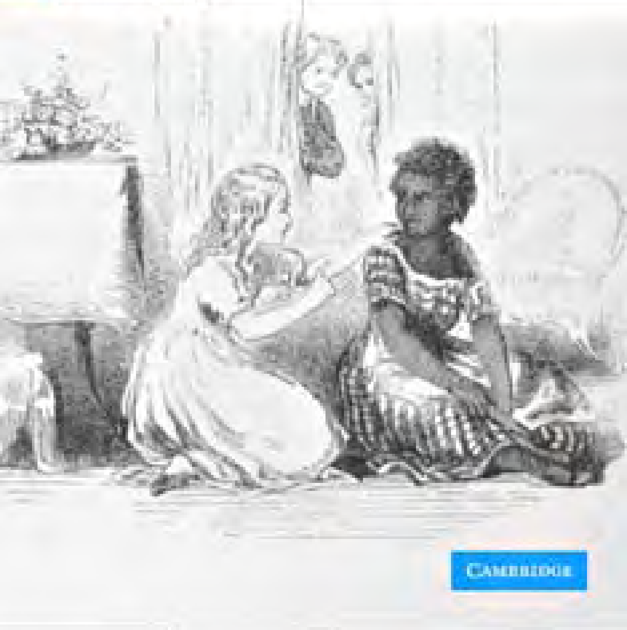
The Making of Racial Sentiment

Ezra Tawil



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The frontier romance, an enormously popular genre of American fiction born in the 1820s, helped redefine "race" for an emerging national culture. The novels of James Fenimore Cooper, Lydia Maria Child, Catharine Maria Sedgwick and others described the "races" in terms of emotional rather than physical characteristics. By doing so they produced the idea of "racial sentiment": the notion that different races feel different things, and feel things differently. Ezra Tawil argues that the novel of white-Indian conflict provided authors and readers with an apt analogy for the problem of slavery. By uncovering the sentimental aspects of the frontier romance, Tawil redraws the lines of influence between the "Indian novel" of the 1820s and the sentimental novel of slavery, demonstrating how Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ought to be reconsidered in this light. This study reveals how American literature of the 1820s helped form modern ideas about racial differences.

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THE MAKING OF RACIAL SENTIMENT

Slavery and the Birth of the Frontier Romance

EZRA TAWIL

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For Sally Tawil and Fred Tawil

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Introduction: Toward a literary history of racial sentiment

> While we know that racial theories have been built on and engendered a range of "scientific" subdisciplines – from Lamarckianism to Social Darwinism, eugenics, degeneracy theory, anthropology, philology, and social psychology – we have not really interrogated the epistemic principles, the ways of knowing – on which racisms rely. Folk and scientific theories of race have rarely, if ever, been about somatics alone. What is so striking as we turn to look at the epistemic principles that shaped nineteenth-century enquiries into race and sexuality is that both were founded on criteria for truth that addressed invisible coordinates of race by appealing to both visual and verbal forms of knowledge at the same time . . . Racism is not only a "visual ideology" where the visible and somatic confirms the "truth" of the self. Euro-American racial thinking related the visible markers of race to the protean hidden properties of different human kinds. Nineteenth-century bourgeois orders were predicated on these forms of knowledge that linked the visible, physiological attributes of national, class, and sexual Others to what was secreted in their depths – and none of these could be known without also designating the psychological dispositions and sensibilities that defined who and what was echte European.
>
> It is this combined palpability and intangibility that makes race slip through reason and rationality.
>
> Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*

> There is an important sense, then, in which the question of the color line – Are you white or black? – cannot be answered by an appeal to color.
>
> Walter Benn Michaels, "The Souls of White Folk"

I

Perhaps the most intriguing of the multiple romance plots in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* is the one that never materializes: the possibility of a romantic attachment between the white hero, Everell

Fletcher, and the "Indian" princess Magawisca. Everell discusses his feelings for Magawisca only once, long after their union has ceased to be narrative possibility, in a conversation with the Fletchers' servant, Digby. "[T]ime was, when I viewed you as good as mated with Magawisca," confesses Digby; "forgive me for speaking so, Mr. Everell, seeing she was but a tawny Indian after all." Everell responds with pique at the premise, and, we can assume, the use of the pejorative epithet: "Forgive you, Digby! you do me honour, by implying that I rightly estimated that noble creature . . . Yes, Digby, I might have loved her – might have forgotten that nature had put barriers between us."[1] The reader understands that this is a barbed exchange between characters opposed in sensibility. While Digby clearly exhibits the familiar form of "Indian-hating" the novel marks as dangerous, Everell is one of those characters, like the eponymous heroine, who is "superior to some of the prejudices of [the] age" and counters them when they arise.[2] Yet Everell's response moves in two directions at once: "Yes, Digby, I might have loved her," on the one hand; "nature had put barriers between us," on the other. Even as he rebukes the suggestion that loving Magawisca is beneath him, he thus grants the premise that the Indian is indeed not a suitable mate. In the transaction between Digby's Indian-hating and Everell's benign exposition of the laws of "nature" lies a logic central to the literary discourse of race in nineteenth-century America. For since this particular "truth" about race comes couched in the language of benevolence, we can only conclude that the suggestion that whites and Indians ought not to marry rests not on prejudice, but rather on natural law. And we are led further to wonder what is it about the Indian that renders her an illegitimate object of desire. The answer offered by the literary narratives I consider here relied substantially on character rather than biology: the races in question are understood to possess incompatible forms of subjectivity.

This book argues that the frontier romance, an enormously popular genre of American fiction born in the 1820s, helped to redefine "race" for an emerging national culture. At a moment when scientific discourse was becoming increasingly concerned with the biological differences among types of bodies, these fictional narratives about racial conflict began to distinguish the "races" on the basis of their emotional rather than exclusively physical properties. By defining the realm of feeling as the most important locus of racial difference, these novels produced what I call "racial sentiment": the notion that members of different races both feel different things, and feel things differently. In accounting for the formation and dissemination of this idea, I place an unconventional focus on the relationship between frontier fiction with the figure of the "Indian"[3] at its center, the political crisis over slavery at the moment of the genre's emergence, and subsequent literary treatments of slavery itself.

In the 1820s, American fiction-writers turned to the past in order to make sense of the present. If the publication of Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814) is widely regarded as the birth of the historical romance in England, the appearance of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Spy* in 1821 is said to mark its arrival on American shores. Ever since, the "biggest bestsellers, the favorite fictions of succeeding generations of American readers, have been historical romances."[4] During the rest of the decade, Cooper, Catharine Maria Sedgwick and Lydia Maria Child inaugurated what would become an immensely popular subgenre of the historical novel in antebellum America: the frontier romance. During roughly the same period in which this new type of fiction arrived and declared itself to be a distinctly American literary mode, the human sciences saw the rise of a new theory of racial difference which eventually inflected all American political thought. My purpose is to establish the historical link between these two developments in particular. While the new biological concept of race was poised to achieve its dominance in scientific thought, the frontier romances of Cooper, Child, and Sedgwick concerned themselves with the sentimental properties attached to race.

I believe that fiction addressed this question in a context defined at least in part by the contemporary crisis of slavery. By reading the frontier novels of the 1820s alongside the political debates surrounding slavery and the scientific writings on "race," I will try to show how fictional narratives could offer narrative solutions to a political crisis during a period when political discourse was curiously unable to do so – how, by setting contemporary contradictions in a fictive past, these stories could imaginatively resolve them. In a certain respect, then, this book revisits an old question in American literary criticism: what did antebellum stories about racial conflict in the colonial past have to say about the most pressing political issues of their own time? By reading frontier fiction for its connection to the politics of slavery, I attempt to recover an important dimension of these novels that has been overlooked or at least under-emphasized. For while a large and still growing body of scholarship investigates the relationship between the emergence of frontier fiction and early-nineteenth-century racial ideology, this work generally does so in order to fathom the cultural politics of westward expansion.[5]

With a few notable exceptions, American literary criticism has yet to consider the frontier romance in relation to the politics of slavery.[6] Apart from the obvious thematic disconnect involved in such an inquiry, there is another simple reason why even to pose the question of slavery in the frontier romance somehow seems out of keeping with the genre's predominant concerns. For it is also at odds with the assumptions we make in periodizing nineteenth-century genres. We tend to think of the frontier novel and the novel of slavery as belonging to the first and second halves of the nineteenth century, respectively, as first the "Indian" and then the "slave" occupied the center of American cultural production (and then succeeded, perhaps, by a return to the Indian narrative in the closing decade of the nineteenth century). We might take the figures of Cooper and Stowe as the signposts of the literary genres corresponding to the first two of these historical moments. As Leslie Fiedler put it in 1960: "Cooper tells precisely the same sort of truth about the Indian that Mrs. Stowe was to tell about the Negro; in each it is guilt that speaks, the guilt of a whole community."[7] This is a succinct formulation of a proposition that operated as a kind of critical common sense during the 1950s and 1960s: to Cooper the "red man," to Stowe the "black." Though it is the "same sort of truth" in each case, this very correspondence is based on an implied antithesis so self-evident, it need hardly be argued. This bifurcation persists today as our distinction between "frontier literature" and "the literature of slavery," a division perhaps clearest in the recent surveys of literary history, where such generic distinctions and periodizations are at a premium, for reasons of coverage and editorial organization.[8] The thematics of the "Indian question" and slavery thus come to be treated as moments in a cultural-historical series. But by attempting to recover the actual lines of filiation between Cooper's frontier fiction (with which I begin in Chapter Two) and Stowe's sentimental novel of slavery (to which I turn in Chapter Five), I hope to demonstrate how they might be understood as belonging to the same cultural field despite differences in period, theme, and the gendering of their narrative modes.

I am by no means the first to suggest that there is something compelling about juxtaposing the work of Cooper and Stowe. One critical example which bears directly on my work here is Philip Fisher's seminal and richly layered examination of the two in *Hard Facts* (1985). *Hard Facts* takes up the "cultural work" of the mid-nineteenth century novel, reading the literary forms of Cooper, Stowe, and Dreiser in relation to "three of the central hard facts of American history," Indian removal, slavery and late-century capitalist expansion, respectively.[9] The present work clearly parallels the first two thirds of Fisher's argument, connecting these fictions to political conflicts at their moment of production. But I cross the wires of Fisher's account, so to speak, by linking the frontier romance to the problem of slavery and the logic of Indian removal to the sentimental novel of slavery, thus intentionally misaligning the "facts" with the usual cultural products in order to see what new insights might result.

To question the assumed ontological priority and thematic singularity of the "Indian" in early frontier romances is not, of course, to deny that the politics of westward expansion and Indian removal were central to the formation of racial categories during the early nineteenth century. Rather, it is to treat the nineteenth-century discourse of race as a system of relationships that cannot be comprehended as the simple supersession of the "white/red" dyad by the "white/black" one. I am not interested in displacing "the frontier" and installing "slavery" as the new master narrative for this period of literary history. I simply want to call attention to their interaction in the formation of American racial categories. I begin by placing my own critical emphasis squarely on the question of slavery in order to supplement the already rich critical literature on the "Indian" and the fiction of the frontier.

During the half-century between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, Anglo-Indian relations were the subject of some seventy-three American novels.[10] It makes perfect sense for us to connect this thematic concern to a set of political practices in need of legitimation, or some form of cultural mediation. "Indian removal" was obviously not the only pressing political issue of the time, however. To early republican statesmen, the "Indian" did present what James Madison called in 1826 a "problem most baffling to the policy of our country." But the problem of what Madison called "the black race within our bosom," no less than that of the "red on our borders," menaced the new nation as Anglo-American politicians understood it.[11] The institution of slavery was an intensely divisive issue for the young republic, and never more so than in the wake of the Missouri crisis of 1819–1821, a dispute over the legality of slavery in the new state that even spawned threats of secession.[12] The most obvious historical lesson that this crisis teaches us is simply that westward expansion and slavery were political problems that could not easily be separated.[13] I want to take this problematic into American literary history and use it to reread the frontier romances of the 1820s against the background of slavery. For as Jared Gardner has pointed out, the period following the Missouri crisis was precisely that during which Cooper wrote and published his first frontier romances.[14] In general terms, it is clear that the "Indian problem" and the "slave problem" were intimately and inextricably linked at the level of cultural meanings. Both were represented as the results of conflicts between racially incompatible groups, and both conflicts turned on the categories of property, ownership and entitlement – concepts which thereby became racialized by the context. This isomorphism between the Indian question and the slave question, I argue, made it possible for frontier romances to use the figure of the "Indian" to think about the problem of slavery in different terms.

The fiction of white-Indian warfare also engaged contemporary concerns about slavery in a more concrete sense: it raised the specter of "race war," a fear that haunted nineteenth-century debates about slavery. It is easy to imagine how the dispossessed and potentially vengeful Indian of frontier fiction may have evoked the slave insurrections of the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Large-scale slave rebellions and conspiracies were planned and enacted with varying levels of success in Virginia in 1800, Louisiana in 1811, and Florida in 1816. Vesey's rebellion of 1822, a conspiracy of slaves and free blacks organized in South Carolina, provided a particularly immediate backdrop to the emergent frontier novels. Though betrayed and quashed before it could be brought about, a lengthy and nationally publicized trial, followed by public hangings of the conspirators and demonstrations by local blacks that had to be contained by state militia and federal troops, all made this the most highly visible such event until Nat Turner's rebellion some nine years later. Cooper, Child, and Sedgwick would no doubt have had these recent events fresh in their minds, along with the political fallout of the Missouri crisis, at the very moment they produced the first spate of frontier romances – Cooper's *Pioneers* was published in 1823, Child's *Hobomok* in 1824, and Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* in 1827. So, too, would the readers who consumed these romances.

While I make this common-sense appeal to the historical context of the production and reception of frontier romances, I will not offer any analysis of whether authors or readers consciously made these connections. As regards the authors themselves, I am interested only in showing how their works were structured in such a way as to engage some of the contemporary questions about the issue of slavery, not in arguing that they deliberately codified those questions. And while I make passing reference to the readership of these novels, what is at issue in my account is neither individual acts of reading, nor even a general pattern of reception, but rather the "reader" implied or imaginatively addressed by the texts. Thus, while there may well have been occasions when individual authors or readers made explicit connections between the themes I discuss, what interests me are the implicit connections between the two that it would have occurred to no one to discuss or spell out in the terms I do here. I think of this not as a disavowed knowledge, but quite oppositely as the level of the "everybody knows": everybody knows, for example, that the vengeful Indian of frontier fiction presents a potential analogy to the historical possibility of slave rebellion. This unspoken semantic level need not be conceived as a repressed depth, but rather as something more like what Foucault has termed a "positive unconscious of knowledge," by which I mean in this context, something that may elude explicit awareness of the reader or articulation by the author, but which nonetheless forms part of the understanding of the semantic limits of the text.[15] Undoubtedly this abstract theoretical statement will become far clearer and more concrete in individual interpretive instances in the pages that follow.

Taking the recent works of Russ Castronovo and Jared Gardner as my starting point, I treat "slavery" not only as a presence in this body of writing but also as a significant absence – what we might call an eloquent silence.[16] In Althusser's terms, we might say that slavery operates as structuring absence, an unposed question to which the frontier romance addressed itself as a kind of narrative answer.[17] Fredric Jameson's notion of a "political unconscious" of literary texts famously draws on these notions of Althusser's, along with the structuralist anthropology of Claude Lèvi-Strauss, in order to theorize fiction as a kind of cultural thinking, a process of reworking available cultural materials to classify more adequately and thus "resolve" in symbolic form problems and contradictions within that culture which could not be resolved in real life. As Richard Slotkin has observed in a similar vein, the peculiar power of the genre of the frontier romance lay in its ability to "work out imaginary resolutions" to contemporary social problems.[18]

My task is thus to understand how these texts offered a powerful way of transcoding the crisis of antebellum slavery into fictional narratives of frontier violence. Yet while I will on occasion employ the language of substitution or displacement, I emphatically do *not* mean to imply that the literary "Indian" was merely the slave in disguise nor to assume a hermeneutics of depth where text conceals subtext. In discussing the connections between the literature of the "Indian question" and the politics (and later, literature) of slavery, I mean to explore the semantic, structural, and narrative connections and overlaps between the two. If I nonetheless place my focus on what the literary Indian could do for the issue of slavery, it bears repeating, it is only to emphasize the less apparent semantic work being performed and hence to supplement existing critical work on the genre. I have chosen to do this, not by offering a comprehensive account of the genre in the antebellum period, but largely through close and thickly-contextualized readings of a select group of frontier novels from the 1820s. I then reread two major works of the 1850s, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno*, against that literary background in order to show their borrowings from the literary logic of the frontier and to cement the link between frontier romance and the mid-century literature of slavery.

II

While the most concrete intervention I aim to make in criticism of frontier fiction is to make it speak to the politics of slavery, my more important goal is to provide a picture of what these novels contributed to their culture's conception of race. My work on this genre is thus indebted to the large body of work analyzing the centrality of race as a constitutive element of American fiction in general, from Henry Nash Smith and Leslie Fiedler on down to the recent work of Richard Slotkin, Eric Sundquist, and Dana Nelson.[19]

My own project has a distinct emphasis from all of these works, however, in that I am interested in exposing the ways in which fiction itself may have helped to fashion modern notions of race. My founding premise is that if we do not insist on the historicity of "race" itself, we risk succumbing to the mimetic fallacy that it must have existed prior to, and dwells outside of, its representation in writing. For this reason, I am not content to treat race as a "theme" or even constitutive element of American fiction, because to do so may cause us to neglect the possibility that fiction itself was an important cultural site of racial *formation* as much as racial representation.[20] To play on the subtitle of Sundquist's seminal work, *To Wake the Nations*, what concerns me here is not so much the part played by "race in the making of American literature" as the part played by American literature in the making of race. This difference in emphasis may follow in part from the different historical period under consideration here: while Sundquist focused on the period from, roughly, 1830 to 1930, my focus initially falls on the fiction produced immediately prior to this period. Hence, where Sundquist investigated an "ongoing crisis over race in American cultural and political life" during his period, I am interested in the process by which certain crises in the first quarter of the nineteenth century were coming to be understood as *racial* crises, as opposed to political or economic ones, and indeed in the continual definition of the categories of race itself.[21] As I will suggest, the decade of the 1820s is a particularly interesting moment in this regard precisely because of the nascence – the incomplete formation – of racial ideology so early in the century. For this reason, a focus on the racial discourse of this decade can be a useful supplement to the vast amount of work on the racial ideologies that achieved dominance by the 1840s or 1850s.

I argue that early frontier romances, which appeared merely to thematize race, were in fact an important part of the cultural processes that shaped it. Drawing on the recent work of race theorists, intellectual historians, and historians of science, I begin by charting the rise to dominance of a new scientific conception of human variety during the first half of the nineteenth century, one that differed in nearly all its fundamentals from earlier such theories. The "diversity of nations" presumed by eighteenth-century natural science and the "race" posited by nineteenth-century biology each attributed to human differences an entirely different etiology, epistemological status, and location on the body. Where eighteenth-century science presumed the original unity of the human species and the origin of all varieties in external influences, nineteenth-century scientists argued for multiple "centers of creation" and the original and natural diversity of "the races." Where eighteenth-century thinkers emphasized continuity in the natural world and the mutability of human differences, nineteenth-century theory saw stark discontinuities among races and presumed the permanence and stability of racial essences. And where eighteenth-century natural scientists focused on the visible surface of the body, nineteenth-century biology shifted its gaze to the body's inner structures – its bones, blood, and microscopic depths – and the interior of the subject in order to ground racial differences.

I thus stress the novelty of nineteenth-century race, and tend to speak of its "emergence" rather than its "development," in order to emphasize critical shifts in its definition between 1750 and 1850. After tracing these shifts in general terms, however, I then focus my critical gaze on the decade of the 1820s, which I believe can be regarded as a significant interval in the larger historical period. This conviction first arose from my observation of a peculiar feature of most histories of racial science, namely, that while nearly all accounts acknowledge a sudden proliferation of racial theory in the 1840s, the period of time immediately prior to it receives almost no attention. There is no great mystery here. Stated most simply, this state of affairs indicates only the paucity of important racial-scientific work prior to the discursive explosion of mid-century racial biology. As I have already suggested, however, I do not regard it as merely incidental that, while the 1820s constitute a decade of little consequence in scientific racialism, it did see the rise of the frontier romance, a hugely popular national literary form which can be seen to thematize questions of human difference related to those treated by science. Emerging, as the genre did, at a moment between the waning authority of an earlier natural science and a racial biology yet to become dominant, the frontier romance bears both traces of the earlier theories and anticipatory gestures towards the later ones. In this respect, the decade of the 1820s may be regarded as a kind of hinge between residual and dominant conceptions of difference.

In focusing on the Janus-faced nature of this literature vis-à-vis human difference, then, I want not only to suggest that the fiction of the 1820s reflects contemporary conceptions at this moment of historical transition, but also to take a hard look at what part this writing might have played in the larger historical and ideological processes I have highlighted here. Ultimately, however, my purpose here is not to claim that race was "born" in the 1820s, or still less that it was my selection of novels that gave it life. Rather, in examining the fictional, scientific and political discourses of human difference side by side, I want to register a change in the way difference itself was understood and how exactly it was thought to mark the human subject. And I do have reason to argue that literary texts may have had a role to play in effecting this change.

By far the most significant development, as far as my project is concerned, is the gradual reconceptualization of human difference from a matter of outward surfaces and somatic textures to an interior property, hidden within the body and revealed through its actions. During the eighteenth century, natural scientists tended to emphasize the visible surface of the body – its "form and color" – in distinguishing the nations of men. By contrast, nineteenth-century biologists shifted attention to the parts of the human body that were hidden from view. In order to differentiate the Negro from the Caucasian, for example, they examined the organization of skeletal and muscular systems, the color of the blood, and the size of the nerves. Even when they did investigate superficial features such as skin and hair, nineteenth-century scientists studied these features under a microscope in order to reveal qualities hidden from ordinary human vision. In this sense, they represented race not as a physical surface but as a physiological depth, thus endowing "race" in the nineteenth century with a kind of thickness that "human variety" did not possess in the eighteenth. So pervasive was the insistence that the truth of the body lay *beneath* its visible surface that the exterior of the body eventually came to be regarded as an unreliable indicator of race. Over the course of the nineteenth century, mental differences gradually supplanted physiological ones as the privileged markers of racial identity. Thus, by the first decades of the twentieth century, scientists interested in identifying racial difference had moved from measuring bodies to measuring minds, and the work of H. H. Goddard, L. M. Terman, and R. M. Yerkes forged the notorious link between race and intelligence.[22]

Meanwhile, US legal discourse and social custom over the course of the nineteenth century worked in tandem to define racial identity in terms of another quality thought to be present even when strictly invisible: a person's descent. The legal notion of descent provided a diachronic dimension along which a person's racial identity might be traced backwards to its familial origin in what Scott Malcomson calls "an infinitely receding past of unknown ancestors."[23] The racial logic of hypodescent – the so-called "one-drop rule" – was only the most dramatic result of this prevailing cultural logic.[24] My point about it here is simply that the very act of classifying someone as "negro," based not on appearance but on the presence of one or more ancestors so classified, is one further indication that the nineteenth-century discourse of race was never a simple matter of the body's complexion or morphology.[25]

This much has already been established by histories of scientific and legal racialism. But the added emphasis I am placing on the importance of interior or unseen qualities of race goes hand in glove with my attention to the specifically literary discourse of race that was taking shape alongside scientific and legal definitions. By analyzing the literary racialism of the 1820s, I will try to chronicle the attribution of certain qualities of character and emotion to race. In so doing, I hope to complement the literary-historical work on the intersections between literary and scientific versions of anatomical race, such as Samuel Otter's *Melville's Anatomies*.[26]

In the frontier novels of Cooper, Child, and Sedgwick, what is defined as the specific "gift" or endowment of each race is neither a physiological quality, an intellectual capacity, nor an element of a family history, so much as a psychological and emotional interior – what I call racial sentiment. To put it simply, when these authors wrote about "white people" and "Indians," they referred not only to "color" as we understand the term, but to different capacities for feeling. Frontier romances made the white person, or more particularly the white *woman*, the repository of a racially specific, and highly valued sentimental interior and, as such, the only figure capable of securing the reproduction of the middle-class household and family feeling. The "Indian," whether vengeful and threatening (Cooper's Magua, Sedgwick's Mononotto), or impassive and reserved (Cooper's Conanchet, Sedgwick's Magawisca), tended to function as a foil to this kind of interiority and provided narrative "proof" that Anglo-American sentimentality could not take root in Indian character.

My argument is thus related in some ways to that of Julie Ellison's fascinating book, *Cato's Tears* (1999), which places racial difference very much in the midst of its history of Anglo-American emotion in order to show how "emotion makes racial distinctions" during the long eighteenth century.[27] In particular, her reading of the transactions of race and sentiment in the works of Sarah Wentworth Morton and Ann Eliza Bleecker explores cultural logics that directly prefigure those I find at work in the later frontier romances of Child, Sedgwick, and Cooper.[28] Yet Ellison also makes clear the polyvalence and plasticity of the signifier "race" in the period in question: "The category of race in the eighteenth century signified ethnicity, nationality, and tribe, as well as the ideology of color."[29] By putting a different kind of historical pressure on changes in the concept of race, and placing my historical focus on the cultural productions of a later period in which the concept was acquiring its more modern psychophysical denotations, I want to explore a version of sentimental literary racialism particular to the first half of the nineteenth century.

I realize, of course, that contemporary culture accustoms us to thinking of race in visual terms, that is, as something we can see. Yet the assumption that race can be reduced, in the last analysis, to an external mark on the body is the first thing we ought to call into question in order to understand how early nineteenth-century American culture understood race. Indeed, the intimate link between race and visibility may be a byproduct of the way difference is figured by a culture such as ours, mediated primarily by the image – photographic, cinematic, and televisual. And since critical race theory has emerged in relation to twentieth-century political and legal projects, much of it has had little reason to question this assumed link between race and visibility. But it is simply unwarranted to assume that our own conception of race prevailed in nineteenth-century America – a culture, we might say, mediated primarily by print. That Martin Luther King, in his "I Have a Dream" speech of August, 1963, could call so powerfully for people to be judged not by "the color of their skin but by the content of their character" implies by negative example this dominant twentieth-century emphasis on the visuality of race.[30] King's statement is only intelligible, that is, if one presumes that race is purely a matter of appearance. Ironically, the racial "others" of the mid-nineteenth century *were* judged by the "content of their character," for character itself had become linked to essential racial differences, and in a manner distinct from earlier discourses of national character or temperament. In other words, race was far more than an attribute of appearance. The visible surface of the body testified to the interior properties of the individual.

In emphasizing the shift to what might be called an "interior" definition of race during the nineteenth century, I am by no means suggesting that surface differences ceased to matter during this period. On the contrary, I am arguing that the notion of racial sentiment supplemented an older system for differentiating bodies, and, indeed, literally made those corporeal differences more "telling." External physical differences, comprising what Colette Guillaumin has termed the "system of marks," were caught up and transformed by a new logic of interior racial differences that was superimposed upon them.[31] To stage the point in terms of the racial logic of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, we could say that Tom's "full glossy black" exterior is necessary in order for Stowe to posit the uniquely "black" sentiments beneath it.[32] While this external mark is necessary, however, it is not alone sufficient to produce nineteenth-century "race." Earlier scientific classifications had identified exterior differences without systematically linking them to matters of sentimental subjectivity. On the other hand, despite the presence throughout western history of highly developed discourses for attributing different qualities of mind or heart to specific groups of people, these discourses did ground such qualities in those groups' essential biophysical properties. Only during the nineteenth century did different subjectivities come to be understood as the property of people with different physiological natures. It is this notion of a properly racial subjectivity whose emergence I want to trace. Its story cannot be told without accounting for the cultural work of literary narratives.

As I have suggested, I believe the frontier romance was uniquely situated to perform the work of producing this form of racial truth for its readers. Yet historical fiction may seem an unlikely place to locate the production of concepts more commonly associated with scientific writing or political discourse. It is no doubt a different register of truth that the novel claims the power to represent than that towards which science or politics gestures. At the same time, "literature" was simply not the same thing to early nineteenth-century readers that it is to us. Indeed, as Jonathan Arac has demonstrated in his genealogy of American prose genres, it was not until 1850 that "literature" took on something like its present meaning, thanks to the simultaneous elevation and "diminishment in scope" that "led the 'literary' to emerge as an independent realm, answerable only to the requirements of its own coherent fantasy rather than engaged in a concerned dialogue with the life of the times."[33] Prior to this period, "literature" had not yet been clearly and definitively distinguished from other forms such as historical narrative, personal narrative, or even political oratory. As late as 1850, Arac speculates, "to the question . . . what was the greatest American literature? Bancroft's *History* and Webster's speeches might have proven likely answers."[34]

While Arac is not concerned with scientific writing, recent histories of science in general, and racial science in particular, are consistent with his argument. As far apart as literary and scientific discourse, and the truths they access, appear to us today, in the mid-nineteenth century they were more difficult to distinguish. "There was never any sharp separation between a precise scientific racialism and literary racial nationalism," writes the preeminent historian of Anglo-Saxon racial ideology, Reginald Horsman, "for scientists discussed culture and national attitudes in the most general and impressionistic of terms, while some nonscientific writers became interested in the physical basis of racial differentiation."[35] It is not simply that the arguments of fictionists, poets, historians, politicians, and scientists mutually reinforced one another, but more profoundly that these types of discourse had not been classified and hierarchized according to their ability to speak the truth. Even in the 1840s, the heyday of "scientific" racialism, "the leading American periodicals often blended ideas on race from a variety of different sources: scientific treatises, monographs on history and philosophy, novels and poems." Nor did science always lead the way in formulating racial facts. In fact, "the creative writers often gave dramatic expression to new beliefs of racial superiority and destiny even before the scientists provided specific proofs for what had been assumed."[36]

But why privilege fiction, and why historical fiction in particular? Without making any sweeping claims about the agency of "literature" as such, I do believe there is good reason to think that American culture might have assigned some of the task of defining race to historical fiction at this historical moment. At the most basic level, historical romance as a form of narrative fiction could say and do things that the discourses of science or politics simply could not say and do. What the scientific tract could only posit, and the political treatise or oration could only advocate, the novel could *narrativize*, setting characters into action before the eyes of an attentive reader. In effect, novels could show readers what science or politics could only theorize. They could embody, rather than claim, a certain kind of authority.

Moreover, the novel's status as a private form of writing endowed it with a paradoxical form of public power. Like modern fiction in general, frontier romances could address a vexed political subject precisely because they claimed, despite their occasional treatment of historical and political events and persons, to be a leisure-time diversion with no purchase on political argumentation.[37] Such novels seemed farthest removed from politics at those moments when the issues they addressed seemed most concerned with personal life, the emotions, courtship, and the formation of households. At such moments, fiction could speak in universals and present its truths not as cultural conventions but as necessities governed by the nature of the human heart. Frontier romances thus came most fully into their discursive powers, so to speak, when they invoked the language and conventions of literary sentimentalism. If I am right that race was being constituted as an interior aspect of character more than an external feature of the body, there could hardly be a more appropriate form of discourse than the sentimental novel for defining the realm of feeling as the locus of racial difference and producing racial sentiment – in short, for showing us how members of different races feel different things, and feel them differently.

Apart from these general observations, there are important reasons why this particular subgenre of the novel would have been peculiarly suited to the cultural work of constituting race. The frontier romance rests on two forms of displacement inherent in its very generic mode. By definition set in the colonial past – a temporal displacement – this sort of narrative fiction seemed able to strip away the contemporary from the primordial, and by extension the historically contingent from the eternal and universal. That is, they explained how the contingencies of the historical present had come to be (and my passing references to these novels as "just-so stories" are a shorthand for this etiological dimension), but they also necessarily told their culture certain things about what had always been true. Set, too, on the semi-savage frontier – a spatial displacement that worked in tandem with the genre's displacement of racial conflict in time – these novels seemed able to strip away the contingency of the social and the civilized from the necessity of the original and natural, and hence to distinguish national from racial character. In both respects, frontier romances claimed the authority to speak the truth about nature, and particularly about the nature of race. This way of reading the frontier romance differs in emphasis from most scholarship on historical fiction in a key respect. For critics such as Georg Lukács and George Dekker, the genre's uniqueness or significance lies in the historicity of its content – its thematizing of historical events and personages.[38] From my perspective, however, what was most profoundly "historical" about this variety of historical romance, paradoxically, was its ability to place certain concepts outside of history, where they might achieve the authority of facts of nature. In this respect they performed the work of "myth" as Roland Barthes has theorized it.[39]

My remarks above on the frontier romance as a form of literary sentimentalism may strike some readers as odd. But in order to account for the literary production of modern race, I soon found it necessary to challenge the literary-historical assumption that frontier fiction is an essentially masculine and anti-sentimental genre. By examining the domestic frontier romances of Child and Sedgwick alongside those of Cooper, and taking account of the sentimental elements of all of their novels, I have tried to counter or at least complicate the traditional bifurcation of historical romance along gender lines. The male and female "halves" of the frontier romance tradition are thus far more comparable, or at least complementary, than has generally been supposed.

There are clearly important differences between these "domestic frontier romances" and the narrative paradigm first established by Cooper. But these differences certainly do not add up, as a familiar critical commonplace suggests, to an abiding divergence of political effects, whereby the more sympathetic versions of the story in its "feminine" incarnations attempt to heal the racial conflicts in which Cooper's fiction exulted. This is nothing more than a pervasive critical stereotype about the fiction of the period, and one whose power begins to dissolve upon close and careful analysis of the novels in question. For what we fail to understand when we carve up the literary terrain in this way is the power of a specifically sympathetic and sentimental discourse about the racial other to constitute ever more absolute boundaries among the "races," and to ground those differences in a discourse of what I have termed racial sentiment.[40] My argument here thus shares with Saidiya Hartman's remarkable *Scenes of Subjection* (1997) an interest in the chillingly counterintuitive phenomenon by which "benevolent correctives" and declarations of the "humanity" of the subjugated racial other at times paradoxically "intensified the brutal exercise of power" rather than ameliorating it.[41] If this kind of argument still seems paradoxical, I would argue, it may be because we still conflate racism and aggressivity in an historically misleading way.

My reaccentuation of sentimentalism in the frontier romance tradition is what ultimately allows me to draw lines of influence between the frontier romance of the 1820s and the sentimental novel of slavery at mid-century – lines that take us, in effect, from Cooper to Stowe, by way of Child and Sedgwick. For the implicit opposition between Cooper and Stowe, which I identified earlier in the work of Leslie Fiedler and his critical milieu, asks us not only to consider the literature of Indian affairs apart from the literature of slavery, but also to consider the masculine adventure tradition apart from, and implicitly opposed to, the feminine sentimental-domestic novel. By arguing, to the contrary, that the treatment of the Indian question in frontier romance made it possible to deal with the question of slavery in popular fiction in the 1850s, I am also understanding these two literary traditions as a collaboration at the level of culture.

Some explanation is in order, however, regarding my particular selection of frontier novels. Though, as I have already indicated, the frontier romance was an explosive new genre in the years before the Civil War, I have chosen in this work to offer in-depth analyses and close readings of a handful of early frontier romances. I have done so, first and foremost, because, as my title indicates, I am interested in tracing the genre's emergence during the decade following Cooper's literary experiment, rather than attempting a comprehensive survey of the genre along the lines of Lucy Maddox's 1991 study, *Removals*. To be sure, the basic narrative strategies my chosen novels employ are typical of the genre as a whole. For example, the figure of the "vanishing Indian", on which much criticism has focused, is nearly universal in antebellum literature, to be found in American novels from Susanna Rowson's *Reuben and Rachel* (1798) to Daniel Thompson's *The Doomed Chief* (1860), and in such other works of the 1820s as Elisabeth Cushing's *Saratoga* (1824), Harriet V. Cheney's *A Peep at the Pilgrims in Sixteen Hundred Thirty-Six* (1824), Nicholas M. Hentz's *Tadeuskund 1, or the Last King of the Lenape* (1825), and Charles Sealsfield's *Tokeah or the White Rose* (1829).

One of the primary features, besides chronology, that distinguishes my selection of novels from the larger archive of the frontier romance is that it represents a slice of a north-eastern literary tradition generally thought to be more sympathetic to the figure of the Indian. Hence, while Cooper, Child, and Sedgwick have, of course, received a lot of critical attention, there is a sense in which they are less obvious choices for a study of racial ideology than authors whose works make more obvious, deliberate, and seemingly more fateful contributions to nineteenth-century race, such as the expansionist ideology of William Gilmore Simms's fiction and the exemplary "Indian-hating" of Robert Montgomery Bird. But it is precisely the mode of transracial sympathy represented by the authors under consideration here that interests me. In order to get at the phenomenon of a racial discourse intimately linked to an ideology of benevolence, it is necessary to acknowledge, in accordance with one of the lessons of Foucault's notion of "genealogy," that some aspects of racial ideology came into being, not according to the precisely calculated intentions of its "authors," but rather in the interstices of unintended results.[42] For as I will indicate at several points along the way (though it is perhaps nowhere more stark than in my reading of Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), the process of racial formation is not necessarily the deliberate construction and dissemination of an ideology, but often a way of dealing with the pressures of ideological problems, and the discursive consequences of particular narrative resolutions.

III

Having explained my aims in general terms, I want now to provide a more detailed account of the project and the steps in which readers will encounter it in the chapters that follow. In order to ground my argument about the contribution made by this strain of fiction to conceptions of racial difference, I begin in Chapter 1 by tracing the history of scientific theories of racial difference in Europe and America between the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries. This perspective makes it quite clear that two markedly different conceptions of human variety predominated at either end of this historical spectrum. In eighteenth-century natural science, human differences were understood in a conceptual framework of what we would now call a radical environmentalism, according to which all variations, no matter how fundamental, were attributed to the effects of climate, diet, and even state of society. This theory was grounded in the assumption that the entire human race, with all of its observable varieties, had descended from the same human pair. Whatever varieties had arisen in the progeny of that primordial couple were easily explained by the influence of external factors. By 1850, however, scientists not only routinely ridiculed this notion as antiquated and absurd, they had replaced it with a theory of the races of man as originally and permanently distinct. This shift meant that human variety quite literally went from a matter of condition to a matter of essence.

In the American context, of course, this change in theories of difference did not take place in a vacuum, but rather in a highly charged political atmosphere in which questions of the natures, entitlements, and rights of different peoples were daily at issue in a range of social issues clustering around westward expansion, "Indian removal," and the vexed and growing institution of slavery. In order to prepare the way for my readings of frontier fiction and the politics of slavery, then, Chapter One reads the changes in scientific conceptions of human variety between 1750 and 1850 against the background of debates about the institution of slavery and the "Indian problem" in US politics during the same hundred-year period. I attempt to show not only how these two racial-political issues were related in the Anglo-American political imagination, but also how they came to be regarded as "racial" problems proper. So evident are the connections between the emergent discourse of race and the politics of slavery for example, that it is tempting to argue that new racial theories arose and took such firm hold in American culture because the political crisis over slavery demanded some such conception, not exactly to "justify slavery," but more accurately, to mediate the contradictions it produced. Without making this causal and functionalist claim, I point out only that the emergent racial ideology certainly did come to serve this purpose in the antebellum period.

After tracing the process by which slavery and race became inextricably linked in American political discourse, I turn in Chapter 2 to Cooper and the frontier romance, in order to suggest that the conceptual shifts described in my first chapter were not restricted to science or politics proper. I begin with Cooper, not only because he is the canonical figure on which the frontier literary tradition hangs, but more importantly, because his writing both illustrates a symptomatic concern with slavery as a site of political and epistemological conflict and enacts a form of symbolic resolution to this conflict. In his political writings of the 1820s and 1830s, particularly his *Notions of the Americans* (1828) and *The American Democrat* (1838), slavery is both a central preoccupation and a source of considerable theoretical difficulty for Cooper. Whenever the subject is mentioned in these works, it is rhetorically marked as an anomalous deviation from an otherwise stable political principle. In *The American Democrat*, an attempt at a systematic account of American democracy against the background of a taxonomy of the forms of government, the only thing which prevents the figure of the slave from entirely unsettling

Cooper's classification scheme and disrupting the story he wants to tell is in fact the assumption of the slave's essential racial difference: "[N]ature has made a stamp on the American slave," he tells us in the only full-scale discussion of slavery in the work. Here again, it is not a matter of Cooper defending slavery, an institution which he ominously warns "menaces much future ill to this country."[43] Indeed, Cooper's overriding concern is not to protect slavery but rather to protect American democracy from its disruptive incursions. By thus arguing that the slave – or rather, the "negro" – is "marked by physical peculiarities so different from his master" as to set him apart, regardless of his social condition, the treatise in effect makes some form of social inequity based on race an inevitable outgrowth of "nature," and hence provides an explanation for the troubling anomalies slavery represents for a democracy founded on the discourse of natural rights.[44]

In this respect, the machinations around the subject of slavery in Cooper's political treatises provide a local instance of the larger political process I lay out in my first chapter, by which "race" becomes the origin of "slavery." But when I turn to Cooper's narrative fiction, I find that it laid the groundwork for this cultural logic before the formal political thought of Cooper and others fully exploited it. I show how in his first frontier romance, *The Pioneers* (1823), Cooper engaged the same issues central to the slavery debate – questions of property conflict, its relation to racial descent, and its effects on a nascent national community – but did so in literary terms, and without ever connecting them to "slavery" as such. In order to unpack the thematics of race and property in the novel, I focus my reading on the mysterious figure of Oliver Edwards, a character to whom some mixture of "Indian blood" is anxiously imputed throughout the novel, but who is revealed at novel's end to be the purely white descendant of English aristocracy. This revelation leads in turn to the immediate and unequivocal resolution of the property conflicts that have circulated around Edwards throughout the novel, and hence repairs the symbolic fractures in the national community. By using the story of frontier warfare to define different types of "blood" and the attributes that corresponded to them, and then linking legitimate ownership to this conception of racial descent, Cooper's first frontier romance enabled the link between race and slavery in narrative terms and thus provided the beginnings of a logic capable of symbolically resolving the contradictions of American slavery. Indeed, Cooper's fiction introduced recognizable elements of the new notion of race almost two decades before its dominance in racial science or its political uses at mid-century. This suggests that frontier romances were not merely the product of a changing conception of race but also part of the cultural mechanism that produced that change.

I turn in Chapter Three to the so-called "domestic frontier romances" of Cooper's first female counterparts, Child's *Hobomok* (1824) and Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827). Cooper's fiction told just-so stories about Anglo-Indian warfare on the colonial frontier; the domestic frontier romance set out to tell this same story of frontier conflict as a love story. While I do not argue that their frontier novels take up themes that map as precisely as those of *The Pioneers* onto the contemporary politics of slavery, there is reason to suggest, at the very least, that the slave remains a kind of persistent off-stage figure in this fiction. Typically, it is in the peripheral spaces of the narrative – prefaces, epigraphs, and the like – where the traces of this absent "other" can be registered. Though *Hope Leslie*, for example, never explicitly mentions African slavery, the preface reflects on the character of the Indian in terms that clearly call the slave to mind as an implied point of reference: "The Indians of North America are, perhaps, the only race of whom it may be said, that though conquered, they were never enslaved. They could not submit, and live. When made captives, they courted death, and exulted in torture."[45] The African slave, though never named, certainly functions here as an implicit term of contrast.

But the real power of domestic frontier romances in negotiating the conflicts surrounding slavery had to do not with any direct treatment of the themes of property and ownership, but rather with how they used ideas about kinship and courtship to bolster emergent ideas about racial difference. In Cooper's *The Pioneers*, the revelation of Oliver Edwards's true racial identity also signaled his legitimacy as a husband to the landowner's daughter, Elizabeth Temple, and hence cemented the resolution of the property conflict with the formation of a generative romantic union. While this love plot was relatively attenuated in Cooper's very first frontier romance, it is important to realize that it was nonetheless present there. The domestic frontier novels of the later 1820s then further elaborated the frontier love story and greatly extended its power to express and resolve conflicts in romantic terms. Their primary mechanism for doing so was the introduction of a new kind of romance plot, one in which the Anglo-American heroine marries across racial lines, or, significantly, refuses to do so. These novels thus drew on the narrative paradigm established by a particular strain of the Anglo-American captivity narrative tradition. Though stories of English women taken captive by Indians had been massively popular on both sides of the Atlantic since the early colonial period, Mary Jemison's 1824 narrative famously and notoriously departed from the standard narrative paradigm in telling the story of how its central protagonist, Jemison herself, "went native" and married one of her captors. In the years immediately following the publication of Jemison's story, Child's *Hobomok* and Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* structured their historical frontier romances around this narrative possibility, and, by doing so, could investigate to a degree simply impossible in earlier fiction certain questions about the racial constitution of the American household, and the relation between race and sentiments such as sexual desire, sympathetic affect, and family feeling. The Indians in these novels, however much they are the exquisite objects of Anglo-American guilt and sympathy, nonetheless do not possess the same kind of sentimental subjectivity as their English counterparts, even when acculturated in English households. On the other hand, the novels' heroines (Mary Conant in *Hobomok* and the eponymous heroine's sister Faith in *Hope Leslie*) alienate themselves to varying degrees from their birth communities and national identities as Englishwomen, and yet are dramatically shown to have retained their sentimental interiors in the end. These novels thus define their highly-valued sentimental subjectivity not as an Anglo-American, but as a *white* property – that is, as a function, not of language, nation, religion, or class, but specifically of race. In doing so, this fiction could do something that Cooper's earlier fiction could not: it defined the heroine's race as what anthropologist Annette Weiner has termed an "inalienable possession," something that could neither be lost, nor taken, nor even given away.[46]

This examination of the racial logic of domestic frontier romance thus requires me to counter the traditional bifurcation of the frontier romance tradition along gendered lines. In Chapter 4, I can then come back at the same problem from the other direction: that of Cooper's novels. I start by observing that his fiction relies to a much greater extent than has been acknowledged on the language and conventions of literary sentimentalism. Not only can Cooper make the tears flow as well as anyone, but his fictions, no less than those of his female counterparts, tend to find their resolutions in the formation of generative Anglo-American heterosexual couples. *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), for example, always regarded as the apotheosis of the male adventure story, famously revolves around a heterosexual love plot that motivates the frontier violence and cements the relationship between men. While we have generally been encouraged to think of these aspects of his fiction merely as concessions to the expectations of a novel-reading public, and thus to assume that the real work of the novels lies elsewhere, I take the function of the sentimental in Cooper very seriously indeed. In fact, I argue that these sentimental elements were vital to Cooper's literary exploration of blood and the nature of racial identity during the late 1820s.

Moreover, in the years following the publication of Child's and Sedgwick's novels, Cooper's frontier novels seemed to borrow heavily from their revisions of his original narrative paradigm. *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish* (1829), published two years after Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*, was organized more around kinship relations than bloody conflicts over property. More specifically, like both *Hobomok* and *Hope Leslie*, the plot of *Wept* is organized around the literary topos of captivity. Exactly as in *Hope Leslie*, moreover, the novel contains parallel captivity plots: that of Cooper's English heroine, who is taken captive by Indians and subsequently marries one of her captors, and the simultaneous captivity of an Indian boy in the heroine's colonial English family. By placing the Indian in an English household and a white woman into an Indian "wigwam," these twin captivities exploit an essentially domestic narrative logic to investigate the question of racial identity, and its interaction with cultural factors, from two directions at once: what place does each type of subject have in a household differently organized? In the end, despite their varying levels of transculturation, both the white woman and the Indian man are shown to have retained their essential natures, still to possess racially distinct forms of subjectivity, and hence to be out of place in the homes of the other. The novel thus concludes as does *Hobomok*, with the interracial romance plot terminated almost as soon as it is begun, and the races being symbolically separated. This "homely" version of the frontier novel, as Cooper's narrator calls it, thus used the interracial love story and the thematics of family feeling to define the two races as possessing two essentially different kinds of subjectivity. While the sympathetic narrative voice values each in different ways, they are ultimately shown to be incommensurable.

By focusing the critical gaze on this sentimental racial logic, and registering the unique power of a sympathetic and sentimental discourse of the racial other to define absolute racial differences, it becomes possible to see clear lines of affiliation between these frontier novels of the 1820s and Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). In Chapter 5 I turn to Stowe's novel of slavery and attempt to shed new light on what is perhaps the most nagging question in the history of Stowe criticism: the seemingly paradoxical conjunction of a compelling critique of slavery on the basis of the slave's claims to humanity, on the one hand, and some of the most entrenched and precisely formulated racialism in our entire mainstream literature, on the other. I do so by focusing less on the ideological underpinnings of Stowe's racialism and more on its narrative functions. I attempt to show how the novel's particular brand of racialism is necessary in order to effect its political indictment of slavery and simultaneously produce an adequate resolution to an acute narrative problem.

Stowe's novel famously differentiates the "negro" and the "Anglo-Saxon" as the possessors of essentially different racial characters. If the former is by nature sensitive and impressible, the latter is dominating and indomitable. But this way of setting the two races in opposition not only creates a certain political problem, but more importantly for my purposes, a narrative problem: how can the novelist imagine an America without slavery, while still adhering to a racialist classification according to which the two kinds of subjects can seemingly only coexist in relations of domination and subjugation that corrupt both? The answer, as critics such as Karen Sanchez-Eppler have shown, is that all of the significant black characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* ultimately either die or emigrate to Africa.[47]

I aim further to explore the anatomy of this resolution by showing how, in ways that have not previously been acknowledged, Stowe drew heavily on the elements of the frontier romance to effect it. First and most basically, Stowe reconfigured what critics have termed the "vanishing American" of the frontier romance as what we might term the "vanishing African." Like Cooper's "Indian John" in *The Pioneers*, Child's Hobomok, and Sedgwick's Magawisca – all of whose tragic, though voluntary and "necessary" departures enable the narrative resolutions of their respective novels – Stowe's black characters vanish as well. If we dig a little deeper into the novel's appropriation of the captivity narrative, and the domestic logic it served in the frontier romance, we can understand to a much greater degree why this vanishing was such a compelling narrative necessity. By endowing the "negro" with the kind of sentimental subjectivity that captivity narratives and frontier romances had attributed preeminently to the white woman, Stowe qualified the slaves to serve the structural function of the heroine in a captivity narrative. And if the "negroes" occupy the position of captives by virtue of their possession of a sentimental interior, the slaveholders and slave-traders occupy the position of the captors to the degree that they lack that same interiority. But these revisions of the captivity paradigm were both the source of the novel's progressive political intentions and, at the same time, the very core of its racial conservatism.

For after rewriting the story of slavery as the captivity of the African to the American, Stowe must then export her captive in order to bring the story to the conventional resolution in which the captive is redeemed by his or her culture and returns "home."

From the earliest frontier novels to Stowe's mid-century novel of slavery, then, the literature of racial conflict contributed to the formation of one of the most fateful concepts in the history of American culture: that of racial essences, their relation to emotional capacity, and by extension, the relative suitability of various peoples for a place in the national community. Running through all of them is the same unsettling paradox of a sentimental or sympathetic racialism, a discursive formation within which, in a most counterintuitive way, the referential and classificatory power of "race" actually increases in proportion to the sympathy accorded the racialized other.

In the conclusion to the book, I turn finally to one location in the nineteenth-century literary tradition where we might observe this notion of sympathetic racialism, not only as a theme, but as an apparent object of satire: Herman Melville's 1855 novella about a slave rebellion at sea, *Benito Cereno*. This work interests me in this context for two reasons. First, in telling the story of slavery in terms which clearly reference the interracial warfare represented in frontier romances (the narrator at one point describes the revolting slaves as "Indian-like"), Melville explicitly connects the two genres that I claim were at least potentially linked in the antebellum literary imagination since the 1820s. Second, at the same historical moment when the notion of racial sentiment continued to animate much of the most "progressive" Anglo-American thought, Melville took aim at that conception and offered what many critics now regard as a more radical critique of contemporary racial discourse. Indeed, there is cause to suspect that Stowe's famous 1852 novel itself was a primary object of Melville's satirical gaze. I choose to end my book with this fascinating moment – a moment when Anglo-American literature looked at itself, so to speak, in order to wage a metafictional critique of race – because it represents an incipient possibility of the analysis of literary racialism I attempt to offer here.

CHAPTER 1

The politics of slavery and the discourse of race, 1787–1840

GENEALOGY OF A "GENERAL SILENCE"

Scholars have long puzzled over Thomas Jefferson's celebrated "ambivalence" about the politics of slavery.[1] Though later generations would look to Jefferson alternately as the patron saint of antislavery and as the father of American racism, his contemporaries knew him primarily as a man who had, in his own words, "carefully avoided every public act or manifestation" on the subject of slavery.[2] It is true that throughout the 1770s Jefferson had been quite outspoken against the institution. In 1774 he had referred in print to slavery as an "infamous practice" which "deeply wounded" the "rights of human nature." The "abolition of domestic slavery," he had written, "is the great object of desire in those colonies where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state."[3] In his original draft of the Declaration of Independence (in sections purged from the final document), he had denounced the slave trade as an "execrable commerce" and listed it among the complaints against the crown (22). And in drafting a Constitution for Virginia in 1776, he had tried to insert a clause prohibiting the importation of slaves (344).

But there is a curious discrepancy between the publicly outspoken Jefferson of the years leading up to the Revolution and the reticent and circumspect statesman of the Early Republic. From the late 1780s on, "the most remarkable thing about Jefferson's stand on slavery is his immense silence."[4] Biographers have documented his squeamishness, for example, about the American publication of his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which contained passages attacking slavery.[5] In letters, "Jefferson would sometimes repeat his antislavery sentiments to correspondents but ask them not to make his statements public."[6] In 1805, Jefferson, as president, would not even write a letter in reply to an appeal for his subscription to an antislavery poem. Instead, he asked his friend George Logan to reply on his behalf, in the negative. During and after his presidency, to similar requests that he lend his support to the antislavery cause, he responded that he was of course an enemy of the institution, but could not take public action as a statesman.[7] He frequently claimed that abolition was inevitable, provided "we . . . await with patience the workings of an overrulling [*sic*] providence"; for since the nation was not yet "ripe" for antislavery a premature action on his part would "rivet still closer the chains of bondage" (592). After years of such evasions, Jefferson then curiously suggested in 1814 that he need not make a public statement because his views had "long been in possession of the public, and time has only served to give them stronger root." But in the very same letter, he cited the "general silence which prevails on this subject" as evidence of "an apathy unfavorable to every hope," and therefore as a rationale for not speaking his already "public" views on the matter (1344–5).

Jefferson's circumlocutions on the subject constitute something of an historical mystery: why, in spite of his unwavering antipathy to slavery, would he have been so reluctant to produce public statements about it? It is perhaps tempting to resolve it in psychological terms; Alf Mapp, for example, attributes Jefferson's public silence to his lifelong fear of controversy.[8] Indeed a certain psychobiographical mode is almost canonical in Jefferson scholarship, particularly when it comes to the issue of slavery. Carl Binger's 1970 biography, for example, found in Jefferson's relationship to blacks a "perilous dilemma between his head and his heart": "One cannot escape the feeling that he was attracted to them, even sexually; but these feelings were 'ego-alien' and had to be pushed aside. The result was a conflict in his feelings which he was never able to reconcile and which led to confusion and guilt."[9] While more recent Jefferson scholarship tends to take its distance from the earlier psychobiographies, the trope of Jeffersonian "ambivalence" is certainly alive and well. "All his adult life," Randall tells us in his 1993 biography, "Thomas Jefferson seems to have tossed and turned in an agony of ambivalence over the dilemma of slavery and freedom."[10] Michael Knox Beran's *Jefferson's Demons: Portrait of a Restless Mind* (2003) also reproduces the familiar central figure of a "dark" and conflicted personality in which we will find the true causes of contradictory political action.[11] Without debating the merits of these psychological approaches for understanding Jefferson himself, I want to raise the possibility that, historically speaking, far more is at stake here than Jefferson's personal "ambivalence," "anxiety", or indecisiveness about slavery.

We might begin by taking Jefferson at his word, in effect, by considering the possibility that his reticence is part of a larger cultural formation, a "general silence which prevails" on the subject of slavery in the early decades of the nineteenth century. From a certain perspective, it is not at all clear what Jefferson can possibly mean by such a phrase. On the contrary, it is obvious that the period witnessed a great increase in discourse about slavery in the writings, speeches and sermons of statesmen and public intellectuals, the spread of reform movements and antislavery societies, the submission of citizens' petitions to the nation's legislative bodies, and notable debates in the state legislatures. But if we focus our attention exclusively on the sphere of official national politics in the decades following the Revolution, we might come closer to grasping the phenomenon towards which Jefferson gestured: a kind of political silence, hardly "general" but perhaps generalizable, and in Jefferson's case at least, contagious. To return Jefferson's public silence to its historical context is to read it as a symptom of a relative national-political silence on the issue of slavery between 1780 and 1820, at least when compared to the periods immediately before and after it. Robert Ferguson has characterized the politics of slavery in the early national period, when the institution was undergoing its most vigorous expansion to date, as a remarkable silence punctuated by brief periods of intense debate.[12] I aim here to extend Ferguson's observation and to register its implications for antebellum literary history.

An exemplary instance of this political reticence can be found, paradoxically, in the place where slavery was most hotly debated in this period. During the Constitutional Convention of 1787, arguments about the destiny of the slave trade and about whether slaves would count in the apportionment of representatives in the House provoked regional conflicts that nearly made the proposed Union impossible. In the face of what David Brion Davis has called an "unnegotiable conflict over the future of American slavery,"[13] the Constitution offered three compromises: the three-fifths ratio; the provision that Congress could tax, but not prohibit, the importation of slaves by individual states before the year 1808; and the provision requiring that fugitive slaves be returned to their masters even across state lines. What is most amazing is that the Constitution famously managed to do all this without ever naming the institution in question. Nowhere in these passages, nor anywhere in the Constitution of 1787, did "slaves" or "slavery" appear. Instead, the Constitution spoke of "Person[s] held to Service or Labour," or used indeterminate phrases like "such persons" or "other Persons."[14]

Clearly, this refinement of the political vocabulary – this elision, in effect, of "slavery" as a political object – was quite deliberate. According to James Madison, it came about because the delegates "had scruples against admitting the term 'Slaves' into the Instrument."[15] Jonathan Dayton, the Convention delegate from New Jersey, explained more fully why the word "slaves" had to be "changed for '*such persons*'":

> The sole reason assigned for changing it was, that it would be better not to stain the Constitutional code with such a term, since it could be avoided by the introduction of other equally intelligible words, as had been done in the former part of the same instrument, where the same sense was conveyed by the circuitous expression of "three fifths of all other persons."[16]

We must understand the decision to elide the term "slavery," then, in the context of this strange discursive behavior, according to which the *word* was thought to "stain" the document, even while the referent institution itself was being insulated from too-radical attack. Clearly, Jefferson was not alone in hewing to "circuitous expressions" on the subject.

If a Congressman so much as raised the topic during this period, Winthrop Jordan has remarked, he risked being treated as if he had "oafishly violated the rules of a game everyone was supposed to know how to play."[17] As if it were indecorous simply to speak of the matter in polite company, President Washington was inclined to apologize to his correspondent for mentioning it in a letter.[18] Southerners deliberately manipulated the Enlightenment language of the social contract to describe the North's duty to keep debate on the issue out of the Congress. "The Northern States adopted us with our slaves," said one southerner in 1790, "and we adopted them with their Quakers. There was an implied compact between the Northern and Southern people, that no step should be taken to injure the property of the latter, or to disturb their tranquility."[19] What must be understood is that *any* deliberation about the subject of slavery came to be regarded as such a disturbance.

One explicit sign of the new federal government's unwillingness to address slavery directly was the reluctance of the Congress to take up antislavery petitions presented by citizens. In response to one of the earliest of these, a Quaker antislavery petition presented in 1790, there had been a movement in Congress not merely to reject, but to refuse even to discuss it.[20] President Washington, who insisted that "there is not a man living who wishes more sincerely than I do, to see a plan adopted for . . . abolition,"[21] nonetheless called the introduction of the memorial into the Congress "an ill-judged piece of business" that "occasioned a great waste of time."[22] After the petition had been dismissed, Washington wrote with relief: "The memorial of the Quakers (and a very mal-apropos one it was), has at length been put to sleep, and will scarcely awake before the year 1808."[23]

In the years after 1814, when Jefferson averred a "general silence," the amount of national-political discourse on slavery was to increase dramatically. More than any other event, it was the Missouri crisis of 1819–1821 that brought the issue into full contact with the question of the health and future of the nation-state. The question of the admission of Missouri into the Union as a slave state occasioned the first Congressional debate directly concerning slavery on the scale of the 1787 debates at the Constitutional Convention.[24] Even so, southern politicians succeeded in turning a debate about the extension of slavery into a question of states' rights and the scope of federal power, and the polemical literature that emerged from the crisis frequently employed this crucial strategy. In *Tyranny Unmasked* (1821), for example, John Taylor, Tory radical and advocate for an embattled slave-holding aristocracy, spoke of "slavery" only once, to denote the subjection of the states to the Federal government:

> Why did God give brains to natural heads, if man could make a political head, better fitted to discern what will contribute to individual happiness? . . . Slavery, either personal or political, consists only in the power of some natural heads to dictate to others. Political liberty consists only in a government constituted to preserve, and not to defeat the natural capacity of providing for our own good. The States and the people, in constituting the Federal government, intended to reserve the use of their own heads.[25]

The power of such arguments was that they couched what was ultimately a defense of chattel slavery in a rhetoric of populism and political liberty. In this respect, the political legacy of the Missouri crisis was a states' rights discourse that provided a way of debating the matter of slavery without talking about it as such.

Even in the vastly changed political climate after the Missouri compromise, when one could certainly not posit a "general silence" about slavery in any literal sense, there were curious and significant holdovers of that phenomenon of circumlocution and evasion. In the 1830s, provoked in part by the 1833 Act of Parliament freeing all slaves in the English colonies, a wave of antislavery literature flooded the American press.[26] In response, President Jackson in 1835 urged Congress to enact a law excluding "incendiary publications" relating to slavery from the public mails. The circulation of such matter, Jackson argued, was "repugnant to the principles of our national compact" and should be prohibited by Congress "under severe penalties."[27] Members of both Houses agreed that the matter was "one of the greatest magnitude, requiring immediate and decisive action" (36); it was referred to a special committee and the legislation was swiftly passed.

If these measures seemed to address themselves quite specifically to "incendiary" abolitionist polemics "addressed to the passions of the slaves" and "calculated . . . to urge them on to deeds of death" (10, 45), what we would regard as "reasonable" debate on the floor of the House and the Senate excited similar apprehensions. This is nowhere clearer than in the congressional debate that erupted in 1835, when a group of Quakers submitted to the twenty-fourth Congress a petition praying for the end of slavery in the District of Columbia. For my purposes here, what is important about this particular petition is not its content, but rather the debate it engendered that was to occupy the Congress on and off for about two years.[28] Since it concerned a federal district rather than a state, the debate could not be conducted under the aegis of states' rights as had the Missouri question. It was immediately resolved that the petition, "with the pending motions thereto," be "laid on the table," that is, shelved without further discussion (38).

Surely one of the most surreal episodes in congressional history, the debate over the 1835 petition at times took on an almost absurd character, as when one of the disputants complained that "he did not know how the House could get at the contents of a petition without reading it" (40). Indeed, the petition itself would never even be read into the record, nor would its specifics be discussed. In the end, the strangely recursive argument that raged around it concerned only whether Congress should entertain debate on the petition. In the House, a Mr. Owens of Georgia, concerned to "put to rest this agitating, delicate, and dangerous question," proposed two resolutions "not to meet the question on this petition alone, but to meet the question, come in what shape it might." The aim of this proposal, said Owens, was to "operate upon all petitions that might come with the same tendency or object; nay, in one word, it was to grapple with the subject itself." It is clear from the resolutions, however, that "the question," "the subject itself," was not slavery, but rather the propriety of public deliberation about it:

> *Resolved*, That in the opinion of this House, the question of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia ought not to be entertained by Congress.
>
> *And be it further resolved*, That in case any petition praying the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia be hereafter presented, it is the deliberate opinion of this House the same ought to be laid upon the table without reading. (38)

So seriously did the House take its own decision to "lay on the table" the petition and its "pending motions," that one representative pointed out, and the House agreed, that Owens's resolutions themselves "could not come up without a suspension of the rules" (39). The House thus had to vote, first, to lay the matter on the table, and second, to suspend the rule in order to entertain further propositions to do so.

It is critical to recognize that in this 1835 debate, both pro and anti-slavery advocates, and politicians with their constituencies on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line, fundamentally agreed that the dangerous eloquence of slavery could only be met with political silence; they disagreed only about the most effective way of imposing it. Thus, for example, John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts, an outspoken enemy of slavery, argued against the proposed resolutions on the grounds that they infringed citizens' "sacred right of petition." Remarkably, however, Adams enthusiastically agreed with Owens on the central issue: no less than his southern colleagues, he assured them, his object was "to get this question out of the view of the nation, and of this House" (39). The alternative tactic Adams suggested was, quite literally, silence itself, deployed as a strategy of containment: all such petitions, he argued, might simply be read into the record, referred to the appropriate Committee, and promptly forgotten. In order to bolster his argument, he narrated several previous instances of petitions to Congress being disposed of in precisely this manner. The coup de grace was an object lesson provided by recent congressional history:

> [I]n 1834, similar petitions were presented, and an effort was made at that time to do that which has been done now, without success. A motion was made to lay on the table, which failed. They were referred to a committee, and from the moment they were referred they went to the tomb of the Capulets. A gentleman from the state of New York (Mr. Dickson,) a distinguished member, now no longer here, presented one or more petitions to this effect, and entertained this House with an eloquent speech of two hours' length in support of them. No reply was made. Not a word was said. The petitions were referred to the Committee for the District of Columbia, and we heard no more from them . . . Sir, did this excite a flame in the House? Not at all. He moved to refer the petitions to the Committee for the District of Columbia; they were so referred, and there they slept the sleep of death. (39–40)

As it happens, in February of 1836, Congress voted with Owens rather than Adams: they passed what was essentially a gag rule barring discussion of slavery in order to "arrest the discussion of the question of slavery on that floor, and throughout the country . . ." The version passed in the

House resolved "That all petitions, memorials, resolutions, propositions, or papers, relating in any way to the subject of slavery, or the abolition of slavery, shall, without either being printed or referred, be laid upon the table; and that no further action whatever be had upon them." In 1837 the House further voted to deny slaves the right of petition.[29] In this way, the Congress agreed to lay the subject of slavery into "the tomb of the Capulets," to use Adams' phrase, and hence to sentence it to a discursive death. This legally imposed silence was to hold in Congress until 1844, when an antislavery petition was not only read into the record but debated vigorously in its particulars.[30] The gag rule would still be intermittently cited by proslavery advocates for a few years, but it could no longer claim the space of political common sense.

"THE BLACK RACE WITHIN OUR BOSOM": SLAVERY AND THE USES OF RACE

I have taken the time to tell this story of reluctant debate and discursive evasion in order to emphasize that the political discourse of "slavery" between the 1780s and the 1840s was marked by a pattern of avoidance at the level of national politics. The fact that these acts of discursive containment failed to distinguish among inflammatory abolitionist appeals, the peaceful "prayers" of citizens, and the discourse of legislators on either side of the issue, tells us that when the subject was slavery these distinctions did not exist in one particular sense: direct discourse about slavery in this period was, de facto, incendiary speech. While I do not want to overstate the extent of "silence" as a political strategy, I am emphasizing it here in order to lay the groundwork for the chapters that follow, which argue that fiction provided the culture with one way of engaging the contested question of slavery by other means. For the time being, I will simply make the common-sense presumption that when discussion of an issue of such vital significance is so carefully limited or policed in one realm, it will find expression in other areas of the culture. In the face of such a critical and yet literally "unnegotiable conflict,"[31] moreover, evasion could only accomplish so much. At times what was needed was an alternate language, a discursive elsewhere according to which the issues surrounding slavery could be transcoded into other terms. As I have indicated, for example, one might speak of social contracts, states' rights, fractions of populations, or corporeal health and happiness, rather than the institution itself, in order to place one's political positions on a more stable ground than the contested field of "slavery" could possibly provide.

It is possible to argue that "race" itself functioned as another such semantic alibi, such that slavery could be talked about as a matter of racial differences. If it seems strange to put it this way, it may be because we are so accustomed to the connection between slavery and race that we tend to naturalize the link and forget that there ever was a way of talking about slavery as anything other than a racial matter. But a great deal of historical scholarship over the past several decades has emphasized that the articulation of race and slavery was not an immemorial association but rather a historical pairing that served a critical ideological function at a particular juncture.

This is to step into that historiographical thicket known as "the origins debate": which came first, racism or slavery?[32] Winthrop Jordan's 1968 book, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550–1812*, is in many ways still the standard account of the race-before-slavery position. Beginning with a section tellingly entitled "Genesis 1550–1700," the book promises to locate the origins of nineteenth-century racism in the sixteenth century. In order to do so, Jordan produces a narrative beginning with European "first impressions" of Africans during the Renaissance and ending in the Early Republic with the emergence of the US as a "white man's country." This trajectory of racism could not merely be the result of slavery, Jordan reasons: "why Negroes came to be slaves in the first place [is] a question which cannot be answered by thinking entirely in terms of the Negro's condition since he was not fully a slave for the Englishmen until they enslaved him."[33]

According to scholars like Barbara Fields and David Brion Davis, on the other hand, it is the other way around. To be sure, Englishmen in America had enslaved Africans since the arrival of the first slaves in the North American colonies in 1619. However, according to this particular strain in historiography, slavery was not inextricably linked to race until much later. The enslavement of Africans in seventeenth-century British America was initially neither a "racial" phenomenon nor an "inevitable outcome of racial prejudice."[34] Eric Williams's *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) is the classic account of the economic and geopolitical factors – not "racial" ones – that accounted for the divergence in status of the labor forces of Europe and Africa. Oscar and Mary Handlin's influential 1950 article, "Origins of the Southern Labor System," was another important extension of this argument. The Handlins argued that the first African-American laborers in early Virginia were not lifetime hereditary bond-laborers – were not, that is, slaves, strictly speaking – but, rather, had the same status as European indentured servants. Not until after 1660, some four decades after their first arrival, did African-American laborers begin to be treated differently. Barbara Fields and David Brion Davis, in the US context, and Colette Guillaumin, in the European context, are among those who have argued along similar lines more recently.[35] Different scholars date the first moment of the articulation of slavery and race differently, some as early as the late seventeenth century,[36] others closer to the turn of the nineteenth.[37] In any case, there seems to be a consensus that the high point of race's explanatory power vis-à-vis slavery was during the mid-nineteenth century.[38]

It was Fields who perhaps countered Winthrop Jordan's underlying premises most succinctly and powerfully. To state the problem in epistemological terms, Jordan presumed that the "Negro" preceded the "slave" as the object of European knowledge. In order to tell his story of origins, then, two unalterable "facts" had to precede slavery in order to make it possible: first, the physical fact of the "Negro's" "distinctive appearance" ("the Negro," Jordan tells us, "was readily identifiable as such; he was born branded"), and second, the psychological fact of the "white man's" primordial fear of blackness.[39] According to Fields, however, by treating race as a physical rather than a social fact, and turning racism into what she calls a "primordial attitude," this kind of account unwittingly "accord[s] race a transhistorical, almost metaphysical, status that removes it from all possibility of analysis and understanding."[40] Indeed, Jordan's trope of the "brand" of race deploys one of the central tropes of nineteenth-century racialism, that of the racial mark or stamp. In debunking this "fallacy of regarding race as a physical fact," a fallacy to which Jordan certainly succumbs, Fields remarks that the common-sense recourse to "observable" differences conceals the fundamental truth that "it is ideological context that tells people which details to notice, which to ignore, and which to take for granted."[41] At its root, this is not only a question of ideology, but a more general philosophical question about perception and classification, and the epistemological gestures which ground them.

Indeed, Fields's historical critique of racial classification is quite consonant with Foucault's comments on classification as such in the preface to *The Order of Things*: only once the terms have been established by which we know when to see similitude and when difference, can we then experience the illusion of an "untrained perception," or what Fields calls an "unmediated reflex of psychic impressions."[42] Framed in these terms, the nineteenth-century conception of race was a system for classifying persons according to somatic, physiognomic, and characterological features, accompanied by new technologies for the measurement of these features as absolute quantities: somatometry, craniometry, and, later in the century, psychometry. But while the features thus measured were presented as simple observable "facts," they needed to be laboriously produced in order simply to be "seen." First, as in any classification system, it was necessary to define which kinds of features would serve as the foundation for the desired classification, such as complexion, morphology, hair texture, and the like. Then, at a more fundamental level, there needed to be a set of criteria for the establishment of resemblances and differences. Racial classification thus relied on what Foucault calls a "system of elements": "a definition of the segments by which the resemblances and differences can be shown, the types of variation by which those segments can be affected, and, lastly, the threshold above which there is a difference and below which there is a similitude."[43] Once this work was completed with regard to race, there then appeared to be a new domain of objects – the "races" of man – and, for example, the "black man" and the "white man" could be spoken of as if they represented the very poles of sentient existence. Crucial to this conception in its nineteenth-century form is the assumption that such beings were differentiated, not by features resulting from environmental or social causes, but rather from characteristics thought to be essential, grounded in "nature," and hence unalterable. Consequently, in order to serve as the basis of natural rather than merely empirical social groupings, racial characteristics had to be apprehended as endo-determined (that is, determined from within the body of the subject rather than imposed on it from without) and hereditary.[44]

Staged in these terms, more is at stake than how we account for events in American historiography, and the "origins debate" becomes piece of a larger historical question about the status of the race concept in Western thought. Indeed, there is a great deal of scholarship on the history of race which takes a longer view of the question, approaching race from the perspective of the history of ideas.[45] As the literary readings that follow in subsequent chapters so often reference the history of this concept, I want to spend some time discussing one particularly important work in this history of ideas mode, Ivan Hannaford's magisterial 1996 work, *Race: The History of An Idea in the West.*[46]

Though Hannaford began his research entirely expecting to trace the origins of modern race-thinking back to ancient western culture, what he found instead was the "remarkable *absence* of race as an organizing principle" in ancient thought and the much more recent historical pedigree of this fateful concept.[47] Picking up a strand of historiography that he dates back to the mid-twentieth century work of Eric Voegelin and Hannah Arendt, he thus ended up taking aim at an assumption whose dangers are in some ways more slippery and subtle than those of racism itself: the very assumption that human cultures have always held a belief in racial difference. For as Fields's critique of Jordan demonstrated, even when historians castigate a supposedly immemorial belief in race as fallacious or dangerous, they paradoxically give it the stamp of universality and hence confer on it a peculiar kind of necessity and historical inevitability.

In order, then, to "resist carrying the categories of the present into the past," Hannaford set himself a methodological imperative: "I shall reject outright any suggestion that illuminates the past by reference to *post hoc* racial differentiation and raciation" (8). In other words, while he might pause to point out when a historically fateful conception is generated, he refuses to identify that concept as racial in itself simply because it would be racialized after the fact by later thinkers. In concrete terms, this means that people of earlier periods "cannot be assumed to have had [racialist] dispositions simply because they used resembling words like 'barbarian,' 'monster,' *ethnos*, 'brute,' 'Wildman,' and 'slave'" (8). The inclusion of the last term should set us on notice that his findings are of great interest to those invested in the "origins debate" and the history of how slavery came to be a racial matter.

What makes this story especially complex is that racialist thinkers consistently supported their theories by grounding them in traditional authorities. Modern references to "racial" truths in ancient works as diverse as the Hebrew scriptures, Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Physics*, and Virgil's *Aeneid* are so commonplace in the nineteenth century that they mask the fact that these texts were in fact being "creatively" rewritten through acts of selective reference or paraphrase. Hannaford painstakingly shows how modern references to ancient racial thought, whether to Greco-Roman, biblical, or medieval sources, in fact rely on bold acts of revision, adaptation, and, not least, anachronistic translation of key terms of those traditional texts which transform them from their own conceptual terms into those of contemporary racial thought. Again and again in the story Hannaford tells, "readings" of ancient authorities by the intellectuals of modern race-thinking turn out to be distortive *rewritings* of those texts into the terms of the emergent race concept. This process, of what Hannaford calls retrospective "raciation" of earlier thought (61), thus amounts to a specifically racialist version of what historian Eric Hobsbawm has termed the "invention of tradition," whereby nineteenth-century racial theorists gave race "the authority of ancestry by mistranslating ancient texts, either from ignorance or deliberate tendentiousness."[48] Subsequent generations of scholars then further muddied the issue when they "misinterpreted" those ancient texts by "attributing to them racial attitudes which they never possessed" (19). Falling into the trap laid for them by nineteenth-century racialism, these scholarly accounts are often plagued by the same misleading acts of translation – rendering the Latin *gens* as "race," for example – which modern racialist thought used to legitimate itself.

In order to disentangle this knot of epistemological recursion, Hannaford systematically rereads a range of ancient thinkers – including the Hebrew scriptures, Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Hesiod, Herodotus, Virgil, and Augustine – in terms truer to their original, and distinctly nonracial, conceptions of the world and human existence. In ancient Greek thought, for example, he finds that the critical differentiations between peoples were not physical but moral and political in the broadest sense of the terms. The dominant notion was what Hannaford terms "the moral science of *eunomics*":

> The differentiation between Greek and non-Greek, between *ethnos* and *politicos*, is not race, but the ability to rise above the mortal life of custom and habit, demonstrating by human excellence (*arete*) a capacity to engage in speech, argument, discourse in a reasoned and gifted way in a public arena. Those who cannot speak the language of politics, do not choose to practice it, and are unable to recognize its essential requirements are said to be *barbaros*. Those who are *barbaros* share with the Greeks the terror and horror of natural existence, but are distinguished from them by their persistence in living brutishly and viciously (without letters) according to nature (*physis*), rather than according to man-made laws (*nomos*). (22)

It is easy to see how ethnocentric such a conception is, and how easily it could serve as a justification for imperial conquest, but it was nonetheless a distinctly nonracial way of apprehending difference. The key to grasping this distinction is to resist identifying aggression with racism. No scholar of race has made as clear a point of this as Colette Guillaumin: "Aggressivity often connotes racism, but does not denote it. It is neither a sufficient condition (aggressivity is not always racist), nor a necessary one (racism exists before overt hostility, in a certain type of relation to the other in society)."[49] Guillaumin suggests that our habitual failure to distinguish aggressive and oppressive social practices from race-thinking proper accounts for the divergent historical datings of the race concept and the consistent tendency to turn it into an immemorial idea.

Another point in common between Hannaford's intellectual history and Guillaumin's theoretical approach to racial classification is the insistence in both that the history of the *concept* of race should not be confused with the history of the *word*. One problem with the latter approach is that it cannot account for the possibility that the same signifier can become attached to different concepts. Guillaumin's emphasis on this point is part and parcel of what we might call her historical semiotics: she studies race as a sign system rooted in social- and economic-historical transformations. "There is a subtle trap laid for us by words whose forms do not alter over time, for we tend to ascribe to them with no hesitation the identity of a fixed meaning."[50] To avoid this pitfall, Guillaumin used "that most commonplace of tools, the dictionary," in order to demonstrate "shifts in meaning behind the façade of permanence." Once we tune in to the possibility that the same sign might operate differently at different historical moments, it becomes possible to observe "in the successive uses of a word . . . a phenomenon comparable to homonymy, whereby signifieds diverge beneath a common signifier."[51] Her attention to the possibility of semantic divergence also has a theoretical counterpart in one of the principles of Foucault's notion of "genealogy," namely, that we not assume that words "[keep] their meaning . . . and that ideas retain their logic."[52]

For Hannaford, tracing the semantic shiftings of the term "race" is simply a matter of getting the story right. He explains not only that the word is of relatively recent origin, having entered the romance languages, English and Scottish between 1200 and 1500, but that not until much later did it begin to acquire anything like its nineteenth- and twentieth-century meanings. When "race" entered into these languages and English during the Middle Ages, "it originally had a multiplicity of meanings that mostly related to running, mathematical or astrological lines, millstreams, ships' wakes, marks, and courses." When applied to descent and lineage, "the word also denoted being of good, noble, and pure lineage, and in Christian Europe directly related to membership in an ancient and exclusive noble order of kings and bishops and to a particular time sequence (*cursus*) that had its authority (*auctoritas*) and origin (*origino*) in a historical past stretching back to Rome" (147). Later, in Early Modern Europe, "to belong to a race was to belong to a noble family with a valorous ancestry and a profession of public service and virtue," and hence race was no longer the exclusive reserve of kings and bishops (175). There are two major things of note here for the student of modern racial thought. First, while Hannaford himself doesn't emphasize the point, Guillaumin notes that early race was an auto-referential concept.[53] In other words, when “to belong to a race” signified participation in a royal or ecclesiastical lineage, it was an advantageous axis of *self-identification*. Only later did race become altero-referential, that is, a mark placed by a dominant group upon a marginal, minority, or subjugated other. The second important lesson in this discursive history is that while the word race denoted belonging in a lineage of power or virtue, it was distinctly *not* a biological inheritance of somatic traits. In that sense, it was a social-symbolic rather than a biophysical category, and hence was absolutely distinct from the modern notion of race as an essential and immutable biological property.

It was not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, according to Hannaford, that “many writers came to use the word ‘race’ to claim that there were immutable major divisions of humankind, each with biologically transmitted characteristics” (17). Prior to this, “descent is not about the transmission of somatological characteristics” because “there is no biology to support a notion of a racial ‘type’” (41). During the eighteenth century, in the absence of a conception of essential biophysical differences, there were a range of discourses in European culture that variably conveyed human difference: climatological, humoral, and what Roxann Wheeler suggestively calls “Christian semiotics,” which “combined moral and aesthetic meanings, primarily in the binary pair pure white and sinful black.”[54] From a contemporary retrospective view, all of these realms of knowledge seem variably and, by a kind of informal collaboration, to cover the terrain later ruled by “race.” But these ways of accounting for variety in the eighteenth century nonetheless differed fundamentally from the racial ideology of the following century. One particularly clear indication of this fact is the “elasticity” of skin color as a signifier throughout the eighteenth century.[55] Not only was complexion radically mutable, but the forces that guided its mutation were variable. Certainly no force was more powerful nor received more attention than variations in temperature in what Wheeler terms the “empire of climate” in Enlightenment thought. But overlapping with climatological thinking were arguments about the shaping influence of civil institutions, religious practices, and commerce on the visible differences among the inhabitants of different regions of the earth.

As scholars have begun to put a finer point on the shifts in the conceptualization of human variety during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and more carefully to guard against the retrojection of nineteenth-century categories of thought onto them, the question of terminology has become invested with greater importance. Some scholars prefer not to use the term "race" to refer both to the earlier and later conceptions; to do so, it can be argued, is to proceed as if the object toward which both terms gestured was identical – race itself – and thus to falter at the very opening of the inquiry. In any case, it has become quite common to find scholars defining and defending their terminological choices, typically in their introductions or in long footnotes. In a recent article on the Renaissance conception of race, for example, Jean Feerick demonstrates that early modern conceptions of difference were in various ways radically different than later theories, in order to "chart the movement of racial categories from fluid demarcations to fixed categories." As a terminological matter, Feerick is content to refer throughout simply to "early" and "later" racial discourses, and, at one point, to "a proto-racial discourse" which gave way to a later, more stable discourse of race.[56] Roxann Wheeler, by contrast, puts more rhetorical weight on her choice of terms: "although *race* makes sense to us now as a term that designates fairly rigid distinctions in appearance and even behavior, it did not have the same currency in the eighteenth century." Consequently, since the concept of race during her period of focus "does not reflect an essential condition," she uses "the term *human variety* or *human difference* to underscore eighteenth-century sensibility, which did not always register the sense of difference that *race* does today."[57] I too will attempt to maintain some terminological consistency in referring to the object of knowledge of the earlier theories as "human variety" and to the later object as "race," primarily in order to pay respect to a general taxonomic shift (sometimes obscured in the secondary literature but clear in the primary sources themselves) from eighteenth-century classifications of "the nations" to nineteenth-century classifications of "the races of man." If, however, some readers prefer to understand the changes I describe as constituting a "development in the idea of race," rather than the "making of modern race" – its reinvention rather than its invention – I am satisfied simply to explain my reasons for making a different rhetorical choice.

It seems extremely counterintuitive even to entertain the idea that eighteenth-century science did not "think race." European thought in this period, particularly natural history, appears to have been obsessively concerned with classifying bodies and objects and inserting them into taxonomies. Indeed, it is fair to say that the Enlightenment was in some sense the high-water mark of the modern will to classify. Nor was there anything benign about these classifications as they pertained to human beings, notwithstanding the occasional scholarly nostalgia for so-called

Enlightenment "optimism." Some scholars of "full-blown" nineteenth-century racism locate its roots firmly in the virulent ethnocentrism of European accounts of physical and moral diversity during the eighteenth century. But to say that aspects of nineteenth-century racialism were built upon eighteenth-century thought about difference is only to identify certain concepts they share, not to draw an unbroken line of filiation between them. Guillaumin theorizes this problem of semantic change as a kind of discursive overlapping or superimposition: "It is hard to deny that the modern senses [of the term "race"] are indeed based on the old ones, as no new terms have been created. But new meanings have certainly been imposed on old terms." This deceptively simple process of semantic "imposition" can in fact produce radical shifts in meaning, for it "involve[s] not a change in the meaning of a single term, but the drift of a whole semantic field. Without exception, the words in this field are now all markedly different from their older homonyms, showing that the somatic-biological ideology they carry, completely absent from earlier usage, was indeed something quite new."[58]

All of this can be more easily illustrated if we descend from historical and theoretical generalities to the details of scientific writing during this period. Linnaeus (Carl von Linné [1707–78]), the great systematizer, is the thinker most often credited with the first classificatory exposition of the races.[59] His *Systema naturae*, first published in 1735, defined four "varieties" of *homo sapiens*: *Europaeus albescens*, *Americanus rubescens*, *Asiaticus fuscus*, and *Africanus niger*.[60] The last revision of the work, the tenth edition of 1758–59, elaborated this fourfold classification:

AMERICANUS	a. reddish, choleric, erect. *Hair* black, straight, thick; *Nostrils* wide; *Face* harsh, *Beard* scanty. *Obstinate*, merry, free. *Paints* himself with fine red lines. *Regulated* by customs.
EUROPAEUS	b. white, sanguine, muscular. *Hair* flowing, long. *Eyes* blue. *Gentle*, acute, inventive. *Covered* with close vestments. *Governed* by laws.
ASIATICUS	c. sallow, melancholy, stiff. *Hair* black. *Eyes* dark. *Severe*, haughty, avaricious. *Covered* with loose garments. *Ruled* by opinions.

AFER d. black, phlegmatic, relaxed.
Hair black, frizzled. *Skin* silky. *Nose* flat, *Lips* tumid.
Women without shame. *Mammae* lactate profusely.
Crafty, indolent, negligent.
Anoints himself with grease.
Governed by caprice.[61]

There is certainly much in Linnaeus's classification that is ominously familiar to the student of nineteenth-century racism. To be sure, there is an evident overvaluation of *Homo sapiens Europaeus* and a corresponding undervaluation of the other varieties of man. But this does not in and of itself constitute the particular system of values we call "racism" or imply the presence of a properly racial classification. If we are careful to situate Linnaean thought in the context of eighteenth-century theories of difference, we immediately recognize that Linnaeus's four primary taxonomic categories – *Americanus*, *Europaeus*, *Asiaticus*, *Afer* – are not functions of biology or morphology but rather of geography. They are, moreover, geographical in a peculiarly eighteenth-century sense. The most influential eighteenth-century theorists of human variety, Linnaeus, Buffon (1707–88), Blumenbach (1752–1840), and the American Samuel Stanhope Smith (1750–1819), all defined subvarieties of the human species as "classes of inhabitants" of different regions. In doing so, as Nicholas Hudson has recently emphasized, they tended to refer not to "races" but "nations" of men.[62] In a typical passage, Buffon discussed "the varieties that appear among men in different regions of the earth," which he organized under three heads: "1. The colour; 2. The figure and stature; and, 3. The dispositions of different people." One twentieth-century commentator on this text, based on the nature of these criteria, apparently expects to find a disquisition on the "races of man": Buffon's "section on 'The varieties of the human species'," he notes with disappointment, "is based upon mere geographic distribution and is a mixture of physical anthropology and ethnography."[63] But this is not an unfortunate oversight on Buffon's part; it is an indication that he is operating in a different conceptual framework than that which governed the nineteenth-century discourse on the "races."

One aspect of Linnaeus's classification that belies its apparent continuity with nineteenth-century race is the juxtaposition of features that would later be assigned to "nature" with those that would be designated as "cultural." It is no great leap for Linnaeus from disposition ("*Gentle*, acute, inventive") to clothing ("*Covered* with close vestments"), and nothing in his system indicates which sorts of features are the more "essential" markers. In the nineteenth century, as we shall see, a bold line would be drawn between differences resulting from "the immutable laws of Nature" and the relatively insignificant "external causes" of variety. Eighteenth-century natural history made a comparable distinction between what it called "nature" and "art," but in a most counterintuitive way, "art" at times seemed to exert even greater power. One source of this discrepancy is a shift in the conception of the origins of the human species.

According to the dominant eighteenth-century account of human origins, the theory of "monogeny" or "monogenesis," all the diverse "nations" were descended from a single human pair.[64] The privileged object of knowledge was man as such – man as a species – and the species were by definition original and indivisible: "Every species having been originally created," wrote Buffon, "the first individual served as a model to their descendants."[65] Progenitor and progeny were connected by "generation," a rule-governed and continuous process. Though consonant with the Biblical account of creation, monogeny nevertheless needed to be buttressed by a theory of the causes of variety. For if the human species was unitary, descended from an original pair of progenitors, whence the diversity of the nations? If the process of generation is governed by natural laws, as Blumenbach put it, "What then are the causes of the contrary event? What is it which changes the course of generation, and now produces a worse and now a better progeny, at all events widely different from its original progenitors?"[66]

By way of a solution, eighteenth-century theorists proposed what contemporary historians of science have called "environmentalism," or more accurately "degenerationism."[67] In its movement from the original progenitors to their modern progeny, the species had "degenerated" into its diverse subvarieties. "Art," which included climate, diet, and "mode of life," determined the degree and direction of degeneration. Of the three, climate tended to be emphasized; indeed, according to Blumenbach, its "effects seem so great that distinguished men have thought that on this alone depended the different shapes, colours, manners and institutions of men."[68] Buffon must have been one of the "distinguished men" Blumenbach had in mind: "The climate," Buffon had written, "may be regarded as the chief cause of the different colours of men. Whenever man began to change his climate, and to migrate from one country to another, his nature was subject to various alterations."[69] For all these thinkers, moreover, there was scarcely any variety that could not, in the last analysis, be reduced to climate or its concomitant influences, diet and the "mode of life." None of the evident differences among the "nations," therefore, could be called "original" or primal. Rather, eighteenth-century science saw all subvarieties within the species, however one chose to define them, as the outcome of external causes.

It is crucial to emphasize that taxonomers like Linnaeus never suggested that the features they catalogued, whether physical, dispositional, or sumptuary, were permanent or immutable. On the contrary, even those features that would later be regarded as the most fixed and stable – such as skin color or cranial shape – were thought to be alterable. More notable is the way that social institutions could influence the process of mutability. Buffon recounted an incident from a seventeenth-century South African account about a Hottentot baby removed from her home and raised in a Dutch colonial household, where she "soon became as white as any European." Buffon drew out the implications of this story for his account of human mutability: "In a succession of generations, a white people transported from the north to the Equator, would undergo this change, especially if they adopted the manners, and used the food, of the new country."[70] In the context of British colonialism, Wheeler explains, "it was commonly reckoned that it would take at least ten generations for Englishmen in the torrid zones to turn into Negroes or for Negroes in England to turn into northern Europeans."[71]

If to a modern, and post-Darwinian, reader the theory of degeneration resembles a kind of proto-evolutionary theory, this is where they most obviously diverge. For bodies could be fundamentally transformed within the space of a single lifetime. Samuel Stanhope Smith's *Essay on the Causes of the Variety of the Complexion and Figure in the Human Species*, published in Philadelphia in 1787, punctuated its argument for monogeny with accounts of people whose complexions had changed over the course of a few years. For example, the "Irish and German nations," previously "among the fairest in Europe," were visibly changing in America:

> The change of complexion which has already passed upon these people is not easily imagined by an inhabitant of Britain, and furnishes the clearest evidence to an attentive observer of nature that, if they were thrown, like the native Indians, into a savage state, they would be perfectly marked, in time, with the same colour. Not only their complexion, but their whole constitution seems to be changed.[72]

Climate, it is clear, was not the only cause of variety: it may be the "first and chief" influence, but, Smith insisted, "the state of society . . . greatly augments or corrects the influence of climate, and is itself the independent cause of many conspicuous distinctions among mankind" (110). It is the European "thrown" not only into a particular climate, but "into a savage state," who begins to resemble the "Indian." The process worked in the other direction as well: Smith cites the case history, famous in the late eighteenth century, of the "Indian" whose "features" began visibly to change after enrolling in college. He so whitened as a result of his exposure to civilization that, Smith concluded, "there is less difference between his features and those of his fellow students, than we often see between persons in civilized society" (62).

By the end of the eighteenth century, stories of people undergoing what we would regard as fundamental physiological changes were readily available in American culture. The majority of these cases concerned people of African descent. For example, Benjamin Rush, republican theorist and physician, reported that two white women had turned darker from living with native African husbands.[73] But by far the greater cultural interest appeared to lie in cases of the opposite sort. From the 1780s until the 1820s, accounts of Africans turning "white" in America circulated not only in treatises on human variety but in the periodical press. The *National Gazette* for October 31, 1791 carried a description by Charles Wilson Peale, who had a year earlier displayed a living specimen of the phenomenon in his Philadelphia museum, of a Maryland slave named James "born a Negro, or a very dark Mulatto, who afterwards became white." So thorough was James's transformation, Peale reports, that presently "His skin is of a clear wholesome white, fair, and what could be called, a *better skin*, than any of a number of white people who were present, at different times when I saw him."[74] Thomas Jefferson had reported similar such cases in Query VI of his *Notes on the State of Virginia* several years earlier.[75] By 1802, such accounts were so commonplace that they now followed headlines like "Another Instance of a Negro Turning White" or "Another Ethiopian Turning to a White Man."[76] According to a contemporary, one of these cases appeared so widely in print that his name, Henry Moss, "for many years afterward, was almost as familiar to readers of newspapers and other periodicals . . . as was that of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, or James Madison."[77]

For a culture saturated with such representations, human variety had the ontological status of a *condition* rather than an essence. Even detailed accounts of features such as skin color and morphology – features regarded by a later science as "racial" characteristics par excellence – were not in this period grounded in a theory of "the races." This can be most clearly demonstrated by noting that identical language was used to refer to social classes as to the differences among "the nations": "The poor and labouring part of the community," wrote Smith in his *Essay*, "are usually more swarthy and squalid in their complexion, more hard in their features, and more coarse and ill-formed in their limbs, than persons of better fortune, and more liberal means of subsistence" (120). This attribution of "racial" characteristics to "classes" was possible because "the several classes of men in polished nations . . . may be considered as people in different states of society" (52). For Smith, the differences among these "classes of men" had the same status as those distinguishing the nations.

By 1850, almost all of the major aspects of the eighteenth-century theory of variety were under assault by a new racial theory, many of whose architects were American scientists. Charles Caldwell's *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race*, one of the first attacks on monogeny and its correlates, degenerationism and the mutability of human difference, was precocious in the sense that it articulated a position, still idiosyncratic in 1830, that was to become commonplace by mid-century.[78] Caldwell explicitly represented himself as doing battle with eighteenth-century knowledge: "The rubbish of the old must be cleared away," he declared, "before the foundation of the new fabric can be securely laid."[79] Hence, if some histories of "race" have tended to obscure the discontinuities in this category, the nineteenth-century racial theorists themselves were certainly under no illusions about it. During the late 1840s, the major antebellum theorists of race, Caldwell, Samuel George Morton (1799–1851), Josiah C. Nott (1804–1873), and Louis Aggasiz (1807–1873), saw themselves as the bearers of a specifically nineteenth-century science of race.

To the theory of monogeny, the new racial science opposed what historians have called "polygeny" or "polygenesis": the doctrine that "the Almighty in his wisdom has peopled our vast planet from many distant centres, instead of one, and with races or species originally and radically distinct."[80] This doctrine did not contradict the Biblical account, Aggasiz wrote in 1850, because Genesis had only been the story of "the branches of the white race."[81] The privileged object of knowledge of polygenesis was not "the diversity of nations" but now "the physical characteristics which distinguish the different Races." No longer regarded as the products of "art," these "characteristics" were now regarded as "independent of external causes."[82] Hence, they were original and primal: "The physical or organic characters which distinguish the several races of men," wrote Samuel Morton, "are as old as the oldest records of our species."[83] The idea of polygenesis itself was not new. Though it was clearly a fringe view in the eighteenth century, there were some thinkers who advanced a theory of original differences irreducible to external influences (in the Anglo-American context, the most important among the early advocates of polygenesis were the Englishmen Charles White and Lord Kames), just as there would continue to be advocates for the residual theory of monogenesis in the nineteenth century.[84] But by the middle of the nineteenth century, polygenesis had supplanted monogenesis as the new scientific common sense.

From the perspective of nineteenth-century racial science, monogenesis was an evident absurdity, because it asked us to believe that "a Caucasian father and mother must do what never has been done, give birth to a true Mongolian, African, or Indian infant."[85] This reductio ad absurdum was based on a willful misrepresentation; the theory of degeneration had never suggested anything of the sort. The question of its accuracy aside, however, what is important about the nineteenth-century critique of monogenesis is that it presupposed a new kind of human body, one which is naturally, permanently – and hence essentially – endowed with "race" from the moment it comes into existence. The notion of originary race applied not only to "Mongolian, African, or Indian" bodies but also entailed the production of the idea of a *white* race. Tracing the "new racial ideology" of Anglo-Saxonism, Reginald Horsman has argued that while English interest in the Anglo-Saxons can be traced back to England after the English Reformation, and developed over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, only at the turn of the nineteenth century did it start to become a racial discourse in the modern sense – a discourse, that is, grounded not in the history of Anglo-Saxon institutions but in a new metaphysics of blood and morphology.[86]

One especially concrete indication of the way the terms of theorizing difference had shifted is the transformed role played by geography in racial classification. In eighteenth-century natural science, as we have seen, geography was not only the basis of taxonomy (European man, Asiatic man, and so on), but it was the cause of the physical and dispositional distinctions among the varieties. Under the dominance of polygenesis in the nineteenth century, when the classification of "races" displaced that of "nations," geography did not drop out of scientific discussion but it did take on a different meaning. Since differences were now assumed to be primal and permanent, place of origin no longer signified the generative or degenerative power of climate, but rather, in Josiah Nott's telling formulation, merely "the geographical distribution of . . . the races of men."[87] Samuel Morton began his discussion of the issue with the premise that global location "is less the effect of coercion than of choice." If peoples seem suited to the climates of their native regions, it is because of their intrinsic inclinations toward them. "Thus, the Eskimau, surrounded by an atmosphere that freezes mercury, rejoices in his snowy deserts, and has pined in unhappiness when removed to more genial climes." By the same token, "the native of the torrid regions of Africa, oppressed by a vertical sun, and often delirious with thirst, thinks no part of the world so desirable as his own."[88] What interests me here is not the obvious ethnocentrism of the descriptions, but the strange reversal by which geography functions in each case as the evidence rather than the origin of distinctions; climate, no longer the cause of the racial mark, now becomes its effect. Nott similarly wrote of the "inherent love of primitive locality," but he emphasized the fact that it was most operative with "those races . . . whose moral and intellectual structure is less complex," as opposed to the higher races, whose enterprise leads them to cross natural limits "impelled by an irresistible instinct": that of "extending and perfecting civilization."[89] Extremely telling throughout all these examples, moreover, is the prevalence of a language of racialized affect – whether the lower races' "love of primitive locality" or the higher races' irrepressible desire to travel – for it gestures towards the discourse of racial sentiment that concerns me in the chapters to come.

Roxann Wheeler, applying Foucault's argument about the transformations of the human sciences in *The Order of Things* to racial science, argues that "the eighteenth-century interest in surface, physical variation gave way, in part, to a new emphasis on structure" by the mid-nineteenth century.[90] This change entailed first of all a shift in focus from the earlier emphasis on visible surfaces to a new focus on hidden depths and inner parts.[91] This certainly seems to apply in the case of American racial theory in the nineteenth century. In order to differentiate the Negro from the Caucasian, for example, these theorists put an unprecedented emphasis on parts hidden from view: the organization of bone and muscular systems, the color of the blood, the size of the nerves, and so on. Caldwell, for example, tells us that the texture of the bones is "denser, harder, and heavier in the African"; that the cranial cavity is "much smaller" in the lower races generally; that "the nerves of the African generally are larger in proportion to his brain, than those of the Caucasian"; and that the pelvic cavity "in the male African . . . is less capacious, and in the female more so, than in the male and female of the Caucasian race." Even superficial parts such as hair and skin were to be analyzed in a new way, for the surface of the body now concealed a kind of molecular depth.

Eighteenth-century accounts of variety, for example, had regarded the texture of the hair as a significant variation, but for racial biology, hair did not give up its secrets so easily. It was no longer a simple matter of observable texture: "the precise difference here," wrote Caldwell, "cannot be adequately made known in words. To be fully understood, it must be seen. The hair of the two races must be examined with a microscope."[92] Hence, nineteenth-century biology tended to locate the markers of racial difference beneath the visible surface of the body in the depths of its physiology.

For my purposes here, however, what is most significant about this inward turn in defining race is its implications for psychological rather than physiological discourses of racial difference. In particular, I am interested in the way sentimental and emotional properties became tethered to racial difference during the nineteenth century such that different races were thought to feel different things and to feel them differently. For the reasons I explained in the introduction, I believe the story of the emergence of this notion of racial sentiment can best be told by looking at early nineteenth-century literary narratives about the races, which is precisely what subsequent chapters aim to do in detail. But in order to prepare the way for this argument, I want to contrast it briefly with related earlier notions of the character and interiority of different peoples.

More than anything else, it was the earlier theory of the humors, a discourse of collective character, that most resembles what I am calling "racial sentiment" in the later period. Indeed, in the ancient writings on human diversity, we often find humoral theory standing in where the modern reader expects to find racialist assumptions about human difference. For example, Hippocrates's *Airs, Waters, and Places*, written in the fifth century BCE, attributed physical differences to differences in geography and the disposition of the humors (blood, bile, phlegm, and choler) in different climates.[93] During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, an expanded humoral theory proved more than capable of accounting not only for physical differences but also for psychological and social characteristics of the world's peoples.[94] The recent work of Mary Floyd-Wilson, Roxann Wheeler, and Jean Feerick has thoroughly explicated the enormous explanatory power of humoral theory in early modern and eighteenth-century Europe. As Wheeler argues, for example, the theory of the humors was "the common sense of the day" in eighteenth-century British culture, and much of what we "have been led to consider physical 'racial' traits that Europeans assigned themselves and others are, to a considerable extent, filtered through the humoral and climatic sensibility" during this period.[95]

In general terms, "humor theory linked the environment to the mind and body in a symbiotic relationship." Complexion was not a mark on the body so much as a variable property of all bodies: it "referred to inhabitants' temperament or disposition; it arose from the interaction of climate and the bodily humors" and skin color "was only one component of complexion." Since "each region of the earth produced nations with a particular cast of humors that dominated the behavior and appearance of [its] inhabitants," it was possible to classify and describe the general characteristics of these nations "as well as to formulate stereotypes."[96] For example, Immanuel Kant's typology of national characteristics in his 1764 *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* classified the moral-aesthetic propensities of the nations of men by linking them to the "accepted classification of the temperaments," the melancholic, sanguine, choleric, and phlegmatic.[97] But as Wheeler emphasizes, insofar as the "humoral body was porous and thus easily affected by what went on in and around it," it was "subject to fluctuation" and hence could not serve as the basis for arguments for essential or permanent differences. Until the end of the eighteenth century, "a vast majority of . . . Europeans still believed that cultural, educational, or environmental change altered the humoral mix and thus affected both appearance and behavior."[98]

A perfect example of this humoralist thinking can be found hiding in plain sight in the Linnaean classification of *Homo sapiens* quoted above, where Linnaeus is careful to assign the dominant humor for each nation as the central term of each initial triad. This is a clue that the dispositional information he goes on to give us for each relies on a humoral model distinct from later theories of essential racial character. What makes this difference initially difficult to grasp is that the cultural antinomies generated on the basis of the humoral body, including many of the stereotypes that animate Linnaeus's table or Kant's classification, would be "fully unmoored from their original context" by mid-nineteenth century racial biology and pressed into the service of a classification of permanent and essential racial types.[99] This explains how Linnaeus can be so frequently cited as a classifier of the races, for it provides a concrete example of the process of cultural revision that Hannaford calls "*post hoc* raciation" and Guillaumin calls the "imposition" of later meanings on earlier terms. Linnaeus "would probably have been very surprised," Guillaumin remarks, "if one had connected him to some endo-determinism" and hence apprehended his classification system as a "natural" grouping in the nineteenth-century racialist sense.[100]

I have taken the time to detail this discursive history of "race" because changes in the understanding of human difference are so critical to the argument of my book as a whole. With this history in mind, we can now return to the "origins debate" and briefly chart how slavery itself might have been changed by the introduction of this new conception. The Williams-Handlin position in the "origins debate," in order to show how slavery as a labor system could be conducted without reliance on racial ideology, argued that the colonial institution of slavery arose from economic and geopolitical necessity and only later acquired the backing of a racial ideology. My concern here is not with the history of slavery as a social institution, but with "slavery" as a concept in Anglo-American political discourse, and the impact of emerging theories of race on that concept – how, in other words, "race" became a category of political thought. To this end, I will gesture towards a few key moments in the discourse about slavery in America, before and after slavery had become fixed to the notion of the slave's race.

The year 1787 saw the drafting of the Constitution, the defense of the three-fifths compromise in *Federalist* No. 54, and the publication of Samuel Stanhope Smith's *Essay on the Causes of the Variety of the Complexion and Figure in the Human Species.* These texts are linked not only by that historical coincidence but also by a shared set of assumptions indebted to Enlightenment thought. For Enlightenment political theorists, to return to the origins of human institutions was at the same time to reach back to man in his original or primitive state. "If I have dwelled so long," wrote Rousseau in his *Discourse on Inequality,*

> upon the supposition of this primitive condition, it is because, having ancient errors and inveterate prejudices to destroy, I thought that I ought to dig down to the roots and show in the picture of the true state of nature how far even natural inequality is from having as much reality and influence in this state as our writers claim.
>
> Indeed, it is easy to see that among the differences that distinguish men, several pass for natural that are uniquely the work of habit and the various modes of living that men adopt in society.[101]

Admittedly, not all Enlightenment thinkers were as intent on establishing natural equality. But no less than Rousseau, the American political theorists who took up the discourse of natural rights at the end of the eighteenth century presumed that if we "dig down to the roots," the majority of physical differences among men will appear to be the outcome of "art" rather than nature, just as they attributed the origins of political inequality to the emergence of civil society. Thus when Abraham Williams set out in a 1762 "Election Sermon" to argue for natural equality he presumed monogeny, "[a]ll Men being naturally equal, as descended from a common Parent, enbued [*sic*] with like Faculties and Propensities, having originally equal rights and Properties."[102] And when Robert Coram, in his 1791 *Political Inquiries*, made a similar argument for equal rights, he too made use of the language of natural science: "Nature is always various in different species, and except in cases of *lusus naturae* [freaks of nature], always uniform in the same species. In all animals, from the most trifling insect to the whale and elephant, there is an evident uniformity and equality through every species." In thus asserting the "uniformity" and "equality" within each species, this political argument presumed monogeny. From this assumption, it followed that inequalities within a species were the outcome of degeneration: "Where this equality is not to be found in the human species it is to be attributed either to climate, habit, or education, or perhaps to all."[103] According to the American system of governance that such texts, along with their more famous counterparts such as the Declaration of Independence, helped to define, men were not merely equal under the law, they were "created equal." In this sense, the political theory of natural equality and the scientific doctrine of monogenesis were of a piece despite the obvious difference in emphasis.

The natural-scientific presumptions that underwrote the political theory of natural rights thus lacked the very conception of race that political discourse would later employ to explain and justify slavery. In a strange way, the famous discussion of slavery in one of the numbers of *The Federalist* makes this evident. Writing as "Publius" in *Federalist No. 54*, Madison rehearsed the logic of the Constitution on the three-fifths ratio. "Slaves are considered as property, not as persons," he begins. On the other hand, the law does regard the slave in some part at least "as a moral person, not as a mere article of property." Faced with this categorical confusion, Madison's strategy is to turn the double-nature of the slave's body into a positive attribute rather than a categorical impossibility: "The Federal Constitution therefore," he asserts, "decides with great propriety on the case of our slaves, when it views them in the mixt [*sic*] character of persons and property. This is in fact their true character." Hence the solution to the problem of classifying the slave is to split the slave's body:

> Let the case of the slaves be considered as it is in truth a peculiar one. Let the compromising expedient of the Constitution be mutually adopted, which regards

> them as inhabitants, but as debased by servitude below the equal level of free inhabitants, which regards the *slave* as divested of two fifth of the *man.*

In this way, Federalist language added a third term to the antithesis between person and property, man and thing. The slave's body, not entirely property and yet not wholly person either, now entered the space between these terms as a mediator or supplement. The American slave was a new and "peculiar case," in some sense comparable to a man, but "debased by servitude," and hence "divested of two fifth of the *man.*" It is doubtful whether even Rousseau, who wrote that "mathematical precision had no place in moral calculations,"[104] could have conceived of this kind of political dismemberment: three parts person, two parts property.

At the same time, it is critical to grasp that the very language that here asserts the slave's "peculiarity" also makes that difference a function of the slave's *condition.* The past participles "debased" and "divested" indicate that the states in question were the result of the operations of slavery on its historical (and grammatical) objects. Hence, what is at issue is not an essential difference between "the slave" and "the man" but two *conditions* to which beings are subject. While these conditions were considered to be mutually exclusive, for the difference between slavery and liberty was absolute, they were also alterable: one could pass from a state of slavery to a state of freedom and vice versa. At the same historical moment, as I have shown, the prevailing theory of human variety held that however widely various as the nations were in appearance, these differences were entirely a function of climate and the "mode of life." Later racial theory acknowledged this by mocking an earlier etiology of variety according to which the most fundamental "points of difference that exist between the different races of men" were "supposed . . . to be convertible into each other."[105] Thus, like "slavery," human variety was conceived as a condition or a state.

The discourse surrounding slavery in nineteenth-century American politics, on the other hand, everywhere betrayed a connection to the new racial science. According to the theory of polygenesis, the genus *Homo* was composed of "races or species originally and radically distinct."[106] Parallel to this scientific argument, defenders of slavery in the political realm argued, first, that the Negro was a "radically distinct" kind of being, and second, that this distinction made his servitude inevitable: "The African slave sees that nature herself has marked him as [a] separate – and . . . inferior – race, and interposed a barrier almost insuperable to his becoming a member of the same society, standing on the same footing of right and privilege with his master."[107] Proslavery advocates could thus catalogue the characteristics of this being called the Negro – an "instinctive indifference to personal liberty," a "want of domestic affections and insensibility to the ties of kindred," a lack of "social tenderness," and so on – and claim that it was these very "distinguishing characteristics" that "peculiarly mark him out" for slavery.[108]

Strictly speaking, nineteenth-century racial science and proslavery discourse thus made "slavery" a different object than it had been in the eighteenth. In effect, slavery was no longer a condition with temporal limits; like race, it became an essential attribute or property of the slave's body. The discourse of the slave's moral and physical depravity was far from new; George Fredrickson has shown that the image of slaves as a "permanently alien and unassimilable element of the population" reached back into the eighteenth century.[109] What *was* new to the nineteenth century, however, was the explanation offered for this state of affairs. In Samuel Stanhope Smith's natural science, as in the argument of the *Federalist* 54, the condition of servitude had been held responsible for the slave's "debasement" or degeneration. "I am inclined . . . to ascribe the apparent dullness of the negro," Smith wrote in the 1810 version of his essay, "principally to the wretched state of his existence first in his original country, where he is at once a poor and abject savage, and subjected to an atrocious despotism; and afterwards in those regions to which he is transported to finish his days in slavery, and toil."[110] But by the mid-nineteenth century this account was precisely inverted. The "debasement" of the slave was no longer regarded as the outcome of contingent circumstances. Now there was widespread agreement that "the Negro" was a naturally and permanently "inferior" being. "Personal observation," wrote William Drayton in 1836,

> must convince every candid man that the negro is constitutionally indolent, voluptuous, and prone to vice; that his mind is heavy, dull, and unambitious; and that the doom that has made the African in all ages and countries, a slave – is the natural consequence of the inferiority of his character.[111]

That this kind of language could be produced, received, and infinitely reproduced in mid-nineteenth century America indicates that a fundamental shift had taken place: slavery, rather than the *cause* of a "degradation" from an original state, was now the *result* of the innate inferiority or, at least, "peculiarity" of the person enslaved. "Race" had come to precede slavery as its origin.

Proslavery arguments used a particular trope – that of the "mark" – to locate in the slave's race the origin of his slavery. Thomas Dew, for example, explained that slaves "*are entirely unfit for a state of freedom among the whites*" (original emphasis) and that their "difference of color" was simply the visible sign of this deficiency.[112] It was, moreover, the reason they could never be truly free, even if emancipated. The American slave, the logic went, forever bore a mark, or a "stamp," that could not be effaced: his race. "The slave of Italy or France could be emancipated or escape to the city" and soon "sink into the mass of freemen around him." The American slave, by contrast, even if manumitted, would never actually be free, for "the emancipated black carries a mark which no time can erase; he forever wears the indelible symbol of his inferior condition; *the Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots*" (original emphasis).[113] Nature had in effect fashioned the "negro" for slavery.

In a manner of speaking, the trope of the mark effectively turned the concept of natural rights on its head. In the Enlightenment account, the state of nature was synonymous with liberty. Men were by nature free; they were made slaves only by other men. But according to the notion of race as a mark, "nature" comes to signify something completely different. For nineteenth-century American thought, the slave is *by nature* distinguished, set fatally apart from other men by immutable "physical peculiarities." Another man, his master, can make him nominally free, but ultimately, because of this "mark," he could not become a legitimate part of the social body. Nature had "made a stamp on the American slave."

Crucially, even antislavery rhetoric reproduced this logic of race as a natural mark. This was first and foremost true of "colonizationism," an early nineteenth-century social movement which aimed "to rid us, gradually and entirely, in the United States of slaves and slavery" by means of a two-part solution: gradual emancipation on the one hand, and the deportation of the freed slaves to Africa, on the other.[114] "In every part of the United States," wrote one colonizationist,

> there is a broad and impassible [*sic*] line of demarcation between every man who has one drop of African blood in his veins, and every other class in the community. The habits, the feelings, all the prejudices of society – prejudices which neither refinement, nor argument, nor education, nor religion itself can subdue – mark the people of colour, whether bond or free, as the subjects of a degradation inevitable and incurable. The African in this country belongs by birth to the lowest station in society; and from that station he can never rise, be his talent, his enterprise, his virtues what they may.[115]

Ostensibly an indictment of white American "prejudices," this kind of argument in fact presumed an essential and immutable "line of demarcation" between races, albeit in a different manner than proslavery, but with a similar conceptual result. One might argue that there is a direct line of descent running from these liberal-progressive capitulations to racialism down to Winthrop Jordan's unreflective use of the racial stamp trope in the 1960s: "the Negro was readily identifiable as such; he was born branded."[116]

Hence although we might imagine that it was primarily the Southern defense of slavery that was indebted to scientific racism, race-thinking was the exclusive province neither of Southern, nor even of proslavery, thought. For despite regional and political differences, as Fredrickson has shown, nineteenth-century political thought on slaves and slavery shared "certain common assumptions which established the boundaries of the debate,"[117] and race was one of the most important things that all sides presupposed. While polygenesis could certainly be used to defend slavery, Gould has argued, it still did not qualify as a partisan doctrine so much as a popular-scientific common sense.[118] Advocates of polygenesis within the scientific community did not necessarily approve of slavery or view it as the only logical outcome of their theories. Caldwell, for example, insisted that black inferiority did not give whites the right to hold slaves: rather, "inferior beings become the objects of kindness, *because* they are inferior. . . . The Caucasians are not justified in either enslaving the Africans or destroying their Indians, merely because their superiority in intellect and war enable them to do so. Such practices are an abuse of power."[119]

Similarly, in the political sphere, abolitionists such as the Illinois Congressman Owen Lovejoy could disagree with proslavery advocates about the morality of slavery, and with colonizationists about their political solutions, but agree with both about the racial inferiority of the Negro: "We may concede it as a matter of fact that [the Negro] is inferior; but does it follow, therefore, that it is right to enslave a man simply because he is inferior? This, to me, is a most abhorrent doctrine."[120] Abraham Lincoln sounded a similar note when he assured his audience, during one of his debates with Douglas in 1858, that there was a vast difference between raising doubts about the expansion of slavery and denying the reality of race: "[T]here is a physical difference between the white and black races," Lincoln asserted, "which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race."[121] Lincoln could no more deny this racial divide than he could negate natural law.

So compelling are the shared racial assumptions across the entire political spectrum of the mid-nineteenth century slavery debate, David Brion Davis has argued, that we may be tempted to conclude "that there was a kind of unconscious collaboration even between abolitionists and their opponents in defining race as the ultimate 'reality.'" Furthermore, viewed in the context of the story of political evasion and silence on the subject of slavery with which I began, it also becomes clear that the rise of "race" as a universally legitimate category of political analysis had a profound effect on the discourse of slavery. Not only did race provide an alternative way of talking about slavery; it became compulsory, we might say, to discuss it in those terms. The two texts with which I end this book – Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* – in some ways represent the literary outcome of this discursive necessity.

"THE RED ON OUR BORDERS": AMERICAN RACIAL THEORY AND INDIAN CHARACTER

I began this chapter by emphasizing the consistent pattern of circumlocution, displacement and semantic substitution on the issue of slavery because it may help us to understand the thematic slippage according to which the "Indian story" of the 1820s, while obviously engaged with the contemporary moral and political crises surrounding Native American removal, might at the same time provide a forum for thinking about slavery and working out narrative resolutions to its political problems. I believe that the frontier novel during this period used the question of the Indian's racial character, not only to mediate the politics of Indian removal, but also to frame questions about African-American character and destiny. I will place my emphasis on the slavery question, it bears repeating, not to displace one ideological context in favor of another, but rather in order to supplement the broad range of critical work on the genre that entirely privileges the Indian question.

Yet I want also to provide some historical context about American ideas about Indian character, and briefly to consider their relation to what Anglo-Americans came to call the "Indian problem." As Reginald Horsman has remarked, Indians "occupied the land which Jefferson intended to transform into an empire for liberty."[122] In the most general terms, then, it stands to reason that the Indian and the slave could operate at times as analogous figures in Anglo-American political discourse. Both could be represented as members of alien populations that vexed the smooth operation of Anglo-American power on the continent. It need hardly be said, I hope, that I am not concerned with comparing or weighing the quite different forms of domination to which these groups were subject or evaluating their catastrophic consequences. But Anglo-American ideas about the "red race" were developing alongside those about the "black." As we shall see, the analogy between the two had its limits. Indeed, the figure of the Indian was consistently accorded a different, and often explicitly contrasting status to that of the "negro." In Thomas Jefferson's treatment of the two in *Notes on the State of Virginia* we will observe this difference in status in perhaps its clearest form, due in part to a peculiar chapter in intellectual history in which the discursive fate of the Indian became tied to that of English creoles in America by virtue of the dominant theories of variety and environment.

A remark made by James Madison in an 1826 letter may serve as a preliminary way of establishing the relationship between the "Indian problem" and the "slave problem" in Anglo-American political discourse: "Next to the case of the black race within our bosom, that of the red on our borders is the problem most baffling to the policy of our country."[123] In this formulation, Madison not only clearly linked the two questions by forging a parallelism between the two "races," but also tellingly contrasted them in at least two ways. First, he seems clearly to imply a hierarchical relation between the two, in which the "most baffling" is that of slavery, with the Indian problem second in line. More significantly, I think, he assigns the two issues to two different imaginative spaces: one is "within our bosom," the other "on our borders." According to the somatic metaphor at work here, the "black" is inside the national body and the Indian outside it. Indeed, if we read the sources from the earliest US policies on "Indian affairs," we consistently find the Indians represented as spatially adjacent to the American nation, whether as a hostile enemy nation who had "tak[en] up the hatchet against us" or as a "neighboring community."[124] Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the Indian remained symbolically "without" in this manner. Around mid-century, however, US policy came more and more to represent the Indians as a population "within" or amidst the nation rather than at its boundaries.[125] We might take the year 1849 as the moment at which this shift in spatial geography became official: in this year, federal jurisdiction over Indian affairs was transferred from the War Department, which had presided over them since the Washington presidency, to the newly created Department of the Interior.[126] In tracing this admittedly sketchy discursive history, I mean to hint at the ways in which the "African" problem during the first half of the nineteenth century was generally accorded a different status, "within the bosom" of American politics, and one more fundamentally threatening, if not to the nation's security, then certainly to its political stability and moral authority.

I have argued above that if we keep in view Collette Guillaumin's caveat not to confuse aggressivity with racism proper, we can grasp how an institution such as slavery might thrive even in the absence of a racial theory. In a similar way, Anglo-Americans did not need a conception of properly racial difference in order to undertake actions so disastrous to native peoples. For seventeenth-century Puritans focused on the possibilities of conversion, the Indians were initially regarded largely in terms of their potential for acculturation, and the transformation of their souls was far more important than differences of mind or body.[127] This viewpoint was, as Reginald Horsman puts it, "completely ethnocentric" but still based on an implicit assumption of the mutability, and hence radical perfectibility, of the Indian subject.[128] Even the colonial captivity narratives which represented Indians as a barbaric and hostile other tended to emphasize religious and national differences rather than properly "racial" ones.[129]

As struggles over land came increasingly to dominate Anglo/Indian relations throughout the early colonial period, the "bloodthirsty savage" became a more commonplace figure in Anglo-American thought. With the Indian involvement in Anglo-French struggles for continental domination from the 1740s to the 1760s, Pontiac's uprising in 1763, Dunmore's War in 1774, and the more regular instances of border warfare between Indians and the new "Americans" after the Revolution, this hostile conception of the Indian character would only become more dominant. Scholars have often written about Anglo-American "double-mindedness" about the Indian in order to register this oscillation between fantasies of a noble or perfectible savage on the one hand, and fears of a violent animality on the other.[130] Robert Berkhofer, in his study of the idea of the Indian in Anglo-American thought, has documented the "ambivalent fashion" in which these "good" and "bad" images of Indians vied for cultural dominance.[131] However accurate this argument may be, we must not allow it to obscure the fact that prior to the nineteenth century, on *neither* side of this binary opposition was the Indian's "nature" connected to a theory of essential biophysical otherness. In this respect, "Indianness" was initially not a properly racial category in the colonial period.

As Karen Ordahl Kupperman has demonstrated, European descriptions of the Indians in the early colonial period "carried no implication that the Indians were of a different race."[132] Europeans emphasized a range of ways in which the Indian was distinct, none of them corresponding to the modern notion of race: differences in dress, in diet, in religious belief and practice, in gender relations, and in social organization more generally. Even the concept of "savagery," however hatefully expressed and however murderous in its consequences, did not have to rely on an assumption of essential and originary difference. We often forget that the term "savage" itself is derived from a term meaning "forest dweller" (from the Latin *silva*, meaning "a wood," via the French *sauvage*) and hence operates on the semantic axis civilized/uncivilized, rather than within a properly racial system of white/nonwhite.

Even the policy of "Indian removal," which common sense dictates we recognize as a form of racial oppression, strictly speaking was not initially understood or justified in racialist terms when the policy began to take shape after the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Official US policy in this period rested not only on the goal of the Indian's cultural assimilation into the American social body, but also on the assumption of white-Indian "amalgamation." In 1808, Thomas Jefferson proclaimed his vision to a group of Delaware, Mohican, and Munsee Indians: "You will become one people with us; your blood will mix with ours: and will spread with ours over this great island . . . You will unite yourselves with us, and we shall all be Americans."[133] As late as 1816, President Madison's Secretary of War William H. Crawford argued that the government might need to "encourage" "intermarriages between [the Indians] and the whites" in order to "preserve the [Indian] race" and engender its improvement.[134] As a matter of policy, "removal" during these opening decades of the nineteenth century was a fate reserved only for those Indians who would not, as Crawford put it, be thus "incorporate[d] . . . in the great American family of freemen."[135] Though this set of assumptions and practices was ethnocentric in the extreme, its difference from mid-century modes of racialist representation is nonetheless clear.

By the middle of the 1820s, spurred by the rapid increase in US territorial expansion, and compounded by the nationalistic fervor following the American victory over Britain in the War of 1812, the federal government had begun in earnest to formulate a comprehensive plan for removal, infamously culminating in the Removal Act signed by Andrew

Jackson in 1830. Just as the emphasis of Indian policy clearly shifted from assimilation to displacement, the tone of official politics had also clearly shifted from an assumption of Indian "improvability" to quasi-scientific statements of racial destiny that would receive scientific authorization in later decades. Secretary of State Henry Clay declared in a meeting of Monroe's cabinet in 1825 that "it was impossible to civilize Indians; that there never was a full-blooded Indian who took to civilization." He concluded that "it was not in their nature" as they were "essentially inferior to the Anglo-Saxon race" and "not an improvable breed."[136] Properly scientific writing followed suit, and "the dominant scientific position by the 1840s was that the Indians were doomed because of innate inferiority, that they were succumbing to a superior race, and that this was good for America and the world."[137] This was certainly a far cry from Jefferson's vision of the joining of English and Indian "blood."

But even under the dominance of this new racial ideology, the "Indian," generally speaking, was never consigned quite to the status of the "negro." Governor Troup of Georgia, for example, inveighed in 1824 against the Jeffersonian dream of white-Indian "amalgamation," but remarked that "public opinion would concede to Indians . . . a middle station, between the negro and the white man."[138] And even after scientific racialism had thoroughly and systematically marked the Indian as essentially different and inferior to the Caucasian race, it was commonplace to rank him above the African or the Asiatic.[139] "The indomitable, courageous, proud Indian," wrote Louis Aggasiz in 1850, ". . .in how very different a light by the side of the submissive, obsequious, imitative negro, or by the side of the tricky, cunning, and cowardly Mongolian!"[140]

We can trace the Indian's dubiously "privileged" discursive status in Anglo-American thought back, at least, to the transatlantic eighteenth-century debate that historian Antonello Gerbi has termed "the dispute of the New World." The debate began with assertions of the inferiority of New World species advanced by Cornelius de Pauw, Abbé Raynal, and especially Comte de Buffon, whose argument about American degeneracy in volume 5 of *Histoire Naturelle* (1766) was the main source to which later American thinkers would return again and again. Buffon began by observing what he regarded as a telling absence of large wild animals in the New World. America boasted no elephant, no rhinoceros, no hippopotamus. When he did find analogous species, they were not only different from, but without fail inferior in stature and generally weaker than their counterparts across the ocean. The puma was "smaller, weaker, and more cowardly" than the European lion. The llama was more diminutive than its counterpart the camel – although the llama's "extended neck and the length of its legs" gave it a larger appearance, Buffon reports, as if he had seen through its poor masquerade.[141] Not only did the New World contain fewer and less vigorous native species than Europe, but even domestic animals cultivated in Europe were diminishing since their introduction into the American continent. This degeneration of "transported" species was not merely an observable empirical "fact" for Buffon; crucially, it derived directly from the theory of monogenesis which it presumed and the theory of climatic influence in which it was embedded.

Buffon's argument was not confined to quadrupeds; "man" himself was no "exception to the general rule" of New World degeneracy. When Buffon turned to what Linnaeus termed "*Homo sapiens Americanus*," he found further and more serious evidence of the "obstacles" posed by the climate "to the increase of living nature." Thus he came to his famously pejorative assessment of the American "savage":

> The savage is feeble and small in his organs of generation; he has neither body hair nor beard, and no ardor for the female of his kind. Although lighter than the European, on account of his habit of running more, he is nevertheless much less strong in body: he is also much less sensitive, and yet more fearful and more cowardly; he lacks vivacity, and is lifeless in his soul; the activity of his body is less exercise or voluntary movement than an automatic reaction to his needs; take from him hunger and thirst, and you will destroy at the same time the active cause of all his movements; he will remain either standing there stupidly or recumbent for days at a time.[142]

From a European perspective, this was perhaps only a more detailed iteration of a rather formulaic piece of ethnocentrism. But as these words traveled across the Atlantic and fell on the ears of those other "Americans" – European bipeds who had been "transported" to the New World and were exposed to the degenerative climate in question – this particular assertion of Indian deficiencies took on new implications. While Buffon never explicitly made the argument that the "transported" Englishman was bound to degenerate in America, this conclusion was nothing more nor less than the logical outcome of his argument within the conceptual framework of the time. It was the encyclopedist Abbé Raynal who drew out these implications in his 1770 *Histoire Philosophique et Politique des deux Indes*, and in so doing, along with Buffon, was to draw the ire of English creoles living in North America.[143]

The extent to which the New World degeneracy thesis irked Anglo-Americans in the late-eighteenth century can be gauged in part by the prominence of those figures who rebutted it. Franklin mocked Buffon's thesis in letters with transatlantic correspondents. Hamilton saw fit to smear the idea in no less a prominent location than the pages of *The Federalist.* But the most extensive and famous American defense against the degeneracy argument occurs in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, first published around 1782. In Query VI of that work, under the section heading "Animals," Jefferson sets the record straight on the quadrupeds of the New World, marshalling and tabulating a remarkable amount of data, from volumetric measurements to anecdotal accounts, in order to rebut "this new theory of the tendency of nature to belittle her productions on this side of the Atlantic" (64). The larger intellectual context makes it clear that Jefferson's vigorous defense of, and expressed admiration for, the Indian, whatever else it indicates, served also to bolster the ontological stability of the English creole against the imputation of degeneracy. In short, the fate of Anglo-Americans came to be tied by an inescapable conceptual bond to that of the American "savages."

Jefferson's recuperation of the Indian did not challenge the *a priori* premise that climate influences body and character, only the eurocentric conclusions which Buffon drew from his understanding of the data. Yet even as Jefferson seemed to accept the dominant eighteenth-century ontology of human difference in those sections of *Notes on the State of Virginia*, his infamous remarks on the "blacks" in the same work came as close as any of his contemporaries to advancing a theory of essential racial differences. "I advance it therefore as a suspicion only," he infamously concluded, "that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind" (143). True to the common sense of his time, Jefferson acknowledges that one must "make great allowances for the difference of condition, of education, of conversation, of the sphere in which they move" (139). But almost unbelievably to a modern reader, after acknowledging these differences in condition, Jefferson displays a remarkable predilection for laying them aside in favor of a suspected preexisting condition: "the improvement of the blacks in body and mind, in the first instance of their mixture with the whites, has been observed by every one, and proves that their inferiority is not the effect merely of their condition of life" (141).

In order fully to understand Jefferson's "black," however, I would argue that we must read this figure in relation to the argument about the capacities of "the Man of America, both aboriginal and emigrant"

(65).[144] When we replace his comments in that context, many of his argumentative decisions become clearer. The first thing to point out is that Jefferson's nomenclature is in striking contrast to that of contemporary natural-scientific writing: he speaks of "whites" and "blacks" rather than "Africans" and "Europeans." He also tends to use the term "race" (rather than "nation") in a manner approaching later uses of the term, as when he speaks of "physical distinctions proving a difference of race" (138). Within the context of his debate with Buffon, these terminological choices immediately make sense. Jefferson cannot simply adopt the relevant categories of the Linnaean taxonomy, *Homo Europaeus* and *Homo Americanus*, because British-Americans do not fit comfortably in either category. And by extension, he cannot speak of the varieties of men as "nations" without running the risk of sanctioning all of the implications of the theory of degeneration and the particular global geography which it had generated, according to which "Europe" signified the perfection of nature in its original state and "America" its corruption and diminution. Yet by virtue of this terminological adjustment, Jefferson's language alone puts in circulation a way of thinking about difference that seemed to make intrinsic properties ultimately more important than geography, and inched towards a theory of variation that made human bodies less subject to degeneration in different climates.

Moreover, there is a clear set of correspondences between Buffon's offenses against the "American" in Query VI and those of Jefferson against the "black" in Query XIV, although the intervening pages make it difficult for the casual reader to recognize. In describing the American savage, Buffon had proceeded from a consideration of stature, to hair, to level of "ardor for his female" and from there to considerations of mind and sentiment. It cannot be a coincidence that Jefferson provides the same kind of information in evaluating the "black": hair ("they have less hair on the face and body"); ardor ("they are more ardent after their female"); emotion ("Their griefs are transient"). When Jefferson turns more fully to the "black's" qualities of mind, there are equally remarkable correspondences to that section of Query VI in which he takes on Abbé Raynal. In the single line that Jefferson sneeringly quotes, Raynal expresses astonishment that "America has not yet produced one good poet, one able mathematician, one man of genius in a single art or single science."[145] Whether by accident or design, Jefferson ends up accusing "blacks" of nearly the identical deficiencies. With regard to poetry, he famously asserts that "Among the blacks is misery enough, God knows, but no poetry," instantiating it with a dismissive gesture towards Phillis Wheatley

(140). Of mathematics, he mentions in passing that "one [black] could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid" (139). And as for genius, "in reason [they are] much inferior, . . . in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous" (139).

While the specifics of these correspondences may or may not be deliberate, it is indisputable that Jefferson is explicitly thinking the "black" in relation to the "Indian"; indeed, he repeatedly contrasts their capacities. For example, after almost surreally ruminating on the many "advantages" of the "blacks" in the New World – where they have "been associated with the whites," where some "have been liberally educated, and all have lived in countries where the arts and sciences are cultivated to a considerable degree" (140) – Jefferson laments that they have squandered these valuable opportunities for improvement. Here is where the Indian is called upon to provide a critical term of contrast:

> The Indians, with no advantages of this kind, will often carve figures on their pipes not destitute of design and merit . . . They astonish you with strokes of the most sublime oratory; such as prove their reason and sentiment strong, their imagination glowing and elevated. But never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never see even an elementary trait of painting or sculpture. (140)

In this way, Jefferson uses the Indian to provide a positive foil for the "black."[146] In turn, I am suggesting, the "black" serves in this text as an alibi for the transplanted Anglo-American, an "elsewhere" that effectively repels the European argument about American degeneracy. For Jefferson's "suspicion" of the essential inferiority of the black person undermines Buffon's thesis, first, by offering a more dramatically degraded version of character than the Indian, and then ascribing it not to the climate of the New World, nor even to that of Africa, but rather raising the possibility of an essential and originary inferiority irrespective of climate. The fact that he does so in connection with a panoply of mental, psychological, and emotional attributes makes his text remarkably precocious vis-à-vis the development of later racialism.

For all of that, Jefferson's remarks are perhaps too often simply cited as examples of American racism par excellence. We must bear in mind, first of all, that Jefferson presents his opinions as tellingly inconclusive and tentative; he doesn't in fact conclude whether "the blacks" were "originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances," and even their empirical inferiority is advanced as "a suspicion only" (143). By consistently describing his inquiry as speculative, Jefferson displays his awareness that his "suspicion" lies beyond the pale of the orthodox scientific thought of his time. As I have indicated above, it is not that polygenesis as such was an unthinkable thought in this period, but it was a minority position. Our question should then be *why* Jefferson departed from the common sense of his contemporaries in this manner.

By restoring Jefferson's infamous comments on "the black" to their argumentative context, I have tried to suggest that they can be read as the conceptual outcome of an intellectual debate in which Jefferson had become embroiled, and by which he was forced to find new conceptual pathways. As a result, though he may never have set out to do so, he began to amend the scientific thought of his contemporaries. In drifting from a concept of "nation" to one more like "race" in order to account for human variety, the text performs an act of supplementation that forecasts what American thought would accomplish in the next half-century. We might view this historical process as the discursive strategy of Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* writ large. To draw this comparison out to its most dramatic conclusion, we might say that it makes perfect sense that a culture ruled by a class of European creoles in the New World would eventually have made "race" more important than geography and embraced a theory of variation that gave intrinsic originary differences more importance than climate. In effect, this would be to historicize race in a manner analogous to Benedict Anderson's history of modern nationalism. Anderson has written of the "creole pioneers" who forged a new and distinctly modern notion of national identity near the turn of the nineteenth century. Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* suggests why English creoles in America may also have "pioneered" a new theory of racial belonging. This is to extend Anderson's account into the terrain covered by Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallertstein in *Race, Nation, and Class.*[147]

I have turned in conclusion to Jefferson's thoughts on difference not only in order to explore the relationship between the categories of "Indian" and "negro" in Anglo-American thought, but also to emphasize that the course of racial thinking I have attempted to trace is one marked by contradictions and overlaps, proleptic anticipations and residual throwbacks. If I have nonetheless insisted that there is a fundamental discontinuity between what, in an admittedly reductive shorthand, I will call in these pages eighteenth- and nineteenth-century conceptions of race, it is because I am interested in tracing an overall shift in a scientific and cultural common sense about human differences.

I have also emphasized this larger historical framework in order to make it clear, against a too-reductive understanding of my own argument here, that American thought had reasons other than the problem of slavery to embrace an alternate theory of human difference. It would be untenably reductive to suggest that modern race-thinking came about purely as a way of justifying American slavery. Such a limited functionalist narrative could not do justice to the complex and overdetermined processes of historical and epistemological change. It would also reduce the historical terrain of racial ideology to a problem in American culture, thus excluding from the outset a more global perspective on colonial projects which relied just as much on the support of "race." When I refer in the pages that follow to the cultural efficacy of "race" in US culture vis-à-vis the problem of slavery, then, I mean to gesture not to the simple origin or function of racial thought, but rather to one of the most fateful uses to which the new discourse would be put in antebellum America. In order to account for the literary side of this story, I will turn now to a kind of writing which emerged in full force in the 1820s and which also claimed the power to represent nature: the frontier romance.

CHAPTER 2

Remaking natural rights: race and slavery in James Fenimore Cooper's early writings

"LETTERS TO HIS COUNTRYMEN": SLAVERY IN COOPER'S POLITICAL WRITINGS

This chapter revisits an old question in Cooper criticism: what did his just-so stories of racial conflict in the colonial past have to say about the most pressing political issues of his own time? By reading Cooper's first Leatherstocking novel, *The Pioneers* (1823), alongside some of his properly political writing from the 1820s and 1830s, I demonstrate how a fictional narrative about the past could offer a narrative solution to the contemporary crisis of slavery during a period when political discourse, including his own political writing, was curiously unable to do so. Viewed against the historical backdrop I laid out at the beginning of the previous chapter, in which the debate over slavery became periodically focused on the propriety of discussing it in national political forums, frontier fiction was aided in this endeavor by its thematic distance from slavery as such. At the same time, however, Cooper is able in *The Pioneers* to take up complex questions of entitlement and ownership within the confines of narrative fiction. In a manner that recalls the movements between the "Indian" and the "black" in Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*, the frontier novel was thus endowed, at the moment of its birth as a genre, with the ability to think the relationship between these two figures of dispossession and the relevance of physical and characterological differences in accounting for both.

In *The Pioneers*, I argue here, Cooper used "race" to generate a symbolic resolution to the problems attending slavery. I emphatically do not claim that Cooper had any interest in "justifying" slavery, an institution which he ominously warns in *The American Democrat* "menaces much future ill to this country" (222). Rather, taking a cue from my reading of his political tracts, I will suggest that Cooper's overriding concern is not to defend slavery but rather to protect American democracy from its political incursions. He did so by disseminating a particular conception of racial difference which, as I have already shown in more general historical terms, made it possible to account for slavery in new ways and hence to contain its contradictions.

I will begin by examining Cooper's discussion of slavery in *Notions of the Americans* (1828) and *The American Democrat* (1838) – political works in which slavery is both a central preoccupation and a source of apparently irresolvable problems. There is a simple reason this might be so. Cooper wrote these texts following the publication of a spate of increasingly disparaging British accounts of American society.[1] A commonplace of these accounts was the use of slavery as an occasion for, as Cooper put it in *Notions of the Americans*, "reproaching the Americans, with incongruity between their practices and their professions" (472). In taking up his pen to respond to these reproaches, Cooper could no more ignore the subject of slavery than concede the critique of American life it buttressed. But Cooper's decision to confront the problem of slavery had a significant, if unintended, consequence. For in attempting to account for slavery, I will argue, these writings widened, rather than closed, the gap between American political theory and existing practices. Though Cooper wanted to describe American society in the terms provided by the theory of natural rights, when it came to slavery he necessarily found himself writing against some of its fundamental premises. Cooper's political writings thus represent theory at its conceptual limits – or rather, pushed to its limits by the intractable fact of slavery.

If Cooper's most famous fictions turned to an earlier moment in the history of the new nation, we might say that his political writings during the 1820s were nostalgic in a different way. Political historians of the Jacksonian years have shown that the period was characterized by a return to the rhetoric and political vocabulary of the founders.[2] Like such contemporaries as John Taylor and John Randolph, Cooper set out in his political treatises to describe the structure of American government in a political language inherited from Enlightenment political theory. His starting point, like that of the Federalists after the revolution, is the solemn triumvirate of natural rights: liberty, equality, and property. Yet when it came to slavery, Cooper would discover that American slavery could not easily be reconciled with the discourse of natural rights. In order, then, to give some historical depth to Cooper's treatment of slavery, I want briefly to summarize the trajectory of slavery's place in this philosophical tradition, placing a particular focus on the elements relevant to Cooper's encounter with the subject of slavery. I will then be in a position to gauge the ways in which Cooper reconfigured aspects of the political theory he had inherited in order to attempt to resolve the problems raised by the issue of American slavery.

Cooper's political treatises engage the very question around which a large body of European and American political theory had long organized itself: what was the foundation of government and the origin of civil society? The line of political thought running from the Whig opposition of the late seventeenth century through the late-eighteenth century writings of English creoles arguing for American independence answered this question by appealing to a particular definition of "man": he was "Master of himself, and *proprietor of his own Person,* and the Actions or *Labour* of it" (original emphasis).[3] This conception of man in turn rested on a story of man's origins in the "state of nature" and how he came to constitute for himself a "civil society." Theorists of natural rights from Algernon Sidney and John Locke in England to Rousseau and Montesquieu in France, and their counterparts in America during and after the Revolution, thus argued from the natural and originary to the social and political. If there is one theoretical gesture which universally characterizes the broad and diverse body of political thought I am calling "natural rights theory," it is this turn to natural man as the basis for understanding civil man and hence society as such.

> To understand Political Power right, and derive it from its Original, we must consider what State all Men are naturally in, and that is, a *State of perfect Freedom* to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, of depending upon the Will of any other Man.
>
> A *State* also *of Equality*, wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another: there being nothing more evident, than that Creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without Subordination or Subjection. (Locke, *Two Treatises* II.4)

For this tradition of thought, "Freedom" (or "liberty") and "equality" constituted "man" as such; to say that man was "Master of himself" was not merely to describe "man" but to define him. By extension, natural freedom and equality were the only foundation of legitimate political power: the "end of every system of legislation," Rousseau wrote, "comes down to these two principal objectives, *liberty* and *equality*. Liberty, because all private dependence is only so much force taken away from the body of the state; equality, because liberty cannot continue to exist without it."[4]

It is not difficult to see how this definition of man and this conception of natural equality made a coherent account of slavery difficult, if not impossible. "Slavery," in fact, held a particular place in this tradition of thought: in countless texts from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it was designated as the ultimate violation of legitimate authority, whether between individuals or between a ruler and a people. "Slavery is so vile and miserable an Estate of Man," began Locke's *Second Treatise*, "and so directly opposite to the generous Temper and Courage of our Nation; that 'tis hardly to be conceived, that an *Englishman* much less a *Gentelman*, should plead for't" (II.1). The ultimate kind of "private dependence," it represented a drain on the force of the body politic. The supreme form of "Subordination or Subjection," it was a negation of that "State all men are naturally in" and hence a deprivation of natural rights. It was impossible, Rousseau insisted, to regard slavery as being in agreement with nature, because it was "absurd and inconceivable" that a man would give himself to another "for nothing" (88). To argue that slavery was the result of the slave's voluntary forfeiture of freedom was thus a violation of reason itself: "[T]he right of slavery is invalid, not only because it is illegitimate, but also because it is absurd and meaningless" (91). And if it could not be grounded in the slave's consent, slavery could only be regarded as a theft of natural freedom, and hence a scandalous inversion of the state of nature.

Above all, slavery clashed with the Enlightenment conception of property, for this account of natural man was at the same time a definition of property and ownership. According to one of the most famous formulations in Locke's *Second Treatise*:

> . . . every man has *Property* in his own *Person.* This no Body has any Right to but himself. The *Labour* of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *Labour* with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *Property.* It being by him removed from the common state Nature placed it in, hath by this *labour* something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other Men. For this *Labour* being the unquestionable Property of the Labourer, no Man but he can have a right to what that is once joyned to, at least where there is enough, and as good left in common for others. (II.27)

Having defined "man" in such a way that the slave was an impossible creature, Locke's definition of property made slavery doubly illegitimate. First, according to this theory of ownership, one person could never have a right, permanently and absolutely, to the fruits of another's labor.

Second, if property had its only legitimate basis in labor, a man could acquire "property" in another man only by an impossible act: that of "mixing" or "joyning" his labor with him.

It was possible in Locke's thought for property to be transferred from one person to another: "Thus the Grass my Horse has bit; the Turfs my Servant has cut; and the Ore I have digg'd in any place where I have a right to them in common with others, become my *Property*, without the assignation or consent of any body" (II.28). But like the social contract itself, the relation of bond servitude was conceived by this tradition as itself a voluntary system of exchange between a master and a servant, and hence a contract with temporal limits: "a Free-man makes himself a Servant to another, by selling him for a certain time, the Service he undertakes to do, in exchange for Wages he is to receive" (II.85). To be sure, colonial slavery was the site of a contradiction in Locke's thought more generally; even as he formulated this theoretical attack on the state of slavery, he also helped write a Constitution for the Carolina colony authorizing the freeman's "absolute power and authority over his negro slaves."[5] My point here, however, is simply that his definition of "man" in his political philosophy would seem to offer no coherent way to justify this practice.[6]

American political discourse from 1760 through the Revolution, in the works of polemicists like Jefferson and Paine, along with scores of less famous politicians, pamphlet writers, and ministers, drew on this theory of natural man, sharpened it, and made it central to the opposition to English imperial rule and the delineation of a specifically American system of governance. These writers frequently cited the likes of Sidney, Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu as authorities, and presented American democracy as nothing more than the applied theory of natural rights. Moreover, they repeated and extended the very tenets of Enlightenment theory according to which chattel slavery, a formidable presence in the colonies, could only represent a crime against nature. "In a state of nature men are equal," said Gad Hitchcock in a 1774 sermon, "exactly on a par in regard to authority; each one is a law to himself, having the law of God, the sole rule of conduct, written on his heart. No individual has any authority, or right to attempt to exercise any, over the rest of the human species, however he may be supposed to surpass them in wisdom and sagacity."[7] Thus, while we might expect American polemicists to have blunted those aspects of natural rights that made slavery impossible to justify, they did no such thing. In fact, starting around 1760, in a phenomenon that Bernard Bailyn has called the "contagion of liberty," Americans such as James Otis, Richard Wells, and Benjamin Rush began to publish polemics against "the iniquitous and disgraceful practice of keeping African slaves."[8] An anonymous letter published in the *Massachusetts Spy* in 1773 asked how "a people who profess to be so fond of freedom, and are taking every method to preserve the same themselves, and transmit it to their posterity, can see such numbers of their fellow men, made of the same blood, not only in bondage, but kept so even by them. Can such a conduct be reconcilable with the love of freedom?"[9] American political discourse could refer to African slaves as "fellow men, made of the same blood" because, as I have shown in Chapter 1, it followed European natural rights theory in another important respect: its presumption of monogenesis, or the original unity of the human species. As we shall see, this is one of the primary areas in which Cooper would intervene in order to offer an orderly account of the American political system in terms indebted to natural rights theory and yet resistant to slavery's disruptions.

"Slavery" commands a curious presence in Cooper's two works of political theory, *Notions of the Americans: Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor* (1828) and *The American Democrat* (1838). Though the former makes reference to slavery only a handful of times, and the latter devotes many pages to the subject, what is most notable in both texts is the occasional, almost accidental, character of the references. In nearly every case, the allusion to slavery is characterized as a digression or afterthought. In *Notions of the Americans*, slavery is treated in passing references, parenthetical phrases, and footnotes (see 235, 235n, 244). In *The American Democrat*, though two chapters are devoted to the subject, slavery continually encroaches on other discussions, surfacing in chapters as disparate as "On The Republick of the United States of America," "On American Equality," "On Liberty," "On Station," "On the Private Duties of Station," and "On Language."[10] Precisely because any mention of slavery seems digressive and even incidental, we might begin to suspect that its place in Cooper's argument is far from inconsequential. It is as if all roads lead to slavery despite his best efforts to steer clear of it.

With remarkable consistency, references to slavery in these texts are accompanied by the language of deviation and anomaly: every time slavery enters the discussion, it does so either as an "exception" to a rule or as a "distinction" that must be made in order to outline an otherwise "essential" principle. In *Notions of the Americans*, it thwarts Cooper's attempt to delineate a uniform and essential national character: the "exceptions," "shades of difference," and "the principal distinctions [which] emanate from slavery" make it impossible to identify "great

National characteristics throughout this whole people" (239): "The first and by far the most important feature which distinguishes [the Southern] States from their Northern sisters is Slavery," Cooper tells us (467). In the *American Democrat*, slavery is cast as an "all important distinction" (56) and as a "striking exception" (54); it repeatedly frustrates generalizations, confuses classifications, and produces crises of definition. Slavery, in short, is the intractable fact that must be imagined not to exist in order for "essential" principles to be elaborated: "But in those states where slavery does not exist," reads a revealing passage, "all men have essentially the same rights" (95).

As these references to this "exception" multiply, so do Cooper's protestations that slavery does not "materially affect the principle" from which it deviates, and that it is thus "manifestly unsafe to found any arguments concerning the political institutions of this Country on the existence of Slavery" (*American Democrat* 48; *Notions* 235n). Yet, however peripheral slavery is claimed to be, and however inessential to the character of the nation and its institutions, for each text it produces a crisis indisputably central to the project at hand. In *Notions*, the attempt to contrast American democracy with the inequality and tyranny of an aristocratic Europe founders on the apparent paradox of chattel slavery flourishing in a republic in which "[t]he influence of birth" is supposed not to exist "in any thing like the extent or even under the same forms as in Europe" (141). Slavery thus interrupts the celebration of American society and manners, and causes Cooper to abandon panegyric for apologetics. In *The American Democrat*, the work of delineating and extolling the principles of an enlightened "republick" must confront slavery as a thriving, if "exceptional," feature of American social life. In both texts, slavery provokes a distinct and inescapable clash between political theory and social practice. Where the two texts differ is in the ways they address the problem.

Notions of the Americans proceeds by attempting to offer an "extenuation of [slavery's] present existence" (482) or otherwise to mitigate the "evil" in its readers' eyes (471). "The condition of the American slave," we are told in a typical passage, "varies, of course, with circumstances. In some few portions of the Country he is ill dealt by. In most districts his labor is sufficiently light, his clothing is adapted to the climate, and his food is, I believe, everywhere abundant" (470). Such a passage operates by means of a subtle substitution: it replaces the question of slavery's legitimacy with the project of distinguishing "better" slavery from "worse." Other passages perform a related function by shifting the focus from slavery's continuing presence to its supposed improvement over time, as when we are assured that "yearly meliorations in the condition of the slaves and of the blacks generally are taking place in some on part of the country or other" (470). Through such displacements and circumlocutions, *Notions of the Americans* essentially dodges the political and philosophical implications of American slavery.

The American Democrat, on the other hand, makes a bold attempt to reorganize and reclassify the given categories of its political culture in order to make room for slavery. Given the centrality of the concept of "equality" to the Enlightenment definition of man, it is not surprising that Cooper must begin by confronting the limits of this concept. The chapter entitled "On American Equality" opens with the following claims:

> The equality of the United States is no more absolute than that of any other country. There may be less inequality in this nation than in most others, but inequality exists, and, in some respects, with stronger features than it is usual to meet with in the rest of christendom. (49)

This passage defines a tension to which the text continually returns: though the principles of American government are supposed to assure "less inequality" than a Europe tainted by hereditary rule, slavery imposes on American society admittedly "stronger" forms of inequality than those known in Europe. Slavery thus presents two related problems. On the one hand, it thwarts the claim that American democracy extends and deepens the political and civil rights of its citizens. "The equality of rights in America," he tells us, "after allowing for the striking exception of domestic slavery, is only a greater extension of the principle than common, while there is no such thing as an equality of condition" (54). On the other hand, slavery introduces new – and distinctly American – limitations to the principle of equality. Thus, for example, we are told that "the same general exceptions to civil and political equality, that are found in other free countries, exist in this, though under laws peculiar to ourselves" (50). The source of this "peculiarity" is slavery itself: "A slave can neither choose, nor be chosen to office, nor, in most of the states, can even a free man, unless a white man. A slave can neither sue nor be sued; he can not hold property, real or personal, nor can he, in many of the states be a witness in any suit, civil or criminal" (51). Under the force of such an exception, it follows "that absolute equality of condition, of political rights, or of civil rights, does not exist in the United States, though they all exist in a much greater degree in some states than in others, and in some of the states, perhaps, to as great a degree as is practicable" (51).

If Cooper's discussion of equality thus far seems merely another instance of the problem slavery represented, in fact it offered the beginning of a solution. For the reduction and limitation of equality in effect forced it to the margins of American democracy: "Equality is no where laid down as a governing principle of the institutions of the United States, neither the word, nor any inference that can be fairly deduced from its meaning, occurring in the constitution" (54). This is an apparently subtle revision, but strictly speaking it significantly reconfigures the assumptions of natural rights. For in order to divest American democracy of equality without stripping it of political legitimacy, equality itself had to be divorced from "nature" – that is, the Enlightenment account of natural equality had to be dismantled. This is precisely what Cooper set about doing under the aegis of a discussion of social station. "They who have reasoned ignorantly," Cooper writes in "On Station," "or who have aimed at effecting their political ends by flattering the popular feeling, have boldly affirmed that 'one man is as good as another;' a maxim that is true in neither nature, revealed morals, nor political theory" (93). In order to grasp the foolishness of this position, Cooper insists, we need only consult common sense:

> That one man is not as good as another in natural qualities, is proved on the testimony of our senses. One man is stronger than another; he is handsomer, taller, swifter, wiser, or braver, than all his fellows . . . Perhaps no two human beings can be found so precisely equal in every thing, that one shall not be pronounced the superior of the other; which, of course, establishes the fact that *there is no natural equality (my emphasis).* (93)

The notion of a "natural equality" among men is thus an evident absurdity. This position not only discounts equality as a legitimate political object; more importantly by far, it pries equality free from nature. In so doing, it does battle with natural rights theory. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century political theory on both sides of the Atlantic – from Locke's argument "That all Men by Nature are equal" (II.54) to Paine's "that all men are born equal and with equal natural rights"[11] – defined "man" precisely in such a way that, so far as the state of nature is concerned, "one man is as good as another."

This is not to erase the contradictions and complexities residing within Enlightenment thought on equality; merely to claim that equality was limited was by no means new in itself. But I mean to emphasize the *way* it was limited at different historical moments, and according to different cultural pressures. Enlightenment theorists did not suppose that all men in civil society enjoyed an absolute or limitless equality. On the contrary, the idea of the social contract was supposed to explain how natural equality had come to be limited: men had agreed to sacrifice the boundless liberty and equality with which nature had endowed them for the security of civil society. The notion of the social contract thus defined equality as both natural and at the same time limited – and this was not a paradox. Conceived as an exchange or substitution of natural liberty for the security of property and person, the social contract could be understood both to limit equality and to insure it: "What man loses by the social contract," Rousseau wrote, "is his natural liberty and an unlimited right to everything that tempts him and to everything he can take; what he gains is civil liberty and the ownership of everything he possesses" (95–6). Through a kind of theoretical sleight of hand, social inequalities can thereby be naturalized, raised on the foundation of natural equality. According to this logic, rather than producing inequalities among men, the social contract in fact perfected equality: "[I]nstead of destroying natural equality, the fundamental pact, on the contrary, substitutes a moral and legitimate equality for whatever physical equality nature had been able to impose among men, and, although they may be unequal in strength or in genius, they all become equal through agreements and law" (98).

For the Cooper of *The American Democrat*, on the other hand, it was not a matter of man's voluntary forfeiture or exchange of "natural" equality; rather, "there is no natural equality" (93). In order to excise equality from natural law in this way, Cooper proposed an entirely different account of the origins of inequality. In effect he replaced the proposition, "one man is as good as another," with what might be called the maxim of natural *in*equality: "nature has made differences between men" (93). For Rousseau, it would have been absurd and scandalous to build a government, or an argument, on a foundation like that of inequality, since "inequality is scarcely perceptible in the state of nature, and . . . its influence there is of almost no account" (33). But if the theory of the social contract defined government as that which refines and perfects natural equality, Cooper's version of American democracy effectively inverted this account, or at the very least dramatically shifted the emphasis: "The very existence of government at all infers inequality" (52).

By grounding inequality in nature in this way, Cooper not only contradicted the political doctrine of natural equality, but also necessarily challenged the scientific presumptions that underwrote it. For as I have already shown, natural rights went hand in hand with natural science in the eighteenth century. Natural scientists presumed that the majority of physical differences among men were the outcome of environment rather than nature, just as natural rights theorists attributed the origins of political inequality to the emergence of civil society. When Cooper asserted in *The American Democrat* that "nature has made differences between men" (93), however, he made implicit reference not to this earlier conception of human variety but to the new theories of racial character emerging in the late 1830s. *The American Democrat* appeals on many occasions to the emergent racial science, particularly when slavery is under discussion:

> American slavery is distinguished from that of most other parts of the world, by the circumstance that the slave is a variety of the human species, and is marked by physical peculiarities so different from his master, as to render future amalgamation improbable . . . [N]ature has made a stamp on the American slave that is likely to prevent this consummation, and which menaces much future ill to this country. (221–22)

This passage not only makes recourse to a specifically nineteenth-century vocabulary of racial difference; in referring to the slave's race as a "stamp" made by "nature," it also employs the dominant trope of the mid-nineteenth century discourse of slavery. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the trope of the "mark" or "stamp" operated within a particular cultural logic. Arguing from the premise that in his "race" the "emancipated black carries a mark, which no time can erase" since he "forever wears the indelible symbol of his inferior condition," mid-century proslavery advocates such as Thomas Dew concluded that the "Negro" was "*entirely unfit for a state of freedom among the whites*" (original emphasis).[12] For Dew, the inescapable conclusion was that nature had in effect fashioned the "Negro" for slavery. In Cooper's hands, by contrast, we can detect a note of sympathy in his account of the unassimilable "negro" who is "marked by physical peculiarities" that set him fatally apart from other men, regardless of his social condition. Yet for *The American Democrat*, the slave is still *by nature* distinguished. Another man, his master, can make him nominally free, but ultimately, he, because of this "mark," could not become a legitimate part of the social body. It may well not have been Cooper's primary political intention to produce such an argument, but nonetheless it is undoubtedly the logical outcome of his account of the American slave.

In "race," then, Cooper thus found a kind of solution to the problems slavery had caused for his political theory. The displacement of the political doctrine of "natural equality," along with the scientific doctrine of monogenesis, in effect added something to the notion of natural rights and hence changed the political terrain of "slavery." Through this act of supplementation, race was available as a basis for classification that made it possible to account for slavery and even to ground it in nature. Yet there is reason to believe that part of the groundwork for such a resolution had been laid by an entirely different kind of writing which emerged in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and was initiated by Cooper: the subgenre of historical fiction known as the "frontier romance." I intend to demonstrate this by examining his 1823 novel, *The Pioneers.*

'THE PIONEERS' AND THE EMERGENCE OF RACE

The Pioneers was the first in what was to become the five-novel Leatherstocking series. Interestingly, scholarship on Cooper has more frequently focused on the second novel in the series, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), particularly when Cooper's racial politics are at issue.[13] This makes a certain amount of sense; while *The Last of the Mohicans* is so clearly preoccupied with racial distinctions, what it calls the "gifts" of different races, *The Pioneers* is harder to pin down on the question of race. It appears not to capture the "anxiety" or "primitive horror of the mixing of the blood" that Leslie Fiedler has said is the "secret theme" of the Leatherstocking tales.[14] This fact has even led critics such as James Wallace to question Fiedler's thesis and to wonder whether Cooper's fiction throughout the 1820s was in fact antiracialist. Wallace convincingly argues, first, that the notion of miscegenation which Fiedler ascribes to Cooper belongs in fact to a discourse of eugenics that flourished only after the Civil War, and that the earlier notion of "amalgamation" had a very different meaning. Wallace then turns to Cooper's 1829 *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish* (a text I will take up in Chapter 4) and argues that, far from fearing miscegenation, the novel nearly celebrates the wonders of amalgamation.[15]

What interests me about *The Pioneers* is that it would seem to be able to generate both kinds of readings. Though certain characters in the novel frequently ruminate on the differences between different kinds of "blood," taken together it would be difficult to articulate a coherent theory of blood or race on the basis of the novel's characterizations. In fact, since the majority of these characters' assertions about blood turn out in the end to have been predicated on a mistaken assumption – that Oliver Edwards is a "half-breed," while he is in fact descended from

English aristocracy – it is possible to argue that the novel ends up dismantling or ironizing the discourse of race. In the end, I will make the case that such a reading is unwarranted. More importantly, I would argue that even to ask the question of whether Cooper is "for" or "against" racialist thinking may lead us astray, no matter which conclusion we choose. If instead we read the novel's representation of difference against the backdrop of the detailed history of racial thought I offered in the previous chapter, we find that *The Pioneers* bears the traces of an earlier conception of human variety distinct from mid-nineteenth century racialist thought. This suggests that what at first appear to be "progressive" elements of Cooper's thinking may in fact be residual traces of a prior discourse of difference; not anti but preracialist conceptions. At the same time, however, the notion of biological race on which *The American Democrat* relied, and which Fiedler and others have found at work in the Leatherstocking series as a whole, can be seen emerging in *The Pioneers.* Viewed from this perspective, the novel's apparent ambivalence on the matter begins to look less like a showdown between contemporary race-thinking and Cooper's better angels, and more like evidence that an emergent racialist discourse is in the process of displacing – within the course of the frontier romance genre and within the narrative of *The Pioneers* itself – an older model of difference. With one foot in eighteenth-century natural history and the other in the nineteenth-century biology of race, *The Pioneers* can be read as a kind of hinge between the two systems of classification.

As *The Pioneers* opens, we follow the progress of three travelers approaching a north-eastern settlement in a horse-drawn sleigh. We are first introduced to the driver, described as "a negro, of apparently twenty years of age":

> His face, which nature had coloured with a glistening black, was now mottled with the cold, and his large shining eyes filled with tears; a tribute to its power, that the keen frosts of those regions always extracted from one of his African origin. Still, there was a smiling expression of good humour in his happy countenance, that was created by the thoughts of home, and a Christmas fire-side, with its Christmas frolics.[16]

It would not be quite accurate to say that we are here introduced to a "character" or even a person; we do not learn, for example, that this is a description of Aggy, the slave of Judge Temple, until he is addressed as such on the facing page. Nor are we introduced to a body, exactly, for, by a reduction characteristic of this novel, it is the face over which the narrative lingers, its surface providing the most essential narrative information. Rather, what we are given, to use Cooper's own word, is a "countenance," a certain distribution of features such as skin pigment and texture, "expression" and "humour." Aggy's, moreover, is one in an entire differential system of countenances; it takes its place in a whole range of other faces and figures. Indeed, this passage is immediately followed by descriptions of the two passengers: the first, who turns out to be Judge Temple, has a "fine manly face, and particularly a pair of expressive, large blue eyes, that promised extraordinary intellect, covert humour, and great benevolence." Accompanying him is his daughter Elizabeth Temple, who is mostly covered with a large cloak and quilted hood "through which occasionally sparkled a pair of animated jet-black eyes" (18).

This kind of physical description, the introduction of a character primarily in terms of his or her countenance, is entirely typical of *The Pioneers.* Not all the characters are necessarily first made known to us in this way. Yet even when characters are introduced by name or deed, or are sprung upon us in the heat of events, the narrative pauses at the first opportunity to convey the critical information. This narrative work is most often motivated by another character's curiosity. Thus, for example, after a hunting accident involving Oliver Edwards, Judge Temple pauses to take in the young man's form: "Some little time elapsed ere Marmaduke Temple was sufficiently recovered from his agitation, to scan the person of his new companion . . . The eyes of the Judge, after resting for a moment on the figure of the stranger, were raised to a scrutiny of his countenance" (39). Nor is each character described only once; Edwards, for one, is described several times, in different situations, environments, and clothing:

> In a corner of the hall, near the grand entrance, stood the young hunter, unnoticed, and for the moment apparently forgotten . . . On entering the apartment he had mechanically lifted his cap, and exposed a head, covered with hair that rivalled in colour and gloss the locks of Elizabeth. Nothing could have wrought a greater transformation, than the single act of removing the rough fox-skin cap. If there was much that was prepossessing in the countenance of the young hunter, there was something even noble in the rounded outlines of his head and brow. The very air and manner in which the rest of his frame was clad, bespoke not only familiarity with a splendour that in those new settlements was thought to be unequalled, but something very like contempt also. (67)

Passages such as this one convey very particular kinds of information about a character's appearance – starting with the clothing, which is encountered first, and proceeding to the hair, countenance, head, and brow. They also posit a correspondence between these features and disposition – "air and manner." Finally, such passages intimate that all this tells us something about the course that the character will take as the narrative unfolds. The initial physical descriptions of Cooper's characters tend to encode characterological features, such as nobility (like Edwards, Temple, Indian John) or ludicrousness (Remarkable Pettibone), and the succeeding events of the narrative bear out these carefully constructed first impressions.

Lingering as they do on the differences among the surfaces of bodies, such passages might seem the first signs of race in *The Pioneers*. In fact, I would argue, they do not rely on "race" as a stable basis of classification. In order to understand why, it is worth briefly recalling the way scientific discourse described the surface of the body at this same historical moment. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw a revival of interest in the ancient principles of physiognomy (its first systematic treatment is attributed to Aristotle), and the emergence of the related fields of craniology and phrenology.[17] Starting in the eighteenth century, natural scientists such as Lavater, Camper, and Blumenbach suggested that a detailed and systematic study of the surface of the body – particularly the face and the head – could provide a wealth of information about character and disposition. By analyzing the shape of the head and the features of the face, isolating such elements as forehead, eyes, and ears, and assigning "characterological significance" to each, physiognomy claimed literally to read the head and the face for signs of an individual's predominant characteristics.[18] Elaborating on this notion, early-nineteenth century theorists of phrenology, beginning with Franz Joseph Gall and Johann Gaspar Spurzheim, described the human brain as made up of thirty-five separate "organs," each of which was thought to correspond to a distinct mental faculty. Because particular organs in the brain became more developed as their corresponding faculties were exercised, the brain's, and consequently, the skull's, shape became crucial indicators of character. Taken together, then, physiognomy and phrenology professed to read, in the words of Lavater, "the original language of Nature, written on the face of Man."[19]

Later in the nineteenth century, this kind of analysis would be put to varied uses: criminology, the identification of social types, and the delineation of what came to be known as national character, all made use of the features "discovered" by the turn-of-the-century science of character. Yet the science of character as it flourished at the start of the nineteenth century was rooted in the assumptions of eighteenth-century natural science, and hence relied on a very different account of human variety than that offered by nineteenth-century racial biology. To be sure, it concerned itself from the beginning not merely with "individuals" but with the grouping of individuals into types. But physiognomists and phrenologists, like eighteenth-century theorists of monogenesis, tended to speak of "nations" rather than of "races" when carving up the human species into its subvarieties: "[W]e conclude," wrote the influential phrenologist, George Combe, as late as 1846, "that among nations, as among individuals, force of character is determined by the average size of the head; and that the larger-headed nations manifest their superior power, by subjecting and ruling their smaller-headed brethren – as the British in Asia, for example."[20] Unlike nineteenth-century "race," moreover, "character" was not conceived as a biological essence. Far from stable and immutable, the facial and cranial features with which physiognomic science concerned itself were the product of external factors: "almost all the diversity of the form of the head in different nations," wrote Blumenbach, "is to be attributed to the mode of life and to art."[21] And phrenological theory regarded as "axiomatic that the size of a particular organ or faculty in the brain could be developed by exercise, that is, by the use and encouragement of the particular ability." Hence these sciences of character did not advance a theory of original or primal differences between groups of persons, nor did they posit polygenesis.[22] Consequently, physiognomy and early phrenology, in contrast to the racial theory of the "American school," were not theories capable of producing stable biological entities such as the "black man" or the "white man."

These aspects of the science of character are entirely consistent with the mode of physical description employed by *The Pioneers*. Though its descriptions may indeed point to features and characteristics, such as skin pigment or morphology, that to us seem to provide racial information, in this novel they produce no stable and consistent division of features among identifiable "racial" groups. In fact, such features often cross racial lines. Lower-class "whites," for example, like the "swarthy" and "black-eyed" congregants described in Chapter Eleven, are on occasion distinguished using terms that to us appear racialized (123–4). This was a commonplace of eighteenth-century natural science, as shown in the following passage from Samuel Stanhope Smith's 1787 *Essay on the Causes of Variety*: "The poor and labouring part of the community are usually more swarthy and squalid in their complexion, more hard in their features, and more coarse and ill-formed in their limbs, than persons of better fortune, and more liberal means of subsistence."[23]

Similarly, reddish complexion or black eye-color (in later novels to become stable signifiers of non-whiteness), are here attached to "white" characters such as Richard Jones and Elizabeth Temple (18, 47). Nor is "black" complexion stable and permanent: it can be "mottled" by cold (17) or apprehension (194) and whitened by wind, fear (50), or spiritual salvation (50, 94, 95, 451). When we are told, then, that there was "something even noble in the rounded outlines of [Edwards's] head and brow," we are given not racial information, but rather certain clues to his character, to his true identity which will much later be revealed, and hence to his destiny in the plot (67). And though *The Pioneers* uses the word "negro," the description of a face "coloured with a glistening black" and yet "now mottled with the cold," imputes to Aggy not the racial essence of nineteenth-century biology, but the complex interaction between geographical "origin" and the force of climate that constituted "pigment" for eighteenth-century natural science (17–18). Those moments in this novel when the narrative lingers over faces and bodies thus convey a classification system still indebted to eighteenth-century natural science.

In one important respect, however, *The Pioneers* departs from the eighteenth-century model and approaches something more like mid-nineteenth century racial thought. The novel does this, not in its description of the surface of the body, but rather in its speculation about the mystery of its interior. If this seems strange, it is only because we are accustomed to thinking of race as first and foremost a visible fact. But it is instructive for precisely this reason. It suggests that race was not only a distribution of physical features, something that could be read off the surfaces of bodies; it was also a depth that lurked within them. This kind of racial depth is precisely what *The Pioneers* began to produce in its elaboration of Oliver Edwards's problematic interior. By attaching certain essential attributes to certain types of "blood," it utilized a metaphysics of blood that would be a key ingredient in the emergent notion of race.

The Pioneers invokes a new account of racial difference in the context of the conflict over ownership that the novel sets in motion – a conflict on which some of the most interesting scholarship on the Leatherstocking tales has focused.[24] James D. Wallace, for example, has argued that the "great question that drives *The Pioneers* is this: who owns America, and by what concept of right?" For this critical position, the land is in a sense the novel's true protagonist, providing "the conflict at the heart of the novel."[25] Yet, rather than understanding the novel's concern with property exclusively as the question of "who owns America?" and hence reading it as an allegory of white-Indian conflict, I would propose that we broaden this model. For the thematics of Indian dispossession was one aspect of a contemporary discussion about property conflict in which the politics of slavery, no less than Indian land ownership, was at stake. Understood in these terms, the complex narrative of property, entitlement, and identity at the center of the novel, whatever else it did, might also have offered a way of thinking about the problem of slavery without addressing it directly.[26]

From the very beginning, *The Pioneers* concerns itself with the problem of ownership in ways large and small. Footnotes and digressive passages strain to describe the peculiar conditions under which Temple, whose Quaker principles find slavery repellent, nonetheless indirectly owns the labor of Aggy (54–55, 55n). Most of Chapter Two is devoted to the complexities of Temple's claim to his "own" land, originally the property of his friend, Edward Effingham, a man of a noble English family who remained loyal to the Crown during the Revolution. At the onset of the Revolution, Temple offered to hold, for safekeeping, his friend's papers, including the King's "letter patent" granting the land to Effingham. After the Revolution, Temple, still protecting his friend's interests, bought the land from the government when an act of confiscation made the property of loyalists available by purchase to American citizens. The complexity and technicality alone of Temple's land claim leads one to suspect that the novel is struggling to make sense of something; and the incidental references to Temple's equally complex claim to Aggy's labor are an early indication that this semiotic struggle might have something to do with slavery.

The history of Temple's land is the backdrop to the dispute occurring early in the novel, involving Temple, Natty Bumppo, and a young man named Oliver Edwards. Natty claims that Edwards has killed a deer with two shots he has fired. Temple believes he himself was responsible for one of the animal's wounds, possibly the first and fatal one. In addition, each of the disputants has some more abstract claim to the buck. Temple is the owner of the land on which the animal was hunted. Natty lays claim to "a kind of natural right to gain a livelihood" (112) on the land by virtue of his intimacy with it and his labor upon it. And it is hinted that Oliver Edwards has some more primordial title linked to his mysterious descent. In the course of the dispute, it becomes clear that the men are not nearly as interested in the deer itself as they are in their competing claims to it.

Temple asserts that it is not for the animal but "for the honour that I contend" (22). Natty, in the role of Edwards's advocate, insists that he "can live without the venison, but I don't love to give up my lawful dues in a free country" (21). Hence, as Temple waxes juridical (if his shot was the fatal one, he explains, the second shot was "what we call an act of supererogation" [23]), and Natty plays the principled but unlettered backwoodsman ("You may call it by what larned name you please, Judge . . . I'm none who'll rob a man of his rightful dues" [23–4]), the episode performs a kind of casuistry. By bringing general principles of ownership, rights, and dues to bear on the concrete problem before them, the disputants pose the question at the heart of Enlightenment theory: what is the basis of a man's claim to property? The Enlightenment account of property, moreover, is the very thing with which American political theorists from the Federalists to Cooper had clashed when they attempted to explain slavery.

It is perhaps only a coincidence – but a striking and symptomatic one nonetheless – that the entire episode strongly echoes one of the most famous passages in Locke: "Thus this Law of reason," Locke had written in the *Second Treatise*, "makes the Deer, that *Indian's* who hath killed it; 'tis allowed to be his goods who hath bestowed his labour upon it" (II.30). Locke characteristically used "America" as the figure for the originary state of nature – "in the beginning," he wrote, "all the world was America" (II.49) – and the "Indian" as a kind of presocial man in whom we could observe the workings of property and person before civil society.

To understand what Cooper's early fictional treatments of his version of "America" did to the Lockean account of property, it is necessary to consider how the conflict over property is linked to the question of Edwards's descent. From the moment Edwards is introduced as the unknown hunter at Natty Bumppo's side, the novel generates a sense of mystery about his origins: there are hints throughout that Edwards is "mixed with the blood of the Indians" (143), having descended from a chief of the Delaware tribe. Richard Slotkin has demonstrated how the "mixed" character in Cooper operated to "test and prove the validity of racialist doctrine" by his or her possession of "blended traits."[27] Not only does the character of Edwards operate in this way, but the suggestion of a mixture actually gives rise to speculation about a kind of competition between Edwards's "Indian" and "white blood." Different characters construe the suggestion of a blood mixture differently: young Elizabeth Temple and Louisa Grant speculate on the romantic possibilities of such a tragic secret (114); Mr. Grant prays that the young man's "white blood"

(144) will overcome the "red" with "care and time," though as yet "neither the refinements of education, not the advantages of our excellent liturgy, have been able entirely to eradicate the evil" (143); old "Indian John" celebrates his Indian nature (138); and Richard Jones is the source of several derogatory statements about "half-breeds," their "natural reluctance to leave the savage state," and the consequent futility of attempts to "wean" them from their "savage ways" (202, 217; cf. 186, 204, 320). Whatever the particulars of these speculations, what runs through them is simply the presumption that there are such things as "Indian nature" and "white nature," and that something called "blood" is the repository of such natures.[28]

It is perhaps easy to overlook the obvious and yet crucial fact that these speculations about Edwards's origins have nothing to do with the visible surface of his body. However carefully the novel may have painted for us the intricacies of Edwards's countenance and figure, not one of the countless attributions of Indian descent take this exterior as its basis. They circulate, rather, around the question of interior qualities. If there is a single quality that is most often imputed to Indian blood in *The Pioneers*, it is surely the propensity to violence. We are told many times that violent emotion, particularly in the form of the thirst for revenge, is a quality inherent in "red" blood. Mr. Grant speaks on several occasions about this "hereditary violence of a native's passion" (143). Carrying Indian blood himself, "Indian John" serves a dual purpose: frequently possessed by memories of battles past, he is evidence of this congenital violence (139, 140, 141–42, 165–66); taken as well to oratorical outbursts, he confirms with his own words that it is an Indian's nature not to forgive but to avenge: "The white man may do as his fathers have told him; but the 'Young Eagle' [Oliver Edwards] has the blood of a Delaware chief in his veins: it is red, and the stain it makes, can only be washed out with the blood of a Mingo" (138). As the suggestions of Edwards's Indian descent multiply, so do indications that he is susceptible to the "hereditary violence" of revenge: "'I trust, my young friend,'" Mr. Grant cautions Edwards, "'that the education you have received, has eradicated most of those revengeful principles, which you may have inherited by descent; for I understand, from the expressions of John, that you have some of the blood of the Delaware tribe'" (141–2).

The figure of Indian vengeance serves a purpose in this novel well beyond the production of a "stereotype": it links the speculation about Edwards's Indian blood with the question of entitlement. For in an extension and generalization of the dispute over the buck, Edwards and

Temple become pitted against one another in a land dispute. Edwards testifies on a number of occasions that he regards Temple's land claims as illegitimate because they were the consequence of expropriation: "'Walk to that door, sir,'" Edwards enjoins Temple at a climactic moment, "'and look out upon the valley, that placid lake, and those dusky mountains, and say to your own heart, if heart you have, whence came these riches, this vale, and those hills, and why am I their owner?'" (345; cf. 206). It is significant that, in relation to this dispute, the novel first uses the word "race" in what seems to be a specifically nineteenth-century sense: "Who could have foreseen this, a month since!" Edwards soliloquizes, "I have consented to serve Marmaduke Temple! to be an inmate in the dwelling of the greatest enemy of my race" (206). Like the earlier hunting dispute, this plot line links the question of entitlement to that of descent. The notion of Indian vengeance cements this link by suggesting that Edwards's resentment, described as a "volcano" threatening to "burst its boundaries," has its origin in his descent, in "the blood . . . in his veins" (138).

This link between entitlement and blood is in no way canceled out by the fact that Oliver Edwards turns out to be "white" and hence "unmixed" after all. It is true that when the secret of his descent is revealed, namely, that he is none other than Edward Oliver Effingham, the son of Temple's sometime friend and original owner of Temple's land, the many assertions of Edwards's mixed "blood" turn out to have been enabled by an elaborate kind of narrative duplicity: Edwards/Effingham is descended from an Indian "chief," but only because the Delawares had given Edwards's aristocratic grandfather this honorary title; he is descended from the "original owners of the soil," by virtue, not of a primordial Indian land claim, but of Major Effingham's prior title to the land; the "hereditary violence" which apparently animates him throughout the narrative was not the natural "vengeance" of his Indian blood, but merely family pride and perhaps even loyalist principle (for he does not know of Temple's good faith in protecting Effingham's land, and of his attempts to contact him or his descendants after the Revolution). Thus, the words "race" and "blood" in association with Edwards's descent are refigured: they now seem retrospectively to refer not to nineteenth-century racial biology, but to an older European notion of kinship.[29]

Yet, although the disclosure of Edwards's identity may seem to take back the notion of blood nature the mystery had introduced, I would argue that exactly the reverse is true. On the most basic level, the reader cannot "unlearn" the facts of race so easily just because the mystery proves to be a narrative ruse. More fundamentally, however, what is most important about the revelation of Edwards's identity is that it completely transforms his relationship to property. Once the mystery of his lineage has been cleared up, Edwards/Effingham is now without hesitation granted the title he had unsuccessfully sought under the presumption of a different racial identity. As Eric Cheyfitz and others remind us, this transaction entails not only the recovery of his father's land, but marriage to Judge Temple's daughter, Elizabeth. By cementing the reappropriation of patriarchal holding with marriage, Cooper's resolution of the question of descent creates the conditions under which the dispute over property will simply disappear. The now benevolent Temple assures Edwards: "'One half of my estates shall be thine as soon as they can be conveyed to thee; and if what my suspicions tell me, be true, I suppose the other must follow speedily.' He took the hand which he held, and united it with that of his daughter" (444). Hence if the mystery of Edwards's identity connected the question of entitlement to that of descent, and defines descent in terms of blood, the fact that Edwards "turns out" to be white only serves to strengthen the connection and emphasizes the definition. The spurious attribution of Indian blood to Edwards linked entitlement to race; the novel's resolution does this all the more emphatically by conveying to the "white" Effingham what had been denied the "Indian" Edwards. It would be left to the domestic revisions of frontier romance to extend the sentimental logic implicit in this resolution. In the frontier novels of Lydia Maria Child and Catharine Maria Sedgwick, and also in Cooper's later fiction, the formation of the white heterosexual couple was the final and most important step in the resolution to racial conflict.[30]

Slavery had been the site of a crisis in American political discourse having to do with property, equality and the nature of "man." The elaborate narrative of entitlement Cooper mobilized in his first frontier romance centered around precisely these categories. Hence, the novel was able to add something to the discourse of slavery that would change it significantly. By linking ownership to blood of a particular kind, the novel began to reorganize these categories in such a way as to alter substantially the account of man offered by natural rights theory. There is no such thing, the resolution of *The Pioneers* tells us, as a man's natural right to property, for strictly speaking, there is no political being such as "man" as the Enlightenment had conceived him. Instead, Lockean "man" has been displaced by distinct varieties of men with different claims to property. In this sense, the category "man" is fractured, along with the political rights that had constituted him. Oliver Edwards's right of property, the novel suggests, rests not on his political status as a "man," but on his racial status as a "white man."

The Pioneers thus reformulated the terms of political debate and provided a narrative logic capable of overcoming the contradictions of American slavery. What was most powerful about it, however, was that it did so without talking about slavery as such. At precisely the same historical moment in which, as I have shown above, the question of debating slavery was such a vexed subject in national politics, the novel engaged its fundamental issues by linking the question of property to the diversity of bodies and "blood" and telling a story about the relationship between entitlement and race. Needless to say, the notion of race nascent in *The Pioneers* could not have acquired the status of cultural common sense had it not been extended through insistent repetition elsewhere in the culture. In order to follow the literary side of this story in the later frontier romances of Cooper and others, I turn next to the most important development in the literary discourse of race, namely, its articulation to sentimental literary modes and domestic plot structures. The addition of this element would make it possible to ground race more firmly in nature.

CHAPTER 3

Domestic frontier romance, or, how the sentimental heroine became white

> Mary Conant was indeed the wife of Hobomok.
>
> Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok.*

> [I]f one is amused by a contradiction, it is because one supposes its terms to be very far apart.
>
> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies.*

According to the dominant literary critical tradition, the designation "domestic frontier romance" presents a contradiction in terms. Most accounts of American literary history proceed on the assumption that the cultural impulse behind the frontier romance opposes that responsible for domestic fiction.[1] Deliberately shaking off the conventions associated with the homebound novels of European middle-class women, American frontier fiction tells the story of racial warfare set on the line between settlement and wilderness. Gender and genre coalesce here in a familiar manner. The heart of the frontier romance is a masculine hero, neither genteel nor marriageable, who flees the settlement for the freedom of the "virgin land." Indeed, its story is often told as if the frontier novel itself were one of Mark Twain's late-nineteenth century boy-heroes, turning its back on "sivilization" to "light out for the Territory."[2] As Leslie Fiedler tells us, the genre veered from "society to nature or nightmare" in order to "avoid the facts of wooing, marriage, and child-bearing" and the entire realm of the "chafing and restrictive" woman-centered home.[3] Where Fiedler seems to celebrate the genre, Richard Slotkin and Philip Fisher, by contrast, have generated powerful critiques of the culture of racialized violence to which this literature contributed.[4] But, despite their differences, all these accounts have persistently defined "male" frontier romance against "female" domestic fiction. It is not surprising, therefore, that this critical tradition has had little to say about the frontier fiction of such women as Lydia Maria Child and Catharine Maria Sedgwick. These novels concern themselves not only with white-Indian warfare, but also – by virtue of their incorporation of interracial romance plots – with the question of how one conducts a courtship under such conditions. They thus meet the generic standard of domestic fiction as well.

Recent literary criticism has sought to redress the neglect of women's frontier fiction by recovering these important works from near oblivion. By and large, it has done so, not in order to register its continuities with the male tradition, but in order to emphasize its departures from that tradition. In this respect, curiously enough, much of the existing scholarship on Child's *Hobomok* (1824) and Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827) seems to have reproduced the central terms of the antithesis between domestic and frontier fiction. According to these critics, the "disobedient" women writers who took up the frontier romance used sentimentality to confront and revise ethnocentric histories and the prejudices of white men's fiction. In doing so, the story goes, white women produced a "radical frontier romance," more daring in its depiction of the "forbidden domain of miscegenation" and interracial romance. Shifting focus from "race war" to interracial sentiment as the central trope of white-Indian relations, women's frontier fiction was more sympathetic towards Native Americans, and more respectful of cultural relativity.[5] Women writers thus substituted for what R. W. B. Lewis called the "American Adam" a tolerant and progressive "American Eve."[6] Though most of these scholars are careful to add that this political project was "limited" at times by its capitulation to dominant ideology, women's frontier fiction nevertheless emerges from this scholarship, first and foremost, as a progressive revision of the racist male prototype.

This bifurcation of frontier romance has made it difficult fully to interrogate the racial ideology of women's frontier fiction. While a growing body of criticism explores the racial politics of James Fenimore Cooper, Robert Montgomery Bird, William Gilmore Simms, and John Pendleton Kennedy, the frontier writing of their female counterparts has simply not received the same kind of scrutiny. For by construing the relationship between "racism" and "sentimentality" as the relationship between a dominant ideology and an alternative countertradition, much of the criticism that has risen up around Sedgwick and Child has had the effect of setting their frontier fiction out of the reach of ideology critique.[7] This state of affairs may also be due, in part, to a particular modality of what Foucault has termed the "repressive hypothesis," here built into the very tropes of criticism itself.[8] For if, by an implicit but pervasive logic, the treatment of interracial unions in domestic frontier romance is understood to be a daring entry into a "forbidden domain," the texts that result are presumed a priori to offer a space of cultural resistance and to preside over the liberation of suppressed political energies. Indeed, the entrance of female authors into the "male" realm of frontier fiction is often explicitly referenced or implicitly figured as "disobedience" – as the breaking of a taboo.

Compelling feminist scholarship has demonstrated, however, that domestic ideology was hardly politically innocent, but, rather, was often complicit in nineteenth-century projects of domination along class and racial lines.[9] In a similar way, I will argue that women's and men's frontier romances not only shared a fundamentally compatible racial ideology, but also worked together to produce it. If, as Philip Fisher has argued, "killing a man" was a racial matter for male historical novelists, the novels I will consider here demonstrate that marrying a man was certainly no less bound up with race for Cooper's female counterparts.[10] To do so is not necessarily to contradict the familiar portrait of the "sympathetic" character of domestic frontier fiction. It is, rather, to confront the powerful and apparently paradoxical conjunction of a sympathetic racialism.

I have argued above that the emergence of the frontier romance as a genre in the 1820s should be understood in part in relation to the problem of slavery and the unprecedented pressure put on the culture to come up with some account of relations of domination and how they might be related to the differences among groups of people. This cultural pressure may account in part for the emergence of a new genre of fiction that – though structured around the figure of the "Indian" and not the "slave" – engaged the question of the racial constitution of the nation. The novels of Child and Sedgwick similarly betray a concern with the problem of African slavery, much as Cooper's fictions did. Like Cooper's *The Pioneers*, moreover, they did so without mentioning the slave as such. Nevertheless, "slavery" in these works remains a kind of off-stage voice, consigned to the peripheral spaces of the narrative, such as prefaces and epigraphs. In the Preface to *Hope Leslie*, for example, Sedgwick writes about the "character" of the Indian in a way which implicitly refers to the slave: "The Indians of North America are, perhaps, the only race of whom it may be said, that though conquered, they were never enslaved. They could not submit, and live. When made captives, they courted death, and exulted in torture."[11] The African slave, never named, functions as an absent term of contrast. The novel thus makes implicit reference to another "race," a permanent and growing population who had not only been "conquered" but also "enslaved." These people had, it is implied, chosen to "submit" to their conquerors rather than to die. Child's

Hobomok similarly uses the Indian to refer to the absent slave. For example, she chooses for one of her chapter's epigraphs several lines about the "famous Indian race" from James Eastburn and Robert Sands' 1820 poem, "Yamoyden," that sound much the same note as Sedgwick's preface about a race "That will not bow in its deathless pride; / Whose rugged limbs of stubborn tone, / No plexous power of art will own, / But bend to Heaven's red bolt alone!"[12] Arguably, this figure of the proud and indomitable Indian, so central to frontier fiction, always potentially gestures towards the unnamed slave. Slavery thus operates in these works, no less than in those of Cooper, as an unspoken presence.

Another indication that the subject of slavery lurked in the background of these novels is the thematic centrality they give to the figure of Indian vengeance. Though such a connection is admittedly speculative, all these ruminations on Indian uprisings against the English set in the early colonial period – what *Hobomok's* narrator calls "deep laid plan[s] of vengeance" (33) – may mirror Anglo-American concerns about slave rebellion in the 1820s. With regard to *Hope Leslie* in particular, the fact that the novel repeatedly refers to collective Indian violence in terms of "conspiracy" (see for example 195–6, 247, 249, 284) – that is, not merely the conventional language of "terrible massacres" but specifically "rumors of secret and brooding hostility" (195) – gives us serious cause to wonder whether contemporary fears about slave conspiracies, such as that of Denmark Vesey in 1822, may have provided a key point of reference for Sedgwick. Indeed, when her narrator tells us that Governor Winthrop hoped "to obtain the key to Miantunnomoh's real designs, and to crush the conspiracy before it was matured" (249), or that the "Indians . . . did form artful conspiracies, but their best concerted plans were betrayed by the timid, or the treacherous" (196) – we can hardly help thinking of Vesey's rebellion, which was famously betrayed and quashed before it could be carried out. Within the novel, the conspiracy subplot comes to a head late in the second volume with the trial of Magawisca for participating in the "direful conspiracy" (284). Here again, there are some telling resonances between the description of Magawisca's demeanor and posture during her trial and the well-publicized descriptions of Denmark Vesey during his 1822 trial. Published in 1822, *An Official Report of the Trials of Sundry Negroes, Charged with an Attempt to Raise an Insurrection in the State of South Carolina* described Vesey's "conduct and behavior" during his "trial and imprisonment" in the following way:

> When Vesey was tried, he folded his arms, and seemed to pay great attention to the testimony given against him, but with eyes fixed on the floor. In this situation he remained immovable, until the witnesses had been examined by the court, and cross-examined by his counsel, when he requested to be allowed to examine the witnesses himself . . . The evidence being closed, he addressed the court at considerable length. When he received his sentence, tears trickled down his cheeks.[13]

Interestingly, there are several notable parallels to the description of Magawisca during her own conspiracy trial. Like the Vesey of the *Official Report*, Magawisca comports herself haughtily in the face of her accusers, "neither guilt, nor fearfulness, nor submission" visible in her "aspect" as she stood "in an erect attitude" and "the perfect composure of her countenance . . . expressed the courage and dignity of her soul" (282). Like Vesey, "her eyes were downcast" (282). And like Vesey, Magawisca listens patiently to the case against her before proceeding to "invalidate . . . the testimony against her" (289) – that of Phillip Gardiner in particular – and concludes by "addressing herself to Governor Winthrop" as the embodiment of the court. Whether by accident or design, then, the figure of Indian conspiracy in the novel and the trial of the suspected conspirator resonates with contemporary discourse about slave rebellion in general and the recent Vesey conspiracy in particular.[14]

But much as I want to keep slavery in view as a critical aspect of the historical context for the genre's emergence, my argument here is *not* that these novels were explicitly structured so as to engage the problem of slavery, nor that we need to map the themes of this fiction onto the topic of slavery in some allegorical way. For the most significant contributions these domestic frontier romances made to the political terrain of "slavery" was anticipatory in nature. That is to say, in producing certain ideas about race, and particularly racial sentiment, they provided the terms in which slavery would eventually become the primary and explicit subject of representation in the next generation of American literary production.

Viewed in this proleptic fashion, one of the most important contributions made by the frontier romance to the ways slavery would later be narrativized had to do with the way they incorporated the captivity narrative. From the inception of the frontier genre, the theme of captivity provided reliable material for subplots central to the generation of suspense and crucial to the narrative pleasure of the novel's eventual resolution. The plot of Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, for example, is famously driven by abductions of its white heroines by Indian villains, and the resolutions to these captivities hinge on the machinations of brave and virtuous male rescuers. Harriet Cheney's 1824 novel *A Peep at the Pilgrims* similarly has its heroine, Miriam, and later her suitor Atherton, taken captive. Not only does the suspension of their courtship by captivity increase our desire for their reunion, but Atherton's bravery in the face of captivity also helps to authorize him as an appropriate husband.[15] Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* and Child's *Hobomok*, along with Cooper's own later novel, *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*, then took this captivity subplot in a different direction. For in having their Anglo-American heroines marry their Indian captors, they followed the narrative path of Mary Jemison's 1824 narrative, in which the female captive "goes native."

But the theme of captivity also operates in many of these frontier novels in a different and less obvious way, for they also routinely represent certain *Indian* characters as captive to Anglo-Americans. If Sedgwick's Magawisca springs most immediately to mind, we must not forget that Cooper deployed this same theme two years later with Conanchet in *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*. Even the villain of *The Last of the Mohicans*, the "savage" Magua, is arguably figured as a symbolic captive to English settler culture and its corrupting influences on his character. While this reversal of the captivity dynamic receives less critical attention in studies of frontier fiction, it is far more relevant to the way slavery would be represented in mid-century literature. For by reversing the racial polarity of the captivity narrative and putting Indians among white captors, they opened up a crucial narrative avenue for slave narratives centered on the topos of captivity.[16] This particular modality of the captivity theme also paved the way, with consequences I will take up in Chapter 5, for Stowe's appropriation of the captivity narrative in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

If these thematic connections suggest that the frontier romance may be an important if unacknowledged precursor to the slave narratives of the later antebellum period, we might make such a connection more simply on biographical grounds. Within Lydia Maria Child's oeuvre, we need only look ahead to her correspondence with Harriet Jacobs and her influence over the shape of Jacobs' 1861 slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. This connection alone indicates that we might fruitfully consider some of the structural and narrative correspondences between the genres of frontier romance and the slave narrative, and, by extension, Stowe's sentimental novel of slavery.[17]

Though such biographical connections can be illuminating, however, I must immediately emphasize that in the readings that follow, I am not interested in excavating the beliefs, opinions or prejudices of the authors in question. For one thing, each of the texts I treat at length here represents only one instance in its author's larger literary production, and in that respect freezes a moment in a longer intellectual, aesthetic and political development. Thus, for example, my emphasis in the readings that follow on the figure of the white sentimental heroine could easily be complicated by a consideration of Child's last and most celebrated novel, *A Romance of the Republic* (1867), a novel centering on a sentimental heroine who was not white, modeled as she is on the "tragic quadroon" type that Child herself had earlier introduced into American fiction.[18] Similarly, my analysis of how *Hobomok* represents interracial marriage as a "wayward fate" does not take account of the development of Child's thought on the issue. While in an 1831 editorial in the *Massachusetts Journal*, she wrote of interracial marriages that "they are in bad taste, and are unnatural," two years later in her *Appeal on Behalf of the Class of Americans Called Africans*, she took aim against antiamalgamation laws, in an apparent change of heart.[19] Finally, most critics understand her *A Romance of the Republic*, which celebrated intermarriage as the solution to racial prejudice, as the ultimate point in this development.[20]

Rather than these authors' development, however, I am concerned with the contribution made by a few specific works of the 1820s to a particular common sense about race in the antebellum period. And, in keeping with the methodological commitments I laid out above in the introduction to this work, this often involves tracing the unintended consequences of certain discursive and narrative choices. As a result of this focus, my account of the problematic discursive effects of this writing vis-à-vis race may often seem to be at odds with our critical and biographical common sense about these writers' progressive political intentions. In the analysis that follows of Child's *Hobomok*, for example, we may find the most dramatic such discrepancy between intention and effect. Rightly known as one of the period's boldest and most uncompromising Anglo-American advocates for Native-American and African-American rights, Child is often associated with the rejection of some of the very racialist assumptions that I will argue her early writing helped produce.[21] While Sedgwick's credentials as a reformer are nowhere near as celebrated as Child's, particularly with regard to slavery, she is still generally understood to have taken on some of her culture's most entrenched assumptions about white/Indian conflict, and normative gender relations.[22]

To my way of thinking, however, their frontier romances could do the cultural work of producing "race" more effectively not only through the operations of sympathy, but also by virtue of the courtship plot.[23] By merging the genre of the frontier romance with that of the domestic novel of courtship, in effect, they returned to a version of the romance that appears much closer to the original narrative model provided by Walter Scott. In *Ivanhoe* (1819), for example, Scott resolved the symbolic conflict between Saxon and Norman descent as alternative genealogies of Englishness by producing a third term in the Ivanhoe-Rowena love plot: the "Jewess Rebecca." As Alide Cagidemetrio has argued, the introduction of this third term allowed the novel to overcome the Saxon/Norman conflict by demonstrating it to be less fundamental than that between "English" and "Jew." The disappearance of Rebecca provides the coup de grâce, by "exonerating Ivanhoe from choosing a bride, and letting Rebecca choose for him by favoring his union with Rowena. The beautiful Jewess voluntarily disappears from the scene, renews an allegiance with her Fathers, and devotes herself to good deeds and spinsterhood."[24] As I will argue below, Child's *Hobomok* and Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* employ structurally identical strategies, removing the Indian from a romantic triangle in order to enable the union of the white couple at novel's end. Though Cooper himself was famously "the American Scott" to his contemporaries, in his earliest frontier romance the courtship plot remained relatively attenuated, compared to the domestic frontier romances I will discuss here. In Chapter 4, I speculate that it may have been these domestic romancers' successes – by which I mean not only their popularity, but the effectiveness of their narrative paradigms in posing and imaginatively resolving questions about the racial constitution of the nation – that led Cooper further to exploit the power of the marriage plot in his subsequent fictions.

Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok, A Tale of Early Times* (1824) and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827) are both stories of heroines of English descent in colonial America who marry Indians. I have already casually referred to these plots as "interracial romances." Yet simply to assume that a middle-class readership in the 1820s already fully understood the *racial* implications of this kind of story presupposes what must be explained: how an English heroine's marriage to an Indian became a question of a "white woman" marrying a "red man." In order to account for the cultural logic according to which a woman's choice of a husband could seem to threaten her identity as a member of the white race rather than as a woman of English descent, we must consider how domestic frontier romances defined and constituted such racial categories in the first place.

The sentimental version of the frontier story relied on a set of ideas about kinship – desire, courtship, and the formation of families – that an emergent middle class had embraced as natural and universal. These fictions taught their readers about the nature of race by articulating it to a discourse of gender which had already acquired the power to speak the truth about nature of a different kind. By describing race in terms of kinship, domestic frontier fiction in effect used one kind of classification to produce another. The key figure in this classificatory activity was the white sentimental heroine. From our present perspective, it may seem as if there was indeed no other kind of heroine for readers steeped in the stories of English and Anglo-American women. In fact, however, it was not until the second quarter of the nineteenth century that American fiction made a woman's race the precondition of her status as a heroine. If the phrase "white sentimental heroine" now seems redundant, it is in part because the writing of Child and Sedgwick made the American fictional heroine's race so essential to her identity that it seems unnecessary to emphasize it. I want, then, to tell a just-so story of my own about how the sentimental heroine first became white.

As I have already noted, American readers first encountered the central figure of these novels, the English heroine who married an Indian, not in frontier romance or in domestic fiction, but in the captivity narrative. *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, published the same year as Child's *Hobomok*, describes in great detail what happened when the captive failed to preserve her identity and chose never to return to her community of origin. I begin with an analysis of this narrative because it contains in embryonic form the central elements of a racial logic that domestic frontier romances would extend and develop.[25] First, the *Narrative* described the captive's identity, and that of her captors, in explicitly racial, rather than national, terms: Jemison was a "white" captive among "red" captors rather than an English woman among Indians. Second, the narrative clearly distinguished "race" as a fact of nature from national or religious identity, which it defined as cultural. Finally, although race was defined as essential, natural and immutable, racial differences resided not on the exterior of the body, but rather in the depths of the mind and the heart. Consequently, when Jemison, Child, and Sedgwick wrote about the "whiteness" of the sentimental heroine, they referred not to "color" as we understand the term, but to a special kind of subjectivity that was in turn the product of a particular kind of household.

MARY JEMISON: GOING NATIVE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

First published in 1824, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison* was one in a long line of narratives describing the captivity of persons of

European birth or descent among Indians in North America.[26] Jemison's narrative was by far the most popular example of a particular variation on the captivity narrative in which the captive forfeits her identity and becomes assimilated to Indian culture. The genre presupposed fundamental differences between the captive's culture of origin and that of her captors, and in the narratives of the nineteenth century, these differences were most often described in racial terms. Narratives in which the captive actually "goes native" were particularly well suited to explore, and thus to establish, the boundaries between the races as they dramatized what happened to those who transgress those boundaries. Captivity narratives since that of Mary Rowlandson in 1682 always entertained the possibility of the captive's going native, but Jemison was one of the first to tell this version of the story in as much detail. No narrative besides Jemison's, moreover, had told this story from the perspective of a captive who had never returned to her community of origin.[27] Jemison's language thus issued from the body of a captive who became "Indian" in almost every conceivable sense – who had even married out – and yet insisted to her readers that she remained "white."[28] In this respect, she replicated the figure that Richard Slotkin has analyzed at the heart of Cooper's fiction: the hero who has "crossed over" a cultural divide and can thus reveal the "irreducible minimum" of racial identity.[29]

Jemison's narrative, then, could do something that narratives such as Rowlandson's could not: it defined the captive's race as something that could not be lost or taken away. To do so, it had to distinguish her cultural identity, or her Englishness, from her racial identity. While the former was classified as a contingent and alterable condition, the latter was defined as essential and immutable. Published some two decades before the dominance of polygenesis in racial science, Jemison's narrative thus portrayed racial difference in a way quite consonant with the scientific conception of race as an essential property of body and mind. Paradoxically, then, by focusing on the experience of an English captive who assimilated to Indian culture, this later captivity narrative represented race as an ineffaceable natural difference.

Modern readers have sometimes understood the early captivity narratives as employing racist stereotypes to set off the pristine body of the captive from that of the polluted savage. To be sure, the genre conferred upon Native Americans a barbarity that branded them enemies of English civilization and justified both the expropriation of their land and wars of extermination. Yet the early narratives distinguished the Indian, not by "racial" characteristics, but by what might properly be called national and religious ones.[30] The captors, as scores of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century narratives described them, were "Indians," "savages" and "heathens," rather than a racially distinct variety of men. So, too, the captive's identity, as the narratives defined it, was a function, not of her race as such, but of her affiliation with a national and religious community, a community "more English than Christian, though it [was] certainly Christian, and indeed puritan."[31] In the early narratives, then, "race," in the mid-nineteenth century sense of the word, was simply not the operative term of contrast. Even the prospect of the captive "going native" and never returning to her culture of origin represented cultural corruption rather than any form of racial pollution – or, more accurately, the distinction between these orders of difference did not exist in this form at this historical moment. It was commonplace, for example, to represent even non-English Europeans in much the same terms as the heathens of America.[32] Consequently, such narratives as those of Hannah Swarton (1699) and John Gyles (1736) could depict the fate of falling into the hands of barbarous French "papists" as every bit as dreadful as falling captive to Indians. "When my mother heard the talk of my being sold to a Jesuit," reports John Gyles, "she said to me, 'Oh my dear child! If it were God's will, I had rather follow you to your grave . . . than you should be sold to a Jesuit, for a Jesuit will ruin you, body and soul.'"[33]

To a nineteenth-century readership, this aspect of the earlier narratives would surely have seemed strange, not because anti-Catholic sentiment had disappeared, but rather because, as I have explained above, that readership took for granted a theory of human difference that had begun to distinguish "race" as a biophysical essence from religion, diet, and other contingencies of cultural difference. In the course of the nineteenth century, racial difference gradually supplemented the Enlightenment antinomy of civilization and savagery, and the captivity narrative became a question of how "white" captives preserved their racial identity while under the thumb of "red" captors.

From the beginning, the narrative described Jemison in just this way. James Seaver, who transcribed Jemison's story, refers to her in the introduction to the first edition as "'The White Woman,' as Mrs. Jemison is called."[34] This designation soon migrated to the title page. The second edition was published in 1842 under the new title, *Deh-he-wä-mis: or A Narrative of the Life of Mary Jemison: Otherwise Called the White Woman.* The alias stuck; phrases such as "The White Woman" or "The White Woman of the Genesee" became the standard epithets for Jemison in the subtitles of subsequent editions.[35] From the very title page, then, readers throughout the nineteenth century were told to understand Jemison's race to be her most essential feature. To my knowledge, hers was the first captivity narrative to give the captive's race top billing in this manner. In order to constitute Jemison as a "White Woman" in the course of telling her story, the narrative charges itself with a kind of definitional task: it must tell us what makes white people white.

As Mary Jemison tells it, the most significant event of her early captivity was her first encounter with "white people" a year or so after her abduction at the age of fifteen. By then, she tells us, she had already been "adopted" by her Indian captors, given a new name, and begun to live a "contented" life among her new Indian "family" (77–8):

> Early the next morning the Indians took me over to the fort to see the white people that were there. It was then that my heart bounded to be liberated from the Indians and to be restored to my friends and my country . . .
>
> Shortly after we left the shore opposite the fort, as I was informed by one of my Indian brothers, the white people came over to take me back; but after considerable inquiry, and having made diligent search to find where I was hid, they returned with heavy hearts. Although I had then been with the Indians something over a year, and had become considerably habituated to their mode of living, and attached to my sisters, the sight of white people who could speak English inspired me with an unspeakable anxiety to go home with them, and share in the blessings of civilization. (80–81)

The episode is a structurally central one, for it raises the question at the heart of the narrative: what relation does a woman living as an "Indian," "adopted" by Indian society and fully adopting it in return, have to the "civilization" from which she has separated? A century and a half earlier, Mary Rowlandson had described a similar event. Rowlandson and her captors come upon a deserted house that had once been occupied by some English people: "There was hard by a vacant house (deserted by the English before for fear of the Indians). I asked them whether I might not lodge in the house that night, to which they answered, 'What, will you love English men still?'"[36] Rowlandson's sentimental attachment to the remnants of an English household is echoed by Jemison's brief encounter with "civilization." In one respect, however, Jemison does revise Rowlandson's account. Unlike Rowlandson, Jemison longs, not for "English men," but rather for "white people" – a phrase she uses several times. In so doing, Jemison defined the culture from which she had been separated, not as a national or a religious community, but as a community of white people.

Worn away by time and soothed by her affection for her "Indian brothers" and "sisters," Jemison's pangs of separation have subsided. Even so, the mere sight of "white people" renews her "anxiety to go home with them." In referring to "white people who could speak English," the narrative offers a partial explanation for this continued longing. Echoing earlier captivity narratives, the association of Jemison's culture of origin with the English language also recalls the parting advice of Jemison's mother: "Be careful and not forget your English tongue" (69). But the very designation, "white people who can speak English" implies the existence of white people who cannot. For Jemison's narrative, being white cannot, therefore, be reduced entirely to a particular kind of linguistic competency. In order to explain Jemison's relationship to that which she has left behind, the narrative has to provide an answer beyond the matter of language.

Though Jemison describes her relationships with Indians in familial terms, these relationships are repeatedly found wanting in comparison to middle-class familial norms. She first establishes this fact in relation to her Indian husbands. Jemison marries her first husband, she tells us, because "my sisters told me that I must." Not "daring to cross them, or disobey their commands, with a great degree or reluctance I went; and Sheninjee and I were married according to Indian custom" (81). Jemison grows to love Sheninjee and to regard him as "an agreeable husband, and a comfortable companion" (82), but the very terms in which she declares this change of heart mark the absence of sentimental affect. At the center of Jemison's marriage to Sheninjee is not "love," we must infer, but reluctance, obedience, and, in the end, accommodation. The event of her second marriage, following the death of Sheninjee, sounds much like the first: "When my son Thomas was three or four years old, I was married to an Indian, whose name was Hiokatoo, commonly called Gardow, by whom I had four daughters and two sons" (95). A transatlantic readership familiar with the conventions of sentimental fiction would have been struck by what this statement did not say. The marriage is described in terms entirely devoid of conjugal affect, and even of Jemison's agency, grammatically speaking: "I was married . . ." These descriptions, then, place Jemison's marriages in stark contrast with the normative companionate marriage as the middle class had defined it.[37] This affectlessness extends to the birth of her children, which she flatly consigns to a subordinate clause: "by whom I had four daughters and two sons" (95). The birth of six children, not individuated in any way, is thus reduced to a piece of narrative information without a trace of feeling, an absence that would have spoken volumes to a sentimental readership.

Jemison's failure to produce the signs of sentimental affect is perhaps most interesting in relation to her comments on parenthood later in the narrative. The most intense form of happiness in the lives of "white people," she tells us, is the pleasure they take in raising, providing for, and instructing children:

> I have frequently heard it asserted by white people, and can truly say from my own experience, that the time at which parents take the most satisfaction and comfort with their families is when their children are young, incapable of providing for their own wants, and are about the fireside, where they can be daily observed and instructed. (122)

In associating the "satisfaction" of white parents with their children's youth, Jemison associates white people with a particular kind of social reproduction and places the relationship between parent and young child at its center. By this point in the narrative, however, it is already abundantly clear that Jemison was not herself at the center of such a family. Indeed, this description of maternal feeling introduces Jemison's account of her unsuccessful attempts to form her own family in captivity. She thus defines the ideal Anglo-American family against the background of her own Indian family's deviance from this norm.

Indeed, immediately following the paean to white parental bliss, Jemison admits that her own "happiness in this respect . . . was not without alloy" (123). She then details the violent division of her family by a fierce rivalry between her sons that ultimately ends in murder. Contrary to the biblical paradigm, however, it is the divergence between Jemison and her sons, and not the conflict between the sons themselves, that presents the most fateful and insurmountable source of her affliction:

> No one can conceive of the constant trouble that I daily endured on their accounts – on the account of my two oldest sons, whom I loved equally, and with all the feelings and affection of a tender mother, stimulated by an anxious concern for their fate. Parents, mothers especially, will love their children, though ever so unkind and disobedient. Their eyes of compassion, of real sentimental affection, will be involuntarily extended after them, in their greatest excesses of iniquity . . . I know that such exercises are frequently unavailing; but notwithstanding their ultimate failure, it still remains true, and ever will, that the love of its reformation is capable of stimulating a disappointed breast. (124–25)

What takes shape as she narrates these tribulations is something more fundamental than mere sibling rivalry, namely, a conflict between a mother bound by Anglo-American sentimentality and "disobedient" sons governed by putatively "Indian" passions. Indeed Jemison's description of her disappointment everywhere insists that she herself possesses the sentiments required for familial happiness: she loves her sons, and loves them "equally"; she is compassionate and affectionate to a fault; she is, in short, endowed with "all the feelings and affections of a tender mother." Hence, if her account of child birth was striking for its lack of affect, this chapter makes it clear that Jemison herself is not devoid of "real sentimental affection." At the same time, however, the self-destruction of Jemison's Indian family tells us that she has failed to reproduce these sentiments in her sons.

An explanation for this failure comes in the unlikely form of a digressive polemic against educating Indians in Anglo-American schools. All such attempts, the narrative tells us, are futile:

> I have seen, in a number of instances, the effects of education upon some of our Indians, who were taken when young, from their families, and placed at school before they had had an opportunity to contract many Indian habits, and there kept till they arrived to manhood, but I have never seen one of those but what was an Indian in every respect after he returned. Indians must and will be Indians, in spite of all the means that can be used for their cultivation in the sciences and arts. (84–5)

It is important to recognize, first, that this brief passage invokes a long tradition of scientific debate about the status of varieties within the human species. In fact, this figure of the educated Indian strongly echoes a passage by the most widely read eighteenth-century theorist of natural science, Samuel Stanhope Smith. In his 1787 *Essay on the Causes of Variety*, Smith supported his argument for the unitary origin of the human species with an anecdote of an Indian who literally whitened after his enrollment in college. "There is [now] less difference between his features and those of his fellow-students," reported Smith, "than we often see between persons in civilized society."[38] For Smith and other eighteenth-century theorists, human variety was mutable to the extent that an "Indian" could quite literally turn into a "white man."

Jemison's rewriting of Smith's anecdote effectively inverts his theory. No matter how early Indians are "taken . . . from their families" to be schooled, every Indian so educated will necessarily be "an Indian in every respect after he returned." Jemison thus argues for primordial racial differences that are not susceptible to changes in environment or "habits." In so doing, she opposes nature and habit as two entirely different orders of identity. "Habits" can be acquired, or in the case of "Indian" habits, "contracted," but one's fundamental racial nature cannot be altered.

Nature will out: "Indians must and will be Indians" (84–5). In this respect, the Indian educated in Anglo-American schools mirrors the figure of Jemison herself after a year of Indian captivity, "considerably habituated to their mode of living, and attached to my [Indian] sisters" (36). Just as the educated Indian is held up as the example of a certain hybridity – Indian nature, white "cultivation" – Jemison provides his precise counterpoint: white nature, Indian habits. The Indian, wherever educated, however "cultivated," is still an Indian in the last analysis; in exactly the same way, Jemison remains white.

Jemison's digression about "cultivated" Indians thus speaks directly to the question posed by her fractured Indian family. The theory of racial nature she advances explains the cause of her failure to produce an Anglo-American family out of Indian materials. Like those Indians educated in white schools, Jemison's husband and sons "must and will be Indians." The lack around which her family is organized is not due to her, then, but rather to the fact that Indians do not have proper familial sentiments. Jemison could leave civilization, marry an Indian husband and have children by him. She could name her children as if they were English; she could even name them after the relatives she left behind (82, 95). Ultimately, however, she could not reproduce her culture of origin because she could not reproduce her racial characteristics in her children. She cannot give Indian men "white" nature. This inability tells us two things at once. First, it asserts that the familial sentiments Jemison had ascribed to "white people" were an endowment of their nature and not merely a result of their cultivation. In so doing, the narrative not only associates race with family feeling; it makes this sentimental subjectivity into a synecdoche for white identity itself. Second, the narrative demonstrates that the reproduction of a white child requires that both parents be white. Jemison has retained the signs of her white subjectivity in spite of her marriages to Indians and her adoption of Indian ways of life. Yet her racial difference from her own children ultimately obstructs the formation of Anglo-American household. The story of Jemison's family thus becomes an object lesson in the incommensurability of whiteness and Indianness defined as two essentially different forms of subjectivity.

The kind of sentiments ascribed to "white people" throughout Mary Jemison's captivity narrative were widely understood in the early nineteenth-century to be the defining characteristics of middle-class women.[39] In the course of the narrative, however, these features become racialized as the values of an emergent middle class were refigured as the constitutive elements of "white" subjectivity. It is no accident, then, that it is first and foremost men, husbands and sons, who are Indians and hence incapable of the white feelings Jemison wishes to reproduce. The sort of feeling that inheres in white people appeared to be the particular provenance of white women, upon whom rested the responsibility of its proper reproduction. By defining race in terms of the interiority of the domestic woman, the narrative placed it in a particular relationship to femininity. Domestic frontier fiction would use the figure of the white sentimental heroine to explore this relationship further.

'HOBOMOK': THE HYDRAULICS OF DESIRE

During the same decade as Jemison's narrative, novels about women who went native explored the same racial logic in a different register – that of domestic fiction. For all of Jemison's emphasis on sentimental affect, her narrative could not tell its readers much about conjugal love. Jemison had described her Indian marriages as a process of reluctant accommodation devoid of sentimental affect, desire, and agency. Domestic frontier romances, on the other hand, could investigate the interior mechanisms by which an Anglo-American woman might actually offer herself to an Indian man as a wife, by rewriting the captivity narrative as a novel of courtship on the order of domestic fictions, such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1791). And since, unlike many of these precursors, the frontier heroine's out-marriage was not a result of seduction, rape, or coercion, this genre thus expanded the terrain of white interiority to include conjugal desire. In doing so, however, domestic frontier romance also changed the domestic novel by articulating it to a specifically nineteenth-century racial discourse. It used the thematics of courtship and desire to constitute its heroine, not only as English, middle class, and feminine, but also as white.

Lydia Maria Child's *Hobomok, A Tale of Early Times* was published in 1824, the same year as Jemison's narrative. Like the narrative, the novel tells the story of a woman of English descent, Mary Conant, who marries an Indian. Having been forbidden by her Puritan father to marry the Episcopalian man she loves, and presuming him dead, Mary decides, while in a "moment of derangement" (136), to become the wife of an Indian named Hobomok and later has his child. When Mary's true love reappears, Hobomok steps aside to make room for the union of the racially compatible couple, who then return to the settlement with Mr. Conant's blessing. Like Jemison's *Narrative*, then, the novel centers on a woman who leaves "the social band" for "the company of savages" (122).

But since Mary Conant marries out willingly, without coercion or even a stint in captivity, *Hobomok* explores the workings of the English heroine's desire in a way that Jemison's *Narrative* could not. Moreover, since its heroine eventually returns to her community of origin, *Hobomok* complements Jemison's narrative in another important respect. By reincorporating its heroine into the Anglo-American community, the novel demonstrates that this heroine has retained her racial identity and hence the most fundamental basis for connection to this community. Child's novel thus offered powerful narrative proof that what most defined its heroine was a permanent endowment of her nature.

From the outset, the novel forecasts what it calls Mary Conant's "wayward fate" (16) in marrying Hobomok. In a sense, this phrase alone asserts what the novel as a whole will demonstrate: that Mary's union with Hobomok is both bad and inevitable. Moreover, since the marriage, narratively speaking, is a foregone conclusion – a "lamentable fact" (130) – the novel authorizes itself to explore the anatomy of her degradation and to discover its true cause. Yet in order to understand how Mary Conant's marriage to Hobomok became a question of a "white woman" marrying an "Indian man," we must consider how the novel defines and constitutes these differences in the first place. Set in Salem, Massachusetts in 1629, the novel's events take place against the backdrop of a "dark and contentious" historical conflict between English settlers and Indians on the frontier (29–30). In a manner that recalls Cooper's frontier fiction, the novel uses the language of racial warfare between the "white people" and the "dark children of the forest" (16), of broken arrows "red with white man's blood" (17), and of the "savage majesty" of the "red man" (31). The themes of courtship and desire, however, occasion most of the novel's racial language. This is most dramatically the case in the description of Hobomok's love for Mary Conant. Having asked for the hand of an Indian woman in marriage, Hobomok then falls in love with Mary Conant, a transgression that incurs the wrath of the kinsmen of his betrothed and the rest of his tribe. Rarely referred to by name, the object of Hobomok's desire is identified by such epithets as "the white man's squaw" (30), "the white-faced daughter of Conant" (31), or simply the "white woman" (14).

By linking Hobomok's desire for Mary Conant to her whiteness, Child made desire into a kind of litmus test of race.[40] But her novel would take this logic further by insisting that the white woman could not really return an Indian's love. Although *Hobomok* announces itself as the story of a white woman who gives herself to an Indian, it ultimately asserts that her union with Hobomok is the result of the systematic redirection of her natural desire. The narrative project of explaining of why and how Mary Conant took a wrong turn has its counterpart in a particular kind of figurative language. Beginning with the reference to the "wayward fate," the novel describes its heroine in terms of her "thwarted inclinations" (47) and the diminution of her natural "disposition" (46). These terms are linked to Mary's waywardness by what might be termed a hydraulics of desire. The novel represents Mary Conant's union with Hobomok as unnatural by identifying the factors that block the path along which her desire naturally flows – or ought naturally to flow. Like so many obstructions, the novel argues, these influences force Mary off her natural course.

The elaborate plot machinery by which the novel unites Mary with Hobomok begins with a divination ceremony. She steals into the woods at a "lonely hour of the night" to perform a marriage ritual designed to help young girls foretell the identities of the men they will marry. Marking out a large circle in the forest floor, Mary walks around it three times with "measured tread," and carefully retraces her steps backwards. Then, standing inside the "magic ring," she utters a kind of incantation:

> Whoever's to claim a husband's power,
> Come to me in the moonlight hour.
> . . .
> Whoe'er my bridegroom is to be,
> Step in the circle after me. (14)

This ceremony, couched in the language of superstition and witchcraft, results in the spectral appearance of Hobomok, who "spring[s] forward" into the circle, prompting her "involuntary shriek of terror." As she turns to leave the "charmed circle," her "favoured lover," Charles Brown, appears just as mysteriously to escort her home (14). This ritual prefigures Mary's marriage to Hobomok and its eventual undoing at the hands of Charles Brown. Indeed, since the ritual seems not merely to reveal Hobomok's presence but almost to conjure it, the novel suggests that the ceremony in the forest may even be the cause of Mary's "wayward fate." Yet the ritual is represented both as an act of mischief issuing from a young girl's overactive imagination and the childish counterpart of her elders' beliefs and mores. As the narrative proceeds, the scene in the forest is concretely linked to Mary's social environment. It is neither Mary nor the magical ritual, but Mary Conant's milieu, what the narrator calls the "ignorance and superstition of the times" (91), that holds the key to her choice of a husband.

By the time Mary steps into the "charmed circle," the novel has already identified the primary force that has sent her there: her father's interdiction. Though there is a perfectly suitable mate for Mary in Charles Brown, Mr. Conant forbids the union on the grounds that Brown is an Episcopalian. By prohibiting his daughter's desire for Brown, Conant unwittingly sets in motion a series of events which lead her to marry an Indian. It is immediately after overhearing her father's condemnation of Brown that the "tears start in Mary's eyes," and she sneaks into the forest to divine her romantic destiny. More importantly, it is after Charles Brown is expelled from the settlement as a heretic and presumed dead at sea that Mary succumbs to the "unreasonableness of mingled grief and anger" (122) and offers herself to an Indian. At the level of plot, then, Child forges a causal link between Conant's religious prohibition against Mary's proper mate and her drift towards Hobomok.

The novel identifies a second factor that pushed Mary into Hobomok's arms: her belief in preordained marriage. This belief is most strongly associated in the novel with Mrs. Oldham, a character whose very name seems to mark the residuality of European kinship systems. A stock figure of domestic fiction, she is one in a long line of characters who serve the function of personifying residual beliefs and practices: "As for Mrs. Oldham, the whole circle of her ideas might be comprised in one sentence, viz. 'People will marry whom they are fore-ordained to marry, and die when they are appointed to die'" (114). Although at first this notion seems little more than a quaint colonial belief, its reappearance and repetition indicate that it provides something more significant than mere local color (21, 127, 137). Another indication of its significance is the fact that Mary Conant herself invokes the notion of marital destiny immediately following the ritual in the forest. Though bewildered by Hobomok's unexpected entrance into her mystic husband-circle, Mary surrenders to her "fate": "'I suppose I must submit to whatever is fore-ordained for me. Folks who have the least to do with love are the best off'" (21). This passage explicitly links the belief in marital fate to the irrelevance of female desire and conjugal love more generally. Under the "stupifying [*sic*] influence" of this "ill directed belief," we are told, Mary simply "submit[s]" to what she believes to be her predetermined course (123). Mrs. Oldham's belief in fate thus works together with Mr. Conant's "no" to deflect Mary's desire from its proper object. If Conant's interdiction removes a potential husband from circulation, Mrs. Oldham's superstitions lead Mary to perform the ritual which conjures his Indian substitute. Together, they see to it that Mary goes native. That they do so is central to what the novel has to tell us about race.

Child first links Hobomok's desire for Mary Conant to her race, and then she demonstrates that Mary could never reciprocate the Indian's desire. From the first reference to Mary's "wayward fate," the novel represents the union as bad. More importantly, however, it argues that Mary could never really desire such a union, for only a formidable – and misguided – cultural labor was capable of diverting her natural desire and forcing her to marry an Indian. *Hobomok* thus represents a white woman's desire for a white man as natural by showing the elaborate machinery necessary to suppress it. It is significant, therefore, that Mary's union with Hobomok is couched not in the language of desire or love but in terms of the absence of precisely these feelings. Indeed, at the moment that she offers herself to an Indian, the narrative dwells on the loss of her will as well as her desire. Overtaken with a "bewilderment of despair that almost amounted to insanity" (120), Mary is said to suffer a "partial derangement of [her] faculties," a "whirl of feeling," in which "she could not even think, and scarcely [knew] what she did" (118–19). In the space of several pages, there are well over a dozen such references to "the chaos of Mary's mind" (120; see 117–125). In a sense, the suppression of her will, and indeed of her reason, is only a further extension of her father's "no" and old-world ideas about kinship. Mary Conant did not possess agency any more than Mary Jemison did. If Jemison's captivity had forced her "reluctantly" to marry an Indian, Conant's captivity to an outmoded form of social reproduction led her to do the same. The reason why Mary marries outside of her birth community is not something essential to her nature but a consequence of her "times" and their assault upon her natural desire.

Mary Conant is distinguished from Mary Jemison, however, in that she eventually returns to the community from which she is separated. Jemison's narrative ends with her living on her own land, a naturalized citizen, but removed both from the community of white people and from the Indian society she had adopted as a child. This endpoint is the starting point and the condition of possibility of the entire narrative. From her cabin at the outskirts of civilization, Jemison travels to a nearby house, and describes for James Seaver the details of her life "in slavery," her attempt – and her ultimate failure – to reproduce a white household from Indian materials (157). Such a narrative could not tell its readers what would happen if she were to come "home."

Child's heroine, by contrast, returns to the community of her origins and successfully reproduces an Anglo-American household. At the level of plot, Mary Conant's return is enabled by Charles Brown's unexpected reappearance. Though Mary had presumed Charles dead at sea, he survives a shipwreck and reclaims her at Hobomok's wigwam. The very terms by which the two men are designated at this critical juncture in the narrative underscores the racial logic that the exchange of the white woman produces. As Hobomok and Charles Brown face each other in the woods, the former is referred to at first as "Hobomok," then "the Indian," "the savage," and, finally, "that dark man" (139). Simultaneously, his counterpart starts out as "Brown" only to become "the Englishman," and ultimately, "the white man" (139). At the moment their meeting is couched in these racial terms, Hobomok withdraws his claim to Mary, declaring that "the sacrifice must be made to her" (139). He then "murmured his farewell and blessing" to the white man, declares his intention to "go far off among some of the red men in the west" (139), and so "forever passe[s] away from New England" (141). Once the Indian has removed himself, the newly constituted white couple can return to the settlement and receive Mr. Conant's blessing.

By opposing Mary's desire for Charles Brown to her surrender to Hobomok, the novel not only opposes white man and Indian, but also placed two sets of marriage rules into competition with one another: the residual Puritan injunction against marrying in the direction of Catholic Europe, on the one hand, and an emergent injunction against marrying across racial lines, on the other. Mary's return to her community of origin effectively resolves this competition. The crucial figure here is Mr. Conant. By giving his blessing to the same union which he had prohibited before Mary went native, he pronounces religious difference inconsequential in relation to race. As the novel adjudicates between these sets of marriage rules, race emerges as a more fundamental marker of a person's identity than religion, at least so far as different kinds of Christians are concerned. Mary Conant's romantic trajectory thus constitutes the distance between herself and Charles Brown as insignificant relative to that which separates them both from an Indian. This racial distance is literalized by the Indian's disappearance at the very moment when the white couple is united.

By marrying out and then returning to her birth community, Mary Conant changed what it meant to belong to that group in the first place. She left a community in which the difference between Christian sects was paramount. But the community to which she returned was one in which Episcopalians and Puritans shared something more fundamental: their race. Jemison's narrative, by insisting that she had retained her racial identity in spite of going native, represented race as a natural and essential property, impervious to the influences of habit or cultivation. Child, by having her heroine marry out and then return, further defined white racial identity as an essential *and inalienable* property. *Hobomok* thus constitutes the heroine's race as what anthropologist Annette Weiner has called an "inalienable possession."[41] In her white subjectivity, the sentimental heroine possessed something which could not be lost, no matter what she did. If Jemison's captivity had demonstrated that whiteness could not be taken away, Mary Conant's out-marriage showed further that it could not even be given away.

'HOPE LESLIE': DOUBLING THE WHITE HEROINE

Central to the power of this conception of race was the act of setting it apart from another, less essential, order of difference. Like, Jemison, Child invoked the distinction between "nature" and culture or "habit." Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie; Or, Early Times in the Massachusetts* (1827) widened the gap between these two modes of difference by enacting them in the contrasting fates of Hope and Mary Leslie. Sedgwick's novel centers around the title character, a willful young woman of English birth, and her younger sister, Mary, who is taken captive in an Indian attack and ends up marrying an Indian by the name of Oneco. Like Mary Jemison and Mary Conant, Mary Leslie crosses the dividing line between "the races." But Sedgwick departed from the narrative model developed by Jemison and Child in two important respects. First, Mary Leslie goes further than her namesakes. In Jemison's narrative and Child's *Hobomok*, the figure of the white woman gone native defined race as a property that was so essential it could not be annulled. Yet these earlier works could not completely settle the question of how racial identity was related to national identity. For since neither heroine completely abandoned all of the trappings of English identity, neither work could represent whiteness as a quality absolutely separate and apart from Englishness. Child's heroine returned to her community of origins in English America. Even Mary Jemison, though she never returned, retained a residue of English identity, as evidenced by her retention of the English language itself. Sedgwick, however, allows Mary Leslie to go so far "native" that she no longer understands English, retains any memories of English ways, or has any tolerance for English habits or modes of dress. She is so thoroughly assimilated to Indian culture that there is no longer anything identifiably English about her. The novel demonstrates, however, that while the heroine's cultural identity can certainly be lost, her racial identity cannot.

To make this point, Sedgwick had to depart from the sentimental paradigm in another way. She splits her heroine, semiotically speaking. The two sisters, Mary and Hope Leslie, arrive together at the Fletcher household in colonial New England. After the younger sister, Mary (also called Faith) is taken captive, she goes native while sister Hope does not and the lives of the two characters forever diverge. Thus, the pair embody the opposition of nature and habit presumed by both Jemison and Child. As if adding one more step to an ongoing narrative experiment, this symbolic twinning of the sentimental heroine allows the novel to take the racial logic of the Anglo-Indian love story one step further than its predecessors.

Of the three works under consideration here, *Hope Leslie* is the first explicitly to broach the subject of racial mixture in relation to the English woman's marriage to an Indian. The novel's concern with what nineteenth-century racial theorists called "amalgamation" is first made central at the moment that Hope learns that her sister Mary has become bound to her captors and married Magawisca's brother, Oneco. When Hope begs Magawisca to "give me back my sister," the Indian woman explains that her return is impossible:

> "Nay, . . . that I cannot do. I cannot send back the bird that has mated to its parent nest; the stream that has mingled with other waters to its fountain". . .
>
> "Speak plainer to me," cried Hope, in a voice of entreaty that could not be resisted. "Is my sister?" – she paused, for her quivering lips could not pronounce the words that rose to them.
>
> "Magawisca understood her, and replied, 'Yes, Hope Leslie, thy sister is married to Oneco.'"
>
> "God forbid!" exclaimed Hope, shuddering as if a knife had been plunged into her bosom. "My sister married to an Indian!"
>
> "An Indian!" exclaimed Magawisca, recoiling with a look of proud contempt, that showed she reciprocated with full measure, the scorn expressed for her race. "Yes – an Indian, in whose veins runs the blood of the strongest, the fleetest of the children of the forest, who never turned their backs on their friends or enemies, and whose souls have returned to the Great Spirit, stainless as they came from him. Think ye that your blood will be corrupted by mingling with this stream?" (188)

The exchange is framed by two instances of Magawisca's central metaphor: the mingling of streams. This figure is repeated, however, with one important difference. In the first instance, the image, recalling the myth of

Arethusa, is that of a confluence of streams of water into a common "fountain." In the second instance, the "mingling" of streams becomes a metaphor for the mixing of "blood."

In marrying Oneco, of course, Mary has not mixed up her blood with his in any literal sense. But mingling streams would have made sense as a metaphor for going native to a readership familiar with the thematics of racial amalgamation which concerned James Fenimore Cooper's enormously popular *The Pioneers* a few years earlier. Like the mystery of Oliver Edwards's "mixed" blood, the controversy over Mary's "mingling" of bloodstreams with Oneco is only intelligible if "blood" is understood as the bearer of certain attributes. For example, "Indian blood," according to Magawisca, is the repository of such qualities as strength, quickness, loyalty, courage, and virtue. Yet whether Mary's going native is understood as the corruption or the ennobling of her white blood is in some sense unimportant, for what both propositions presume is that blood is the carrier of a person's nature, that Indians and white people have different natures, and hence that they have different blood.

It is also significant that, in the exchange between Hope and Magawisca, the word "race" anticipates the meaning racial biology would later give to it. Prior to this point in the novel, the word "race" has already appeared several times. What is at first most apparent about these references, taken together, is their inconsistency. At times, "race" seems to refer to a family or line of descent, as when Magawisca speaks of "my father's race" (39). On other occasions, race is coterminous with "tribe," as with references to the Mohawk race (110) or the race of the Pequots (104). This inconsistency is in fact entirely typical of early nineteenth-century usage. During the first quarter of the nineteenth century, a period wedged, so to speak, between the waning authority of eighteenth-century natural science and racial biology, which had yet to emerge into dominance, "race" had various meanings. It could refer simply to groups of kin such as families or extended kinship networks, or, by extension, to larger social units such as tribes or nations.[42] But rarely during this period was race used to refer to types of men as defined by essential or permanent attributes, a sense, of course, which the word would acquire by mid-century. Yet on several occasions in *Hope Leslie* the word takes on this meaning, particularly when it is put in the mouths of Indian characters. When Magawisca's father, Mononotto, refers to the destruction of "my people" by a "race of . . . murderers" (75), race seems to become unmoored from tribe or family and attach itself to "white men" en masse (48). This sense of the word is heightened whenever two races are placed in opposition, as when

Mononotto refers to "our race" and "our enemy's race" (84; cf. 187). By the point in the novel when Magawisca confronts Hope's apparent "scorn . . . for her race" (188), the word diverges further from early-nineteenth century usage and approaches the meaning racial science would give it later in the century.

The news of Mary's marriage to Oneco not only describes this union in racial terms; it also racializes the relationship between Hope and Magawisca, who face each other with mutual "scorn." What lends this scene some of its dramatic force is the fact that the novel has gone to great pains to link the two in "indissoluble bonds" of sentiment (192). Hope, "superior to some of the prejudices of her age" (123), has consistently defended Magawisca against the stern colonial magistrates predisposed against "savages." Magawisca, described as "noble" from her introduction, time and time again acts with loyalty towards Hope and her family, even at the cost of her own safety. In the most dramatic demonstration of her "nobility," Magawisca's arm is severed as she defends Everell Fletcher from the tomahawk of one of her own tribe. Here then are an English woman and an Indian woman, previously held up as an idealized instance of Anglo-Indian sympathy, who nevertheless come to find themselves opposed as members of hostile races. The episode clearly identifies the cause of this state of affairs in the anticipated "mingling" of their races. In this respect, Mary Leslie's going native serves to test Hope Leslie's sentiment. Though Hope is "superior" to racial "prejudices," this freedom from prejudice coexists with her certain knowledge that the two races should not "mingle." If Hope's reaction to the news shows us that even one free of "prejudice" recognizes natural law, Magawisca's response is equally important in establishing this fact. Though she bristles at Hope's "God forbid!" she does not speak for amalgamation so much as from bruised racial pride. Far from endorsing racial mixture, then, Magawisca's "proud contempt" indicates only that she is offended by Hope's apparent disgust. In fact, we are told, Magawisca "reciprocated with full measure, the scorn expressed for her race" (188). Though pitted against each other in this way, the two women are in fundamental agreement.

Hope's disgust and Magawisca's contempt form a diptych that constitutes the same racial boundary from opposite sides. Critically, they do so not in spite of, but by means of the novel's deployment of trans-racial sympathy and sentiment. It is thus undoubtedly true, as Dana Nelson has compellingly shown, that the novel's treatment of race is bound up with the rhetoric of sympathy.[43] But we only partly understand the effects of this rhetorical strategy if we neglect the way this sympathy towards racial others could also help to produce the racial differences it traversed and hence constitute the very boundaries it seemed to transgress. The figure of the sympathetic Anglo-American subject who nonetheless acknowledges the necessity of natural law is thus profoundly indebted to the structure of feeling that Renato Rosaldo has termed “imperialist nostalgia.”[44]

The boundary between white people and Indians was not the only boundary at issue for the novel. The relationship between the woman who had gone native and the community left behind is, finally, more important than the racial divide between Hope and Magawisca. Sedgwick’s novel dramatizes this relationship by placing the sister who had gone native face to face with the sister who had not. The first truth that this meeting between Mary and Hope confirms is the truth that Magawisca has already pronounced: that Mary Leslie will never return. As she “was very young when she was taken where she has only heard the Indian tongue” (192), she no longer understands English. Mary’s ignorance of English is not the only sign of her irrecoverability. She has no childhood memories of English ways, and try as Hope might, Mary cannot be persuaded to wear English clothing. The narrative impossibility of her return acquires a metanarrative dimension as well, for it marks the impossibility of Mary Leslie’s story ending as had those of her literary namesakes. It could not follow the story of Mary Conant, who returned to her community of origin to reproduce a white family after all. Nor could it end even as Mary Jemison’s had, with the captive narrating the circumstances of her captivity *in English*, “plainly and distinctly, with a little of the Irish emphasis” (56). To a readership familiar with this narrative tradition, the story of Mary Leslie must have represented a significant departure. Mary Leslie had not only married out of the community of English people; she had also abandoned everything that signifies membership in that community. But only by alienating Mary from her English identity in this way and then placing her before her sister Hope, could Sedgwick pose the question of her racial identity as such. In a manner similar to Jemison’s association of race and sentiment, the meeting between Hope and Mary made the question of Mary’s racial identity seem to hinge on the tearful exchange of sentimental affect between the sisters.

The novel places two obstacles in the path of this resolution. At first, Hope is overcome by a “sickening feeling, an unthought of revolting of nature” at the sight of her sister in her “savage attire” (227). At the touch of her sister’s hand, however, “nature” asserts itself in a different way. “Hope stretched out her hand, without lifting her eyes; but when she felt her sister's touch, the energies of nature awoke, she threw her arms around her folded her to her bosom, laid her cheek on hers, and wept as if her heart would burst in every sob" (227). Yet even after Hope has overcome her revulsion, she must confront the problem of how to "address one so near to her by nature, so far removed by habit and education" (228). For as Hope's affect, and her tears, pour forth towards her sister, Mary's inability to understand English presents a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. The episode raises a problem comparable to the story of "thwarted inclinations" we encounter in *Hobomok*. The sentimental bond that ought to unite the sisters is temporarily blocked:

> Mary . . . remained passive in her arms. Her eye was moistened, but she seemed rather abashed and confounded, than excited; and when Hope released her, she turned towards Oneco with a look of simple wonder. Hope again threw her arm around her sister, and intently explored her face for some trace of those infantine features that were impressed on her memory. "It is – it is my sister!" she exclaimed, and kissed her cheek again and again. "Oh! Mary, do you not remember when we sat together on mother's knee? Do you not remember, when with her own burning hand, the very day she died, she put those chains on our necks? Do you not remember when they held us up to kiss her cold lips?" Mary looked towards Magawisca for an explanation of her sister's words. "Look at *me*, Mary – speak to *me*," continued Hope.
>
> "No speak Yengees," replied Mary, exhausting in this brief sentence, all the English she could command. (227–28)

Mary Jemison had been urged by her mother to "remember my child your own name, and the name of your father and mother. Be careful and not forget your English tongue . . . Don't forget, my little daughter, the prayers that I have learned you – say them often" (69). Hope Leslie's entreaties to her sister echo these parting words point for point: the repetition of Mary's name, the appeal to familial memory, the pleading for English speech – and running through them all, the language of maternal sentiment. The qualities for which Hope searches in Mary, moreover, are the same sentimental qualities which Jemison had identified with white subjectivity. Yet Mary fails to respond. She remains "passive" in her sister's embrace. Indeed, she displays more sentimental attachment to the members of her Indian family, Oneco and Magawisca, than to either Hope or her mother's memory. Mary's three words, "No speak Yengees," explain why Hope cannot succeed in redirecting that emotion: "every motive [she] offered was powerless, every mode of entreaty useless" (229). Yet Mary's initial failure to display sentimental affect towards Hope raises the possibility that Mary lacks not only English language but those very qualities that define her as "white." The meeting between the sisters thus threatens to repeat the exchange between Hope and Magawisca, who faced each other as representatives of incommensurable races.

At the moment Hope has resigned herself to the futility of her appeals, Mary's indifference gives way to family feeling. Kneeling beside Mary, Hope "expressed the tenderness and sorrow of her soul in a kind of prayer." Mary's response is the crux of the entire episode: "Mary understood her action, and feeling that their separation was forever, nature for a moment asserted her rights; she returned Hope's embrace, and wept on her bosom" (231). Mary's wordless embrace completes the gesture begun by Hope's epiphany: "It is – it is my sister!" In the play of affect between the estranged sisters, and particularly in the act of mutual recognition, the crisis is resolved. Hope and Mary are sisters, after all. The language of "nature" attends both sides of this transformation. Just as Hope's initial revulsion gives way to the "energies of nature," "nature" then asserts "her rights" when Mary returns that embrace. This language echoes not only the terms of Hope's problem – how to "address one so near to her by nature, so far removed by habit and education" – but also the terms in which Jemison described the "cultivated" Indian. By putting Hope face to face with sister Mary in her "savage attire," Sedgwick's "recognition scene" (to borrow a concept from Aristotle's *Poetics*) resolves the competition between "habit" and "nature" as competing orders of identity. The story of sisters, the "same" by nature, but belonging to different cultures, is something like the narrative equivalent of a controlled experiment: it could sort out the effects of nature and habit with a new kind of precision. What separates Mary and Hope is merely "habit and education." What unites them is far more powerful: they share the same "nature."

In Mary Leslie, then, Sedgwick gives us a heroine who has married out but who cannot possibly return. Yet in taking Mary this far native, the novel did much more than assert the impossibility of her return. It extended the racial logic of Jemison's narrative and Child's *Hobomok.* Jemison had asserted that "Indians must and will be Indians." In exactly this way, Sedgwick completed this argument by demonstrating that white people must and will be white people, no matter what. Mary Jemison could not reproduce herself outside of the community of white people; Mary Conant could become the center of a white family only after her return to this community. Mary Leslie tells us, however, that although racial identity needs a culture to surround it, it is never reducible to this culture. She may have lost her Englishness, but she nevertheless remains white. Paradoxically, the novel that narrates the most dramatic and unapologetic instance of going native is the one which demonstrates most clearly that one's race could never be altered.

Despite their emphasis on the difference between "white" and "red," these works simultaneously defined the relationship between the woman gone native and the culture she left behind. By separating the white woman from her culture of origin, they demonstrated what it meant to belong to that culture in the first place. No matter what steps their heroines took to separate themselves from their community of origin, those women would always be defined by that origin. It was their essential nature. By making the possession of a racial essence the basis for group identity, and by making cultural reproduction seem to depend on the proper direction of the white woman's desire, domestic frontier fiction thus forged a specifically sentimental racial logic.

In *The Pioneers*, Cooper had used the story of frontier warfare to explain the different types of "blood" and connect them with specific attributes. In so doing, the first frontier romance helped to give racial difference a basis in nature. The novels of Child and Sedgwick tethered this nascent discourse of race to established categories of gender. Like Mary Jemison, they did so by telling the story of the English woman who crossed over into Indian culture and yet remained white. These works all rest upon the same paradox: they constituted the boundaries between the races by telling the stories of women who had transgressed these boundaries. In this sense, to say, as I have, that the heroines of these works "remained" white is not quite accurate, for such language conceals the process by which this very writing helped to call this racial identity into being. While these fictions gestured towards a racial essence which preexisted them, in point of fact, they participated in the retroactive production of this essence. At the narrative level, it was only by having their heroines "retain" their white identity in the end that this quality could be said to have been there "all along." The production of this identity was retroactive at the level of genre as well. When it represented the heroine's race, and not merely her virtue, as in need of preservation and protection, domestic frontier romances gave the sentimental heroine a racial identity that, strictly speaking, she had not possessed in eighteenth-century domestic fiction. The fact that we can now project this identity onto earlier heroines – wasn't Richardson's Pamela "white"? – testifies to the success of domestic frontier romance in establishing such categories as common sense.

AN INDIAN SENTIMENTAL HEROINE?

Jemison's narrative, Child's *Hobomok*, and Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* thus represent three moments in the development of a cultural argument about the nature of race. In one important respect, however, *Hope Leslie* was able to extend this racial logic in a different direction than its predecessors. As I have argued, whiteness and femininity were necessarily articulated in all three works under consideration here. But *Hope Leslie* is the only of the three to embody Indianness in a female character as well, and hence the only one to raise the question whether an Indian woman can possess the qualities that define "white" femininity. In conclusion, then, I want to examine how, by raising, and then dismissing the possibility of Everell Fletcher's romantic attachment to Magawisca, the novel expanded the gender affiliations of the interracial romance plot. Through the white male hero, Everell Fletcher, the novel explores the question of interracial desire from a different standpoint: under what conditions is an Indian woman a suitable mate for a white man?

The bond between Everell and Magawisca is first forged when Everell is abducted by Magawisca's father, along with Mary Leslie. Magawisca, torn between loyalty to her father and her affections for the Fletcher family, saves Everell's life in a climactic scene. Literally interposing her own body between Everell and her father's vengeance, Magawisca has her arm lopped off by her father's hatchet and allows Everell to escape. Though the two do not meet again until much later in the novel, there are passing indications that they hold each other in mutual affection. On Magawisca's part, this affection is represented as potentially romantic. When Magawisca catches a glimpse of Everell through a partly open door, for example, she betrays emotions that a sentimental readership would have immediately understood: "An involuntary exclamation burst from her lips, and then shuddering at this exposure of her feelings, she hastily gathered together the moccasins that were strewn over the floor, dropped a pair at Hope's feet, and darted away" (185). And when Magawisca learns from Hope that her "very name is dear to all Mr. Fletcher's friends, most dear to Everell," she again reveals her interest: "'Dear to Everell Fletcher! Does he remember me? Is there a place in his heart for an Indian?' she demanded, with a blended expression of pride and melancholy" (190).

For Everell's part, most of what we know about his feelings for Magawisca come in the form of hearsay from characters such as Hope. Magawisca is "Everell's Magawisca" (190), the "heroine of Everell's imagination" (186) for having "redeemed his life with her own" (93). Everell himself discusses his feelings for Magawisca only once, in the scene to which I alluded at the beginning of this book:

> "It is odd what vagaries come and go in a body's mind [says Digby]; time was, when I viewed you as good as mated with Magawisca; forgive me for speaking so, Mr. Everell, seeing she was but a tawny Indian after all."
>
> "Forgive you, Digby! you do me honour, by implying that I rightly estimated that noble creature; and before she had done the heroic deed, to which I owe my life – Yes, Digby, I might have loved her – might have forgotten that nature had put barriers between us." (214)

As I have commented above, though Everell rejects Digby's aggressively racist presupposition, his rebuke moves in two directions at once. Though seemingly opposed, the two aspects of Everell's response – "Yes, Digby, I might have loved her" and "nature had put barriers between us" – work in tandem to produce a sympathetic version of racial "barriers." However "noble" Magawisca is, only by "forgetting" natural law could he view her as a suitable mate. In this sense, the episode is structured around the same double-gesture performed by the confrontation between Magawisca and Hope. Indeed, Everell's response to Digby precisely mirrors Hope's reaction to the news of her sister's marriage to Oneco. Both rely on the proposition that the amalgamation of these two races is unnatural. Yet at the same time, both characters insist on their sympathy towards Indians and their refusal of racial prejudice. In each case, the novel goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the proposition that whites and Indians ought not marry rests not on prejudice, but rather on natural law.

In the contrast between Digby's Indian-hating and Everell's benign exposition of natural laws, then, lies the central racial logic of *Hope Leslie*. For Digby, Magawisca is nothing more than a "tawny Indian"; for Everell, she is a "heroine," a friend and a sister (186, 329–30). On one point, however, they agree: Magawisca is ultimately not an adequate mate for Everell. The critical question thus becomes why? What is it about the Indian woman that renders her an illegitimate object of desire for a white man? The novel has begun to answer this question, in fact, long before the prospect of Everell's and Magawisca's romantic union has been raised, and to do so in relation to the figure of Magawisca.

At the outset of the novel, we are introduced to the Fletcher family in colonial Massachusetts. The second chapter finds the Fletcher household opening itself to new members. In addition to the daughters of Fletcher's cousin, Alice and Mary Leslie (renamed Hope and Faith), their tutor, Master Cradock, and their widowed aunt, Dame Grafton, the family is also to include two Indian servants, Oneco and Magawisca. These early events surrounding the extension of the Fletcher family introduce the question which *Hope Leslie* will consider throughout: what place do Indians have in a white household? Initially, this question is posed by Mrs. Fletcher alone. Through her, the novel first advances a theory which it will consider carefully: the notion that Indians, particularly Indian women, are incapable of a certain kind of labor.

When Martha Fletcher is first told that Hope and Faith are to be accompanied by two Indian servants, she voices what will become her constant preoccupation: she doubts "if any use can be made of an Indian servant" (21). Mrs. Fletcher's doubts about Indian utility soon come to focus exclusively on Magawisca, and her anticipated inability to perform the kind of domestic labor necessary to keep a middle-class household running: "My husband might as well have brought a wild doe from the forest to plough his fields, as to give me this Indian girl for household labor . . ." (23–4). Mrs. Fletcher's doubts about Indian serviceability, which she had begun to voice even before she had met Magawisca, only intensify after the arrival of the "Indian girl." Writing her husband in a letter about domestic affairs in his absence, she reports that her fears about Magawisca's unsuitability to domestic labor have been confirmed:

> I have, in vain, attempted to subdue her to the drudgery of domestic service and make her take part with Jennet, but as hopefully might you yoke a deer with an ox. It is not that she lacks obedience to me – so far as it seems she can command her duty, she is ever complying; but it appeareth impossible to her to clip the wings of her soaring thoughts, and keep them down to household matters. (32)

Magawisca is useless as a domestic laborer, Mrs. Fletcher finds. The impossibility of "subduing" her to domesticity, moreover, is not caused by her unwillingness to perform such labor, nor does it seem to have much to do with Magawisca's particularity. Rather, as the terms of Mrs. Fletcher's many comments on the subject make clear, this incompatibility resides in the depths of Indian nature itself. There is an incompatibility between Indianness and domesticity as fundamental as the opposition between the wild and the tame – in Mrs. Fletcher's terms, the deer and the ox. Indians, in effect, are antidomestic.

At first this proposition seems little more than an instance of the "prejudice" the novel asks its readers to keep at a distance. Indeed, it is immediately countered by benevolent voices more sympathetic to the Indian, for Mrs. Fletcher is surrounded by characters who are uncomfortable with her pronouncements about Indian nature and who admonish her to be more compassionate towards the "poor savage" (22). Yet in a typical gesture, these rebukes concede her fundamental premise even as they dispute the language of prejudice in which it is couched. Thus, for example, when Mrs. Fletcher asserts the "self-evident truth" that the "wild and wandering ways" of savages are "but little superior to those of the wolves and foxes," her son Everell rebukes her for her condescension, while at the same time reiterating the connection between Indianness and animality: "hunted, as the Indians are, to their own dens, I am sure, mother, they need the fierceness of the wolf, and the cunning of the fox" (24). Moreover, Magawisca confirms with her own words that domesticity is contrary to her nature. "My foot . . . is used to the wild-wood path. The deer tires not of his way on the mountain, nor the bird of its flight in the air" (24). Like Everell's protest on her behalf, Magawisca's response not only underlines the proposition of Indian antidomesticity, it also reproduces a crucial feature of Mrs. Fletcher's language: the metaphoric equivalence between Indians and animals – even naming the same animals, deer and birds, to which Mrs. Fletcher had referred.

This, then, is why Magawisca can be the "heroine of Everell's imagination," and at the same time be understood as an unnatural and hence undesirable mate for him. For all of the definitional work which has been performed around the figure of Magawisca from the very beginning lies in the background of Everell's conversation with Digby. When Everell asserts that "nature had put barriers" between them, he does not need to explain it further, for by this point in the novel, an enormous narrative labor has already been expended to establish it as common sense, as "self-evident truth."

It is thus important to the workings of this racial logic that the character of Magawisca participates in the establishing of this truth. Ultimately, it is her voice as an Indian which speaks with the most authority on the matter of racial difference. It is her trial for treason before the colonial magistrates in Chapter Nine that provides the most significant narrative occasion for her exposition of natural law. The climax of the episode comes at the moment when the Governor announces that the court must adjourn and reconvene in one month's time. Upon hearing this news, Magawisca addresses her accusers:

> "Then," said Magawisca, . . . "then, I pray you, send me to death now. Any thing is better than wearing through another moon in my prison-house . . . Wait not for his testimony" – she pointed to Sir Phillip – ". . . Do you wait for him to

> prove that I am your enemy? Take my own word, I am your enemy; the sunbeam and the shadow cannot mingle. The white man cometh – the Indian vanisheth." (292)

Magawisca's pronouncement begins as a kind of extension of the proposition that the Indian is antidomestic: the Indian emerges here as a kind of wild animal that would die in captivity. Just as performing domestic labor was impossible for a soaring "bird," the Indian prisoner is here figured as a wild animal for whom domestication is equivalent to death. The metonymic substitution of the "prison-house" for the middle-class household thus defines the Indian as a being for whom civilization itself is the same as prison (cf. 235). The Indian in white society is like the "imprisoned bird" who seeks only to be "restored" to the "freedom of nature" (256). This slippage not only dramatizes the characterization of the Indian woman as antidomestic, it also links this argument about Indian womanhood back to the question of the Indian as such. What begins as another iteration of Magawisca's antidomesticity thus becomes an assertion of the incommensurability of whiteness and Indianness writ large.

The novel thus relies on the discourse of racial difference that Jemison's narrative and Child's *Hobomok* had begun to develop. Like these works, *Hope Leslie* defines whiteness and Indianness, not as external attributes of the body, but first and foremost as essentially different kinds of subjectivity. Characters may differ on the value they assign to Indian difference, but all agree that this difference exists as an intractable natural fact. Whether expressed by a mean-spirited character (Jennet, Digby) or a misguided one (Mrs. Fletcher), by a benevolent one (Everell), or by the subject herself (Magawisca), it is the same "self-evident truth": White people and Indians are fundamentally different kinds of beings. But Sedgwick takes the logic farther in having Magawisca not only declare the fundamental racial difference of the Indian and the "white man," but also assert the inevitability of the Indian's "vanishing" as a result of this difference. *Hobomok* had sent its title character into the wilderness to clear a space for the white heterosexual couple. But it took *Hope Leslie* to state the necessity of this gesture, in the Indian's "own" voice, with the authority of a proverb: "The white man cometh – the Indian vanisheth."

This figure of Indian disappearance is literalized in a dramatic way at the end of the novel with Magawisca's departure into the wilderness. When Everell and Hope beg Magawisca to remain with them and finish the work of clearing her name, she asserts the necessity of her own "removal" from white civilization:

> "It cannot be – it cannot be . . . the Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night."
>
> Everell and Hope would have interrupted her with further entreaties and arguments: "Touch no more on that," she said, "we must part – and for ever." (330)

Though what Everell and Hope ostensibly offer is friendship, in refusing to remain with them, Magawisca employs the language of "mingling" to declare the impossibility of her remaining. This language recalls the two instances of amalgamation which the novel has proposed: the marriage of Mary and Oneco, on the one hand, and the earlier prospect of Everell's marriage to Magawisca, on the other. In so doing, it links these two unions, both understood as illegitimate, to the legitimacy of Hope's and Everell's.

Magawisca's disappearance effectively consummates the romantic bond between Hope and Everell. At the same moment that she announces the necessity of her disappearance into the wilderness, Magawisca speaks the love which the two, not realizing it was shared, had never spoken: "my spirit will joy in the thought . . . that you are dwelling in love and happiness together" (330). Magawisca's last utterance is thus performative in a most radical sense: it secures in a single gesture both her own disappearance and the union of the white couple. Her last act before removing herself is the joining of their hands and the utterance of a kind of blessing or benediction before leaving:

> All felt the necessity of immediate separation, and all shrunk from it as from witnessing the last gasp of life. They moved to the water's edge, and . . . in broken voices, expressed their last wishes and prayers. Magawisca joined their hands, and bowing her head on them, – "The Great Spirit guide ye," she said, and then turning away, leaped into the boat, muffled her face in her mantle, and in a few brief moments disappeared for ever from their sight.
>
> Everell and Hope remained immoveable [*sic*], gazing on the little boat till it faded in the dim distance; . . . They breathed their silent prayers for her; and when their thoughts returned to themselves, though they gave themselves no expression, there was a consciousness of perfect unity of feeling, a joy in the sympathy that was consecrated by its object, and might be innocently indulged, that was a delicious spell to their troubled hearts. (334)

The point could hardly be clearer: the Indian's disappearance cements the affective bond between Hope and Everell. The Indian may be "noble" and his or her disappearance "tragic." Yet, as in *Hobomok*, the novel's final and most important work on behalf of the newly constituted white couple is the expulsion of the Indian from the social body. This is the very heart of the sentimental logic of race which the novel advances: in order for the love story to proceed and the white hero and heroine to be united, the Indian must disappear. But this disappearance must also be attended by an outpouring of transracial sympathy.

As counterintuitive as it may seem, then, the net result of this semantic work was to extend and elaborate on emergent ideas about racial difference. Hence the real power of domestic frontier romances in negotiating the conflicts surrounding slavery had not to do with any direct treatment of its themes, but rather in the way they ruminated on the nature of racial difference and its implications for social relations of power and dominance. And the contribution they would make to the mid-century discourse of slavery had everything to do with the central phenomenon I have explored here: the process by which sympathy towards the racial other, rather than erasing racial distinctions, helps in fact to shore up those differences. Though this formation has obvious relevance to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (which I consider in Chapter 5), I want first to return to Cooper and trace the movements of trans-racial sympathy in the works of his that followed those of Jemison, Child, and Sedgwick. I hope thereby to trace Cooper's relatively unacknowledged contribution to the phenomenon of a sympathetic racialism and the notion of racial sentiment.

CHAPTER 4

"Homely legends": the uses of sentiment in Cooper's The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish

Perhaps more than any other American writer of the nineteenth century, James Fenimore Cooper has been associated with the rejection of the domestic fiction of the European bourgeoisie. One particularly obvious symptom of this critical profile is the uneasy position of Cooper's first novel, *Precaution* (1820), in his oeuvre. A novel of courtship and manners on the order of Jane Austen's fiction, *Precaution* is treated, when mentioned at all, as a literary failure, "forgiven and forgotten," as Robert Darnell has put it.[1] In his discussion of *Precaution* in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Leslie Fiedler even tellingly confused the novel's title with that of Austen's *Persuasion*.[2] But there is an ironic way in which *Precaution* does establish Cooper's place in literary history as presently understood, for this first novel sometimes stands in as the sign of everything Cooper's mature work would irrevocably displace in establishing the masculine character of the American novel. Indeed, Fiedler describes the first novel as a kind of experiment in literary transvestism: "Cooper began his career imitating an English gentlewoman entertaining and edifying her peers. It is disconcerting to find him impersonating a female." Against the backdrop of this early authorial persona, Fiedler celebrates Cooper's artistic maturation as part and parcel of the masculinization of the novel. Cooper's turn to the frontier romance with *The Pioneers* (1823) represents his final refusal of literary drag in a "self-conscious attempt to redeem fiction at once for respectability and masculinity."[3]

Readers of Cooper's frontier novels can hardly deny, however, the continuing presence, at the very least, of the sentimental conventions associated with the "other" kind of American fiction; put simply, Cooper can make the tears flow as well as anyone. To be sure, he invented in Natty Bumppo a hero who could never marry. At the same time, Cooper's fictions, no less than those of his female counterparts, tend to find their resolutions in marriage and the formation of a middle-class household around an Anglo-American heterosexual couple. To choose one well known example, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), the apotheosis of the male adventure story, revolves around a heterosexual love plot that motivates the frontier violence and cements the much-vaunted relationship between men.

In the face of these signs of the very kind of fiction Cooper's writing is said to have displaced early Cooper criticism represented these elements of his novels as concessions to a sentimental readership. Henry Nash Smith perhaps inaugurated this critical strategy in his seminal work on the western novel, *Virgin Land* (1950). The presence of courtship and love plots in Cooper's novels, Smith argued, were evidence only of his resigned acknowledgement that he worked in a necessarily feminized genre and of his "reluctance to break with the conventions of the sentimental novel . . . A novel, according to canons which he considered binding, was a love story."[4] Running through this critical account was Smith's palpable disappointment that, as R.W.B. Lewis once lamented of Robert Montgomery Bird's frontier fiction, "conventional elements . . . borrowed from English popular fiction occupy, as usual, too many pages."[5] Implicit in these formulations was the notion that sentimentality did not properly belong to American frontier novels, but was, rather, a European import. Try as Cooper did to resist, however, it was as if something in the genre itself strongly compelled him to produce such novels against his better artistic judgment. From this perspective, Smith could view Cooper's literary career as a "twenty-five years' struggle to devise a Wild Western hero capable of taking the leading role in a novel," which is to say, a "man who played the male lead in the courtship." When, late in his career, Cooper attempted to create a new kind of marriageable protagonist capable of bringing the novel to a conventional resolution, he ended up "destroy[ing] the subversive overtones that had given Leatherstocking so much of his emotional depth."[6] This critical account thus acknowledged the presence of the sentimental in Cooper's fiction only in order to relegate it to the periphery, and in so doing, shored up the putative opposition between frontier and sentimental romance.[7] In this way, criticism tended to use the residues of the sentimental to inoculate Cooper's fiction against sentimentality.

As even this brief account makes clear, we might ultimately be able to clarify the issue simply by being more careful about how we deploy a range of different literary categories: the domestic novel (which is centered on relations and events within the household), the novel of courtship (which thematizes courtship proper), and sentimental fiction (which concerns itself with descriptions of emotions and sentiments as they are revealed in the course of the novel's events). Perhaps by more carefully separating these strands, a more complex mode of analysis would be available to us; it might be possible to describe a novel like *The Pioneers*, for example, as a sentimental but non-domestic novel in which the courtship plot is highly attenuated, to say the least.[8] In the mid-twentieth century critical strand I have just identified, however, critics tended to lump these genres and modes together in such a way that Cooper is said either to reject them altogether, or at least to write in such a way that the real genius of his art lies in his attempt to resist or contain their demands.

This chapter makes a contribution to what I would like to consider an incipient sea-change in the understanding of Cooper. While some still presume that he was locked in a struggle with women writers to masculinize the novel, critics are paying increased attention to the sentimental elements in Cooper's work.[9] Yet to question the assumption that frontier romance is an essentially anti-sentimental form makes it necessary to reevaluate the relationship long presumed to prevail between Cooper's fiction and that of his female counterparts. As I argued in Chapter Three, whether the novels of Child and Sedgwick are characterized as a progressive revision of Cooper's narrative paradigm or as its bastardization, the presumption in either case is that they tread on his turf. Child and Sedgwick certainly borrowed from Cooper. Indeed, their frontier novels cite him reverently as the preeminent writer of the frontier. The narrator of Child's *Hobomok* makes reference to "the proud summit which has been gained" by "Mr. Cooper" in *The Pioneers*.[10] Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* refers to an unnamed "recent popular work," almost certainly *The Last of the Mohicans*, published the year earlier, that had "so well described" the Indian character that it was almost unnecessary to do so again.[11] Both novels, moreover, are informed by the racial logic Cooper's early fiction had popularized. In much the same way that Oliver Edwards of *The Pioneers* comes to be understood as "white" by dispelling the rumors of his Indian descent, the sentimental heroines of Child and Sedgwick are constituted as white precisely by placing their racial identity in question. Along with Mary Jemison's 1824 captivity narrative, one might argue, it was Cooper's Natty Bumppo, the white man with Indian habits, who provided the model for the white heroines of domestic frontier fiction who "went native." As Richard Slotkin observes, Natty "tests the boundaries" of racial identity by crossing them, and in so doing "represents the irreducible minimum of white racial character – the white man without the extra support of a civilization."[12]

But by inserting this kind of cross-over figure into an erotic economy, domestic frontier romances used the thematics of love and courtship to disclose racial identity and define it as an indelible mark. Child and Sedgwick thus added something to Cooper's narrative model that changed it fundamentally. I intend to argue that Cooper's subsequent fictions bear the traces of this act of supplementation. In doing so, I insist that the literary exchange went in both directions. In his domestic counterparts, Cooper could observe how the story of romantic love transformed the story of frontier conflict and how race could be more fully explored when articulated to gender. By returning Cooper's fiction to the larger field of antebellum historical romances, and placing it alongside the domestic frontier romances of Child and Sedgwick, I will identify the ideological work performed by the sentimental in Cooper's own work. These sentimental elements were vital to Cooper's literary exploration of blood and the nature of racial identity during the late 1820s. For without negating the critical emphasis on masculinity and homosocial bonding on Cooper's frontier, I will argue somewhat counter-intuitively that his fiction transformed "white" identity for a popular readership into first and foremost a feminine property that could only be reproduced within the household. In this, his work is of a piece with that of Child and Sedgwick.

As Richard Slotkin observed in *The Fatal Environment*, two senses of the word "romance" converge in the generic designation, "frontier romance," one derived from the chivalric epic, and the other from the modern love story. Romance in the second sense suggests the presence of "a love theme in which the sexual/social conflict becomes a metaphor for the historical oppositions of the novel."[13] Slotkin begins his discussion of Cooper with a familiar dismissal of this aspect of his fiction: "The Romantic 'plots' of Cooper's fiction are concessions to the sentimental taste of his audience, and their shapes from novel to novel are (with some exceptions) redundant and predictable." By contrast, the true "genius" of Cooper's novels lies in "the narrative subtext, in which Cooper carries forward his integrated retelling of the Frontier Myth," a deep structure which "develops and grows from book to book, adding meanings rather than merely repeating them" (87). Yet the reading of Cooper's fiction that Slotkin goes on to provide – to my mind one of the most compelling critical readings of Cooper to date – in a sense complicates that conventional assertion. For Slotkin's analysis of Cooper's racial logic comes to focus on the very "romantic" elements in Cooper's fiction which the earlier critical tradition had dismissed:

> The romantic complications of the plot serve to establish as a central premise the association of sexual and racial identity, and the linkage of sexual and racial qualities to moral character and psychological structure. The linkage uses [the] sexual analogy to establish the immutability of racial character . . . So defined, sexual and racial forces appear in the novel as keys to understanding the larger tendencies that work below and shape the surface of the historical events . . . (90–91)

In this way, Slotkin argues, Cooper uses sexual desire to "test" race in almost the same way a scientist tests for a substance in a laboratory experiment: "the sentiment of love is a litmus test of racial character" (90). I want to extend Slotkin's extremely illuminating observation about the interaction of racial and sexual codes by making gender and sexuality the operative terms of my analysis of the racial ideology of Cooper's work at the close of the 1820s. Like the domestic frontier romances of Child and Sedgwick, Cooper's 1829 novel, *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish* used a particular kind of love story drawn from the captivity narrative, and the sentimentality it can generate, to establish race as an indisputable fact of nature. By virtue of its sentimental logic, moreover, it defined race, not only as a mark on the surface of the body, but also as a depth residing within the mind and heart.

As I demonstrated in Chapter 2, Cooper's first frontier romance, *The Pioneers*, used the thematics of Anglo-Indian warfare to interrogate the Enlightenment conception of natural rights. Cooper's later fictions, on the other hand, focused not only on relations of violence in the wilderness, but also on relations of kinship within the household, to tell its "Indian stories." A particular moment in *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish* furnishes an example of this shift in emphasis. Though there is no central conflict over ownership comparable to the one at the center of *The Pioneers*, the language of natural rights is still very much a presence in *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*. Early in the novel, Ruth Heathcote has a premonition of a "creature of mortal birth, and creature too that hath no claim on thee or thine, and who trespasseth on our peace, no less than on our natural rights, to be where he lurketh."[14] The novel's most explicit invocation of property rights, however, is motivated by her "shudder[ing]" young daughter, also named Ruth, who will be captured during an Indian attack on the Heathcote household and become the wife of an Indian. As the Indian raid begins, Ruth Heathcote explains to her daughter that "the heathen is truly upon us, with bloody mind":

> "And why is it, mother," demanded her child, "that they seek to do us harm? Have we ever done evil to them?"

> "I may not say. He that hath made the earth hath given it to us for their uses, and reason would seem to teach that if portions of its surface are vacant, he that needeth truly may occupy."
>
> . . . "Surely, we are here rightfully. I have heard my father say that when the Lord made me a present to his arms, our valley was a tangled forest, and that much toil only has made it what it is."
>
> "I hope that what we enjoy, we enjoy rightfully! And yet it seemeth that the savage is ready to deny our claims."

To this point, the passage explicitly invokes not only the Enlightenment conception of natural rights, but also the specifically Lockean notion that labor is the basis of ownership: "'[T]is allowed to be his goods," Locke wrote in his *Second Treatise of Government*, "who hath bestowed his labour upon it."[15] The conflict between "us" and "the savage" is thus expressed as a competition between two opposing claims to the land. At this point, however, the exchange takes a critical turn:

> "And where do these bloody enemies dwell? Have they, too, valleys like this, and do the Christians break into them to shed blood in the night?"
>
> "They are of wild and fierce habits, Ruth, and little do they know of our manner of life. Woman is not cherished as among the people of our father's race; for force of body is more regarded than kinder ties." (154)

In response to little Ruth's question about land ownership, her mother answers in terms of Indian "habits," "manner of life," and particularly gender relations as the roots of Anglo-Indian conflict. Moreover, she suggests that the basis of Anglo-Indian difference is a clash between two forms of social reproduction, one based on corporeal "force," the other on bonds of kinship. As we shall see, this moment in the novel, in which the language of rights get folded into that of kinship relations, is symptomatic of the ideological movement in the novel as a whole.

Set in colonial Connecticut in the late-seventeenth century, the novel tells the story of a Puritan family living at the edge of the English settlements during King Philip's war. Against this historical backdrop, the novel stages a series of captivities which explore racial boundaries by taking captives down different narrative paths. Most notable among these captives is Cooper's girl-heroine, little Ruth Heathcote, who follows the heroines of Child and Sedgwick by marrying her Indian captor. Even the choice of the name Ruth may be a nod to Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*, whose Indian heroine Magawisca is figured in one passage as the eponymous character of the Old Testament book of Ruth, a Moabite woman who married into a Hebrew tribe (32).

From the beginning of the novel, Cooper seems to acknowledge a departure from certain generic conventions, or at least readerly expectations. In his preface to the 1833 English edition, Cooper declares that "the writer has departed a little from the usual style of novel-writing in this work" and instead written what he calls a "familiar poem" (vii). After introducing us to the Heathcote family, and following them to their new isolated habitation in the wilderness, the narrator of the novel proper pauses just before the "action of our piece commences" (10) to warn the reader that the story to follow may disappoint:

> With this preliminary explanation, we shall refer the reader to the succeeding narrative for a more minute, and we hope for a more interesting account of the incidents of a legend that may prove too homely for the tastes of those whose imaginations seek the excitement of scenes more stirring, or of a condition of life less natural. (11)

This is not the only time when the word "homely" is used in the novel. From its context, we understand it to refer not only to the ordinary or unappealing, but rather specifically to matters of "domestic interest" (277) – as, for example, when the narrative describes "the homely fabrics of the looms of Ruth" (23). Indeed, the word is used later in a similarly self-reflexive context, when Cooper refers to the narrative as "this homely legend" (110). In what sense, however, can a story which revolves around race war and captivity on the colonial frontier – the typical stuff of frontier romance as Cooper pioneered the genre – be described as "familiar" or "homely"? The answer lies not in the subject matter. Following James Wallace, I will argue that the novel is "homely" in a more profound way: it tells "historical events of great moment . . . as events within a family."[16]

Like its precursors in Cooper's oeuvre, *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish* is rife with "facts" about Indian nature. Variously called "natives," "savages," "heathens," "red men" and "wild beings" (v, 108, 100, 308, 191), Cooper's Indians are distinguished by certain characteristics described as natural to their race rather than specific to their culture. The nature of this "cunning race" (184) becomes particularly apparent in violent conflict: "In such emergencies, with an Indian, thought takes the character of an instinct" (383). Driven by an insuppressible "desire of revenge" (320), they are "ruthless" and "wild" (191), and yet "cautious" (161), endowed with a "never-slumbering vigilance" (291). Although here, as in Cooper's earlier fiction, these kinds of interior properties mark racial difference, ultimately, it is not these qualities so much as their concealment that distinguishes the

Indians. The notion of the Indian's "stern nature" (152) and "immovable composure" (135), something of a cliché in Cooper, is based on an implicit argument about Indian interiority. "The mind of a native," we are told, "does not give up its secrets" so easily (143). For the Indian is "accustomed to entire self-command" (306) which causes him "to repress all natural emotions" (317; cf. 319, 386). Paradoxically, then, we are simultaneously given a wealth of information about the nature of "savage passions" (192) and told that these passions are unreadable. To understand this paradox is to unpack the novel's complex logic of racial legibility.

The novel does not merely assert its "truths" about Indian subjectivity; it dramatizes them through the narrative device of captivity. Indian nature is first put to the test, so to speak, with the captivity of the young Indian boy, Conanchet, among the Heathcote family. From the moment they capture him, the Puritans subject Conanchet to a kind of "experiment" (96) in acculturation. The family's patriarch, Mark Heathcote, driven by the "ruling passion" that "the seeds of spiritual regeneration . . . exist in the whole family of man, and consequently in the young heathen as well as in others," sets about trying to civilize him (91–2), to bring him towards Christian prayer and more civilized clothing. "But all attempts to lure the lad into the habits of a civilized man were completely unsuccessful" (92). This failure is defined negatively; as with Cooper's Indians in general, the clearest sign of Conanchet's Indianness is the illegibility of his thoughts and feelings to his English captors. The Heathcotes are never more anxious than at those moments when Conanchet "bent his eyes aside, and stood in one of those immovable attitudes which so often gave him the air of a dark piece of statuary" (149).

As the narrative develops, however, there are hints that Conanchet has changed in significant ways as a result of his captivity in the Puritan household. These changes show themselves in the heat of conflict. When, for example, it becomes clear that the Heathcote family will soon be the target of Indian violence, we are given certain clues that Conanchet, like Magawisca in *Hope Leslie*, feels affection and concern for his English captors:

> The lad stood the scrutiny with the undismayed and immovable composure of his race. But though his eye met the looks of those around him haughtily and in pride, it was not gleaming with any of that stern defiance which had so often been known to glitter in his glances . . . On the contrary, the expression of his dark visage was rather that of amity than of hatred, and there was a moment when the look he cast upon Ruth and her offspring was visibly touched with a feeling of concern. (135–6)

At issue in this passage is literally the legibility of Conanchet's interior in his countenance. What is most significant, however, is that two different sets of emotions are legible there. As we are told a few pages later: "It seemed as if he balanced between his pride and his sympathies" (147). Indeed, nearly every description of Conanchet testifies to the fact that different aspects of his interior battle for dominance: "notwithstanding the evidences of austerity which custom, and perhaps character, as well as rank, had gathered in his air, there was a heart beneath that might be touched by the charities of humanity" (304). If read correctly by one "skilled in the history of savage passions" (192), then, the surface of Conanchet's body bears witness to "a strange and unwonted confusion of mind" (304).

The inner battle between Conanchet's "savage passions" (192) and his sentimental "heart" (304) arises, we must conclude, because he has spent time within an Anglo-American household. As he himself testifies, it was while he was "a captive many moons" to "the pale faces" that "he thought less of revenge," his thirst for violence "began to grow weak," and his "mind" became "troubled" (314). More specifically, it is the English woman, Ruth Heathcote, who incites his sympathetic affect. When he "bent his look with concern on the mild eyes of the anxious Ruth" was also when "[t]he countenance of the boy worked with a feeling that it was not usual for an Indian to betray" (151). The link between Conanchet's sentiments and his female captor becomes even more explicit retroactively. Returning to the scene of the Indian raid, and on the assumption that the Heathcote family is dead, Conanchet's "gentle recollections" of Ruth produce a "melancholy and relenting shade that clouded his swarthy features" (192).

As in the case of Mary Jemison's sons, however, *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish* demonstrates that Anglo-American sentimentality does not flourish in the soil of Indian character. The residue of Indian passions, "wild and exulting, like that of the savage when he first feels the joy of glutted vengeance" (192), always threatens to displace his softer sentiments. When an Indian warrior stokes Conanchet's pride, for example, he all but abandons his concern for the Heathcotes: "For a single moment the countenance of the boy changed, and his resolution seemed to waver" (167). The signs of the return of a violent nature to Conanchet's countenance are disconcerting to the Heathcotes:

> The passage of the electric spark is not more subtle, nor is it scarcely more brilliant that was the gleam that shot into the dark eye of the Indian. The organ

> seemed to emit rays coruscant as the glance of the serpent. His form appeared to swell with the inward strivings of the spirit, and for a moment there was every appearance of a fierce and uncontrollable burst of ferocious passion. (151)

Though these signs are located in the countenance and "form" of Conanchet, as this passage attests, they originate beneath the surface, in the "inward strivings of the spirit." On another occasion, the Heathcotes speculate that these eruptions of Conanchet's nature arise from his blood: "But when the war-whoop shall be thrilling through thy young blood, the temptation to join the warriors may be too strong" (148).

If Conanchet's captivity among the Puritan family introduces and "tests" the notion of Indian nature, two other captivities allow this novel to explore the nature of Anglo-American subjectivity. The "heathens" attack the Heathcote household in retaliation for Conanchet's captivity and take Whittal Ring captive along with Ruth, the child of Content and Ruth Heathcote. While a captive, Whittal not only adopts the culture of his captors, but completely forfeits his cultural identity and comes to believe that he is an Indian. Years later, when he is rediscovered by the Heathcotes, he is initially unrecognizable. The account of his return can only be described as a scene of reading in which the body of Whittal Ring provides the text. It can be no coincidence that Whittal's return to his community of origin immediately follows the introduction of the "medical man," Doctor Ergot (214). At the level of plot, Ergot has been summoned to look after a newborn child in the Ring household. But no sooner does he arrive on the scene than he is called upon to perform a different purpose far more critical to the narrative, namely, to witness the return of Whittal Ring in the guise of a "savage" and read his body for signs of racial identity. As James Wallace has observed, the satirical character of Ergot is in many ways a version of *The Prairie*'s Doctor Battius.[17] Yet where Wallace concludes from the lampooning of Ergot that the novel is, in effect, "against" racial thinking, I will argue, to the contrary, that the novel stages a competition between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientific knowledge and their divergent accounts of human difference. The novel resolves this competition in favor of a specifically nineteenth-century racialism.

Like his counterpart in *The Prairie*, Doctor Ergot is associated with a fetishization of the book and written knowledge, is all too full of the "dignity suited to one of his calling" and espouses knowledge not only bookish, but European, drawn from "books uttered by writers over the sea" (214, 216). As he arrives on the scene, he becomes involved in a debate with the brawny woodsman, Eben Dudley. Ergot and Dudley engage in a version of the well-known scientific controversy that historian of ideas Antonello Gerbi has termed the "dispute of the New World."[18] As I have explained in Chapter 1, this debate, which began in the mid-eighteenth century and took place in a transatlantic dialogue among men of letters, hinged on Buffon's proposition that the various species of fauna in the New World, including Homo sapiens, were inferior in stature and in figure to those of Europe. This diminution of the form of the body, moreover, was said to correspond to deficiencies of character and intellect. Perhaps the most counterintuitive aspect of the debate, by twentieth-century lights, was the notion that not only "aboriginal" New World species, but any species subject to New World conditions for some stretch of time would necessarily be diminished in this fashion. Needless to say, English creoles living in America bristled at this notion. Thomas Jefferson, for one, famously took Buffon to task and defended American flora and fauna in Query VI of *Notes on the State of Virginia* – without, however, challenging Buffon's founding premise about the influence of climate.[19] Hence, this chapter in the history of science is only intelligible in relation to distinctly eighteenth-century assumptions about human variety. Rooted in the tenets of eighteenth-century natural science, the argument for New World inferiority presumed that all physical characteristics were a result of changes in environment and the consequent "degeneration" of species into various subvarieties. Since there was scarcely any variety that could not, in the last analysis, be reduced to environmental influences, none of the evident differences among the "nations" of men could be called original or essential. *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish* demonstrates this notion to be inadequate in relation to a different idea of race that came to dominate American culture by the mid-nineteenth century. In contrast to monogenetic diversity, the racial differences presumed by nineteenth-century polygenesis were indelible and rooted in nature.

Cooper's Dr. Ergot expresses his views on the subject in terms drawn from the vocabulary of eighteenth-century natural science. Like the theorists of monogenesis, Ergot makes recourse to the notion of degeneration: "Now it is known in philosophy, that the stature of man hath degenerated, and must degenerate in these regions, in obedience to established laws of nature . . ." (216). When Dudley counters with anecdotal evidence of the statures of the men he himself knows in the New World, Ergot scolds him for "settling a knotty and learned point by the evidence of a few shallow exceptions" (216). With a nod towards the "patriotic sentiment" (217) which balks at the notion of New World inferiority, Ergot nevertheless insists that "the science, and wisdom, and philosophy of Europe, have been exceeding active in this matter; and they have proved to their own perfect satisfaction . . . that man and beast, plant and tree, hill and dale, lake and pond, sun, air, fire, and water, are all wanting in some of the perfectness of the older regions" (216–7). Clearly overmatched, Dudley defers to Ergot's formidable learning: "I shall not contend against things that are proven . . . since it needs be that the learning of the men in the old countries must have an exceeding excellence in virtue of its great age" (217). Yet Doctor Ergot's knowledge is immediately and explicitly put to the test, not by Dudley, but by the arrival of the "ill-grown" and "savage" Whittal accompanied by his brother Reuben (219). Whittal's arrival interrupts the debate between the physician and the borderer to interject the question of how Ergot's eighteenth-century European taxonomy will stand up to the peculiarly American figure of an Englishman acculturated as an Indian.

Initially, both men regard the stranger as a "savage" whom Reuben has "made a captive" (219). But they soon begin to note certain aspects of his appearance that cast doubt on this initial assessment: "He hath the colors of a Narragansett about the brow and eyes, and yet he faileth greatly in the form and movements" (219). Ergot cautions that one must look to "the evidences of nature" in order to "[see] to what race he belongs," and orders the man "set . . . in a position of examination, . . . one in which nature may not be fettered by restraint." He then proceeds to read the figure, head and face of "the patient" using phrenological language:

> The conformation of the whole head is remarkably aboriginal, but the distinctions of tribes is not to be sought in these general delineations. The forehead, as you see, neighbors, is retreating and narrow, the cheek-bones as usual high, and the olfactory member, as in all of the natives, inclining to Roman.

This phrenological reading is not only mocked by the context, but also revealed to be questionable in the ensuing exchange with Eben Dudley. Dudley attempts to call the physician's attention to certain features that contradict his conclusions, namely that "the nose of the man hath a marked upturning at the end," and that he leaves "an out-turning footprint" unlike that of an Indian. In response to such observations, Doctor Ergot resorts to a kind of taxonomical sleight of hand: anything that does not fit his classification he declares to be an "exception" or "peculiarity." "There are anomalies in the physicals of an Indian, as in those of other men" (219), he explains impatiently. Ergot finally attempts to settle the matter and silence all objections by fiat: "I pronounce the fellow to be a Narragansett" (221).

By this point in the novel, the reader knows that Ergot's science is profoundly limited. The novel gives us to understand that Dudley, the "adventurer in the forest" (217), has a more reliable fix on the truth of the stranger's race, having "stud[ied] the movements and attitudes of the captive with quite as much keenness, and with something more of understanding than the leech" (221). The climax of the scene occurs when Dudley "coolly advanced to the captive, and raising the thin robe of deer-skin which was thrown over the whole of his superior members, he exposed the unequivocal skin of a white man" (221). In the face of this "embarrassing refutation," Ergot makes a final desperate attempt to shore up his conclusions:

> Here we have another proof of the wonderful agency by which the changes in nature are gradually wrought! . . . Your captive, beyond a doubt, oweth his existence to Christian parentage, but accident hath thrown him early among the aboriginals, and all those parts which were liable to change were fast getting to assume the peculiarities of the tribe. He is one of those beautiful and connecting links in the chain of knowledge, by which science followeth up its deductions to demonstration.

This proposition is framed by the narrative context in such a way that it appears to be an utterly bankrupt scientific argument and the final collapse of reasoning. Yet this very proposition was completely in line with monogenesis, a theory which maintained that a "white man" could literally and completely become an "Indian" through exposure to a new environment. It was precisely this component of eighteenth-century thinking, as I have explained in Chapter 1, that struck nineteenth-century racial theorists as absurd.

Even the good doctor retreats from his earlier interpretation when the captive is brought to the Heathcote house: "In giving that opinion, I spoke merely of his secondary or acquired habits . . . for, having reference to his original, the man is assuredly a white" (243). That this is Whittal's identity he now pronounces beyond doubt, "as may be seen by divers particulars in his outward conformation, namely, in the shape of the head, the muscles of the arms and the legs, the air and their brand of racial common sense" (243). What were once "peculiarities" and exceptions to the true nature of the specimen have become the essential properties of Whittal's "race."

Thus, it is fair to say, the dispute between Ergot and Dudley stages a competition between the American borderer and the European man of letters. The argument is resolved not by words, but by the arrival of a natural specimen to put the matter to the test. Moreover, the narrative result demonstrates the infirmity of European Enlightenment thinking on the issue of human difference when compared to the experience of ordinary Americans. So long as they remain on the terrain of European theory, Ergot's intellect overpowers Dudley. But when debating the plain facts of American life, Dudley clearly has the advantage. Doctor Ergot's problem is that he reads the surface of the body without knowing what that surface says about an individual's interiority. This inability to read racial depth allows him to make the absurd claim that a white man could become an Indian or vice versa. What the novel satirizes, then, is not "the very possibility of a racial science," as Wallace suggests, but rather a particular theory of difference, indebted to eighteenth-century natural science, which it demonstrates to be bankrupt in relation to an emergent and specifically American racial logic.[20]

A critical aspect of this racial logic is the fact that, while the exposure of Whittal's "white skin" is what precipitates the reversal of the doctor's position, race ultimately is not reduced to "color." The entire episode serves to confirm the doctor's caution that "the color of the skin may not be proof positive" (243). Indeed, it is easy to miss the fact that what settles the issue of Whittal's identity is not color, but *kinship*. After the scientific debate has played itself out to a nineteenth-century conclusion, the novel can arrive at a more properly narrative resolution. In an encounter recalling the tearful reunion scene between Hope and Mary Leslie in Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*, Whittal Ring's sister, Faith recognizes her brother in his savage state:

> "Away! away!" cried Faith, forcing herself in front of the speaker, and, by placing her two hands on the shaven crown of the prisoner, forming a sort of shade to his features. ". . . This is no plotting miscreant, but a stricken innocent. Whittal – my brother Whittal, dost know me?" (244)

Just as in Sedgwick's novel, however, the scene cannot be brought to resolution unless Faith can succeed in "stirr[ing] long-dormant recollections in the mind of Whittal." Indeed, it seems at times "as if memory were likely to triumph, and all those deceptive opinions which habit and Indian wiles had drawn over his dull mind were about to vanish before the light of reality" (263–4). In the end, however, Faith cannot succeed, for Whittal's "dull faculties obstinately refused to lend themselves to a change that, in his case, would have been little short of that attributed to the transmigration of souls" (264). Though Whittal eventually flees the settlement for the wilderness, the terms in which the novel describes the failure "in his case" indicates that the circumstances surrounding his captivity do not necessarily obey the same laws as that of another captive in the novel who has gone native.

In fact, Whittal's captivity functions as a narrative prelude and a foil to that of the young Ruth Heathcote. To begin with, it is significant that Whittal's first appearance in the guise of a "native" occurs in the context of Ergot's ridiculous misreadings of his identity. If the revelation that Whittal has gone native is comic, the news of Ruth's out-marriage plays as tragedy. While Whittal's loss of his Anglo-American cultural identity is ultimately peripheral to the novel, Ruth's captivity, by contrast, is the axis on which the entire narrative turns. Indeed, Ruth is the "wept," or lamented, child to which the novel's title refers (365). The contrast between the two captivities reproduces the same sentimental logic at work in the frontier romances of Child and Sedgwick. It is the out-marriage, not of the white person, but rather of the white *woman* that gravely threatens the kinship group to which she belongs. For Cooper's novel, that is, Ruth Heathcote's racial essence operates as the "inalienable possession" upon which Anglo-American group identity seems to depend.

The basis for little Ruth Heathcote's union with Conanchet is established early in the novel. While Content Heathcote is in the woods one night, his wife (also named Ruth) is stricken by a foreboding of danger to her young daughter in a kind of vision of "our little Ruth [lying] in agony" (45). When Content returns and hears of her "warning of evil," he at first understands her fear to be inspired by the mysterious Englishman who had lately arrived in the household. In clarifying the object of her fear, Ruth then makes one of only a few of the novel's references to "blood" as the basis of racial difference: "I fear none of white blood," she says, "nor of Christian parentage; the murderous heathen is in our fields" (45; see also 22; 250; 256). Content attempts to convince Ruth that she had merely been dreaming. "'Tis not a dream," she insists. "I have seen the glowing eyeballs of a savage" (45). The metonymic association of the Indian threat with a pair of eyeballs is repeated several times during the course of the novel. Indeed, this image is used more than once in explicit connection with little Ruth, indicating that the Indian gaze holds a particular kind of threat to her. When Eben Dudley, for example, inadvertently stokes Conanchet's Indian pride by mentioning the name of his father, Ruth instinctively clutches her daughter in order to protect her from Indian eyes: "Ruth recoiled, and clasped her little namesake closer to her side, when she saw the dazzling brightness of his glowing eyes, and the sudden and expressive dilation of his nostrils" (62).

Indian "eyeballs" represent two different threats for this novel. One is obviously the threat of violence. During the Indian attack on the Heathcote household, the "glaring eye-balls" of the Indian menace his potential victim (168). When asked why she hides her "countenance" while in Conanchet's presence, little Ruth replies: "Mother, I see the Indian unless my face be hid. He looketh at me, I fear, with wish to do us harm" (166). Ruth's fear is immediately borne out by events, as the entrance of a "naked savage" in the "frightful masquerade of his war-paint" interrupts her mother's attempt to console her (166).

Given the romantic trajectory of little Ruth and Conanchet, however, the Indian gaze necessarily signifies something else, as well. In contrast with the gaze of the bloodthirsty savages of his tribe, Conanchet's look constitutes a sexual threat, rather than a threat of violence. Moreover, this kind of looking does not work only in one direction. In a passage that recalls Cora Munro's sexually charged glance at Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans*, we are given a detailed description of Ruth's countenance as she looks at Conanchet "in wonder and in fear":

> Flaxen locks, that half covered a forehead and face across which ran the most delicate tracery of veins, added lustre to a skin as spotlessly fair as if the warm breezes of that latitude had never fanned the countenance of the girl. Through this maze of ringlets, the child turned her full, clear, blue eyes, bending her looks, in wonder and in fear, on the dark visage of the captive Indian youth, who at that moment was to her a subject of secret horror . . . when, led towards the upper rooms, she moved from the presence of her mother, it was with an eye that never bent its riveted gaze from the features of the young Indian, until the intervening walls hid him entirely from her sight. (146)

Like Cora's "indescribable look of pity, admiration, and horror,"[21] little Ruth regards the "heathen" not only with fear but also with "wonder" and "interest" (100). As this passage makes clear, moreover, it is not Conanchet's gaze so much as his exchange of looks with Ruth that is threatening. If the source of her apprehension here is not Conanchet's eyes, but her own, it would explain why Ruth covers her face in her mother's dress. She is not trying to hide it from Conanchet's look, but rather to keep her *own* look from reaching its object, as she explains: "I see the Indian unless my face be hid" (166). According to the logic of the novel, the exchange of looks between the white woman and the Indian man carries the threat of interracial desire and the resultant amalgamation or mixture of the races.[22]

As if in immediate confirmation of the danger of white women exchanging looks with Indians, the Narragansetts attack the Heathcote household and capture Ruth along with Whittal Ring shortly following the movement of the gaze between little Ruth and Conanchet. From this moment on, any mention of "the whole subject of her captivity among the heathen, and her restoration" (347) necessarily refers to the tradition of captivity narratives. As Cooper's readers would no doubt have been aware, most of these stories obeyed the same narrative structure. Indeed this narrative paradigm is explicitly invoked when, some years after Ruth's capture, the Heathcote family hears "a rumor of an exciting nature," namely, a report from an "itinerant trader" that an English girl matching Ruth's description was dwelling in an Indian village a few hundred miles away. When Content Heathcote and Eben Dudley set out to find her, the reader has every reason to expect that they will reclaim Ruth as the seventeenth-century English captive, Mary Rowlandson, had been redeemed, by paying a ransom.[23] The captive Content finds after his journey proves not to be his little Ruth, but rather "a girl in whose jet-black tresses and equally dark organs of sight might better trace a descendant of the French and Canadas, than one sprung from his own Saxon lineage" (235–6). Even after Ruth's father realizes that the girl is not his own, he nonetheless attempts to "rescu[e] the child they had in fact discovered from the hands of her barbarous masters" by offering "the ransom intended for Ruth in behalf of the captive." The offer is rejected and "the adventurers were obliged to quit the village with weary feet and still heavier hearts" (236). Thus "[d]isappointed in both their objects," the Heathcotes cannot bring the captivity story to its traditional resolution.

Though described as a "fruitless errand" (236) at the level of plot, this episode in fact serves a critical narrative function: it is the first suggestion we are given that Cooper does not intend to follow the model of Mary Rowlandson's captivity in recounting that of Ruth Heathcote. For not only had they been "cruelly . . . deceived" about the identity of the captive, but the girl they find has been "naturalized in [the] tribe" and become an "adopted daughter of the savages" (235). At this moment, the story of captivity veers sharply away from the narrative model provided by Mary Rowlandson and towards that of Mary Jemison. Rowlandson had described her captors, and differentiated herself from them, not by means of "race" per se, but primarily in terms of national and religious identity.[24] Jemison's narrative, by contrast, described its heroine in explicitly racial terms from the outset, when it dubbed her the "White Woman of the Genesee." In a similar way, Cooper's novel first refers to the captive girl whom Content and Dudley attempt to redeem with the epithet, "this little descendant of a white race" (235). Moreover, the girl's captors are described, in a telling phrase, as a "distant tribe on which the scion of another stock was said to have been so violently engrafted" (235). While no explicit mention is made of the captive having married out, this image of forcible "engrafting," along with the language of adoption and naturalization, inevitably raises the specter of "going native" for a readership familiar with Jemison's well-known story, published a few years earlier. In thus shifting the narrative in the direction of a captive who had married across racial lines, the episode prefigures the eventual recovery of Ruth Heathcote and the scandalous truth that she has become the wife of a Narragansett.

We first meet Ruth in her "savage" condition after some years have elapsed, following the narration of one of the bloody battles of King Philip's War. She is initially identified only as an unnamed female figure approaching two Indian warriors. "As this female is to enact no mean part in that which follows," the narrator tells us, "the reader may be thankful for a more minute description of her person." We are then given the following description of Ruth, or rather, Narra-mattah, as she is now known:

> The age of the stranger was under twenty. In form she rose above the usual stature of an Indian maid, though the proportions of her person were as light and buoyant as at all years. The limbs, seen below the folds of a short kirtle of bright scarlet cloth, were just and tapering, even to the nicest proportions of classic beauty; and never did foot of higher instep and softer roundness, grace a feathered moccasin. Though the person, from the neck to the knees, was hid by a tightly-fitting vest of calico and the short kirtle named, enough of the shape was visible to betray outlines that had never been injured, either by the mistaken devices of art or by the baneful effects of toil. The skin was only visible at the hands, face, and neck. Its lustre having been a little dimmed by exposure, a rich, rosy tint had usurped the natural brightness of a complexion that had once been fair even to brilliancy. The eye was full, sweet, and of a blue that emulated the sky of evening; the brows soft and arched; the nose straight, delicate, and slightly Grecian; the forehead fuller than that which properly belonged to a girl of the Narragansetts, but regular, delicate, and polished; and the hair, instead of dropping in long straight tresses of jet black, broke out of the restraints of a band of beaded wampum, in ringlets of golden yellow. (322)

If the reader was unsure beforehand of the identity of the figure to be described, there are enough parallels to the earlier description of Ruth as she looked at Conanchet, from her "ringlets" of golden hair to her blue eyes and lustrous skin, to eliminate any mystery. Indeed, it performs the same dialectical movement between surface and depth as that earlier passage. Here, the narrator describes the surface of Ruth's body only after proceeding centripetally through the "tightly-fitting" layers which "hid" them. And like the description of Cora Munro in *The Last of the Mohicans*, her figure exposed through the opening in her veil, this passage ruminates on the relation between the visible and the invisible. The final image, of "ringlets of golden yellow" hair which "broke out of the restraints of a band of beaded wampum" recalls the "blood . . . ready to burst its bounds" in Cora's countenance.[25]

This description of Ruth in her "native" state also asks to be read in relation to the earlier scene of reading over which Doctor Ergot ridiculously presided. Indeed, it is as if Ergot's earlier misreading of Whittal Ring has prepared the way for the appearance of Ruth. The reader has, quite literally, already been taught how to read Ruth's body without making the same errors. In subtle but clear contrast to Ergot's suspect reading practices, the various "peculiarities that distinguished this female from the others of her tribe" are represented here not as anomalous "exceptions" to be discounted, but clear as "the indelible marks of nature." The reader is thus encouraged to compensate for Ergot's earlier mistakes and identify Narra-mattah as a white woman who has merely been acculturated as an Indian.

Conanchet, as if he has been reading Narra-mattah along with us, attempts to convince her of the truth of her racial identity: "Listen. Lies have never entered the ears of Narra-mattah. Thou didst not come of the sumach [*sic*], but of the snow . . . Thy blood is like spring-water" (325). At first, Narra-mattah refuses these signs of her racial difference. She regards herself instead as an "Indian girl" (327), appealing to a racial identity that is further than skin deep: "If the Great Spirit made her skin of a different color, he made her heart the same" (326). When Conanchet shows her the village of her childhood for the first time since her captivity, she refers to it merely as "a village of the Yengeese," and declares that "[a] Narragansett woman does not love to look at the lodges of the hated race" (325). Conanchet then attempts to awaken her familial memory, just as Sedgwick's Hope had attempted to do with her sister Mary: "Dost never think of the warmth and of the food of the lodge in which thou hast passed so many seasons?" This kind of appeal is equally ineffective until

Conanchet makes specific reference to her mother: "But I hear a softer voice! 'Tis a woman of the palefaces among her children: cannot the daughter hear?" Once he invokes Narra-mattah's status as a daughter of a white woman, she experiences a transformation, try as she may to resist:

> Narra-mattah has forgotten all; she does not wish to think of things like these. She knows how to hate a hungry and craving race. But she sees one that the wives of the Narragansetts do not see. She sees a woman with white skin; her eyes look softly on her child in her dreams; it is not an eye, it is a tongue! It says. What does the wife of Conanchet wish? – is she cold? here are furs – is she hungry? here is venison – is she tired? the arms of the pale woman open, that an Indian girl may sleep. (327)

Though she speaks in the visionary metaphors of Cooper's Indians, and describes herself throughout as an "Indian girl" who opposes the "hated race" (322) of white people, Narra-mattah is led back to her white nature despite her best attempts to remain true to her adopted culture. The passage asserts, moreover, that what separates Ruth from "the wives of the Narragansetts" is the sentimental bond with her mother. It is not the color of her skin, but rather her sentimental subjectivity that is the indelible mark of her whiteness and her difference from Indian women. As this bond is disclosed, her return becomes a narrative certainty.

Conanchet is immediately changed by Narra-mattah's vision: "The Great Spirit of thy fathers is angry, that thou livest in the lodge of a Narragansett. His sight is too cunning to be cheated. He knows that the moccasin, and the wampum, and the robe of fur are liars. He sees the color of the skin beneath" (328). The "sight" here attributed to the "Great Spirit," is precisely what the reader has already been taught about the nature of race: that external signs can be deceptive. It was these very signs that Ergot had failed to grasp correctly in misreading Whittal Ring's racial body. But here this notion takes a new form. What Conanchet concludes from the revelation of Ruth's racial depth is that his union with her was unnatural. At this point, he begins to speak in the voice of narrative necessity: "Come, there is a straight path before us" (328). He then takes his wife by the arm, leads her to her mother, and "placed the two females in attitudes where each might look the other full in the face" (329). In explicit contrast to the earlier exchange of looks between the white girl and the Indian, which operated as a trope of racial amalgamation, this look between Ruth and Narra-mattah will lead to the separation of the races.

Like the earlier moment when Faith Ring recognizes her brother Whittal, the scene that follows is in effect a repetition of the scene between Hope and Mary Leslie. Here, however, the recognition scene occurs not between siblings, but between a mother and a daughter:

> No child of tender age ever unexpectedly came before the eyes of Ruth Heathcote, . . . without quickening the never dying pulses of maternal love. No wonder, then, that when she found herself in the situation and under the circumstances described, nature grew strong within her, and that her mind caught glimpses, however dim and indistinct they might be, of a truth that the reader has already anticipated. Still, a certain intelligible clue was wanting. (329–30)

These "glimpses" of the truth are at first insufficient to convince Ruth Heathcote that the "mysterious and lovely being" before her is, in fact, her daughter. Conanchet then sternly tells Ruth to "know her child":

> Ruth could hesitate no longer; neither sound nor exclamation escaped her, but as she strained the yielding frame of her recovered daughter to her heart it appeared as if she strove to incorporate the two bodies into one . . . Then came the evidence of the power of nature when strongly awakened. (331)

This last phrase strongly echoes a phrase from the corresponding scene in Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*, when, in an embrace between the sisters, "the energies of nature awoke" and "nature . . . asserted her rights" (227, 231). In Sedgwick's novel, the recognition scene was not complete until the recalcitrant sister completed the circuit of sentimental affect. In exactly the same way, recovery of the lost daughter in *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish* must be completed by Ruth's recognition of her mother. But where Mary Leslie, after the tearful exchange with Hope, remains with her Indian husband and returns to her adopted culture, little Ruth Heathcote's recognition of her mother can come only after she returns to the settlement, not only physically, but emotionally. The recognition scene cannot be complete until, in the words of her mother, "we possess our Ruth in affection as we now possess her in the body" (352). Narra-mattah must become Ruth.

Unlike Sedgwick's Mary Leslie, Ruth retains some knowledge of "the language of her childhood," for her knowledge of English "had been sufficiently implanted before her captivity" (351). This fact inevitably raises the question whether, despite all the novel's efforts to establish race as an endowment of nature, language is not at the base of it after all. The challenge of what we might term the reacculturation of Ruth, however, is that her linguistic competency, and her cultural memory more generally, do not guarantee her return:

> [H]er memory recalled indistinct recollections of most of the objects and usages that were so suddenly replaced before her eyes; but . . . the latter came too late to supplant usages that were rooted in her affections by the aid of all those wild and seductive habits that are known to become nearly unconquerable in those who have been long subject to their influence. (348–9)

This passage presumes a complex relationship between "nature" and "habit" as orders of difference. For although the novel has already established unequivocally that Ruth is "white" by nature, the question remains whether it is "too late" to supplant her "nearly unconquerable" native habits and bring her back into Anglo-American culture.

Ruth Heathcote must use a specifically maternal form of control in order to coax her daughter back. Characterized as a kind of "gentle violence" (348) or "gentle force" (351), Ruth Heathcote's power is precisely that of the middle-class domestic woman within the household over which she presides. She proceeds not by physical force, but the power of surveillance: a "never-tiring, vigilant, engrossing, but regulated watchfulness" (349).[26] Through it, the mother can "fathom the depths of her daughter's mind" and subject it to the "mysterious influence of nature" (350). The question is whether she can use this power to implant the proper form of "affection" (352) deep within her daughter and fully restore her white sentimental subjectivity, in much the same way that she was able to "lend" Conanchet a sentimental depth during the period of his captivity. The breakthrough occurs just at the moment when Ruth is overcome by the "painful conviction that her dominion over the mind of her child was sadly weakened, if not lost forever" (355). It is the flowing of tears that provides the "unequivocal evidence of success" (356). Doubt is immediately cast on this success by the sudden arrival of the daughter's "Indian babe," brought by Conanchet (356), "an offspring with an Indian cross of blood" (368). Though Ruth flees the settlement once more, with her child and Whittal, the terms of this resolution confirm the novel's sentimental racial logic. Spurred by her mother's disapproval and her own longing for her husband, Ruth "return[s] to the forest" (393). Yet Conanchet, still the voice of racial purity in the novel, refuses her, insisting both that Ruth's "nature . . . will have way" (401), and that their child is the "fruit" of a union that is against nature and offensive to "the Great Spirit" (395). He then leaves her to surrender with honor to an Indian foe, and is killed (403). Conanchet's gesture of reuniting Narramattah with her mother thus entails his own disappearance, exactly as Lydia Maria Child's noble Indian, Hobomok, removes himself in order to enable Mary Conant's return to her birth community. Once widowed, Ruth dies in her mother's arms, confirming with her last words that her return was complete and that she still possesses white subjectivity. As if the entire episode of her captivity and marriage out were now a dimly remembered dream, she asks: "Mother – why are we in the forest?" (410).

Though frontier fiction is famous for a certain racialized language of the body's exterior – "redskins" and "pale faces" – I have suggested that its most profound contribution to American racial discourse was in fact the delineation of a racialized interior. By using the interracial love story and the thematics of family feeling, Cooper, too, defined race as a special kind of subjectivity. No less than in the fictions of his female counterparts, racial identity was made to hinge on a sentimental depth whose reproduction depends on femininity and takes place within the woman-centered household. Taken together, these frontier romances produced a racial discourse that moved from the outside of the body to the inside of the subject, connecting the two as part of a single racial essence irreducible to either. In doing so, they provided the terms of the next generation of public debate over slavery and paved the way for a body of fiction which would explicitly address the issue during the 1840s and 50s.

CHAPTER 5

Stowe's vanishing Americans: "negro" interiority, captivity, and homecoming in Uncle Tom's Cabin

The previous chapters have explored the idea that one cannot fully understand the racial ideology that blossomed in the 1850s without thinking about the way the frontier romances of Cooper, Child and Sedgwick helped to reshape contemporary ideas about racial difference. By turning now to Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, I want to suggest the ways in which frontier romance provided a narrative paradigm for her fictional treatment of slavery. While frontier romances focused their explorations of race on the opposition between the Anglo-American and the Indian, I have argued, they spoke eloquently to the subject of slavery. Without ever addressing the subject explicitly, frontier fiction engaged its central issues by means of a spatial and temporal narrative displacement. This foundational genre reflected on the causes of contemporary racial conflict by retrojecting it into the colonial past and locating it, not in the interior of the nation, but on the edges of the settlement.

In arguing that frontier novels supplied Stowe with a narrative paradigm, I do not mean to suggest that Stowe simply eliminated this structure of narrative displacement and wrote a novel of slavery in precisely the same terms. For to do so would have raised the specter of slave insurrection and "race war" – a figure that haunted the discourse about slavery during the first half of the nineteenth century, and a particularly menacing historical prospect after the Nat Turner rebellion of 1831.[1] As Jefferson wrote of slavery in April 1820: "we have the wolf by the ears, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other."[2] While Jefferson himself saw no viable political solution to this problem, I want to suggest that Stowe's appropriation and reconfiguration of the racial ideology of frontier romance did offer a narrative resolution to this dilemma for a readership on the brink of the Civil War.

Read in this light, it is certainly plausible to understand the novel's emphasis on the docility of the "negro" as a way of addressing contemporary fears of race war. Indeed, Eric Sundquist has argued along those lines in a brief discussion of the novel's ideological containment of the potential for slave revolution:

> For Stowe, of course, violent revolution was no answer, and her sentimental racialism prevented her from imagining fully the need for, and the effects of, such insurrection. Rebellion, as it appears in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, is an apocalyptic issue: obvious in the Christ-like martyrdom of Tom; or, more revealingly, in the gothic intrigues of Cassy . . . Whatever its intention, the book's stated assumption that pure blacks are naturally docile comes close to implying that slaves were incapable of revolution.[3]

I intend to argue here, in basic agreement with Sundquist, that the novel's "sentimental racialism" worked to mediate the figure of slave rebellion, and to reduce the threat discursively. It did so, however, through more complex semiotic means than the emasculation of the slave's power. In order to understand how, we need to attend to the ways in which Stowe borrowed aspects of the frontier novel to do this work. By doing so, I hope to provide a fuller account of the ideological and narrative function of the novel's theory of a distinctive "negro character."

In her "Concluding Remarks" to the novel, Stowe perhaps retrospectively signals an indebtedness to frontier romance: "The writer has lived, for many years, on the *frontier-line of slave states*, and has had great opportunities of observation among those who formerly were slaves" (my emphasis).[4] She thus constructs her narrative authority from her location on that "frontier-line" and the opportunities it has afforded her for "observation" of those crossing it, in effect, from slavery to freedom. She then further supplements this authority by making reference to a different line, that dividing the United States from Canada: "She has also the testimony of missionaries among the fugitives in Canada, in coincidence with her own experience; and her deductions, with regard to the capabilities of the race, are encouraging in the highest degree" (386). Stowe's authorial persona and the Canadian "missionary" are thus both invested here with a form of empirical knowledge akin to that of the laboratory scientist: they have "observed," "experienced," and then made "deductions," and "testified" about the "capabilities" of the "race" that is their experimental subject. In short, they see both sides of a line, and understand what happens when someone crosses it.

This chapter takes up several aspects of Stowe's borrowings from frontier romance. By recovering these discursive links, I hope to put a different spin on aspects of Stowe's fiction that have already received much critical attention, such as the novel's representation of "negro" character (Richard Yarborough), its deployment of sentimental and domestic modes of argument (Jane Tompkins, Gillian Brown), the politically ambivalent effects of this mode vis-à-vis contemporary race politics (George Fredrickson), and the novel's figurative erasure of the black subject from the US national space (Karen Sanchez-Eppler).[5] I begin in Section 1 by demonstrating how the novel's almost didactic passages on the essential characteristics of the "Anglo-Saxon" and the "negro" draw on the frontier novel's function of teaching readers the differences between "white people" and "Indians." In Section 2, I investigate the novel's emphasis on the "negro's" mimetic nature. Far more than just a characterological stereotype that provides the novel with occasions for comic relief, the trope of the "imitative negro," I argue, is in fact the linchpin of the novel's racial theory and is intimately connected to its domestic-sentimental structure. Section 3 then demonstrates how Stowe adapted the narrative logic of the "vanishing Indian" from the frontier romance, remaking this figure as a "vanishing African" who is no sooner liberated from slavery than he or she is symbolically removed from the space of the nation. In order to effect this narrative resolution, I argue, Stowe drew on the captivity topos that provided so much fodder for frontier romances. For after figuring the slaves as African captives in "Anglo-Saxon" America, it makes perfect narrative sense for her to end the novel in the conventional way by freeing the captives and sending them "home."

Perhaps the most enduring problem in Stowe criticism over the past several decades has been to find a way to analyze her most famous novel's assault on the practice of slavery, and at the same time to come up with some satisfying account of its particular brand of racialism. It may not be an exaggeration to say that this is the aspect of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that most critics, indeed astute readers of all kinds, have found most perplexing and paradoxical: the odd conjunction of a powerful antislavery politics, on the one hand, and some of the most entrenched and precisely formulated racialism in our entire mainstream literature, on the other. I would identify two primary modes in which criticism has encountered Stowe's racialism. The first is what we might call, striking a Barthesian pose, "in-spite-of" criticism: Stowe's novel, this kind of account goes, is progressive in spite of its capitulation to certain contemporary racial ideologies.[6] This rhetorical strategy of containment best serves arguments that emphasize Stowe's progressive gender or antislavery politics while acknowledging certain regrettable problems in her treatment of race. Usually these problems are explained by the inevitable "limitations" imposed on Stowe's thought by the powerful ideologies of her "time." The second critical mode, by contrast, places the focus squarely on Stowe's racial ideology the better to expose its insidious workings. It thus rejects apologetics in favor of hard-nosed ideology critique.

In identifying these critical modes, I do not mean to suggest a typology that would allow us to assign critics into one of these groups, nor is it likely that many critics can be fully characterized by either of these stereotypes. But I expect that they are familiar tendencies; I at least have felt the pull of each of these approaches both in my research and in the classroom. Nonetheless, this chapter attempts to avoid either possibility – political apologetics and what Barthes called the "pious show of unmasking" – and their considerable, though very different, critical pleasures.[7] I have done so simply because I believe that the novel's racialism is not in competition with its antislavery politics, but rather, is quite consonant with it. Robyn Wiegman has written that "in the paradoxes of her political gestures, Stowe's protest against slavery does not necessarily entail a challenge to the structural asymmetries in which white supremacy defines and constrains interiority itself."[8] To push the argument still further, we might say that even to call such a situation "paradoxical" obfuscates the place of racialism in Stowe's political thought. For as I will argue, the novel's "capitulations" to dominant racial ideology are not merely unfortunate holdovers from the inescapable racialism of her "times," nor signs that her critique did not go far enough; the novel's racialism was literally and precisely required by the mode of argument against slavery Stowe chose.[9]

By replacing Stowe's novel into the lineage of the frontier novel, and understanding both its lines of affiliation with that tradition as well as the limits of this analogy, I hope to shed a new light on the political and narrative functions of its racialism. I have done so because it seems to me that our job as critics is not merely to "expose" Stowe's racial theory, and certainly not to help her escape its constraints, but rather to explain the discursive predicament in as accurate and truthful a manner as possible. I want to begin, then, with an unflinching look at the novel's complex and layered racial theory, in order to provide a more systematic and detailed account of the operations of "race" in the novel than has perhaps been offered before.[10]

THE TRUTH ABOUT NEGROES AND ANGLO-SAXONS

The opening line of *Uncle Tom's Cabin, Or, Life Among the Lowly,* in Stowe's preface to the reader, clearly announces the novel's concern with the nature of racial differences:

> The scenes of this story, as its title indicates, lie among a race hitherto ignored by the associations of polite and refined society; an exotic race, whose ancestors, born beneath a tropic sun, brought with them, and perpetuated to their descendants, a character so essentially unlike the hard and dominant Anglo-Saxon race, as for many years to have won from it only misunderstanding and contempt. (xiii)

Though the novel will quickly turn to what is generally regarded as its predominant political concern, the system of slavery, the focus here is more properly on the "character" of an "exotic race," defined at this point only in opposition to its counterpart, the "hard and dominant Anglo-Saxon race." It is thus clear, literally from the book's first line, that the object is to distinguish these races and to parse their essentially opposed "characters." "Character" seems to operate here as an essential interior property, transmitted to descendants along with other racial inheritances. This unnamed "exotic race" is soon identified: "The object of these sketches," our narrator continues, "is to awaken sympathy and feeling for the African race, as they exist among us; to show their wrongs and sorrows, under a system so necessarily cruel and unjust as to defeat and do away the good effects of all that can be attempted for them, by their best friends, under it" (xiii). If the novel's opening line simply placed two races, one abject and one "dominant," in an abstract space before the reader, the use here of the first person plural clearly locates the reader, along with the narrator, in an Anglo-Saxon "we," observing with sympathy that other race in "our" midst, "the African race as they exist among us." The syntax of this last formulation is also telling, for it suggests that there may be a difference between the "African race, as they exist among us," and the African race as "they" would be otherwise. There is even a note of frustration sounded in the suggestion that "our" best attempts to do something for "them" are obstructed or nullified by the system of slavery. These hints are admittedly slender ones at this early point in the novel. As I will argue below, however, the implied discrepancy between the "African race's" *essence* and *condition*, and the related question of the positive and negative influences on its character, will be the keys to the complexities of the novel's theory of racial difference.

I have looked at these opening lines in such detail because they forecast a number of the novel's abiding themes and concerns in an extraordinarily condensed form. Though the "African" will give way to "the negro" as the novel's term of choice (and I shall continue to use the latter term myself here with quotation marks always implied),[11] a significant amount of narrative capital, so to speak, is spent defining the negro as a type, what the narrator will call some pages later "the negro *par excellence*" (16), for the benefit of a reader interpellated as a member of the Anglo-Saxon race. Whatever we presume Stowe's readers to have thought about the physical and visible differences between these races, moreover, it is easy to neglect the obvious but critical fact that the differences that receive the greatest attention are interior properties of character and subjectivity. It is not so much the bodies, but the "hearts" of these races that are being assessed. The Anglo-Saxon will remain an important term of contrast, but the primary narrative work is the exposition of negro character.

While characters marked either as admirably sympathetic or negatively ethnocentric make many assertions concerning racial difference, at least as many are offered in asides to the reader in the same benevolent voice of the narrator that sounds out from the preface. Indeed, the third person narration itself is copiously larded with commonplaces about "negro nature," all endowed with the status of proverbial truth rather than the limited perspective of a character. Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether they constitute positive or negative attributes, it is not difficult to assemble a kind of catalogue of the truths offered by the narrator about the "negro" – an operation that many of Stowe's readers have no doubt casually performed as these truths accumulate in the course of the novel. We learn, for example, that the negro is passionate ("the negro mind, impassioned and imaginative, always attaches itself to hymns and expressions of a vivid and pictorial nature" [25]) and carries a peculiar musical sense ("those odd guttural sounds which distinguish the native music of [the] race" [207]) and way of speaking ("an indescribable intonation, known only to those who have heard it among the negroes" [39]); that the negro's is a peculiarly emotional and sentimental race ("a sensitive and impressible race" [250], a "susceptible race" [252]), and hence they are both naturally affectionate creatures ("all the instinctive affections of that race are peculiarly strong" [82]) and essentially domestic ones ("Their local attachments are very abiding. They are not naturally daring and enterprising, but home-loving and affectionate" [82]). Corollary to this domesticity is a kind of native culinary bent among the women ("cooking being an indigenous talent of the African race" [179]). The negro's putative "simplicity" means that children are a frequent figure of comparison (a "kindly race, ever yearning toward the simple and childlike" [127]), and in accordance with Stowe's version of New Testament logic, this childlike simplicity makes Christianity a kind of natural fit ("It is the statement of missionaries, that, of all races of the earth, none have received the Gospel with such eager docility as the African. The principle of reliance and unquestioning faith, which is its foundation, is more a native element in this race than any other" [343]).

Though at first glimpse this may seem a veritable laundry list of very different, and, of course, highly stereotypical attributes, they all fit together in a fairly coherent cluster of metonymic associations. In fact, it may serve provisionally to regard the possession of an essentially sentimental nature as the core attribute around which an entire panoply of other attributes are arranged and out of which they are thought to issue. The most highly privileged among these secondary characteristics is surely the peculiar combination of domesticity and Christian subjectivity. Though it is at times difficult to make out the hierarchical tree according to which we are told that one quality leads to another, and so on, the negro's possession of a uniquely "sensitive and impressible" form of subjectivity seems to be fertile soil for the development of a deep Christian subjectivity and a number of other features marked as desirable. Scholars have traced this central feature of Stowe's "negro" to the influence of Alexander Kinmont's 1837 lectures in Cincinnati.[12] Viewed in their larger historical context, these conceptions of the negro virtually define what intellectual historian George Fredrickson has called the ideology of "romantic racialism" in this period. But as we shall see, Stowe could use the narrative fictional form to extend the territory of this conception and make it do different work.

Alongside this figure of the "negro," whom the narrator so carefully defines for us, is the relatively less explored figure of the Anglo-Saxon. Here, too, Stowe was drawing on contemporary ideas about "Anglo-Saxon" racial nature that, as Reginald Horsman has shown, had been firmly established in American culture by the 1850s.[13] Yet while far less ink is consumed enumerating the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon race, it is no less clearly marked by an essential nature than its counterpart. We might say, then, that while the bulk of the narration is focused on the definition of the "negro," the "Anglo-Saxon" is everywhere and nowhere, providing the background to the novel's ruminations on the character of its implied other. The first paragraph of the novel's preface itself establishes this figure of the "hard and dominant Anglo-Saxon race" (xiii) whose power will loom over the entire novel. While dominance is the single characteristic most consistently ascribed, throughout the course of the novel we learn also that "Anglo Saxon blood" is characterized by "calculating firmness and foresight" (234), and "stern, inflexible, energetic elements" that are "well adapted" to the Anglo-Saxon's position of power over "the destinies of the world" (376). Though these last features are ascribed to the race by particular characters (St. Clare and George Harris, respectively) they correspond not only to the narrator's passing comments throughout the novel, but also to Stowe's exceptionally straightforward formulation in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published the year after the novel: "The fact is, that the Anglo-Saxon race – cool, logical and practical – have yet to learn the doctrine of toleration for the peculiarities of other races"; this, along with their divinely sanctioned "dominant position in the earth" is "their peculiar character" (27–8).

Stowe's delineation of the nature of the "Anglo-Saxon" and the "negro" obviously owes a lot to earlier American literary versions of race. In particular, I would argue that the parsing of racial character here is a direct descendant of a racial discourse whose formation I traced in earlier chapters in the 1820s fiction of Cooper, Child and Sedgwick, in which "white" and "red" were consistently classified as distinct forms of subjectivity. To be sure, Stowe's racial logic follows that brand of narrative fiction in emphasizing interior over exterior differences. From the terms of her classification, however, it is also immediately apparent how Stowe's way of mapping the racial interior radically departed from the conventions of frontier fiction, and did so for certain political reasons.

As I have argued above, frontier romances made the white woman the repository of a racially specific, and highly valued sentimental interior and, as such, the only figure capable of securing the reproduction of the middle-class household and family feeling. The "Indian," whether vengeful and threatening (Cooper's Magua, Sedgwick's Mononotto), or impassive and reserved (Cooper's Conanchet, Sedgwick's Magawisca), tended to function in these novels as a foil to this kind of interiority and provided narrative "proof" that Anglo-American sentimentality could not take root in Indian character. Stowe's "negro," on the other hand, is apparently endowed by nature with sentimental subjectivity and a "gentle, domestic heart" (81). By contrast, a range of "Anglo-Saxon" characters, from the barbaric slaveholder, Simon Legree, to the brutally unsentimental southern mistress, Marie St. Clare, and the affectively deficient New Englander Miss Ophelia, furnish examples of white characters lacking precisely the interior qualities that Cooper, Child, and Sedgwick had attributed to white women. Rather than the "negro," then, it is what the narrator calls the "colder . . . white race" (141) whose insufficient capacity for such feeling is represented as the cause of negro suffering. Stowe thus seems to bring her novel to the brink of arguing for the superiority of "African" civilization over "American" savagery. As we shall soon see, the novel does not end up exactly there. Nonetheless, Stowe essentially puts this idea into George Harris's mouth: "I think that the African race has peculiarities, yet to be unfolded in the light of civilization and Christianity, which, if not the same with those of the Anglo-Saxon, may prove to be, morally, of even a higher type" (375–6).

As much as Stowe uses characters as repositories of ideas in this way – no doubt one factor contributing to perennial accusations of "cardboard" characters and ham-handed dialogue – I believe it is more accurate to say that the novel uses characters not as mouthpieces, but rather as *specimens* of the narrator's proverbial truths. For the primary work of defining the "negro" takes place through the development of specific characters. While Tom is not the first of the novel's negroes to be introduced, he is certainly its most important. Stowe introduces her hero in the novel's fourth chapter:

> At this table was seated Uncle Tom, Mr. Shelby's best hand, who, as he is to be the hero of our story, we must daguerreotype for our readers. He was a large, broad-chested, powerfully-made man, of a full glossy black, and a face whose truly African features were characterized by an expression of grave and steady good sense, united with much kindliness and benevolence. There was something about his whole air self-respecting and dignified, yet united with a confiding and humble simplicity. (18)

The narrative conceit of the "daguerreotype" does a lot of work here. First and most obviously, it announces the importance of the visual dimension. A character is not being *described* so much as set before us. It thus implies an immediacy more comparable to the indexical presence of the photographic subject (according to the ideology of that form) than the representation of a fictional character, however "truthful."[14]

Yet while the figure of the daguerreotype would seem to privilege the visual, the passage then proceeds from the outside in, linking Tom's exterior qualities to a specific kind of interiority on which his narrative fate will turn. Thus, the narrator begins with pigment and facial features, selecting features for Tom's body that place him in an entire differential system of bodies that the novel will parade before us. Phrases such as "full glossy black" and "truly African features," for example, set Tom apart from a set of characters whose bodies are made to bear witness to a mixed racial descent, and hence by implication are neither "fully" nor "truly" negroes. Then, by way of Tom's "expression," the narration turns inward to describe his "whole air," which is described in terms that posit specifically interior qualities such as benevolence, dignity, humility, and so on. In this respect, it exactly follows what I called the "centripetal" trajectory of the racialized descriptions we encountered in Cooper. Here, too, the countenance functions as a kind of swinging door between the outside and inside of the character.

From the moment of Tom's introduction, moreover, he begins to function as a kind of test case of the general truths the narrator offers. He is everywhere held up as the ultimate representative of his race. Point for point, Tom embodies the number of properties the narrator ascribes to negro character, and with each attribute ascribed to him, he becomes more and more the synecdoche for the negro as such. So, for example, he is essentially sentimental and domestic, possessing "to the full, the gentle, domestic heart, which, woe for them! has been a peculiar characteristic of his unhappy race" (81). Sensitive and susceptible, "Tom [has] the soft, impressible nature of his kindly race, ever yearning toward the simple and childlike" (127). And perhaps most famously, Tom "has a natural genius for religion" (160), as we learn of the negro in general. Tom is also the quintessential "passionate negro," as we learn upon his arrival at St. Clare's "Moorish" mansion with its luxurious natural environment. After describing Tom's "air of calm, still enjoyment" on seeing the place, the narrator then pauses to explain – or rather, *remind* us of – the deep racial origins of his reaction: "The negro, it must be remembered, is an exotic of the most gorgeous and superb countries of the world, and he has, deep in his heart, a passion for all that is splendid, rich, and fanciful; a passion which, rudely indulged by an untrained taste, draws on them the ridicule of the colder and more correct white race" (141). In a movement typical of the novel as a whole, then, the narrator moves back and forth between Tom's individual disposition and his negro nature. This, I take it, is what Hortense Spillers means when, in the course of her reading of this episode, she remarks that "Tom is the scene's negro, and the Negro in his fully imagined Africanity."[15]

Though I have extracted these assertions of Tom's nature from their original narrative contexts, it is important to note that these properties are only attributed to Tom as they reveal themselves in the course of specific events and circumstances. Analysts of frontier fiction such as Richard Slotkin have pointed out how the plot machinery of warfare and gender relations is used to "test" character, particularly racial character. Elaborating on Slotkin's premise in the previous chapters, I have emphasized the way the thematics of courtship and sexual desire serve this "litmus test" function vis-à-vis race. In a comparable but more generalized way, it seems to me, Stowe places her negro characters in changing circumstances so that we can observe what alterations of character, if any, will result. This is preeminently true of Tom whose displacements from one environment to another provide the novel with its basic structure. Characters, in other words, are not simply placed down before us to confirm their possession of negro nature. Rather, these subjects need to be "tested" by exposing them to a variety of environments and events. This process, we might say, issues from the requirements of narrative itself: what else, after all, does it mean for something to "happen" in a story? But it is also part and parcel of a specific kind of literary practice that it may not be inappropriate to call "experimental" in a particular sense.

This notion of the literary experiment helps provide a theoretical context for what initially appears to be an inconsistency, contradiction, or at least puzzling feature within Stowe's representation of the negro: the presence of another type of negro character, "degraded" rather than "pure," and exhibiting nothing like the natural simplicity, innocence, sentimentality and Christianity modeled by Tom and asserted by the narrator to be the essence of negro character. Into this category we can easily place the character of Topsy before her conversion, and relatively minor characters such as Prue, who passes like a cloud through the narrative at the end of volume one.

One of the clearest incarnations of the "degraded negro" trope can surely be found in the peculiarly twinned figures of Sambo and Quimbo, the "fiendish" (309) overseers on Legree's plantation. We first meet them when Tom does, rolling up to Legree's plantation in the chapter entitled, "Dark Places," as if marking this arrival as a sinister revision of the earlier "comic" arrival scene at St. Clare's mansion.[16] It is clear enough from their first description that we are to understand their character as radically divergent from Tom's: "Their coarse, dark, heavy features; their great eyes, rolling enviously on each other; their barbarous, guttural, half-brute intonation; their dilapidated garments fluttering in the wind, – were all in admirable keeping with the vile and unwholesome character of everything about the place" (299–300). Eventually, the narrator will simply use epithets such as "the two savage men" (359) to convey this rather extravagant depravity in a more condensed form. In Sambo and Quimbo, then, we have the perfect embodiment of the docile negro's sinister counter-image.

As might be expected, however, the narrator clearly explains that the brutality of these overseers is the result, not of naturally cruel disposition, but of systematic training: "These two colored men were the two principal hands on the plantation. Legree had trained them in savageness and brutality as systematically as he had his bull-dogs; and, by long practice in hardness and cruelty, brought their whole nature to about the same range of capacities" (299). By a certain metonymic association, Sambo and Quimbo thus mirror the "unwholesome character" of the plantation, which in turn is part and parcel of the inhumanity of Legree himself. But this does not *fully* explain their narrative function, as is clear from a passing comment the narrator makes of Sambo and Quimbo: "It is a common remark, and one that is thought to militate strongly against the character of the race, that the negro overseer is always more tyrannical and cruel than the white one" (299). If we take this notion seriously, Legree's cruelty towards his slaves could not fully account for the peculiar fact that the slaves then exhibit what we are told is *greater* cruelty in turn. Significantly, the narrator does not go on to reject this commonplace about the "negro overseer," but rather grants it, and then immediately begins to recuperate negro character in a different manner: "This is simply saying that the negro mind has been more crushed and debased than the white. It is no more true of this race than of every oppressed race, the world over. The slave is always a tyrant, if he can get a chance to be one . . ." (299). In fact, however, due to a strange but consistent racial logic, the novel offers another, more fundamental explanation for the putative excesses of negro depravity under slavery: the "peculiarly" imitative nature of the race.

"A CURIOUS CHAPTER OF PSYCHOLOGY": MIMESIS AND NEGRO PARTICULARITY

We have already seen how, for this novel, the "negro" can be claimed to be essentially docile, affectionate, and fervently religious in certain cases, and yet also uniquely savage, depraved, and fiendish in others. What remains to be understood is that these two sets of characteristics, however seemingly incommensurable, are in some sense two sides of the same coin. In order to explain how, we need to look at some of the novel's other versions of negro character, embodied in characters who fit comfortably on neither side of the binary opposition I have explored thus far. I am referring to certain minor figures such as Sam and Andy, the buffoonish pair on Shelby's plantation, and little Harry, the son of George and Eliza Harris. Though they may participate in some of the sterner events of the narrative (the threat of Harry's sale motivates Eliza's escape, and Sam and Andy are among the party made to pursue them), the aura of these characters is nonetheless more comic than tragic. These were undoubtedly the kind of figures James Baldwin had in mind when he referred, with trenchant sarcasm, to the novel's "lively procession" of "stock, lovable figures."[17]

Little Harry first appears in Chapter One, and it is surely significant that he is the first member of the "exotic race," just introduced in the Preface, to be met in the flesh. After a description of his "dimpled face" and "gay" clothing, the narrator comments on his disposition, "a certain comic air of assurance, blended with bashfulness" (3). Then, egged on by Mr. Shelby (who calls Harry "Jim Crow" in this passage), Harry begins to perform for Haley:

> "Now, Jim, show this gentleman how you can dance and sing." The boy commenced one of those wild, grotesque songs common among the negroes, in a rich, clear voice, accompanying his singing with many comic evolutions of the hands, feet, and whole body, all in perfect time to the music.
>
> "Bravo!" said Haley, throwing him a quarter of an orange.
>
> "Now, Jim, walk like old Uncle Cudjoe, when he has the rheumatism," said his master.
>
> Instantly the flexible limbs of the child assumed the appearance of deformity and distortion, as, with his back humped up, and his master's stick in his hand, he hobbled about the room, his childish face drawn into a doleful pucker, and spitting from right to left, in imitation of an old man.
>
> Both gentlemen laughed uproariously.
>
> "Now, Jim," said his master, "show us how old Elder Robbins leads the psalm." The boy drew his chubby face down to a formidable length, and commenced toning a psalm tune through his nose, with imperturbable gravity. (3)

In the rich critical and theoretical literature on minstrelsy, the concept of mimesis has, of course, been a crucial one for analyzing the dynamics of white subjects, costumed as black, performing this kind of dance for white audiences. It is certainly possible to understand Stowe's literary performance at this textual moment – her dance inside Harry's skin, so to speak – in these terms. But mimesis also resonates on a different level in this passage, for two of the three "acts" of Harry's own performance are based on his uncanny ability to imitate. Harry's entire "Jim Crow" dance is essentially an extended demonstration of his weirdly protean plasticity: not only can he "instantly" form his body, his "flexible limbs," into any shape, he can even cause his face to wear the unmistakable marks of another's interior characteristics (Uncle Cudjoe's dolefulness, Elder Robbins's "gravity").

Significantly, a certain mimetic ability is also attributed to Sam, another of the novel's "comic relief negroes." Sam and Andy make their real mark on the narrative in the course of Eliza's escape and pursuit, when their various subterfuges and buffoonish performances not only constitute a very real form of resistance, helping Eliza to escape, but at the same time, also provide the novel with its primary form of what we can only call situation comedy. Most notable in Sam's characterization, however, is his curious ability to imitate:

> It must be observed that one of Sam's especial delights had been to ride in attendance on his master to all kinds of political gatherings, where, roosted on some rail fence, or perched aloft in some tree, he would sit watching the orators, with the greatest apparent gusto, and then, descending among the various brethren of his own color, assembled on the same errand, he would edify and delight them with the most ludicrous burlesques and imitations . . . In fact, Sam considered oratory as his vocation, and never let slip an opportunity of magnifying his office. (64)

The reference to "political gatherings" as the occasions for Sam's imitative oratory is perhaps not merely incidental. Sam is, in fact, compared to a politician on another occasion (see 38), a fact of which the narrator reminds us prior to the passage just quoted: "It will be perceived, as has before been intimated, that Master Sam had a native talent that might, undoubtedly, have raised him to eminence in political life" (64). In this context, as the narrator goes on to explain, the "politician" operates first and foremost as a figure capable of turning all sorts of situations to one's personal advantage. But in a related sense, the modern "politician," much like the "negro," is also a stereotypically protean figure, capable of shaping oneself to a particular audience and occasion.

In the novel's procession of "imitative negroes," I would also mention the character of Adolph, or "Dolph," St. Clare's comically effete servant, who is frequently seen imitating his master, wearing his clothes, and particularly putting on his airs. "As to Dolph," remarks St. Clare with his characteristic wryness, "the case is this: that he has so long been engaged in imitating my graces and perfections, that he has, at last, really mistaken himself for his master" (152). On one occasion, Adolph and Miss Jane play at being master and mistress, calling each other "St. Clare" and "Miss Benoir" (187). In another strange episode, the reader sees Sambo imitating Dolph, himself imitating St. Clare (284). To these instances I would add Tom and Chloe's boy Mose, who "imitated precisely the nasal tones" of Uncle Peter holding a prayer meeting.

My interest here is not in exposing Stowe's deployment of a racial stereotype, for the notion of the mimetic racial other certainly preexisted Stowe in the white popular imagination, but rather in analyzing the narrative function the "imitative negro" served for her novel. "Minor" characters these all may be, but this insistently repeated characterization must be regarded as constituting a significant aspect of the novel's racial theory. Hence, while such characters can be understood to provide comic relief, as I have suggested, they simultaneously have quite a serious narrative purpose.

First, I would point out that the "imitative negro" topos, forged though it may be around particular characters, nonetheless receives the stamp of proverbial truth in the "objective" generality of the third person narration. Probably the clearest such formulation is given to us embedded in a passage making a familiar proposition about slavery's assault on the slave's sentiments. Its context is the opening of the chapter "The Middle Passage," in which Tom meets his new, and most horrible master, Simon Legree. At this moment, the narrator steps forward to explain:

> It is one of the bitterest apportionments of a lot of slavery, that the negro, sympathetic and assimilative, after acquiring, in a refined family, the tastes and feelings which form the atmosphere of such a place, is not the less liable to become the bond-slave of the coarsest and most brutal . . . (291)

There are many important things of note in this passing statement, which at first appears to be no more than a rehashing of information already given. Most significantly, the notion of the slave's peculiarly strong family feeling, long established as a commonplace by this stage of the narration, here receives a crucial further clarification: the "negro" in this passage is "sympathetic and assimilative" by nature. That is to say, if he is characterized by anything in particular, it is not family feeling as such, but rather the ability to *absorb* such feelings from his surroundings. Second, and relatedly, the "tastes and feelings" that characterize the slave's domesticity are here explicitly said to have been "acquired" by the slave while in a "refined family." From the narrative context in which this passage appears, moreover – Tom's own movement "down the river" in stages, from a family most "refined" to one most "coarse" – it must be presumed that the "family" providing the slave with these "tastes and feelings" is that family which owns him as property.

This theory of the "negro, sympathetic and assimilative" can thus be understood as a formalized version of the stereotypically "imitative" negro whose many comic avatars I explored above. With this conception in mind, if we revisit the catalog of truisms about the negro I detailed earlier, certain aspects of it begin to resonate in a different way. Recall, for example, that "sensitivity" was an insistently attributed characteristic of this "sensitive and impressible race" (250), also described as a "susceptible race" (252). I would also add that this notion of negro "susceptibility" and "impressibility" receives the most authoritative kind of extra-textual support in a fascinating passage, also concerning Tom's interiority, from Stowe's *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin:*

> The vision attributed to Uncle Tom introduces quite a curious chapter of psychology with regard to the negro race, and indicates a peculiarity which goes far to show how different they are from the white race. They are possessed of a nervous organization peculiarly susceptible and impressible.[18]

This, then, is the essence of the negro, we are told time and again: "peculiarly susceptible." But to be peculiarly susceptible is not to be anything in particular. It is, in effect, to be a cipher. As paradoxical as it may seem for a novel which spills so much ink telling us what "negroes" are like, to the question "what is the negro?" the novel can be understood to answer: literally nothing.

I hasten to add, however, that this is not exactly an evacuation of the negro's value according to the sentimental cultural logic presumed by Stowe. For the negro's much vaunted tendency towards domesticity is, in effect, merely an outgrowth of this "sympathetic" quality. In order to render this terrain less confusing, we might recall that for the philosophical tradition that defined much of what Stowe's readership regarded as common sense about human feeling, that tradition stretching back to John Locke and the faculty psychology of the Scottish common-sense school, sentiment itself was closely related to the simple ability to feel. "Sympathy" was the name for a highly valued emotional capacity that issued directly from the simple quality of being "impressible" by the experience of another, and "sensibility" was related to the philosophical account of the mind's absorption of sense impressions.[19] Indeed, Stowe's repeated use of the word "impressible" inescapably calls to mind Locke's famous metaphor of the wax tablet. It is nearly impossible not to make this connection when the narrator speaks of "the soft, impressible nature of [Tom's] kindly race, ever yearning toward the simple and childlike" (127). Thus, like the child – another important thought-figure for this philosophical tradition – the negro is the perfect Lockean "substrate," ready to receive impressions and hence capable of exemplary sensibility.

This has profound and, frankly, disturbing implications for the novel's definition of "negro nature." For according to this theory, the very qualities that make the negro the ideal receptor of sentimental subjectivity, and hence a kind of perfect candidate for Christianity, namely his "peculiarly susceptible and impressible" nature, in the language of *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, also make him perfectly suited to becoming the most horrible brute under other circumstances, a fact to which Sambo and Quimbo's excessive brutality testifies. Impressibility looks like goodness when it is impressed with something good. But just as surely, it looks like cruelty or abjection when so influenced. It follows that, in direct contrast to the narrator's initial remarks on the "phenomenon" of the "more tyrannical" "negro overseer," not *any* being subjected to such cruelty would be as cruel. The acutely impressible negro is thus capable of being acutely depraved. Thus, if at first we seemed to be faced with a contradiction between two versions of negro character, one essentially pure and one uniquely depraved, this conception of the negro as "peculiarly susceptible" effectively mediates the opposition, making it seem no longer an inconsistency, but rather a precisely formulated racial theory. The theory explains, in short, how the "negro *par excellence*" (16) can be not only Tom, but also Topsy.

Topsy is not merely another example of "negro depravity"; she is the most crucial test case. For, not merely given to the reader as virtuous (like Tom), nor as depraved (Sambo, Quimbo), Topsy is the one character whom we observe moving from one extreme to the other. Topsy is thus the ultimate experiment in negro impressibility, and, in this sense, the case study on which the entire superstructure of the novel's racial theory rests. To begin with, Topsy enters the narrative quite explicitly as an experimental subject. St. Clare has bought her from a "couple of drunken" and "low" types who beat the girl daily. Thinking that "something might be made of her," he decides that his northern cousin, Ophelia, might be the one to make it (208). The question then becomes whether Topsy can be adequately rehabilitated – literally re-formed – in this new environment. I have indicated above that I regard the epistemological structure of experimental science to be relevant to the structure of the novel and its racial logic. But surrounding the Topsy episode, the very language of experimental science is everywhere in the narration itself. Topsy is an "experiment" (215), a "fresh-caught specimen" (207–8), a "new subject" (208), and a "sample" (244). Modern readers might be tempted to read all this language of specimens, most of it put in St. Clare's mouth, as ironic, but I would argue, to the contrary, that it is dead serious. For Topsy is a specimen for Stowe and her readers to analyze and experiment on as much as she is to Ophelia and St. Clare.

Not surprisingly, the narrator is careful, soon after Topsy's introduction, to establish her remarkable capability for imitation: "Topsy was soon a noted character in the establishment. Her talent for every species of drollery, grimace, and mimcry, – for dancing, tumbling, climbing, singing, whistling, imitating every sound that hit her fancy, – seemed inexhaustible" (215). Set in the context of the novel's other "imitative negroes," then, we might say that such figures as Harry, Sam, or Dodo are burlesque versions, and those such as Sambo and Quimbo gothic versions, of a master narrative of racial influence. Topsy represents the "comic" pole of this potential. For if negro subjects can imitate everything from oratory and facial features to brutality and depravity, then Topsy can, in principle, learn to imitate sentimentality.

However depraved she is when we meet her, then, there is always the hope that Topsy might be provided with a positive model to imitate. It is Eva, of course, who famously shows Topsy the way, and in so doing, reveals the angelic stuff of which she herself is made. In order to have her do so, the novel must bring Eva and Topsy together and let us watch them interact. In accordance with Stowe's penchant for an almost theatrical "blocking" of her characters, she has the two children stand looking at one another in a kind of tableau before the reader. It may merely be a coincidence, but a striking and significant one nonetheless, that this scene precisely replicates the structure of what I have called the "recognition scenes" in Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*. As I have explained above, Sedgwick used these scenes (one in which Hope Leslie and Magawisca face each other to discuss Hope's sister's shocking out-marriage, and the other in which Hope and her sister themselves meet face to face) to dramatize stark differences between characters, to explore whether those differences could be surmounted, and if so, by what means. Stowe places Eva and Topsy together in this posture, not once, but twice. On the first occasion, the two children stand together and talk, Eva speaking the "first word of kindness [Topsy] had ever heard in her life" (213). The narrator, ever disinclined towards understatement, informs us here that, as the two children faced each other, "they stood the representatives of their races" (213). The same image is then repeated with even greater emphasis some pages later, in the well-known scene of Eva's laying-on of hands, which, like Hope Leslie's meeting with her sister, reaches its climax with the shedding of tears.

Stowe's scene begins with St. Clare pulling back a curtain to peek at Eva and Topsy in the glassed-in "reading room": "There sat the two children on the floor, with their side faces towards them. Topsy, with her usual air of careless drollery and unconcern; but, opposite to her, Eva, her whole face fervent with feeling, and tears in her large eyes" (245). Given the narrative context, the question implicitly posed by the image is clear: what will happen when these two very different kinds of subjects come into contact? To use the language favored by the novel itself, this is a question of "influence," a word first used by St. Clare in his ruminations on the deleterious psychological effects of slavery, and used many times thereafter. Stowe offers us two perfectly logical possibilities: either Eva will have a salutary influence on Topsy's character, or Topsy will have a degenerative influence on Eva's.

As for the latter prospect, it is raised as a narrative possibility only to be swept aside. Just after Ophelia's introduction to Topsy, she confronts St. Clare: "But so depraved a child, – are you not afraid she will teach [Eva] some mischief?" St. Clare replies: "She can't teach her mischief; she might teach it to some children, but evil rolls off Eva's mind like dew off a cabbage-leaf, – not a drop sinks in" (215). It is interesting to note that Stowe here chooses the metaphor of a liquid element – will the dew "sink in" or "roll off"? – for the word "influence" itself (literally, an influx, a "flowing in") is etymologically linked to fluidity. This would perhaps not be worth remarking upon were the fluid metaphor not tellingly repeated in the later climactic scene between Eva and Topsy, which also turns on the dripping of an all-important drop – this time, not of dew, but tears:

> "O, Topsy, poor child, *I* love you!" said Eva, with a sudden burst of feeling, and laying her little thin, white hand on Topsy's shoulder; "I love you, because you haven't had any father, or mother, or friends; – because you've been a poor, abused child! I love you, and I want you to be good. I am very unwell, Topsy, and I think I shan't live a great while; and it really grieves me, to have you be so naughty. I wish you would try to be good, for my sake; – it's only a little while I shall be with you."
>
> The round, keen eyes of the black child were overcast with tears; – large, bright drops rolled heavily down, one by one, and fell on the little white hand. Yes, in that moment, a ray of real belief, a ray of heavenly love, had penetrated the darkness of her heathen soul! She laid her head down between her knees, and wept and sobbed, – while the beautiful child, bending over her, looked like the picture of some bright angel stooping to reclaim a sinner. (245)

To adapt the language of St. Clare's dew metaphor, if we were assured earlier that Topsy's depravity would safely "roll off" of Eva, much as Topsy's tears presumably roll off her "little white hand," we learn here, on the other hand, that Eva's "heavenly love" most certainly "sinks in." Where "Miss Feely" has thus far failed, Eva's authentic "feeling" succeeds beyond measure. Topsy's tears themselves are the most compelling possible testimony to this successful flowing-in of Eva's sentiment, for we must recall that the scene began with Eva looking tearfully into Topsy's eyes and Topsy returning Eva's "fervent" gaze only with "her usual air of careless drollery and unconcern" (245). We have certainly never seen Topsy display anything like this kind of sentimental response before, with the notable exception of the incipient "sparkle of something like a tear" in Topsy's eye on hearing her "first word of kindness" from Eva in their earlier face-to-face meeting (213). Thus, when Topsy finally weeps the tears a sentimental readership has been anxiously awaiting, we understand that Eva has in effect poured her own luminous Christian interiority into the "darkness of [Topsy's] heathen soul."[20] Then, like a vessel overfilled, Topsy easily spills off some of the excess sentiment. Indeed, in an extrapolation of this process, by novel's end Topsy quite literally is a vessel of Christianity which she carries to Liberia as a missionary.[21]

In a slippage characteristic of the novel, Topsy's conversion to Christianity is at once a conversion to domesticity and feminine sensibility. The first tangible sign of Topsy's "marked change" and her acquisition of "sensibility" (267) – the proof that "Topsy is different from what she used to be" (248) – comes just a page or two after the climactic scene with Eva, when we see Topsy picking and arranging flowers as a gift for her young mistress. After Marie cruelly slaps her for the "mischief," Eva calls Topsy over to her:

> Topsy, who had stood sullenly, holding down her head, now came up and offered her the flowers. She did it with a look of hesitation and bashfulness, quite unlike the eldrich boldness and brightness which was usual with her.
>
> "It's a beautiful bouquet!" said Eva, looking at it.
>
> It was rather a singular one, – a brilliant scarlet geranium, and one single white japonica, with its glossy leaves. It was tied up with an evident eye to the contrast of color, and the arrangement of every leaf had carefully been studied.
>
> Topsy looked pleased, as Eva said, – "Topsy, you arrange flowers very prettily. Here," she said, "is this vase I haven't any flowers for. I wish you'd arrange something every day for it." . . .
>
> Topsy made a short courtesy, and looked down; and, as she turned away, Eva saw a tear roll down her dark cheek. (248)

Topsy's flower arrangement bespeaks not only careful study, but the mark of a "singular" aesthetic sense. More importantly still, she at last begins to display the more properly gendered attributes of "hesitation and bashfulness," in place of her earlier "boldness and brightness." At the end of the passage, we know the process is complete by her downcast gaze, and especially the tear rolling down her cheek. Eva's request for a daily repeat-performance is an interesting one, for having already seemingly breathed her last breath in several successive chapters, she will obviously not be around to enjoy many more of Topsy's arrangements. Yet, as the attentive reader understands, she gives Topsy this homework assignment as a subjectivity-building exercise. Eva's apparent success thus proves that contact with a properly ordered Anglo-Saxon subject can positively transform the "peculiarly susceptibile" other.

All of this may cause us to reevaluate Stowe's characterization of her eponymous hero. Possibly the most pervasive and least questioned readerly assumption about *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has been that, for better or worse, Stowe meant Tom to model the essential dignity and goodness of the negro character, and by so doing, to militate against the immorality of the institution of slavery. But what if, in fact, Tom was meant to model for Stowe's readers, not negro "goodness," but negro "impressibility"? Viewed from this perspective, Tom begins to look very much like another case study of the proverbially "sympathetic and assimilative" negro who, in the words of the narrator in "The Middle Passage," has "acquir[ed], in a refined family, the tastes and feelings which form the atmosphere of such a place" (291). Tom's exquisite piety and Harry's "grotesque" Sambo dance, though at opposite ends of the affective spectrum, are thus connected to the same aspect of the negro's nature: impressibility. What, after all, was the Shelby household, if not just such a "refined family" from which Tom may be presumed to have imbibed his "tastes and feelings" prior to the novel's outset? By extension, then, Stowe's implied readers must consider the possibility that Tom's body, insistently described as a "glossy" or "shiny" surface, might literally reflect properly Anglo-Saxon sentimentality back at them, just as surely as Sambo and Quimbo mirror Legree's depravity.

Once we begin to reread the novel's ruminations on "negro" character through the lens of "impressibility," we are also in a position to rethink its domestic structure in a new light as well. There is, of course, a large critical literature that takes up the novel's deployment of domestic conventions, much of it focused on how Stowe's domestic politics uses the space of the home as the basis of a sentimental argument against slavery.[22]

I hope here to supplement this critical strain by putting a different emphasis on the domestic, and by linking it, not to the novel's antislavery or gender politics, but to its racial theory. I remarked earlier that the novel's "experimental" thinking about racial character – subjecting characters to changes in place and event, and registering the resultant changes in subjectivity – satisfies the most fundamental requirement of narrative fiction itself. I want now to explain how it is particularly well suited to domestic narrative fiction in particular. These two sets of concerns can be seen perfectly to converge in the section of "The Middle Passage" just mentioned, where the novel explicitly poses the question: what kinds of households will produce what variations in "negro" interiority?

As I have argued in previous chapters, frontier romances had represented "whiteness" as a special kind of subjectivity that could only be reproduced in a self-enclosed Anglo-American household at whose center was lodged a racially compatible heterosexual couple. Adapting this logic to her purposes, Stowe used her novel to demonstrate that the Southern plantation household could never fully satisfy the conditions required to reproduce the proper kind of "negro" *or* "Anglo-Saxon" subjects. First, she represented the plantation household as an extended network of kin and laborers, sharing more in common with the early modern than the modern middle-class family.[23] Next, she showed how that antiquated family structure in turn destroyed the more valued, because relatively self-enclosed, household of Uncle Tom. By extension of this logic, such endemic disruptions of negro social reproduction were bound to produce the various defective forms of negro interiority that the novel parades before us in such figures as Prue and Topsy, Sambo and Quimbo. This logic is simultaneously "experimental," in the narrative sense I mentioned earlier, and domestic to its core, for it makes the heterosexual couple and the family the key terms in the measurement of variations in subjectivity.

The most obvious narrative site where these questions about domesticity and character become focused, of course, is around the character of Tom himself. In a manner of speaking, the question is offered to the reader even before a single page has been turned, for the novel's very title invests Tom's living arrangements with uncommon significance, symbolically positioning his *cabin* as the book's "hero." Hence, when we as readers are finally "invited" into this cabin in Chapter Four, "An Evening in Uncle Tom's Cabin," we may already be inclined to assume that the eponymous household, so to speak, represents a model we are meant to embrace or value. And from that point forward, Tom's removes from one environment and household to another literally provide the novel with its structure; these changes in Tom's dwellings become a critical index of our hero's progress and the state of the society in which he finds himself at different points.

How, then, does Tom live when we first meet him in his old Kentucky home? "An Evening with Uncle Tom's Cabin" opens:

> The cabin of Uncle Tom was a small log building, close adjoining to "the house," as the negro *par excellence* designates his master's dwelling. In front it had a neat garden-patch, where, every summer, strawberries, raspberries, and a variety of fruits and vegetables, flourished under careful tending. The whole front of it was covered by a large scarlet bignonia and a native multiflora rose, which, entwisting and interlacing, left scarce a vestige of the rough logs to be seen. Here, also, in summer, various brilliant annuals, such as marigolds, petunias, four-o'clocks, found an indulgent corner in which to unfold their splendors, and were the delight of Aunt Chloe's heart.
>
> Let us enter the dwelling. (16)

In a relatively short space, this description conveys a remarkable amount of information through what might be called a concise semiotic grammar. For, to any reader familiar with the codes of nineteenth-century middle-class domesticity, there is a wealth of information hiding in plain sight here. The passage begins by introducing the two linked spaces of the "small log building" and the master's house which adjoins it – and it is worth noting that the narrator will later return to this outer narrative frame of "the house" after describing the cabin, its contents and its occupants. The remainder of the paragraph focuses on the various kinds of natural growth taking place in front of the cabin – growth whose positive significance is immediately signaled by the fact that it evidently renovates the cabin's "rough logs" with a "brilliant" floral and vegetal facade. All this "flourish[ing]," moreover, suggests not merely fertility, which could imply a rather more wild version of nature than is given here, but more particularly, cultivation – thus setting us up for a contrast with both the St. Clare and Legree plantations later. It is specifically a "garden-patch," after all, and a "neat" one at that; it is the result, not of wild growth, but of "careful tending." Even the passing mention of "annuals" subtly emphasizes the fact that whatever "splendors" the garden offers are the deliberate result of human labor recently expended and seasonally repeated ("every summer").[24] In a Lockean sense, then, cultivation of this sort implies the "mixing" of natural resources with human labor and reason which alone is the foundation of legitimate ownership.

Once inside the cabin, we meet Tom, at his "rheumatic" table, sitting for the narrative "daguerreotype" I analyzed earlier. It is surely significant that, after the narrator pauses to take his picture, we realize that we are meeting Tom engaged in the activity of learning to read and write. This signals, first, that it is a household in which literacy is present, and hence, in principle at least, one capable of producing middle-class subjects.[25] My point is not that this slave cabin is literally figured as a middle-class home, but rather that it is coded in these terms in order to increase the reader's identification with the slaves as representatives of the virtues and values being destroyed by slavery.

The trappings of literacy have another deeper resonance in this novel, for they imply access to the Bible, and hence the production not only of literate persons, but Christian souls. This connection is made explicit later in the novel, when little Eva presses for slave literacy (for, as she says, "poor Mammy . . . does love the Bible so much, and wishes so she could read" [229]), and dreams of taking "all our people" to the North, and setting up a school where "I'd teach them to read their own Bible, and write their own letters, and read letters that are written to them" (230). Literacy for this novel is thus never merely the ability to read, but preeminently the ability to read the eternal book. Tom's reading lesson, then, symbolically qualifies the cabin to be the site of the prayer meeting that forms there immediately afterwards, and authorizes Tom as its leader and "a sort of minister" (26).

It is important to note that the source of Tom's literacy is George Shelby, the young master of "the house," whom we meet in the act of teaching Tom his letters in this first scene in the cabin. Indeed, throughout the novel – particularly before Tom meets little Eva, who in some sense replaces George as Tom's point of access to the "majestic book" (224) – Tom's relationship to his Bible is often linked to "Mas'r George" (see for example 125–6) and Tom's literacy to George's highly valued, almost fetishized handwriting (see 223–24). This persistent association emphasizes that Tom's access to writing, and hence his authority as "a kind of patriarch in religious matters" (26), issue somehow from his young master (or later, young mistress), and, by extension, from the Anglo-Saxon family in which he is enslaved. Tom's authority as a literate Christian subject thus reflects Mas'r George's tutelage, just as, we may infer, Chloe's household management may reflect her exposure to Mrs. Shelby as a model of domesticity. If these associations seem uncomfortably out of keeping with the way we usually understand the novel's "domestic politics" (in Gillian Brown's phrase), I would only point out that it is exactly what the narrator tells us in the lines from "The Middle Passage" already analyzed: whatever "refinement" Tom's household possesses, it may have "acquired" or "assimilated" from the Anglo-Saxon family in which it is embedded. This narrative argument is thus linked at the deepest conceptual level to the domestic racial logic of the frontier romances I have discussed above. Like Sedgwick's Magawisca and Cooper's Conanchet, Stowe's Topsy and Tom are brought into Anglo-American households in order to serve as an experiment in acculturation. And exactly as those Indian characters attest, Topsy and Tom himself prove to be re-formed by their new environments such that they exhibit signs of properly Anglo-American sentiment.

But of course the chapter in which we spend "An Evening in Uncle Tom's Cabin" ultimately points to a more complex and ambivalent relationship between "the house" and "the cabin of Uncle Tom" – the two spaces invoked at the beginning of the chapter. For if, on the one hand, the Shelby household enables the consummate domesticity of the exemplary slave family, on the other hand, it threatens that very possibility. As I remarked earlier, the description of the cabin itself is framed or enclosed by references to the house that adjoins it, for after describing the prayer meeting that assembles in the cabin, the narrator returns us to the larger house to remind us that Tom's cabin lies literally and figuratively in its shadow: "While this scene was passing in the cabin of the man, one quite otherwise passed in the halls of the master" (26). That other scene is the economic transaction in which Mr. Shelby, compelled by unfavorable financial circumstances, has sold Tom (along with Eliza and Harry) to Mr. Haley – a transaction, that is, directly resulting in the dispersal of the self-enclosed household we have just been asked to celebrate. It is telling that the narrator speaks here of moving from the "cabin of the man" to "the halls of the master" (26), for in this formulation, it is Tom whose humanity is emphasized ("the man"), and Shelby ("the master") who is symbolically reduced to a function of power. In a similar way, Mrs. Shelby may later be extolled by the narrator as the paragon of domestic womanhood (179), but that paean to her exemplary domesticity comes only after the reader has seen firsthand how the intractable fact of slavery within her household has undermined its good order and compromised her own ability to protect her extended "family" of servants. In this way, Stowe aims to show us how slavery presents the Southern white woman with a conflict between the laws of her culture and laws of her nature – her natural gifts as a woman. "O, Mr. Shelby," Stowe has Mrs. Shelby lament to her husband, "I have tried – tried most faithfully, as a Christian woman should – to do my duty to these poor, simple, dependent creatures . . . I was a fool to think I could make anything good out of such a deadly evil" (28–9).

This, then, is the lesson of "Kintuck": even in slavery's "mildest form" (7), the slaves' sentimental value – as members of an extended family of childlike dependents, according to the paternalistic fantasy that the novel at times indulges even as it critiques the myth of the "patriarchal institution" – can without warning be abruptly displaced by their market value, leaving them "helpless and unprotected" (7). And as long as husbands can be torn from wives (Tom and Chloe) and mothers from husbands and children (Eliza, George, and little Harry), there cannot be a stable "negro" household. Thus, the Shelby household is not only the "refined" family to which Tom's domestic space is indebted; the two are not only spatially associated ("close adjoining") but also set into a symbolic competition with one another. The result is a complex and ambivalent relationship between the two: in principle, there *can* be a negro household capable of producing a highly valued form of sentimental Christian subjectivity, provided this household exists in a kind of symbiotic relation to the larger house of the master. Paradoxically, however, when all are living under conditions of slavery, that same Anglo-Saxon family structure is inherently destructive to the burgeoning negro subjectivity it helps engender.

"HEAVEN IS BETTER THAN KINTUCK": NEGRO CAPTIVITY AND AFRICAN REDEMPTION

To return to the question with which I began this chapter, the novel's antislavery political project is inextricably linked to its theory of the races, for, in order to enact its critique of slavery, it proceeded by producing, in the "negro" and the "Anglo-Saxon," two kinds of subjects, absolutely distinct and fundamentally incommensurable. Stowe found the necessary materials for this project ready at hand in the frontier romance: narratives of property conflict and courtship, linked to a metaphysics of blood in which different racial natures vie for domination. But after adopting this descriptive theory of race from Cooper and his contemporaries, of course, Stowe thoroughly reconfigured it. If in the frontier romance, the nonwhite other represented a deficiency of normative sentimentality, it was quite otherwise with Stowe's "negro." As we have seen, the success of the novel in moving the sentimental reader hinged upon its ability to remap the interior of the "negro" in such a way that familial domesticity and Christian subjectivity seem naturally to flourish there. In order to militate against slavery, however, it had also to show how the negro's subjection to Anglo-Saxon domination inevitably destroys this pristine negro character and puts a depraved and unregenerate form of humanity in its place. In turn, even the Anglo-Saxon race itself is degraded as a result. Stowe generalized this phenomenon in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*: "[I]t will appear that the institution of slavery has produced not only heathenish, degraded, miserable slaves, but it produces a class of white people who are, by universal admission, more heathenish, degraded, and miserable. The institution of slavery has accomplished [this] double feat . . ." (365). Since of course all this rested on a theory of racial character, the novel presents what we must identify as a necessarily racialist critique of slavery.

However effective a strategy this was for arguing against slavery, there is an essentialist cast to this demonstration that is not fully contained by the political critique of slavery it serves. For, according to this way of differentiating the "negro" from the "Anglo-Saxon," the two races cannot coexist, in actuality or in principle, except in relations of domination and under conditions which generate moral and racial pollution. As the novel shows us over and over again, aside from certain "moral miracle[s]" such as Tom (185), "a helpless and sensitive [negro] race" (384), can only be corrupted by contact with "the hard and dominant Anglo-Saxon race" (xiii). The problem is not merely the institution of slavery, but more broadly, Anglo-Saxon "prejudice against negroes" (246), as the novel incarnates in the figure of Ophelia, and as *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* stated outright:

> The fact is, that the Anglo-Saxon race – cool, logical and practical – have yet to learn the doctrine of toleration for the peculiarities of other races; and perhaps it was with a foresight of their peculiar character, and dominant position in the earth, that God gave the Bible to them in the fervent language and with the flowing imagery of the more susceptible and passionate oriental races. (27–8)

In His wisdom, God may thus try to engender "toleration" in the dominant race – to smooth its "hard" temperament with the "flowing" hand of scripture – but "their peculiar character" cannot be fundamentally altered any more than that of the "peculiarly susceptible and impressible" negro. Indeed, the Anglo-Saxon's "dominant position in the earth" is, like all other things, divinely foreseen, and by implication here, divinely sanctioned. Slavery, then, cannot be the cause of these primordial relations of domination, but must merely be their lamentable effect.

All of this helps to explain the attention the novel gives to Northern racism. It is at first somewhat curious that a novel apparently devoted to demonstrating the corrosive effects of slavery and the perversity of its modes of social reproduction would make so visible certain dangerous or limited white characters whose shortcomings could not be attributed solely to the culture of slavery. A prime example of this is Miss Ophelia's self-confessed "prejudice against negroes" – a phrase, significantly, used in this novel in relation to this Vermont woman alone (246). Even more strikingly, we sometimes forget that the novel's most savage slave-holder, Simon Legree, was also born and raised in New England (322), as was Augustine St. Clare's father (194–95). The inescapable implication is that there is a "prejudice against negroes" not born of slavery, and hence not dependent on its economic system or its social relations, but whose origin, rather, is in a deep and natural antipathy between the races. By extension, whenever these two races coexist, we can expect that they will find themselves locked into relations of power and subjugation that always threaten to erupt into violence.

If I began with the question, "what work does race do for Stowe?" I am left now with a different one: what problems does Stowe's racial theory create for her novel that then needed to be resolved? For this way of staging the relationship between the races created a dilemma. How can the "Anglo-Saxon" free the "negro" if dominance and subordination are hard-wired into their respective racial natures? To state the problem in more literary terms, how can the novelist imagine and narrate a world without slavery while still insisting on such absolute racial differences? Both logically and narratively speaking, it would seem that there is only one way out of the near inevitability of slavery: to keep the races from coming into contact in the first place.

As many readers have noted, by the novel's end, all significant characters carrying "negro" blood either die or emigrate to Africa. Much of this narrative work is performed in the closing chapters of the novel. George Harris takes his family first to Canada, then to France, and eventually to Africa, declaring himself to be no longer an American. Topsy also goes to Africa, not as a repatriating citizen but as a Christian missionary. As I shall explain below, moreover, even Tom's death is coded as a final act of migration to "a better country." As Karen Sanchez-Eppler has argued persuasively, "the utopian freedom [Stowe] constructs" in the novel's resolution is thus "predicated on the absence of black bodies."[26] In making this observation, Sanchez-Eppler helped focus the critical gaze squarely on a problem of no small consequence to Stowe criticism: Stowe's recourse to a logic of "colonization," which was a largely discredited political solution at the time that she wrote. Yet, despite the fact that even the novel itself critiques colonization as a deeply flawed plan, it turns to it as if to the only viable resolution to its racial logic. As I discussed above in Chapter 1, advocates of colonization in the 1820s and 30s often based their position on a sympathetic discourse about "prejudice" as an obstacle to the legitimate incorporation of freed slaves into the American social body. Based on what I have been arguing thus far in this chapter, we can certainly regard what Sanchez-Eppler calls Stowe's "failure to imagine an America in which blacks could be recognized as persons" as a natural outgrowth of a carefully articulated racial theory according to which Anglo-Saxons and negroes can only live together under conditions that corrupt both.[27] According to the novel's ideological double-gesture, black bodies can now in principle house a highly valued form of subjectivity, but in practice they can only do so under a set of social conditions in which the races are kept pure and separate.

But in order fully to analyze the anatomy of this resolution, I contend, we must read it not only through the lens of ideology, but also through the lens of narrative. The question then becomes, in other words, not why Stowe "believes in" colonization, but rather why the novel she set out to write needed to resolve itself by resuscitating this residual cultural logic and "disappearing" the African. My answer begins with the novel's adoption of the narrative paradigm of the frontier romance. For Stowe found a solution to the problems created by her racial theory in a central topos of that literary form, namely, that of the "vanishing American." In exploring these correspondences, I mean not to argue, of course, that Stowe had *Hope Leslie* open on her writing table as she deliberately borrowed from its language or structure. My argument is a good deal simpler: on some level, she knew, and her readers knew, exactly how such scenes should play out, for they had seen them insistently repeated in three decades' worth of fiction about vanishing racial others.

The most compelling critiques of frontier romances in general, and Cooper's works in particular, have focused on the figure of the vanishing Indian. In Richard Slotkin's trenchant formulation, "Cooper never loves his Indians so much as when he is watching them disappear."[28] As I have argued, moreover, Child's *Hobomok* and Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* extended this narrative logic by linking it to an interracial love story. Criticism has tended to emphasize the way the sentiment of "sympathy" seems more fundamentally to govern these female-authored versions of the frontier story. Even if we grant this premise, however, we must also be careful to acknowledge that these sympathetic Indians are no less prone to disappearance when it comes time for the novelist to effect the resolution of the conflicts in play. The title character of Child's novel, *Hobomok* must vanish into the wilderness in order to make room for the racially compatible Anglo-American couple. Sedgwick's Indian heroine, *Hope Leslie*'s Magawisca, whose union with Everell Fletcher is raised as a narrative possibility and then dismissed, also removes herself from the English settlement, declaring that "the Indian and the white man can no more mingle, and become one, than day and night."[29] In thus disappearing, Magawisca, too, clears a space for the highly valued white couple. In both versions of the story, then, the retreat of the Indian secures Anglo-American social reproduction. Central to the power of these resolutions was the fact that the vanishing subjects "themselves" argued the necessity of their own disappearance. Jared Gardner has explicated this logic in the context of Cooper's *The Prairie*, but his analysis works equally well throughout the genre, particularly in its more sentimental-domestic forms: "The Vanishing American declares the races to be separate species after all and devotes the rest of the novel to defending the distinctions that justify his own extinction."[30] It thus appears to be a plain fact, sympathetically recorded, rather than an argument that served a particular political ideology.

Stowe reproduced this narrative logic in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, refiguring the vanishing Indian as a vanishing African. George Harris, who emigrates with his newly reconstituted family (Eliza, Harry, and now Cassy, who turns out to be Eliza's long-lost mother), is undoubtedly the most visible such figure, for, in the long letter reproduced for us (374–77), he leaves behind an extensive written testimony of his motivations for leaving. Among the most significant aspects of his parting declaration is his revelation that "I have no wish to pass for an American, or to identify myself with them," followed by his declaration of identification with "the oppressed, enslaved African race" and the "yearning of my soul . . . for an African *nationality*" (374, original emphasis). In such phrases as "pass as an American," George implicitly equates "American" and "Anglo-Saxon," and in his slippage from "African race" to "African nationality," he produces a corresponding geographical elsewhere proper to the "negro" other. In both ways, the novel forces the categories of race and nation to converge. What makes George's disappearance so striking, then, is that in the very act of vanishing he constitutes the national community he leaves behind as an essentially Anglo-Saxon one. In exactly the same manner as the frontier romances whose resolutions provided its pattern, the power of this resolution is that Stowe has her most powerful "negro" character do the discursive work of redefining the nation as Anglo-Saxon, just as, for example, it is Sedgwick's

Magawisca who makes the compelling case that "the white man cometh; the Indian vanisheth" (292).

This figuration of America as a white man's country also explains the curious narration of Topsy's ultimate narrative fate. Brought to New England by Miss Ophelia to complete her education-cum-conversion, Topsy ultimately goes, "by her own request," "as a missionary to one of the stations in Africa" (377). This resolution is entirely predictable, given Topsy's characterological trajectory from the moment St. Clare presents her to Ophelia as a kind of synecdoche of "heathen" Africa, and hence a test subject for an experiment in missionary efficacy (244). According to this familiar evangelical narrative, the final step in the conversion of the "heathen" would logically be the heathen's own readiness to convert others. But what is most striking about the narrator's tying-up of loose ends here is a detail buried in the brief coda to the story: "[W]e have heard," appends the narrator, "that the same activity and ingenuity which, when a child, made her so multiform and restless in her developments, is now employed, in a safer and wholesome manner, in teaching the children of *her own country*" (377, my emphasis). This last gesture is delivered so incidentally as to be easily missed. But in what possible sense, we might well ask, is this "station in Africa" to be regarded as Topsy's "own country"? As Topsy's biography prior to her entrance into the St. Clare household is by no means clear – a fact compounded by her own repeated insistences that she is from nowhere, mothered and fathered by no one – we are surely not meant to assume that she was herself born in Africa and is at last returning there as a repatriating citizen. Indeed, we are not even given the name of this missionary outpost to which she is "returning." We can only assume, then, that "her own country" is just that – hers – owing only to her belonging to what George has called an "African race" just a few pages earlier (374). Here again, race and nation converge in an historically significant manner.

As for our hero, Tom, his entire narrative path constitutes a series of disappearances "down the river." Nonetheless, Tom's status as a "vanishing American" figure is clearly quite different, not only in the obvious sense that, in the end, he does not emigrate to Africa, but rather is beaten to death by Legree. His last act of "migration," we might say, is not a physical dislocation but rather a spiritual ascendance, for his final and most dramatic disappearance, namely his death at the hands of Legree, is of a piece with his spiritual triumph. If it seems strange to a modern reader that Tom's murder is thus described, and in a chapter entitled "The Victory," no less, we need only remember that it is modeled on the passion of Christ, and these paradoxes begin to resonate with the New Testament narrative model. But I would press still further, and identify the frontier novel as another significant narrative template for this same resolution. For Tom's death also resonates with the frontier paradigm, according to which the passing away of the racial other is, if not exactly spiritually redemptive, essentially productive vis-à-vis the material development of the national landscape and the triumphant onward march of civilization.

Though Tom's form of disappearance thus seems to depart clearly from the model represented by Topsy and George, there is a deeper structural connection that may not at first be apparent. While Tom does not, like these others, go "back" to Africa, even his dying is figured as a return, for it employs a traditional semantic association between death and homecoming. When the realization dawns that Tom is likely to die at Legree's hands, for example, the narrator offers an omniscient description of Tom's interior state as a kind of spiritual homesickness about to come to an end: "His soul throbbed, – his home was in sight, – and the hour of release seemed at hand" (357). Tom is thus rewarded with a different kind of homecoming than that of George or Topsy: he returns to the celestial kingdom that is the model for a Christianized "Africa."

The scene of Tom's actual demise a few pages later makes this association between dying and going home even more explicit. George Shelby, who has come hoping to reclaim Tom and bring him back to Kentucky, has arrived only in time to see him breathe his last:

> "You shan't die! You *mustn't* die, nor think of it! I've come to buy you, and take you home," said George, with impetuous vehemence.
>
> "O, Mas'r George, ye're too late. The Lord's bought me, and is going to take me home, – and I long to go. Heaven is better than Kintuck." (362)

It is surely significant that Stowe puts George Shelby there to beg Tom for his impossible return in this way, just as, for example, Sedgwick has Everell Fletcher and Hope Leslie beg the departing Magawisca to remain with them. For this scene exactly replicates the structure of the tearful scenes in frontier romances in which the Indian took, finally, his noble and lamentable leave over the tearful objections of his white sympathizers.

Indeed, the scene of the dying racial other speaking in heightened tones about a return "home" is also a commonplace of frontier fiction. In Lydia Maria Child's short story "The Lone Indian," for example, her Indian hero's final defiant act of "grief and anger" is to depart not only for westward lands but for death itself: "[H]e seemed like one who had lost his way, and was sick to go home to the Great Spirit" (160). In this way, by an odd ideological reversal, for the Indian to remain in the "land of his fathers" (159) is paradoxically reconstituted as a homesick wandering, while westward removal and death itself is figured as homecoming. Like Stowe's Tom, moreover, the Indian spiritualizes and valorizes this "place": in the words of countless dying Indian heroes, death is the "happy hunting grounds," as in Chingachkgook's death scene in Cooper's *The Pioneers*: "Hawk-eye! my fathers call me to the happy hunting grounds. The path is clear, and the eyes of Mohegan grow young . . . Farewell, Hawk-eye – you shall go with the Fire-eater and the Young Eagle to the white man's heaven; but I go after my fathers" (421). In both literary contexts, religious sentiment is thus the occasion for a perverse logic according to which death is a gift dispensed by the Anglo-American writer to the racial other, and his "resistance" ends up meaning to vanish in the precise direction that dominant ideology has traced for him.

If the defiant mood of the literary Indian's death makes Tom seem a less than appropriate comparison, consider instead George Harris, whose most defiant gestures repeat this same association of the grave-as-home, and, by extension, death as a form of resistance: "'My country!' said George, with a strong and bitter emphasis; 'what country have I, but the grave, – and I wish to God that I was laid there!'" (94). This notion of death as, not merely a home, but more specifically a "country" is a fascinating one, for it represents dying as, in essence, a form of migration. Tom has "gone to a better country," reports Mas'r George on his return to Kentucky (379). Here, then, perfectly merged, are the two forms of "resistance" available to the novel's negroes: dying and emigration. By what overriding narrative logic, we might ask, do these troubling ideological reversals make sense?

Certainly one source is Christian soteriology. I refer here, not only to the passion story, but a more generalized logic of inversion that pervades the New Testament gospels. What, after all, are "Beatitudes" of the Sermon on the Mount, if not a series of reversals in which less valued terms are paradoxically substituted for highly valued, or "blessed" ones: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."[31] Stowe's narrator in fact quotes from these lines after Tom's death (365), as she does the similarly themed chiasmus, evidently a paraphrase of a line from the Parable of the Householder, also in Matthew: "the first shall be last, and the last first" (156).

In further unpacking the resonance of the negro's "homecoming" to Africa, however, we must look to another critical narrative stream feeding into the novel, also indebted to biblical paradigms, as we shall see, but with a distinct cultural provenance. Where else in the Anglo-American literary tradition, we might well ask, was a suffering figure celebrated at the moment of a departure from an alien people, to the extent that this departure marked a redemptive form of homecoming? The answer is the captivity narrative.

As Michelle Burnham has demonstrated, Stowe adapted the logic of the captivity narrative to tell the story of slavery, and I want briefly to reframe this argument in relation to my project here.[32] In effect, by endowing the slaves with the kind of sentimental subjectivity that captivity narratives had attributed to white women alone, Stowe qualified them to serve the narrative function of the heroine in a captivity narrative. And if the "negroes" occupy the position of captives by virtue of their possession of a sentimental interior, the slave-holders and slave-traders occupy the position of the captors to the degree that they lack that same interiority. Oddly reminiscent of the Indians of captivity narratives, Stowe's slave owners lack all capacity for family feeling. In countless narratives of captivity, the Indian captors disregard the life of children and especially the mother-child bond; the scene of an Indian dashing an English infant against the ground is a grisly commonplace in the colonial narratives. Stowe does not have any of her slave-holders do this, of course, but her novel substitutes for it a still more horrible variation on the theme: infanticide as the last recourse of the slave woman to protect her children from slavery, as in Cassy's "Quadroon's Story" (318). Among the other offenses of the slave-holders against the human heart is their disregard for romantic love and the marriage bond between slaves, displayed time and again in their callous separation of husbands from wives. In this, too, they act much like Mary Rowlandson's captors, for example, who, when she expressed a desire to make camp in an abandoned English house, taunted her: "What, will you love English men still?"[33]

By casting her slave-holder in the role of the unsentimental Indian captor, Stowe could rely yet again, whether deliberately or not, on the pattern established by the frontier romance. As I have discussed above, from the inception of the frontier romance, the theme of captivity had a privileged place in the genre. Yet while we often focus on the more prominent white captives in this fiction, the theme of captivity also operates in a different and less obvious way, for these novels also routinely represent certain *Indian* characters as captive to Anglo-Americans.

Sedgwick's Magawisca in *Hope Leslie* and Cooper's Conanchet in *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish* spring most immediately to mind. While this reversal of the captivity dynamic receives less critical attention, it is of course far more relevant to Stowe's appropriation of the genre in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and is an important, if seldom acknowledged precursor.[34]

Though I am more concerned here with the novel's appropriation of the narrative conventions of captivity than with explicit allusions to the captivity narrative tradition, it is certainly worth noting that this tradition is made a definite point of reference on at least one occasion, in an episode involving George Harris:

> George stood with his head drawn back, his arms folded tightly over his broad breast, and a bitter smile curling his lips.
>
> "I wonder, Mr. Wilson, if the Indians should come and take you a prisoner away from your wife and children, and want to keep you all your life hoeing corn for them, if you'd think it your duty to abide in the condition in which you were called. I rather think that you'd think the first stray horse you could find an indication of Providence – shouldn't you?" (95)

As in other passages in the novel, George's physical stance here is again highly reminiscent of the impassive, statuesque Indian of frontier fiction, "arms folded tightly over his broad breast," as if struggling to contain the forces contending there. In his argument to Mr. Wilson, of course, he rather self-consciously references the narrative of Indian captivity, down to the subtle burlesque of colonial Puritan narratives in which a fortunate accident such as a "stray horse" was always to be understood as an "indication of Providence."

Though Stowe may be using George Harris here to signal to the reader that the captivity narrative is lurking in the background, George himself provides only the novel's most explicit and self-conscious reference to captivity. On other occasions, the captivity narrative is no less important a point of reference for being merely implicit. In the narrator's description of Emmeline and Lucy, the two women about to arrive at Legree's, and understood to be under the subtly asserted threat of sexual violation, Stowe uses language which we would have no trouble imagining as lifted from the pages of a narrative such as Mary Rowlandson's:

> True, there is religious trust for even the darkest hour. The mulatto woman [Lucy] was a member of the Methodist church, and had an unenlightened but very sincere spirit of piety. Emmeline had been educated much more intelligently, – taught to read and write, and diligently instructed in the Bible, by the

> care of a faithful and pious mistress; yet, would it not try the faith of the firmest Christian, to find themselves abandoned, apparently, of God, in the grasp of ruthless violence? How much more must it shake the faith of Christ's poor little ones, weak in knowledge and tender in years! (296)

Aside from these figures, there are of course many captives and levels of captivity. Nancy Armstrong has remarked of Topsy, for example, that she follows the narrative trajectory of a particular kind of captive: the one who, like Mary Jemison, "goes native" and fully adopts the culture of her captors.[35] The novel's theory of the "absorptive" character of negro subjectivity, moreover, makes this kind of acculturation all the more likely under the "best" circumstances. From this perspective, Tom himself is a similarly acculturated captive, with his consummate Christianity and familial domesticity serving as the marks of his acculturation. Indeed Tom's ride to Legree's plantation seems to draw rather closely on the conventional descriptions of the "removes" of the captive through the wilderness.

I would argue, in fact, that Tom is the novel's preeminent captive. As Robyn Wiegman has noted, Stowe's characterization of her hero introduces a discrepancy between his "masculine corporeality," on the one hand, and an interior marked by "feminine" qualities of humility, kindliness and benevolence, on the other.[36] Whatever other functions this serves, we might also say that by endowing Tom with this kind of subjectivity, Stowe qualified him to take the place of the captive heroine par excellence. Of course, as I have already noted, the novel figures a range of female characters as captives within the plantation household. On my reading, however, there are a number of occasions in which Tom is explicitly figured as a substitute heroine.

The reader might have recognized this extraordinary exchange of roles when Tom becomes a replacement for Eva after the little girl's death: "Meantime, [St. Clare] attached himself to Tom more and more, every day. In all the wide world, there was nothing that seemed to remind him so much of Eva" (265). If not then, then certainly when Tom arrives at the Legree plantation and assumes the place of Lucy, soon to be ravaged by Legree, Tom's suitability for the role of heroine is clear. In the pages leading up to this episode, Tom's personality is described in terms which seem designed particularly to accentuate his feminine-coded qualities of sympathy and sentiment: he is "quiet and peaceable in disposition"; he "in various ways manifested a tenderness of feeling, a commiseration for his fellow-sufferers, strange and new to them, which was watched with a jealous eye by Legree" (304). Having established this, the climax of the scene shows Tom, not so much as Lucy's heroic masculine rescuer, but rather as her stand-in: "The poor woman screamed with apprehension, and all rose, as by a general impulse, while they dragged [Tom] unresisting from the place" (309). Precisely this kind of substitution is repeated later, when Legree takes out his wrath towards the escaped Emmeline and Cassy on Tom in "The Martyr" (356ff.). In all of these ways, then, Tom is coded as a symbolic substitute for the captive woman.

The dramatic final scene between Tom and George Shelby, which I have discussed above, also makes perfect sense in relation to the captivity narrative tradition. Stated in metaliterary terms, George's attempt to buy Tom back represents the desire to bring the novel to the conventional resolution of a captivity narrative, in which the family of the captive attempts to "redeem" him or her by paying a ransom. This resolution turns nicely on the double-valence of the English verb to "redeem" – which carries both economic and spiritual senses. In Tom's reply, however, we understand the sad but inevitable fact that George cannot so redeem him because, in effect, Mas'r George is merely another captor and Kentucky is "Babylon" rather than Canaan. The "husband" who will redeem Tom is thus "the Lord" – who can offer a "redemption" less economic and more spiritual.

As Tom's reply to Mas'r George also makes clear, in adopting the thematics of captivity from the frontier romance, and applying it to the slave, Stowe reaccentuated its biblical origins. As if returning to the original textual source of the captivity plot, Stowe's version of captivity everywhere references the biblical book of Exodus as a critical intertextual location – albeit one which she reads figurally in relation to the New Testament passion story. The Exodus intertext is established in the first pages of the novel, in the preface:

> When an enlightened and Christianized community shall have, on the shores of Africa, laws, language and literature, drawn from among us, may then the scenes of the house of bondage be to them like the remembrance of Egypt to the Israelite, – a motive of thankfulness to Him who hath redeemed them! (xiv)

With this stroke of the pen, the central association is fashioned: the African in America is like the enslaved Israelite in Pharoah's Egypt. This homology is further developed throughout the novel. In the prayer meeting in Tom's cabin, for example, the slaves sing hymns, the narrator tells us, "which made incessant mention of 'Jordan's banks,' and

'Canaan's fields,' and the 'New Jerusalem'" (25). And later, we are told that Tom himself, "in his own simple musings" saw a "parallel" between his not-unpleasant "bondage" at St. Clare's lush plantation and "that of Joseph in Egypt" (176).

But this extended comparison between the slaves and the Israelites in bondage – and the attendant figuration of "Africa" as a promised Canaan – has a profound and perhaps unanticipated consequence. For it signals that the African *must* leave at the end of the narrative, in order to accomplish the exodus – the going-out – of a people after years of exile. That is, if America to the negro is like "Egypt to the Israelite," then the novel must end up deporting the "negro" not only from the Anglo-Saxon domestic space – the "house of bondage" – but also from the "domestic" in the national-political sense of the term: the space of the nation itself. What I have called the "vanishing African" is thus a narrative necessity literally from the novel's first pages.

Bearing in mind this particular connection to captivity narrative, we can finally understand the novel's "vanishing Africans" at yet a deeper level of the narrative structure: they are captives returning home. From the very beginnings of the genre, the captivity narrative generated value for a culture by representing it as a vulnerable minority held captive by a menacing majority. It represented the struggle between the two cultures as a competition between right and might, civilization and savagery. Consequently, when the "negro" was made to occupy the position of protagonist in a captivity narrative, that individual suddenly became the standard-bearer of civilized virtue and family feeling in the face of overpowering savagery. This revision was both the source of the novel's progressive political intentions and, at the same time, the very core of its racial conservatism. For after rewriting the story of slavery as the captivity of the African to the American, Stowe must then deport her captive in order to bring the narrative to the conventional resolution in which the captive is redeemed by his or her culture and returns "home."

The logic of the captivity narrative, by way of the frontier romance, thus provided Stowe with an indispensable narrative solution to the problem produced by her racial theory. In explicating this logic, I have accounted for the novel's racialism not only in ideological but in narrative terms. The novel thus replicates the same unsettling paradox at the heart of the more sentimental versions of the frontier romance: the most sympathetic representations of the lamented Indian, paradoxically, are those in which the captivity plot is most applicable, and hence those in which the Indian must vanish as a way of going home. In this version of the story, and in Stowe's appropriation of it, the retreat of the racial other effectively secures proper Anglo-American social reproduction. What was so powerful about this way of resolving conflict was the fact that the vanishing subjects "themselves" articulated the necessity of their own removal, and typically, did so against the heartfelt pleas and laments of their sympathetic Anglo-American friends. As a result, through each of these disappearances could run the voice of a sympathetic Anglo-American author who nonetheless acknowledged the inevitable vanishing of the lamented other.

Conclusion: Captain Babo's cabin: racial sentiment and the politics of misreading in Benito Cereno

> While giving some directions about setting a lower stu'n'-sail, suddenly Captain Delano heard a voice faithfully repeating his orders. Turning, he saw Babo, now for the time acting, under the pilot, his original part of captain of the slaves. This assistance proved valuable. Tattered sails and warped yards were soon brought into some trim. And no brace or halyard was pulled but to the blithe songs of the inspirited negroes.
>
> Herman Melville, *Benito Cereno*

In the chapters above, I have been concerned with tracing the formation of a racialist common sense in American culture, and in particular with exploring the role of a particular strand of literary culture in this process. As a result, some readers may find it frustrating how little I have focused on the forms of resistance to, or critique of, this dominant position – a situation perhaps exacerbated by my emphasis on how some of the putatively "progressive" literary works themselves helped to produce a distinct and entrenched form of racialism characterized by the discourse of benevolence and sympathy. If I have thus represented a stifling kind of unanimity on the question of race, it is only because I have been at pains to explain in explicit detail the pervasive power of a dominant ideology. Having said that, there were of course many sites and types of resistance to dominant racial ideology in nineteenth-century America. We could, for example, look to the history of reform movements in particular to find contemporaries who challenged these ideologies and the political projects of domination which they bolstered. But just as my focus has been the formation of a specifically literary discourse of race, I am interested here in describing a specifically literary form of interrogation and critique of the ideology of racial sentiment. There is obviously much material for such an inquiry to be found in both the Native American and African American writing of the antebellum period. In keeping with the focus of my project, however, I want to turn in conclusion to one location within the Anglo-American literary tradition itself where we might observe such a critique at work: Melville's 1855 novella, *Benito Cereno.*

Even as Stowe utilized some of the narrative paradigms of the frontier romance to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she carefully avoided fashioning her slave characters after the proud and warlike Indians of frontier stories. For to tell the story of slavery in such a way would activate the white fantasy of a "race war" between slaves and masters that had long served as a justification for slavery's continuation, even by those who regarded it as a moral evil. In a word, it would be to capitulate to Jefferson's image of the "wolf" of slavery and his warning of what would happen if "we" ever "let him go" – an issue which Stowe would confront in her 1856 novel, *Dred*, which did thematize slave rebellion. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, however, she reconfigured the racial valences of the frontier story – casting the slaves as docile innocents, and emphasizing the biblical intertext of the captivity story in sending her captives "home" at novel's end – in order to achieve her political objective.

In *Benito Cereno*, on the other hand, Melville actualized the figure of interracial warfare at the heart of the frontier novel, but translated it into the terms of slavery and the white/black racial binary. In so doing, he fully and explicitly brought the narrative conventions of those two genres into contact with one another. The first clear reference to the frontier tradition comes almost as soon as Delano boards the *San Dominick*, when he sees a group of "negroes" sitting on the deck in the activity of polishing "hatchets."[1] Though he describes "the six hatchet-polishers" on this occasion as "unsophisticated Africans," who "clashed their hatchets together, like cymbals, with a barbarous din," these characters are explicitly refigured later when "Indian-like, they hurtled their hatchets" against the whites in open revolt (101). Apart from these, there is at least one other occasion where the narration explicitly references frontier imagery:

> [Delano] rubbed his eyes, and looked hard. Groves of rigging were about the chains; and there, peering from behind a great stay, like an Indian from behind a hemlock, a Spanish sailor, a marlingspike in his hand, was seen, who made what seemed an imperfect gesture towards the balcony, but immediately, as if alarmed by some advancing step along the deck within, vanished into the recesses of the hempen forest, like a poacher. (74)

Here, the setting of the ship is refigured as a "hempen forest," as ropes become "groves of rigging," masts become trees, and sailors become Indians appearing from and disappearing into "recesses." For my immediate purposes here, the most important result of this metaphorical work is to lay the figurative groundwork for Melville to cast the struggle between master and slave in the terms of frontier warfare. By corralling the story of slavery into this literary paradigm, Melville is able explicitly to represent black resistance to slavery in a manner that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could not.

While I am ultimately concerned here with the merging of genres performed by these narrative choices, we might begin by accounting for this connection between the story of slavery and the language of frontier warfare in the mid 1850s in straightforward historical terms. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 – establishing the two territories and rolling back the earlier provision of the Missouri Compromise, which would have barred slavery from both – brought the question of a moving "frontier" into explicit contact with the politics of slavery. Not only Melville's fictional treatment of interracial conflict in his 1855 tale, but also Stowe's own shift in literary direction with *Dred* (1856) make more immediate sense against this historical backdrop.[2]

Apart from this topical connection, however, Melville may have been playing in *Benito Cereno* on a much deeper historical connection between the history of slavery and the history of conflict between Europeans and Indians in the "New World." Eric Sundquist begins his historical archaeology of Melville's tale in *To Wake the Nations* with just this historical conjunction.[3] When Melville reveals to the reader that the remains of Don Alexandro, the owner of the slaves who had revolted, have been "substituted for the ship's proper figure head – the image of Christopher Colon, the discoverer of the New World" (107) he fashions a perfect image of the conjoined origins of New World slavery, the settlement of San Domingo, and the historical power relations among Europeans, Indians, and Africans. When Columbus took command of his second voyage to Hispaniola in 1494 – as San Domingo, or present-day Haiti was then known – he authorized the enslavement of the Indian population to labor the gold fields. In 1517, spurred on by the protests of priests such as Las Casas that such enslavement would result in the extermination of the Indian people, the Spanish crown responded by authorizing the first official transport of African slaves to San Domingo to take the Indians' place. Out of this confluence of factors was born "the New World slave trade, destined to carry some 15 million slaves across the Atlantic by 1865."[4]

These historical connections among Indians, Africans, and Europeans help to explain not only the function of Spanishness in *Benito Cereno* but more particularly its structure of reference to the black revolution in San Domingo. It is well documented that Melville's tale drew on an episode described in Amasa Delano's 1817 *Narrative of Voyages and Travels in the*

Northern and Southern Hemispheres, in which the captain told the story of a similar mutiny aboard a slave ship.[5] Among the many changes Melville made to Delano's historical narrative, scholars have made much of one in particular: by setting the story in 1799 and renaming the slave ship from the *Tryal* to the *San Dominick*, Melville invokes not only the origins of New World slavery, but also the Haitian revolution of the 1790s. "Babo does plot the release of revolutionary energies spreading to Delano's ship," Sundquist argues, "just as it was feared that the black revolution in San Domingo, frequently characterized by southern and northern writers as an impending volcanic eruption, conflagration, or hurricane, might spread to other slaveholding territories."[6]

In this regard, it is illuminating briefly to compare the way Haiti is differently thematized in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. When Stowe's Augustine St. Clare referred to the "San Domingo hour," he produced a narrative based on the assumption of blood difference and blood mixture. According to this logic, it was not "negro" blood which was to be feared, but the indomitable Anglo-Saxon blood which was a "pretty fair infusion" in that of the slaves. The narrative trajectory of George Harris cements this logic by connecting his power to a kind of republican depth lurking in the "white part" of his blood. In the end, George's resistance – and by extension that of the Haitian revolution – is ascribed to his temperamental "Anglo-Saxon" blood which will not down.

Interestingly, Melville seems explicitly to reference a similar theory of blood, through the character of Delano. When he sees a loaded exchange of glances between Babo and "a tall, rajah-looking mulatto," Delano presumes there is some form of racial competition between the two, which he speculatively attributes to that "peculiar feeling which the full-blooded African entertains for the adulterated one" (88). He then engages Benito in a discussion of blood mixture, and references a "planter's remark" (89) about its results. To choose another example, when trying to understand why the scurvy would have affected the whites more than the slaves, Delano makes "random reference to the different constitution of races, enabling one to offer more resistance to certain maladies than another" (90). Allan Moore Emery has argued persuasively that these references to the nature of blood and the results of its mixture suggest an awareness of, and ironic reframing of, theories of racial hybridity advanced in Josiah Nott and George Gliddon's *Types of Mankind*, published the year before *Benito Cereno*.[7]

I would also point out, however, that we might find a reference point for such notions of racial mixture not only in the explicitly "negrophobic" science of Nott and Gliddon, but also the "romantic racialism" of Stowe's milieu. I do not mean to suggest that there is a perfect correspondence or an explicit allusion here. But if Delano's understanding of the politics of blood on the *San Dominick*, concretized in his "reading" of the exchange of looks between Babo and Francesco, is here being held up to satirical critique, then by extension, so is Augustine St. Clare's racial theory. For St. Clare's account of "San Domingo" and Delano's extravagant misreading of the *San Dominick* are of a piece. If we follow this critique to its end, it is as if Melville's tale warns its readers not to forget the lesson of Haiti – or more aptly, as I will suggest below, not to distort it with a particular brand of racialist logic.

Since around the middle of the twentieth century, literary historians have explored the ways in which Melville's writing, with the trope of irony at its center, can be understood to hold the assumptions of his culture up to critique. One of the primary targets of such critique, many critics have suggested, is mid-nineteenth century racial ideology.[8] This aspect of Melville's literary practice has been discussed in a range of his texts, from *Typee* and *Omoo* to *Moby-Dick* and *Benito Cereno*. But Melville's preoccupation with race-thinking is perhaps most clearly and explicitly on display in those sections of *The Confidence-Man* that take up what one chapter title ironically designates "The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating."

As Melville's Judge Hall prepares to give an account of the "Indian-hater" Colonel Moredock,[9] he begins by telling a story of origins of this "sentiment" in general, describing how the young "backwoodsman" learns to hate Indians:

> [I]f in youth the backwoodsman incline to knowledge, as is generally the case, he hears little from his schoolmasters, the old chroniclers of the forest, but histories of Indian lying, Indian theft, Indian double-dealing, Indian fraud and perfidy, Indian want of conscience, Indian blood-thirstiness, Indian diabolism – histories which, though of wild woods, are almost as full of things unangelic as the Newgate Calendar or the Annals of Europe. In these Indian narratives and traditions the lad is thoroughly grounded. "As the twig is bent the tree's inclined." The instinct of antipathy against an Indian grows in the backwoodsman with the sense of good and bad, right and wrong. In one breath he learns that a brother is to be loved, and an Indian to be hated.[10]

Here, the birth of race-hatred is told as a narrative of development that ironically appropriates the Enlightenment narrative of cultivation a la Rousseau's *Emile*. Melville's adoption of the twig and tree aphorism from Pope's *Moral Essays* distorts the classical analogy of natural and sentimental cultivation; in a manner of speaking, what the youth receives is not a sentimental but an unsentimental education. Though the Judge refers to the "instinct of antipathy," the entire drift of the passage makes this sentiment seem anything but instinctive in the pre-cultural sense; it is, rather, the result of careful cultivation. Also significant here is the central role of narrative in this origin story: the "knowledge" given to this budding backwoodsman comes from "chroniclers" and "histories," "narratives and traditions." These narratives, we are told, provide the "ground" in which our sapling grows. Similarly, when the judge refers in another passage to the Indian-hating backwoodsman as a "Leather-stocking Nemesis," it is impossible not to understand it as an intertextual nod towards Cooper's frontier fiction. Taken together, these references seem subtly to suggest a connection between racism and literary narrative – a connection, I will suggest below, that *Benito Cereno* also implies in its characterization of Captain Delano.

There is also at times a very interesting experimental-scientific air to this account, as when the Judge speaks of a "species of diluted Indian-hater" in much the same way racial science spoke of "diluted" blood and literature had explored "mixed" characters. Adopting this scientific language and giving it an ironic spin, Melville uses this "diluted" form to provide important data on the phenomenon of Indian-hating proper, according to the same logic by which a laboratory scientist compares concentrated to diluted forms of a substance under analysis: "For the diluted Indian-hater, although the vacations he permits himself impair the keeping of the character, yet, it should not be overlooked that this is the man who, by his very infirmity, enables us to form surmises, however inadequate, of what Indian-hating in its perfection is" (150–51). Here, all of the terms are subjected to an ironic inversion, whereby the narrator archly implies that the "infirm" and "diluted" forms of prejudice give us important data about Indian-hating in its pure and "perfected" form.

Most important to my argument here is the way this account shifts the focus from the origins and nature of racial difference to the origins and nature of racial prejudice, and uses all the narrative techniques usually attending the former ironically to analyze the latter. It is not the quality of race, but the quality of racism that is at issue here. Consider, for example, this passage about the famous "Indian-hater" himself: "Though Colonel John Moredock was not an Indian-hater par excellence, he yet cherished a kind of sentiment towards the red man, and in that degree, and so acted out his sentiment as sufficiently to merit the tribute just rendered to his memory" (152). Considered in juxtaposition to the statements of "Indian passions" in the frontier novel or "negro" sentiments in Stowe, this passage shifts our focus from what I have called racial sentiment to racist sentiment. We might exploit one phrase in particular for a useful point of contrast with Stowe, for in the difference between Stowe's ruminations on the "negro *par excellence*" and Melville's on the "Indian-hater par excellence" we find a compact embodiment of precisely this shift in emphasis.[11]

In a similar way, I want to argue, *Benito Cereno* places on the examination table not the racial "other," so much as the man who makes such distinctions. The novella opens with a description of Captain Delano's view of the approaching *San Dominick*; the manner in which the approaching ship is described immediately foregrounds the problem of the accuracy of Delano's "intellectual perception" (47). As he watches the approaching "stranger, viewed through the glass," his view, and consequently his judgments, are affected both by the physical distance of the ship and by the "deception of the vapors" that obstruct his vision. As the distance between the ships diminishes, we are given new descriptions of this "stranger" in stages: first, as it is seen in the distant bay, then as "upon gaining a less remote view" the ship differently "appeared," and finally as "upon a still nigher approach, this appearance was modified, and the true character of the vessel was plain" (48). In effect, this progression represents the very process which Melville's reader is about to undergo, as "appearances" will yield to the "true character" of events. We may even be tempted to render this as an allegory, not of reading, but rather of rereading, for if ever there were a tale that demanded rereading, it is this one. As Frederick Busch has written: "As much as the subject is slavery and revolution, it is also perception and invention; it is about fiction, the successes and failures and tactics of which are very much on Melville's mind."[12] Whether we frame the tale in philosophical terms, as a matter of perception and cognition, or in narrative terms, as a metafictional meditation on questions of reading and interpretation, it is clear that what is at issue here is Delano's apprehension of the facts and the conclusions he draws on their basis.[13]

Thus, while we might colloquially summarize the plot of the novella as the story of a mutiny on a slave ship, strictly speaking, it is in fact the story of a captain who, having boarded a slave ship on which a slave rebellion has already taken place, completely misapprehends the reality aboard. The narrative mode Melville chooses itself serves to enhance this point. His decision to keep the reader in suspense as to the true situation by tethering the narration to Delano's misperceptions places the focus squarely on the problem of reading: it puts Melville's reader in the position of reading

Delano's reading, eventually coming to generate one's own suspicions about the captain's reliability.[14] In other words, though the novel is narrated in the third person, this narrator has a limited perspective tied to that of Delano, who, if not technically the tale's narrator, in fact serves as an unreliable protagonist, so to speak.[15]

What I want to emphasize that makes this text relevant for consideration here has to do with the specific causes the story assigns to Delano's misreading. I will argue that the story presents a particular discourse of racial sentiment, modeled on that of Stowe's enormously popular novel of a few years earlier, as that which misleads Delano into his near-fatal misapprehension of reality. Just as the anatomy of "Indian-hating" offered in *The Confidence-Man* implied that the tradition of the frontier romance was partly responsible for the dissemination of racialism (and the production of the Indian's "Leather-stocking nemesis" as a cultural type), in *Benito Cereno*, I will suggest, he targets the sentimental novel of slavery that I have argued drew on that frontier tradition. My argument here is thus indebted to Sarah Robbins's ground-breaking 1997 essay juxtaposing *Benito Cereno* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and suggesting that Melville appropriated "Stowe's familiar sentimental markers" in order to subject them to a "multi-layered ironic critique." Robbins makes this case by returning the story to the context of its original publication in *Putnam's Monthly* in 1855, and reading it against the background of the magazine's editorial attacks on Stowe's literary practice during the very months in which Melville's story was being serialized there. Based on this publishing context, she argues convincingly that "Melville could expect his readers to interpret Delano, Benito Cereno, and Babo at least in part through juxtaposition with Stowe's by-then-famous characters."[16] In reframing Robbins's analysis here, I aim to offer some more internal textual evidence to support the connection, and make my own case for the satirical dimension of Melville's story. In addition, rather than focusing on Melville's strategies of characterization, which certainly do provide a clear point of contrast to Stowe's, I focus here on the story's critique of a particular form of racial theory.

As many contemporary critics have argued, and with good reason, Melville's story everywhere suggests that the primary cause of Delano's self-deception is the character's racism.[17] Though from the moment he boards the *San Dominick*, the "noisy indocility of the blacks in general" (52), along with various other "peculiarities of captain and crew" (78) repeatedly give Delano the opportunity to uncover the true state of affairs, he cannot conceive of it, because he cannot imagine the "blacks" to be in a position of power or control. In particular, his misapprehensions rest on his assumption of the mental inferiority of the *San Dominick*'s "negroes," whom he considers "too stupid" to have formulated such a "design" on the "whites," who "by nature were the shrewder race" (75). Time and again we are shown how Delano soothes his fears and suspicions with the comforting balm of his racism – as when he feels an "apprehensive twitch" of fear upon being surrounded by a group of blacks, only to remind himself that they were "like so many organ-grinders, still stupidly intent on their work, unmindful of everything beside" (59). The ironies here, of course, run deep. As incapable of such a plot as Delano assumes the slaves to be, Melville seems to suggest, it is in fact Delano's own mind that proves too "unmindful," as we learn when his "long-benighted mind" finally sees the light near the end of the story's narrative portion (99). There is ample reason to believe, then, that like *The Confidence-Man, Benito Cereno* thematizes race-thinking in order to hold it up to satirical critique. But the anatomy of Delano's self-deception has a particular emphasis that Colonel Moredock's "Indian-hating" lacks. As I have already indicated, what is most clearly on display in the story is Delano's habit of curbing his burgeoning suspicions by a counteracting psychological force. We are free simply to assign the name "racism" to this force, but if we stop there, we miss the particular modality of racism at issue here.

Each time Delano "good-naturedly explained away" (69) signs of trouble, the narration ascribes to him some emotional state that aids his self-deception. What I want to emphasize here is how much this language is drawn from a familiar nineteenth-century discourse of sympathy.[18] Starting with the narrator's first reference to Delano's "benevolent heart" (47), we are given other hints as to the a priori tendencies of this "pained American" (61). In fact, due to the nature of the narration, the story can actually show us the inner workings of Delano's mind as he oscillates between his apprehensiveness and his attempts to regulate his perceptions in accordance with a sympathetic view of humankind. When he first experiences misgivings about boarding the strange ship, for example, we are told that Delano's "surprise was lost in pity" as he contemplates the suffering that must have caused the evident dissolution of "good order" on the *San Dominick* (52). On another occasion, he rethinks his suspicions by scolding himself that "he might not, after all, have exercised charity enough" in his thoughts (53). Running throughout is Delano's evident pride in his own capacity for sympathetic affect: "I think that, by a sympathetic experience," he assures Don Benito, "I conjecture . . . what it is that gives the keener edge to your grief" (61).

This emphasis helps explain what otherwise would be a paradoxical or at least counterintuitive aspect of Melville's characterization of Delano's racism: the emphasis on his "sympathy to the negro" (88). The narrator at one point describes the history of this character's predilection:

> At home, he had often taken rare satisfaction in sitting in his door, watching some free man of color at his work or play. If on a voyage he chanced to have a black sailor, invariably he was on chatty, and half-gamesome terms with him. In fact, like most men of a good, blithe heart, Captain Delano took to negroes, not philanthropically, but genially, just as other men to Newfoundland dogs. (84)

This passage operates almost as a mirror image of the description of Colonel Moredock's "Indian-hating"; to a point, the passage seems designed to portray Delano's freedom from racial prejudice. But the sting in the tail, so to speak, comes with the turn taken at the end of the passage, in which the negro is associated with a dog. This image alone is a clear enough signal that this form of affection for the race – what the narrator calls Delano's "old weakness for negroes" (84) – does not posit relation between subjects so much as a relation of affectionate condescension modeled on that of a human towards a pet animal. Most significantly, however, it is this very association between "negroes" and pets that contributes to what is arguably Delano's most serious mistake: his misrecognition of the character and motives of Babo, Don Benito's presumptive servant, in actuality the orchestrator of the slave uprising. For when Babo is first introduced as the unnamed figure at the Spanish captain's side, he is similarly compared to a pet dog: "By his side stood a black of small stature, in whose rude face, as occasionally, like a shepherd's dog, he mutely turned it up into the Spaniard's, sorrow and affection were equally blended" (51). If not at the moment this language appears, then certainly by story's end, this pronouncement is framed as ironic in the extreme.

A different kind of sentimentalized association between "negroes" and animals is on display later in the story, when Delano's "attention had been drawn to a slumbering negress" lying "like a doe in the shade of a woodland rock," her child nursing at her breast like "her wide-awake fawn, stark naked, . . . its hands, like two paws, clambering upon her" (73). Lest we think this language of animality would somehow have seemed natural or unremarkable to Melville's original readership, it is worth pointing out that in the same issue of *Putnam's Monthly* in which the third installment of *Benito Cereno* was originally published, an article ironically entitled "About Niggers" satirized the denial of black humanity, and concluded with the lines: "The nigger is no joke, and no baboon; he is simply a black-man, and I say: Give him fair play and let us see what he will come to."[19] There is good reason, then, to expect that Melville's readers might have understood such aspects of Delano's perception as an ironic comment on these "benevolent" myths of black animality.[20]

One of the things that places such an interpretation of Melville's story on notoriously slippery and uncertain ground is the feature of the story's narrative structure on which I have already commented: since the narrator tends to be aligned with Delano's perspective, such language often comes embedded in the third-person narration itself. In fact, the high-water mark of Delano's style of benevolent or sympathetic racialism occurs not in the character's interior monologue but in an aside by the narrator:

> There is something in the negro which, in a peculiar way, fits him for avocations about one's person. Most negroes are natural valets and hair-dressers; taking to the comb and brush congenially as to the castinets, and flourishing them apparently with almost equal satisfaction. There is, too, a smooth tact about them in this employment, with a marvelous, noiseless, gliding briskness, not ungraceful in its way, singularly pleasing to behold, and still more so to be the manipulated subject of. And above all is the great gift of good humor. Not the mere grin or laugh is here meant. Those were unsuitable. But a certain easy cheerfulness, harmonious in every glance and gesture; as though God had set the whole negro to some pleasant tune. (83)

We might well ask what the reader is supposed to make of such statements, proffered by the narrator in the voice of proverbial truth.[21] One cause for suspecting that they are not offered at face value is the context in which they appear. It is surely no accident that this description of the "negro" as a devoted manservant is immediately followed by the shaving scene, in which Babo takes a blade to the throat of his captain. Arming Babo with a straight-razor, of course, is a masterstroke of Melvillean irony, for it perfectly mediates between the stereotype of the "negro" as "natural valet" and the violent reality of the revolutionary situation on the *San Dominick*. While, to be sure, this reality is not definitively confirmed until the "unveiling" final movements of the story, the reader is constantly made aware of the possibility. Even as Delano watches the act of shaving, for example, the narrator tells us: "Altogether the scene was somewhat peculiar, at least to Captain Delano, nor, as he saw the two thus postured, could he resist the vagary, that in the black he saw a headsman, and in the white, a man at the block" (85). Though Delano himself shakes off this "vagary" in typical fashion, dismissing it as "one of those antic conceits, appearing and vanishing in a breath, from which, perhaps the best regulated mind is not always free" (85), by now the reader has cause to dwell longer on the "conceits" rather than returning with Delano to his characteristically blithe racialism.

One of the most interesting aspects of the anatomy of Delano's racialized perception is Melville's subtle suggestion that it received support from the books Delano has read. In the lines that fall between the paean to the "negro valet" and the "Newfoundland dogs" passage quoted above, the narrator subtly highlights the ways in which these aspects of Delano's "old weakness for negroes" are indebted to more general cultural and literary stereotypes: "[O]ne readily perceives why those hypochondriacs, Johnson and Byron – it may be something like the hypochondriac, Benito Cereno – took to their hearts, almost to the exclusion of the entire white race, their serving men, the negroes, Barber and Fletcher" (84). Here again, the language of proverbial truth is ironically framed by the context. For though the mystery of the *San Dominick* has not yet been fully unveiled, certainly by this point in the narrative the notion that Benito Cereno is simply a "hypochondriac" and Babo his faithful servant is obviously rather suspect. The reference to Johnson and Byron, I would argue further, functions as a wink at the reader, suggesting that these conceptions of negro character are in fact literary clichés.

This notion receives support elsewhere in the story, where we are as much as told that Delano's misperceptions are directly informed by his reading. After he observes the "slumbering negress" and her "fawn," for example, Delano is overtaken with paroxysms of delight on the scene of "naked nature . . . pure tenderness and love" (73) stretched out before him. To the modern reader the tableau evokes the National Geographic special, or the documentary film on the "wilds of Africa"; for Melville's readers the relevant frames of reference would have been travel writing and ethnography. In fact, the narrator's account of Delano's thrill of recognition suggests strongly that his perception has been thoroughly conditioned by his exposure to these forms of representation: "Ah! Thought Captain Delano, these perhaps are some of the very women whom Mungo Park saw in Africa, and gave such a noble account of" (83). When the story was reprinted in *The Piazza Tales*, editors changed the reference from Mungo Park to John Ledyard, with whom Melville had apparently gotten Park confused. In either case, contemporary readers would have understood the allusion to narratives of exploration and discovery from the last decade of the eighteenth century, in keeping with the story's 1799 setting.[22]

Apart from such clear references to other literary texts and figures, the story seems also to engage more subtle forms of metaliterary thinking. To begin with, one cannot suppress the sense that Melville is playing with a double-entendre every time he describes Delano's inability to conceive the rebellious slaves' "plot" or "design," as if he cannot recognize such actions because they belong to a literary or aesthetic paradigm that he cannot grasp.[23] If we allow for this possibility in our reading of the story, a number of other passages begin to resonate along this metaliterary dimension. When we are told, for example, that Delano is "incapable of satire or irony" (63), we are given information about his character, to be sure, but it comes packaged in specifically literary terms, for "satire" and "irony" typically denote not dispositions, but modes of language. In other words, just as Melville elsewhere famously classified whales as books, here he seems to describe Delano in terms of literary genres. This language may shed light on another enigmatic passage in which Delano, after ruminating on the "duplicity" and "mystery" that surrounds Don Benito, describes the Spanish captain as a "black-letter text" (65). Though Melville's use of the term is somewhat idiosyncratic, it makes perfect sense in this context if we recall the typographical denotation of "black letter" as a synonym for "Gothic" type, thus suggesting that Melville is exploiting the term's typographical and generic valences at once. Another passage in which Delano muses about the differences between his disposition and that of the apparently morbid Don Benito seems to bear this out: "This poor fellow now, thought the pained American, is the victim of that sad superstition which associates goblins with the deserted body of man, as ghosts with an abandoned house. How unlike are we made!" (61). On the one hand, the specifics of this reflection are easily enough attributed to the narrative context in which it appears: Delano has just unwittingly spooked the Spanish captain by stumbling on the fact that Don Alexandro has been killed and his remains are on the ship. But "superstition," "goblins" and "ghosts," dead bodies and empty houses are all also staple figures of gothic fiction, or at least of a popular caricature of the gothic. If, as I have suggested, the cast of Delano's thought is everywhere associated with that of a good reader of sentimental fiction – less than a page earlier, Delano has bragged of his "sympathetic experience" and insight (61) – the thoughts here associated with Benito mark a specifically gothic sensibility. As Frederick Busch has written of the prominence of gothic literary conventions in the story: "we [readers] may perceive them; Delano cannot."[24]

I have taken the time to emphasize the story's concerns with textuality in general, and with other texts or genres in particular, in part to give support to the possibility that a specific literary text is implicitly present here: Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, published about three years earlier.[25] Given the extraordinary popularity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the years between its publication (first serialized in 1851–52) and that of *Benito Cereno* (first serialized in 1855), and given the thematic connections between the two works, it makes sense to interrogate the relationship between them on simple historical grounds. Modern readers, of course, have the benefit of hindsight in receiving Stowe's novel as the most popular and influential work of the nineteenth century. But even in the few months following the novel's publication, contemporaries understood that a unique literary sensation was underway. While in its original serial form the novel had a relatively small audience, it immediately acquired a notoriety and began to have a social impact belied by the limited circulation of the newspaper in which it was first serialized. Published in book form in March of 1852, the first edition rapidly sold some ten thousand copies in the first week. This first run would quickly be dwarfed by subsequent sales; it would sell an unthinkable 300,000 copies in its first year alone, and eventually become the first American novel to sell over a million copies.[26] Nor can the cultural sensation produced by the novel be charted in terms of the statistics of its printing history alone. It set off a firestorm of commentary and debate in the public sphere, and the literary side of this controversy famously spawned a corpus of "anti-Uncle Tom literature," as such novels as Mary H. Eastman's *Aunt Phillis's Cabin* (1852) and Maria J. McIntosh's *The Lofty and the Lowly* (1852) countered Stowe's tragic portrait of slavery with sunny tales of benign slave-owners and contented slaves.[27] The response to the novel was so voluminous that there was both a market and a necessity for the publication of Stowe's *A Key To Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1853, the author's attempt to shore up the novel's authority by providing an additional nonfictional apparatus to bolster its claims.

All of this serves merely as an indication that Stowe's novel loomed very large on the cultural horizon while Melville conceived and wrote his own story of slavery. Turning back to *Benito Cereno*, then, it is not surprising to find distinct echoes of Stowe's novel, particularly in the proverbial truths about race that I have examined above. For example, one cannot deny the resemblance between the "peculiar" features of "the negro" averred by Melville's narrator – from the "great gift of good humor" to the "certain easy cheerfulness, harmonious in every glance and gesture; as though God had set the whole negro to some pleasant tune" (83) – and those "peculiarities" described by Stowe's narrator. Not only the content of these assertions, but also their tone echo that of Stowe's novel, as when Melville's narrator breaks off from the events of the narrative to begin his abstract catalog of negro characteristics with the line, "There is something in the negro which, in a peculiar way, fits him for avocations about one's person" (83). To choose another example, we might also hear shades of Stowe when Melville tells us that Babo's ministrations to Don Benito display that characteristic "affectionate zeal which transmutes into something filial or fraternal acts in themselves but menial; and which has gained for the negro the repute of making the most pleasing body servant in the world" (52). To add a final example, we might think of Stowe's most famous protagonist when Benito says of the slaves in general that "their owner was quite right in assuring me that no fetters would be needed with his blacks" (57), or of Babo in particular that he is one "whom a master need be on no stiffly superior terms with, but may treat with familiar trust; less a servant than a devoted companion" (52). Certainly, these quotations are all instances of a form of paternalistic racialism widely used as rationalizations for domestic slavery; perhaps, then, it is this larger discourse in general, and not Stowe's novel in particular, that is the primary target of Melville's irony. If so, the debt that Stowe's racial theory owes to this familiar kind of paternalism make her less the object of direct satire, and more one caught in Melville's line of fire. Either way, my central point is that not only the content but also the rhetorical form of the racialist assertions ironized in *Benito Cereno* share striking similarities with the "laudatory racism" (to use Colette Guillaumin's phrase) embodied by Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*[28]

In my brief account of the cultural sensation surrounding Stowe's novel, I emphasized its remarkable saturation of the literary marketplace. But the novel's influence extended beyond print culture. Immediately on the heels of its first publication, a significant portion of the story's impact issued not from printed novels but theatrical shows adapted from Stowe's novel. The first dramatization of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* began its run as early as the fall of 1852, and from that point forward the "Tom-Show" became a staple of American theater and had what theater critics have designated as an incalculable impact on

American popular culture.[29] Eventually, as Thomas Gossett has estimated, "perhaps as many as fifty people would eventually see *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the play, for every one person who would read the novel."[30] I believe this theatrical context in particular sheds light on another interesting feature of Melville's novella: the frequent use of metaphors of theater and performance.

The deceptions perpetrated by the slaves and crew of the *San Dominick* are repeatedly described in images drawn from stage performance. To choose the most concrete example, the narrator at one point strangely describes the spaces of the ship as they correspond to that of the theater or opera house: looking down from the poop deck, Delano's "eye fall[s] . . . as from a stage box into the pit, upon the strange crowd before and him" (78). What interests me more, however, is the fact that "playing a part" is an insistently repeated trope throughout the story (64; cf. 60, 91, 93). When Delano begins to suspect that some "wicked imposture" may be at work, for example, he thinks his suspicions in performative terms: was Benito perhaps a pirate "act[ing] the part" of a captain, and hence "playing a part above his real level" (64)? Though Delano has got the "plot" exactly wrong – it is in fact Babo, he will realize later, who is "acting . . . his original part of the captain of the slaves" (92) – Delano is right that a play is being staged for his benefit.

If it is true that Melville is at least in part responding to the contemporary sensation surrounding *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in popular culture, this theatrical frame of reference acquires another layer of significance: it suggests, in effect, that Babo is putting on a "Tom-Show" for Delano.[31] This, indeed, is exactly what is revealed later when the spectator is admitted backstage, so to speak, to comprehend the constitutive parts of the performance. In the depositions that follow the narrative proper, there is an abundance not only of metafictional language (the "fictitious story," the "invented story" [110]), but explicitly metatheatrical imagery as well. Not only was Babo deliberately "performing the office of an officious servant with all the appearance of submission of the humble slave" (110), but he turns out to have orchestrated the entire performance:

> [T]he negro Babo then announced the plan to all his companions, which pleased them; that he then, the better to disguise the truth, devised many expedients, in some of them uniting deceit and defense . . . among other devices, was the device of presenting Atufal, his right-hand man, as chained, though in a moment the chains could be dropped; that in every particular he informed the deponent [Don Benito Cereno] what part he was expected to enact in every device, and what

> story he was to tell on every occasion, always threatening him with instant death if he varied in the least. (109)

One of the most interesting implications of this unveiling is the revelation that Babo had compelled Don Benito himself to "enact" a part – that of "the principal owner, and a free captain of the ship" (109). Babo, in other words, is not merely an actor, but author, director, and stage manager all at once. Under his direction, all engage in a kind of racial farce in which they play out stereotypes of racial character, power and control that almost exactly invert the true state of affairs aboard the *San Dominick*.

These then are the most compelling narrative correspondences between *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Benito Cereno* that give us cause to suspect that Melville's novella, if not a direct satire of Stowe's novel, at least offers some form of indirect commentary on it. I do not insist that Melville consciously set out to offer a metafictional "critique" of Stowe. But by writing a story that foregrounded the limitations of a discourse of racial difference that was in circulation in American culture, Melville certainly provided the materials for such a critique. Indeed, by telling us that his protagonist is "incapable of satire or irony," Melville perhaps warns his readers not to have a similarly limited discursive range, effectively signaling to us that these forms of language are central to his own literary project and the very tools he used to dismantle the racialist assumptions of his contemporaries. What is at stake for me in this reading is not to locate Melville outside of contemporary ideology, for as Samuel Otter has explained, Melville's are "immanent critiques" that do not claim "an outsider's privilege."[32] But I do not think it is an accident that critics have consistently found *Benito Cereno* to be, in Dana Nelson's words, so "incisive in its recognition of the conceptual, epistemological, and representational structures that support the racist economy."[33] Toni Morrison has speculatively credited Melville with the "recognition of the moment in America when whiteness became ideology."[34] The reading of *Benito Cereno* that I have made above suggests the possibility that he did the same for the nineteenth-century ideology that I have termed racial sentiment. In this respect, Melville's story represents an incipient form of the analysis of literary racialism I have attempted to offer in this book.

In terms of my specific arguments about literary form, moreover, by explicitly merging the story of frontier warfare with the novel of slavery – two genres which I have suggested had always been implicitly connected in the antebellum literary imagination – Melville not only interrogated some of the most entrenched assumptions of his cultural moment, but used the tools of literary narrative itself in order to do so. The complex allusion in the story's setting to the "substitution of Africans for New World Indians"[35] lays bare the discursive connection between the two and makes explicit the play of analogy and displacement which is an ever-present semantic potential in the antebellum frontier romance and the sentimental novel of slavery.

Notes

INTRODUCTION: TOWARD A LITERARY HISTORY OF RACIAL SENTIMENT

1 Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*, ed. Mary Kelley (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 214.

2 Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, 123.

3 Here and throughout, I choose to use the (in some sense retrograde) term "Indian" to refer to the figure at the heart of this literature. In a similar way, I will speak of the "negro" in Stowe's writing. I do so to mirror the terms used in the novels themselves, and hence to emphasize that I am talking about a figure in a discourse – a literary character, so to speak. In the context of my critical project, to substitute terms such as "Native American" or "African American," as if recovering some lost historical referent for literary characterizations, seems to me to be problematic to the extent that it sustains the referential illusion I want to dispel. For practical reasons, these terms do not always occur in quotation marks in my text.

4 George Dekker, *The American Historical Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1.

5 See for example, Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (New York: Random House, 1950); Lucy Maddox, *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 22–86; Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1986); Eric J. Sundquist, "The Indian Gallery: Antebellum Literature and the Containment of the American Indian," in *American Literature, Culture, and Ideology: Essays in Memory of Henry Nash Smith*, ed. Beverly R. Voloshin (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 37–64; Eric J. Sundquist, "The Literature of Expansion and Race," in *The Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. 2,* 8 vols., ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 125–328.

6 The most important of these exceptions is Jared Gardner, *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787–1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), which reads Cooper's early frontier novels against the historical background of the Missouri Compromise crisis. For other discussions of Cooper's writing in relation to slavery, see Joseph Lockard, "Talking Guns, Talking Turkey: Racial Violence in Early American Law and James Fenimore Cooper," in *Making America, Making Americans*, ed. A. Robert Lee and W. M. Verhoeven (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 313–36; Russ Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation: American Genealogies of Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 31–67; James D. Wallace, "Race and Captivity in Cooper's *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*," *American Literary History* 7, no. 2 (1995), 189–209.

7 Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Rev. edn. (New York: Anchor, 1992), 195.

8 See for example Bercovitch (ed.), *Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. 2;* Emory Elliott (ed.), *Columbia Literary History of the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

9 Fisher, *Hard Facts*, 5.

10 Louise Barnett, *The Ignoble Savage: American Literary Racism, 1790–1890* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), 21.

11 Quoted in Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating and Empire-Building* (New York: New American Library, 1980), 99.

12 Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Noonday Press, 1990), 8, 71–2.

13 For a range of historical work on the relations between economic growth, westward expansion, and the political crisis over slavery, see, Watson, *Liberty and Power*; Edward Pessen, *Jacksonian America: Society, Personality, and Politics* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1969) and *Riches, Class, and Power: America before the Civil War* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1990); Charles Grier Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

14 See Gardner, *Master Plots*, 81–124.

15 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), xi.

16 See Russ Castronovo, *Fathering the Nation: American Genealogies of Slavery and Freedom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 4; Gardner, *Master Plots*, 4. See also the discussion of the "fantasy of geographical connection" as a stabilizing force against the contentious issue of slavery in Robert A. Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750–1820* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 5–6.

17 See Althusser's "symptomatic reading" of Marx's texts and the theorization of structural causality in Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London and New York: Verso, 1997). For the preeminent applications of Althusser's concept of symptomatic reading to literary criticism, see Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*

(London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); and Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981).

18 Slotkin, *Fatal Environment*, 84. My reading of frontier fiction clearly owes a great debt to Slotkin's treatment of the genre. One of the things that distinguishes his readings from much prior criticism of historical fiction is that Slotkin treats "the Indian story" as a kind of flexible allegory for other social issues. His account of the frontier novel focuses in particular on how by "put[ting] the Indian and the matter of racial character at the center of his consideration of moral questions" (88) stories of colonial racial conflict expressed and resolved contemporary class dynamics. My account differs from Slotkin's in emphasizing how the thematics of white/Indian racial difference spoke to the question of slavery in particular. Furthermore, as I will discuss below, I also aim to extend Slotkin's account in two other ways: by treating these novels as sites of racial formation, and by reevaluating the sentimental aspects of the frontier tradition.

19 See Smith, *Virgin Land*; Fiedler, *Love and Death*; Slotkin, *Fatal Environment*; Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993); and Dana D. Nelson, *The Word in Black and White: Reading "Race" in American Literature, 1638–1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

20 The concept of racial formation is indebted to Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, 2nd edn. (New York: Routledge, 1994).

21 Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 7.

22 On the relationship between early-nineteenth century anatomy and craniometry and later psychometrics, and their theories of intelligence and IQ, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981).

23 Scott L. Malcomson, *One Drop of Blood: The American Misadventure of Race*, 1st edn. (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2000), 356.

24 On the "one-drop rule" in US racial logic, see F. James Davis, *Who Is Black? One Nation's Definition* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991), 4–6; Eva Saks, "Representing Miscegenation Law," *Raritan* 8, no. 2 (1988): 39–69; Marvin Harris, *Patterns of Race in the Americas* (New York: Walker, 1964), 56. For a regionally specific study of the legal basis racial classification in Louisiana, Virginia R. Domínguez, *White by Definition: Social Classification in Creole Louisiana* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986).

25 On the complex interaction between the visible and invisible properties that constitute race, see Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 203–6; Stuart Hall, *Race: The Floating Signifier*, dir. Sut Jally, 75 min., (Northampton, Mass.: Media Education Foundation, 1997). For other discussions of race and visibility or legibility see Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender*

(Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Michael T. Gilmore, *Surface and Depth: The Quest for Legibility in American Culture* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003): 62–3; and Christopher Castiglia, "Abolition's Racial Interiors and the Making of White Civic Depth," *American Literary History* 14, no. 1 (2002): 32–59.

26 Samuel Otter, *Melville's Anatomies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

27 Julie Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 17.

28 Ibid., 123–147.

29 Ibid., 17.

30 Quoted in Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal: An African American Anthology* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 405.

31 Colette Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 133–152.

32 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York: Norton, 1994), 18.

33 Jonathan Arac, "Narrative Forms," in *Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. 2*, ed. Bercovitch, 615.

34 Arac, "Narrative Forms," 705.

35 Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 159. On the interaction between scientific, political, and literary discourses of race, see also, George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914*, 2nd edn. (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1987).

36 Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 159.

37 On the power of such private forms as the novel, the conduct book, or the captivity narrative to effect certain historical changes (albeit changes of a completely different nature than are at issue in the present work) see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

38 See Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (Lincoln, Nebr.: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); and Dekker, *American Historical Romance*.

39 Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 109–58.

40 My thinking about the discourse of sympathetic or sentimental racialism in the fiction of Cooper, Child, Sedgwick, and Stowe is thus indebted to George Fredrickson's notion of "romantic racialism" and Colette Guillaumin's theoretical decoupling of racism and aggressivity. See Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 97–129; and Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, 30–31. For a more general argument about the politically ambivalent effects

of benevolence, see Susan M. Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003). See also Dana Nelson's argument about the relationship between nineteenth-century sentimentalism and scientific racialism in "'No Cold or Empty Heart': Polygenesis, Scientific Professionalization, and the Unfinished Business of Male Sentimentalism," *Differences* 11:5 (1999/2000): 29–56.

41 Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5.

42 See Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology, Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984, Vol. 2*, 2 vols., ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1998), 369–92.

43 James Fenimore Cooper, *The American Democrat* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Classics, 1981), 221–22.

44 *American Democrat*, 222.

45 Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie*, 6.

46 See Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

47 Karen Sanchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 48.

1 THE POLITICS OF SLAVERY AND THE DISCOURSE OF RACE, 1787–1840

1 See for example Fawn McKay Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* (New York: Norton, 1974), 50; Willard Sterne Randall, *Thomas Jefferson: A Life* (New York: H. Holt, 1993), 144.

2 David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975), 155–56; Thomas Jefferson, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Putnam, 1984) 8: 351.

3 Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Viking, 1984), 115. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent references to Jefferson's writing are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.

4 Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 179.

5 Noble E. Cunningham, *In Pursuit of Reason: The Life of Thomas Jefferson* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987), 94–6; Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 177–8.

6 Alf J. Mapp, *Thomas Jefferson, Passionate Pilgrim: The Presidency, the Founding of the University, and the Private Battle* (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, 1991), 368.

7 See Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 175–76.

8 Mapp, *Thomas Jefferson, Passionate Pilgrim*, 302.

9 Carl Alfred Lanning Binger, *Thomas Jefferson: A Well-Tempered Mind* (New York: Norton, 1970), 132, 131. Brodie's *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History* similarly traces Jefferson's "ambivalence about blacks" back to his childhood (50).

10 Randall, *Thomas Jefferson: A Life*, 144.
11 Michael Knox Beran, *Jefferson's Demons: Portrait of a Restless Mind* (New York: Free Press, 2003).
12 See Robert A. Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750–1820* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 497, 508.
13 Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 130.
14 U.S. Constitution, art. 1, sec. 2; art. 1, sec. 9; art. 4, sec. 2.
15 Max Farrand (ed.), *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787, Vol. III*, 4 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), 436.
16 Ibid., 377.
17 Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550–1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 328.
18 George Washington, *George Washington: A Collection* (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1994), 319.
19 Quoted in Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 133.
20 Jordan, *White over Black*, 325.
21 Washington, *George Washington: A Collection*, 318.
22 George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799, Vol. XXXI,* 39 vols. ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), 52.
23 Ibid., 30.
24 See George W. Mitchell, *The Question before Congress: A Consideration of the Debates and Final Action by Congress Upon Various Phases of the Race Question in the United States* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 24; Jordan, *White over Black*, 331.
25 John Taylor, *Tyranny Unmasked* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Classics, 1992), 16–17.
26 Mitchell, *Question before Congress*, 39.
27 United States Congress, *The Congressional Globe: Containing Sketches of the Debates and Proceedings of the First Session of the Twenty-Fourth Congress, Vol. II-III* (Washington: Blair and Rives, 1836), 10. Unless otherwise noted, subsequent citations from the congressional record of the debate will be to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.
28 For a narrative history of this political crisis, see William Lee Miller, *Arguing About Slavery: The Great Battle in the United States Congress* (New York: Knopf, 1996).
29 United States Congress, *The Congressional Globe: Containing Sketches of the Debates and Proceedings of the Second Session of the Twenty-Fourth Congress, Vol. IV* (Washington: Blair and Rives, 1837), 170, 179–85.
30 Mitchell, *Question Before Congress*, 53.
31 Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 130.
32 For the main participants in this debate, see also Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, 1975); Davis, *Problem of Slavery*;

Thad W. Tate and David L. Anderman (eds.), *The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society* (New York: Norton, 1979); T. H. Breen and Stephen Innes, *"Myne Owne Ground": Race and Freedom on Virginia's Eastern Shore, 1640–1676* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Oscar Handlin and Mary Handlin, "Origins of the Southern Labor System," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series, no. 7 (1950); Jordan, *White over Black*; and Barbara Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," in *Region, Race, and Reconstruction: Essays in Honor of C. Vann Woodward,* ed. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): 143–76. Useful summaries of the debate can be found in Alden T. Vaughan, "The Origins Debate: Slavery and Racism in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 97 (1989): 311–54; and Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race,* (London and New York: Verso, 1994), 3–21.

33 Jordan, *White over Black*, x.

34 Fields, "Ideology and Race," 161.

35 It is no accident that much of the historical scholarship embracing the slavery-before-racism position is produced by scholars who owe at least some debt to Marxist historical methods – and who can thus account for the system of slavery in material terms rather than seeing it as an outgrowth of racist ideology. In order to do so, they revisited the emergence of "African slavery" in the larger context of global labor relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, relations that initially included the indenture of both black and white laborers. Excavating the often neglected history of Native American slavery has also been important for demonstrating the contingent relationship between blackness and slavery, and also for distinguishing among the colonialist projects of different European nations in the New World. Eric Williams mentions Indian slavery in *Capitalism and Slavery* (7–10). More recently, other scholars have taken up this question in greater depth. See for example Barbara Olexer, *Enslavement of the American Indian* (Monroe, N.Y.: Library Research Associates, 1982); and Donald Leland, *Aboriginal Slavery on the Northwest Coast of America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

36 See Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race* (London and New York: Verso, 1994).

37 See Fields, "Ideology and Race"; and Davis, *Problem of Slavery.*

38 See George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914*, 2nd edn. (Hanover, N. H.: University Press of New England, 1987); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

39 Jordan, *White over Black*, 108.

40 Colette Guillaumin's critique of a related liberal fallacy has similarly radical consequences for the epistemological status of "race": "It is heart-rending to hear so many well-intentioned people (then as now) question themselves about the reasons that could exist for 'reducing the blacks to slavery'

(contempt, they think; visibility; who knows what else?). But no 'blacks' per se were reduced to slavery; slaves were made – which is very different. All these strange reasons are sought and advanced as if 'being black' existed in itself, outside of any social reason to construct such a form, as if the symbolic fact asserted itself and could be a cause. But the idea of 'reducing "the blacks" to slavery' is a modern idea which only came about at a specific historical juncture when the recruitment of slaves (who at the beginning were blacks and whites) was focalized." As the continuation of her argument makes clear, Guillaumin's understanding of this "historical juncture" is clearly indebted to Eric Williams's account of the triangle trade and to the Handlins' argument about the historical contingency of the slavery/blackness articulation: "People were enslaved wherever they could be and as need dictated. Then at a certain historical moment, from the end of the seventeenth century on, slaves ceased to be recruited in Europe because their labor power from then on was needed there, with the development of industrialization. Consequently they were taken only from a specific and relatively limited region of the world, constituting one of the poles of the triangular traffic. During the period of European/African recruitment, there was not (not yet) a system of marking other than that used for this purpose (branding). So, a fortiori, neither was there any reflection about the somatic/physiological 'nature' of slaves." Colette Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 141.

41 Fields, "Ideology and Race," 143, 145, 146.

42 Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), xx; Fields, "Ideology and Race," 146.

43 Foucault, *Order of Things*, xx.

44 Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology*, 136.

45 See Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963); William Ragan Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815–59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Michael P. Banton, *The Idea of Race* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978); Fredrickson, *Black Image*.

46 Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996). Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

47 Bernard Crick, "Foreword," in Hannaford, *Race*, xiii.

48 Bernard Crick, "Foreword," in Hannaford, *Race*, xii. See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

49 Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, 30.

50 Ibid., 37

51 Ibid.

52 Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology, Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984, Vol. 2*, 2 vols. ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New Press, 1998), 369.

53 Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology*, 49–52.
54 Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture*, *New Cultural Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 2.
55 Ibid., 9.
56 Jean Feerick, "Spenser, Race, and Ire-Land," *English Literary Renaissance* 32, no. 1 (2002): 86, 117.
57 Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 303.
58 Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power and Ideology*, 49.
59 See James Sydney Slotkin (ed.), *Readings in Early Anthropology* (Chicago: Aldine, 1965), 176; Jordan, *White over Black*, 218.
60 Slotkin (ed.), *Readings*, 176.
61 Slotkin (ed.), *Readings* 177–78.
62 Nicholas Hudson, "From 'Nation' to 'Race': The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29, no. 3 (1996): 247–64.
63 Slotkin (ed.), *Readings*, 184.
64 See Stanton, *Leopard's Spots*, 1–14; Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 44–45; Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981), 39–40; Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 72, 81–83.
65 Slotkin (ed.), *Readings*, 185.
66 Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach*, ed. Thomas Bendyshe (London: Longman Green, Longman Roberts & Green, 1865), 71.
67 Gould, *Mismeasure*, 39–40.
68 Blumenbach, *Anthropological Treatises*, 71.
69 Slotkin (ed.), *Readings*, 185.
70 Quoted in Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 5.
71 Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 4.
72 Samuel Stanhope Smith, *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species: To Which Are Added, Strictures on Lord Kames' Discourse on the Original Diversity of Mankind* (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1787), 22. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.
73 See Jordan, *White over Black*, 518–19.
74 Charles W. Peale, "An Account of a Person Born a Negro, or a Very Dark Mulatto, Who Afterwards Became White." *National Gazette*, October 31, 1791.
75 Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1972), 70–71. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.
76 See Samuel L. Mitchill M.D. F.R.S.E., and Edward Miller M.D., "Another Instance of a Negro Turning White," *Medical Repository* IV (1801): 199–200; and "Another Ethiopian Turning to a White Man," *Medical Repository* V (1802): 83–4.
77 Quoted in Jordan, *Black over White*, 521.

78 See Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 120, 128.

79 Charles Caldwell, *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race* (New York: E. Bliss, 1830), 176.

80 Josiah C. Nott, *Two Lectures on the Connection between the Biblical and Physical History of Man* (New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1849), 5; see also Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 71–96.

81 Quoted in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 132.

82 Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana: Or, a Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America: To Which Is Prefixed, an Essay on the Varieties of the Human Species, and on the American Race in Particular* (Philadelphia: John Fuller, 1838), 3.

83 Samuel George Morton, "Observations on Egyptian Ethnography, Derived from Anatomy, History, and the Monuments," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s. 9 (1846), 158.

84 See Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 48ff.

85 Caldwell, *Thoughts*, 63.

86 Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 6.

87 Louis Ruchames (ed.), *Racial Thought in America: A Documentary History* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1969), 462.

88 Ibid., 442.

89 Ibid., 464.

90 Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 32.

91 See Foucault, *Order of Things*, 229, 251, 268.

92 Caldwell, *Thoughts*, 74–5, 77, 78, 81, 84.

93 See Frederick Sargent, *Hippocratic Heritage: A History of Ideas About Weather and Human Health* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982).

94 Nancy Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

95 Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 2.

96 See Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 22–3, 26.

97 Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 64ff. Jean Feerick's analysis of Renaissance representations of Irish physicality, character and emotion furnishes another particularly interesting example of this discourse of national character and emotional disposition. See Feerick, "Spenser, Race and Ire-land."

98 Wheeler, *Complexion of Race*, 22; 23–4.

99 Ibid., 26.

100 Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology*, 151 n9.

101 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rousseau's Political Writings*, trans. Julia Conway Bondanella (New York: Norton, 1988), 32.

102 Charles S. Hyneman and Donald S. Lutz (eds.), *American Political Writing During the Founding Era, 1760–1805, Vol. 1*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1983), 5.

103 Ibid., *Vol. 2*, 797.

104 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin, 1987), 105.
105 Caldwell, *Thoughts*, 72.
106 Nott, *Two Lectures*, 5.
107 Chancellor Harper, Governor Hammond, Dr. Simms, and Professor Dew, *The Pro-Slavery Argument as Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writer of the Southern States* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 56.
108 Ibid.
109 Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 1.
110 Samuel Stanhope Smith, *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species* (New Brunswick: J. Simpson & Co., 1810), 263.
111 William Drayton, *The South Vindicated from the Treason and Fanaticism of the Northern Abolitionists* (Philadelphia: H. Manly, 1836), 222.
112 Harper et al, *Pro-Slavery Argument*, 422, 447.
113 Ibid.
114 See Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 1–42.
115 Quoted in Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 17.
116 Jordan, *White over Black*, 108.
117 Fredrickson, *Black Image*, xix; see also Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 125.
118 Gould, *Mismeasure of Man*, 69.
119 Caldwell, *Thoughts*, vi-viii.
120 Quoted in Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 51.
121 Paul M. Angle (ed.), *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 235.
122 Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 103.
123 Quoted in Drinnon, *Facing West*, 99.
124 Francis Paul Prucha (ed.), *Documents of United States Indian Policy*, 2nd edn. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 1, 12.
125 Ibid., 47, 59, and passim.
126 Ibid., 80.
127 Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), 19ff.
128 Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 103.
129 See Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 3–25.
130 Pearce, *Savagism*, 76.
131 See Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*, 3–25.
132 Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 58.
133 Quoted in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 108.
134 Prucha (ed.), *Documents*, 28.
135 Ibid.
136 Quoted in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 198.

137 Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 191.
138 Quoted in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 196.
139 On the racialization of the Indian, see Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 189–207.
140 Ruchames (ed.), *Racial Thought*, 459.
141 Quoted in Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750–1990*, trans. Jeremy Moyle (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), 5.
142 Quoted in Gerbi, *Dispute of the New World*, 5–6.
143 It is doubtful whether Raynal really made such a clear case for the matter. Nonetheless, via Jefferson's attack on him in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Raynal became associated with this position in American culture. See Gerbi, *Dispute of the New World*, 262n.
144 For a discussion of the juxtaposition of Jefferson's statements about Native Americans and African Americans that is in some ways consonant with my argument here, see Frank Shuffleton, *A Mixed Race: Ethnicity in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 257ff. Shuffleton argues that we need to "shift the terms of discussion from race, the usual frame of reference, to ethnicity, a broader and more subtle strain of discourse" (258).
145 Quoted in Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 64.
146 For other instances in which Jefferson employs the Indian/black opposition, see Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, 61, 138, 140.
147 See Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

2 REMAKING NATURAL RIGHTS: RACE AND SLAVERY IN JAMES FENIMORE COOPER'S EARLY WRITINGS

1 For a brief history of this literature, see Gary Williams's introduction to James Fenimore Cooper, *Notions of the Americans: Picked up by a Travelling Bachelor* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991). Subsequent references to this work are to this edition, and are given parenthetically in the text.
2 See Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Age of Jackson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), 57–73; Marvin Meyers, *The Jacksonian Persuasion: Politics and Belief* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957) 16–32; and Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian America* (New York: Noonday Press, 1990), 3–15.
3 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), II.44. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.
4 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rousseau's Political Writings*, ed. Alan Ritter (New York: Norton, 1988), 115–6. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

5 John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 175.

6 The well known passage on captives of war (II.23–4) has sometimes been used to support the claim that the *Second Treatise* provided justifications for chattel slavery. See for example David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975), 45. Yet, like the relation between master and bond servant, that between conqueror and captive was also conceived as an exchange or compact which it was within the captive's power to dissolve at any time "by resisting the Will of his Master, to draw on himself the Death he desires" (II.23). In addition, Locke insists that enslavement to a lawful captor could under no conditions justify hereditary enslavement; that is, it did not extend to the captive's children. "For supposing them not to have joyn'd in the War, either through Infancy, absence, or choice, they have done nothing to forfeit them: *nor has the Conqueror any right* to take them away . . ." (II.182, original emphasis). The simple claim that Locke offered "a justification for absolute and perpetual slavery" (Davis, *Problem of Slavery*, 45) thus seems untenable. In any case, as Davis himself argues, by the early eighteenth century there were few attempts to justify slavery in these terms.

7 Charles S. Hyneman and Donald S. Lutz (eds.), *American Political Writing During the Founding Era, 1760–1805* (Indianapolis: Liberty Press, 1983), I.288.

8 John Allen, quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1992), 240. On the "contagion of liberty" see Bailyn, 232–246.

9 Hyneman and Lutz, *American Political Writing*, 183.

10 See James Fenimore Cooper, *The American Democrat* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Liberty Classics, 1981), 24–25, 50–51, 54, 56, 61, 95, 110, 152. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

11 Thomas Paine, *Political Writings*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 77.

12 Chancellor Harper, Governor Hammond, Dr. Simms, and Professor Dew, *The Pro-Slavery Argument as Maintained by the Most Distinguished Writer of the Southern States*, Reprinted edn. (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1968), 447, 422.

13 For some important studies of Cooper that do focus on *The Pioneers*, see Eric Cheyfitz, "Literally White, Figuratively Red: The Frontier of Translation in *The Pioneers*," in *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Clark (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1985), 55–95; Douglas Buckholz, "Landownership and Representation of Social Conflict in *The Pioneers*," in *James Fenimore Cooper: His Country and His Art*, ed. A. Test George (Oneonta: State University of New York at Oneonta, 1991), 94–102; Nan Goodman, "A Clear Showing: The Problem of Fault in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers*," *Arizona Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (1993): 1–22; Brook Thomas, "The Pioneers, or the Sources of American Legal History: A Critical Tale," *American Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1984): 86–111; Joseph

Lockard, "Talking Guns, Talking Turkey: Racial Violence in Early American Law and James Fenimore Cooper," in *Making America, Making Americans*, ed. A. Robert Lee and W. M. Verhoeven (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 313–36; Janet E. Dean, "The Marriage Plot and National Myth in *The Pioneers*," *Arizona Quarterly* 52, no. iv (1996): 1–29; Thomas S. Gladsky, "The Beau Ideal and Cooper's *The Pioneers*," *Studies in the Novel* 20, no. 1 (1988): 43–54.

14 Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, rev. edn. (New York: Anchor, 1992), 204–5.

15 James D. Wallace, "Race and Captivity in Cooper's *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*," *American Literary History* 7, no. 2 (1995), 189–209.

16 James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 17–18. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

17 See Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," in *The Contest of Meaning*, ed. Richard Bolton (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1989), 344–89; Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 56–59, 120–122; George Stocking, "The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race," *Modernism Modernity* 1, no. 1 (1993): 4–16.

18 Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 348.

19 Quoted in Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 348.

20 Quoted in Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 59.

21 Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, *The Anthropological Treatises of Johann Friedrich Blumenbach*, ed. Thomas Bendyshe (London: Longman Green, Longman Roberts & Green, 1865), 121.

22 Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 57–58.

23 Samuel Stanhope Smith, *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species: To Which Are Added, Strictures on Lord Kames' Discourse on the Original Diversity of Mankind* (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1787), 53.

24 For a variety of work which takes up questions of property and ownership in Cooper, see Frank Bergmann, "The Meaning of the Indians and Their Land in Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*," in *Upstate Literature: Essays in Memory of Thomas F. O'Donnell*, ed. Frank Bergmann (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 117–27; Gordon Brotherston, "*The Prairie* and Cooper's Invention of the West," in *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Clark (Totowa, N.J.: Barnes & Noble, 1985), 162–86; Richard Godden, "Pioneer Properties, or 'What's in a Hut?'" in *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical Essays*, 121–42; Goodman, "A Clear Showing"; Buckholz, "Landownership and Representation of Social Conflict in *the Pioneers*"; Brook Thomas, "The Pioneers, or the Sources of American Legal History: A Critical Tale," *American Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1984): 86–111; Susan Scheckel, "'In the Land of His Fathers': Cooper, Land Rights, and the Legitimation of American National Identity," in *James Fenimore Cooper: New Historical and Literary Contexts*, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 125–50.

25 James D. Wallace, "Introduction," in James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), x.

26 Jared Gardner, in an important reconsideration of Cooper, has argued much the same thing about the importance of slavery as a background to his fiction. See his *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787–1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). Gardner contends that it was in Cooper's later novel, *The Prairie* (1827) that the issue becomes most clearly a concern. In order to provide a context for his reading of this later novel, he first offers a brief reading in which he highlights the traces of this concern with slavery in *The Pioneers*. I aim here to extend Gardner's account by offering an analysis of *The Pioneers* that places a sustained and detailed focus on the workings of race in the novel and on its almost systematic engagement with the issues underlying the slavery debate – an engagement that allows the novel to attempt a symbolic resolution to the contemporary political impasse.

27 Slotkin, *Fatal Environment*, 89.

28 For a discussion of "Indian nature" in Cooper, see Randall C. Davis, "Fire-Water in the Frontier Romance: James Fenimore Cooper and 'Indian Nature'," *Studies in American Fiction* 22, no. 2 (1994): 215–31.

29 For an interesting reading of Edwards's identity which differs in emphasis from my reading here, see Cheyfitz, "Literally White, Figuratively Red." See also Gardner, *Master Plots*, 89–90.

30 For another reading of the function of the marriage plot in *The Pioneers*, see Janet E. Dean, "The Marriage Plot and National Myth in *The Pioneers*," *Arizona Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (1996): 1–29.

3 DOMESTIC FRONTIER ROMANCE, OR, HOW THE SENTIMENTAL HEROINE BECAME WHITE

1 For the main proponents of this account, see D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955); Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (New York: Random House, 1950); Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957); Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Rev. edn. (New York: Anchor, 1992); Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1986).

2 Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 362.

3 Fiedler, *Love and Death*, 25–6.

4 See Slotkin, *Fatal Environment*, 81–106; and Fisher, *Hard Facts*, 22–86.

5 See Nancy A. Walker, *The Disobedient Writer: Women and Narrative Tradition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Mary Kelley, "Introduction," in *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*, ed. Mary Kelley (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), xxxv; Carol J. Singley, "Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*: Radical Frontier Romance," in *The (Other) American Traditions: Nineteenth-Century Women Writers*, ed. Joyce W. Warren (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 39–53; and Carolyn L. Karcher, "Introduction," in *Hobomok and Other Writings on Indians*, ed. Carolyn L. Karcher (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986), ix–xliv.

6 See Leland S. Person, "The American Eve: Miscegenation and a Feminist Frontier Fiction," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 5 (1985): 668–85; and Annette Kolodny, *The Land before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

7 Some important recent exceptions include Lucy Maddox, *Removals: Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Politics of Indian Affairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Lori Merish, "'The Hand of Refined Taste' in the Frontier Landscape: Caroline Kirkland's *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* And the Feminization of American Consumerism," *American Quarterly*, no. 45 (1993): 485–523; Nina Baym, "How Men and Women Wrote Indian Stories," in *New Essays on The Last of the Mohicans*, ed. Daniel Peck (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 67–86; Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682–1861* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1997); and Judith Fetterley, "'My Sister! My Sister!': The Rhetoric of Catharine Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (1998): 491–516.

8 See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 17–49.

9 See for example Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Anchor Books, 1977); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Hortense J. Spillers, "Changing the Letter: The Yokes, the Jokes of Discourse, or, Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Reed," in *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Deborah E. McDowell and Arnold Rampersad (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 25–61; Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists of the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture, Southern Literary Studies* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); Mason I. Lowance Jr., Ellen E. Westbrook, and R. C. De Prospo (eds.), *The Stowe Debate: Rhetorical Strategies in Uncle Tom's Cabin* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994); Lora Romero, *Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997); Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment*; Amy Kaplan, "Manifest Domesticity," *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (1998): 581–606; Laura Wexler, "Tender

Violence: Literary Eavesdropping, Domestic Fiction, and Educational Reform," in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Shirley Samuels (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 9–38; and Susan M. Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

10 Fisher, *Hard Facts*, 22–86.

11 Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*, ed. Mary Kelley (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 6. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

12 Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings on Indians*, ed. Carolyn L. Karcher (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986). Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

13 John Oliver Killens (ed.),*The Trial Record of Denmark Vesey* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), 30. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

14 As for Child, she too was clearly concerned with the problem of slave rebellion. In her 1833 antislavery tract, for example (written at a time when Nat Turner's 1831 rebellion was the more critical point of reference than Vesey's) Child explained slave violence as a necessary outcome of slavery, but condemned it on moral grounds. See Lydia Maria Francis Child, *An Appeal in Favor of That Class of Americans Called Africans* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 184.

15 For an excellent discussion of the politics of captivity in this novel, see Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment*, 97–103. Of particular significance to my reading here is Burnham's argument that the novel "indulges both in racial stereotype and transracial sympathy" (102) – a conjunction critical to my readings of sentimental frontier fiction, and also with obvious relevance to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which I consider in Chapter 5.

16 Of course, authors of slave narratives could also find this model of translation in the long tradition of narratives of "white slavery" on the Barbary coast. For examples of these narratives, see Daniel J. Vitkus and N. I. Matar (eds.), *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001). The more direct antecedents, of course, were captivity narratives authored by African Americans such as Briton Hammon and John Marrant. See for example Burnham on Marrant's influence on Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in *Captivity and Sentiment*. On the relation between the slave narrative and the captivity narrative, see also Jean Fagan Yellin, "Introduction" in Harriet A. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), xxvi, xxxiv.

17 On the connection between Child's *Hobomok* and her work on Jacobs's narrative, see Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment*, 147–69.

18 See Caroline Karcher's essay on *Romance of the Republic* in *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Deborah E. McDowell and Arnold Rampersad

(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 81–103. See also the discussion of the "tragic quadroon" trope in Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Dana Nelson offers an astute and balanced reading of the racial ideology of *Romance of the Republic* in her "Introduction" to Lydia Maria Francis Child, *A Romance of the Republic* (Lexington, Ky.: University Press of Kentucky, 1997). Though the novel "can certainly be said to value positively the racial Other" (xv), argues Nelson, it tends to value these characters to the extent that they display the "imitative" capacity to mirror the valued aspects of Anglo-American culture (xvi). In this respect, it shares something important with the racial theory of Stowe's earlier *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as I will explain in Chapter 5.

19 Quoted in Child, *Appeal*, xxvii.

20 On Child's changing opinions about intermarriage, see Carolyn Karcher's "Introduction" to Child's *Appeal*.

21 See Carolyn L. Karcher, *The First Woman in the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994); and Bruce Mills, *Cultural Reformations: Lydia Maria Child and the Literature of Reform* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

22 On Sedgwick's politics, see the introduction to Mary Kelley (ed.), *The Power of Her Sympathy: The Autobiography and Journal of Catharine Maria Sedgwick* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1993). In 1853, Sedgwick published an article on Elizabeth Freeman, an African American woman who had challenged the legality of slavery in Massachussetts in 1781, with Theodore Sedgwick (Catharine's father) as her legal counsel. On Sedgwick's discomfort with abolitionist politics, however, and the tensions between her and Child on the issue, see Child, *Appeal*, xliv. As Child would later write of their differences, Sedgwick may have "sincerely wished well to the negroes, but she could not bear to *contend* for them, or for anything else," for she was "*afraid* of reformers" in general and the slavery question in particular (xliv). Finally, on Sedgwick's unpublished "slave story" manuscript, see Karen Woods Weierman, "'A Slave Story I Began and Abandoned': Sedgwick's Antislavery Manuscript," in *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Lucinda L. Damon-Bach and Victoria Clements (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003).

23 Despite the difference in cultural and literary context, this kind of argument bears obvious connections to Doris Sommer's work on nineteenth-century Latin American romances. See Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

24 Alide Cagidemetrio, "The Vanishing of Indian Princesses: Or, the Sentimental Transformation of the Pocahontas Myth," *Rivista di Studi Nord-Americani*, no. 7 (1996): 1–9. See also Cagidemetrio, "A Plea for Fictional Histories and Old-Time 'Jewesses'," in *The Invention of Ethnicity*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 14–43.

25 For a different reading of Jemison's narrative and its relationship to the frontier romances of Cooper, see James D. Wallace, "Race and Captivity in Cooper's *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*," *American Literary History* 7, no. 2 (1995): 200–203.

26 On captivity narratives, see Roy Harvey Pearce, "The Significances of the Captivity Narrative," *American Literature*, no. 19 (1947): 1–20; Tara Fitzpatrick, "The Figure of Captivity: The Cultural Work of the Puritan Captivity Narrative," *American Literary History*, no. 3 (1991): 1–26; Nancy Armstrong, and Leonard Tennenhouse, *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); June Namias, *White Captives: Gender and Ethnicity on the American Frontier* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola, and James Arthur Levernier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550–1900* (New York: Twayne, 1993); Christopher Castiglia, *Bound and Determined: Captivity, Culture-Crossing, and White Womanhood from Mary Rowlandson to Patty Hearst* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment*; Richard VanDerBeets, "Introduction," in *Held Captive by Indians: Selected Narratives, 1642–1836*, ed. Richard VanDerBeets (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1994), xix-xxxix; Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark (eds.), *Puritans among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676–1724* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

27 Thanks to Gordon Sayre for helping me to clarify this point. Other contemporary narratives about captives who had been assimilated include those of John Dunn Hunter and John Tanner. On earlier examples, such as that of Eunice Williams, see Norman J. Heard, *White into Red: A Study of the Assimilation of White Persons Captured by Indians* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1973); James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Colin Calloway, *Downland Encounters: Indians and Europeans in Northern New England* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1991); and John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1994). For a thorough account of the cultural, political and ideological work of stories about "going native" in late-nineteenth century and twentieth-century American culture, see Shari Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001).

28 Here I am deliberately skirting the question of how much of the narrative we ought to attribute to the interpolations or outright fabrications of Jemison's amanuensis, James Seaver. Though this is an important question of compositional history that has rightly received much attention in scholarship on the narrative, I regard it as irrelevant to my exploration of the narrative's racial ideology on two counts. First, as a matter of reception, the experience, story, and language of the narrative belonged to "Mrs. Jemison" in the eyes of its first readers. When I speak of "Jemison," then, I refer to the figure in

the writing, and to its fictive speaker, and make no claims about whether the historical referent really believed or felt what appears on the page. Second, and more importantly, any gesture towards the "real" Jemison in distinction from Seaver's construction of her always, in principle, carries a particular intellectual danger: that of positing an authentic Jemison and her spurious or distorted narrative counterpart in order to manage "discrepancies" within the text. It may be tempting to use this strategy as a way of explaining away ethnocentric or racialist passages in the narrative. The problem with this is that it necessarily rests on a *prior* assumption that the authentic Jemison would have been wholly sympathetic and antiracialist, and hence any aggressivity can be ascribed to the distortions of her "editor." Not only is this logic troublingly circular, it also negates the possibility both of a more ambivalent and complex subjectivity on Jemison's part, and more broadly, of the historical possibility of a sympathetic racialism – the very discursive conjunction I want to chart here. For all these reasons, I embrace a kind of compositional agnosticism on the matter of Seaver's authorship.

29 Slotkin, *Fatal Environment*, 91.

30 On the importance of national difference in the early narratives, see Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 3–25.

31 Armstrong and Tennenhouse, *Imaginary Puritan*, 207.

32 VanDerBeets, "Introduction," xxv-xxvii.

33 Vaughan and Clark, *Puritans among the Indians*, 99–100.

34 James E. Seaver, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison*, ed. June Namias (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995), 54. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

35 On this publication history, see Namias, "Introduction" to Seaver, *Narrative.*

36 Vaughan and Clark, *Puritans among the Indians*, 35–6.

37 On the rise of this model of marriage in the nineteenth century and its relation to the rise of the middle classes, see Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York: Dutton, 1995).

38 Samuel Stanhope Smith, *An Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure in the Human Species* (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1787), 60–62.

39 Cultural and literary historians have shown how the European middle classes emerged and achieved their economic dominance in part by staking their claims in the private sphere. Their cultural hegemony entailed a redefinition of the family, the formation of a new kind of individual, and the production of new and more effective forms of social control. See Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage, 1979); Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1979); Phillipe Ariès, George Duby, and Michelle Perrot, *History of Private Life: From the Fires of Revolution to*

the Great War, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990). Symbolically at the center of all of these transformations, Nancy Armstrong has argued, was the middle-class domestic woman, upon whose virtues everything seemed to depend. See Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. American historians have described a comparable process taking place around the turn of the nineteenth century. See for example Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

40 My discussion here of sexual desire as a test of racial character is directly indebted to Richard Slotkin's analysis of Cooper's frontier fiction. See *Fatal Environment*, 90. In the following chapter, I elaborate on the literary-historical implications of this connection between male- and female-authored frontier romances.

41 See Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

42 This multivalence persists even into the twentieth century. See George Stocking, "The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race," *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 1 (1993): 4–16.

43 Dana D. Nelson, *Word in Black and White: Reading "Race" in American Literature, 1638–1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 65–89. Nelson's "'No Cold or Empty Heart': Polygenesis, Scientific Professionalization, and the Unfinished Business of Male Sentimentalism" takes quite seriously the relationship between a nineteenth-century sentimental discourse of sympathy and scientific racialism, arguing that "the culture of sentimental reform supplied the logic of the political stakes in . . . the debate over the scientific theory of polygenesis," *Differences* 11: 5 (1999/2000): 34.

44 Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," in *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), 68–90.

4 "HOMELY LEGENDS": THE USES OF SENTIMENT IN COOPER'S *THE WEPT OF WISH-TON-WISH*

1 Donald G. Darnell, *James Fenimore Cooper: Novelist of Manners* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 14.

2 The error remains uncorrected in the revised 1992 edition. See Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, Rev. edn. (New York: Anchor, 1992), 186.

3 Ibid., 186, 187–88, 170.

4 Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (New York: Random House, 1950), 65. For other critical accounts that make this argument, see Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957); and James D. Wallace, *Early Cooper and His Audience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 65.

5 R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 106.

6 Smith, *Virgin Land*, 69–70, 65.

7 Jane Tompkins offers a metacritical reading of similar impasses in the history of Cooper criticism. See Jane P. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 97–98.

8 Thanks to Jonathan Arac for helping me to clarify this point.

9 This critical project is assisted by recent scholarly reconsiderations of sentiment which decouple it from femininity in order to register male sentimentality in the nineteenth century. See for example Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler, (eds.), *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) and Dana Nelson, "'No Cold or Empty Heart': Polygenesis, Scientific Professionalization, and the Unfinished Business of Male Sentimentalism," *Differences* 11: 5 (1999/2000): 29–56. For accounts of Cooper which focus on sentimentality to varying degrees, see Jane P. Tompkins, "No Apologies for the Iroquois: A New Way to Read the Leatherstocking Novels," *Criticism* 23, no. 1 (1981): 24–41; and Darnell, *James Fenimore Cooper: Novelist of Manners* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993).

10 Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok and Other Writings on Indians*, ed. Carolyn L. Karcher (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 3.

11 Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*, ed. Mary Kelley (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 81. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

12 Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), 91. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

13 Slotkin, *Fatal Environment*, 82. On the critical history of the term "romance" in American literary history, see John McWilliams, "The Rationale for 'the American Romance'," *Boundary 2* (1990): 71–82.

14 James Fenimore Cooper, *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish: A Tale* (Philadelphia: Carey, 1829), 43.

15 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett, Student edn. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), II.30, cf. II.27.

16 James D. Wallace, "Race and Captivity in Cooper's *The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*," *American Literary History* 7, no. 2 (1995): 203, cf. 199. Wallace's essay is an important point of departure for my reading here, particularly in the lines of affiliation it draws between Cooper's novel and the tradition of the captivity narrative (Mary Jemison's in particular). At the same time, however, while we cover much of the same ground, we reach rather different conclusions about the function of the captivity topos, the ideological work performed by the discourse of sentimentality, and particularly the status of "race" in the novel. Wallace argues that "Cooper's racial discourse lacks any element of genetics or any other science of race. In fact, Cooper satirizes the very possibility of such a science . . ." (193). As will be apparent, my reading of the novel's racial language in relation to contemporary scientific discourse leads me to a very different conclusion.

17 Wallace, "Race and Captivity," 193.
18 Antonello Gerbi, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750–1990*, trans. Jeremy Moyle (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), 255.
19 Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1972).
20 Wallace, "Race and Captivity," 193.
21 James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative of 1757* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 19.
22 This discussion of the gaze is informed by the treatment of early Hollywood cinema in Mark Garrett Cooper, "Love, Danger, and the Professional Ideology of Hollywood Cinema," *Cultural Critique*, no. 39 (1998): 85–117.
23 See Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark (eds.), *Puritans among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676–1724* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 71. The settlement from which Rowlandson was taken, Lancaster, is mentioned elsewhere in Cooper's novel (261), which is set during King Philip's War, the same period as Rowlandson's captivity.
24 On the importance of national and religious difference in early representations of the "Indian," see Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 3–31.
25 Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans*, 19.
26 On the historical formation of a specifically maternal form of power in US culture, see Mary P. Ryan, *The Empire of the Mother: American Writing About Domesticity, 1830–1860* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1985). Nancy Armstrong applies Ryan's account to the rise to power of the European middle classes and extends it by connecting the power of the domestic woman to Foucault's notion of surveillance. See Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

5 STOWE'S VANISHING AMERICANS: "NEGRO" INTERIORITY, CAPTIVITY, AND HOMECOMING IN *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*

1 See David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770–1823* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975), 398, 411; and George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914*, 2nd edn. (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1987), 8–9, 52–53.
2 Thomas Jefferson, *Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson, *Library of America* (New York: Viking, 1984), 1434.
3 Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 17.
4 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York: Norton, 1994), 386. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

5 See Richard Yarborough, "Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" in *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 45–84; Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 122–46; Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 13–38; Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 97–129; Karen Sanchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 14–50.

6 See Roland Barthes "Neither-Nor Criticism" in *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 81–83.

7 Ibid., 9.

8 Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 200.

9 For a similar argument, see Arthur Riss, "Racial Essentialism and Family Values in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *American Quarterly* 46 (1994): 513–44.

10 For a range of work on Stowe's racial theory on which my account will draw, see Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 97–129; Thomas F. Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas, Tex.: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985); Thomas Graham, "Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Question of Race," in *Critical Essays on Harriet Beecher Stowe,* ed. Elizabeth Ammons (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1980), 128–34; Yarborough, "Strategies of Black Characterization"; Jean Fagan Yellin, *The Intricate Knot: Black Figures in American Literature, 1776–1863* (New York: New York University Press, 1972), 121–153; Samuel Otter, "Stowe and Race," in *The Cambridge Companion to Harriet Beecher Stowe*, ed. Cindy Weinstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 15–38.

11 I have chosen to maintain a certain consistency in echoing Stowe's term "negro," first and foremost, because I want to explicate not only the content but also the form of the novel's racial categories, and hence want to work with the novel's terms throughout. Even when not quoting the novel, however, I make passing references to its conceptions of "negro nature," and so on, in order to keep the novel's own designations in the foreground. It has seemed to me that, in the context of my argument, to substitute for Stowe's "negro" a term such as "black" or "African American" when speaking in my own voice, would be dangerous to the extent that it encouraged us to forget that the novel is not describing actually existing historical subjects, but cultural stereotypes and literary figures. I have thus opted for using the more estranged term "negro" consistently in order to keep the reader's critical distance from the term alive and well. Even when I have not placed the words in quotation marks, then, it is presumed that the term is so defamiliarized as not to need them. In a similar spirit, I used the term "Indian" when speaking of the frontier novel.

12 On Kinmont's "romantic racialism," see Fredrickson, *Black Image*, 104–7. On the influence of Kinmont's theories on Stowe's novel, see Joan D. Hedrick, *Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 209.

13 See Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981).

14 On the work of photographic conventions in British Victorian fiction, see Nancy Armstrong, *Fiction in the Age of Photography: The Legacy of British Realism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999).

15 Hortense J. Spillers, "Changing the Letter: The Yokes, the Jokes of Discourse, or, Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Reed," in *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Deborah E. McDowell and Arnold Rampersad (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 26.

16 The phrase "arrival scene" is borrowed from the structural analysis of ethnographic narrative in Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

17 See James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel," *Partisan Review* 16 (1949): 580.

18 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin; Presenting the Original Fact and Documents Upon Which the Story Is Founded, Together with Corroborative Statements Verifying the Truth of the Work* (Boston: Jewett, 1853), 45.

19 For fuller accounts of the discourses of sensibility, and on the role of Scottish common-sense philosophy in American culture, see Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750–1800* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); and Julie Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

20 For an analysis of the Topsy/Eva scene as the "exchange of interiorities" between the two, see Nancy Armstrong, "Why Daughters Die: The Racial Logic of American Sentimentalism," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1994): 1–24.

21 Compare the narrator's statement about Tom when he converts Augustine St. Clare: "Tom's heart was full; he poured it out in prayer, like waters that have long been suppressed" (263). Christian prayer is figured here as a kind of incorporeal libation – a pouring of interiority out of a filled vessel.

22 For a variety of critical work on the novel's deployment of domestic narrative structures, and the political work done by representations of households in the novel, see Brown, *Domestic Individualism*, 13–38; Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 122–46; Christina Zwarg, "Fathering and Blackface in Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 23, no. 3 (Spring, 1989): 1–15.

23 For some scholarship on the history of the English and American family, see especially Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500–1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); and Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790–1865* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). On the formation of the Southern plantation household see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988).

24 On the middle-class garden see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850*, Rev. edn. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 370–75.

25 For a concise discussion of the importance of literacy to middle-class subject-formation, see Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, 98–108.

26 Karen Sanchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 48.

27 Ibid.

28 Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization, 1800–1890* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), 98.

29 Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*, ed. Mary Kelley (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 330.

30 Jared Gardner, *Master Plots: Race and the Founding of an American Literature, 1787–1845* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 111.

31 *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 5:3–5

32 See Michelle Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment: Cultural Exchange in American Literature, 1682–1861* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1997), 118–46.

33 Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark (eds.), *Puritans among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676–1724* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 35–6.

34 Burnham, for example, offers an astute analysis of Stowe's appropriation of the "reversed" captivity paradigm, citing John Marrant's captivity narrative as one cultural location where such reversals had previously been staged. See Burnham, *Captivity and Sentiment*, 124ff.

35 See Nancy Armstrong, "Why Daughters Die: The Racial Logic of American Sentimentalism," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7, no. 2 (1994): 1–24.

36 Wiegman, *American Anatomies*, 197–8.

CONCLUSION: CAPTAIN BABO'S CABIN: RACIAL SENTIMENT AND THE POLITICS OF MISREADING IN *BENITO CERENO*

1 Herman Melville, *The Piazza Tales and Other Prose Pieces 1839–1860* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 50. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

2 See Eric J. Sundquist, "*Benito Cereno* and New World Slavery," in *Re-Constructing American Literary History*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 93–122; and Robert S. Levine, "Introduction" to Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (New York: Penguin, 2000).

3 Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 135–36.

4 Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 136.

5 See Harold H. Scudder, "Melville's *Benito Cereno* and Captain Delano's Voyages," *PMLA* 43 (1928): 502–32.

6 On the changes Melville made to Delano's account, see Carolyn L. Karcher, "The Riddle of the Sphinx: Melville's *Benito Cereno* and the Amistad Case," in *Critical Essays on Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno,"* ed. Robert E. Burkholder (New York: G.K. Hall, 1992), 196–229. For a particularly rich discussion of the overlaps between the story and the history of the revolution in San Domingo, see Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 135–54, 172.

7 Allan Moore Emery, "The Topicality of Depravity in *Benito Cereno,*" *American Literature* 55, no. 3 (1983): 322–24.

8 For the precursor of many such readings of Melville, see C. L. R. James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (London and New York: Allison & Busby, 1985). Samuel Otter's *Melville's Anatomies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) is the most important and nuanced recent work to take up the question, arguing for a Melville who "offers neither a transcendent critique nor a symptomatic recapitulation" of racial ideology, but rather an "immanent critique" that is consequently "subject to entanglement and complicity" (5, 102, 6). I have also attempted to take instruction from Otter's caution not to deploy the "deus ex machina of irony often used to redeem [Melville] from the taint of his culture" (4). Other important considerations of the question include Arnold Rampersad, "Melville and Race," in *Herman Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Myra Jehlen (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1994), 160–73; Arnold Rampersad, "Melville and Modern Black Consciousness," in *Melville's Evermoving Dawn: Centennial Essays*, ed. John Bryant and Robert Milder (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1997), 162–77; Carolyn L. Karcher, *Shadow over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville's America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980); Aldon Lynn Nielsen, *Reading Race: White American Poets and the Racial Discourse in the Twentieth Century* (Athens, Ga.: The University of Georgia Press, 1988); Toni Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro American Presence in American Literature," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 28 (1989): 1–34; Dana D. Nelson, *The Word in Black and White: Reading "Race" in American Literature, 1638–1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 109–130.

9 Melville's judge is an ironic appropriation of James Hall, the mid-century "authority" on Indians and author of *Sketches of History, Life, and Manners in the West* (1834–35). See the brief but excellent account of Melville's use of this figure in Roy Harvey Pearce, *Savagism and Civilization: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), 244–51.

10 Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade*, Northwestern-Newberry edn. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1984), 146. Subsequent references are given parenthetically in the text.

11 Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons (New York: Norton, 1994), 16.

12 Frederick Busch, "Melville's Mail," in *A Dangerous Profession: A Book About the Writing Life* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 111.

13 Samuel Otter's reading of the "Doubloon" episode in *Moby-Dick*, which culminates in Pip's metacommentary on the prior readings, offers a comparable interpretation of Melville's "reflection on the corporeal obsessions that . . . skew our vision"; see *Melville's Anatomies* 168–71.

14 Dana Nelson refers in a similar spirit to "the *narrator's* reading of Delano's reading of race." Nelson, *Word in Black and White*, 109.

15 On the subtleties of the narrative voice, the deceptions it helps perpetrate on the reader, and the consequent "relationship between the reader and Delano, joined but separated by the conspiring voice of the narrator" see Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 151.

16 Sarah Robbins, "Gendering the History of the Antislavery Narrative: Juxtaposing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Benito Cereno*, *Beloved* and *Middle Passage*," *American Quarterly* 49 (1997): 554, 555.

17 In his brief discussion of *Benito Cereno*, C. L. R. James argued that "Melville . . . in the opinions of the capable, well-meaning, Negro-loving Captain Delano, itemized every single belief cherished by an advanced civilization . . . about a backward people and then one by one showed that they were not merely false, but were the direct cause of his own blindness and stupidity." James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways*, 133. See also Glenn Altschuler, "Whose Foot on Whose Throat: A Reexamination of Melville's *Benito Cereno*," *CLAJ* 18, no. 3 (1975); Sandra A. Zagarell, " Reenvisioning America: Melville's 'Benito Cereno'," *ESQ* 30 (1984): 245–59; H. Bruce Franklin, "Past Present and Future Seemed One," in *Critical Essays on "Benito Cereno"*, ed. Robert E. Burkholder (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1992), 230–46; Franklin, "Slavery and Empire: Melville's *Benito Cereno*," in *Melville's Evermoving Dawn*, 147–161; Karcher, *Shadow over the Promised Land*, 19–27, 128–32; Nelson, *Word in Black and White*, 109–130. For a metacritical account of how Melville criticism shifted from earlier-twentieth century readings of Babo as a figure of depravity and evil (and as a symptom of Melville's unconscious racism) to later readings of the story as a critique of racism, see Emery, "The Topicality of Depravity."

18 My discussion here draws on the thorough and astute analysis of Melville's relation to the discourse of sympathy in Susan M. Ryan, *The Grammar of Good Intentions: Race and the Antebellum Culture of Benevolence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 46–76. On Melville's relationship to sentimentalism see Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, Rev. edn. (New York: Anchor Books, 1988), 289–326.

19 "About Niggers," *Putnam's Monthly* 6, no. 36 (1855): 612.

20 For an extremely illuminating reading of other aspects of "About Niggers" in relation to *Benito Cereno*, see Robbins, "Gendering the History," 551–52. Of particular interest is the characterization of the "darkly Swiftian tone" of the piece, which has obvious connections to Melville's use of satire.

21 See the juxtaposition of the narrative structures of *Benito Cereno* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in Robbins, "Gendering the History," 553. See also her brief but suggestive discussion of how the authors seemed differently to conceive their narrative authority, as indicated by their quite different subsequent "repackagings" of their narratives – Stowe's in *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* and Melville's in his *Piazza Tales* the following year (559).

22 On the Park/Ledyard problem, see the editorial appendix to Melville, *The Piazza Tales*, 585.

23 Many critics have commented in passing on the potential double-valence of the term. See for example, Nelson, *Word in Black and White*, 128–30; and Karcher, "Riddle of the Sphinx," 220. Barbara Johnson plays on the metaliterary implications of Melville's use of the term "plot" in "Melville's Fist: The Execution of *Billy Budd*," in *The Critical Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 79–109.

24 Busch, "Melville's Mail," 112.

25 Analogies to Stowe abound in criticism on *Benito Cereno*, even if only in the form of passing references to some of Stowe's character types or narrative strategies. For one substantial comparative study, see Brook Thomas, *Cross-Examinations of Law and Literature: Cooper, Hawthorne, Stowe, and Melville* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

26 See Thomas F. Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin and American Culture* (Dallas, Tex.: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), 165.

27 For a good summary of this literature, see Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 212–239.

28 Colette Guillaumin, *Racism, Sexism, Power, and Ideology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 31. Sundquist comes very close to precisely this point in his discussion of Melville's ironization of "the virtue of 'benevolence,' the central sentiment of abolitionist rhetoric since the mid-eighteenth century" – which, Sundquist makes clear by association, often engaged in a "profound indulgence in racialist interpretations of black character." Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 152. Melville's excavation of "Delano's offensive stereotypes," Sundquist writes, "allow us to see that the trope of African American docility and gaiety was generated as much by sympathetic liberalism as by the harsh regime of slavery . . . Melville in his way nearly collapses the distance between proslavery and antislavery, South and North, so as to display the combined stagecraft that preserved slavery. Paternalistic benevolence is coextensive with minstrelsy, on the plantation or on the stage" (153).

29 Mary C. Henderson, *Theater in America: 200 Years of Plays, Players, and Productions* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1986). See also Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class, Race and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 211–233.

30 Gossett, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 260.

31 On the possible connections, or at least resonances, between Delano's expectations of black character and the article on "Negro Minstrelsy" which

ran in *Putnam's* in January 1855 while *Benito Cereno* was under composition, see Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 152ff.; and Emery, "Topicality of Depravity," 321. Several critics have commented in general terms on the "show" that Babo puts on. See especially Eric Lott's discussion of the story as "Melville's version of the minstrel show" in *Love and Theft*, 234–35; and Joyce Adler's characterization of Babo as "master psychologist, strategist, general, playwright, impresario, and poet," and her consequent connection between Babo and Melville himself, in Adler, "Melville's *Benito Cereno*: Slavery and Violence in the Americas," in *Critical Essays*, 88, 92. See also H. Bruce Franklin on the "dramatist-audience relationship" that "structures all the action witnessed by Delano on the *San Dominick*," in "Past Present and Future Seemed One," 243. Franklin focuses in particular on the shaving episode which is larded with theatrical references. The language of theatricality, "shadow plays" and especially minstrelsy is also everywhere in Sundquist's reading of the story in *To Wake the Nations*, 135–182.

32 Otter, *Melville's Anatomies*, 102, 4.

33 Nelson, *Word in Black and White*, 127.

34 Morrison, "Unspeakable Things," 16.

35 Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 136.

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