotkin persuasively argues this position:

> Natty Bumppo is a commoner by birth who is lifted beyond the limitations of class by his apprenticeship to the Indians and the wilderness. But unlike the squatters, he never presumes on his special status, or on the peculiar freedom from restraint provided by the wilderness ... he symbolically renounces property ... hence he will never become a competitor with his social superiors ... Instead, he ... facilitates the resolution of social tensions (1985, 105).

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A common feature in all three novels is different classes of whites uniting against (and learning from each other about) a common, Indian enemy. The lowly-born Natty is able to help the obviously more cultivated Monroe daughters, as well as the more cultivated and somewhat more capable men like Duncan Heyward and Monroe himself. White men of different social rank close ranks against the Indian menace, as Natty educates Heyward and they work together for white social and political interests.

This is obviously complicated by Natty's relationship with Chingachgook and Uncas, affirmed at the opening and closing of the novel's action. Without ignoring the ambivalence this creates for the novel's stance, we should also note that Uncas is nearly executed for treason against the Delawares before saved by the revelation of his royal lineage (cf. 326-328). Natty, on the other hand, steadfastly refuses to betray white interest, even while he shuns its effects. His identity revolves on strictly delineated, specifically white "gifts." Even though he occasionally expresses reservations about his racial brothers' uses of those gifts, he insists on the importance of the distinction. When Monroe, overcome with grief, wishes Natty to express his sentiment that racial differences will be overcome in the next life, Natty categorically refuses to translate Monroe's hope. "To tell them this," insists Natty, "would be to tell them that the

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snows come not in the winter" (371). White skin, like white snow, must retain its integrity.

In The Yemassee, the message of white unity is the same, but Simms does not sidestep the political aspects of the issue as Henry Nash Smith accuses Cooper of doing. Rather, The Yemassee contains an explicit lesson on the white project of civilization which will be realized through lower-class acquiescence to the leadership of the gentry. This lesson is emblematized in the dashing and gentlemanly Governor Craven, who is "disguised" during most of the novel's action as the mysterious (and gentlemanly) Gabriel Harrison. Craven has set aside his public personage to discover any plotting of the local Indians, and to avert their potentially devastating affects. Disguised, he falls in love with (and is reciprocated by) the pastor's daughter, Bess Matthews. While her father is upset at Harrison's inability to document his lineage, Bess and her mother need no material evidence to see that Harrison is "born and bred a gentleman" (199).

Bess is also unknowingly the beloved of a lowly-born backwoods boy, Hugh Grayson. Hugh, for his part, hates Harrison and reacts vehemently against Harrison's noble bearing, as he relates to his brother:

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> perhaps, not less than yourself, I cannot help but feel it. My pride is to feel my independence--it is for you to desire control, were it only for the connexion and the sympathy which it brings to you. You are one of the millions who make tyrants. Go--worship him yourself, but do no call upon me to do likewise (45).

Hugh is in fact clearly associated with the revolutionary figure Thomas Paine when he later explains, "my own mind is my teacher." Simms however tips his hand on the political context of that association when Greyson adds, "and perhaps my tyrant" (210). It is clear from the ensuing action that the problem is not Grayson's concept of freedom--Harrison also confesses that "freedom is my infirmity" (48). Rather, the real problem is his prideful insubordination against his social betters. Literally deranged by grief after he witnesses a romantic interlude between Harrison and Bess, Grayson attempts to kill Harrison. Harrison, who can imagine no white harboring enmity against him, adamantly refuses to believe that Grayson "has the right man." He saves Grayson from himself, as it were, and enlists him in the aid of the white settlement (215-219). When the threat of the Yemassee uprising is realized, Grayson's better nature asserts itself. Hugh Grayson, the narrator relates,

> with all his faults, and they were many, was in reality a noble fellow. Full of high ambition--a

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> craving for the unknown and the vast, which spread itself vaguely and perhaps unattainably before his imagination--his disappointments very naturally vexed him somewhat beyond prudence, and now and then beyond the restraint of right reason. He usually came to a knowledge of his error before it had led too far (304).

Grayson learns to set aside his social pretensions, as he discovers his duty to be a "man and a citizen" (305). He unites with Harrison's cause against the Yemassee, and later, chastised and purified by battle with the Indians, learns further to submit to the wisdom of "that air of conscious superiority .. that tone of command ... of a power unquestionable" (347) which Harrison manifests through his gentlemanly bearing. Greyson becomes a happier and better "man" by playing his part as a "citizen"--recognizing and submitting to the authority of his white betters. This purification comes about, significantly, through the (white) civic project of Indian-killing. Published the same year as _The Yemassee_, James Hall's "The Pioneers" recounts the Indian-hater William Robinson's boast in terms strikingly similar: "I believe that in killing the savage I performed my duty as a man and served my country as a citizen" (86).

For Robert Montgomery Bird, the project of Indian-killing is the same, but the thrust of the social lesson is

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quite different. Nick of the Woods was conceived, as Bird promises in his Preface to the first edition, to portray

> the character of men by whom--in the midst of difficulties and dangers as numerous and urgent,--perhaps more so than ever attended the establishing of a colony in North America,--were laid, upon a basis as firm as if planted by the subtlest and wisest spirits of the age, the foundations of a great a powerful State ... drawn from what, in our vanity, we call the humbler spheres of life,--farmers and hunters, the mountaineers of Virginia and the Carolinas (27).

These men, indigent and ignorant, have been the shaping force in American civilization, argues Bird. "Without the influence of any great and experienced mind to impel, direct or counsel, [they] succeeded in their vast enterprise ... and secured to their conquest all the benefits of civil government and laws" (27). While Robert Winston points out that Bird's proclaimed interest in the common man wanes after the Preface (76), a clear message about their importance is yet a significant aspect of the novel.

While Bird is obviously more interested in the narrative possibilities of his "gentlemanly" character, Roland Forrest, than he is his Kentucky backwoodsmen, he qualifies his endorsement of Roland on all counts. Roland is certainly "entitled to superior attention" (43) but he is

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also sulky, judgmental and foolhardy. He at first scorns the backwoodsmen as "but one degree elevated above the Indians" (45), but his experiences in the woods under the guidance of Nathan chasten Roland, and give him a healthy respect for the hardy Kentuckians who make it their life to fight off the Indians he cannot cope with. In the end, though Roland is sent back to Virginia to populate civilization with his gentlewoman cousin Edith, Bird provides an equally valuable marriage in the Kentucky settlement, between the renegade's daughter, Telie Doe, and the son of the Colonel, Dick Bruce. They, presumably, will provide the frontiersmen that pave the way for the children of Roland and Edith.

Nick of the Woods emphasizes the elemental importance of both classes to the American vision, and also provides an explicit message on the cost of white disunity. Nathan Slaughter is shunned by the Kentucky woodsmen for his pacifist declarations. In another tale that he relates to Roland (before his later revelation), Nathan explains about a time when he encountered the tracks of an Indian party as he was out hunting. Following them, he discovered they were heading toward his "own little wigwam," and fearing for the safety of his neighbors, the Ashtons, he went to warn them. "But verily," he relates to Roland, "they held my story light, and laughed at and derided me; for, in them days, the people hardened their hearts and closed their ears against

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me, because I held it not according to conscience to kill Injuns as they did" (148). Turned away by the Ashtons, Nathan goes to the Colonel Bruce, hoping to persuade him to dispatch a force to save the Ashtons, whom he is sure the bloodthirsty Indians will harm. Bruce not only scoffs at Nathan, but takes away his rifle saying, as Nathan relates it, "as I was not man enough to use it, I should not be allowed to carry it" (150). Nathan rushes back to the Ashtons only to see them massacred, as we later learn his family had been. The dynamics of this scene become particularly complex in light of the later revelation--for instance, if Nathan has been killing Indians all along (and we should assume that his chancing across the trail was no more fortuitous than his choosing to settle in Wenonga's territory), then why didn't _he_ attempt to stop the Indians instead of going to warn the Ashtons and Colonel Bruce? Despite this, one lesson is driven clearly and with particular force: whites must unify on the frontier. As the narrator of _The Yemassee_ notes, the "generally exposed situation on the whole frontier occupied by the whites, with the delay and difficulty of warlike preparation, rendered every precautionary measure essential" (158). The cost of white discord will be measured in "white" blood.

While the messages of the three novels differ in means, the end is the same. Not only are whites on the frontier identified in a common cause, but that cause and identity

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are carried back into, and sustained by, civilization. Each novel features some transaction between characters on the frontier, and characters from civilization. In Mohicans, Alice Monroe and Duncan Heyward, neither of whom proved particularly adept (or adaptable) on the frontier, will marry and return to civilization. Similarly, Roland and Edith Forrest, rescued from the Shawnees and returned to their inheritance, return to the now cultivated Virginia. Gabriel Harrison/Charles Craven, in his role as governor and by right of his noble birth, can move from civilization to frontier and back, with authority and ease. Importantly in these transactions, each group of whites is informed by the mission of the other. The ideal, as Harrison puts it in The Yemassee, is to form "one community" (125). The project of that community is, as Bird affirms in his Preface, to "wrest ... from the savage the garden-land of his domain," and to "secure ... to their conquest all the benefits of civil government and laws" (27).

In The Fatal Environment, Slotkin argues that frontier ideology succeeded by displacing white class conflict onto an archetypal formulation that sees whites unified against the forces of Nature. "Instead of interpreting history as a competition for power and resources by classes of fellow citizens, the Myth projects competition outward, and imagines the strife as that between a fully human entity--"civilization"--and an entity that is primarily inhuman"

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(79). Yet the "engine which ... exceeds human power to control" is presumably not beyond white "human power," and must be controlled to guarantee the success of the white civilizing mission. In order to accomplish this, whites on the frontier and in the "Metropolis" must think in concert, and must sustain the white mission on all fronts. This "metaphorical substitution of Indian warfare for class conflict," as Slotkin summarizes, "reduces the moral and political complexities of modern life to a terrible simplicity" (80).

Each novel establishes a communicative link between the expanding border and the cultural border that will allow identification between the white people and will provide the establishing of a common perspective on the frontier and the Indians who inhabit it. As they portray such an historical link, these stories also provide the possibility of a contemporary reader's identification with the characters of the novels that will allow him or her to adopt the novel's particular perspective. Thus, these novels are social and cultural agents in a specifically material sense, in that they could shape attitudes toward current situations that readers encountered during the continued expansion of imaginative and physical frontiers during the 1820's and '30's.

readers encountered during the continued expansion of imaginative and physical frontiers during the 1820's and '30's.

TRADITION AND THE NOVEL

These novels, each in their own way, strive to create a sense of American tradition. This tradition, in whatever form, ultimately presents white Americans overcoming social/class boundaries to identify themselves in opposition to Indians/Nature. Epitomized in Nathan Slaughter's frontier story, these novels remove whites readers from a sense of historical or political complicity by localizing a permanent and present guilt for the conflict onto the Indians. The American tradition in frontier novels, as Slotkin so eloquently puts it, is a "terrible simplicity" that seeks to monologize the American experience, to speak in only one voice while eliding the voice of social strife between different groups of whites as well as eliminating the voice of the Native American. As Lentricchia notes, "the human costs of the rhetorical action of tradition-making are grim" (131).

Yet if, as Lentricchia argues, "tradition-making functions precisely to hide class conflict by eliding the text's involvement in social struggle," this task is compromised by the demands of the novel, which Mikhail M.

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containment, it speaks to an absolute past of national tradition. "Everything incorporated into this past was simultaneously incorporated into a condition of authentic essence and significance, but therefore also took on conclusiveness and finality, depriving itself, so to speak of all rights and potential for real continuation" (16). If, as this chapter has argued, one of the fundamental social roles of frontier novels was to create a sense of frontier tradition and white unity for their contemporary significance during the period these novels were written, then the epic genre could not be suitable to their rhetorical purposes. Rather, the novelistic genre could, in Bakhtin's words, provide a "zone of maximal contact with the present," even in an historical novel, which is characterized by "a positively weighted modernizing, an erasing of temporal boundaries, the recognition of an eternal present" (11; 365). The novel could do this because of its "folklore roots" (21), which subvert the hegemonic drive of authority, and the containment of other, idealized genres like the epic. The novel is, as Bakhtin persuasively argues, "associated with the eternally living element of unofficial language and unofficial thought" (20), the discourse of which is rooted in heteroglossia--a "social diversity of speech types" (263)--and is therefore inevitably sedimented with the very social history frontier tradition seeks to repress.

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It might be argued, then, that the frontier novel embodies the contradictory urges of frontier ideology, which were geographically and temporally centrifugal, and culturally centripetal. Bakhtin argues that the same forces that operate ideologically are also manifest in the "life of language":

> At any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects ... but also--and for us this is the essential point--into languages that are socio-ideological ... This stratification and heteroglossia, once realized, is not only a static invariant of linguistic life, but also what insures its dynamics (271-272).

Alongside this expanding drive works the "centripetal" forces of language, those that seek to unify, normalize. These forces, suggests Bakhtin, "develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization" (270-271). The novel, unlike other genres, embodies this struggle between the two antithetical trends of ideology and language.

Bakhtin proposes that the "languages of heteroglossia ... encounter one another and co-exist in the consciousness of real people--first and foremost, in the creative imagination of people who write novels" (291-292). In outlining what he perceives to be the novel's (and novelist's) "dialogic imagination," Bakhtin argues that

unlike a poet, who seeks to eliminate the chaos of heteroglossia and language diversity, the novelist welcomes them, "not only not weakening them, but even intensifying them" precisely in order to interact with them (298). The novelist forms his or her own artistic vision from heteroglossia itself. "The prose writer makes use of words that are already populated with the social intentions of others and compels them to serve his own new intentions, to serve a second master" (300).

But the author can never remove the traces of social and ideological struggle from the words he or she appropriates. Thus, sedimented in the artistic rendering of heteroglossia in the novel is always a history of prior intentions. Bakhtin summarizes: "Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel (whatever the forms for its incorporation) is *another's speech in another's language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way." This results in what Bakhtin terms "double-voiced discourse," which "serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author" (324).

The language of any character, then, despite the author's intentions for it, contains the history of its lived contexts. Thus, The Yemassee's caricature of the language of the black slave, Hector, at once serves the

narrator's parodic and political intentions while it contains its own history. In the novel's action, Hector is the ever-faithful, obsequious slave. When Harrison notifies Hector that he is being liberated for saving Harrison's life, Hector comically and categorically refuses.

> I d---n to h-ll, maussa, ef I guine to be free! ... I can't loss you company, and who de debble Dugdale [Harrison's Indian-eating dog] guine let feed him like Hector? 'Tis onpossible, maussa, and dere's no use for talk 'bout it. De ting aint right; and enty I know wha' kind of ting is freedom wid de black man? Ha! You make Hector free, he turn wuss more nor poor buckrah--he tief out of de shop--he git drunk and lie in de ditch--den, if sick come, he roll, he toss in de wet grass of de stable. You come in de morning, Hector dead--and, who know--he no take physic, he no hab parson--who know I say, maussa, but de debble fine em 'fore anybody else? No, maussa--you and Dugdale berry good company for Hector. I tank God he so good--I no want any better (355-356).

Charles S. Watson observes of this passage that "Simms is skillful in having the black himself present the argument [of white pro-slavery advocates] in his own picturesque Gullah dialect" (341). Yet, however rhetorically effective Simms' strategy may be for the pro-slavery stance, he cannot

obscure the historical and social circumstances that populate the Gullah dialect--the history of white enslavement and exploitation that are sedimented in Hector's language. Simms can neither parody nor exploit Hector's speech without the help of the Gullah dialect itself, which is precisely what constitutes the "double-voicedness" of his use of it. The two languages--Gullah dialect, and Simm's intentional rendering of it--enact dialogically: "it is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other" (324). The Yemassee presents Hector's speech to refute charges of white oppression of black slaves; Gullah dialect contains the history of that very oppression.

In the same manner, Bird's representation of Wenonga's barely intelligible pigdin English portrays the novel's desire to portray the Indian as debased, ignorant and degraded. At the same time, Wenonga's pidgin details the history of Native American/white relations. Roland, as the narrator reveals, could understand the Shawnee warrior only when he made some attempt to speak in English. The fact that the Wenonga could speak English at all chronicles the trail of Indian concessions to the whites, who for their part, rarely reciprocated the favor. "The human being in the novel," argues Bakhtin, "is first, foremost and always a speaking human being; the novel requires speaking persons bringing with them their own unique ideological discourse, their own language" (332). As we have seen, the novelist

may shape that language according to his or her artistic/political purposes, but the heteroglossic nature of the novel always "relativizes" the author's intentions (316).

Thus, the novel is inevitably ambivalent, a "tension-filled unity" (272). Each of the frontier novels considered here manifest this ambivalence--between the monologic drives of American tradition-making, and the heteroglossic nature of their medium--in a different way. In The Last of the Mohicans, Natty himself embodies what Frank Collins calls a "faltering synthesis" (79). Natty enacts his political role as a British scout, and his social role as a "resolver of social tensions" (see above), but at the same time he manifests a profound aversion to the political and social system he espouses. In The Yemassee, the ambivalence is centered in the logical contradiction contained in the novel's portrayal of Indians. The novel depicts a formerly noble, and now debased savage as it seeks to locate the responsibility for white violence against the Yemassee in "nature," and specifically, the inherently inferior "Indian nature." Yet Simms cannot have it both ways. No matter how The Yemassee attempts to displace white responsibility onto Indian nature, it admits its guilt in its historicized reading of Indian life before and after white contact.

Finally, in Nick of the Woods, Nathan Slaughter seeks to expunge Indian violence from America's forests by

exterminating them entirely. Yet he cannot do so without being unequivocally implicated in that very Indian violence. Nathan takes on, more and more, an "Indian" way of life precisely as he tries to eliminate it, as we saw above in his characterization of his house as "my own little wigwam." By the end of the novel, he is transformed into a striking image of Wenonga, wielding an axe, covered in blood, carrying a string of scalps, and whooping in the spirit of "never-dying revenge" that parallels Wenonga's own characterization (see 323--324; 344). Ultimately, none of the three novels is able to sustain a unified vision of white American tradition and history. The heteroglossic nature of the novel inevitably subverts the ideological/ rhetorical drive of frontier literature to establish a monologic American ideal.

THE SOCIAL VALUE OF FRONTIER LITERATURE

When Chingachgook questions Natty on the accuracy of white accounts of border conflicts, Natty obliquely acknowledges the monologic drive of white history books: "My people have many ways, of which, as an honest man, I can't approve. It is one of their customs to write in books what they have done and seen, instead of telling them in their villages where the lie can be given to the face of a cowardly boaster and the brave soldier can call on his comrades to witness for the truth of his words." (23).

Natty's concern with white bookishness is not so much that the truth-value of the book will diminish, but that the reader will be withdrawn from social action in his scholarly pursuits: "In consequence of this bad fashion, a man who is too conscientious to misspend his days among the women, in learning the names of black marks, may never hear of the deeds of his father, *nor feel a pride in striving to outdo them* (emphasis mine, 23). That Natty speaks precisely from the medium of the novel he excoriates allows Cooper a double-voiced message purposefully turned to the motives of frontier fiction. Cooper presents Natty as a figurative frontier father--a pathfinder who paves the way for America's civilized progeny. At the same time, Natty's voice reminds Cooper's reader that the job is not done, that sons of the frontier should not merely read of border exploits, but should "striv[e] ... to outdo them."

Without denying the contributions of earlier criticism on the frontier novel, it seems important also to recognize the ways in which these novels presented a history that would shape contemporary white values, policy and action while disguising the very basis for the same. Although the novel's characteristic multi-voicedness may have subverted the possibility for frontier literature to achieve a true single-voiced tradition, that monologized vision of white Americans versus Indian savages (however compromised) became relevant to contemporary readers paradoxically through the

novelistic medium. That is to say, the novel at once prevented a monolithic tradition from being fully realized while it facilitated the impact of that fictionalized tradition by providing a "zone of maximal contact with the present" for the reader. And one reader, at least, was able to find a real (and transatlantic) social application in these fictive works. The British colonist and writer W. Winslow Reade provided this assessment of Africa in his travel account, Savage Africa (1864; quoted in Hammond and Jablow, 73):

> This vast continent will finally be divided almost equally between France and England ... Africa shall be redeemed ... in this amiable task they [i.e. the Africans] may possibly become exterminated. We must learn to look upon this result with composure. It illustrates the beneficent law of Nature, that the weak must be devoured by the strong ... When the cockneys of Timbuctoo have their tea-gardens on the Oases of the Sahara; when the hotels and guide books are established at the Sources of the Nile; when it becomes fashionable to go yachting on the lakes of the great Plateau; when noblemen building seats in Central Africa, will have their elephant parks and their hippopotami waters, young ladies on camp-stools, under palm trees will read with tears, The Last of the Negroes.

NOTES

1. Jane Tompkins' work on Cooper represents an important break from earlier critics who focus on the archetypal or psychological experience of the individual on the frontier. She argues, in her essay "No Apologies for the Iroquois," that Cooper is a "profound thinker, one who was obsessively preoccupied not with the subtle workings of individual consciousness, but with the way the social world is organized," and also with exploring the dangers of sameness and difference within a given social order (99; 118). Tompkins urges us to see The Last of the Mohicans and works like it as "agents of social formation" (119).

Richard Slotkin's second major work, The Fatal Environment is also an important contribution to socio-political studies of frontier novels.

2. R. W. B. Lewis has said that Cooper's contribution to American literature was to bring the hero to life by taking him out of society ("the cities and cellars"), instead "putting him where he belonged--in space" (98). This comment applies more accurately to the legacy of Cooper criticism (and frontier romance criticism in general). Beginning with D. H. Lawrence, who, with a psychoanalytic approach, discussed the "dream world" and "wish fulfillment" dynamic of Cooper and his novels, criticism has tended to focus on the abstract, or interior psychological values of frontier romance that transcend immediate social concerns. Most often, the action of the novel is considered a dramatic tableaux against which the individual plays out eternal conflicts and discovers absolute moral qualities. Lewis, for instance, discusses Cooper:

> The drama Cooper constructed for [his] actors on the spatial scene resulted from his trick of poising that scene upon the very brink of time. In the characteristic adventure of a Cooper novel ... the personality of the Adamic hero is made to impinge upon the products of time: the villages lying a little inland ... social institutions with their precedents and established practices; relationships inherited through the years (99).

Society, however, is just what the heroic individual avoids, according to Lewis: "These are things the hero has to cope with in the course of his dramatic life, but which he must eventually stay clear of, if he is to remain faithful to the spatial vision" (100). In the "space" of the frontier, the Adamic hero must play out mythic conflicts, for instance, in

Nick, where the Adamic, "innocent man of love" meets, and is transformed by a "collision with evil," becoming "the outraged Adam" (107-109).

All three novels fall under the rubric of Richard Chase's definitions of "romance," either the historical romance which follows the lead of the British Scott, or the darker, psychological strain of the genre which produced such an influence on Melville and Hawthorne (20). For Chase, romance as a genre under either definition is ultimately anti-cultural. Instead, it defers to larger truths: "the very abstractness and profundity of romance allow it to formulate moral truths of universal validity" (xi). Further, its characters "will not be complexly related to each other or to society or to the past. Human beings will on the whole be shown in ideal relation--that is, they will share emotions only after these have become abstract or symbolic" (13).

Leslie Fiedler rejects Chase's arguments in Love and Death in the American Novel. "To speak of a counter-tradition to the novel, of the tradition of 'the romance' as a force in our literature, is merely to repeat the rationalizations of our writers themselves; it is certainly to fail to be specific enough for real understanding" (29). Fiedler's view is more monolithic, but if his arguments differ from Chase's, the implications are much the same. American literature does not have counter strains, but is itself counter to the American social reality:

> Our fiction is not merely a flight from the physical data of the actual world, in search of a (sexless and dim) Ideal; from Charles Brockden Brown to William Faulkner or Eudora Welty ... it is, bewilderingly and embarrassingly, a gothic fiction, nonrealistic and negative, sadist and melodramatic--a literature of darkness and grotesque in a land of light and affirmation (29).

Fiedler, in his analysis of the bourgeois genre of the novel, discovers a "turning ... from mythology to psychology, from a body of communal story to the mind of the individual" (40).

Fiedler acknowledges a concrete social reference for Chingachgook, as the embodiment of communal (white) guilt for the violence against Indians. The task of the Leatherstocking Tales, he argues, is precisely to exorcise that guilt (195). The contemporary value of that process is abstracted into the mythic: "The primitive, good or evil, Cooper never lets us forget is past history and a present dream" (199). In the end, and despite a nodding acknowledgement to the notion that Cooper might somehow have addressed a social conflict between two cultures, Fiedler discusses Cooper's Indians as interactants of a white psyche.

Influential critics like Lawrence, Lewis, Chase and

Fiedler have established what A. N. Nikolyukin calls a "subjective-idealistic conception of literary development--Freudian, mythic, existential, and so forth" (575), which persistently deflects attention from literature's social/material inception. Even when a critic begins with some attempt to foreground real social concerns, the pressure to abstract the discussion seems irresistible. Joel Porte, who pinpoints Cooper's racial consciousness as centrally "American," notes that "Cooper commenced his writing career at a point when the notion of race began to have special interest for an American writer" (8), during the Jacksonian era that saw Indian resettlement become national policy and pastime. Yet Porte shortly makes an astounding leap out of social reference when he argues that "the notion of race ultimately became for Cooper ... a way of meditating on good and evil" (9). Ultimately, according to Porte, the issue of race for Cooper does not mediate an actual social reality, but provides the artist with a means to contemplate the Nature of Experience: "The American hero is simply facing his own duplex nature--the light and darkness within himself--and the duplex nature of experience generally" (10).

3. For example, Duncan Heyward in Mohicans, and Mr. Matthews in Yemassee (who, although is currently living in the country, is clearly inexperienced and ignorant of its dangers, particularly the "habits" of its native inhabitants). Interestingly, the motif of the ignorant city-dweller in frontier literature, especially in Mohicans and Nick, reverses the "country-bumpkin" theme, producing a type of "city witling."

4.Bird ambiguously claims remembrance of an actual story that corresponds to Nathan's: "The author remembers, in the published journal of an old traveller--an Englishman, and, as he thinks, a Friend; but he cannot be certain of this fact, the name having escaped him and the loose memorandum he made at the time having been mislaid--who visited the region of the upper Ohio towards the close of the last century, an observation on this subject, which made too deep an impression easily to be forgotten" (34). Whether or not Bird fictionalized the event, his placement of the Slaughter family in the northern region of the Susquehanna valley does not seem to me fortuitous.

5.Simms makes a similar comment, with a double emphasis. See pages 63 and 244.

CHAPTER FOUR
W/RIGHTING HISTORY:
SUBVERSIVE SYMPATHY IN SEDGWICK AND CHILD

THE POLITICS OF SENTIMENT

In her 1860 article, "How Women Should Write?" Mary Bryan traces women's growing involvement in literary fields. It is in response to men's demand "for intellectual food through the length and breadth of the land ... they want books for every year, for every month--mirrors to 'catch the manners living as they rise,' lenses to concentrate the rays of the new stars that dawn upon them" (quoted in Friebert and White, 369). Woman, responding as always to man's call, "steps forward to take her part in the intellectual labor," but then is strangely hindered by the qualms of the male establishment. Bryan here incisively chronicles the course of women writers in patriarchal society:

> Thus is apparent what has gradually been admitted, that it is woman's duty to write--but how and what? This is yet a mooted question. Men, after much demur and hesitation, have given women liberty to write; but they cannot yet consent to allow them full freedom ... With metaphysics [women] have nothing to do; it is too deep a sea for their lead to sound; nor must they grapple with those great

> social and moral problems with which every strong soul is now wrestling ... Having prescribed these bounds to the female pen, men are the first to condemn her efforts as tame and commonplace, because they lack earnestness and strength (370).

Bryan herein argues forcefully in behalf of women writers who have begun to confront the "earnest age we live in." These women recognize that "there are active influences at work, all tending to one grand object--moral, social and physical advancement." These are women, Bryan asserts, who have come to understand that "the pen is the compass-needle that points to this pole" of social change (371).

Bryan presents an admittedly utopian hope that women writers will become "God's chosen instrument in this work of gradual reformation, this reconciling of the harsh contrasts in society that jar so upon our sense of harmony, this righting of the grievous wrongs and evils over which we weep and pray, this final uniting of men into one common brotherhood by the bonds of sympathy and affection" (373). She perceives literature as a powerful agent of "gradual reform" that might resolve the awful contradictions of antebellum America. Her essay at once acknowledges and projects the social mission of nineteenth-century women's fiction.

Before we can analyze nineteenth-century women's novels for the implications of reformist tendencies in their

construction of the Racial Other, we have to be able read those novels as Bryan did, setting aside the implications of the typically demeaning label "sentimental." The tradition of nineteenth-century women's fiction that Bryan so passionately argued for has only recently received any serious attention. By and large, it has been scanted and ignored by twentieth-century critics who have subsumed nearly all of nineteenth-century women's fictive efforts under the derided categories, "sentimental" and "domestic." Henry Nash Smith's 1974 analysis of "The Scribbling Women and the Cosmic Success Story," sums up nearly a century of the generalized disdain which had characterized discussions of nineteenth-century women's writing. Following the lead of earlier critics who, like Alexander Cowie, find "domestic fiction" to be generally "trite" and predictable, Smith somewhat sweepingly concludes that "the best-selling novels of the 1850's ... express an ethos of conformity. They emphasize unquestioning submission to authority, whether of God or an earthly father figure or society in general ... it brings the realm of the ideal under the same system of law and of implied covenants that prevails in society" (51).

Based as they are on just four relatively unanalyzed passages from two novels (Susan Warner's Wide, Wide World and Maria Cummin's The Lamplighter), Smith's generalizations are of limited value. As recent scholars of "sentimental fiction" have documented, there is a great variety among the

women writers of the nineteenth-century that refuses generalizations.[1] In her Sensational Designs (1985), Jane Tompkins suggests that the problem of evaluation lies not in the novels, but in the critical apparatus brought to them. She argues that the criteria of aesthetics against which these novels have been judged is not a permanent value but is in itself political and changing. Further, she shows the popular power of the novels labeled sentimental or domestic lies precisely in their political dimension. Contemporary literary values serve to aestheticize and dehistoricize the political dimension of literature: "In modernist thinking, literature is, by definition, a form of discourse that has no designs on the world. It does not attempt to change things, but merely to represent them, and it does so in a specifically literary language whose claim to value lies in its uniqueness" (125). Such theories, as Russell J. Reising points out in his 1986 study of American literary criticism, are finally unable to account in any way for a large portion of American literature that declares for itself a social, moral or religious agenda (cf. p. 13-48).

Any full reading of these works, Tompkins proposes, must be placed in an insistently historicized context if we are to "understand what gave these novels traction in their original setting" (xv). In so doing, we must take seriously their social agenda, to read them as "agents of cultural formation rather than as objects of interpretation and

appraisal" (xvii). This establishes a different set of literary standards by which to evaluate these works:

> When one sets aside modernist demands--for psychological complexity, moral ambiguity, epistemological sophistication, stylistic density, formal economy--and attends to the way a text offers a blueprint for survival under a specific set of political, economic, social, or religious conditions, an entirely new story begins to unfold, and one's sense of the exigencies of narrative alters accordingly (xviii).

Tompkins' approach allows us to reevaluate nineteenth century women's writings seriously and more positively. Her sociological mode of criticism, as she herself suggests, is pertinent to a more general evaluation literature and criticism. Sociological inquiry affords us a better understanding of how a text functioned in its own historical context, and enables us to question the particular (and political) ends of our contemporary readings of a given text.

Many women writers of the nineteenth century addressed themselves clearly to perceived social ills, despite the limitations that Mary Bryan observes were imposed on them.[2] They in fact used the "sentimental novel" as a "political enterprise, halfway between sermon and social theory, that both codifies and attempts to mold the values of its time"

(Tompkins, 126). During a century of Indian removal, war and massacre, and the equally insistent and perhaps more immediate issue of slavery, women writers of the north, south, east and west examined the problematics of racial relations, many with intent to reform. Indeed, the far-and-away best-seller of the century, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852) was a powerfully conceived "sentimental" redaction of the most explosive issue of the decade. It would certainly seem plausible to argue (as Tompkins does) that Americans of the nineteenth century demanded social mediation (if not always reformative) from their fiction, testified to by the predominance, and popularity, of frontier romance, slave narratives, anti-slavery and plantation novels.

Two works in particular, Catherine Maria Sedgwick's Hope Leslie (1827), and Lydia Maria Child's A Romance of the Republic (1867), take an historical look at racial prejudice in order to mediate white society's racist and patriarchal relations. Both works have been classed as women's, or domestic fiction, in that they feature women protagonists, and emphasize family and community relationships rather than action/adventure. Both undertake an often unnoticed but radical restructuring of historical and racial understanding, making explicit the political drives behind historical representation. Both novels mediate racial barriers by presenting cross-racial friendships between

women: in Hope Leslie between Hope and Magawisca; in A Romance of the Republic between a network of black, mulatto, octoroon and white women. Both novels argue forcefully, if quite differently, for restructuring of racial understanding by suggesting the fictionality of "race" and positing cultural difference and arbitrary power motives as the real focus for understanding.

Accepting Hope Leslie and Romance of the Republic on their own terms, however, does not mean acquiescing uncritically to their construction of the Racial Other. On the contrary, I will argue in this chapter that the vision of racial equality offered by these writers has its own conceptual and political limitations. Specifically, in each we see the effects of what Tzvetan Todorov calls the "prejudice of equality." In his 1982 The Conquest of America, Tzvetan Todorov examines the narratorial and material processes of "understanding" the racial Other.[3] He suggests that unless "grasping is accompanied by a full acknowledgement of the other as subject, it risks being used for purposes of exploitation, of 'taking'; knowledge will be subordinate to power" (132). Versions of the Other as equal can subtly participate in this exploitation, sometimes even more thoroughly than those which posit the Other as unequal: "If it is incontestable that the prejudice of superiority is an obstacle in the road to knowledge, we must admit that the prejudice of equality is a still greater one, for it

consists in identifying the Other purely and simply with one's own 'ego-ideal,'" and thus negates the Other's right to difference. This "second great figure of alterity," while "incontestably more attractive," mistakes in negating difference in order to establish equality. Such a formulation, argues Todorov, is "even less valid" than depictions that would at least grant the racial Other a significant difference from the white Subject, even though that difference would place the Other on an inferior conceptual plane (167).[4] Accordingly, the second focus of the discussion will be to question the dynamics of the racial equality articulated in each work.

FLOWERS WILD AND CULTIVATED

Catherine Maria Sedgwick's third novel, Hope Leslie, Or, Early Times in the Massachusetts was published in two volumes in 1827. The novel was probably written, as Sister Mary Michael Welsh speculates, in response to a North American Review essay on her second novel, Redwood, which, while commending Sedgwick's effort, calls for an American literary endeavor that would utilize American historical materials (Walsh, 25; NAR, 245). In Hope Leslie, Sedgwick turns to America's Puritan legacy, not "to illustrate history" but rather the "character of the times." Both history and character are compelling subjects for Sedgwick, and she hopes to inspire a similar enthusiasm in her

readers: "the writer would be fully gratified if, by this work, any of our young countrymen should be stimulated to investigate the early history of their native land" (6).

The plot, set roughly during the mid-sixteen hundreds, turns, as Mary Kelley notes, on two themes: Pequot dispossession and subjugation, and a "romance among the Puritans" (xxi). Hope Leslie and her sister Faith are orphaned in England and sent to America to be adopted by Puritan emigrant William Fletcher. The action is formed largely around the friendships formed among Hope, the Pequot servant/slave Magawisca, and William's son Everell.

As Welsh and Mary Kelley document, the work was well received, and was compared favorably to Cooper's Last of the Mohicans. Sedgwick was herself somewhat abashed by the overwhelmingly favorable reviews published in women's magazines and in the North Atlantic Review. She was not disconcerted, however, at the controversy which arose over her depiction of Indians, the defense for which she had already prepared in her original Preface:

> In our histories, it was perhaps natural that [the Indians] should be represented as "surly dogs," who preferred to die rather than live, from no other motive than a stupid or malignant obstinacy. Their own historians or poets, if they had such, would as naturally, and with more justice, have extolled their high-souled courage and patriotism. The

> writer is aware that it may be though that the character of Magawisca has no prototype ... it may be sufficient to remark, that ... we are confined not to the actual, but to the possible (6).

Nor was she surprised by criticism of her less than hagiographic view of the Puritans, which she carefully qualified but refused to back down from in a private letter. In the letter, Sedgwick insists that she bore only "filial reverence" to the Puritans. However, "their bigotry, their superstition, and above all their intolerance, were too apparent on the pages of history to be forgotten" (quoted in Walsh, 67).

Clearly, and despite the numerous textual apologies regarding her humble inadequacies as historian and author, Sedgwick had set out to redefine received opinion about both sides of the racial border. Sedgwick's refusal to accord Puritan historians de facto authority over her subject is basic to her fictional design. Her critique of Puritan racism is inextricable from her insistent attention to the debilitating effects of patriarchy. As numerous critics such as Lillian Schlissel, Susan Armitage, Glenda Riley, Annette Kolodny and Leland Persons have now documented at length, the frontier vision of Sedgwick and other frontier novelists and diarists specifically counters the "Adamic myth" and its valorization of white male conquest--conquest over non-white males and women of any color.[5]

Indeed, the enterprise of racial re-visioning is inseparable from a confrontation of patriarchal authority in Hope Leslie, as the narrator's asides attest. For instance, as she offers her readers a "formal introduction to the government-mansion" (143), the narrator pauses to clarify her unpretentious, lackey-like relation to the "mighty master of fiction." Rather than attempting to "imitate the miracles wrought by the rod of the prophet," the narrator promises to rely for her description on quotations from "an authentic record of the times" (143). Here, as in her Preface, Sedgwick assures male authorities (and those who are invested in upholding them) that she does not presume upon their rank. In her Preface she avers in the first and closing sentences: "The following volumes are not offered to the public as being in any degree an historical narrative, or a relation of real events ... These volumes are ... far from being intended as a substitute for genuine history" (5-6). Her repeated insistence, however, combined with the content of comments sandwiched between these apologies, might suggest that the apologies themselves are less sincere than calculatingly rhetorical, designed to assuage those who, as Mary Bryan insists, refuse to grant women writers any "metaphysical" or political authority.

A closer examination of Sedgwick's strategy illuminates her subversive political commentary on the patriarchal assumptions of the Puritans and her contemporary male

audience. Sedgwick promises the same kind of deference and submission to male authority that she models in her novel through Mrs. Fletcher, Esther Downing, and Mrs. Winthrop. But Hope Leslie cagily qualifies the value of their meek subservience, suggesting that such behavior breeds an unthinking temper and frank servility. The novel presents a paragon of Puritan girlhood in Esther Downing, who, the narrator at one point reflects, "could not have disputed the nice points of faith, sanctification and justification, with certain celebrated contemporary female theologians" (135). And sandwiched within her honorific depiction of Mrs. Winthrop is a comparison of the Puritan first lady to a horse on a bit, "guided by the slightest intimation from him who held the rein; indeed ... it sometimes appeared as if the reins were dropped, and the inferior animal were left to the guidance of her own sagacity" (145).

As these narratorial evaluations suggest, the more admirable course is the more independent. What Sedgwick actually does as the author of Hope Leslie is more akin to the actions of the title character. Hope, following the guide of her own heart and genius, often defies patriarchal authority, secretly moving to assert a humane justice toward people whom the Puritans would trample, like the unfairly harassed Nelema. "It may be seen that Hope Leslie," the author notes, "was superior to some of the prejudices of the age" (123). While Sedgwick protests her reverent distance

from any actually historical enterprise, she in fact broadly tackles it, beginning in her prefatorial comments on the "Indians of North America," and the (ad)vantage of historical perspective (quoted above).

From the beginning of chapter four--a central one to this analysis--Sedgwick indicates her willingness to confront authorized history. She takes as her epigraph a modified version of one of the most censorial comments of early Anglo-American historical legacy: "It would have been happy if they had converted some before they had killed any."[6] In the chapter that follows, Sedgwick delivers two versions of the Pequot war, one based on actual Puritan accounts, and the other fictionalized from a sympathetic stance and wary re-reading of the same Puritan accounts. While Natty Bumppo can acknowledge that "every story has its two sides" (Cooper, 23), The Last of the Mohicans refuses this opportunity to subvert authority. Instead, the Indian Chingachgook tells only of the good days before white contact, and how his tribe is coming to an elegiac end, carefully avoiding placing direct blame for this on the European invaders. Hope Leslie's two-sided history is decidedly more confrontative.

One of the methods Sedgwick uses to explore racial configurations is to stage debates between various characters on precisely this subject. For example, Digby, a veteran of the Pequot "war," is thoroughly suspicious of any

Indian: "They are a treacherous race ... a kind of beast we don't comprehend" (41-42). He maintains a staunch party line modelled on the historical accounts of the Pequot massacre by Hubbard, Trumbull and Winthrop. In contrast, Everell, who is decidedly attracted to Magawisca, holds a more skeptical attitude and doggedly questions Digby's defensive assertions. When Digby insists that "we know these Pequods were famed above all the Indian tribes for their cunning," Everell counters: "And what is superior cunning among savages but superior sense?" (43). Their dialogue reveals the power of representation, the way the same incident can be interpreted differently depending on the prejudices the interpreter brings to it. This point is underscored by the narrator's comment on the authority of the combined accounts: When Everell bests Digby, narrator observes that Digby felt "the impatience that a man feels when he is sure he is right, without being able to make it appear" (43).

By a similar process of narratorial intervention, Magawisca's account of the Pequot "war" is lent important authority. Her "side" of the story focuses on the cruelty of the Puritan's planned attack on sleeping women, old people and children, by sneaking up and setting fire to the village--fire "taken from our hearth-stone, where the English had been so often warmed and cherished" (49). Magawisca's story, supported by the narrator's consequent

expansion, thoroughly subverts the command of the male Puritans' version. First, it insistently historicizes the situation, emphasizing the causal, reactive quality of "Pequod treachery" and subtly revealing white treachery. Further, it recognizes the Indian foe as human, not "beasts," emphasizing familial relations throughout. Magawisca's account challenges the unexamined politics of historical representation, focusing particularly upon the persuasive power of narrative and narrator.

Magawisca prefaces her story with a warning for Everell, which doubles as a meta-historical commentary for the reader: "Then listen to me: and when the hour of vengeance comes, if it should come, remember it was provoked" (47). Like Fredric Jameson's caveat, "always historicize," Magawisca's words comment on Digby's dehistoricized observations on Indian "nature." The Indians are not by "nature" vengeful, but are so in this situation because of the wrongs they received at the hands of the Puritans.

Magawisca and the narrator combine forces to contextualize the conflict and to undermine Puritan righteousness. Magawisca recounts the burning of Mystic and the ensuing massacre of surviving women and children: "All about sat women and children in family clusters, awaiting unmoved their fate. The English had penetrated ... Death was dealt freely. None resisted" (53). Everell is so moved

by this account that he weeps. When Magawisca finishes, the narrator smoothly picks up the threads of the story to fill in the "factual" and most gruesome background from Puritan accounts, quoting Winthrop and Hubbard. While Sedgwick has before protested that she merely follows the accounts of the Puritan fathers, the narrator does not here hesitate to direct their intentions to a different purpose. Of these accounts, the narrator comments:

> In the relations of their enemies, the courage of the Pequods was distorted into ferocity, and their fortitude, in their last extremity, thus set forth: "many were killed in the swamp, like sullen dogs, that would rather in their self-willed madness, sit still to be shot or cut in pieces than receive their lives for asking, at the hands of those into whose power they had now fallen" (54).

The narrator highlights the unfeelingly prejudiced nature of the histories available, and the apparent contradictions between the Puritan mission and Christian humaneness. The narrator implies that once conscious of the political aspect of historical representation, quite different versions can be constructed--versions both more balanced and accurate.

The scene between Magawisca and Everell also reveals the power accrued simply by being able to <u>tell</u> the story. Magawisca's alternative version of the Pequot war is persuasive enough to transform Everell, whose imagination,

> touched by the wand of feeling, presented a very different picture of those defenseless families of savages, pent in the recesses of their native forests, and there exterminated, not by superior natural force, but by the adventitious circumstances of arms, skill and knowledge; from that offered by those who "then living and worthy of credit did affirm, than in the morning entering into the swamp, they saw several heaps of them [the Pequods (CMS)] sitting close together, upon whom they discharged their pieces, laden with ten or twelve pistol bullets at a time, putting the muzzles of their pieces under the boughs, within a few yards of them" (54).

The narrator acutely perceives the dominative structure of representation, not only affirming the possibility of alternative history, but insisting on the inherent necessity of it: "Here it was not merely changing sculptors to give the advantage to one or the other of the artist's subjects; but it was putting the chisel into the hands of truth, and giving it to whom it belonged" (53). The patriarchal Author of Puritan history, who in his story represents his own political ends and thereby dominates the Pequods not once in reality) but twice (textually), is not possessed of the hands of truth." Rather, the narrator asserts, it is the

silenced subject--the Indian and the white woman--who are possessed of the real right to truth.

Having issued a challenge to the authorized white versions of the Pequot war, the narrator craftily moves, full of authority, into an acute analysis of the Pequod dilemma. Strikingly, the focus is here on the more dangerous and less pitiable Pequot chief, Monotto. Magawisca, narratively and sympathetically, has paved the way for the narrator's commentary on the dispute between Monotto and Sassacus. As Magawisca relates, she, her mother and three younger siblings had all survived the village burning in the shelter of a little cellar covered by a rock. Later, they ventured out just in time to meet her father, Monotto, the other sachem, Sassacus, and the village elders returning from a "friendly council." When the men realized what had happened, they all "turned with suspicion and hatred on my father. *He* had been the friend of the English; *he* had counselled peace and alliance with them; *he* had protected their traders, delivered the captives taken from them, and restored them to his people; now *his* wife and children alone were living, and they called him traitor" (50). Monotto is defended by the antagonistic Sassacus, the sachem who had sworn enmity against the English and counselled war long ago.

The narrator then relates that "Magawisca had said truly to Everell, that her father's nature had been changed

by the wrongs he had received" (56), hereby historicizing Monoto's behavior and refuting the received Puritan version of Indians as "naturally" savage. While Sassacus manifested "a jealousy of [the English] encroachments" and "employed all his art and influence and authority, to unite the tribes for the extirpation of the dangerous invaders," Monotto, "forseeing no danger from them, was the advocate of a hospitable reception, and pacific conduct" (50). It was ironically Sassacus, as the narrator is at pains to indicate, who was right about the "dangerous invaders" (and "invaders" is doubly emphasized when repeated as the last word of the chapter). Monotto is betrayed by his own generous impulses: "He had seen his people slaughtered, or driven from their homes and hunting-grounds, into shameful exile; his wife had died in captivity, and his children lived in servile dependency in the house of his enemies" (51). Only "in this extremity," and not at all unreasonably the narrator implies, is Monotto driven to revenge. Apart from establishing sympathy for Monotto at a personal level, the narrator also uses his story as a trenchant comment on the broader predicament of the various Indian nations which, divided between those who counseled war and those who advocated hospitality, were finally unable to forestall English treachery. Sedgwick thus establishes an historical dialogue that had been suppressed from the Puritan accounts.

Sedgwick's construction of the Other has important

implications at semiotic level as well. In his study of the Spanish conquest of America, Todorov argues for a semiotic analysis of colonial relations. Examining the underlying characteristics of colonial discourse, he differentiates between two "touchstones of alterity," one which is structured around "a present and immediate second person" (i.e., me vs. you), and one which revolves on "the absent or distant third person" (i.e., me [us] vs. them). He argues that it is at this point (where the Other is designated as either present or absent) "that we can see how the theme of perception of the other and that of symbolic (or semiotic) behavior intersect" (157). Whether one regards the racial Other as a second person, immediate presence, or an third person absence can profoundly affect the possible actions conceptually available toward that Other.

This frame is most useful for an analysis of Sedgwick's radically conceived fourth chapter, which by enacting dialogue between English and Pequot characters, places the relationship in a "me/you" semiotic frame. Within this second-person symbolic relation, the narrator reveals the cruelty of Puritan policy toward the Pequots, acted out in the semiotic perspective of a third-person frame. From the "us/them" vantage, the Puritans can act viciously and record with no sense of irony the very passage the narrator quotes from Winthrop: "It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire, and the streams of blood quenching the

same, and the horrible scent thereof; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave the praise thereof to God" (54). Such a perspective is impossible when one recognizes the Other as an immediate presence, indeed, talks and listens to the Other as Everell does.

Todorov's frame is also essential to explain a curious passage that follows only two chapters later. After the scene in which the Fletcher family is ruthlessly slaughtered by Monotto and his accomplices, the narrator pauses to address the reader directly. "We hope our readers will not think we have wantonly sported with their feelings." The narrator continues to explain that such events, "feebly related," were common in early Puritan life. "Not only families," the narrator elaborates, "but villages, were cut off by the most dreaded of all foes--the ruthless, vengeful savage" (72). The semiotic structure here--the "touchstone of alterity"--is suddenly not second, but third person. In the passage that ensues, we witness the representational implications of this switch, the violence now permitted, easily effaced and rationalized.

"In the quiet possession of blessings transmitted," the narrator elaborates, "we are, perhaps, in danger of forgetting, or undervaluing the sufferings by which they were obtained. We forget that the noble pilgrims lived and endured for us" (72). Chronicling the sacrifices made, the narrator then outlines their mission: "to open the forests

to the sun-beam and to the light of the Sun of Righteousness." In reward, the Puritans "saw, with sublime joy, a multitude of people where the solitary savage roamed the forest--the forest vanished, and the pleasant villages and busy cities appeared--the tangled foot-path expanded to the thronged high-way--the consecrated church planted on the rock of heathen sacrifice" (73). The implications of this passage's semiotic structure are a stunning contrast to those of chapter four. Here, the women, children, <u>families</u> of Indians are transmuted (via the third-person frame of reference) to a "single, solitary savage." The historical context of the colonial conquest is effaced--the Puritans are "rewarded" for sacrificing "the land of their birth ... their homes ...all delights of the sense" (72). And the historical struggle, textually elided, is sanctioned by the merit of the Puritan's religion, their "enlightening" influence on the land itself. The narrator continues to make an oblique reference to the colonists' actions against America's original population:

> And that we might realize this vision--enter into this promised land of faith--they endured hardship, and braved death--deeming, as said one of their company, that "he is not worthy to live at all, who, for fear or danger of death, shunneth his country's service, or his own honour--since death is inevitable and the fame of virtue is immortal."

> If these were the fervors of enthusiasm, it was an enthusiasm kindled and fed by the holy flame that glows on the alter of God (73).

Here, we have a holy mission, not white treachery. We see the traces of deleted historical content when we begin to ask questions about this passage. What magnitude of service could "the country" require against that "single, solitary savage"? How much work can it be to build a church on a rock--unless the expression is a metaphor that represses a less pleasant meaning? Rather, this passage uncritically highlights how the representatives of that "consecrated church" built on the "rock of sacrifice" also have the power to choose the terms by which their history will be written. As Todorov ironically observes, "societies that employ writing are more advanced than societies without writing; but we may hesitate to choose between sacrifice societies and massacre societies" (252).

It is, perhaps, impossible to explain the juxtaposition of these two exceedingly divergent passages. Which one did Sedgwick intend? Maybe both. Cultural hegemony is pervasive, and enlightenment not always foolproof. Albert Memmi emphasizes the imaginative difficulties of "the colonizer who refuses": "It is not easy to escape mentally from a concrete situation, to refuse its ideology while continuing to live with its actual relationships" (20). Certainly Sedgwick does not abandon her attempt to deal

fairly with her Indian characters at this point. As will be discussed briefly below, Sedgwick establishes a modicum of cross-racial understanding, indicating that the most serious racial difficulties arose at the hands of the whites. Further, she offers an alternative behavior model to the received frontier wisdom of her day. But, finally, she does not see clearly to a resolution of racial misunderstanding, and instead establishes a metaphor which allows her to peacefully--even beautifully--allow the Indian to fade into the distance.

Tension and ambivalence mark the remainder of Hope Leslie. Sedgwick is at many points more successful than Child will be in establishing cultural relativity between whites and Indians. That is, Sedgwick allows her Indians dignity in their difference. She reveals the Indians to be governed by religious and moral principles, even though different from the Puritans'. Magawisca, defending her brother against Hope's outburst, responds, "Yes, an Indian, in whose veins runs the blood of the strongest ... who never turned their backs on friends or enemies, and whose souls have returned to the Great Spirit, stainless as they came from him" (188). Magawisca at one point clearly defends the legitimacy of the Indian life-style. When Hope pleads with her to stay in Boston, insisting that her "noble mind must not be wasted in those hideous solitudes," Magawisca makes it completely clear that such a life--though different from

Hope's--is equally valuable to her. Notably, Hope accepts Magawisca's answer.

As Mary Kelley discusses in her valuable Introduction to the Rutgers edition of Hope Leslie, Sedgwick goes a long way toward suggesting cross-racial equality through her "parallel" portrayals of Hope and Magawisca. Magawisca is, Kelley notes, "the only Indian woman in early American fiction invested with substance and strength" (xxvi). Her character in many ways corresponds to Hope's, and in some ways exceeds it. The respect her character accrues during the narrative is not merely token. As Kelley observes, both Hope and Magawisca defy their culture's patriarchal order. Yet it is Magawisca who commits the "ultimate act of resistance" when she prevents Everell's execution, sacrificing her arm: "hers is the most heroic act in the entire novel" (xxvii).

Sedgwick also demonstrates an awareness that, as Todorov puts it, "each of us is the other's barbarian" (190). When Magawisca initially reveals to Hope a willingness to arrange a meeting with Hope's sister, Hope cries that "if I could once clasp her in my arms, she should never leave me" (188). Magawisca informs Hope of Mary's marriage to Oneco, at which Hope shudders, exclaiming "God forbid! ... My sister married to an Indian!" The narrator demonstrates the relativity of the construction of barbarism by relating how Magawisca recoiled "with a look of proud

contempt, that showed she reciprocated in full measure, the scorn expressed for her race" (188). Importantly, Magawisca's scorn is fully authorized, in light of her version of the massacre at Mystic.

Further, Magawisca reveals that although she holds white and Indian differences presently ineradicable, those differences arose historically because of white hostility. At her trial, affirming her enmity toward white colonists, she queries "can we grasp in friendship the hand raised to strike us?" In this argument, the colonists' relations with the Native Americans are again historicized. And in the narrative's insistence on contextualizing Indian violence, Sedgwick suggests, contrary to the cultural assumptions of her day, an alternative to "Indian-hating." In their later summaries of this cultural phenomenon, Robert Montgomery Bird and James Hall would insist that white "Indian-haters" responded "naturally" to the treachery and violence of the Indian foes. Everell in particular, and also his father are witness to the violent murder of the rest of their family. Yet unlike Nathan Slaughter in _Nick of the Woods_, the two men in _Hope Leslie_ do _not_ swear "eternal vengeance" (cf. Bird, 236). Instead, by relying on their religious faith, and their sensibility, the two men continue in life without becoming embittered toward the Indian race. Everell applauds Hope's rescue of Nelema, and himself engineers Magawisca's escape from Puritan punishment.

In the end, however, while Sedgwick goes far toward suggesting a relative cultural standard to evaluate Native Americans, she is not able to fully resolve the implications of her critique for her contemporary audience. Instead, she adopts a manichean allegory aesthetized by a garden metaphor to dispense with the Indians at the end of her narrative. Having earlier associated the Puritans with enlightenment (they "open the forests to the sun-beam, and to the light of the Sun of Righteousness,") Sedgwick has Magawisca herself adopt those polar terms in her own defense: "Take my own word, I am your enemy; the sun-beam and the shadow cannot mingle" (292). Magawisca more frequently explains the cultural incompatibility of the two peoples with a flower metaphor. On two occasions, she elaborates, both in relation to Mary's embrace of Indian life-ways. Mary is key in this formulation. Through her, Magawisca is able to emphasize that the differences are not inherent or racial, but <u>cultural</u>. This qualification, though revolutionary in its own right and starkly opposed to Cooper's formulation of white and red gifts, ultimately has nowhere constructive to go. "The lily of Maqua's valley, will never again make the English garden sweet" Magawisca says, preparing Hope for their meeting (188). Pleasant though this figure may be, Magawisca later reveals its full implications, this time as she warns Hope of Mary's inevitable return to Oneco: "When she flies from you, as he will, mourn not over her, Hope

Leslie--the wild flower would perish in your gardens--the forest is like a native home to her--and she will sing as gaily again as the bird that hath found its mate" (331-332). The Indian's destiny in Hope Leslie is here made clear, for the Puritan's mission, as the narrator has indicated, is to cultivate the forest. Indian destiny will for now be "lost in the deep, voiceless obscurity of those unknown regions" (339). The narrator here refers by "regions" to "far western forests," but in Sedgwick's own lifetime, those forests were being cultivated. Rather, the weight of the metaphors relegates the Indians to a "deep, voiceless obscurity" of (mostly unrecorded) history. The ultimate "fate" of the Indians is never made explicit in Hope Leslie. Rather, the text succumbs to the same processes of historical representation that it formerly condemns in the Puritan accounts of the Pequot massacre, in which Indian genocide is something that happens outside the agency of whites.

Romancing Readers

Lydia Maria Child also wrote a frontier novel, Hobomok, A Tale of Early Times, which was published in 1824, three years before Hope Leslie. Child later read Sedgwick's novel, and enjoyed it, as she indicates in a letter to her close friend, Sarah Shaw, written late in her life. Her esteem for the book itself was diminished, however, by her

regard for its author. The letter to Shaw was to acknowledge the volume of Sedgwick's memoirs that Shaw had sent. Child, while agreeing to read them promises also to return the volume "as it is not the kind of book I care to keep" (May 20, 1872; SL, 506). Elaborating, Child insists that "any person who *apologized* for slavery must be deficient in moral sense" and more specifically charges that Sedgwick, while wishing "well to the negroes ... could not bear to *contend* for them, or for anything else ... She was very deficient in moral *courage*" (506). Sedgwick's work may have been interesting, but apparently was of no enduring value to Child. As she tells Shaw, she had several years before contributed her copy of Hope Leslie to a library.

Child's charge against Sedgwick was a heartfelt one. She herself had literally ruined her literary career to "contend" for slaves in print--both in scholarly treatise and fiction. Time and again she braved public hostility and censure to argue on behalf of emancipation and racial tolerance. Appeal in Favor of that Class of Americans Called Africans (1833) was a well-researched and copiously documented study of historical and contemporary slave institutions, including a careful analysis of African history and slave trade's effects on that country. As she notes, hers was the "first anti-slavery volume published in this country" to set forth an argument for immediate emancipation (SL, 232). Her well-argued appeal for

emancipation and an end to anti-miscegenation laws earned her the censure of many fellow citizens, resulting in the Boston Athenaeum revoking her library privileges and a costly decline in subscriptions to her Juvenile Miscellany.[7] Despite the intimidation of what Caroline Karcher sums as "social ostracism, economic boycott, and mob violence" (1986a, 285), Child proceeded to edit the National Anti-Slavery Standard for two years (1841-43), and published anti-slavery fiction and tracts like the ironic and incisive The Patriarchal Institution, As Described by Its Own Family (1860). Her least noted effort on behalf of black and white relations came, interestingly, after the Civil War--an intriguing novel entitled A Romance of the Republic (1867).

A Romance is in fact so little noted that it is frequently altogether overlooked. Neither the Cambridge Handbook of American Literature (1986) nor The Columbia Literary History of the United States (1988) acknowledge the novel in their summary of Child's work. Nina Baym, who was responsible for the section in the Columbia History on nineteenth century women writers seems entirely unaware of the book's existence. She neglects to mention it in her study of Woman's Fiction and in her Columbia History essay "The Rise of the Woman Author" states that after Hobomok, Child "wrote only two more novels," The Rebels (1825) and Philothea (1836; 294). Nor does Patricia G. Holland, in her

essay on "Lydia Maria Child as a Professional Author" find the book worth any mention.[8]

There is very little critical comment on the work.[9] Alexander Cowie mentions it in his Rise of the American Novel, arguing that the book "should logically have been her best fiction" but that, suffering in "the hampering grip of propaganda" the novelist could not "emancipate her fictional characters from ideological bondage" (182). In a more extended analysis, William S. Osgood arrives at similar conclusion. He professes to be surprised "that a woman of Mrs. Child's intellect did not adapt her 'novel-making' to current literary tastes" (145). Arguing that "the material for a realistic story was present in Child's novel," Osgood complains that Child "chose to package it with sentiment and suspense ... [and] preferred to embellish real life, thereby magnifying the story out of proportion" (145). The reviewers, as Osgood notes in conclusion, ignored the work, and rightly so as Child neglected her opportunity, as he asserts, to "comment frankly on the world around her," and fails therefore to 'discharge the universal debt ... [of] making useful books'" (158).[10] Notably, both scholars criticize Child for not pandering to the public taste, the reverse of the charge levelled against sentimental or domestic writers of the preceding decades. In actuality, the book is much more worthwhile than its small body of scholarly assessment would indicate. That the Romance was

relegated to oblivion by historical conditions antipathetic to its message at several levels (the least of which may have been stylistic) should in no way preclude it from serious treatment.

As Carolyn L. Karcher has convincingly established, a publishing industry and reading public largely hostile to abolitionist agitation put serious constraints on what women writers could address in their writings, and accordingly played a large part in shaping a new genre that could at once satisfy the conservative reading public while conveying--often through covert strategies--abolitionist concerns. Karcher argues that the enterprise was

> fraught with contradictions: the conventions of romance must serve to dispel the readers' romantic illusions about slavery; a language shorn of ugly details must convey the violence of flogging to an audience convinced that abolitionists exaggerated the cruelty of slavery; a code of gentility that did not protects slave women against rape or white women against their husbands' philandering must govern fictional treatment of sexuality (1986a, 12).

While abolitionist tracts and slave narratives provided a compelling and more authentic view of slavery, the public could not be induced to buy them. Such material was considered indecent by most, unscrupulous and dishonest by

many. So, abolitionist fiction, softened and conventionalized as it was, was the most effective alternative to communicate to an otherwise deaf public. Recognizing these factors should help us more clearly to evaluate the genre's anti-conventional social mission.

Karcher argues that Child is one of the best examples of a woman who tested the limits of this genre--often to her own financial detriment. In a careful analysis of one of Child's short stories, "Slavery's Pleasant Homes," Karcher documents the radical yet careful craft of Child, manifested nowhere better than in the passage where a quadroon slave is flogged to death by her mistress's husband. In that passage, Child's "feat ... is dazzling. With exquisite rhetorical tact, she succeeds in evoking a scene whose every element is unmentionable in polite society: a husband's rape of his wife's foster-sister; a gentleman's sadistic flogging of a 'tenderly-nurtured' woman; a pregnancy resulting from illicit sex; a miscarriage induced by violence" ("Rape, Murder and Revenge," 18). But, as the publishing history of "Slavery's Pleasant Homes" reveals, Child's daring if tactful experiments were not successful. The story was never reprinted. Later, even after the publication of Uncle Tom's Cabin, when she edited Harriet Brent Jacob's Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (which like "Slavery's Pleasant Homes" tested the limits of propriety to reveal the atrocities of slavery) Child

encountered astonishing resistance from Boston booksellers and publishers (24).[11]

In "Censorship American Style: The Case of Lydia Maria Child" Karcher examines the opposition Child met with from booksellers and publishers, and argues that while their rejections of Child's manuscripts were often couched in terms of "public taste" and "demand," the motives for the dismissals were probably quite different. In a careful analysis of sales figures and correspondence, Karcher argues that, in fact, Child's more radical work was fairly popular with the reading public, who frequently bought out what they could get--when they could get it. Rather, it was the _booksellers_ who refused to promote the abolitionist works. The public, Karcher suggests, may have been "more receptive to radical views than the publishing industry" (1986a, 287). Looking closely at this phenomenon, Karcher documents the financial links between the publishers and booksellers, and Southern and pro-Southern interests. Given this, she suggests that the publishers' concerns were more for "alienating powerful patrons rather than masses of readers, North or South" (1986a, 296). This pressure drove Child, who relied professionally and financially on her writing, to modify her work to meet the covert censorship of American presses.

Child wrote _A Romance of the Republic_ six years after helping Jacobs to publish _Incidents_. Her radical conception

of the role of the historian and fiction-writer as social mediator led her to choose fiction as a vehicle more effective than "the ablest arguments, and the most serious exhortations" (quoted in "Rape, Murder and Revenge," 11). The work represents her careful but continued commitment to social reform. She returns to a more conservative but publicly successful anti-slavery fiction subgenre--the quadroon who falls in love with a white gentleman. Importantly, she turns the genre carefully to her own purposes of combatting racial prejudice and reexamining American history in order to reconstruct post-war America.

As Child detailed in a letter to Sarah Shaw in 1865, the end of the Civil War had not occasioned for her an end to work on behalf of the now freed slaves. On the contrary:

> I have been thankful to God for the wondrous change; but, what with the frightful expenditure of blood; and emancipation's being forced on us by *necessity*, instead of preceding from the repentance of the nation; and the shameful want of protection to the freedmen since they have been emancipated; there has been no opportunity for any out-gushing of joy and exultation (SL, 458).

And as she later explains to Robert Purvis, who wrote complimenting A Romance after its publication, "In these days of novel-reading, I thought a Romance would take more hold of the public mind, than the most elaborate arguments;

and having fought against Slavery, till the monster is *legally* dead, I was desirous to do what I could to undermine Prejudice ... I have tried to help on this good work ... and sad as I sometimes am over the present state of affairs, still, on the whole, I feel encouraged" (August 1868; SL, 482-83).

If publishers and public were antagonistic to abolitionist writing before the Civil War, they gave an equally cool reception to works that rehashed slave issues after. Torn apart by the conflict, the nation wanted mostly to rebuild and forget. Child's Romance steadfastly refused this formulation. To rebuild without remembering was to deny the lessons history had to offer, and to turn away the redemptive possibilities of moral growth. Accordingly, like Hope Leslie, A Romance insists on historicizing black and white relations, looking backward in order to look forward.

The plot of A Romance focuses on two quadroons, Rosa and Flora Royal. Raised in New Orleans by a doting but ineffectual father, they are kept secluded and ignorant of their slave status. When Mr. Royal suddenly dies, the girls learn hard lessons about the slave world. The novel follows their soon-separate paths through adulthood and final reunion in the North just before the outbreak of the Civil War.

The novel revolves on a double message of irony and vision which is signaled in the title. It addresses itself

quite consciously to the genre of romance that Simms had described in his 1853 Preface to The Yemassee, a "substitute which the people of the present day offer for the ancient epic," a genre that at once heightens reality (even to extravagance) in utilizing the poetic possibilities of America's history.

Child's title is ironic at two levels. First, while the events of the novel do seem beyond the realm of possibility, Child knew they were mostly grounded in actual fact. With the exception of a subplot set in Italy, all the other events of the novel are drawn from accounts documented in countless newspaper reports and ads for runaways, which Child had quoted in her tract, The Patriarchal Institution. Quadroon daughters were often unaware of their condition as chattel until their father's death brought about their sale. Innumerable runaway slaves were described as having "blond hair ... blue eyes ... white complection ... Roman nose" and were predicted to "pass themselves as whites."[12] And slaves who ran away often met miraculously with family members in the North. As one character comments on Flora's condition, "I have long been aware that the most romantic stories have grown out of the institution of slavery; but this seems stranger than fiction ... it makes one anxious to conceal he is an American (157).

Second, the poetic qualities that a "romance" of the "republic" might be expected to emphasize were the most

embarrassing facts of the Republic's existence. Child's epic topics are, no matter how genteelly narrated, the scandals of slavery--lust, dishonesty, and even rape--in the South, and weakhearted complicity to the inhumane practice of capitalism in the North. The Republic's historical legacy, by this account, is one of moral bankruptcy. A Romance of the Republic was hardly a "romance" at all.

At the same time, however, A Romance suggests the redemptive possibilities of this legacy. The novel ends on a positive note, figuratively--as many of the white characters acknowledge both sympathy and responsibility toward the newly emancipated blacks--and literally--as many of the characters gather in a war's end celebration, singing both black spirituals and patriotic tunes. The novel reexamines the most negative facts of the Republic's existence to show how they can be redeemed for a truly epic future. Child thus puts "history" and "romance" to specifically confrontative and mediative purposes in order to provide a novel that is at once a revision of America's history, and a re-vision of its future course.

Child provides a critique of the motives behind slavery while she models a corrective course. She targets patriarchal needs for authority and accumulation, and she details the subtle and dramatic courses of corruption these drives can lead to. The lust for capital accumulation leads men into slave-trade, and traps them in moral dissolution.

Through the genealogy of Rosa and Flora, Child chronicles two generations of men who, in trying to become rich, involve themselves in slavery, fall in love with black women, and beget daughters. Both men neglect to manumit their wives and daughters. The grandfather of Rosa and Flora sells their mother--his beloved daughter--to Royal when he faces a financial crunch. And Royal, who becomes the devoted "husband" of Eulalia, is detained from procedures to manumit her by his capital interests--as he later feebly explains that "being immersed in business ... [he] never seemed to find the time" to take his wife abroad to legally marry and manumit her (21). Similarly, business debts overrule his wish to free his daughters.

The text subtly questions Royal's apparently innocent oversight through its depiction of Gerald Fitzgerald. When we first meet Fitzgerald, it is in Royal's own house, which is described as "the temple of Flora" (4), a paradise secluded from the eyes of the world, a "fairy land" (21), accessible only by the invitation of Royal himself. Fitzgerald later that evening questions Royal King on which girl he preferred and comments that "If I were the Grand Bashaw, I would have them both in my harem" (13). His remark reveals his own acquisitive motivations at the same time it suggests that "the Temple of Flora" somehow represents Royal's own pretensions to the Grand Bashaw's harem. And when Fitzgerald "rescues" the daughters by

taking them to his plantation, his more sinister behavior yet mirrors Royal's, in his shammed marriage to Rosa, in keeping both sisters secluded and veiled in public, and even in purchasing many of Royal's effects in order to recreate the atmosphere of his "Temple of Flora."

Along the same lines, the novel comments on the need for authority which undergirds the mentality of slave-owners. When the creditors meet to discuss the division of Royal's estate, the subject of the girls comes up, and two creditors appeal for some arrangement to be made to honor Royal's wishes. Suggesting that these appeals are made out of self-interest--an attraction for the girls--the other men present insist that "the law is inexorable" (69). Later, however, it becomes clear that their appeal to "the law" was motivated by their own attraction to the girls, and their desire to <u>own</u> them. The text links acquisitiveness to a psychological need for dominance, which the very structure of slave laws is designed to conceal.

The slaveholder's need for authority, however veiled and sanctioned by "law" is also more crudely expressed. As was predicted by his comment to King regarding the Grand Bashaw, Fitzgerald ultimately reveals his need to dominate Rosa and Flora. When first Flora, then Rosa reject his sexual advances, he triumphantly reveals to them the fact of his purchase, and declares his total authority. As he tells Rosa, "since I cannot persuade you to listen to mu

expostulations and entreaties, I must inform you that my power over you is complete. You are my slave" (143). And, as the narrator and several of Fitzgerald's slaves make clear, Fitzgerald's need for sexual domination is not novel or limited to the two beautiful quadroons. When Fitzgerald ruminates on preventing the auction-block sale of Rosa, the narrator comments that "he was familiar with such scenes, for he had seen women offered for sale, and had himself bid for them in competition with the rude, indecent crowds" (66). One of Fitzgerald's house slaves ironically comments that "Massa knows what's hansome. He's a good judge ob we far sex" (132).

As the following passage details, Rosa's purity or honor is Fitzgerald's concern only as it increases the compass of his sexual dominance:

> He seemed to see her graceful figure gazed at by a brutal crowd, while the auctioneer assured them that she was warranted to be an entirely new and perfectly sound article,--a moss rosebud from a private royal garden,--a diamond fit for a king's crown. And men, whose upturned faces were like greedy satyrs, were calling upon her to open her ruby lips and show her pearls. He turned restlessly on his pillow and muttered an oath. Then he smiled as he thought to himself that, by

> saving her from such degradation, he had acquired complete control of her destiny (66-67).

Child here makes daring use of romantic images to lay bare the psychological connections between patriarchy and slavery. By "saving" Rosa, even from the "gaze" of other men, Fitzgerald achieves the mastery of complete ownership which allows him more fully to realize his dream of a harem.

Just as Child subverts sentimental language in a passage almost breathtaking in its frankly sexual tone, she also turns sentimental plot expectations to deliver a pointed message. Nina Baym summarizes the paradigmatic sentimental plot, which typically features a young orphan who, through the aid of an older, exemplary mentor, learns womanly, Christian virtues. But in A Romance, it is the mentors who are educated through their experiences with the black characters. In particular, Mrs. Delano, who helps Flora escape from Fitzgerald, is not at first sympathetic to the abolitionist cause: "It was contrary to Mrs. Delano's usual caution and deliberation to adopt a stranger so hastily; and had she been questioned beforehand, she would have pronounced it impossible for her to enter into such a relation with one allied to the colored race and herself a slave" (147). But her relation with Flora gradually alters her perspective. Just concealing Flora's condition compels a quick education in slave resistance, as Mrs. Delano seeks

help from prominent abolitionists and for the first time pays serious heed to their arguments.

Mrs. Delano begins a crucial course of moral self-examination which reflects the paradigm of the novel itself. At one point remembering her youthful romantic acquaintance with Rosa and Flora's father, Alfred Royal, Mrs. Delano reflects, "I ought to do the same for them without that motive ... but should I?" (222). She shortly has opportunity to test herself on this point. During their preparations for departure on a steamship after an unsuccessful trip to the South in search of Rosa, another slave of Fitzgerald's, Chloe, appeals to Mrs. Delano to claim her and her two children as Mrs. Delano's own slaves in order to aid their escape. With encouragement from Flora, Mrs. Delano consents to the subterfuge, and later describes it to an abolitionist:

> If ever a quiet and peace-loving individual was caught up and whirled about by a tempest of events, I am surely that individual. Before I met this dear little Flora, I had a fair prospect of living and dying a respectable and respected old fogy, as you irreverent reformers call discreet people. But now I find myself drawn into the vortex of abolition to the extent of helping off four fugitive slaves (266).

Later, Mrs. Delano details the revolutionary change in aspect that Flora has provided: "As for my education, I have learned to consider it as, in many respects, false. As for my views, they have been greatly modified by this experience. I have learned to estimate people and things by their real value, not merely according to external accidents" (278).

Mrs. Delano's moral growth conveys an important message to the contemporary readers of A Romance, predicting the possibility of a national progress modeled on self-examination. As Mrs. Delano at one point meditates, "so one wrong produces another wrong; and thus frightfully may we affect the destiny of others, while blindly following the lead of selfishness. But the past, with all its weaknesses and sins, has gone beyond recall; and I must try to write a better record on the present" (150). This, the narrator underscores, will only be effected through a total commitment to social and racial reform. Mrs. Delano's social peers gossip about her sponsoring a clerk and allowing him to pay court to her adopted daughter, as well as her attendance at abolitionist meetings. The narrator comments that while Mrs. Delano was becoming "a black sheep in aristocratic circles ... these indications passed by her almost unnoticed, occupied as she was in earnestly striving to redeem the mistakes of the past by making the best possible use of the present" (283-84). Mrs. Delano in this

way becomes a model for post-Civil War America. She provides an example of moral progress expressed through social action that suggests the means by which America can write its own record anew--a true romance of the republic.

Mrs. Delano's growth also parallels the meta-historical project of A Romance. In the novel, Child rejects "history" as a concretized and unreclaimable past. Rather, she turns to historical examination as an active means of confronting and counterbalancing the past. Her historical model--a moral-historical perspective as a basis for contemporary social mediation--responds consciously to post-war cynicism by suggesting a means to redeem past mistakes. As Mr. King prophesies, "we were all of us working for better than we knew" (434). The answer is not in despair but in social action. A Romance insists on an alternative future, grounded in a recognition of past wrongs, which purposefully counters perspectives of cosmic futility and impotence such as those portrayed in Stephen Crane's "The Black Riders" and "War is Kind." Accepting the perspective of "futility," the text implies, can lead to a continued prejudice.

A Romance closely questions the basis of racial prejudice, revealing its economic motivation and arbitrariness. While she utilizes the sentimental figure of the "tragic quadroon" in a fairly conventional way, Child takes a decidedly unconventional step in her reversal of the two Fitzgerald sons. She plays out the radical consequences

of this subplot to offer a pointed lesson: people are shaped by education and circumstance, not by racial inheritance. Gerald Fitzgerald (one-eighth black) takes after his father--a proud and somewhat dissipated spendthrift. "How much trouble these niggers give us!" he reflects just weeks before learning of his own racial heritage (312). George Faulkner ("pure" white), on the other hand, while bearing a "wonderful resemblance to ... Gerald," contrasts to the privileged brother in "a firmer expression of the mouth" which is attributed to "his determined efforts to escape from slavery" (413). Child illustrates the selfish absurdity of racist "reasoning" through the merchant Mr. Bell. Informed of the switch, the boys' maternal grandfather summarizes it as "a pretty dilemma ... My property, it seems, must either go to Gerald, who you say has negro blood in his veins, or to this other fellow, who is a slave with a negro wife" (394). Strikingly, Mr. Bell's concerns lay bare the economic motive behind racial prejudice.

The dubious standard of outward appearance is pointedly satirized by the white, working-class abolitionist, Mr. Bright. As he explains to Flora's husband, his conversion came when, looking through Southern papers in search of a job, he came across an advertisement describing a runaway slave:

> "'Run away from the subscriber a stout mulatto slave, named Joe, has light sandy hair, blue eyes, and a ruddy complexion; is intelligent and will pass himself for a white man ...'
>
> "'By George!' said I, 'that's a description of *me*. I didn't know before that I was a mulatto (322).

Bright goes instead to Vermont, and successfully passes himself as a runaway slave. This experience is a powerful education for him; "Blue-eyed Joe," as he dubs the man described in the ad, "seemed to bring the matter home" (322). Child here makes an entirely unconventional suggestion--instead of talking about "blacks" who look "white," Child proposes that "whites" can in fact look "black." In this way, she brings home to her white readers the fictional and arbitrary basis of racial tropes and racial prejudice.

The mainstay of the plot in A Romance is the "tragic quadroon." As Susan Koppelman was the first to note, Child introduced this figure to American literature, and made it a successful vehicle which could at once reveal the sexual plight of women slaves and satisfy the refined tastes of white readers. Koppelman also credits Child for being "the first white writer to grant black and racially mixed women the right to be 'ladies.' Child portrays the enslaved woman as partaking with grace and virtue in the life typically

reserved for the mistress" (2). But Karcher is concerned with the limitations of the figure: "As a vehicle for protesting against racism ... and as an instrument for probing the connection between white supremacy and male dominance--the archetype of the "tragic quadroon" proved highly ambiguous" (25). Karcher observes that in the long run, the statement that the quadroon makes against the sexual exploitation of women slaves is qualified by "the use of the genteel, near-white heroine to personify the wrongs of slavery reinforce the very prejudices antislavery fiction sought to counteract" (25).

As Karcher highlights, we have to question Child's reliance on the "near-white black" in remaking cross-racial understanding. Todorov proposes a three-dimensional analysis of racial relations and representations that will be useful to our consideration here. He argues that "we must distinguish among at least three axis on which we can locate the problematics of alterity" (185). The first, "axeological," level entails value judgement, a statement on whether the Other is good or bad, loved or hated, equal or inferior. At the second, "praxeologic," level, the speaking subject positions him or herself in relation to the Other. That is, the subject embraces or identifies with the Other, or identifies the Other with the subject, imposing the subject's values upon the Other. The third, "epistemic," level, determines whether the subject knows, or remains

ignorant of the Other's identity, largely determined by the first two levels. As Todorov points out, here there are no absolutes, "but an endless gradation between the lower or higher states of knowledge" (185).

Todorov's scheme illuminates the limitations of Child's "tragic quadroon" and the ways in which the values that underlie this figure inform her depiction of the other black characters in A Romance. Child clearly grants all her black characters dignity and equality. At the axeologic level, then, she values the racial Other positively, indeed modeling several levels of loving, cross-racial relationships--between Flora and Mrs. Delano, Rosa and Mr. King, George Faulkner and Harriet, for instance. At the praxeological level, while it can be said that A Romance "embraces the Other's values," this observation must be carefully qualified. The black characters' values are embraceable only as (and precisely because) they are identical to white values of virtue, chastity and republicanism.

Child quite effectively makes her point that outward appearances should not be the basis for judgement. But in proposing an alternative, she eradicates what Todorov terms "the touchstone of alterity," completely identifying her black characters with the enlightened white characters who have abandoned racial prejudice. When Alfred King overcomes his original scruples over racial difference to finally

marry Rosa he realizes that "Rosabella must be seen as a pure, good soul, in eyes that see as the angels do" (246). Child is at pains here and throughout to establish the identical qualities of the blacks' and whites' psychological, emotional, and intellectual states.

Child does this in order to eliminate categories of racial difference. But what she fails to allow--a positive evaluation of alternative cultural or social configurations-effectively prevents A Romance of the Republic from establishing any tolerance or understanding of difference at any level. As Karcher is careful to observe, Child's black characters are not representative of slave experience in the South, where the predominant number of slaves were employed in the field. The characters in A Romance of the Republic represent that small proportion of slaves who lived closest and most often aspired to white society. While A Romance effectively employs these characters to undermine concepts of 'race,' it is not able to recognize the cultural differences produced by the intersection of African cultural heritages and slave quarter life. Consequently, its contributions to cross 'racial' understanding are qualified in that it fails to confront and mediate another alternative past--slave quarter experience and culture.

The "prejudice of equality"--identifying the racial Other with one's own "ego-ideal"--while in many ways more humane, is finally no more effective in creating real

knowledge (Todorov's third, "epistemic" level) of the constructed Other than the "prejudice of superiority." Child is adept at questioning the drives of power and authority in patriarchy, and their role in creating "false" and "prejudiced" education. But in her formulation of a future culture formed solely on reformed white values she overlooks alternatives to white cultural expression and thereby prevents a fuller questioning of the biases in American culture that permitted slavery and patriarchy, and continued to permit 'racial' prejudice. Despite this important limitation, however, Child must be given credit for paving a way toward attaining such knowledge by privileging values in A Romance that tolerate, assist, and communicate with, the Other.

Sedgwick and Child successfully undermined concepts of racial difference, emphasizing the cultural basis underlying race categories. Yet both were limited in their racial restructuring, unable to envision cultural alternatives to their own social values that might have made their revisioning even more effective. While Sedgwick can allow racial difference to some degree, she so fully embraces white America's historical legacy that she cannot resolve the "Indian problem" in any meaningful way for contemporary readers. And Child, by fully identifying blacks with socially reformed whites and failing to acknowledge the

predominant slave experience, denies a valuable opportunity to increase cross-cultural understanding by repressing the ground it could take place on. Each novel self-consciously and unconsciously provides "social medicine" to their contemporary audience--a difficult mix of progressive vision and complacent oversight reminiscent of Mather and Bird.

Yet, Hope Leslie and A Romance of the Republic provide powerful alternative readings that challenge and revision contemporary historical and racial formulations, and their reformative "sentimentalism" must be closely examined for a full understanding of their socio-political emphasis. Clearly, Osgood's charge against Child, that she failed to make a useful book, is untenable. As we have seen, these novels argue for cultural change which could have a profound and humane influence in oppressively constructed "racial" relations. Sedgwick provides a model for an alternative, dialogic history which has practical as well as theoretical implications. Child offers a model of moral self-examination and growth which encourages post-Civil War whites to shoulder responsibility for racial compensation and harmony as a means to redeeming their negative past. Both authors set forth commanding and plausible alternatives to patriarchal and slave society, and authorized history, which despite their limitations offer constructive cultural options. For these reasons, both novels (and others like them) are valuable to any understanding of the social

context of American literature. Remarkable for their alternative social vision and marked by their limitations, the novels are important voices in the literary dialogue on racism and racialism that engrossed nineteenth-century America.

NOTES

1. More recently, scholars of "sentimental fiction" have taken up the challenge of Helen Waite Papashvilly's ground-breaking All the Happy Endings (1956), which discovers not conformity but "handbooks of another kind of feminine revolt." Subsequent studies have found a rich, and often highly subversive, diversity. See for instance Nina Baym's Women's Fiction, and Friebert and White's Hidden Hands Anthology. Both studies argue against generalizations about "sentimental" literature, pointing out the wide variety of themes and styles among nineteenth-century women writers. Friebert and White urge adopting categories such as domestic, seduction, melodrama, realistic, satire and humor, frontier romance, education and polemic. Their anthology accordingly excerpts from novels that document the inadequacy of blanket summaries such as Smith's on the "conformity" of "the scribbling women."

2. These limitations were imposed, as Nina Baym painstakingly documents, by a male literary establishment devoted to taming women writers' radicalism on all fronts. See Baym, Readers Reviewers and Novels, esp. 369-73.

3. See section three, "Love," 127-167.

4. Deborah Root incisively analyzes the imperialist implications of Todorov's own argument in her article "The Imperial Signifier: Todorov and the Conquest of Mexico." In it, Root argues that "Todorov would maintain the Aztec radical 'Otherness' to serve a pedagogy cleansed of imperialism," which rather than neutralizing difference depoliticizes it. As a result, Todorov is uncritical of his own reductive generalizations, and the ways in which his own analysis reduplicates colonialist discourse, particularly in its desire to master and silence the racial Other: "Despite Todorov's claim to have engaged in a dialogue with the Other (and to have expressed a neutral acceptance of difference and a recognition of equality), in The Conquest of America, the voice of the Other is evoked only to be, again, silenced" (197, 219). In this way, it would seem that Todorov's own analysis of the "prejudice of equality" might be fruitfully turned on itself.

Todorov obliquely defends his stance in "'Race,' Writing and Culture." In it, he clarifies his position that "whereas racism is a well-attested phenomenon, 'race' itself does not exist." His focus is rather the attribution of

cultural differences to "race," and the difficulties of assessing the importance and import of cultural difference:

> Racialism has affinities both with relativism and with universalism ... The excessive universalism takes the form of refusing cultural differences in the name of the unicity of the human species and the diversity of individuals. We are so busy battling stereotypes in the description of Others that we end up refusing these Others any specificity at all ... the restricted universality of the past should be opened up as much as possible, until it is able to account for both the diversity of cultures and the differences which exist within one and the same culture (174-5).

Collette Guillaumin finds such a stance, however generously intended, as problematic. She finds that Todorov's "anti-racist" school, which uses as its "central argument culture and the right to cultural identity" is not so far removed from what it counterposes. Such a stance, she argues, still means "postulating some being specific to human groups, and it is of minor importance whether that being is to be encouraged or saved: the fact remains that groups are being regarded in light of essences and not of relationships" (63-64). Hazel Carby would agree: "Culture is the terrain of struggle *between* groups ... there is no whole, authentic, autonomous black culture which lies outside of these relations of cultural power and domination" (1989, 43).

5. The work of Kolodny and Persons in particular have been formative to my analysis of Sedgwick.

6. As Mary Kelley notes, the epigraph is taken from John Robinson, quoted in William Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation (41, 357).

7. As Carolyn Karcher notes, Child's argument against all kinds of racial discrimination, including anti-miscegenation laws, was a bold move for a woman in the nineteenth century and signaled her continuing commitment to "avant-garde ideas about race and gender" ("Rape, Murder and Revenge," 4).

8.Holland does record her awareness of the book's existence in the notes to her essay; see 166, n. 28).

9. Since writing this essay, and shortly before submitting the draft of my dissertation to the department, I was able to procure a copy of Slavery and the Literary Imagination (Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1989), which contains yet another excellent essay by Caroline Karcher, this one dealing directly with Romance of the Republic. In "Lydia Maria Child's Romance ... An Abolitionist Vision of America's Racial Destiny," Karcher focuses on Child's use of

miscegenation in the novel, and the vision and limitations of its critique of racial prejudice. While our approaches are substantively different, many of our conclusions about the novel's strengths and limitations are similar.

10. It should be noted that Osgood's summary conclusions are often qualified, and occasionally contradicted, by his own analysis. For instance, after faulting the work for sentimentalism, embellishment and lack of adherence to reality, he comments that "Romance is written with a rather steady hand ... for the first time Mrs. Child creates truly believable characters" (151). Osgood compares Fitzgerald's character to "Faulkner's anguished young men of Yoknapatawpha County" (153). As for its lack of social relevance, Osgood admits that the work functions as "an ironic commentary on the wrongheadedness of men's conventions" (152). And while he criticizes Child for failing to provide her readers with the type of story they preferred, "stories that revealed the harsher realism of American life, even the uglier aspects of American character" (145), he does parenthetically note Child's apparent "endorse[ment of] miscegenation, a 'catastrophe' no more acceptable in America in the 1860's than it was in the 1820's"--apparently an aspect of ugliness the American reader did not prefer (154).

11. In fact, the company that finally contracted with Jacobs to publish the book went bankrupt, at which point Jacobs herself purchased the plates.

12. For a full range of examples extracted from pamphlets and newspapers of unfortunate "white" slaves, see Child's 1860 tract.

CHAPTER FIVE
ETHNOCENTRISM DECENTERED:
COLONIALIST MOTIVES IN THE NARRATIVE OF ARTHUR GORDON PYM

"RACE" IN PYM AND POE

In the last thirty years, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym has become one of the most popular and controversial texts among Poe scholars. It would seem, as Douglas Robinson suggests, that Poe's eccentric narrative is "an interpreter's dream-text ... a textual vacuum begging to be filled with a reading" (Robinson, 47). The striking variance of conclusions on The Meaning of Pym contributes to current curiosity over the work. Readings of Pym range widely, from psychoanalytic exploration to social satire, from self-referential commentary on writing (or reading) to a metacritical demonstration of utter absence of meaning. Commentary on the text apparently refuses to find any consensus or "thrust toward uniformity" (Robinson, 52).[1]

One early commentator, Harry Levin, examined the racial dynamics of the text, arguing that Pym played out Poe's racist phobia. Leslie Fiedler expanded on Levin's suggestions in his psychoanalytic approach to Pym, and shortly after, Sydney Kaplan elaborated on the specifically racist content of the hieroglyphics in his introduction to a 1960 edition of Pym. Evelyn Hinz offered careful

qualification to these readings in 1970, pointing out the error of attributing Pym's racist phobia to Poe himself. In 1975, Eric Mottram presented a provocative analysis of the social implications of racial dynamics in Pym, and the narrative's relevance to the racial upheaval of mid-seventies America. Recent analysts, however, have focused on the narrative's metatextual suggestiveness, largely abandoning a pursuit of Pym's social or racial dimensions.

On the other hand, Poe scholars are once again battling over Poe's own racial attitudes. This dispute focuses largely on one unsigned review in the April 1836 Southern Literary Messenger. The review, published during Poe's tenure as editor, cites favorably two pro-slavery books, Slavery in the United States (James Kirke Paulding) and The South Vindicated from Treason and Fanaticism of Northern Abolition (probably William Drayton). Early Poe scholars attributed the essay to Poe, who commonly contributed the book reviews while editor of SLM. But in 1941, a dissertation by William Doyle Hull challenged this assumption, instead proposing on the basis of an ambiguous but suggestive letter from Poe to Beverly Tucker, that Tucker in fact wrote the review. After several decades of sometimes heated debate, Bernard Rosenthal published an impressively thorough examination of the issue. In his close reading of the Poe-Tucker letter, his meticulous reconstruction of printing and transportation schedules, and

his scrutiny of other SLM correspondence, Rosenthal traces the impossibility of attributing the essay to Tucker on the basis of extant evidence.

More importantly, however, Rosenthal refocuses the discussion of Poe's racist attitudes. Poe's disputed authorship of the review, he insists, is a straw man: "The authorship problem in regard to the Paulding-Drayton review has unnecessarily obscured Poe's pro-slavery views" (30). Whether or not Poe wrote the review, Rosenthal points out, he elsewhere expressed pro-slavery sympathies, in, for instance, his reviews of Robert Montgomery Bird's Shepperd Lee, Anne MacVicar Grant's Memoires of an American Lady, an unpublished review of John L. Carey's Domestic Slavery, and particularly in his stance on works by the noted Southern defender of slavery, Thomas R. Dew (cf. 30-31). If he didn't write the review, Poe elsewhere made clear his sympathy to its views: "His politics in regard to slavery and social structure ... embodied the kind of mythology about slavery to be found in the Paulding-Drayton review" (31).

Some fifteen years after Rosenthal's important essay, the controversy has again arisen.[2] Based, it seems, on no new evidence, the dispute perhaps reveals more about the agenda of the critics than any new insight into Poe. G. R. Thompson, for instance, in his essay on "Edgar Allan Poe and the Writers of the Old South" in the Columbia Literary

History of the United States (1988) asserts parenthetically that "the notorious review of two books defending slavery in the Messenger in 1836, upon which some critical interpretations of Poe's Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym have been based, was written not by Poe, but in all likelihood by Beverly Tucker" (269). Thompson minimalizes Poe's concern with slavery, asserting that only in his review of James Russell Lowell's A Fable for Critics does Poe take "any kind of stance on slavery" (269). Thompson's evident agenda, however, is to exonerate Poe from any "regionalist sentiment":

> Rarely does he employ Southern locales or character types; he does not embroil himself in the issue of slavery; he does not address matters of Southern autonomy and separatism; he does not confront Southern with Northern personages; he does not cast Southern leaders as knights in the quest of glory (277).

Thompson is at pains to establish Poe as a "major national writer" (262) and in order to do that he must prove that Poe, as the "one original voice out of the Old South" deserves continued esteem precisely because he transcended Southern values--including any intellectual involvement with slavery. In order to save Poe for a canon increasingly skeptical of texts that support human oppression, students of Poe like Thompson have depicted a de-politicized and

de-historicized Poe oeuvre. Instead, they argue for an essentialist Poe, a "true man of letters" who "focuses on the integrity of the work of art in terms of the ... metaphysical ideal" (Thompson, 277), or a true man of our deconstructionist times, whose works point only to "frustrating indeterminacy ... or a useless and contrived 'unity'" (Rowe, 94).

My discussion will not attempt to resolve the dispute over Poe's racism. It will, if it is possible, make any discussion of Poe's racial views even more problematic by arguing that while at one level, Pym is a racist text, another, marginalized aspect of the text provides a reading that counters colonial ideology. The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym is thus a colonialist text which collapses on its own structure of racial knowledge. To understand this dynamic, we must examine the systematic relationship between what the text foregrounds--the literal level of Pym's narrative as well as the concluding editorial comment--and the elements it attempts to shadow, or marginalize.

WHITE IS RIGHT

In his study of Race and Manifest Destiny, Reginald Horsman notes that "America's sense of mission ... always embodied an outward thrust" (82). The "enlightening influence" that white America imagined it provided the world justified its passport in return. Setting out over the

seas, the colonialist purpose was, as naval scientist Matthew F. Maury would put it in 1850, to "revolutionize, and republicanize and Anglo-Saxonize" (quoted in Horsman, 281). Horsman underscores the crucial link for America's imperialist ideology between the white presence and progress, as evidenced in the views of Simeon North in 1848. The Anglo Saxons were elemental to "civilization," for they were the ones "whose enterprise explores every land, and whose commerce whitens every sea" (quoted in Horsman, 289).

The Anglo-American's drive to expand his knowledge of the world was inseparable from his investment in capitalist expansion. Even when knowledge was ostensibly most disinterested, like Pym's apparently irrelevant elaborations on wildlife in the south Arctic sea, every bit of information was potentially profitable. We can throw this fact into bold relief when we pose the minimal questions about the political/social/ material context of knowledge which James Berlin outlines: "what are the effects of ... knowledge? Who benefits from a given version of truth? How are the material benefits of a society distributed? What is the relation of this distribution to social relations? Do these relations encourage conflict? To whom does ... knowledge designate power?" (489).

These questions bear acutely on an analysis of Pym's narrative. While Pym gives an impression of an individually motivated quest for adventure, he in fact took part in a

wide-spread and well-sanctioned cultural phenomenon, and that his "adventure" was possible only because of existing and far-ranging white presence on the world's oceans. The text itself participates in the antebellum dialogue on white destiny, colonial expansion, and racialism,[3] and this dimension deserves close consideration.

Pym immediately establishes itself as travel/adventure narrative, and as part of a colonialist tradition:

> Upon my return to the United States a few months ago, after the extraordinary series of adventures in the South Seas and elsewhere ... accident threw me into the society of several gentlemen in Richmond, Va., who felt deep interest in all matters relating to the regions I had visited, and who were constantly urging it upon me, as a duty, to give my narrative to the public (150).

Pym's fictional adventure was situated squarely in a colonialist context, driven by capitalist ideology. Pym delivers his narrative in public form at the urging of a "society of several gentlemen"--men of a certain class-interest--who "felt deep interest" in Pym's story and urged him, "as a duty," to share his story with the American public. These opening remarks reveal that just as colonial exploration was initiated to expand the white/Western capitalist world system, the colonial travel narrative, as Mary Louise Pratt summarizes, joins "the knowledge edifice

of natural history" with capitalist expansion (125), documenting a "natural" basis for white domination. It becomes Pym's "duty" as a citizen of the United States to share his knowledge with his fellow citizens. This knowledge is emphatically _not_ for disinterested speculation, but rather pecuniary speculation, as the "interest" felt by the "gentlemen," as well as the content of the narrative itself make clear. Pym's account will map white access into regions previously inaccessible, as well as informing the consumer public on the materials and lands available for use/exploitation.

Pym disguises the motives for making his journey and publishing his account in colonialist rhetoric. As he tells it, his motive for publication is duty; his reason for travel is "melancholy." After the _Ariel_ incident, in which Pym and Augustus capsize in a storm and nearly die, Pym recounts his renewed interest in sea-going: "For the bright side of the painting I had a limited sympathy. My visions were of shipwreck and famine; of death or captivity among barbarian hordes; of a lifetime dragged out in sorrow and tears upon some gray and desolate rock in an ocean unapproachable and unknown" (162). No suggestion of fame and fortune enter into his account. But, as Albert Memmi points out in his landmark monograph _The Colonizer and the Colonized_ (1957), the material position of a "usurper" colonist guarantees his "interest" in the economic aspects

of the situation. A colonizer is fundamentally aware of his guarantee to superior economic rights in usurped lands based on his exploitation of that land's material and human resources (*passim* 45-89). Pym's narrative records his famine and fears among "barbarian hordes," yet it also documents the "profitable speculation" he hopes for in "discovery," his eagerness to be "the first white" on an island, and his participation in exploitation on Tsalal. His cooperation with the unnamed gentlemen in Virginia, and the material production of his account further mark his complicity and profit in the colonial enterprise. His protesting rejection of "the bright side of the painting" should be viewed as a legitimizing rhetoric for the real motives of colonial exploration, a rhetorical tactic which, as Pym points out, was a "common" feature of discourse "to the whole numerous race of the melancholy among men." Importantly, this rhetoric did not obscure the "destiny" which he "felt ... in a measure bound to fulfill" (162) in his privileged role as a white colonial explorer/adventurer. Pym admits that he resorted "intense hypocrisy" to "further his project"--deceiving his relatives in order to leave on The Grampus. His deceptive actions here might be taken as a symbol of Pym's own rhetorical strategy in his narrative and, at a larger level, of a culturally sanctioned policy of subterfuge.

Similarly, Pym's record of his travels with The Jane reflects colonial ideology and rhetorical strategy. Pym situates The Jane Guy's mission in the South Seas as part of an international colonialist endeavor of "discovery." The Jane was a trade ship of a "peculiar service"--a trade ship vested with the "powers to cruise the South Seas for any cargo which might come most readily to hand." To this end, as Pym notes, "it is absolutely necessary that she should be well armed," although The Jane itself was not so well armed and equipped as "a navigator acquainted with the difficulties and dangers of the trade could have desired" (263-264). Clearly, "trade" is a euphemism for The Jane's real mission, which might more accurately be described as "conquest." The cargo carried also reveals the agenda of the ship, which "had on board, as usual in such voyages, beads, looking-glasses, tinder-works, axes, hatchets, saws, adzes, planes, chisels, gouges, gimlets, files, spokeshaves, rasps, hammers, nails, knives, scissors, razors, needles, thread, crockery-ware, calico, trinkets and other similar articles" (263)--construction tools and baubles of minimal worth. In proportion to what they carry, as Pym's account makes clear, the crew of The Jane expect an astronomic return on their investment.

Recording who first discovered each island and where its most convenient points of access are, Pym catalogues his observations in the manner of promotional tracts. He

notes the wildlife and fauna of each island The Jane passes, and records facts essential to potential settlers, such as his observation on the largest of the Tristan d'Acunha islands: "plenty of excellent water may here be readily procured; also cod, and other fish, may be taken with hook and line" (272). As he makes these observations, Pym occasionally slips into second-person--"Proceeding on eastwardly from this anchorage you come to Wasp Bay ... into which you can go with four fathoms"--authorizing his American audience to identify with the explorer/colonizers. This rhetorical strategy includes the reader in the colonial enterprise, making him a "trading partner" in the text (267).

Possession is clearly at stake as Pym recounts the various voyages and claims of other explorers, noting two in particular (Jonathan Lambert and "an Englishman of the name of Glass") who seized sovereign authority over their "discoveries." Pym himself eagerly anticipates laying similar claims: "Of course a wide field lay before us for discovery, and it was with feelings of most intense interest that I heard Captain Guy express his resolution of pushing boldly to the southward" (281). Pym's "intense interest" (an echo of the Richmond gentlemen's "deep interest") belies the apparently objective and disinterested tone of the information recorded in his narrative.

It is with this same "intense interest" that Pym manages to persuade the captain of The Jane to continue southward, despite evident danger. Pym expresses regret for the consequent deaths of all the crew members. Yet he qualifies that regret, explaining that "I must still be allowed to feel some degree of gratification at having been instrumental, however remotely, in opening to the eye of science one of the most intensely exciting secrets which has ever engrossed its attention" (287). Scientific penetration was, however, predicated on economic propagation. That is, colonial science would hardly be "intensely excit[ed]" over areas that did not somehow stand to benefit the economy of the colony. Pym's pursuits deliver to the "eye of science" not only the news of a temperate and productive zone, but several "natural" proofs of racial hierarchy. Each of these in turn pertain directly to white economic interest. While the first documented material and human resources ready for exploitation, the second provided a theory which would legitimize that exploitation, would "naturalize" white domination in metaphysical terms.

Mary Pratt observes that "regardless of an individual traveler's own attitudes and intentions, the Europeans in this domain of struggle [i.e., the colonial frontier] were charged with installing the edifice of domination and legitimizing its hierarchy" (127). One of the functions of travel/adventure narratives was to rationalize the

colonialist "right" to "discovery" and subsequent privilege. Not surprisingly then, racial hierarchy becomes the dominant subtext of Pym's account of the island Tsalal--an island which is particularly well-suited to The Jane's purposes. "Well wooded," apparently unmapped and undiscovered, the island "occasioned us great joy." Excited by the potential for profit on Tsalal, Pym has a clear investment in characterizing the natives of the island as "savage" (288). Accordingly, he characterizes their language as "harangue" and "jabbering" (289), their actions as "ignoran[t]" and superstitious (290).

Racialist polarities structure the island of Tsalal. A manichean world where black and white dominate but do not mix, Tsalal underwrites the color line of the antebellum south. Pym's observations of the island feature its segregated nature. Most immediately, he calls attention to the curious water, which was not "colourless, nor was it of any one uniform color." Pym elaborates on its striking character:

> Upon collecting a basinful, and allowing it to settle thoroughly, we perceived that the whole mass of liquid was made up of a number of distinct veins, each of a distinct hue; that these veins did not commingle; and that their cohesion was perfect in regard to their own particles, and imperfect in regard to neighbouring veins (293).

Pym underscores the significance of this evidence of a natural principle of color segregation, describing it as "the first definite link in that vast chain of apparent miracles with which I was destined to be encircled" (293).

Tsalal itself, according to Pym, replicates the natural apartheid evidenced in the water. "Indeed," he writes, "we noticed no light-colored substances of any kind upon the island" (325). He details the dark rocks, dark-skinned animals, birds and fish. More significantly, he suggests that the all-black Tsalalians instinctively avoid anything white. Their surprise at sighting the crew of The Jane signals to Pym "that they had never before seen any of the white race." Their response--they "recoil"--indicates a "natural" aversion between races, shared by black and white alike. Manifesting a "degree of ignorance for which [the crew of The Jane] were not prepared," the Tsalalians inexplicably refuse to approach anything white--"the schooner's sails, an egg, an open book, or a pan of flour" (290-91). Unlike Hope Leslie, Pym does not acknowledge the possibility that Tsalalians might regard the crew of The Jane as "savage." Rather than exploring the relativity of values (i.e., isn't it interesting that the Tsalalians seem to consider white as evil and dangerous as we consider black?), Pym uses this example to reinforce a stable, hierarchical opposition between white and black, equating

the former with civilization, the latter with complete ignorance and savagery.

Pym's account after his escape from Tsalal continues to document this binary opposition. As Pym, Peters, and their hostage Nu-nu continue southward, the environment becomes increasingly white--"pallidly white birds" negotiate the "milky water" and sky, and "white ashy material" covers the men. Nu-nu, taken captive to aid Pym and Peter's escape from the island, is likewise critical to the meaning the final chapter of Pym's account. The all-black Tsalalian provides a point of contrast and a pointed message. When Pym and Peters innocently try to gain his help with a piece of white linen, Nu-nu shudders and shrieks (330). Later, when the linen sail flaps in his face, Nu-nu "became violently affected with convulsions" (332). From this point, he "obstinately lay in the bottom of the boat," refusing a "rational reply" (333). His only response, in fact, is to lift his upper lip, showing his black teeth.

These events offer a segregationist parable: in the state of nature, black doesn't want to mix with white. Nu-nu provides a direct affirmation of this, obligingly convulsing and expiring in the face of an increasingly white environment. The unaccountable monochrome of water, air and wildlife, counterpointed by Nu-nu's presence and death, all provide Pym and his readers with a fantastic confirmation of the goal of Manifest Destiny. If the Anglo-Saxon colonist's

project was to "whiten every sea," the "truth" objectively recorded by Pym revealed that the white colonist's right--physically and metaphysically--to the South Sea is already guaranteed: it is white.

OF BIRDS AND MEN

Tzvetan Todorov observes in a recent article that "whereas racism is a well-attested social phenomenon, 'race' itself does not exist" (171). Collette Guillaumin, in her seminal essay "The Idea of Race and its Elevation to Autonomous, Scientific and Legal Status," clarifies Todorov's statement:

> The crucial fact is that the present century has seen the idea of race given legal status, alongside the older categories such as property, sex and age. The idea has emerged from the area in which it was only an *effect* of social relationships (and thus still an ideological form), and become in its turn an independent cause. This change has been to some extent underestimated ... Today the question raised by the notion of race, if not of racialism, is generally thought to have been settled. The notion is supposed to correspond to self-evident physical fact; to be beyond debate, and thus something it is unnecessary or ill-bred to discuss. But the whole point is that race is not a material fact which

> produces social consequences. It is an idea, a mental fact, and so a social fact in itself. And if we really want to, we can find out where ideas come from. They certainly do not fall out of the sky (41).

Guillaumin emphasizes the concept of "race" as a progression, where the "rationalization came after, and not before the initiation" of social domination (52). Despite modern beliefs that there are "biologically specific groups" of humans that exist in naturally-defined hierarchical relationships, Guillaumin's analysis documents that we must regard "race" as a "practical relationship which has been crystallized in a pseudo-scientific form, the form of racial taxonomy and its successive historical implications" (57). Likewise, readers should not accept Pym's fictional premise of "race" as a biological or metaphysical category.[4] The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym questions and undermines this biological/metaphysical reading by revealing race as a practically useful interpretive construct governed by political motives.

The incidents of the Tsalal episode call to mind the colonial exploitation of Native Americans, in the sense that Europeans invade Tsalal and exploit the Tsalalians, bartering, as did the early North American Anglo settlers, with trinkets and beads. The scene has links as well to the Southern system of African slavery. Captain Guy, we are

told, "was a gentleman of great urbanity of manner, and of considerable experience in the southern traffic" (264). The white crew of The Jane acts on Tsalal out of the complacency of their historically proven superiority. Like their ancestors roughly two hundred years before, they take for granted, for instance, their right to take fuel and refuge on Tsalal, as well as their right to forcefully exploit the apparently friendly natives.

Significantly, the pretense of the crew at negotiating with and compensating the natives for their goods and service is a tacit admission of European bad faith. Clearly, they are not establishing mutual trust or equitable exchange; nor do they intend to do so really. Captain Guy assures Too-wit of "his eternal friendship and good-will," at the same time knowing that the crewmen will "sacrific[e]... him immediately upon the first appearance of hostile design" (297). In return for a complete supply of food, as well as permission to establish a commercial industry on shore, the natives are presented with "blue beads, brass trinkets, nails, knives and pieces of red cloth." That the exchange is merely a token mask for the real structure in play is admitted by Pym in the next sentence: "We established a regular market on shore, *just under the guns of the schooner*, where our barterings were carried on with *every appearance* of good faith" (299, my

emphasis). The "appearance" is "faith"; the operative dynamic is force.

Just as power, not good will, is the rule of the market, so power is the interest that rules Pym's perception of the natives. Pym assumes, for instance, that because the Tsalalians recoil from the "complexions" of The Jane's crew, "it was quite evident that they had never before seen any of the white race" (289). It is important that Pym be able to believe that the crew of The Jane are the first white men the Tsalalians have seen in order to lay their claim to the island. And, when the Tsalalians express apparent willingness to be exploited by the white crew's proposed system of exchange, Pym unquestioningly believes what he perceives as their ignorance, "they being fully delighted in the exchange"--an exchange which The Jane crew clearly knows is unfair (hence their pleasure in the "arrangement"), and which Pym's narrative emphasizes by detailing the precise value of the *beche de mer* on the Chinese market. Pym's knowledge of Tsalalian behavior is never free or objective, but always shaded by his own investment in the interpretation.

The investment of Pym and the crew actually constitutes a dangerous blind spot in their observations of the natives. The crew members feel assured in their assumptions about the Tsalalians' ignorance because of their confidence in their superior force (white [is might] is right). Indeed, they

cling cognitively to their superiority as they cling physically to their guns. They assume that the Tsalalians "took [their guns] for idols, seeing the care we had of them, and the attention with which we watched their movements while handling them" (290). Since the crew did not demonstrate "the certain efficacy" of their weaponry to the natives, they conclude that the "savages" are unaware of their function--despite (indeed because of) the evident "awe" and fear the natives manifest in the presence of the "great guns" (304; 290). The guns, however, prove to be the _whites_' idol, useless in the rock slide attack despite the great faith the crew places in them. While Pym protests that the "perfidy" of the natives--their "great... decorum" and "extravagant demonstrations of joy"--disarm the crew, it is, finally their own blindness which ambushes the crew of _The Jane_.

It is impossible for Pym (and unnecessary for the rest of the crew) to reconcile the Tsalalians' "deeply-laid plan" of ambush with their supposed ignorance. This event in fact negates all colonial representational certainty and undermines Pym's textual authority. Pym sidesteps the issue, by shifting his cognitive framework from "ignorant" to "treacherous" to explain the event, but another level of the text suggests an alternative explanation. When, for instance, Chief Too-wit witnesses the cook accidentally gashing the deck of the ship, his actions demonstrate a

"sympathy" in what he apparently considered "the sufferings of the schooner, patting and smoothing the gash with his hand, and washing it from a bucket of sea-water which stood by." His actions, Pym remarks, evidenced "a degree of ignorance for which we were not prepared," Yet it was precisely <u>because</u> they are prepared to arrive at this conclusion that they fail to perceive the possibility of a cultural system of beliefs determining Too-wit's behavior which would help the colonizing crew gather more precise knowledge about Tsalalian culture. That is, rather than noting Too-wit's extravagant ignorance, they might have observed that he displays a reverence for wooden objects. Inexplicable as that might be, the information could have also been useful.

Indeed we can only speculate, based on the limited observations of Pym, at the ways in which the ship's crew violated Tsalalian cultural norms. The "great astonishment" that the natives evince when the crew members quickly clear a flat area of timber might indicate not pleasure, but displeasure--a possibility which Pym never entertains. Pym's assumption that the Tsalalians regarded the guns as idols overlooks the suggestion that the natives knew their use, and were never fooled by the crew who everywhere proceeded "armed to the teeth" (303). This is to say that the "awe" of the Tsalalians can read two ways: as wonder

(at having never seen such a thing) or as fear (at having seen precisely such a thing).

Ironically, while the shipmen are all very poor at reading the Tsalalians' belief-system, the obverse is apparently not true. The Tsalalians manage to dupe the crewmen by turning their sense of security against them. The Tsalal natives face their visitors unarmed, with a simple assertion: "there was no need of arms where all were brothers" (304). The statement is ambiguously double-barreled: while at one level--the level the crew accepts--it can mean "we don't need arms because we feel like your brothers," it can also be a warning, that "if we were brothers we wouldn't need arms." Furthermore, it pointedly defines their visitors as enemies--men who are "brothers" <u>don't</u> carry arms. Pym's account suggests that the Tsalalians were never duped by the crew, but rather acted on their knowledge of the use of firearms <u>and</u> the crewmen's sense of security with them in order to trick them into their death. Thus, these marginalized elements of <u>Pym</u> calculate the possible ramifications of the self-blinding basis of colonial "knowledge."

While the Tsalalian episode questions the social dynamics of colonial interaction, another seemingly unrelated episode suggests alternative behavioral possibilities. Before his arrival at Tsalal, Pym pauses to describe a rookery--the curious living arrangement developed

between albatross and penguins. These "colon[ies]" are described as a social system. They are carefully planned, "trace[d] out, with mathematical accuracy." Each resident must contribute to the colony's construction, which is "just sufficient size to accommodate easily all of the birds assembled, and no more--in this particular seeming determined upon preventing the access of future stragglers who have not participated in the labour of the encampment" (269). Most importantly, it is integrated. The penguins and albatross live cooperatively, admitting even "a variety of other oceanic birds." Pym himself signals its importance, commenting that "in short, survey it as we will, nothing can be more astonishing than the spirit of reflection evinced by these feathered beings, and nothing surely can be better calculated to elicit reflection in every well-regulated human intellect" (271).

The birds' collectivity reflects negatively on Pym's ethnocentric attitudes, which seek not cooperative integration, but exploitative segregation of humans. Pym's description of the birds also throws into relief the motives behind his delineation of human characters. Pym describes the royal penguin as a stately blend of grey, white, black, gold and scarlet, whose variegation symbolizes the integration of his community. Pym also calls attention to the penguin's "striking ... resemblance to a human figure"--so striking in fact that it "would be apt to deceive the

spectator at a casual glance or in the gloom of the evening (268). He suggests an explicit comparison between the two groups in this passage and opens up at the same time an opportunity for comparison between his reading of birds and men.

His appreciation of social mixture that he sees mapped in the rookery and symbolized in the penguin does not extend to humans. Dirk Peters is a "hybrid" of red and white, not "stately" but "half-breed," not "beautiful" but "deformed" (209; 150; 189). Peter's conduct, unlike that of his presumably rational white companions, "appeared to be instigated by the most arbitrary caprice alone" (205). Some Pym scholars have attributed the narrator's curious remark after the Tsalalian ambush that "we [i.e. Pym and Peters] were the only white men on the island" to a technical mistake by Poe.[5] It seems appropriate to suggest, however, based on his post-narrative introduction of Peters as "half-breed" that this classification is one entirely in keeping with Pym's prior cognitive strategies. As Evelyn Hinz has suggested, Pym needs an ally when faced by an island of angry "blacks," and thus his arbitrary racial delineation shifts to include Peters in the exclusive white club. Once back in his comfortably white-dominated world, however, Pym relegates Peters to a "half-breed" caste. Peter's changing status illustrates the social basis of racial categorization.

TO BE SHADY/TO BE WHITE

Another level of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym reveals the general failure of Pym and his colonial epistemology to represent Otherness as "radical," to inscribe a stable opposition between "black" and "white," as well as between "art" and "nature" which would support colonial knowledge. Rather, what colonial knowledge refuses to know becomes its structuring dynamic. The foregrounded level of meaning in Pym is caught in its desire to reach some sacred, final point of knowledge that would confirm the legitimacy of colonial motives. This aspect of Pym, then, reveals the terminal instability of colonial knowledge and identity, while it lays bare the repressive means through which colonial subjectivity and authority operate.

"The transference of knowledge," notes Barbara Johnson, "is no more innocent than the transference of power, for it is through the impossibility of finding a spot from which knowledge could be all-encompassing that the plays of political power proceed" (1980, 107). As I have suggested, the colonial motivation to know the nature of various races of men in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym arises from a complex symbiosis of political, economic and psychological needs. The second half of the narrative in particular concerns itself with essentialist racial categories, but is finally unable to support any such certainty. How racial knowledge collapses upon itself in Pym becomes evident in a

close reading of the narrative's system of binary opposition between white and black.

Pym imposes a racial interpretation immediately upon meeting the Tsalalians. Noting almost immediately that the "savages" who greet The Jane Guy are "jet black," he also notes their black accouterment: clothing, clubs, and black stones on the bottom of the canoes. Pym also establishes their contrast to "the white race," semiotically linking white sails, eggs, books and flour to the crew of The Jane. Seamen are not, of course, notoriously white in complexion. (It is difficult to imagine that every crewman on board The Jane was albino.) Yet it is evidently Pym's priority to identify his group as white, in direct contrast to the "jet-black" Tsalalians.

This initial perceptual identification allows Pym to develop a useful conceptual binary which structures his knowledge of both groups. Just as he arbitrarily represents an outward opposition, he depicts correspondingly antithetical behavior in the two groups. Pym, as well as the author of the Note, relies unquestioningly on these perceptual and conceptual oppositions. Closer examination, however, reveals these binaries as self-collapsing at an epistemological level--insupportable fiction, not stable opposition. Pym's arbitrary classification of outward appearance ignores, as we have seen, contradictory evidence-(i.e., even if we grant Pym the "blackness" of the

Tsalalians, we know that "whites" are not white). Similarly, in order to construct a convincing essentialist argument for racialism, Pym must transform difference within human behavior, into difference between arbitrarily drawn groups of humans; he must turn, as Johnson puts it in The Critical Difference, ambiguity into binarity.

The conceptual strategy of binarity, as Johnson further observes, "presupposes that the entities in conflict be knowable" (1980, 106). But it is precisely to combat the unknowable that Pym creates these categories. The colonial knowledge-structure must codify difference, Pratt has convincingly argued, in order to stabilize both the identity of the Subject/Self and Object/Other. Pym's epistemological certainty about both "black" Tsalalian and "civilized" or "white" nature fails because he must know in advance of knowing. In other words, he must know the Tsalalians to know how the white colonizer differs, and he must know these things before he sets eyes on the Tsalalians, in order to assume the superior right of colonizer--a right assumed from the moment he began his journey. He must construct a fiction about knowing that inevitably discloses its actual failure to know.

The rigid system of color imagery in the text collapses in a similar manner. As John Carlos Rowe observes, the black/white polarizations of imagery "are only apparently oppositions" (100). Paul Rosenzweig perceptively elaborates

on the significance of Pym's apparently "insignificant footnote" in the opening of the Tsalal section. In the Note, Pym explains that his descriptive use of the terms "morning" and "evening" are not to be "taken in their ordinary sense." This is because the daylight is continual, it still being fall in the southern hemisphere (287). Comments Rosenzweig: "Something so basic to man's sense of reality as the cycles of day and night is here revealed as relative, a mere fiction of artistic license for much of the narrative" (143). Pym's complacent admission that he can neither distinguish day from night, nor dates, nor location, and his continued use of all distinctions, raises difficulties for other apparently stable oppositions. "How seriously," asks Rosenzweig, "are we to take Pym's similar light-and-dark divisions of landscapes and races? Mere figments of the mind, too?" (143).

Other aspects of the text undermine the strict black/white imagistic distinction. The final phase of the southward trip, which relies heavily on light-white/dark-black imagery, gradually erodes the strict disparity commonly acknowledged between the two. The vapor from the south is in fact repeatedly described as "gray"--a blend of white and black. Eventually the antithetical sense of the two words merges into a union. While Pym records the increasing whiteness of the environment--the "milky hue" of the water, the "fine white powder" that falls over them, he

also describes the "materially increased" and "sullen darkness." Like the behavioral opposition that disintegrates under close scrutiny, the perceived opposition of black/white color imagery also dissolves in Pym.

It would seem that any perceived opposition is inherently unstable, as Pym himself suggests earlier in the text. Reflecting on the quality of his experiences through various stages of his adventure, Pym notes that "so strictly comparative is either good or evil" that one day's suffering is another's relief (253). It is, in fact, Pym's nagging awareness of the unreliability of human perceptions, compensated for only by an interpretive will, that leads him late in the narrative to construct another binary, between art and nature. J. Gerald Kennedy has observed that in the "Flying Dutchman" scene, in which the mutiny survivors hope to be saved by a death-ship, interpretation is revealed "as flagrant self-delusion" (1987, 155). Pym and his crew-members see what they want to see: a rescue ship. They persist in their interpretation, accounting for the brig's wide yawing by adding interpretive epicycles and eccentric orbits to the providential delivery they believe is coming. "She yawed so considerably," reports Pym, "that at last we could think of no other manner of accounting for it than by supposing the helmsman to be in liquor" (233). Even when irrevocably confronted with the fact that the ship will not provide a rescue, Pym and his mates do not relinquish their

interpretation: "We plainly saw that not a soul lived in that fated vessel! Yet we could not help shouting to the dead for help! Yes, long and loudly did we beg" (235).

Pym arrives at a new formulation which will compensate for human shortsightedness while still confirming colonial desire for self-confirming knowledge. He comes to suspect what John Irwin calls "the larger epistemological problem ... of whether the mind is a self-verifying apparatus." His solution is to turn to "the book of nature [as] a self-evidential text" (Irwin, 93). In Pym's account of the Tsalalians, his lingering doubts about the apparent nature of the Tsalalians, although never acted on, prove, like the Flying Dutchman, that the colonist's interpretive will must always remain suspect. In hindsight, he muses:

> I believe that not one of us had at this time the slightest suspicion of the good faith of the savages. They had uniformly behaved with the greatest decorum, aiding us with alacrity in our work, offering us their commodities, frequently without price, and never, in any instance, pilfering a single article, although the high value they set upon the goods we had with us was evident by the extravagant demonstrations of joy always manifested upon our making them a present (303).

Yet he had noticed evidence to the contrary, with some discomfort, for instance the systematic reinforcements of

Tsalalians on their first march into the village, and the contempt with which Too-wit greeted the captain's gift of blue beads. When he and Peters emerge from the gorge after the avalanche, Pym reports that "luckily a half suspicion of foul play had by this time arisen in my mind, and we forbore to let the savages know of our whereabouts" (308). Although Pym tries to rationalize the deception as being the Tsalalian's fault ("we should have been the most suspicious of human beings had we entertained a single thought of perfidy on the part of people who had treated us so well," 303), clearly, the crew's fate was the result of their own self-deception. They had, as Pym "half" suspects, seen what they wanted to see. Their knowledge, as Pym backs away from conceding, is not absolute.

To allay his fears, Pym constructs a more sophisticated binary at this point in the narrative, privileging self-evident Nature over manufactured art. In so doing, he is able to displace responsibility for interpretation--the self-verifying apparatus of the mind--onto the eternally inscribed text of the world. This explains his interest in finding the hieroglyphs "altogether the work of nature," even while (and especially because) he recognizes an indenture that "might have been taken for the intentional, although rude, representation of a human figure standing erect, with out-stretched arm" (321). Pym ignores evidence of human agency--the "vast heap[s]" of "arrowhead flints" as

well as the Tsalalians' demonstrated ability to effect chasms in the rock formation--to conclude on the basis of "several large flakes of marl" that the hieroglyphs must be "the work of nature" (321). He assiduously documents their scientific interest, an action which reveals the importance he attaches to their shape.

Similarly, when Peters and Pym enter a ravine, where "the surface of the ground in every other direction was strewn with huge tumuli, apparently the wreck of some gigantic structures of art," Pym concludes that "in detail, no semblance of art could be detected" (325). As with his evident fascination with the significance of the Tsalalian water, Pym looks for "natural" evidence of segregation and order. To accept the hieroglyphs and surrounding ruins as the product of art--the work of man--means that they are at once suspect. The product of art _is_ the product of the interpretive will, and therefore anything they "reveal" is as partial (in both senses of the word) as Pym's interpretations of the Tsalalians. If, on the other hand, the hieroglyphs can be shown as the work of nature, with the hieroglyphic figure gesturing to the white figure at the pole, then all the natural world can be seen working in concert to confirm colonial desire: the right of white. The natural domination of the "white" race of man will be guaranteed not by their own limited and suspect knowledge,

but instead inscribed in the Nature of Things, irrefutable and divinely ordained.

Yet this binary proves no better at sustaining itself than that constructed between white and black. Merely discerning between art and nature is exposed as an act of will when Pym persuades Peters on the basis of ambiguous evidence that the chasms are the work of "nature":

> I convinced him of his error, finally by directing his attention to the floor of the fissure, where, among the powder, we picked up, piece by piece, several large flakes of the marl, which had evidently been broken off by some convulsion from the surface where the indentures were found, and which had projecting points exactly fitting the indentures; thus proving them to have been the work of nature (321).

The lacuna signaled by the semi-colon marks the site of interpretive will. Pym here refuses to consider the fact that the Tsalalians had demonstrated their ability to render such chasms in the wall of marl. He denies the significance of the heaps of (white) arrowheads. In this break, he imposes his interested intention to interpret the hieroglyphs as <u>not</u> the work of man, an <u>interpretation</u> which collapses the structure of the binary as it reveals that every act of cognition is "art." "Knowledge" is inseparable

from the knower's "interest." The distinction Pym wants to make between art and nature is, finally, artificial.

In Nature, a confident Ralph Waldo Emerson observes of "man" (presumably western, European) that "one after another his victorious thought comes up with and reduces all things, until the world becomes at last only a realized will" (20). The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym exposes the process by which colonial knowledge achieves this exclusive "realized will." As Emerson aptly suggests, it succeeds only by reduction: both in its willful blindness and in its attempt to repress cultural/narrative heterogeneity. The last chapters and the Note emphasize that authority is established in colonial literature by limiting the structure of representation to a speaking, white Subject and a voiceless, dark Other, and by naturalizing this arbitrary division and silence.

Richard Drinnon has suggested in his impressive study Facing West that for Western colonial civilization, the dispossession of native peoples became a "defining and enabling experience," the means by which they "conquered an identity for themselves" (461). The death of Nu-Nu in the closing scene of Pym's narrative naturalizes the colonial structure of representation as it emblematizes colonial desire. Notably, Nu-Nu's expiration is preceded by the loss of speech in the increasingly white environment. As Pym records, "This day we questioned Nu-Nu concerning the

motives of his countrymen in destroying our companions; but he appeared to be too utterly overcome by terror to afford us any rational reply" (333). The next day, he remains even more passive: "he breathed, and no more" (333). Nu-Nu cannot (and must not) tell his story in the white world. His silence and death provide another proof for racialism as it confirms "white" identity.

Pym's story is authorized <u>by</u> Nu-Nu's silence as well as by that of Dirk Peters. There are no other versions to contradict his. By a default that cannot be seen as coincidental since Pym carefully discredits any version Peters might offer in his Introductory Note, Pym provides the author-ized version of the journey. In a sense, then, the white identity constructed in Pym's narrative demands the silence of the Other.

The concluding Note similarly assumes interpretive authority by repressing other voices. Although Pym is dead, the mysterious author promises that Peters "may hereafter be found, and will, no doubt, afford material for a conclusion." Yet the Note itself stands for this conclusion, offering a redaction that supports Pym's original colonial intents. Strikingly, the interpretive strategies of the author of the Note duplicate Pym's even as he assumes the responsibility of pointing out Pym's oversights. Like Pym, the author ignores the contradictory evidence contained in the narrative in order to assert that

"nothing *white* was to be found at Tsalal, and nothing otherwise in the subsequent voyage to the region beyond" (336). And, also like Pym, he fills in gaps with certainty--literally--as he notes that while the hieroglyphic characters of the lower range "are somewhat broken and disjointed; nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that, in their perfect state, they formed the full Egyptian word ... 'the region of the south'" (336).

The author's interest in documenting the opposition of white and black becomes apparent in his willingness to assume that an intentional opposition is inscribed by the hieroglyphs. There is, in fact, nothing to indicate that only "to be white" obtains in "the region of the south, or that "to be shady" is excluded. As we have seen above, the actual region of the south documented by Pym's narrative contains both light and darkness, white and shade. Further, these terms exist in relation to each other (like bad and good); one is meaningless without comparison to the other. The conclusion suggested by the author of the Note, however, that the two are opposed rather than intrinsically related, exposes the author's own investiture.

The author has indeed an "interest" in his interpretation. "*White*" becomes the obsessive emphasis of the Note, as we see in the last sentences:

> Tekeli-li was the cry of the frightened natives upon discovering the carcass of the *white* animal picked up

> at sea. This also was the shuddering exclamation of the captive Tsalalian upon encountering the *white* materials in possession of Mr. Pym. This also was the shriek of the swift-flying, *white*, and gigantic birds which issued from the vapoury *white* curtain of the South. Nothing *white* was to be found at Tsalal, and nothing otherwise in the subsequent voyage to the region beyond ("author's" emphasis, 336).

The author here focuses upon white nearly to the exclusion of black. The structure of representation authorizes <u>only</u> whiteness, just as the interpreted hieroglyphs "point" solely toward whiteness--the final sanction of colonial domination. The text must silence and repress the Other even as it maintains the negative presence of the Other as a point of comparison ("nothing white ... nothing otherwise"). Like the black/white binary, colonial authority is meaningless without reference to the Other.

The litany of "white" establishes the point of colonial subjectivity and authority. This subjectivity is constituted through its comparison to the Other, precisely as that Other is excluded from subjectivity. Susanne Kappeler outlines the repressive structure of representation:

> The ... project of constituting ... subjectivity is a serious business that has nothing to do with fictional and playful fantasy. It is the means by

> which the ... subject convinces himself that he is real, his necessary production of a feeling of life. He feels the more real, the less real the Other, the less of a subject the Other, the less alive the Other. And the reality he creates for himself through his cultural self-representation is the Authorized Version of reality (62).

Colonial subjectivity and authority, as both the ending of Pym's narrative, and the appended Note make clear, is premised on the presence of the Other, only under erasure: the continued death of the Other.

THE (PORT)ENDING OF PYM

The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym finally offers a negative social medicine, in that it subverts the basis of the model it represents without proposing an alternative. Its conclusion, however, is not "frustrating indeterminacy." The narrative emphasizes the material effects of colonial ideology while it undermines the pretensions of colonial knowledge to disinterested objectivity. Colonial knowledge, as Pym reveals, is nothing if not "interested" and willful. Two comments of the author of the Note underscore this dynamic. First, he announces that "it would afford the writer of this appendix much pleasure if what he may here observe should have a tendency to throw credit, in any degree, upon the singular pages now published" (335). And

in outlining the "white" confirmation contained in Pym's narrative, the author writes, "Conclusions such as these open a wide field for speculation and exciting conjecture" (336). The ambiguous words "afford ... credit" and "speculation" all highlight the pecuniary motive of colonial literature. "Interest" initiates the text, and "speculation" on whiteness provides the "conclusion"--a fiction crisscrossed by the traces of the colonial will to power.

Despite a wide range of fairly promising reviews, Burton Pollin documents the surprising failure of Pym on the market.[6] It was, perhaps, the refusal of The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym to resolve its own issues in any specific way that frustrated some of the contemporary readers of the work. An unsigned notice in the New York Review calls the book "perplexing and vexatious" (Quoted in Walker, 98), and a London Spectator review complains that the book is "without any definite purpose" (Quoted in Walker, 103). Sales of the book apparently dwindled in the critical irresolution over its intentions. As one reviewer spoofs, "Arthur Pym is the American Robinson Crusoe, a man all over wonders, who sees nothing but wonders, vanquishes nothing but wonders, would, indeed, evidently, scorn to have anything to do with wonders" (Quoted in Walker, 105).

Pym's intellectual stalemate may be, however, precisely

what makes it so attractive to modern theorists of American literature. As G. R. Thompson summarizes,

> Despite the astonishing range of readings, what emerges from all the critical attention is that there is in Pym a coherent and symmetrical structure of events that generates a haunting ambiguity. Once regarded as an unfinished or hastily finished mistake, the arabesque romance of Arthur Gordon Pym exemplifies Poe's method of resonant indeterminateness and his affinities both with modernism and postmodernism (174).

The "affinity" that Pym shares with these modes of theory is not, however, unproblematic. Nancy Hartsock has highlighted some important pitfalls in modernist and postmodernist theory in a recent article, "Rethinking Modernism: Minority vs. Majority Themes." As she summarizes, postmodernist theorists propose a "social criticism that is ad hoc, contextual, plural and limited" as a counter against "totalizing and universalistic theories such as those of the Enlightenment" (190). But, she argues, the theoretical agenda of postmodernism has more in common with "Enlightenment paradigms and values" than postmodernists would care to acknowledge. "Somehow," she observes, "it seems highly suspicious that it is at this moment in history, when so many groups are engaged in 'nationalisms' which involve redefinitions of the marginalized Others, that

doubt arises in the academy about the nature of the 'subject,' about the possibilities for a general theory which can describe the world, about historical 'progress'" (197).

Pym may suggest doubt, as current post-structuralist critics claim, about the nature of the Self and its origin. But there is no doubt expressed in The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym about the relation of the Subject/Self and Object/Other in colonial ideology. The final pages of the narrative and the Note epitomize Hartsock's model:

> The philosophical and historical creation of a devalued Other was the necessary precondition for the creation of the transcendental rational subject ... the creation of the Other is simultaneously the creation of the transcendental and omnipotent theorizer who can persuade himself that he exists outside of time and space and power relations (191; 195).

As Hartsock perceptively indicates, the construction of the colonial Self is predicated, as we have seen in Pym, upon the devaluation, the domination and the continuing destruction of the racial Other.

Russell Reising has recently warned against theoretical tendencies to derealize literature, to denature its social basis and agenda. As he notes, "for many contemporary theorists, the question of American literature's social or

historical significance is not so much engaged and transcended as it is ignored" (200). Overlooking Pym's broadly social basis wrongly implies the unimportance of these connections between literature and material reality. Such criticism also overlooks the important challenge that it makes to any critical enterprise. Pym is not finally about "the willed incoherence of the text itself" (Kennedy,176), "the duplicity of the sign" (Rowe, 107), the origin of the "writing self" in the "uncertainty between body and shadow" (Irwin, 234) or the fact that "the ultimate secret is not to be found" (Thompson, 274). Although the novel is to some degree about all those, what it most clearly emphasizes is the problematic, even violent basis of colonial knowledge (theory), subjectivity and authority. It is not solely about absence of meaning, but about the impulses--social, political, economic--that undergird the construction of any system of meaning. The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym offers a serious examination of the questionable motives behind the interpretive will and very real material ramifications of those interpretations. As such, it should pose a difficult question to contemporary theorists about their own theorizing activity.

NOTES

1. As Paul Rosenzweig notes, "most seem unable to resist the lure of ascribing an illuminating meaning to both the figure and ending" (137). Conclusions on the meaning of Pym are various, and any summary would be lengthy--a quick categorization will suffice here. By far the most thoughtful and extended analysis of Pym is John Irwin's nearly two-hundred page treatment in American Hieroglyphics. Here, he considers Pym as a metaphysical exploration of the relation of being, knowledge and death. For analyses of Pym as death wish, see, for instance, William Peden; as hoax, David Ketterer (1978; 1979), Richard Kopley, J.V. Ridgely; bildungsroman/mythic journey, Leonard W. Engel, Roger Forclaz, Richard Levine, Kathleen Sands, John Stroupe, Grace Farrell Lee; metaphor of artistic process, Daniel Wells; metaphysical negation, Paul Rosenzweig (1980), Joel Porte; metaphysical affirmation, Curtis Fukuchi; metacommentary on origin of reading/writing, Jean Ricardou, J. Gerald Kennedy (1987); social satire, Evelyn J. Hinz, Hinz and Teunissen, J. Gerald Kennedy (1973); social commentary, Harry Levine, Sydney J. Kaplan, Edwin Fussell, Eric Mottram; psychoanalytic treatment, Marie Buonaparte, Leslie Fiedler; epistemological search for knowledge, Paul John Eakin, John Carlos Rowe, Joan Dayan, A. Robert Lee; epistemological negation of knowledge, Paul Rosenzweig (1982). For a more thorough consideration of trends in criticism on Poe, see Douglas Robinson's useful article.

2. Many thanks to Professor Bernard Rosenthal for extensive personal correspondence outlining the history of the controversy since the publication of his essay in 1974.

3. Racialism, as Tzvetan Todorov formulates it, is the attempt to establish a scientific or natural basis for racism. Racialism as a movement in the scientific community saw extended currency from the mid-eighteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. While racism is still operative, racialism is discounted, and 'race' is no longer an acceptable biological category. See 172-175.

4.Many readers have uncritically made this mistake. The comments of John Stroupe here indicate the general trend of such analyses: "Pym does not die, and it is not necessary that he die to escape the savages of Tsalal, who are black (i.e. evil) ... Thus, if the Tsalalians do not only appear evil, but are evil, then, by contrast, the white

figure who destroys the savage is a representative of good--an affirmation. Perhaps Poe is suggesting that Pym comes to an affirmation of life through the confronting of evil ..." (320). Similarly, Fukuchi observes that the "Tsalalians exemplify greed and primitive ignorance [and] are condemned to live in darkness" (155), while Richard Levine comments that "Tsalal is the island of blackness, the sphere of total depravity. The island is strange and the natives exist on an animal level ... depraved individuals whose very teeth are black" (31). By the same standard, critics like Joseph Moldenhauer characterize Dirk Peters as "an important embodiment of the perverse, dramatizing the imp in all its ambiguity" (269).

5. Burton Pollin, in his impressive annotation of Pym, suggests that "perhaps Poe had vaguely intended to revise in earlier portions Peters' Indian ancestry and neglected to do so" (335, n. 21.7B). He elaborates in his Introduction that "the instinctive workmanship of Poe ... prevented him from constructing an entirely artless book" but that "without question, in style Pym is Poe's least careful, least polished work (14; 12).

6. See Pollin, 1974, 1975, and particularly 1978, in which Pollin queries, "Considering the total two dozen American reviews by now found and recorded,the question again arises: Why did Harper and Brothers have to acknowledge that their sales of so promising a book by so 'accomplished' writer were so low?" (10).

CHAPTER SIX
"FOR THE GAZE OF THE WHITES": THE CRISIS OF THE SUBJECT IN "BENITO CERENO"

INVOLUNTARY CHOICES

Like The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, "Benito Cereno" participates in the antebellum dialogue on white destiny, colonial expansion, and racialism. Allan Moore Emery, who applauds recent scholarly recognition of Melville's political engagement, insists that "Benito Cereno," not Moby Dick, is the "primary piece of evidence" for this case. In the story, Melville created a "political tale with timeless implications," the most important concern of which was (as in Pym), "American expansionism" (48-50). Delano's actions on the San Dominick foreshadow the policy of "interventionism of mid-century Americans"; his rhetoric of charity, like that of Manifest Destiny, is merely "camouflage for a largely 'piratical' enterprise" (53, 55). Sandra Zagarell likewise argues that "Delano's smugness is characteristic of the prevailing American political and cultural climate of the 1850's" and that the story "lays bare the elaborate ideology by means of which Americans denied the historical implications" of slavery (245). She finds that "in the traditions Melville's Delano carries forward, exploration is inseparable from colonization, free

enterprise from slavery, profit from plunder" (256). Through his trenchant expose of Delano's "sentimental racism" as capitalist self-interest, Melville questions (and exposes) the "inadequate histories and hierarchical ideologies" of nineteenth-century Americans (247, 255-57).

Various other readers have shared Zagarell's concern with how "Benito Cereno" reflects on Melville's own racial stance. Melville scholars such as F. O. Matthiessen, Charles Neider, Joseph Schiffman and Sidney Kaplan have argued that "Benito Cereno" reveals Melville's racism, however unconsciously. Other critics, including Carolyn Karcher and Charles Swann, through close reading of this text and other's in Melville's oeuvre, maintain that Melville's intention in "Benito Cereno" was quite the opposite.[1] They argue that in the story, Melville questions and even radically subverts American racism of the antebellum period. While the diverse conclusions of these scholars either preclude or problematize any pat conclusions concerning Melville's own intentions for the text, they do confirm that "Benito Cereno" has something important to say about the operations of racism.

It is the argument of this chapter that in "Benito Cereno," Melville questions the dominative structure of Western conceptualization, epistemology and representation. Through its presentation of the slave revolt on the San Dominick, and the ensuing legal process, "Benito Cereno"

effectively brackets the concept of 'race,' disproving its ontological basis and recognizing the political/social/economic genesis of racial oppression. Yet while portions of the text undermine racialist polarities, it never seems to beyond questioning to a countervening anti-racist account. On the contrary, the story is finally arrested in a consuming sense of horror that may well supersede the earlier questioning. In the end, "to rush from darkness to light was the involuntary choice" (292). Babo, at last, is "the black," defined, punished, and emblematized by "the whites."

To account for this arrested dynamic, we need to look more closely at the epistemology which undergirds Delano's reading of events on the San Dominick and after.[2] We might begin first by noting the conceptual structure Delano relies on, opposing black in every instance to white. Second, we should examine the evident, indeed, overwhelming relief he feels toward Don Benito when the "truth" of the matter overcomes him. It is this "infinite pity" which he feels on behalf of his "host" that provides the clue to Delano's real crisis. A careful reading of the implications following Delano's crisis will concomitantly illuminate the full significance of that final, horrific image of Babo's impaled head, and the complicated structure of racial representation that at once delimits "the gaze of the whites," and paralyzes "Benito Cereno."

THE GRAYNESS OF EVERYTHING

Through the eyes of the (self-proclaimed) well-intentioned Amasa Delano, we see the essentialist knowledge-structure of the slave economy. The order of nature is, for the captain of The Bachelor, self-evident. Despite the narrator's observation that, on the day described in the story, "everything [was] gray," Delano insists on seeing in black and white. Even when he cannot discern the nature of the curious ship he sights (it "showed no colors"), he imagines that he sees a "whitewashed monastery after a thunderstorm," inhabited by "dark moving figures ... as of Black Friars pacing cloisters" (241). Similarly, once aboard the ship, Delano persists in forcing all evidence into his conceptual framework, despite his growing discomfort at the uneasy fit.

Just as Delano's perception is controlled by a conceptual binary, black and white, so is his interpretation of events governed by his assumptions about the essential character associated with each color. Taking the slaves "genially," he relies on his certitude that "whites" are "by nature the shrewder race" and that "blacks" are "too stupid" to worry about (279; 270). Accordingly he attributes the ominous sight of the six Ashantis sharpening hatchets to "the peculiar love in negroes of uniting industry with pastime," explaining their threatening activity to himself as "unsophisticated" cymbal-crashing (243). By the same

token, he wonders at Don Benito, "this undemonstrative invalid ... apathetic and mute," of whom "no landsman could have dreamed that in him was lodged a dictatorship beyond which, while at sea, there was no earthly appeal" (246). It is impossible for Delano to entertain the notion of black power; it is equally impossible for him to envision a fellow "white" without it. Where The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym describes an attempt to naturalize racial opposition and hierarchy, in "Benito Cereno," it is *fait accomplis*. Like the negro saluting the French flag in Roland Barthe's analysis of "Myth Today," Babo's evident devotion to Don Benito signals to Delano the "beauty of that relation" between black and white, "a spectacle of fidelity on the one hand and confidence on the other" (250). Babo's particular history, the particular history of slaves on the San Dominick, and the more general history of slave oppression and Western trade are elided in the image of devoted slave and master.

Zagarell observes that "when Delano finally discovers the true nature of the blacks' position, he shifts effortlessly from sentimentalizing them to brutalizing them as monsters" (248). Like Pym, then, Delano's recognition of the slaves "with mask torn away ... in ferocious piratical revolt ... like delirious black dervishes" (295) is still grounded in racist essentialism. He has learned nothing about the slaves, but has merely substituted one

essentialist label for another: blacks are now not by nature innocent, but depraved. The result of this is to deny the slaves on the San Dominick any historical or subjective dimension, which is to say that the conceptual strategy which structures his "revelation" prevents him from ever realizing the "true nature of the black's position."[3] By denying them historical cause, Delano denies the slaves subjectivity. Thus, he keeps them safely objectified, never having to regard them as any more than animals, either Newfoundland dogs or wolves (279, 299).

We see the instability of this racist conceptual strategy, however, in Delano's reflections on Don Benito. As Emory observes, American cultural prejudices against the Spanish were rife throughout the periods during which "Benito Cereno" was both set and composed (61-62). While the American Delano is eager to be welcomed by the "gentlemanly" Don Benito as an equal, the more uneasy he becomes, the more he is drawn to reflect on Benito Cereno's "yellow hands" and "dark" complexion and moral character (243, 251, 263). Thus he is alternately torn between considering "Spanish" as an essentialist category, or a national appellation. Increasingly disturbed by Don Benito's apparent coldness, Delano wonders about a Spanish conspiracy: "might not that same undiminished Spanish crew, alleged to have perished off to a remnant, be at that very moment lurking in the hold? On heart-broken pretense of

entreating a cup of cold water, fiends in human form had got into lonely dwellings nor retired until a dark deed was done" (245, 262). The collapse of moral nature and physical appearance that distinguishes racist thought becomes complete when Delano laughingly muses on "the dark Spaniard himself, the central hobgoblin of all"--despite his earlier observations on the "pale invalid" (263; 258). The tension between his twin impulses to essentialize Don Benito, and to recognize him as equal becomes evident when he reflects that "these Spaniards are all an odd set; the very word Spaniard has a curious, conspirator, Guy-Fawkish twang to it. And yet, I dare say, Spaniards in the main are as good as folks as any in Duxbury, Massachusetts" (273-74).

The ultimate infirmity of racist conceptualization is highlighted in Babo's replacement of the ship's figurehead with the bleached-white bones of Don Aranda, and his question, "whether, from [the] whiteness [of the bones], he should not think it a white's" (304-305). Essentially, as Babo's gesture graphically affirms, when you get down to the bare bones, there is no difference. Racial difference is, then, demonstrably superficial, its significance, artificial. This is a recognition that Don Benito refuses to countenance and Delano does not comprehend. Like every other Spanish crewman aboard the San Dominick, Don Cereno "covered his face" when Babo tries to make him look on Aranda's skeleton (305). As in Pym, then, the "whites" must

systematically blind themselves to large portions of their experience if they are to maintain their conceptual dominance.

While Delano relies on a rigid conceptual opposition between white and black, it is important to note that they are perceptually interchangeable in certain instances. The narrator underscores Delano's quirky manipulation of characterization in a passage where Delano decides to accost one of the sailors directly. Despite his earlier musings on the sailors' darkness, Delano here regards them as "whites": he proceeds onto the poop, "curiously surveying the white faces, here and there sparsely mixed in with the blacks, like stray white pawns venturously involved in the ranks of chessmen opposed" (265-66).[4]

It is curious, given the perceived opposition here, that Delano proceeds to identify the first white sailor he observes with darkness. The narrator describes the sailor's contradictory appearance:

> The mean employment of the man was in contrast with something superior in his figure. His hand, black with continually thrusting it into the tar-pot held for him by a negro, seemed not naturally allied to his face, a face which would have been a very fine one but for its haggardness. Whether this haggardness had aught to do with criminality, could not be determined; since, as intense heat a cold,

> though unlike, produce like sensations, so innocence and guilt, when, through casual association with mental pain, stamping any visible impress, use one seal--a hacked one (266).

Appearance, the narrator pointedly underscores, is equivocal, and as such, is insufficient evidence for evaluation. Delano's reflections on the sailors, then, reveal not only the inadequacy of his perceptions, but suggests political motives for them. The generosity he holds out to Don Benito does not extend to his crewmen, whom Delano repeatedly associates with darkness, vice, thievery and subterfuge:

> Because observing so singular a haggardness combined with a dark eye, averted as in trouble and shame, and then again recalling Don Benito's confessed ill opinion of his crew, insensibly he was operated upon by certain general notions which, while disconnecting pain and abashment from virtue, invariably link them with vice.
>
> If, indeed, there be any wickedness on board this ship, thought Captain Delano, be sure that man there has fouled his hand in it, even as he now fouls it in the pitch (266).

"It is charity," observes Zlatic, "that prevents Delano from harboring any suspicions of Cereno, but that same remarkable charity leads him to suspect this innocent sailor, since the

alternative would be to admit there is unmerited misery in the world" (332). In order for Delano to affirm his own dominance, his "progress as king-at-arms" (265) as deserved, he must perceive those whom he dominates as deserving of their less fortunate position. Accordingly, he seizes clearly tenuous "evidence" of their inferiority, associating it here and elsewhere with darkness.

Tellingly, Delano sees the white sailors as "pawns"--social inferiors and as such, objects for his purposes. This is a revealing point, for Delano's position of dominance and authority is not constructed on solely racial terms. Earlier, when Delano is musing on Don Benito's indifferent reception of Delano's aid, he notes that "even the formal reports ... made to him by some petty underling, either a white, mulatto or black, [Don Benito] hardly had patience enough to listen to" (247). The category "petty underling" conflates racial categories, and, significantly, whites are an interchangeable term within the overall group. This is to say that Delano's epistemological structure does not simply oppose white to black, but rather opposes a certain group of whites to a much larger group composed of whites, mulattos and blacks.

A PRIVILEGED SPOT

As Sandra Zagarell notes, of all Delano's worries while on board the San Dominick, "uppermost ... is a strong-minded

devotion to preserving a highly vertical institutional organization" (249). Delano is troubled, in part, by what he perceives as a lack of proper authority on the San Dominick: "What the San Dominick wanted was, what the emigrant ship has, stern superior officers. But on these decks not so much as a fourth-mate was to be seen" (247). The captain of the Bachelor's Delight expects a reflection of "good order" in "armies, navies, cities or families, in nature herself" and his mental appeals to providence and a higher order mark his faith in the natural sanction of such hierarchy (244; cf. also 272, 293).

In particular, Delano is disturbed by Don Benito's reluctance to command. "I know no sadder sight," Delano muses, "than a commander who has little command but the name" (253). He is reassured, though, when offered evidence of his counterpart's dominance. Atufal's padlocked figure provides a recurring comfort to Delano, along with other "signs" of order:

> Atufal's presence, singularly attesting docility even in sullenness, was contrasted with that of the hatchet-polishers, who in patience evinced their industry; while both spectacles showed, that lax as Don Benito's general authority might be, still, whenever he chose to exert it, no man so savage or colossal but must, more or less, bow (288).

These markers of Don Benito's authority remain nonetheless "equivocal," and Delano alternately attributes his doubts to Don Benito's "icy though conscientious policy" of command (246) or ill-health.

Delano's continuing unease with Don Benito is compounded by Benito's apparent refusal to grant some sort of fraternal recognition of Delano's authority. Assuming from the first that his "host" will appreciate "a brother captain to counsel and befriend," Delano is "not a little concerned at what he could not help taking for the time to be Don Benito's unfriendly indifference toward himself" (245). He is eased somewhat to note the "pervading reserve" of Benito's manner, extended to all on board and not manifested in particular toward himself (247). Markedly, Delano is only marginally aware of his reception among the others on the ship. The only opinion that counts is Benito Cereno's, as we see when Delano muses just before leaving the ship that "after good actions one's conscience is never ungrateful, however much so the benefited party may be" (293). While many of the others on board have clearly manifested their appreciation of the relief provided by Delano and the crew of the Bachelor's Delight, Delano is only interested in the recognition of Don Benito.

Expecting relations of "hospitality and business" (291), he welcomes every sign of intimacy between himself and Cereno. He seeks constantly that "privileged spot"

where two captains can converse on equal footing, such as "sociable plan" Babo proposes for the two captains to continue in conversation while Don Benito is shaved (248, 277). Delano is anxious to establish a mutual relationship, as when he invites Don Benito to board his ship: "Come, all day you have been my host; would you have hospitality all on one side?" (290). And when Don Benito at last displays a willingness to bid a courteous farewell to Delano, that captain registers a "pleased surprise," and "reciprocally advanced ... with instinctive good feeling" (293). The tension between Delano's need to recognize Don Benito's authority, and his need to have Don Benito recognize his lends a crucial insight to the dynamics of the power at stake in Delano's world.

Eric Sundquist has suggested that the most compelling aspect of "Benito Cereno" is that "authority ... is caught in point of crisis and held in precarious suspension" (1987, 87). Delano, as Sundquist explains, in his role as guest must defer to the authority of his host, Benito Cereno. Don Benito's exercise of power, however, is enigmatic, and therefore problematic for Delano, whose position on the ship is suspended then between guest and victim. Increasingly worried that rather than recognizing his guest's authority, Don Benito seeks to usurp it, Delano begins planning to withdraw the command from Benito Cereno, who "evidently, for the present ... was not fit to be intrusted with the ship."

Relieved of his duties, Delano reasons, Don Benito will "be in some measure restored to health, and with that he should also be restored to authority" (264). This line of reasoning allows Delano to assume that Don Benito's curious actions stem from a temporarily displaced authority, not a malign use of it, that once rested and restored, all will be aright, the proper relation between the two captains restored. These thoughts, according to the narrator, are "tranquilizing." Ironically echoing Delano's penchant for black and white, the narrator observes that "there was a difference between the idea of Don Benito's darkly pre-ordaining Captain Delano's fate, and Captain Delano's lightly arranging Don Benito's" (264). The difference is, of course, that he suspects Cereno of malign motives, while Delano only seeks to restore "good order." But does he? Clearly, Delano has "no small interest" invested in his transactions--social and business--on the San Dominick (239). He is looking for compensation at least for his generosity, as he politely intimates after his meal with Don Benito. And finally, his pursuit of the renegade ship belies his "interest." Despite Don Benito's warnings, Delano appoints his chief mate, suggestively described as a "privateer's man," to head up the capture. To encourage the sailors he explains that the ship's captain "considered his ship good as lost; that she and her cargo, including some gold and silver, were worth more than a thousand doubloons"

(297). His assumption that Cereno has surrendered responsibility for the ship is apparently based on Cereno's warnings against pursuit; at any rate, his hasty conclusion here underscores his primary motive--money--and his eagerness to participate in system that exploits human life for profit.

We might recall that earlier, Delano "cannot call" Babo a slave, rather he terms him "friend"--a term, we might note, he also applies to Don Benito (250, 290). He pleads on behalf of Atufal, and reflects, with pity for Babo's cut cheek, "this slavery breeds ugly passions in man!" (256, 283). Yet despite his protestations of cross-racial sympathy and friendship, it is unthinkable to Delano that a "white" could be "so far a renegade as to apostasize from his very species, almost, by leaguing in against it with negroes" (270). Delano also offers to buy Babo, a curious gesture for a man who cannot call Babo "slave"--apparently not, at least, until he owns him (265). Further, when Delano realizes what is <u>really</u> taking place on the slave ship, he turns violently against Babo. This moment is important: Delano realizes that Babo is not trying to kill him, but Don Benito, and he is <u>angrier</u> because of that realization. Why is Babo more dangerous to Delano as Don Benito's assailant?

The answer to this lies in how Delano formulates his sense of self and relation to others, which is, as this

discussion has suggested, based on a model of domination. Questions of power, as Nancy Hartsock has observed, are intrinsic to questions of community, and concomitantly, questions of epistemology. Hartsock explains:

> Theories of power are implicitly theories of community. To examine ... theories of power is to involve oneself in the questions of how communities have been constructed, how they have been legitimized ... perhaps more important, efforts to explain how power operates inevitably involve larger questions as well, and different theories of power rest on differing assumptions about both the context of existence and the ways we come to know it (3).

By looking more closely at Delano's understanding of power, we can understand his model for interpersonal relations, how he constructs a sense of Self in relation to community--en route to an epistemological understanding of just what is at stake for Delano on the San Dominick.

Delano's first moments on the ship indicate his expectations, as he overlooks in a "first comprehensive glance ... those ten figures, with scores less conspicuous," seeking impatiently "whomsoever it might be that commanded the ship" (243). Delano awaits Don Benito's account of events as the authorized version: "the best account would, doubtless, be given by the captain" (247). We later see

that for Delano, issues of authority, command and power are tied intrinsically with issues of ownership, as when Delano asks of Don Benito, "You are part owner of the ship and cargo I presume" (254). Relations between the two, the construction of community among ship captains, is ultimately based on economic issues. Delano boards the ship to offer assistance. Once he does so, he prolongs his visit in order to discuss economic arrangements. And he is frankly surprised that Don Benito "appeared to submit to hearing the details more out of common propriety, than from any impression that weighty benefit to himself and his voyage was involved" (286). Benefit and profit, apparently, are the bottom of the matter for Delano. Hospitality, then, is but a prelude to business, the real reason for interrelating in Delano's world. Community, for Delano, is constructed by and through economic relations, constituted by selected and isolated individuals seeking profit. Interrelation occurs through "a brief association on the basis of [a] momentary conjuncture of interest": Delano has what Don Benito needs (44).

But community formed on the basis of capital or market exchange can only be, in Hartsock's words, "instrumental and arbitrary" (44). Delano's model is what Hartsock would term a "fragile community." Its fragility is compounded not only by its instrumental temporality, but its exclusivity. In Delano's model for community, the slaves are part of the

cargo, not part of any potential community. Nor are the sailors accorded equal status as members of Delano's community, as we see when he begins wondering "how come sailors with jewels?--or with silk-trimmed undershirts either?" Ownership is intrinsically connected with command; sailors are not in command. Therefore they must have stolen the valuables: "has he been robbing the trunks of dead cabin-passengers?" (261). The sailors are closer in status to the captain than the slaves--Delano does consider consulting various sailors when Don Benito is not forthcoming. Yet they are just as easily overlooked. The main body of people on the ship are, in short, "pawns"--objects used by the captain of a ship for profit and gain. An asymmetrical Subject/Object structure is erected, where, in Kappeler's words, "the role of subject means power, action, freedom, the role of object powerlessness, domination, oppression." Clearly, as Kappeler observes, "the two roles are not equally desirable" (52). Nor is there any basis for intersubjectivity. Delano does not expect to relate with any of the men on board the San Dominick except Don Benito, and when he does so, he speaks to sailors at last resort.

A BACHELOR'S DELIGHT

Within Delano's epistemology, then, the status of Subject is derived from supremacy, not intersubjectivity.

Community is constituted along three axis of domination: race, class and gender. While "Benito Cereno" scholars have long focused on racial dynamics, only Sandra Zagarell has, to my knowledge, commented on the aspect of gender in the construction of power in this story. Observing that commentators have traditionally referred to the "homoerotic coloring" that Delano attributes to the relationship of Cereno and Babo, Zagarell argues instead that "grounded as it is in a reversal of power, the relationship actually reveals the literal instability of gender." Melville makes this point to prove that not only are race and gender cultural constructs, but "all meaning in his readers' world derives from convention" (251).

While it may be true that ultimately the point is the instability of meaning, it is equally true that a stable relationship and set of expectations are associated with the concept of gender, particularly in "Benito Cereno." It is important that while women are hardly present in the action of the story, they are imaginatively present in nearly every instance of domination, and their metaphoric significance cannot be overestimated here. The Subject-position is equated with male status, the Object with female. We see this imaginative system at many points in "Benito Cereno." Most often noted, of course, is the scene where Babo has just appeared, bleeding from a cut he says was inflicted by Don Benito. Delano ruminates on the ugliness of slavery,

but when the master and slave reappear, "as if nothing had happened," Delano thinks, "but a sort of love-quarrel, after all" (283). As Zagarell points out, Babo's behavior toward Don Benito blends "feminization with domestication" (251), behavior which Delano finds reassuring.

Delano also derives a great deal of satisfaction from viewing a negro woman and her infant. The sight not only provokes a philosophical reflection on "naked nature" and the reproductive traits of "uncivilized women," but it "insensibly deepened his confidence and ease" (268). It seems obvious at this point to suggest that the sight deepens Delano's confidence and ease--both shaken by his doubts about his position on the San Dominick--because they reconfirm his status as Subject. The "slumbering negress" is doubly objectified in Delano's epistemology: both woman and African, she is two times a servant. Similarly, Delano is "charmed" by the sight of the chained Atufal (292). While Atufal himself is an undoubtedly masculine figure, "like one of those sculptured porters of black marble guarding the porches of Egyptian tombs," his role is feminized by the symbolic value of his chains, and his subservience to Don Benito (287). Babo elucidates for Delano: "the slave there carries the padlock, but master here carries the key" (256). Delano absorbs the significance of the key "suspended by a slender silken cord from Don Benito's neck," and with a smile, observes "So, Don

Benito--padlock and key--significant symbols, truly". Delano is offended this time at Don Benito's reaction. Don Benito, it seems, either didn't get, or did not appreciate the joke, Delano's "playful allusion to the Spaniard's singularly evident lordship over the black" (257).

Relations of gender domination are also symbolically present in Delano's musings on the mulatto servants. In a patriarchal, capitalist system, miscegenation had only one permissible (i.e., legal) equation: white (Subject) owner-male plus black (Object) slave-female. In this context, Delano's interest in seeing improvement in the offspring of this interaction is ironically revealing: "for it were strange, indeed, and not very creditable to us white-skins, if a little of our blood mixed with the African's, should ... have the sad effect of pouring vitriolic acid into black broth" (284). Even the imagistic metaphor he chooses is suggestively gendered.

Woman, as a gender category, is most clearly objectified in metaphors for the ships in "Benito Cereno." The name of Delano's ship is plain enough, The Bachelor's Delight. The use of gendered pronouns, an "accepted" practice among seamen, coupled with dominative verbs, reinforces cultural praxis. Delano surveys the stranger ship in the opening passages of the story with uncertainty: "she" is indecisive, and "it seemed hard to decide whether she meant to come in or no--what she wanted or what she was

about." Delano at last comes to a decision. "Surmising ... that it might be a ship in distress, Captain Delano ... prepared to board her, and at the least, pilot her in" (240). Elsewhere, Delano tellingly compares his boat to a "New-foundland dog," a comparison he has earlier made to blacks, completing the association between women, blacks and service-objects (271).

These aspects of gender metaphors and domination combine in "Benito Cereno" to confirm what Hartsock explains as the "symptomatic ... cultural confusion of sexuality, violence and domination" (165). More specifically, she explains sexuality as a "gendered power relation" (164). The association of power and maleness with Subject-status in "Benito Cereno" thus become most clear in the court deposition when it focuses on the role of the "negresses" in the revolt. These women, who unlike their male countrymen remain unnamed, audaciously attempt to declare Subjectivity through assertion of power and violence. Their actions are apparently so excessive that the women are restrained by the (presumably male) "negroes" (310), as the deposition records. Perhaps worse than their physical actions, the African women use the power of their voice willfully to inflame the violence. These women who vocalize and act with violence are arguably the largest threat to the system ascribed to by Delano and Don Cereno, and reproduced in the legal documents, for they most radically call into question

the racist and sexist underpinnings of the legal and social system that has enslaved them.

As Zagarell notes, there are only two positions in Delano's ideological system: victor or victim. All relations are based on dominative and gendered power relations, but the only exercisers of power are those accorded status as Subject--that is, as male, non-African owners of capital. That Delano expects power-plays between Subjects becomes evident in his persistent suspicions of Don Benito. But the largest threat to his epistemological system is precisely the one that is unthinkable: the challenge issued by Objects in the system, black "cargo." _This_ provides the answer to the question posed earlier, of why Delano becomes angrier to realize that Babo is trying to kill not Delano, but Don Cereno. If Babo is defending Don Benito by trying to kill Delano, his actions provide direct confirmation of Benito's subjectivity, thereby upholding Delano's epistemological system. If, however, Babo is trying to kill his "master," he is directly challenging the system that affords him only Object status; that is, he is acting to seize his own Subjectivity. As such, his actions are profoundly threatening to Delano as well as to Benito Cereno. Delano's reaction--both the physical and mental blow to Babo along with the "infinite pity" he feels toward Don Benito--at once reestablishes his Subjectivity and community.

The problem for Don Benito is somewhat larger and more destructive. He has been forced to exchange places with Babo: Babo is in actuality the thinking/acting Subject and Cereno is the Object of the ex-slave's manipulations. Further, Babo makes a travesty of Don Benito's former Subject-status by forcing him to assume the role he once commanded. While Delano perceives Don Benito's "lordship" over Atufal and Babo, the worst indignity he apparently suffers, as many commentators have observed, is being emasculated via his secret status as Object, signified by the "artificially stiffened" scabbard that he sports, not a real sword at all. Rather it is Babo who carries an "alert ... dagger" (306), which he shows Don Benito to command his submission. While Delano only momentarily recognizes a real threat to his status as Subject, and is able to quickly overpower the danger, Cereno is fully robbed of his, a horror which is clearly, from his subsequent actions, unbearable and ultimately fatal. For this reason, Don Benito cannot stand to face Babo, living evidence of the arbitrariness, the temporality of the racist ideology he shares with Delano and the court of Lima. He cannot identify Babo, since that power--the power of naming, of authorship--is the power of the Subject. All he has left, as Carolyn Karcher astutely notes, is blame for the inadequacy of the Subject community upon which both he and

Delano have relied. "You were with me all day," he accuses Delano,

> stood with me, sat with me, talked with me, looked at me, ate with me, drank with me; and yet, your last act was to clutch for a monster, not only an innocent man, but the most pitiable of all men. To such degree may malign machinations and deceptions impose. So far may even the best man err, in judging the conduct of one with the recesses of whose condition he is not acquainted. But you were forced to it; and you were in time undeceived. Would that, in both respects, it was so ever, and with all men (314).

Cereno still clutches at racist essentialism, at Subject community. Denying the historical dimension of the situation, and, ergo, his responsibility, he whines of abstract "malign machinations." Just as Delano expected interrelation between Subject-captains, so did Don Benito rely on Delano's understanding. Ultimately, however, Don Benito realizes the frailty of his power, his Subjectivity, his community, his epistemology, testified to by the modality of his last sentence, "<u>would that</u> ... it was so ever, and with all men."

More and more, Don Benito retreats into silence, silence being in "Benito Cereno" the marker of Object-status. Delano, upon first boarding the ship, notes the

"noisy indocility" of the slaves: whenever the Object speaks without the command of the Subject, she/he speaks out of turn (245). Even Babo's "conversational familiarities," clearly in service of Don Benito, begin to annoy Delano (256). Indeed, though Atufal's muteness is sign of his resistance (he will not beg pardon), it is also a sign for Delano, combined as it is with his complete obedience, respect and general docility, of "royal spirit." In short, though he will not ask forgiveness, his silence marks him as a good slave. Because Delano cannot comprehend the reversal of roles on the San Dominick, he does not understand that silence can be subversion as well as submission. Likewise, he does not comprehend the reversed dynamics of communication between sailors and slaves, for instance the "old Barcelona tar" whom he decides to consult for information. The sailor at first attempts to escape attention, then reluctantly confirms Delano's queries. The narrator notes that "the negroes about the windlass joined in with the old sailor; but as they became talkative, he by degrees became mute, and at length quite glum, seemed morosely unwilling to answer more questions, and yet, all the while, this ursine air was somehow mixed with his sheepish one" (267). Robbed of his Subject-status (relative as it is in comparison to the captain's), he by degrees loses his voice, his position an unfamiliar combination of dominant bear and powerless sheep. Much in the same manner,

unable to recover from his trauma,[5] Don Benito by degrees sinks into silence. The communication systems utilized by the patriarchal epistemology which dominates Don Benito's world are inadequate--as they are for the Objects of the system--to communicate his experience. Yet, patriarchal communication systems are upheld and reconfirmed by the legal and aesthetic discourse in "Benito Cereno." Indeed, these two systems of communication actively sustain and propagate the power-structure ascribed to by Delano--a structure which reproduces the power of the white male Subject.

THE BEAUTY OF THAT RELATIONSHIP

Arguing that Western representation is a sexist and racist system of communication, Susanne Kappeler observes that within the traditionally conceived Western representational system, there "is the structure of production and consumption represented by two white men" (15). She elaborates:

> there is collusion between the two white men of the picture. They look at each other. One is the host, the other his guest. There exists a structure of identification and solidarity, a common purpose, a shared understanding, a communicated pleasure between them. What is more, there are further white men: in the courts.

While the interrelation or mutual confirmation of power and Subject-status that should have happened on the San Dominick between Delano and Don Benito fails initially, this failure is recouped by the Lima Court. As Kermit Vanderbilt has observed, the Lima court "succeeds Delano's crew as the narrowly vindictive ... instrument of white oppression" (318). The court documents duplicate and magnify the impersonal, ahistorical and essentialist tendencies of Delano's epistemology. "Race," in the court deposition, is an appendage, a marker of less-than-Subject (or human) status. "The negro Babo" rings repeatedly through the text, "negro" brought to fore as the court in effect re-names the slave, his "legal identity" confirmed by the "testimony of the sailors" (315). Conversely, Don Aranda and Don Benito are identified racially only in the context of Babo's quoted remarks; otherwise, they are named simply Don Aranda and Don Benito. The linguistic structure of naming in the court document becomes reminiscent of a common feature of language: man/(wo)man, where the prefix marks essential Otherness, and Object-status. Thus, in every instance identified as "the negro Babo," the slave is denied Subjectivity and historicity, and is instead essentialized.

Strikingly, too, as Vanderbilt points out, the court views the blacks, but not the whites, as "defendants in a 'criminal cause'" (318).[6] As Object-Others in a white, male legal-system, the slaves are silenced; nowhere is their

testimony solicited, except through the medium of white male hearsay (read authority). It is significant, then, when a peculiar phrase appears near the end of the extract from the deposition: "that all this is believed, because the negroes have said it" (310). Confirming as it does the acquiescence and willful participation of all the slaves, both male and female, in the revolt, this "testimony" is strategic. The voice of the defendants is (indirectly) invoked only in terms of self-indictment.[7] The passive construction of the sentence is no accident, conveying a universal and objective judgement on behalf of a very limited, very interested group.

The power of legal discourse is recognized by the slaves as well. Halfway through their revolt, they seek to draw up a "paper," a legal contract between the slaves and Don Benito and his crew, promising not to kill any more in exchange for a safe voyage to Senegal and the ship and its material cargo. Legal language, then, is one of the many patriarchal/capitalist apparatuses that the slaves seek to subvert and manipulate to their purposes, having recognized its efficacy in the "master's" system. Charles Swann discusses Melville's fascination with the active power of legal discourse. "Here is a language," Swann notes, that unlike the powerlessness of novelistic discourse "does, frighteningly, have effect, that can speak--and enact--'capital sentences'" (10).

The court of Lima both figuratively and literally enacts a sentence on Babo, which confirms the purpose of the trial. We should note, however, that the purpose of the trial was not to find the slaves guilty--that is a given. Rather, the sentence is enacted to prove that the "whites" on the ship were in every way responsible to the community of fellow white male Subjects, as the deposition at one point observes: "these statements are made to show the court that from the beginning to the end of the revolt, it was impossible for the deponent and his men to act otherwise than they did" (311). Babo's punishment is thus the emblem of white guiltlessness.

In sentencing Babo's head to be affixed to a pole for the "gaze of the whites," the legal discourse of the Lima Courts merges with another kind of discourse prominent in "Benito Cereno"--that of the aesthetic. The two types of discourse exist in a symbiotic relation; legal discourse sanctions power for an elect group, while aesthetic discourse defines pleasure. Babo's head as a legally produced artistic object both symbolizes this power and provides its viewers a pleasurable sensation of power and life. To understand how this is so, we must first turn to Delano's seemingly benign reflections on "beauty" in "Benito Cereno."

As the court's language employs a mask of disinterested universality, so do Delano's aesthetic observations reflect

a sense of beauty emanating spontaneously from the object. Beauty, that is, is an object-function; it does not arise in the interest of the viewer-Subject. Delano's attention "had been drawn to a slumbering Negress." He is passively led to notice her, to recognize her as an object of beauty: "Ha, there now's a pleasant sort of sunny sight." As Delano watches her, she "started up, at a distance facing Captain Delano." "Not at all concerned at the attitude in which she had been caught," she proceeds to ignore Delano and kiss her child (267). The language in this passage is important, suggesting as it does a certain artistic setting. "Facing" the viewer or artist, the object of interest, the "mother," is "sight[ed]" and "caught." This scenario establishes the artistic vantage point: apparently unconscious of Delano's gaze, the mother continues in "maternal transports." He sees her, she remains oblivious to him; he has "caught" her unaware, much as an artist recognizes and captures his artistic object.

The scene continues:

> There's naked nature, now; pure tenderness and love, thought Captain Delano, well pleased.
>
> This incident prompted him to remark the other negresses more particularly than before. He was gratified with their manners: like most uncivilized women, they seemed at once tender of heart and tough of constitution; equally ready to

> die for their infants or fight for them. Unsophisticated as leopardesses, loving as doves. Ah! thought Captain Delano, these, perhaps, are some of the very women whom Ledyard saw in Africa and gave such a noble account of.
>
> These natural sights somehow insensibly deepened his confidence and ease (268).

Delano recognizes the other women as objects of admiration and beauty, just as did Ledyard before him. Like the sight of the original "slumbering negress," these other "noble women," commonly (if speculatively) viewed by both men afford pleasure, "insensibly."

Jan Mukarovsky has discussed extensively the social function and construction of aesthetic norm and value. He argues that there is a "relation between social organization and the development of the aesthetic norm" (49). That is to say that "aesthetic value is not inherent in an object: in order for the objective pre-conditions to be effective, something in the arrangement of the subject of aesthetic pleasure must correspond to them" (28). The subject--artist/viewer--must be either individually or socially motivated to "discover" beauty in any object. For this reason, then, although any particular aesthetic norm "strives to attain universal validity, it can never achieve the force of natural law" (26), simply because it is a social, and therefore dynamic, construct.

Mukarovsky comments also on the pleasure associated with the aesthetic: "Another important feature of the aesthetic function is the pleasure which it evokes. Hence its ability to facilitate acts to which it belongs as a secondary function, as well as the ability to intensify the pleasure connected with them; cp. the use of the aesthetic function in child-rearing, dining, housing, etc." (22). Using Mukarovsky's comments as guidelines for our analysis of Delano's reflections on the "slumbering negress," we can now begin more clearly to understand the social dynamic of the aesthetic function for Delano in "Benito Cereno."

As Delano revealingly notes, the "sight" is "sunny ... [and] quite sociable, too" (267). While the language of the passage, in its passive construction, pretends to a universal and disinterested recognition of beauty in the women, it conceals evidence of its political and social agenda. I suggested above that part of the appeal of this sight for Delano rests in its confirmation of his superior racial, gender and class position. Another part of its appeal is the community it constructs between Delano, and another man, Ledyard, in their common (disinterested and therefore objective) recognition of beauty. And, as Mukarovsky delineates, another part of the aesthetic value of the scene Delano views lies in its imperative to certain types of action, its naturalization of certain kinds of social relationships. Thus Delano aesthetically idealizes

and naturalizes the woman ("naked nature") as "uncivilized" in her position as social inferior, "negress," in her role as slave, and "mother," in her reproductive (and therefore profitable) capacity.

Clearly the focus is less on the O/object than the advantageous social arrangements and sensations that result from viewing her for the artist/viewer/Subject. Kappeler suggests that this is because the picture or artistic Object is always "the true icon of its author" (52). She illustrates her argument by using language as a metaphor:

> As a speaker, I am always present as the subject of my speech: I may represent myself by means of the pronoun 'I' within my utterance, or I may never say 'I' or 'me' at all, and yet I am implicitly present, the author of my speech, the speech the token of my presence (52).

Likewise, the artist is the "speaking I" of the representation, communicating to "another subject--the spectator or reader," his "guest." Artistic representation, like language, is a structure that creates and confirms community between the artist and viewer, speaker and listener, between two Subjects. Through aesthetic recognition, then, the viewer identifies himself with and confirms his place in the Subject community.

We can see the structure of this community if we analyze another of Delano's reflections on beauty. Shortly

after Delano boards the San Dominick, he prods an explanation of the ship's plight from Don Benito. As Don Benito attempts to recount the exemplary behavior of the slaves on board, he falters repeatedly, apparently weak. He finishes by commending Babo above all the slaves, whereupon Babo humbly protests that "what Babo has done was but duty." Here, Delano congratulates Don Benito on such a "faithful fellow," and pauses to reflect:

> As master and man stood before him, the black upholding the white, Captain Delano could not but bethink him of the beauty of that relationship which could present such a spectacle of fidelity on one hand and confidence on the other. The scene was heightened by the contrast in dress, denoting their relative positions (250).

Once again, we have an artistic "scene," an objective and passive recognition of "beauty." This time, the important difference is the physical presence of a white in the "scene." We should observe, however, the position of Don Benito. He may be physically supported by Babo, but to Delano, this is further proof of Don Benito's Subject-position relative to Babo's placement as Object. If we re-examine the verbal transaction just before this "snapshot," this dynamic will become clear. Don Benito has just testified to Babo's efficacy in subduing the other slaves. This is to say that at a point of incipient rebellion among the Objects on the ship, Babo alone remained submissive to

his Object status, acting on behalf of his "master" in maintaining the Subject-status of Cereno. In the face of this compliment, Babo does not assume authority; rather he is self-effacing, confirming his passiveness, accepting his powerlessness. Delano responds to this by congratulating Don Benito, cementing the Subject-community by acknowledging Cereno's dominance and ownership of Babo. Thus, in the scene that Delano admires, Don Benito is the artist; he has created the "beauty of that relationship." Delano joins with Cereno in admiring the Object that he has created, the happily dominated slave Babo.

Kappeler comments incisively on the relation between representation and reality, fact and fiction. Rather than being disjoined and mutually exclusive, Kappeler argues that they exist in symbiotic relation, one feeding the other. Representation is acting in the world. Further, "subjectivity of viewing goes over seamlessly into agency in the world" (58). Critics have made much of Delano's "repudiation" of slavery (when he reflects on Babo's cut cheek) and the subsequent irony of his offer to buy Babo. As I hope this analysis would indicate, there is no irony in his offer to buy Babo. He very clearly identifies himself with the position of Cereno, occupies the same Subject space as privileged, dominant, owner-master. It is not contradictory, then, for him to offer to buy the slave from Don Benito. Rather, it is only the seamless extension of

his appreciation of "the beauty of that relationship," the validation of his Subjectivity.

We are now in a position to return to a consideration of that final image of the impaled head of Babo as a reprisal of the scene just analyzed above. As I have argued, Babo's head is placed on the pole by the Lima court as an artifact, a re-presentation of his sentence, as an emblem of white guiltlessness. His punishment, then, is marked by a structure of representation strikingly similar to that suggested above, and to another which Kappeler presents as part of her framing argument in The Pornography of Representation. In a section entitled "Fact and Fiction," Kappeler analyzes the photographic evidence of the torture and death of black South African Thomas Kasire. Kasire, who was recently employed on the farm of the white van Rooyen, was accused by him of being a supporter of the South Western People's Organization. As Kappeler summarizes, van Rooyen one weekend took Kasire hostage, invited his drinking pals to the farm, and for two days systematically tortured and eventually killed Thomas Kasire. The photographs, which were used as evidence in van Rooyen's trial, were, argues Kappeler, an intrinsic part of the torture:

> The coincidence of this kind of violence and its representation is no accident. It is no curiosity in the domain of representation. The pictures are not

> documentary evidence, snapped by a journalist or observer by chance in the right place at the right time. The pictures are compositions, deliberate representations, conforming to a genre. The victim is forced to 'pose'; the perpetrator of the torture positions himself in the other picture with reference to the camera. Another white man is behind the camera, framing the picture (6).

Like the photographs of Thomas Kasire, the impaled head of Babo is also part of a "genre," a recognizable structure of representation which carried a certain host of associations, and a certain positioning of participants. Babo's torture and death, like that of Kasire's, plays out a sophisticated structure of representation: through that re-presentation, the whites re-affirm their dominance, enact the structure of representation in their viewing, and carry it seamlessly into their realities. Just as Delano recognized the "beauty" of the master/slave relation and offered to buy Babo, the white audience identifies with the scenario constructed by the court of Lima. They enact its sentence physically, as they participate in Babo's torture, and metaphorically, as they "gaze" on his head, the "gaze" constituting their Subject-community. Thus the "final tragedy" of "Benito Cereno is not, as Eric Sundquist would have it, that Delano cannot identify with Cereno (Sundquist, 1987, 100). Rather, it is that neither Delano nor Benito

Cereno can identify with the humanity of Babo. Both men, Delano only momentarily, Cereno much more fully, experience the dehumanization of being subversively rendered Object/Other under Babo's authority. But neither the Spanish nor the American captain are able to recognize the horror of dehumanization when it is reimposed on Babo through the legal authority of the Lima court. To the contrary, both men reassume their place as Subjects and participate in asserting the universality of Subjectivity. The Africans' subversion of the power structure is rendered, through legal discourse, an aberration; the power structure itself remains intact and unquestioned. Slavery and racism, as Western institutions, are not the horror of the story for Delano and Cereno, rather, it is the specter of the possible assault on their status as Subjects presented by one anomalous African. As such, Babo's severed head embodies this horror for them while it reifies white Subjectivity and its essentializing structure of representation.

HIS VOICELESS END

The narrator's horror is different. His horror might be described as an overwhelming sense of helplessness against the effectiveness of the racist system which reproduces its dominance by beheading Babo. Of all the texts under consideration in this dissertation, "Benito Cereno" is the most incisive in its recognition of the

conceptual, epistemological and representational structures that support the racist economy. As diverse commentators have noted, however, in "Benito Cereno" the text of the narrator reaches a point of paralysis, where "past, present and future seemed one."[8] "Black" and "white" may be artificial and even dangerous conceptual constructs, but gray, for the text, is a state of irresolution, of uncertainty. In the "voiceless end" of Babo, "Benito Cereno" acknowledges the inadequacy of the racist, patriarchal and capitalist structure of communication in representing the experience of the Object of that system. The narrator, echoing the silence of Babo, is not able to voice an alternative to the essentialist dilemma. Though the text lays bare the insidious motivations of the racist system, it does not offer a final redeeming solution, or a promise of progress, but only a despairing collapse of history into timeless and repeated oppression.

The narrator's dilemma in "Benito Cereno" is many ways paradigmatic of the texts examined in this study. Alongside the narrator's acute analysis of racial persecution and a capitalist system of domination is his inability to think freely outside that system. Like Mather, the narrator is unable to escape assigning a metaphysical significance and unchanging opposition to "black" and "white." Like Sedgwick, the narrator analyizes the terms of the perceptual/semiotic problem, yet cannot free himself from

relying on those very terms. Like Poe's Pym, the text offers a negative medicine--a critique, but no imaginative alternative. "Benito Cereno," like the other texts considered, is governed by an economy of contradiction which echoes that of racist thinking. Whether supporting or subverting racism, these texts are ultimately suspended by their own contrary urges: either, like Nick of the Woods, they collapse distinctions of Otherness in the process of enforcing Difference, or, as in Romance of the Republic, they refuse to confront cultural difference in order to declare Sameness. Replaying rather than reforming their society's ambivalence about "race," these texts, like "Benito Cereno," may have dissipated their own alternative social vision, enforcing instead what JanMohamed aptly terms a "privileged stasis." Thus, it might be said that the activity of these texts in the world was as much to mediate Anglo-American guilt about inequity, as to change Anglo-American society in fundamental ways.

THE MEANING OF "RACE"

"The meaning of race," as David Brion Davis observes in a recent review essay, "remains curiously elusive." He questions, "to what extent is race an ideological construction?" (34). The project of this study has been not to answer Davis's question definitively, but to suggest the texture of the Anglo-American literary dialogue which

concerned itself with the issue of "race." It has not been my goal to reduce these texts to their least common denominator; rather, I have been concerned with exploring the variance between these texts, to investigate the literary uses of "race" as--to use Raymond Williams's words--an "active history, made up of the realities of formation and struggle" (210). My approach is meant to highlight the active role that literature has played and plays in shaping material and social reality, in conceiving of and suggesting strategies for dealing with "race." As Williams argues, "to see the full social dimension of [literary] ... production is to take it more seriously and more seriously as *itself* than has been possible in more specialized political or aesthetic perspectives" (210).

It seems difficult to generalize about a group of texts as diverse as those represented here--texts chosen, in fact, for their diversity. Their similarities were only in that they addressed the issue of "race," and that they functioned, as I have argued, rhetorically, as "social medicine." One last common feature that must be acknowledged is their common appeal to what they variously construct as a "white" audience. Newes from America enthusiastically extolled the opening of new land to its British audience; "Benito Cereno" incisively castigates the dominative social structure of its Anglo-American audience. Each text considered here, no matter what its political

ends, establishes a rhetorical structure between a "white" author and a "white" readership.

Kenneth Burke argues that the function of "rhetoric" is "to confront the implications of division" between "men" (22). While the subject matter of each of these texts addresses the divisions between racial groups in America, each text rhetorically addresses divisions between "white" readers over the issue of race. Clearly there was no consensus; each text proposed a kind of model, a perspective on race for its conflicted readership. And finally, this common rhetorical positioning, white author to white reader, seems to lead to an ineluctable conservatism. No matter how progressive the impulse of the text, in discussions of "racial" intermarriage from Byrd's Histories to Child's Romance for example, the perspective always failed to relinquish some last vestige of "white" privilege. As a result, texts with progressive missions like "The Negro Christianized" nonetheless affirm the superior right of white accumulation, and likewise, A Romance of the Republic unquestioningly endorses white class-structure and culture. This trend might suggest the inevitable conservatism of what Todorov would term a third-person structure of representation: the racial Other, in this rhetorical/representational structure, remains an Object. Perhaps the only truly constructive confrontation of this subject comes in direct dialogue with that objectified

Other, authorizing the voice, as Sedgwick suggested, of the victim of American racial history and representation. Perhaps the Anglo-American failure to do so--both in literature and action--was the problem from the very start.

NOTES

1. Matthiessen pays only brief notice to "Benito Cereno." While he regards it highly ("one of the most sensitively poised pieces of writing [Melville] had ever done" 373), he faults Melville for a certain naivete in his "theatrically" drawn slaves: "Although the Negroes were savagely vindictive and drove a terror of blackness into Cereno's heart, the fact remains that they were slaves and that evil had thus originally been done to them. Melville's failure to reckon with this fact within the limits of his narrative makes its tragedy" (508). Seven years after Matthiessen's comments, Charles Neider argued that in altering Delano's actual account of the mutiny, "Melville glosses over extenuating circumstances in his effort to blacken the blacks and whiten the whites, to create poetic images of pure evil and pure virtue" (10).

In 1962, Sidney Kaplan was to formulate this position most explicitly in response to the question he posed for himself: "what did Melville mean?" (16). For Kaplan, "Benito Cereno" represents a regression from Melville's earlier, more liberal and humane stances on racial issues. "The reverse symbolism of Moby Dick, it must be concluded, is simply not present in "Benito Cereno ... looked at objectively, the tale seems a plummet-like drop from the unconditionally democratic peaks of White Jacket and Moby Dick" (23). For a time, Kaplan's arguments seemed powerful enough to persuade Joseph Schiffman, who had earlier argued for "Benito Cereno" as a condemnation of slavery (1950). In his 1962 introduction to "Benito Cereno" in Three Shorter Novels of Herman Melville, Schiffman equivocates on his earlier stand, concluding that "in highlighting the savagery of the rebellion, Melville sullied his tale with racism--an element which detracts from the stature of 'Benito Cereno'" (235).

In her exhaustive study of Melville's attitudes toward race and slavery, Carolyn Karcher argues that "Benito Cereno" is foremost "an exploration of the white racist mind and how it reacts in face of a slave insurrection" (128). In this, she takes up Joseph Shiffman's suggestion in 1950 that "'Benito Cereno' as a story flows from two sources: first from Don Alexandro's mistaken belief that his slaves were tractable, and, second, from Delano's inability to perceive that a slave rebellion was occurring under his very eyes ... In depicting the short-sightedness of those who thought slavery was acceptable to other people, Melville was condemning slavery" (321). Karcher, discovering a deep

ambivalence in Melville, carefully qualifies her own conclusions: "while disputing the claim of some critics, that Melville champions the cause of slave revolt in 'Benito Cereno,' one can nevertheless exonerate him from the charges of racism that others have leveled at him for having exhibited slave revolt in such an appalling light" (143). Scholars since have generally accepted and followed Karcher's careful historical and contextual analysis. Charles Swann's recent work (1984; 1986) tackles the issue again, qualifying the findings of both Kaplan and Karcher. He finds that Melville's "deconstructs" his racist readers, "unmasks by unbalancing the ideology" of racism (10). "The more the Southern reader accepts Melville's picture of the blacks--that the smiles of servitude may be masks and that one cannot tell the difference--the more unstable his world picture becomes and the more destabilizing Melville's seeming assent to the dark part of that divided world picture" (12). While "Benito Cereno" is not a radical gesture, Swann concludes, it is a "nudge in the right direction."

Two books provide a representative sample of this debate through 1964: Melville's "Benito Cereno," John P. Runden, ed. (1965); and A "Benito Cereno" Handbook, Seymour L. Gross, ed. (1965).

2. Zlatic describes a naive if obtuse Delano, who "is faithful and has confidence in an optimistic and rational view of an orderly and beneficent universe," whose consequent "faith makes him incredulous of anything which does not conform to that view" (335). For Zlatic, then, Delano "is not mercenary nor ruthless, but he nonetheless exploits the docility of the blacks, not so much for monetary gain but for corroboration of his moral and metaphysical outlook" (339). Somewhat differently, Emery sees Delano's mentality as the embodiment of "the interventionism of mid-century Americans," describing him as "jaunt[y]" and "bold" and motivated finally by "a simple desire for financial gain" (53-54). Sandra Zagarell expands Emery's reading of Delano in her analysis of Delano's ahistorical and apolitical ideology. "Elaborating a complex ideology, [the story] also dramatizes the epistemological fancy footwork Delano must perform in order not to understand what is amiss on the San Dominick" (246). In rewriting Delano's Narrative, Zagarell argues, Melville "reverses the real Delano's portrait of himself as a moral innocent, recasting him as a minor originator of the self-celebrating hypocrisy that allowed Americans to think themselves historically unique" (247).

3. Zagarell makes this point in her essay somewhat differently. See esp. 248.

4. Ironically, Delano relies on a conceptual strategy that opposes white to black in a power-play without considering the logical extension of his metaphor, that the black side too must have a king contesting for dominance.

5. And much like a rape-victim, as Sandra Zagarell astutely observes (251).

6. While Vanderbilt's essay is interestingly argued, I have to state at this point that I have profound reservations about his conclusion, that the point of the story is the "merging intimacy and identity" between oppressor and oppressed (316), that through their actions on the San Dominick, the slaves implicate themselves in the same structure of domination and oppression as that which they seek to overthrow. Superficially, this conclusion seems sound, but to find slaves therefore complicit in their slavery (or the slavery of history, see 319) is a process of rationalization much like that seen in the court documents of "Benito Cereno," where the voice of the blacks is credited only where it indicts them. It seems much more to the point to historicize the motives for action on either side; where the whites in the story act clearly for economic gain, the blacks strike from a very different motive: they desperately want their freedom.

7. We might also speculate that in this usage, as just previously, "negroes" is only intended to refer to the male members of that group, in contrast to the "negresses," thereby allowing the male slaves to confirm their subjectivity over the females (who are thereby doubly silenced) by voicing their condemnation.

8. Commentators have long marked Melville's "realistic" approach which refuses simple resolution (see, for instance, Miller and Phillips in Gross). More recently, critics have studied Melville's text less for its stylistic than for its epistemological implications. Edgar Dryden observes that "if the theme of 'Benito Cereno' is in part the fictitiousness of social, political, and religious forms, its method is a demonstration of the illusory nature of the architectonic fiction. As the limited point of view in the first part of the story reveals, the intricacies of human life can never be revealed by the carefully rounded and self-contained fiction ... the subversive nature of truth forces all meaningful fictions to end in 'disappointing sequels'" (208-209). Both Zagarell and Emery elaborate on Melville's historic vision, which was "less pleasantly 'progressive,' more grimly repetitious" (Emery, 67). Vanderbilt concurs that in the end, the vision of "Benito Cereno" does not transcend to an alternative strategy, but "coils endlessly" on "inquisitorial" violence and oppression

(322). Karcher's observation that Melville was "as tragically paralyzed as most of his contemporaries in the face of the nation's most pressing moral and political dilemma" (143), extends equally to the text of "Benito Cereno."

AFTERWORD
"WITHIN THE PALE OF HUMAN BEINGS": COMMUNITY IN *INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF A SLAVE GIRL*

In his recent discussion of "the political responsibility of the critic," Jim Merod argues that "texts are records not only of verbal or conceptual possibilities, but no less of communal and interpersonal possibilities" (100). Each of the texts considered in this study constructs a vision of community in different ways, some including, some excluding the racial Other that it discusses. Yet in every vision of community, segregated or integrated, "white" privilege remains entrenched. I have suggested that perhaps this is because of an inevitable conservatism in the rhetorical structure of white author addressing white audience. While it would take book to explore this possibility fully, it seems appropriate to consider briefly another text, this one addressed by its "black" author to a "white" audience: Harriet Ann Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Given the signal failure of the texts discussed here to model strategies that would effect a truly egalitarian, integrated society, it is important not to overlook the achievement of a work like Jacobs'. Evidencing, in Abdul JanMohamed's words, a "sustained negation of the attempted

hegemonic/ideological formation" (246), Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl effectively undercuts racialist theory of the pre-Civil War era. It does so by insistently linking racial categories to their social definition, by positing a common denominator--humanity--that links blacks and whites, and by modeling effective social action as a corrective to the material structure of racism.

Incidents acutely perceives that the political structure of patriarchy was sustained by both racial and gender domination. This awareness is manifest in the rhetorical structure of the text, as well as in the analysis and narrative strategies of the narrator. Linda immediately positions her text as an appeal to Northern white women:

> I have not written my experiences in order to attract attention to myself; on the contrary, it would have been more pleasant to have been silent about my own history. Neither do I care to excite sympathy for my own sufferings. But I do earnestly desire to arouse the women of the North to a realizing sense of the condition of two millions of women at the South, still in bondage, suffering what I suffered, and most of them far worse (1).

Later, in a direct address to her "Reader," Linda identifies herself as part of a slave "sisterhood," referring to "my sisters who are still in bondage, suffering as I once suffered" (29). More importantly, however, Linda situates

her white Northern readers as part of that sisterhood, encouraging them, through subtle narrative strategies, to confront their own oppression in and complicity with the patriarchal social system.[1] In the same passage in which Linda refers to her "sisters," she tells a tale of two sisters, "one ... a fair white child; the other ... her slave." She briefly chronicles their lives:

> The fair child grew up to be a still fairer woman. From childhood to womanhood her pathway was blooming with flowers, and overarched by a sunny sky. Scarcely one day of her life had been clouded when the sun rose on her happy bridal morning.
>
> How had those years dealt with her slave sister, the playmate of her childhood? She, also, was very beautiful; but the flowers and sunshine of love were not for her. She drank the cup of sin, and shame, and misery, whereof her persecuted race are made to drink (29).

Linda here forces in her reader a recognition of an unspoken, unspeakable "sisterhood," between women of both "races," master and slave. In doing so, she at once evokes moral indignation against this "illicit relation" while she breaks down the racial binary (black vs. white) by depicting a social relationship where they are opposed only in circumstance. Notably the slave sister, in contrast to the

"fair child" her owner, is nowhere identified by her skin color, but only in terms of her social status.

Linda's vision of interracial sisterhood is sophisticated and complex. While the tale above concludes with a beautiful marriage for the fair child, projecting a happy future for her if not for her slave sister, Jacobs is at pains elsewhere in Incidents to disburden her reader of this illusion. While the Southern woman slave owner is privileged in many ways, she too is a victim of patriarchy. Linda elaborates several times in her narrative on how white women are exploited; at one point she makes the issue particularly real for her Northern reader. Northerners, she observes, "are not only willing but proud to give their daughters in marriage to slaveholders." They are fostering a destructive illusion, as Linda explains:

> [They] have romantic notions of a sunny clime, and of the flowering vines that all the year round shade a happy home. To what disappointments are they destined! The young wife soon learns that the husband in whose hands she has placed her happiness pays no regard to his marriage vows. Children of every shade of complexion play with her own fair babies, and too well she knows that they are born unto him of his own household. Jealousy and hatred enter the flowery home and it is ravaged of its loveliness (36).

If the sentimental novel, ending typically with the marriage of the heroine, contains an ironic acknowledgement that perhaps no happy days would follow, Incidents makes explicit that irony.[2] Jacobs emphasizes that the form to which she refers her own story--the sentimental novel--is inadequate to describe women's life as slave or mistress under a patriarchal slaveocracy.[3]

Linda's account focuses insistently on women, and women's experiences. She highlights their related (but unequal) entrapment in a vicious system, depicting, for instance, a woman who was so kind to her slaves that when she offered to free them just before she married, her slaves loyally refused to leave her. Her new husband unfortunately did not share his wife's generosity, and cruelly exploited the slaves. Legally unable to intervene, the wife endured, and died "glad to close her eyes on a life which had been made wretched by the man she loved" (51). This example and others underscore an unacknowledged hierarchy of power in patriarchal slaveocracy: if slaves are subject to their white masters (of both genders), the white mistresses are subject to their (white) master as well.

Linda's assessment of the victimization of Southern white women extends even to Mrs. Flint, her violently cruel mistress. Without excusing her atrocities, Linda sets Mrs. Flint's motives in a social/historical context. In a chapter entitled "The Jealous Mistress," Linda details how

Mrs. Flint becomes aware of her husband's pursuit of Linda. Forcing the story from Linda herself, Mrs. Flint weeps and groans, so that Linda "was touched by her grief." The sympathy is pointedly not mutual, as Mrs. Flint's "emotions arose from anger and wounded pride. She felt that her marriage vows were desecrated, her dignity insulted; but she had not compassion for the poor victim of her husband's perfidy" (33). Still, Linda refuses to blame her, explaining that "slaveholder's wives feel as other women would under similar circumstances" (34). Incidents assigns Mrs. Flint's jealousy and hatred, and her perverted thirst for power over other humans to the "patriarchal institution" (cf. 146). The cruelty Mrs. Flint manifests toward Linda--grown from her jealousy of Mr. Flint--and her desire to have control over her husband's licentious behavior is but a poor mirror of his depraved lust for Linda and his desire to "master" her.

Linda's analysis explains (without vindicating) the Southern white woman. Incidents offers no such excuse for white men, casting them as culpable for the oppression both genders of the "master race" inflict on their slaves. By her account, white men in slave society are actively ruinous; white women partake in cruelty because of the emotional suffering inflicted on them by white men. Yet Linda's analysis is not reductive here, either. While white men uphold and enforce patriarchal slavery, and benefit the

most from it, they too are victims of the system they create. Linda explains about the cruel husband from the example above: "Had it not been for slavery, he would have been a better man, and his wife a happier woman" (51). The text's refusal to oversimplify, to overlook social and historical cause, is the mark of its achievement. Nowhere does Incidents essentialize: black slaves are no more inherently stupid/lusty/tractable than their white owners are inherently cruel/licentious/greedy. Rather, at every point, the text emphasizes that humans are shaped by social factors, and that the patriarchal slave institution has a deleterious effect on members of any race or gender.[4]

Linda's more insistent focus, however, is on the victimization of women, and most particularly, on the victimization of slave women. If patriarchal slavery, as Incidents suggests, is fueled by the oppression of blacks and women, then the profoundest victim, as Linda's narrative emphasizes, is the black woman. Gloria Wade-Gayles elaborates on this historical "double jeopardy":

> Unlike other groups in white America, black women are twice burdened. Because they are *black*, they are denied the pedestals and petticoated privileges a racist and sexist society assumes to be appropriate "gifts" for women. Because they are *women*, they are denied the power and influence men enjoy as the "natural" (or God-decreed) heads of

> families and leaders of nations. Black women are thus confined to both the narrow space of race and the dark enclosure of sex. This "double jeopardy" has created a complex, painful, and dehumanizing reality in which they have struggled for both freedom and selfhood (4).

Linda's narrative and commentary highlight this "double jeopardy" of sexism and racism most particularly in her reaction to Flint's sexual threats. Flint harasses Linda with sexual innuendoes and (presumably) pornographic letters. Because of the vigilant jealousy of his wife, Flint is prevented from acting out his obsession for Linda. Consequently, he devises plans to build a house for Linda several miles away, where she will live in exchange for light labor (cf. 53, 83). His "promise," to "make a lady" of Linda by keeping her as a private prostitute, exposes the social construction of "lady," and how its fluctuating definition inevitably serves white male interest: "white ladies" are valued (by white men) for their sexual chastity; "black ladies" are valued (by white men) for their permissiveness. Linda responds by taking the white Mr. Sands as lover and father to her two children. Her observation that "it seemed less degrading to give one's self, than to submit to compulsion" ironically underscores the fact that her action only redistributes her bondage; she is in fact exploited by <u>both</u> men.

The mixture of race that Linda's union with Sands highlights--the "tangled skein" of slave genealogy (78)--provides a point of resistance to racial definition. Linda notes her grandmother's father was a South Carolina planter. Linda's uncle Ben, as she describes him, is "nearly white; for he had inherited the complexion my grandmother had derived from Anglo-Saxon ancestors" (6; cf. 4). From the first moments of Incidents then, the perceptual opposition of black and white is shown to be unreliable and thus both ontologically and perceptually invalid. Linda drives this point home when she relates how Ben is able to escape from slavery: "For once his white face did him a kindly service. They had no suspicion that it belonged to a slave; otherwise, the law would have been followed out to the letter, and the *thing* rendered back to slavery" (24). Incidents suggests that in a slave-system, material circumstance dictates perception, that such perception is self-interested and dehumanizing.

While slaves like Ben might be able to use their fair complexion as a ticket to freedom, within the South's social system a white complexion was the slave's badge of dishonor, a dishonor which negated his or her self-worth. It was the sign of the slave mother's transgression, taken by the white social arbiters as evidence of her lustful and acquiescent "nature" (and justification of her continued debasement). The force of this (white) social standard worked to make

slaves themselves complicit in negative self-judgement, to acquiesce to their own inferiority. As JanMohamed explains, "the hegemonic formation of minorities is itself based on an attempt to negate them--to prevent them from realizing their full potential as human beings and to exclude them from full and equal participation in civil and political society" (1987b, 246).

Linda chronicles how she for a time accepted slave society's logic in "A Perilous Passage."[5] In this chapter, too complex to treat as fully as it deserves here, Linda details the emotional crisis and course of action that Flint's sexual overtures force her to. She insists that "I wanted to keep myself pure; and under the most adverse circumstances, I tried hard to preserve my self-respect" (54). Linda repeatedly apologizes to her Northern audience for this lapse in her moral character, for her loss of virtue in accepting Sands as lover and father. She for a time accepts the white reading of "virtue." When she reveals the fact of her pregnancy to Flint, Linda remembers that she "felt wretched ... my self respect was gone! I had resolved to be virtuous though I was a slave. I had said, 'Let the storm beat! I will brave it till I die!' And now, how humiliated I felt!" (56). She is at this point compliant with the slave system's attempt to negate her selfhood, accepting patriarchy's version of her corrupted virtue and debased self-worth.

Yet underneath the apologies, she details how conventional (white) morality fails the slave woman. In fact, this passage provides an alternative reading which suggests that Linda has maintained her virtue precisely through her liaison with Sands.[6] Linda had hinted earlier in her narrative a reading that resisted the one imposed on her by white patriarchy when she observed that "it is deemed a crime in [the slave girl] to wish to be virtuous" (31). JanMohamed proposes that "the most crucial aspect of resisting the hegemony consists in struggling against its attempt to form one's subjectivity, for it is through the construction of the minority subject that the dominant culture can elicit the individual's own help in his/her oppressions" (1987b, 247). In "A Perilous Passage," Linda details her successful resistance of Flint, and patriarchy in general, through an act of self-assertion. "I knew what I did, and I did it with deliberate calculation" (54).

Though she wavers during the actual event (rather than the "triumph" over Flint that she expected, she feels shame), the mature Linda who narrates <u>Incidents</u> is able to counter her negation (as a worthy human) by negating the basis on which it was formed. "The condition of a slave," she argues in retrospect, "confuses all principles of morality, and, in fact, renders the practice of them impossible" (55). Barbara Johnson observes that "if identities are lost through acts of negation, they are also

acquired thereby" (1987, 4). If the constituent elements of slave society are "the slave's 'social death,' his utter powerlessness and his overwhelming sense of dishonor," Linda's "Passage" powerfully marks her revision of self and claims her honor, counter to the self-negating imperatives of white social hegemony (cf. JanMohamed, 1987b, 248).[7]

Linda's ability to resist white cultural hegemony comes in part from her insistence on contextualizing, historicizing every consideration of racial interaction. Incidents refuses to consider "race" in metaphysical terms. From the perspective of social formation, Linda is able to counter manichean formulations of "race" with such observations as, "no matter whether the slave girl be as black as ebony or as fair *as her mistress*" (my emphasis, 27). By this strategy, Linda encourages her reader to expect a typical racist opposition (black as ebony, white as snow). But she subverts their expectations by reminding them of the social circumstances that have in fact already eradicated the ontological possibility of the opposition--the slave girl might be as "fair as her mistress" because they share a white father.

She notes that whites seek to legitimize their oppressive system by mythologizing it: "They seem to satisfy their consciences with the doctrine that God created the Africans to be slaves" (44). Accordingly, they can justify their views of blacks as inherently inferior. "I

admit the black man is inferior," Linda answers. "But what is it that makes him so? It is the ignorance in which white men compel him to live." And, she concludes, again insisting on a recognition of the social operation of racial perception, "who are the Africans? Who can measure the amount of Anglo-Saxon blood coursing in the veins of American slaves?" (44).

Linda's striking use of black and white imagery highlights her message that the two are opposed only in terms of social setting. Incidents frequently relies on light and dark imagery but rather than enforcing a natural opposition, the narrative demonstrates that a dark or bright destiny is a factor of perspective, choice and circumstance. As Toni Morrison puts it, "we are not, in fact, 'other.' We are choices" (9). When Flint explains to Linda his offer to "keep" her, he says "But I must let you know that there are two sides to my proposition; if you reject the bright side, you will be obliged to take the dark one" (84). Linda undermines the imagistic opposition by clarifying that from her position either choice was "dark" and resolves that "out of the darkness of this hour a brighter dawn should rise" (85). In this, she rejects Flint's categories of white and black, defining and choosing her own in their stead. Where the narrator of "Benito Cereno," could not envision anything other than a stable and even eternal opposition between black and white, the narrator of Incidents shows this

opposition as imagistically and imaginatively useful, but always perceptually and socially contextual.

Incidents uses this binary imagery to subvert social binarity. The text repeatedly demonstrates how the lives of both black slaves and free whites are metaphorically "colored" by the patriarchal slave institution. Rather than reinforcing their social polarity, (i.e., blacks have "dark destinies" while whites have "bright" ones), Linda emphasizes that human life encompasses both kinds of experience. As she pointedly comments, "lives ... receive their hue from circumstance" (60). Incidents in this way brackets "difference," and turns instead to a consideration of sameness. "Human nature," Linda insists, "is the same in all" (54). Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl thus creates an imaginative space for identification between the whites and blacks while it opens up a communicative space in its rhetorical structure.

The text likewise works to collapse categorizations across racial boundaries, showing that people of every gender and culture can be seduced by the benefits of an oppressive system. White men and women provide models for corruption, but black men are also willing to profit by cruelty, like the "free colored man who tried to pass himself off for a white, and who was always ready to do any mean work for the sake of currying favor with white people" (119). Nor were slave women exempt from these temptations,

as we see when Linda castigates Jenny: "She was one of those base characters that would have jumped to betray a suffering fellow being for the sake of thirty pieces of silver" (154).

Conversely, representatives of all peoples can transcend material influence to a recognition of "the cause of humanity" (30). Incidents models humane and communal action that can counter the oppressiveness of a sexist and racist society. Linda's escape most particularly demonstrates such action, from the kind slave-owner's wife who not only hides Linda but lends Flint money to search for her up North, to the free black Peter who aids her removal to the "loophole of retreat," to the captain of Linda's escape ship who confides his abhorrence of slavery. Incidents demonstrates the existence of community between such people, and the power it can wield: through this community, Linda effects her escape.[8]

Incidents works to include its reader in this community. It makes this attempt through a powerful rhetorical framework that insistently addresses the reader directly. "What would *you* be," Linda asks her reader to consider, "if you were born and brought up a slave, with generations of slaves for ancestors?" (44). Her rhetorical strategy serves imaginatively to reverse the place of white reader and slave narrator. Incidents thus provides a point of identity between the two "races," replacing ontological

difference with socially-defined difference. Otherness, as this text underscores, is never radical. Just as there is a point of difference between any peoples, there is always a basis for intersubjectivity. She repeatedly highlights their common "human nature" and invites the Northern white woman to compare their experience: "O, you happy free women, contrast *your* New Year's day with that of the poor bond-woman!" When Linda queries, "Oh reader, can you imagine my joy [at being reunited with her son]" (173), she invites her reader to participate, like her, as a woman long separated from her child. But more to her point, she continues, "no you cannot, unless you have been a slave mother" thereby emphasizing how difference is constituted by institution, not nature.

The narrative also exhorts its reader to act upon this identification. "Surely," she urges,

> if you credited one half the truths that are told to you concerning the helpless millions suffering this cruel bondage, you at the north would not help to tighten the yoke ... In view of these things, why are ye silent, ye free men and women of the north? Why do your tongues falter in maintenance of the right? (28, 29-30).

<u>Incidents</u> in this respect does more than talk. It at once assumes, models and encourages an active social response among whites to correct the injustice of a system they

underwrite. Incidents is thus a powerful text which constitutes a site of interracial identification at the same time it exposes "race" as an arbitrary social formation. It models an empathetic and constructive community among whites and blacks, and through its rhetorical structure offers its reader imaginative and active access to this community. It is this aspect of Incidents which most clearly highlights the imaginative limitations of the other texts discussed in this study.

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"If it were easy to remain grounded in the morally good," as Barbara Johnson has recently observed, "the history of the twentieth century would look quite different." She continues, "it is not enough to decide that we now recognize evil in order to locate ourselves comfortably in the good" (1987, xvii). In Incidents, Harriet Jacobs insists that recognition is not enough, that action is required before we can rest, complacent that we have done our part: "In view of these things, why are ye silent?" Many critics today, like Johnson, Lentricchia and Merod, are echoing Jacobs' call to action. As Merod eloquently argues:

> Not at all clear, still, is the degree to which the self-contestation of critical writing will continue to perpetuate theory without political commitment to exploited peoples who sustain intellectual work

> by their labor, and their poverty, while remaining without political representation. If professional intellectuals relinquish just that self-concern which prolongs insularity and spoke to one another as people who have power to challenge violent authority and authority's violence (which they do), demoted people everywhere would have representation in the only culture capable of changing the world's material order (195).

This is, precisely, the accomplishment of Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl--its commitment to challenge and change "violent authority and authority's violence," along with its representation of "demoted people" as humans and as equally entitled American citizens. It offered an important challenge to its nineteenth-century audience; it seems that its message might be equally relevant still.

NOTES

1. The role of this interracial "sisterhood," both in a general historical sense, and as it is suggested in this particular text, is an issue hotly debated among feminist scholars. Gloria Wade-Gayles sees a "problematic assumption" in a recent "tendency to see black and white women as 'sisters' in oppression." She elaborates on this general issue:

> The difficulties here are obvious. White women have participated actively, and without coercion, in the oppression of black men and women. They have been "ladies" who lived in leisure because black women have been "mammies." They have been protected and pampered, while black women have been dehumanized, brutalized and devalued as blacks and as females ... White women were victims of the peculiar institution of slavery, but they were beneficiaries as well, and it is as beneficiaries that black women see them (9).

Many recent Incidents scholars have argued that Linda's perspective is coincident with Wade-Gayles' conclusion: as a black woman, Linda (and Jacobs) does not see (and perhaps does not hope for) a "sisterhood" between the white and black women in the novel. For example, Minrose Gwinn argues that Incidents is a "vehicle of rage directed toward her former mistress," in which "Jacobs flogs her powerless former mistress over and over throughout her narrative" (65). In her sensitive analysis of Incidents, Hazel Carby argues that "many of the relationships portrayed between Linda Brent and white women involve cruelty and betrayal ... Jacobs' appeal was to a potential rather than an actual bonding between white and black women" (1987, 51). Most recently, in an impressive reading of "black and white women in the old South," Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has used Incidents to confirm her argument that "slave women did not see their mistresses as oppressed sisters" (48; cf. Epilogue).

Bell Hooks, however, suggests that the perspectives of black feminist scholars like Wade-Gayles, Gwinn and Carby come out of the social context of the 1960's, where black women, from both choice and a sense of exclusion, turned against the largely white feminist movement and focused on race oppression. Hooks points out that

> unlike us, black women in 19th century America ... participated in both the struggle for racial equality and the women's rights movement. When the

> question was raised as to whether or not black female participation in the women's rights movement was a detriment to the struggle for racial equality, they argued that any improvement in the social status of black women would benefit all black people (1981, 2).

Jean Fagin Yellin, a scholar who has extensively researched Harriet Jacobs' life, and has recently edited a new edition of Incidents, concurs with Hooks' analysis. She argues that a vision of interracial sisterhood is the focus of Incidents: "A central pattern in Incidents shows white women betraying allegiances of race and class to assert their stronger allegiance to the sisterhood of all women" (1987, xxxiii). William Andrews also agrees: "Incidents ... was written as much to assert the power and potential of women's community in the South and the North as to denounce the state of commonage under which all resided under ... slavery" (254).

2. See for instance, Catherine Maria Sedgwick's short story, "Old Maids," which wryly suggests why happy stories must end with marriage, in advise to a "story teller to close the tale when he comes to a happy day; for ... it is not probable another will succeed it" (26).

3. Hazel Carby elaborates on the ways in which Linda's account of Mrs. Flint "utilized the conventions of an antebellum ideal of womanhood," and makes them "appear as a corrupt and superficial veneer that covers an underlying strength and power in cruelty and brutality" (see 54-55; also 24-34).

4. Linda also briefly acknowledges the function of class in the social structure of the antebellum south. Commenting on the rabble-rousing whites who raided the houses of slaves and free blacks during the time of the Nat Turner insurrection, Linda observes that, "it was a grand opportunity for the low whites, who had no negroes of their own to scourge. They exulted in such a chance to exercise a little brief authority, and show their subserviency to the slaveholders; not reflecting that the power which trampled on the colored people also kept themselves in poverty, ignorance and moral degradation" (64).

5. This chapter's title, I think it is worth noting, is a suitable pun. It deals with a perilous time in the narrator's life, and at the same time, it represents a perilous attempt of the narrator to explain her decisions to her white audience.

6. Yellin notes here that "Jacobs's narrator does not characterize herself conventionally as a passive female victim, but asserts that--even when young and a slave--she was an effective moral agent" (xxx).

7. See also Valerie Smith's discussion of Jacobs' narrative in Self-Discovery and Authority in Afro-American Narrative. Smith observes that despite the limitations imposed by Jacobs' use of the sentimental novel and her address of a white audience, "yet she seized authority over her literary restraints in much the same way that she seized power in her life" (28).

8. While I believe that the rhetorical project of Incidents is to construct such a community between whites and blacks, I do not believe that it is a naive project. Linda's gratitude to whites for their actions on her behalf is often tempered by her acknowledgement that those actions are yet impeded by continued privilege and blindness on the part of the whites. Of the ship captain, for instance, Linda notes that "he was sorry, now that he had brought us to the end of our voyage, to find I had so little confidence in him. Ah, if he had ever been a slave, he would have known how difficult it was to trust a white man" (158). William Andrews, in his extended analysis of the narrative in To Tell a Free Story, notes the *double entendre* of Linda's exclamation upon learning her confident Mrs. Bruce had bought off Mr. Flint against Linda's wishes. "So I was *sold* at last!" evokes, as Williams observes, the "nineteenth-century colloquial sense of being cheated or duped" (261). Williams sensitively explicates Linda's sense of betrayal at this act which she must publicly acknowledge as "generous": "was it not an ironic trick of fate that, after all she had been through [to evade the imperatives of patriarchy], a female friend, with the best intentions, had broken confidence with her and secretly negotiated with the patriarchal institution on its own terms?" (261).

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