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“A Very Different Looking Class of People”: Racial Passing, Tragedy, and the Mulatto Citizen in American Literature

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The University of Southern Mississippi

“A Very Different Looking Class of People”:

Racial Passing, Tragedy, and the Mulatto Citizen in American Literature

By

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the mulatto citizen as one who prevails against tragedy, uses passing as an escape route to freedom and equality, and establishes a fixed racial identity in a color struck world. In nineteenth-century American literature, the mulatto penetrates a seemingly solid world of color to reveal racial anxieties of the time. Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lonely* (1852), William Wells Brown's *Clotel, or the President's Daughter* (1853), Frank J. Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857) and Frances E.W. Harper's *Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted* depict these mulatto characters as agents of social change. Each of these texts present the figure of the mulatto in a historical context, as a slave in the South and free/freedman in the antebellum North. Considering these various genres (esp. the blending of fiction and nonfiction at times), this study examines how different authors take a political stance by using the mulatto figure to define U.S. citizenship.

Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a foundational text due to the political response during Abraham Lincoln's administration and from abolitionists worldwide. Stowe represents those minorities excluded from the democratic process, namely African Americans and women who were both disenfranchised. I examine political fiction by Brown, Webb, and Harper due to their depictions of the laws of slavery and African Americans' civil rights struggles throughout the nineteenth century. Most of these American writers were excluded themselves from the political process.¹ Therefore, I consider these writers most capable to present the voice of the marginal, mulatto citizen.

¹ African American men were not granted suffrage until the 15th amendment of the Constitution was ratified in 1870, only to be nullified and restored almost a century later by the 1965 Voting Rights. Women did not receive the right to vote until the 19th amendment in 1920.

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INTRODUCTION

In *Neither Black nor White Yet Both: Thematic Exploration of Interracial Literature*, Werner Sollors states that the word “mulatto” is of sixteenth century Spanish origin, which designated a child of a black and a white parent (127). While this description appears as merely a mixture of two races, the mulatto posed a disturbing threat to nineteenth century Americans. Sollors notes that “of all the combinations of white and black, the mulatto unites the most physical advantages” (133). Some physical advantages include the mulatto’s fair, “white” complexion, curly hair, and eyes indistinguishable from those of the pure white race. Sollors illustrates the threat of the mulatto using a quote from Claude McKay’s short story “Near-White”: “They [whites] hate us more than they do the blacks. For they’re never sure about us, they can’t place us [mulattos]” (135). The nineteenth century societal institutions of slavery and Jim Crow segregation laws and social customs created a supposedly fixed color line between white and black Americans. However, the mulatto crossed racial barriers, often without detection, undermining these institutions established mostly for the preservation of white purity. In short stories, poetry, and novels, the figure of the mulatto is a common trope in American literature used to address vexing racial problems through occurrences of tragedy, passing, citizenship, and identity crisis. Using critical race theory and historical studies, this project examines the mulatto characterization in the nineteenth century world of race and white supremacy.

The “tragic” mulatto is one who usually suffers death, rejection from a white lover, and/or from the discovery of their black lineage. However, this project rejects this stereotype and reveals the mulatto as *untragic*. While certain tragedies do occur in the works, they do not limit the mulatto’s full character. In the literature for this project, the authors’ emphasis on the mulatto’s

defects helps him/her to overcome the obstacles they face while also gaining citizenship. Such figures then appear as conquering citizens or the hero/heroine instead of fallen or “tragic” characters.

In the literature examined for this project, the mulatto often becomes a conquering citizen by racially “passing.” Sollors defines the act of passing as “passing for white in the sense of ‘crossing over’ the color line in the United States from the black to the white side” (247). The theme of racial passing has a unique appeal to American readers. A mulatto, in fact or fiction, can pass or disguise themselves, intentionally or unintentionally, as a white person merely by their appearance. Therefore, mixed-race individuals can gain greater access to either race, differently from someone who has a darker complexion. With the brutal institution of slavery as the nucleus of the nineteenth century, racial passing serves as an escape from this legal, but morally unjust institution. Racial passing, by someone legally defined as “black,” compromises the power and superiority of whiteness. A mulatto has the ability to make their blackness, a designated marker of inferiority, invisible. Racial passing appears most often in works set during historical periods when social boundaries and legal restrictions against African American nullified their citizenship. Works published and set during slavery in the antebellum era illustrates how the power of whiteness is essential to American citizenship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Mulatto: Miscegenation and Identity

At the beginning of Frederick Douglass's *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), he states "Every year brings with it multitudes of this [mulatto] class of slaves. Whether this prophecy is ever fulfilled or not, it is nevertheless plain that a very different-looking class of people are springing up at the South, and are now held in Africa; and if their increase will do no other good, it will do away the force of the argument, that God cursed Ham, and therefore American slavery is right" (243). As a former slave who is mindful of the laws against miscegenation, Douglass notes the visibility of whiteness and the invisibility of blackness, and thereby the diminished racial distinctions between black and white Americans. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, miscegenation is "the mixing or interbreeding of (people of) different races or ethnic groups, *esp.* the interbreeding or sexual union of whites and non-whites." In his essay "The Beginnings of Miscegenation of Whites and Blacks," Carter G. Woodson conveys that laws and punishments were established to prevent miscegenation from happening during slavery. Laws such as "if any free Negro man or woman should commit fornication or adultery with any white man or woman, such Negro or Negroes should be sold as a servant for seven years and the white man or woman should be punished as the laws directs in cases of adultery or fornication" (Woodson 50). While such decrees were established, Woodson concludes that it seemed to have little effect considering how in some areas the mulatto population increased (50). Woodson notes miscegenation in cities such as Charleston and New Orleans, where a number of quadroons and octoroons crossed over to the other race [i.e. passing] (50-1). Sollors also traces such social developments in fictional accounts and as witnessed by Douglass. Sollors defines each

mixed-raced figure through ancestry and blood ratio. If a mulatto reproduces with someone white, the product is a quadroon. The quadroon is “one whose blood is four part European [white] and one part African [black]. The term ‘Quadroon’ thus marks a character with some ‘black’ ancestry who could be taken for ‘white’...” (Sollors 126). If a quadroon reproduces with a white person, the product is an octoroon. The “‘octoroon’ originally referred to one-eighth admixture of either white or black blood, and hence to a person with one great-grandparent of another race.” Moreover, “The term, [octoroon], often became connected with what has been called the stereotype of the ‘Tragic Mulatto’” (Sollors 127). Following such logic, Sollors notes that the more invisible blackness becomes and the more visible is whiteness, therefore, the more tragic the mulatto becomes. While these mixed-raced figures appear during and after slavery, they complicate American society’s notions about race as a biological category or social construct. During slavery, the curse of Ham was used as the justification for racial inferiority and oppression. Proponents of slavery believed that the biblical figure Noah had cursed his son Ham with blackness and the condition of slavery (Sollors 80).² On the contrary, the mulatto complicates this doctrine. Because of the mulatto’s white characteristics and physical traits, they are often indistinguishable from those of “pure” white personage. Furthermore, the laws of slavery were based on black-blood equation and not just color complexion. Miscegenation dismantles the racial ideology of slavery. While interracial relationships and marriages were outlawed in the nineteenth century, for instance, “concubinage” was not; in some cases, sexual relations between blacks and whites, specifically black women and white men, were socially acceptable (Kinney 20).

Miscegenation, despite political and social debates from the 1700s to the present, still takes place in modern American society and controversy about the mulatto remains. Elaine K. Ginsberg, in *Passing and the Fictions of Identity* (1996), asserts that “the generation of

²Genesis 9:20-27

miscegenation made invisible in some the smaller percentage of African heritage that would have visibly marked them as ‘slave,’ enabling legal ‘black’ men and women to pass as white and free” (7). Thus, the mulatto presents the question of, if a slave is identified and characterized through blackness, what if that blackness is invisible? While this “different-looking class of people” appear as “white,” they were still considered a Negro due to the one-drop rule and a slave through the mother (Spillers 2).³ As Judith R. Berzon puts it in *Neither White Nor Black: The Mulatto Character in American Fiction* (1978), “he [the mulatto] is torn between two groups, not primarily in a psychosocial sense, but rather as the expression of his divided biological inheritance” (100). In regards to the different blood ratios, the mulatto has been constructed using genealogy though the conflict is centered between biology and the social construction of race. While biology determines what is visible and what is not, black traits vs. white traits, social customs determine *what is made visible outside of genetics*, considering Jim Crow designations for whites and blacks.⁴ This division of color highlights how different races are legally (mis-) treated; genealogy gives the mulatto the choice to remove themselves from the dividing line and into either black or white spaces of privilege.

The Passing “Citizen”

With the increase of a class of mixed-raced people, passing would become a common occurrence because of the social inequality of blacks. During slavery, the mulatto “passed” into freedom by adopting a white identity (e.g. the black fugitive couple William and Ellen Craft)

³F. James Davis’ “Who is Black? One Nation’s Definition” looks at the one-drop rule and the term mulatto in the United States disguising racial traits from cultural traits.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jefferson/mixed/onedrop.html> Oct. 30, 2011

⁴Richard Wormser- *Homer Plessy vs. Ferguson*-“separate, but equal” accommodations for blacks and whites. In 1896, the Supreme Court of the United States heard the case and upheld the Louisiana segregation statute constitutional. The Plessy decision set the precedent that “separate” facilities for black and whites were constitutional as long as they were “equal”, and thus Jim Crow emerged throughout the United States.

http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_plessy.html Dec. 13, 2011.

(Ginsberg 7). With lynching on the rise before and during the reign of Jim Crow, blacks sought to escape discrimination and racial antagonism making passing a viable option (Talty 83). From enslavement to institutional discrimination, passing allowed the mulatto to achieve the equality reserved for white citizens, which mulattos were deprived of as “black” individuals. In nineteenth century American literature, passing during slavery and the post-antebellum era is presented as a necessity, a means for achieving social equality for blacks and citizenship before the ratification of the 14th amendment.

Even though the 13th Amendment abolished slavery and granted slaves their freedom⁵, it did not guarantee civil equality for African Americans. Segregation and Jim Crow laws re-established an unjust society for blacks during the nineteenth century. While most blacks were no longer enslaved, they were still subjected to the dominance of white authority. Separate public facilities such as restaurants, schools, water fountains, and bathrooms were established during the post-Reconstruction era in order to identify blacks as social inferiors to whites. This also extended to public transportation such trains (and later buses). Signs that read “WHITES ONLY” and “BLACKS ONLY” were posted everywhere throughout the South and these designated spaces often appeared outside of the region (creating a Jim Crow America). However, where does the mulatto, quadroon, or octoroon belong in segregated society? No signs read “MIXED ONLY.” Again, due to the one-drop rule, anyone with even an ounce of Negro blood in their veins was legally “black.” However, physical features such as skin color/tone, hair texture, and eye color are visible, not blood ratio during everyday encounters. In “American Graffiti: The Social Life of Segregation Signs,” Elizabeth Abel presents a political cartoon of a white woman being

⁵13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery in 1865 triggering Reconstruction throughout the South and redefining of racial equality.

mistaken for colored.⁵ The streetcar conductor points to a sign declaring “ ‘FROM HERE BACK FOR NEGROES’ ” (9). In response, a Caucasian woman protests, “ ‘But I’m not! I got this tan out at the beach’ ” (9). While the cartoon appears as dark comedy (pun intended), it illustrates how racial identities are constructed by law and not complexion alone. Abel explains that “by pairing and mocking the arbitrariness of racial signifiers, graphic and somatic, the cartoon suggests that they both can be resignified, that there is some room for play” (9). Segregation signs were meant to create a physical barrier between blacks and white; however, it seems impossible for a tanned-white woman to cross such false boundaries. Segregation may seemed to have only affected blacks, but it also created limitations for whites (as in the cartoon). With race being such a visual concept during Jim Crow, it was in the eye of the beholder, esp. a public authority (i.e. the conductor) to determine to which race an individual belonged. The tanned-white woman in the cartoon is placed in a similar position as the mulatto. Thus, “the cartoon offers a twist on a classical trope of African American letters, in which the inaugural encounter with a segregation sign is a defining moment of social inscription, a painful rite of passage that spells the fall into race” (Abel 9).

White southerners (esp. slave holders) and northern whites were empowered by the privilege of whiteness, if not their economic status. Slaves possessed no civil or human rights; they were subjected to brutality, inequality, and deprived an education, and even their own families. On the contrary, slave holders and most whites were given educational opportunities, allowed to create and maintain families, and were not subjected to racial violence. The maintenance of family ties and the protection of human rights are central to this project’s critique of the mulatto.

Appearing as white essentially allows the mulatto, quadroon, and/or octoroon the option to choose

⁵From the 1945 *Chicago Defender*, the cartoon mocks the idea of segregation and the signs used to create a barrier between blacks and white showing the flaws of race and racial categories.

a race other than the one that society and even genealogy assigns them because of their invisible blackness. This project examines how passing affects the mulatto's sense of self and the mulatto's status (historical and fictional) in society. The act of choosing to pass for white, the benefits and consequences thereof, are analyzed as a narrative strategy common in interracial literature.

Citizenship for the Negro

In nineteenth century literary texts, we see the mulatto not only crossing the color line by passing and claiming whiteness, but also claiming all the benefits that come with being white, most importantly citizenship. A citizen is one entitled to the rights and privileges of a free man; a member of a state; a native or naturalized person who owes allegiance to a government and is entitled to protection from it.⁶ The 14th Amendment states that “no state shall deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law” (Thomas 14). While the 14th Amendment was not ratified until 1868, establishing the definition of citizenship for African Americans, the definition of citizenship was already established for whites. The Civil Rights Act of 1866 states “[citizens] shall have the same right... to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property, and to full and equal benefit of all laws and proceedings for the security of person and property, as is enjoyed by white citizens” (Thomas 13). Significantly, the 1866 Civil Rights Act emphasized that these civil rights were already “enjoyed” and only allotted to white citizens. With Stowe, Brown, and Webb's works being published and set in the 1850s, before even the ratification of the 13th Amendment, they depict their mulatto characters claiming rights enjoyed only by whites at the time, transforming these characters from a slave to a citizen. Similarly, Harper's text shows the mulatto freedman claiming citizenship before the law defines

⁶Merriam-Webster Online- <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/citizen>

citizenship for blacks. However, prior to the ratification of these constitutional amendments, Stowe, Brown, and Webb humanize the mulatto and the Negro in the midst of slavery as a means of abolishing the practice. With these authors presenting a common humanity, the slave is presented as an equal despite being considered legally inferior to whites because of his/her education, disposition, or even complexion.

Harper depicts the evolution of black citizenship from the slave to the freedman to the citizen in *Iola Leroy*. Harper presents the mulatto and Negro as second-class citizens unequal to whites even after the ratification of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments as well as the Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1875. While these decrees defined freedom, citizenship, civil, social, and political rights, the Negro still remained inferior, but Harper shows the mulatto claiming and exercising political rights. Black Codes, especially in the southern states, were passed and kept blacks from political rights and privileges such as voting, testifying against whites, serving on juries, and having to sign yearly labor contracts, leaving the Negro still inferior under a “disguised slavery” (Harper 7). The Jim Crow Era was initiated by the *Homer Plessy v. John Ferguson* case of 1896, deeming “separate but equal” facilities for whites and blacks as constitutional. These authors illustrate the mulatto abandoning the tragic stereotype, undermining laws and societal standards of slavery and Jim Crow, and becoming a (white) citizen.

Tragic Mulatto

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines tragic as “resembling tragedy in respect of its matter; relating to or expressing fatal or dreadful events; connected with or excited by such events; sorrowful, sad, melancholy, gloomy.” The mulatto is often labeled as “tragic” in literature

through an array of circumstances. In “White Slaves: The Mulatto Hero in Antebellum Fiction,” Nancy Bentley asserts that the mulatto’s tragedy begins with their birth. She states that “as the logic of antislavery fiction has it, the sexual oppression that produces [the female mulatto’s] Europeanized ‘beauty’ also makes her the victim of the next cycle of abuse” (8). Miscegenation is usually due to a tragic incident; the rape of a black slave woman by her white slave master. The mulattos’ white and beautiful features are inherited by their quadroon and octoroon descendants making them vulnerable to the cycle of tragedy. Sollors also notes that in general mulattos are well-shaped and well-featured women in the literature (129). However, this “tragic” inheritance extends to male mulattos as well. Neither male nor female mulattos can uphold nineteenth century cultural standards of being a Victorian lady or a gentleman. Barbara Welter, in “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” divides “true womanhood” into four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Without them, “all was ashes and with them she was promised happiness and power” (Welter 152). A lady was expected to uphold these virtues; however, these expectations and standards does not hold true for the female mulatto in interracial literature. Welter states that “religion or piety was the core of a woman’s virtue, the source of her strength” (152). However, not just for the mulatto, but for all black woman, religion is the justification for slavery making it the source of their burdens, not their strength. Welter goes on to write that “purity was essential to a young woman, its absence as unnatural and unfeminine. Without it she was, in fact, no woman at all, but a member of some lower order” (154). Black women and mulattos were frequently raped by their masters and overseers and due to the oppression of slavery. These women could not protect themselves from sexual harassment or sexual assault to preserve their purity. Being a slave already enforced submissiveness and while some female slaves did hard labor, some were subjected to attending to their mistress and their

children, thus performing the maternal role. While black women did possess some of these virtues, without all of them they could never be a “true woman.”

Similar to women, men also had virtues to uphold. A gentleman is a man of respect and the head of the family. Welter explains that “men were the movers, the doers, the actors” (159). However, black men and mulatto men had limitations that were out of their control. During slavery, black and mulatto men were under surveillance by the masters and, most importantly, their lives and families did not belong to them. They had little mobility and could do nothing without the permission of their master. Similar to the black female and mulatto, the black male and mulatto could not protect his family or himself; moreover, he was not allowed to perform the role of provider for his family. While blacks had more mobility during Jim Crow, they were still subjugated to racially categorized spaces which prevented black men from being the idea “movers, doers, and actors.” Differently from black and mulatto males, black and mulatto females often had to bear the burden of supporting families during slavery. Despite the father’s race, the child followed the condition of the mother, enslaved or free. Yet, the male and female mulattos both appear tragic in the fiction I examine. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* presents these issues of womanhood, manhood, and vulnerability through her three mulatto characters Eliza, Cassy, and George.

Death is often the most common tragedy that a mulatto experiences in the literature. Bentley further writes that “by definition, the tragic mulatto is granted her most pronounced symbolic power by virtue of her worldly suffering—her sexual exploitation and the betrayals and abuse she endures usually find physical expression in suicide or fatal illness” (9). The texts for this project do present circumstances where death is the fate of the mulatto, but there are also instances where death does not occur. So how/when death occurs and under what circumstances death is

presented must be taken into consideration. In some texts where tragedy does occur, the mulatto is still victorious and lives. In some of the texts evaluated for this project, some mulattos are not subjected to as much tragedy as others, thus contradicting the popular stereotype of the “tragic mulatto.” Other instances of tragedy include the discovery of one’s black lineage, double consciousness of race, and the lost of a lover. Each circumstance alters the mulatto’s life, but does not necessarily deem them tragic.

METHODOLOGY

Literary critics have applied the term “tragic” to mulatto characters who suffer circumstances leading to their death, unrequited love, and/or identity crisis. This project determines if this term is appropriate for understanding mixed-race characterizations collectively in nineteenth century American literature by looking at two major themes that surround the mulatto: passing and citizenship. In order to properly analyze the figure of the “tragic mulatto,” historical accounts of race relations and social issues are taken into consideration to contextualize the mulatto within American culture.

During the antebellum era, the tragic mulatto served as an agent of social change. In James Kinney’s *Amalgamation! Race, Sex, and Rhetoric in the Nineteenth-Century American Novel* (1985), he examines how abolitionist writers used both miscegenation and the mulatto as propaganda to attack slavery in works of antebellum plantation fiction. Kinney explains that “the Southern romantics were portraying the idyllic life of the agrarian South, in which the Negro slave was a colorful native background figure” (56). In response, abolitionist writers counter the Southern stereotype of the happy black member of the plantation family by portraying the tragic mulatto in antislavery novels (56). Most characterizations of a female tragic mulatto mirror the characterizations of a white southern lady; both are presented as “white” (in physicality and purity), the offspring of a white father, rightful heirs, educated, and superior in beauty. With this parallel characterization, the mulatto in antislavery literature display “reverse racism” to the readers of the period, largely middle-class females, showing the idea of a visually white person not only being enslaved, but lives being destroyed (63). As Kinney confirms, “southern miscegenation is a key point in the attack on slavery because, in the interracial relationship, the

slave status of the woman puts her totally at the mercy of the white male. Crying out against the degradation of helpless females has great emotional appeal,” especially to a predominantly female audience (59). With miscegenation as “a major piece of heavy artillery” combined with “the sorrowful story of a tragic mulatto” as “ammunition” in antislavery novels, there emerges “a useful literary symbol for the many problems associated with slavery and racism in 19th century America” (225). However, this project provides multiple examples of *untragic* mulatto figures to illustrate a broader range of mixed-race characterizations in American literature. The mulatto as a literary symbol is analyzed through the lens of their triumphs, victories, and claims of citizenship, straying from the popular stereotype of their tragedies and misfortunes.

Various sources were used for this project including novels, literary criticism, and historical studies: the novels serve as primary sources, while books and journal articles, written by literary scholars and historians (among other specialist), are used as secondary sources. These novels that were written primarily by abolitionists present interracial romances during slavery, the laws of miscegenation, passing, and family division as a literary attack on the institution. Literary scholars examine mixed-race characterization based on the themes of passing, genealogy, slavery, and miscegenation. Using both past and present literary works, Kinney reveals the consequences of miscegenation and its effect on our understanding of race in America. The mulatto as well as quadroon and octoroon characterizations are analyzed depending on the depictions of such individuals in the texts. The “one-drop rule” is central to the nineteenth century categorization and genealogy of individuals of mixed-race. It determines the (in)visibility of blackness or whiteness of these characterizations. The literary texts I chose look at the mulatto through the lenses of race and citizenship, especially the time leading up to the Civil War and its aftermath with the ratification of Constitutional amendments. The literature includes, but is not limited to

Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lonely* (1852), William Wells Brown's *Clotel or, the President's Daughter* (1853), Frank J. Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857), and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's *Iola Leroy, or Shadows Uplifted* (1892).

Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is a foundational text for this project because of the controversial political response it sparked during Lincoln's administration. Stowe's work is the first major novel written by a woman addressing the ideology of slavery. Stowe sets her novel in the antebellum period leading up to the Civil War and as a response to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The Fugitive Slave Act allowed slave holders to retrieve their slaves even after they had escaped to a free state. Kinney notes that the Fugitive Slave Act removed any recourse to basic rights for the fugitive slave and exerted extreme pressure in favor of the claimant and for the first time; Northerners could be forced by law to aid in the capture and return of runaways (55). This act transformed the North from a land of freedom to another land of slavery, with northerners serving as slave catchers. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe's characters George, Eliza, and Harry are mulattos trying to escape from slavery and they are subjected to the one-drop rule. With the Fugitive Slave Act destroying the freedom once accessible by fleeing to northern areas of the U.S., George and Harry both have to pass as white in order to get to Canada and to secure complete freedom. Stowe's use of a male and female mulatto figure allows a gendered comparison of the "tragic" mulatto in this study. While both mulattos run away, they are running away from different circumstances. Eliza runs away from a home where she is a privileged slave. She is educated and does not suffer the abuse to which most slaves are subjected. Unlike other quadroons in nineteenth-century American literature, she is not vulnerable because of her beauty and is raised to be pious under the protection of her mistress, Mrs. Shelby. Eliza and George are even allowed to marry, though their marriage is not legal. However, Eliza's protection is limited,

in that despite Mr. Shelby's (her master's) better judgment, he sells her son Harry due to financial necessities. With maternal instincts, Eliza does not accept this fate and runs away with Harry to prevent him from being sold.

Differently, George runs away because of the abusive treatment from his master. George, an intelligent mulatto slave, builds a machine similar to the cotton gin, which impresses everyone but his master. His master, after seeing George's superiority, demotes him to the most harsh working conditions on the plantation and tells George that he must take up with a new wife. With the pride of his work taken and the threat of losing Eliza, George rejects a potentially tragic fate and runs away. Considering these circumstances, both mulattos face a tragic situation; Eliza, as mother, not being able to protect her child and George, as man and father, not being able to protect himself or his family. With slavery, passing, and gender issues intertwined, Stowe shows the different purposes that the mulatto serves in nineteenth century American literature.

Similar to Stowe, William Wells Brown's *Clotel* presents his mulatto protagonist passing in slavery and thereafter. *Clotel's* tragedies include not being able to marry her white lover Horatio, being sold and separated from her daughter Mary, and her death in the novel. Significantly, the author casts *Clotel* as Thomas Jefferson's illegitimate "black" daughter by his slave Sally Hemmings, thus juxtaposing the ideology of slavery and freedom associated with such a prominent political figure during the nineteenth century. Brown's work appeals to the readers' sympathy by revealing the hypocrisy of American democratic principles and the horrors of slavery in the so-called "land of the free."

Frank J. Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* is also set during slavery; however, he presents the mulatto involved in a romantic, though illegitimate, interracial relationship. His character Emily, a mulatto slave, is married to her master Clarence Garie. Webb's novel presents

his mulatto in a contradictory social and regional context. By marrying Clarence, Emily appears as both a plantation mistress and, by law, a slave. In the South's plantation society, the wife/mistress is at the right-hand side of the master. Set in Savannah, Georgia, the novel presents Emily in a position of power that other slaves do not usually possess. By Webb moving the Garies to the North—Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he critiques the legitimacy of their relationship outside of slavery. In the North, they legally marry, and Emily and their two children, Emily and Clarence, are all free. Yet, the taboo of interracial marriage prevails in the North as well. After Clarence Garie is murdered and Emily Garie dies, everything that the marriage establishes is void, including the legitimacy of their children as being free citizens and rightful heirs to the Garies' estate. They become slaves by law once again. As orphans, Clarence and Emily are separated, reinforcing the division of family commonly seen during slavery. Clarence's tragedy begins with him being forced to hide his black ancestry his entire life which leads him to an identity crisis about racial belonging. Adding to his tragedy, when Clarence's identity is revealed (by an old childhood playmate George Stevens), he is denied the social privilege of being with his white girlfriend/later fiancé, "Little Birdie," and he consequently dies of a broken heart. Webb's mulattos are used to address the dynamics of an interracial relationship, passing, and the true extent of the color line in the U.S.

Similar to Webb, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's *Iola Leroy* depicts slavery and its aftermath, presenting the same scenario with a marriage between a white slave owner Eugene and a mulatto, Marie. After Eugene Leroy dies, his marriage to Marie and everything that surrounds it is void. Differently, while Emily and Clarence Garie's children are aware of their racial background, Eugene and Marie's children—Iola, Harry, and Grace—are not. By unfortunate circumstances, Harry and Iola find out that they are in fact considered black and subjected to

slavery. (Grace dies as a young child without ever learning the truth of her “tragic” heritage).

Harry and Iola are both given multiple opportunities to pass, but neither chooses to do so.

Although Harry and Iola have been unintentionally passing, Harper’s work evaluates the choice of passing or not passing even when it can be beneficial for the characters. Both characters choosing not to pass allow the mulatto to be viewed as victorious without relying on their whiteness to secure their future in a racist society. With the theme of passing, Harper presents also the question of black citizenship by addressing the mulattos’ political, social, and civil rights during Reconstruction. By depicting her mulatto characters’ reaction to these issues, Harper gives them a voice as agents of social change and potential citizens during a pivotal time in American history.

Although there are various ways to identify mulatto characterizations, only characters of black and white parentage are evaluated in this project. At the core of the nineteenth century social issues was racism primarily between black and white Americans. The father is usually white and the mother is usually black in the interracial literature. The father is a slave holder and/or prominent figure in the text (i.e. wealthy and/or of high class status). The mother can be a slave/or previously a slave or free woman/citizen of color. The relationships between the mother and father can be either consensual or nonconsensual: consensual sexual relationships depicted in marriage and nonconsensual sexual relationship based on rape (which may not have been a criminal offence during slavery). The characters that are analyzed are not limited to just major characters, but minor characters are analyzed as well. In each of the works selected, a minor mulatto character shares the same misfortunes and tragedies as the focal mulatto character. The minor mulatto characters in these works offer a different dimension than that of the major characters; they appear marginal to the text but extend the communal relations of the mulatto to illustrate how large populations of mixed-race individuals were considered a threat to raced-based

systems of slavery and Jim Crow. Minor black characters are also analyzed as citizens, offering a comparison to the status of the mulatto. In *The Garies and Their Friends*, for example, George Winston finds that there is no place for the mulatto in a fabricated “equal” country, and, as a result, he goes to South America for better opportunities.

In *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the minor character Cassy, opposite of Eliza, is violated, sold countless times, and loses her children. Cassy offers a heightened struggle for female slaves because Cassy is not protected like Eliza. In *Clotel*, while the mulatto protagonist dies, her daughter Mary offers the alternative fate of the mulatto despite the tragedies’ that they experience. In the end, Mary has both freedom and love, two things *Clotel* is unable to obtain. In *Iola Leroy*, Miss Delaney, a dark complexioned character who appears in the novel briefly, addresses politics of the time and “the Negro Problem.” She represents activists black women (like Frances Harper) in the nineteenth century.

Major themes and/or categories of my analysis are identity, relationships, the endings of novels, passing, citizenship, and tragedy. Identity is how the character views him or herself and how other characters view mulatto figures in different contexts. Relationships will range from marriage, companionship, and/or to a concubine relationship. The novels end in various ways: in death, marriage, and/or racial discovery. Sollors also defines passing as the “act of identifying oneself or accepting identification as a white person—use of a person having some Negro blood to assimilate into white society by concealing one’s antecedents” (247). However, the most frequently used definition he provides will be used to analyze passing in the novels and to see what effects they have on the characters and the society in context: “‘passing for white’ in the sense of ‘crossing over’ the color line in the United States from the black to the white side” (247). From slavery to the Reconstruction, the mulatto aids the transition of citizenship in America. For each

of thematic category, I want to answer the following questions:

- Identity- How does the character view him or herself? How does this view affect them personally, socially, and/or physically? Is the character searching for a “true” identity? Is such an identity found?
- Relationships- Is the relationship consensual or nonconsensual? How does this affect the characters? What is the context and/or setting of the relationship (North or South)?
- Endings of novels- Is the ending sad/“tragic” or happy? Does this ending affect the character(s) identity? Does the ending make the character tragic as whole/ or only in some aspects?
- Passing- Do the character(s) choose to pass? Why does the character choose to pass or not? How does this affect them socially? How does this affect the character(s) identity? Do they develop a double consciousness? How does the mulatto affect the laws during slavery and segregation?
- Citizenship- What does it mean to be a citizen during different eras, from slavery to Reconstruction? How does the mulatto gain citizenship? How does the mulatto address or impact the rights of citizens—political, social, and civil?

DISCUSSION

The Garies: “A Family of Peculiar Construction”

At the beginning of *The Garies and Their Friends*, Frank J. Webb introduces the reader to the wealthy planter and his family living in Savannah, Georgia during the antebellum era. “There was nothing about Mr. [Clarence] Garie to attract more than ordinary attention” (2), but the true peculiarity surrounds Mrs. Emily Garie and their children. Mrs. Garie is regarded as “a lady marked with beauty...her hair, of jetty black, was arranged in braids; and through her light-brown complexion the faintest tinge of carmine was visible...she displayed a fine profile and perfectly moulded form” (2). On their veranda, Mrs. Garie sits opposite of her husband, creating an almost undetectable contrast between his whiteness and her blackness. Webb shows the reader how Mrs. Garie, through her mulatto profile, appears as an exotic other when placed next to the “ordinary” Mr. Garie. Mr. Garie is given a banal description, while Mrs. Garie is the focal point in the elaborate description of her physical appearance. Her beauty is exquisite, and her children complete this peculiar portrait of a family:

The little girl in [Mrs. Garie’s] arms and the boy at her side, showed no trace whatever of African origin. The girl had the chestnut hair and blue eyes of her father; but the boy had inherited the black hair and dark eyes of his mother. The critically learned in such matters, knowing his parentage, might have imagined they could detect the evidence of his mother’s race, by the slightly mezzo-tinto expression of his eyes, and the rather African fullness of his lips; but the casual observer would have passed him by without dreaming that a drop of negro blood coursed through his veins. (2-3)

Webb places the children distinctively by the side of Mrs. Garie not only to inform the reader of their parentage and true race, but also to represent one of the most important customs that surrounded slavery in the nineteenth century, the “one-drop rule.” The children placed next to Mrs. Garie reinforce the slave law that they follow the status of the mother. Hypothetically, if the

children were placed next to Mr. Garie and no description was given, this family portrait would appear rather “ordinary.” Thus, Webb presents the significance of racial amalgamation at the beginning of the novel, which continues as a recurring theme throughout it.

Following the Garies’ family portrait, the reader is introduced to George Winston, Mrs. Garie’s cousin who reunites with her after he is freed from slavery. He has just returned from a trip to Philadelphia in search of prospects for his relocation. Although he is described as a “dark-complexion gentleman,” George tells the Garies about how he visited one of the most prestigious white families in the city, unsuspected of passing as a white man. While relaying his story to the Garies about his time in Philadelphia, George Winston is described as having polished manners, an irreproachable appearance, and clothed in fine linen” (8). Webb notes that the “fine looking gentleman seated near Mr. Garie loses nothing by the comparison that their proximity would suggest.” Seating these two figures next to each other, conversing and laughing, creates an apposition between the two revealing the fickle color line between the races. When Mr. Garie asks if they suspected that he is colored, Winston replies, “ ‘I don’t think they had the remotest idea of such a thing...Old Mr. Priestly was like a father to me; and as for his daughter Clara and her aunt, they were politeness embodied’ ” (3). Moreover, Mr. Priestly allowed Winston to serve as Clara’s escort. “ ‘We [George and Clara] went to the opera, the theatre, to museums, concerts, and I can’t tell where all. The Sunday before I left I accompanied her to church, and after service, as we were coming out, she introduced me to Miss Van Cote and her mamma’ ” (3). George crosses the color line to enter white society as a southern gentleman. Here we have a black man escorting a white woman to social functions publicly during the height of slavery. However, George is passing as a well-mannered, southern gentleman, and can easily enter the social circle of white, northern elites. In this scene, George is passing involuntarily and it is his upbringing by his

master that enables him to appear as a white, southern gentleman.

While the North was popularly regarded as territory where African American citizens had more freedom during the antebellum era, Webb shows how racial segregation was practiced there as well as in the South. Mr. Priestly is a bigot though he does not realize the error of his ways, which Webb mocks in Winston's passing. Mr. Garie states that " "The old man prides himself on being able to detect evidence of the least drop of African blood in any one; and makes long speeches about the natural antipathy of the Anglo-Saxon to anything with a drop of negro blood in its veins' " (4). George is so white in complexion and demeanor that he not only deceives Mr. Priestly, but defies the standards of what a black man can be, a gentleman. Mr. Garie relays Mr. Priestly's opinion of such, saying " 'the existence of 'a gentleman' with African blood in his veins, is a moral and physical impossibility, and that by no exertion can anything be made of that description of people,' " but here George stands, quite literally in the arms of his daughter, being everything Mr. Priestly proclaims he cannot be. In these instances, we see George claiming social rights, i.e. escorting Clara to different places, which were not allotted to him or to any African American at the time. Not only does George's mannerisms and complexion allow him to be embraced by Mr. Priestly, but also his association with Mr. Garie; George is not his slave, but a friend and even a family member. Webb from the very beginning shows how racial identity and class status can determine the role the mulatto character plays in fiction and a historical context. Southern plantation owners were among the elite, and George has been raised and cultivated to emulate this cultural image. Mr. Priestly is also a cultivated gentleman and George mirrors him because of the training by his master, making him appear to be everything Mr. Priestly is, if not more.

Migrating to a “Land of Freedom”

What is key to a mulatto’s identity is geographic location because it may determine a character’s cultural, if not racial identity. Webb presents George Winston among white elites in the North (Philadelphia) and in the South (on Mr. Garie’s plantation in Savannah, Georgia and on Mr. Moyese’s, his master’s, plantation, in New Orleans). In New Orleans, George is a slave, but his appearance as a white man is contested. After his death, Mr. Moyeses’ lawyers Mr. Lee and Mr. Ketchum discuss the controversial will that stipulates Georges’ inheritance (racial and legal). Mr. Lee says, “ ‘George is almost as white as you or I, and has the manners and appearance of a gentleman’ ” (11). They argue over the value and liability of such prized property as a cultivated, mulatto slave.

In Savannah, George and Clarence are both portrayed as southern gentlemen on the Garie plantation. However, Clarence knows of George’s lineage and the Garie plantation, like the Garie family, is no “ordinary” plantation. Instead of being visited by family members, friends, and neighbors, the Garies are isolated from society. Mr. Garie receives occasional visits from white gentlemen, but they disregard his illegitimate family. While she is the mistress over the plantation, Mrs. Garie is not respected as such since none of the white ladies in the neighborhood associate with her (57). The elites in southern society are plantation and slave owners, and Clarence is respected for his wealth and class status. However, his relationship with Emily is limited because while society tolerates their relationship, the law did not permit Emily and Clarence to marry.

After being freed by his master Mr. Moyese and being left a sufficient inheritance, George goes in search of his mother. After learning that she is dead, he continues to travel throughout the

novel in search of his own identity. With no ties to any black family and his white appearance, George has the potential to be whoever and whatever race he desires. For example, when he registers at a hotel where upper-class southerners usually stay in Philadelphia, George encounters a porter who is a member of the “Vigilance Committee of the Under-ground Railroad Company, a society formed for the assistance of fugitive slaves” (40). This particular porter, Ben, escorts George to his room and mistakes him for being a white, southern slave holder. So Ben plays the role of a desperate and despairing Negro who is yearning to return to his plantation; the trick, however, is to obtain funds for the Vigilance Committee (39). George exclaims to Ben that “ ‘any man that prefers slavery to freedom deserves to be a slave—you ought to be ashamed of yourself,’ ” and George dismisses Ben from his room (40). What is significant in this scene is that George, without an introduction or background information, except that he is from New Orleans, is mistaken for a white, southern gentleman.

Webb emphasizes how George can easily cross the boundaries where ever he goes due to his appearance and manners. When Webb introduces George, he has just returned from a tour of the northern states, in search of a place to establish himself in business (11-14). However, Webb notes that George realizes that “amongst the whites, he could not form either social or business connections, should his identity with the African race be discovered; and whilst, on the other hand, he would have found sufficiently refined associations amongst the people of colour to satisfy his social wants, he felt that he could not bear the isolation and contumely to which they were subjected” (14). In searching for his identity, he finds that his choice to be either white or black does not matter because in America neither race allows him to be seen or judged as simply a man that is equal to all other men. In the end, he leaves the United States and goes to South America where “if he must struggle for success in life, he might do it without additional embarrassments

that would be thrown in his way in his native land, solely because he belonged to an oppressed race” (14). Webb moves George to different locations to show that racial boundaries are not insurmountable to resolve. Outside of America, the idea of whiteness being superior and blackness being inferior has no bearing on identity, thus allowing his distinct “white” appearance to be irrelevant. While George is a minor character in the novel, his experiences illustrate how the mulatto can negotiate boundaries to resolve racial conflicts. George’s experiences are significant in that he undermines the ideas and standards surrounding race, both white and black, in the nineteenth century and shows how race is socially constructed instead of being a biological fact.

In a similar travel narrative, the Garies leave the South and travel north to Philadelphia in search of freedom. For them, it is especially important to protect the children from a tragic fate of enslavement. Despite Mr. and Mrs. Garie being in love with a strong family bond, they initially reside in Savannah, Georgia, a slave state, where his wife and children are Mr. Garies’ legal property only. When Mr. and Mrs. Garie discuss their predicament, she refers to their children by saying, “ ‘I wish they were not little slaves,’ ” leaving Mr. Garie shocked and hurt by this assertion (53). However, she continues, “ ‘I know you do not treat me or them as though we were slaves. But I cannot help feeling that we are such...If anything should happen that you should be taken away suddenly, think what would be our fate’ ” (53-4). Mrs. Garie recognizes the dangers her and her children face despite her union with a white, wealthy plantation owner. Interracial marriages were illegal in the South; Emily is nothing more than Clarence’s mulatto mistress, which is socially allowed considering common practices of miscegenation. However, the North is not the land of freedom they anticipate. Even with a warning from Mr. Garie’s uncle, John, they decide to move anyways. John tells Mr. Garie that “ ‘you can’t expect to live there as you do here; the prejudice against persons of colour is much stronger in some of the Northern cities than it is

amongst us Southerners...You won't be able to sustain your old connections with your Northern friends--you'll find that they will cut you dead' ” (100). He goes on to say that “ ‘as long as you live here in Georgia you can sustain your present connection with impunity, and if you should ever want to break it off, you could do so by sending her and the children away...but go to the North, and it becomes a different thing. Your connection with Emily will inevitably become a matter of notoriety’ ” (100). Similar to George, John realizes that this hopeful freedom they are in search of cannot be found in neither the North nor the South. Mr. Garie disagrees and feels that “ ‘Emily is as much my wife in the eyes of God, as if a thousand clergymen had united us...My father did not feel that my mother was any more his wife, than I do that Emily is mine’ ” (101). Mr. Garie's elevation of Mrs. Garie to a superior and legal status as his wife is quickly dismissed. John responds, “ ‘Hush, hush; that is all nonsense, boy; and, besides, it is paying a very poor compliment to your mother to rank her with you mulatto mistress’ ” (101). In this moment, John represents the eyes of the law. Although he accepts Emily as his nephew's concubine, he still recognizes her as their racial inferior despite her intimate relationship with Clarence. By using the phrase “mistress,” John overtly marks a contrast between Emily and Clarence's mother. Emily is not acknowledged as the legitimate wife of Clarence because of her black lineage. In Georgia, where she is known as once being a mulatto slave, her education, appearance, and social manners as a southern “lady” are meaningless.

The Little White Darkies

As the novel progresses and the Garies move to Philadelphia, we meet their neighbors the Stevens. Mr. and Mrs. Stevens are racist and after finding out that Mrs. Garie and the children have Negro blood in their veins, the Stevens try to destroy their new found freedom. Once Mr.

Garie literally brings to “light” the fact that Mrs. Garie is a mulatto, Mrs. Stevens brings this new information to the other students’ parents at the school all of their children attend, fearing the taint of integration. When Mrs. Stevens insists that the teacher dismiss the Garies children, Miss Jordan believes it is “ ‘unjust and unchristian to eject two such children from my school, because their mother has the misfortune to have a few drops of African blood in her veins... [she tells Mrs. Stevens] Why, you yourself must admit that they are as white as any children in the room,’ ” including Mrs. Stevens’ children (157). Her daughter Liz is described as having “dark chestnut hair, and mild blue eyes, and a round, full face, which, in expression, was sweetness itself” (127). This description is almost, if not exactly, the same description of Mr. and Mrs. Garie’s daughter Emily. Even with this taken into account, Mrs. Stevens says “ ‘I am willing to acknowledge they are; but they have nigger blood in them, notwithstanding; and they are, therefore, as much niggers as the blackest, and have no more right to associate with white children than if they were as black as ink’ ” (157). A little blood, like ink, taints and outweighs the immense amount of white blood in their veins. Mrs. Stevens’ reference to ink also reinforces the law of the one-drop rule written in ink, making it a permanent stain like their black blood. Thus, while genetically their blackness is invisible, society rejects their whiteness. Even after expulsion of the children, Mr. Stevens arranges for a mob to attack their home leaving Mr. and Mrs. Garie dead in the end and the children orphaned. Then, they are given the same opportunity like George to pass for white. Throughout the novel, Emily and Clarence’s blackness is always in connection with their mother. With Mrs. Garie being dead, their blackness is only detectable by blood, not physical appearance.

Passing to be “Better Off”

With Mr. and Mrs. Garie dead, the question of what to do with Clarence and Emily arises.

Mr. Balch and Mr. Walters, after negotiating Clarence Garie's will with Mr. Stevens (who turns out to be a long lost heir of the Garie family), decide to separate the two children. Emily is left with the Ellises, good friends of the Garies, and Clarence is sent to live with Mr. Eustis, "a discreet man and a person of liberal sentiments" (277). In this instance, Clarence and Emily are treated as slaves. Their "master," Mr. Garie, is dead and with his assets, his slave children are distributed as property, continuing the cycle of separating slave families. During Mr. Stevens, Mr. Balch, and Mr. Walters' negotiation, Mr. Stevens states that " 'by the laws of Georgia these children, instead of being his heirs, are my slaves. Their mother was a slave before them, and they were born slaves; and if they were in Savannah, I could sell them both tomorrow' " (260). Even in death, the children still follow the condition of the mother though they have relocated to the North and Mr. and Mrs. Garie were legally married there.

During Mr. Balch and Mr. Walters' discussion over the fate of the children, Mr. Balch proposes that they are both situated to where they could pass successfully, but Mr. Walters disagrees. Mr. Balch proclaims that " 'as white persons they will be better' " in which Mr. Walters agrees saying " 'in our land of liberty it is of incalculable advantage to be white' " (275). However, Mr. Walters sees the dangers passing could bring and predicts Clarence's future. He would be " 'an undetected forger, who is in constant fear of being apprehended, is happy in comparison with that colored man who attempts, in this country, to hold a place in the society of whites by concealing his origin. He must live in constant fear of exposure; this dread will embitter every enjoyment, and make him the most miserable of men' " (275). While Mr. Balch still believes it is the best for both to pass, they agree to let Clarence leave and live as a white person and Emily, because of her age, decide for her to live with the Ellises. The Ellises are "a highly respectable and industrious coloured family," who befriend the Garies when they moved to

Philadelphia (18). Mr. and Mrs. Ellis, along with their three children, Esther, Caroline, and Charlie, represent the middle class Negro family in the North. Later in the novel, Emily and Clarence's separation shows the reader how the division affects their social status in urban society.

The Clarence we see later in the novel is quite the gentleman. He is strikingly handsome, educated, and the paragon of what a white gentleman should be. However, this is not the only thing that changes about Clarence. The loving relationship he once shared with Emily is now diminished. When he visits Emily he says “ ‘whilst enjoying her company, I must of course come in familiar contact with those by whom she is surrounded [the Ellises]. Sustaining the position that I do—passing as I am for a white man—I am obliged to be circumspect, and have often been compelled to give her pain by avoiding many of her dearest friends when I have encountered them in public places because of their complexion’ ” (323). Instead of acknowledging the biological relationship he shares with Emily, he shuns her and her associations. Not only are Emily and Clarence physically separated, they are racially separated. Later in the novel, Webb refers to Emily as still little Em, but magnified, “with a trifle less of the child in her face... her hair has a slight kink [and] is a little more wavy than is customary in persons of entire white blood; but in no other way is her extraction perceptible, only the initiated, searching for evidences of African blood, would at all notice this slight peculiarity” (337). Being associated with the Ellises versus her white father and mulatto mother, Emily appears blacker than she initially did. Unlike Clarence who appears “whiter” than ever before. Clarence admits that he feels awful for shunning Emily, but ultimately he concludes that “ ‘I can't be white and colored at the same time; the two don't mingle, and I must consequently be one or the other’ ” (323). He goes on to say that “ ‘my education, habits, and ideas, all unfit me for associating with the latter... I don't avoid colored people, because I esteem them my inferiors in refinement, education, or intelligence; but because

they are subjected to degradations that I shall be compelled to share by too freely association with them' ” (323). Clarence, despite the difficulty of passing, makes his choice of denying his blackness for the privileges of being “white.” Yet, by cutting off his connection with Emily and his previous life, he lives in fear and paranoia that his true identity will be revealed, a mixed-race identity he does not claim. His fate is the tragic future Mr. Walters initially predicts.

With the danger of his identity being discovered, Clarence finds love with the angelic, white Miss Bates, his “Little Birdie”:

Her complexion was strikingly fair; and the rich curls of dark auburn that fell in clusters on her shoulders...Her eyes were grey, inclining to black; her features small, and not over-remarkable for their symmetry...There was the sweetest of dimples on her small round chin, and her throat white and clear as the finest marble. The expression of her face was extremely childlike; she seemed more like a schoolgirl than a young woman of eighteen on the eve of marriage. There was something deliciously airy and fairylike in her motions, and as she slightly moved her feet in time to the music she was humming, her thin blue dress floated about her, and undulated in harmony with her graceful motions. (328)

Through this description, we see that Clarence falls in love with a white lady and the thought of losing someone so precious and celestial is tragic for him. Unlike his father, in reverse, Clarence’s relationship with a white woman could help elevate his social status and secure his whiteness, if his tainted heritage is not revealed. During his conversation with Miss Ada Bell, his caregiver along with Mr. Eustis, she suggests to Clarence to inform his girlfriend of his mixed identity. Clarence proclaims, “ ‘Once or twice I thought of telling her, but my heart always failed me at the critical moment. It would kill me to lose her’ ” (324). He recognizes that by claiming the latter racial identity, black, he will lose everything he now possesses because of his white identity, including the love of his life, Little Birdie.

By unforeseen circumstance, Clarence’s true identity is revealed. Mr. Stevens’ son, George, an old playmate of Clarence’s, reveals to Mr. Bates (Little Birdie’s father) that Clarence is

a “coloured man” (351). After Mr. Bates receives this news, he screams insults such as “ ‘impostor, devilish villain, bastard, and contemptible black-hearted nigger’ ” (352). In a matter of seconds, Clarence transforms from a mannered and handsome “white” gentleman to merely a black nigger. When Mr. Bates confronts Clarence, he says, “ ‘I do not wish the world to know that my daughter has been wasting her affections upon a worthless nigger; that is all that protects you!’ ” (354). Mr. Bates protects himself and his daughter from being tainted by Clarence’s blackness. Clarence’s blackness cannot only destroy him and his reputation, but also the Bates’ reputation. Similar to George Winston at the beginning of the novel, who successfully passes, the Priestly family is well respected and revered because of their social status and a “tainting” such as this would compromise that status. In both cases, blackness acts as the ultimate contamination. Everything Clarence has worked for—the protection of his identity and his love for Little Birdie—are now nullified. When Mr. Bates asks for the letters from Little Birdie, Clarence promises with his honor he will return them the next day and Mr. Bates exclaims “ ‘A nigger’s honour!’ ” (354). Clarence replies, “ ‘Yes sir—a nigger’s honour! A few drops of negro blood in a man’s veins do not entirely deprive him of noble sentiments. ’Tis true my past concealment does not argue in my favour. I concealed that which was no fault of my own, but what the injustice of society has made a crime’ ” (355). Here, there is a change in Clarence, in that he claims himself as not just colored, but a “nigger” and places himself with the degraded class of people he once rejected. Clarence shows that the matter of importance is not that he concealed himself, but the fact that a racist society is the reason why he does so. As a black man, despite his education, position, mannerisms, and class, he would not carry the same precedence as a white man. Webb provides an example, Mr. Walters, of this proclamation.

Mr. Walters, “jet-black in complexion,” is superior in both wealth and education to most

whites, but even in his circumstances he is still at a disadvantage because he is black (121). Mr. Walter tells Mr. Balch that “ ‘time and time, when scraping, toiling, saving, I have asked myself. To what purpose is it all?—perhaps that in the future white men may point at and call me, sneeringly, ‘a nigger millionaire’ ” (275-6). While Mr. Walters is overtly darker than Clarence, the negative connotation in this comment shows that it is their race that ultimately determines their status as a person, and being a part of the oppressed race denies them the advantages and equalities afforded to whites regardless of their wealth and education. For the masses of black Americans in the antebellum era, they are treated as second- class citizens. In the end, Clarence is heart-broken and is reduced to the status a common Negro in stark contrast to the white gentlemen he was once.

“Life is for Stronger Hearts”

After Clarence’s life is destroyed, he is on the brink of death and suffering the consequences of a broken heart. “Day by day he faded perceptibly, grew more and more feeble, until at last Doctor Burdett began to number days instead of weeks as his term of life. Clarence anticipated death with calmness—did not repine or murmur” (387). On the brink of death, he lets his sister write a letter to Little Birdie requesting that he see her before he dies. At such a request and with Little Birdie’s health fading as well after the discovery of Clarence’s identity, she comes immediately to see him. However, she is too late. After calling his name multiple times and bathing his temple, the nurse comes in and “opened his bosom and placed her hand upon his heart. It was *still--quite still*: Clarence was dead!” (391). His angel of mercy is too late. Soon after Clarence’s death, Birdie also succumbs to a tragic fate, “to join her lover, where distinctions in race or colour are unknown, and where prejudices of earth cannot mar their happiness” (391).

Clarence is buried beside his parents in a predominately black cemetery, with the racial stigma following him to his grave.

While Clarence deals with an immense amount of tragedy in his life, in the end, he appears triumphant nonetheless. While segregation prevented the legitimacy of his relationship with Little Birdie in the physical world, they are rejoined in a spiritual realm where nothing can penetrate their love for one another. Webb provides a romantic ending for Clarence and Little Birdie that revises the convention narrative of the “tragic” mulatto. Moreover, Clarence comes to accept his true identity when he is welcomed among the Ellises and reunited with his “black” sister. After the “tragic” discovery, Clarence could have easily moved to a different location and started over with no connection to his black lineage, but after experiencing the destructive effects of passing, he chooses not to. He remains with his adopted family and dies a “black” man.

Emily, after losing her parents, being separated from her brother, and eschewed by him, is equally triumphant. She finds love with Charlie Ellis, is happily married to him, and does not have to suffer the difficulties Clarence does by not passing. Emily accepts her associations with African Americans. Even when Clarence offers her the proposition to pass with him and begin a new life, she declines the offer with pride: “You walk on the side of the oppressor—I thank God, am with the oppressed” (336). Despite some inconsistencies in her white appearance (e.g. the kink and waviness of her hair noted only after she resides with the Ellises), Emily’s associations with the black community makes her black, and she embraces these associations with both honor and dignity. In the end, the oppressed triumphantly rises.

In the novel, Webb encompasses the different dimensions of what it means to be a mulatto in the nineteenth century, and he offers alternate endings for this figure stuck on the color line within segregated society. Like George Winston, the mulatto could abandon America

completely, seeing it as a lost cause to achieve racial equality in America. Like Clarence, the mulatto can pass for white, but forever live in fear and misery despite the superiority and advantages in society. Like Emily, the mulatto can embrace the degraded and oppressed class and race to which only a few ounces of their blood assigns them, and suffer the consequences of civil inequality and social inferiority. Webbs' depictions of mulattos that can access varied social spaces despite legal prohibitions and that can claim civil and political rights show the fickleness and flexibility of race as defined by law and social customs in nineteenth century America.

The President's Family

In *Clotel, or the President's Daughter*, William Wells Brown introduces the mulatto as "superior" and "distinguished for their fascinating beauty" (44-5). From the beginning, Brown separates the mulatto slave from Negro slaves. Brown shows the mulatto as an exotic other and superior to the average slave in price and demeanor. "The handsomest [mulatto] usually pays the highest price...and not a few are dressed in the most extravagant manner" (44). Brown also shows that mulattos are permitted to attend Negro balls and "although the term 'Negro ball' is applied to most of these gatherings, a majority of the attendants are often white. Nearly all the Negro parties in the cities and towns of Southern States are made up of quadroon and mulatto girls and white men" (46). The narrator further explains that "these [Negro balls] are democratic gatherings, where gentlemen, shopkeepers, and their clerks, all appear upon terms of perfect equality. And there is a degree of gentility and decorum in these companies that is not surpassed by similar gatherings of white people in the Slave States" (46). Thus, mulattos and quadroons are differentiated from darker slaves with only those of a lighter complexion in attendance. This makes mulattos somewhat the peers of white elites in southern society. At these Negro balls,

there are mulatto women dancing, flirting, and conversing with upper-class white men, despite the laws against miscegenation.

The mulatto slaves Brown describes in the novel come from no ordinary slave holder, but the third President of the United States, Thomas Jefferson. His mistress Curren (a fictional depiction of Sally Hemmings) is described as a “bright mulatto, and of prepossessing appearance” (45). She has two children, Clotel and Althesa, with Jefferson; both daughters by blood equation are quadroons. Clotel and Althesa both attend these Negro balls which leads to Clotel’s relationship with Horatio Green, the son of a wealthy gentleman from Richmond, Virginia (46). Horatio and Clotel immediately fall in love and he promises to purchase her. Although they are Jefferson’s mistress and children, Curren and her daughters are owned by Mr. Graves and, after his death, they are all sold: Althesa for one thousand dollars and Clotel for fifteen hundred dollars because of their remarkable beauty. While the sale of the estate is underway, Brown places the President’s illegitimate daughter on the auction block for the readers to witness the scandal:

There she stood, with a complexion as white as most of those who were waiting with a wish to become her purchasers; her features as finely defined as any of her sex of pure Anglo-Saxon; her long black wavy hair done up in the neatest manner; her form tall and graceful, and her whole appearance indicating one superior to her position. (47)

Ironically, Clotel is valuable property with her flawless white complexion and her esteemed pedigree. While her purchaser is her lover Horatio Green, she suffers the consequences of the being separated from her biological relations, a prevalent theme in abolitionist literature. Curren and her sister who are purchased by the same trader, Walker. During this transaction, Brown delineates how whiteness and social association has no merit to protect mulattos in the antebellum era. It does not matter that these three slaves are cultivated ladies who should be protected by the concubinage system, which is socially tolerated in some southern cities (e.g. New Orleans,

Savannah, Charleston) as depicted in the novel. However, in linking the mulatto figure to Thomas Jefferson, Brown mixes race with politics, showing how miscegenation is unlawful and condemned by the public though widely practiced throughout the South. Furthermore, the scandalous affair between the President and his slave, as depicted in *Clotel*, undermines Jefferson's bigotry as documented in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785).

After the women are sold, the novel follows Clotel on her journey to freedom. We find Clotel situated in a cozy cottage that Horatio has bought for her. Unlike a cabin, which most slaves are subjected to, her cottage is "a perfect model of rural beauty" and has piazzas surrounding it covered with clematis and passion flowers (62). Acting as the "lady" of the house, Clotel lives in a beautiful paradise, her own garden of Eden, with Horatio by her side initially. Horatio and Clotel have a baby girl together named Mary, who has a complexion lighter than her mother and not darker than other white children (63). "As the child [Mary] grew older, it more and more resembled its mother. The iris of her large dark eyes had the melting mezzotinto, which remains the last vestige of African ancestry, and gives that plaintive expression, so often observed, and so appropriate to that docile and injured race" (63). Brown references Mary's black ancestry to show how Mary follows the condition of her mother despite her being no darker than other white children. As her mother, Clotel realizes the dangers of Mary's beauty, a curse she shares with other women in the mulatto family. "When she looked at her beloved Mary, and reflected upon the unavoidable and dangerous position which the tyranny of society had awarded her, her soul was filled with anguish" (63). As a quadroon, Clotel sees the trouble that has been afforded to her mother, Althesa, and herself. With Mary being an octoroon, her blackness is less visible than Clotel's, and the dangers only worsen, following the logic of tragedy for the mulatto figure. With this in mind, Clotel suggests to Horatio a move to England or France so that Mary and she

can be free, but Horatio's engagements in political and other state affairs takes priority over securing their freedom (64). As the novel progresses, we see that even Horatio's love for Clotel and Mary is compromised for another woman. Horatio marries Gertrude, a pure white woman and past lover, and Clotel is left heart-broken.

Althesa, however, finds a "man of honour," Henry Morton. Henry, a physician and a man with little exposure to slavery, encounters Althesa while boarding with James Crawford. "He was unprepared to behold with composure a beautiful young white girl of fifteen in the degraded position of a chattel slave" (90). Through Henry's first glance, Althesa is not considered a mulatto or even a quadroon, but a beautiful, young white girl. Henry represents an outsider perspective of miscegenation since he is not from the South, but from Vermont, and he is not well acquainted with slavery. The readers therefore are given someone who considers Althesa "white," deserving respectability and civil rights, despite having the knowledge of her position as a slave. Brown provides an ironic scenario—a "black" person unintentionally passing as "white"—to illustrate just how the color line is blurred.

Henry indeed rescues Althesa from a potentially tragic fate; his "sympathy ripened into love, which was reciprocated by the friendless and injured child of sorrow" (91). With this mutual love, he purchases Althesa, educates her, and makes her his wife. Althesa thereafter is referred to as "Mrs. Morton," legitimizing her symbolic, privileged status even though the marriage illegal. By mannerism, education, complexion, and association, Althesa is transformed a white lady and beloved wife. Five years later, Althesa and Henry have two daughters and Althesa is the lady of her home with a servant woman name Salome at her side. Salome is described as "perfectly white" to indicate her racial purity juxtaposed to Althesa (114). Brown again introduces another reversal of race relations by having a white woman subordinate to a

quadroon woman.

Salome's whiteness is tainted by her foreign origins and her caste. We learn that Salome is born in Germany and, later, reduced to indentured servitude after her father dies and her mother finds another situation, leaving Salome with her first employer (115). Salome tells Althesa that she was forced to take up with a Negro and has three children by him (115). Ironically, in this reversal of a "tragic mulatto" scenario, Brown replaces the mulatto with a white woman, allowing her to be reduced to pseudo-slavery (since indentured servitude carries a contractual term limit). Like a tragic mulatto, Salome's freedom is jeopardized due to some unforeseen circumstances. Brown paints a picture that in the nineteenth century is horrible to see; a white woman being raped or having consensual sex with a Negro, especially a slave. Brown displays how racial ambiguity creates tragedy for some individuals; when the color line is blurred so much, even a free white woman slips through the cracks, as it appears in Abel's political cartoon. Moreover, while miscegenation is against the law, Brown illustrates further how it affects the white race too.

While Salome does later regain her freedom, her children do not. Brown confronts the reader saying, "This, reader, is no fiction; if you think so, look over the files of the New Orleans newspapers of the years 1845-6, and you will there see reports of the trial" (117). Brown juxtaposes historical events with fictional depictions to further authenticate the effects of slavery, the law, and miscegenation in the nineteenth century.

Returning to Althesa who is in bliss for the moment, we find Clotel in sorrow. With Gertrude being aware of Clotel and Mary's relation to Horatio, she and her father demand that they are sold and sent out of the state. With his marriage hanging in the balance, Horatio gives his consent. Clotel is sold to Walker, the same slave trader to whom Currer and Althesa are sold, and Gertrude keeps Mary as her servant. Reduced to this position, a servant to her own father, Mary is

compelled to do harsh and unjustly labor for a ten year old child. Clotel experiences another painful separation, first from her mother and sister and now from her only daughter Mary, the “cycle of tragedy” continuing. Clotel is bought by James French, a merchant living in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Suffering a similar fate as her mother, Clotel becomes the target of her jealous new mistress. Brown writes “every married woman in the far South looks upon her husband as unfaithful, and regards every quadroon servant as a rival. Clotel had been with her new mistress but a few days, when she was ordered to cut off her long hair” (119). Brown’s earlier description of Clotel in the novel consists of her long, wavy hair as significant to her identity as an exotic other. Now we see her beauty as a tragic flaw. “She was soon seen with her hair cut as short as any of the full-blooded Negroes in the dwelling” and cast as even their social inferior (119). Other servants laughed at her saying, “ ‘she tinks she white, when she come here wid dat long har of hers...missus make her take down her wool so she no put it up to-day’ ” and “ ‘Miss Clo [Clotel] needn’t strut round so big, she got short nappy har well as I’ ” (119). While her complexion is still fair and she is still regarded as “handsome,” her status is undermined, her monetary value is even decreased.

Similar to her mother, Mary is also punished. Gertrude thinks of ways to make Mary look more like other Negroes because “the child was [too] white” (126). So, “[t]he white slave-girl was put to work, without either bonnet or handkerchief upon her head,” and with this act Gertrude accomplishes the change she seeks. “The sun had the desired effect, for in less than a fortnight Mary’s fair complexion had disappeared, and she was but little whiter than any other mulatto children running about the yard” (127). Parallel to Clotel, Mary’s identity is compromised and she is casted out into an inferior position. Gertrude realizes that by appearance, Mary’s complexion makes her appear equal to herself; thereby, to show that she is truly superior and pure

in race, she taints Mary's complexion and identity. Mary no longer possesses the appearance of a beautiful white little girl, but the appearance of a mulatto servant. Yet, "the close resemblance between the father and child [Mary] annoyed the mistress more than the mere whiteness of the child's complexion" (127). Mary's altered appearance does not change her slave status but it does show just how race is fluid and therefore an unstable factor in determining rights of citizenship in the antebellum era.

With Brown's use of Jefferson's illegitimate "family," he critiques the racial politics of slavery. The white blood of the patriarch does not determine the status of the mulatto offspring. So "one drop" of black blood is more powerful than supposedly whiteness as defined by law?! Brown shows how tragedies affecting even the President's near-white children could also happen to any pure white child/person (e.g. Salome's case). With this strategy, Brown actually evokes fear in his white readers. Might their own freedom be jeopardized by the laws governing mulattos as slave property, and, later, as second-class citizens? Is justice and equality available to even those white persons of foreign birth? How is whiteness constructed by law and social custom and therefore capable of being nullified by unforeseen circumstances? Brown's novel of racial passing presents abolitionist beliefs about slavery to appeal to white readers unaware of their own vulnerability as *passive citizens*.

Passing for Freedom

When we return to *Clotel*, she is sold to another master because of the fear that she would die from grief due to her separation from Mary and the heart-broken of losing Horatio. While her new master treats her with "respectful gentleness" and flatters her with gifts, Clotel remains in fear. Brown writes, "she dreaded every moment lest the scene should change, and trembled at the

sound of every footfall. At every interview with her new master Clotel stoutly maintained that she had left a husband in Virginia, and would never think of taking another” (138). Even though Clotel is sold from her past horrible master, she is still vulnerable. Curren raises Clotel to be a virtuous lady, but, as a slave, she has no protection from sexual violation. Brown shows that with both Curren and Clotel although miscegenation is illegal, it is commonly practiced. Clotel cannot be what Welter actually calls a “true woman,” according to Victorian cultural standards. Moreover, within the context of a “Christian” country, adultery is allowed with miscegenation. Combined with the fear of her new master and the grief of being separated from her daughter, Clotel thinks of a plan to escape with another servant residing on the estate, William. “[A] tall, full-bodied Negro, whose very countenance beamed with intelligence,” he tells Clotel “ ‘you look a good deal like a man with your short hair.’ ” She replies, “ ‘I have often been told that I would make a better looking man than a woman’ ” (138). Brown offers the reader a different interpretation of Clotel’s physical make-up. This beautiful quadroon can “perform” as a black male to escape dangers she could not as a mulatto female. After William offers her the money he has saved to purchase his own freedom, he tells her “ ‘you are much fairer than many of the white women of the South, and can easily pass for a free white lady’ ” (139). She accepts the money, but under the condition that they can both try to escape. She tells him, “ ‘I will assume the disguise of a gentleman and you [William] that of a servant, and we will take passage on a steamboat and go to Cincinnati and thence to Canada’ ” (139). Clotel, instead of passing as a southern white lady (another second-class citizen no less), she decides to pass as a southern gentleman / plantation owner, and, therefore, she is protected by the disguise of whiteness, masculinity, wealth, *and* citizenship. Under the name of Mr. Johnson, “[Clotel] attired a neat suit of black, and she had a white silk handkerchief tied around her chin, as if she was an invalid. A pair

of great glasses covered her eyes; and fearing that she would be talked to too much and thus render her liable to be detected, she assumed to be very ill” (139-40). On the other hand, William transforms into a pompous Negro servant, “talking loudly of his master’s wealth” to everyone on the steamboat (140). Significantly, Brown plays off the escape of William and Ellen Craft to authenticate his fictional account with a historical event.⁷ In this scene, we see Mr. Johnson and William performing as master and slave by means of passing, with both characters stepping out of their normal elements; Clotel transforms into a man and William into a simpleton. Furthermore, Clotel as a white gentleman is silenced, while William is quite loquacious, allowing the Negro servant to dominate the scene as his master’s superior. Mr. Johnson actually hides at times “in his room to avoid conversation with others” (140).

Clotel and William make it safely to the free state of Ohio and part ways there, at which she disposes her disguise. While William goes to Canada, Clotel goes back to Richmond, Virginia to retrieve her daughter. Before she leaves Cincinnati, she resumes her men’s apparel due to the fear of being recognized in Richmond. However, Brown changes Clotel’s costume and transforms her into a foreign traveler. “This time she had more the appearance of an Italian or Spanish gentleman. In addition to the fine suit of black cloth, a splendid pair of dark false whickers covered the sides of her face, while the curling moustache found its place upon the upper lip” (159). Moreover, “from practice she had become accustomed to high-heeled boots, and could walk without creating any suspicion as regarded her sex” (159). Without William by her side, Clotel has no direct contrast of power relations—black to white or slave to master. Instead, we see Clotel stand alone and we can scrutinize her gendered performance. While the quadron image

⁷ William and Ellen Craft, a fugitive slave couple, disguised themselves as master and slave, William as a slave and Ellen Craft as a white, invalid slave holder, escapes to freedom in 1848 by passing and authenticates their account by writing *Running a Thousand Miles to Freedom* (1960). See also Elaine K. Ginsberg’s *Passing and the Fictions of Identity* (71).

sheds away, she is still an exotic *other*. Trying to detect her whiteness, readers are drawn to her tainted complexion, foreign dress, and odd behavior in drag given her rehearsed role of a gentleman whose ethnicity appears to be something other than southern.

On the journey to Richmond, we find that Clotel is unlike any other white male passenger in the carriage. One is an elderly gentleman with two daughters and another is a pale and tall minister with a white neckerchief. There is another man with a “rough featured, dark countenance, with a white hat on one side of his head told that he was from the sunny South” (160). The other two gentlemen were “ordinary American gentlemen” (160). Brown points out all the Americans to isolate Clotel as the only “foreigner” in the carriage. Brown loads the carriage with white gentlemen using “props” to indicate their whiteness: the pale skin, the white hat, and white neckerchief. Clotel, by contrast, appears in her dark suit, dark whickers, and darker complexion. Sollors considers markers of identity as typical narrative props in interracial literature; such markers are used to indicate racial purity or impurity.

Similar to the boat ride to Cincinnati, Clotel acts as a silent observer, listening to other passengers’ discussions about politics and slavery. All the women in this scene, including Clotel and the two daughters of the elderly gentleman, do not offer their opinions on the controversial subjects. Thus, Brown illustrates nineteenth century cultural standards that defined gender roles especially in the public sphere. The elderly gentleman tells one of his daughters to extend an invitation to Mr. Johnson to join the debate (168). While Mr. Johnson declines the offer, Brown uses this invitation to show how Clotel still remains attractive as an exotic other, unsuspected of being “black”/mulatto or a woman. Similar to George Winston in *The Garies and Their Friends*, “Mr. Johnson” is well rehearsed in bourgeois mannerisms and he/she could easily enter white society without suspicion. This scene also shows how miscegenation extends to other ethnicities

and not just between whites and blacks, and most importantly, how this mixing is accepted and even initiated in a society defined by racial segregation. Clotel performs her role successfully—transforming from a quadroon slave to a southern slave holder to an Italian gentleman—with no one discovering her real identity. Brown uses Clotel to show how the mulatto figure can remain racially ambiguous, and how by simply rehearsing and masquerading his/her gender appearance or class status, he/she can create a powerful illusion. Clotel does just that in her quest for freedom and for her daughter.

“Death is Freedom”

Still as Mr. Johnson, Clotel finally makes it to Richmond. Fearing discovery by someone in her native home, Clotel remains as Mr. Johnson and secludes herself in her hotel room. However, since the Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831,⁸ all “strange” whites were watched with a great degree of alacrity, leaving Clotel in a more vulnerable position. She eventually is discovered and captured. On her third day in Richmond, two officers enter her room and tell her they are authorized to inspect all strangers. She opens her trunk and “to their surprise, found nothing but women’s apparel, which raised their curiosity” (178). With further investigation, Clotel is discovered as a missing fugitive slave and is arrested (178). In this scene, despite her disguise as an Italian gentleman, the women’s apparel being on her person undermines her appearance as a gentleman. Clotel’s outer disguise is effective, but it is her biological makeup that condemns her as a female mulatto.

After Clotel’s arrest, her master orders her removal from Richmond and sends her to a slave prison/Negro pen in the District of Columbia and then to be sent to New Orleans.

⁸ See Daniel W. Crofts’ “Communities In Revolt: An Introduction” that looks at how “Nat Turner, the prophetic slave–rebel, inspired and led the 1831 Southampton slave revolt, the most famous slave revolt in U.S. history,” leaving slave holders and other white people in fear across southern states.

Significantly, the prison is “midway between the capital at Washington and the President’s house,” both symbols of freedom, yet Clotel is held captive in the vicinity (181). After hearing and seeing nothing of her daughter, Clotel loses all hope of seeing her again and tries to escape. One night while the prison gates are being closed, Clotel darts past her keeper and runs for her life (181). Guards are immediately sent after her and just as she makes it to the bridge, in hopes of hiding in the thick forest, she is surrounded by her capturers:

[Clotel’s] solution is taken. She clasped her hands convulsively, and raised them, as she at the same time raised her eyes towards heaven, and begged for that mercy and compassion there, which had been denied her on earth; and then with a single bound, she vaulted over the railings of the bridge, and sunk forever beneath the waves of the river. (182)

Clotel’s body is discovered on the bank of the river the following day, a hole is dug, and she is buried. So is the tragic fate of the President’s daughter. However, only in death does Clotel find the freedom she searches for her whole life. She does not have to pass for white to be free. Through Clotel’s death, Brown shows the reader how freedom can be obtained for the Negro or mulatto slave in the spiritual realm where racism and slavery cannot affect them.

While we left Althesa in bliss, misfortunes fall on her family too. Yellow fever spreads all across the South and does not miss the Morton family. Henry Morton and Althesa die, leaving their two daughters, Ellen and Jane, without any legal protection. “The girls themselves had never heard that their mother had been a slave, and therefore knew nothing of the danger hanging over their heads” (171). Henry’s brother, James, who knows that they are in a dangerous situation, comes to rescue them and take them to the North to be free, but his mission fails. Right as they are boarding the train to leave, the girls are apprehended by Henry Morton’s creditors claiming them as property. Despite James offering the mortgage of his farm in Vermont as collateral, they are carried away as valuable property, with the creditors pleading that they “would sell for more than common slaves” and they do (171). Like Clotel and Althesa, Ellen and Jane are

auctioned off and sold to the highest bidder, one for twenty three hundred dollars and the other for three thousand dollars, the biological cycle of tragedy continuing. Quickly going from freedom to slavery and from white to black, Ellen and Jane's lives are short lived. Ellen is sold to an old gentleman who claims to have purchased her for a housekeeper, but Ellen soon learns that she has been purchased to become a sex slave (172). A few days later, she commits suicide: "she was found in her chamber, a corpse. She had taken poison" (172). Not willing to submit or degrade herself, Ellen finds freedom through suicide. Jane is purchased by a young southern gentleman and bought for the same purposes as her sister. Different from Ellen, Jane is in love with Volney Lupac, a student in her father's office. When he is made aware of Jane's misfortune, he comes to her rescue. Together with a rope ladder and sheets tied together, she descends from the prison chamber into the arms of her lover. However, her master is out hunting that morning and sees the two lovers and fires a shot, leaving Volney dead in Jane's arms. Jane faints beside him and days later dies of a broken heart (173). While both sisters experience misfortunes and tragedies, freedom and safety is found through death; freeing them from the tragedies and misfortunes that are often seen with the mulatto figure, breaking the cycle of tragedy.

Mary: The Mulatto Heroine

Of all the tragedies in *Clotel*, Mary appears as the triumphant heroine. She remains a servant to her father Horatio, but because Horatio has lost feelings for Mary, Gertrude develops sympathy for her and becomes her friend. "Mary had grown still more beautiful, and, like most of her sex in that country, was fast coming to maturity," and with this maturity Mary finds love with a mulatto named George (187). Similar to Mary, George is a slave of Horatio's and the descendant of a statesman. His mother was employed as a servant at one of the principal hotels in

Washington where members of Congress resided. “He [George] was as white as most white persons. No one would suppose that any African blood coursed through his veins. His hair was straight, soft, fine, and light; his eyes blue, nose prominent, lips thin, his head well formed, forehead high and prominent; and he was often taken for a free white person by those who did know him” (187). Despite his status as a slave and his mixed-racial identity being known, he is still mistaken for a white person, thus Brown displays how his appearance supersedes his position as a slave.

George joins the Nat Turner Slave Revolt and is sentenced to death despite his heroic act of aiding the city by ascending into the burning court house to save a box with important content. Brown making George appear as a white gentleman allows him to put a “white gentleman” on trial for the white audience and the reader to witness. Brown uses George to voice the sufferings and errors of slavery to not only the white audience in the novel, but the white audience of the nineteenth century. George gives a touching speech at his trial on the degradation of the institution of slavery and all the inequalities it encompasses, leaving his white audience in tears, and hopefully white readers. However, Brown makes the scene realistic; despite George’s heroic acts and compelling speech, he is still sentenced to death. The narrator notes that “George was a slave, and an example must be made of him, and therefore he was sentenced” (189). George’s reputation, heroic act, and powerful speech are dismissed and only his status as a slave, not necessarily the deed or crime he committed, is all that matters.

After George’s sentencing, with Gertrude’s consent, Mary visits George in his cell every day. A few days before his execution, Mary suggests to him to exchange clothes with her so he can escape. Initially George does not agree, but after Mary assures him that because she is not “the person condemned, [she] would not receive any injury,” he consents and they exchange

apparel (190). With this disguise in hand, George leaves the prison undetected. “George was of small stature, and both were white [Mary and George], there was no difficulty in his passing out without detection; and as she usually left the cell weeping, with handkerchief in hand, and sometimes at her face, he had only to adopt this mode and his escape was safe” (190). George and Mary perform as does *Clotel*, but instead we witness another gender switch instead of a racial switch. Later during George’s travels, he is pursued by some slave catchers because he is mistaken for their fugitive female slave, Miss Dinah. This case of mistaken identity further illustrates how effective is George’s gendered and racial disguise. George runs to a nearby farm, and the farmer gives him refuge and does not allow the slave catchers to enter without a warrant. While they go to retrieve a warrant, the farmer nails up the door and when they return he tells them they will have to provide their own tools to pry the door open (193). By the time the slave catchers enter the barn, George has escaped to a neighboring friend of the farmer. Once there, he lays aside his female attire and “dressed up in a straight collared coat and pantaloons to match” and continues his voyage to Canada, arriving safely (193). In Canada, he seeks employment to save up money to buy Mary’s freedom. After six months of labor he sends an English missionary to go and purchase Mary. As a result her aiding George’s escape, however, the court makes Horatio sell Mary out of the state and she is taken to the New Orleans’ market (194). With lost hope, George leaves America and goes to Manchester, England, and after three years of work during the day and taking private lessons at night, he becomes a clerk (194). In this new location, George decides to pass for a white man. “George was so white as easily to pass for a white man, and being somewhat ashamed of his African descent, he never once mentioned the fact of his having been a slave. He soon became a partner in the firm that employed him and was now on the road to wealth” (194-5). While George does not claim to be white, he also does not claim to be black.

However, his complexion enables him to “cover up” his mark of shame, and with no one knowing his associations, he can successfully be a white man and uses this identity to his advantage.

Brown examines the mulatto outside of America and shows how the mark of oppression follows him despite being away from the “oppressor.”

Ten years later, we find George in France in a graveyard reading when he comes across a woman with a veil over her face and a child at her side. When the lady sees George she screams and faints. George jumps to his feet and catches the lady before she hits the ground. Hearing the commotion, an elderly gentleman, appearing to be her father, asks what the matter is. George does not know what to say to the gentleman and holds a smelling bottle to the lady’s face and she begins to revive. However when she sees him again, she screams and faints again. “It now appeared quite certain, that either the countenance of George Green, or some other object, was the cause of the fits of fainting; and the old gentleman, thinking it the former, in rather a petulant tone said ‘I will thank you sir, if you will leave us alone’” (196). George leaves the graveyard confused and returns to his hotel. Days later he receives an invitation to dinner from J. Devenant, the elderly gentleman from the graveyard and accepts his invitation. George goes to the dinner to find out that the lady he encountered in the graveyard is Mary. When he hears this “fountains of mingled grief and joy stole out from beneath his eyelashes, and glistened like pearls upon his pale and marble-like cheek” (199). Mary enters the room and they embrace each other in love and happiness, the two lovers finally reunited. Brown gives these two heart-broken mulattos a fairytale and romantic reunion, transforming these two tragic mulattos to untragic and further breaks the cycle of tragedy.

After dinner Mary tells George the last ten years of her life. She tells him that after he escaped from prison, she was discovered and kept in prison for three days. On the third day, after

being visited by magistrates and two judges, she was let out and her master said she was liberated under the condition that she is immediately sent out of the state. She was purchased by a negro-trader and sent to New Orleans. Once there, she was put into the slave market for sale, but no one was willing to purchase her ““as all thought me too white, and said I would run away and pass as a free white woman”” (201). Brown exposes how being a mulatto once brought a valuable price, but now the tables have turned and purchasers see mulattos as a risky investment. However days later, Mary is purchased to be a waiting-maid for a mistress by a gentleman residing in the city. Her new master and her leave for Mobile and on the boat Mary sees the foreign gentleman, Devenant, who was observing her while she was in the slave auction. He approaches her saying he intended to purchase her and give her freedom, but she had been purchased already and resolved to follow her to try and purchase her again. When Mary asks why he wishes to give her freedom, he tells her that she reminds him of his sister that died three years ago. He confesses, “ ‘the love which I had for my sister is transferred to you’ ” (202). Mary, being skeptical, turns away and leaves. The next day the foreign gentleman gives Mary a piece of paper that turns out to be a bank note for one hundred dollars. She goes to return the money to the gentleman and when she tries to he declines saying ““I gave it to you—keep it”” (203). She replies ““I do not want it”” and he replies ““you had better give your consent for me to purchase you, and you shall go with me to France”” (203). When Mary tells him that he cannot purchase her because her master is in New Orleans and she was purchased not to be sold, he tells her that when they arrive in Mobile and the passengers are exiting the boat, to take his arm and she can escape unobserved (203). Mary dresses herself in her best clothes, puts a veil over her face, and is ready on the landing of the boat upon the arrival in Mobile. “Surrounded by a number of passengers, we [Devenant and Mary] descended the stage leading to the wharf, and were soon lost in the crowd that thronged the quay”

(203). Boarding another boat as Devenant's sister, here passing as a foreign lady, similar to her mother passing as an Italian, they sail to Europe. Upon arriving to Havre, Mary and Devenant marry as he promised. Mary tells George, "I loved him, but it was only that affection which we have for one who has done us a lasting favour: it was the love of gratitude rather than that of the heart" (204). At the close of her narrative, we find out that the old gentleman accompanying Mary is the father of the deceased Devenant. A few days later, George and Mary are joined in holy matrimony as husband and wife and live happily ever after in England. Brown ends the novel happily and romantically giving an alternate ending to the stereotypical tragic ending of death or discovery for the mulatto. Through Mary, Brown breaks the cycle of the tragedy that surrounds the "president's family". Similar to Winston in *The Garies and Their Friends*, Mary and George find happiness outside of America, and thus find the land of freedom they've been searching for.

In *Clotel, or the President's Daughter*, Brown uses the mulatto to examine the affects of slavery in America on whites and blacks alike. The author offers the mulatto as a political mediator in the dispute of race and rights for U.S. citizens of color. Through Clotel, Ellen, and Jane, Brown offers death as the only way to achieve complete freedom. Other mulattos like George and Mary obtain freedom by leaving America. Brown uses the mulatto character to show the tragedy and horrors of slavery through "white faces" with invisible black blood to expose inhumanity of the institution and the hypocrisy of a democratic nation.

The Mulatto Family: George, Eliza, and Harry

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life Among the Lonely*, Harriet Beecher Stowe addresses the inhumanity of slavery in what would become the bestselling abolitionist novel of the nineteenth

century. Stowe takes a critical look at all persons involved in the slave trade: abused slaves, vicious slave catchers, white slave masters, pious Christians, and corrupt politicians alike. Tom, George, and other characters encounter some of these persons on their freedom journeys. We follow Tom as he goes down South, further into the depths of slavery, and follow the quadroons George, Eliza, and their son Harry as they travel north to Canada. Tom is an obedient and humble servant and Mr. Shelby's, his master's, "best hand" (68). "He [Tom] 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 kindness and benevolence" (68). Stowe depicts the different experiences of black slaves versus mulatto slaves. While both must deal with separation from their families, Stowe shows how a mulatto's value is significantly different from a Negro slave and how these profits are used to build a stronger American economy though the slaves suffer the costs.

At the beginning of the novel, Stowe introduces Mr. Shelby and Mr. Haley, two gentlemen slave holders as the "good" master versus the "bad" master, respectively. Mr. Haley "was a short, thick-set man, with coarse, commonplace features, and that swaggering air of pretension which marks a low man who is trying to elbow his way upward in the world." By contrast, Mr. Shelby "had the appearance of a gentleman and the arrangements of the house, and general air of the housekeeping indicated easy, and even opulent circumstances" (41-2). Mr. Shelby treats his slaves with kindness and does not abuse them unlike Mr. Haley, who beats his slaves when even an ounce of disobedience is observed. Because Mr. Shelby is in Mr. Haley's debt, he needs a way to defer his payments. During their discussion, Harry steps out on the porch where they are sitting and he immediately attracts Mr. Haley's attention. "There was something in [Harry's] appearance, remarkably beautiful and engaging. His black hair, fine as floss silk, hung in glossy

curls about his round, dimple face, while a pair of large dark eyes, full of fire and softness, looked out from beneath the rich, long lashes, as he peered curiously into the apartment” (43). Following this description, Mr. Shelby says to Harry, “ ‘come here Jim Crow... show this gentleman how you can dance and sing’ ” (44). “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” (44). In this scene, Stowe introduces the reader to a minstrel performance, popular during the antebellum era. Harry performs as the stereotypical, comical Negro. After Harry’s performance, Mr. Haley wants to purchase the prized specimen. At this moment, Eliza enters the scene.

There needed only a glance from the child to her, to identify her as its mother. There was the same rich full, dark eye, with its long lashes; the same ripples of silky black hair. The brown of her complexion gave way on the cheek to a perceptible flush, which deepened as she saw the gaze of the strange man [Mr. Haley] fixed upon her in bold and undisguised admiration. Her dress was of the neatest possible fit, and set off to advantage her finely moulded shape;--a delicately formed hand and a trim foot and ankle were items of appearance that did not escape the quick eye of the trader, well used to run up at a glance the points of a fine female article. (45)

Stowe not only connects Eliza to Harry by their similar appearance, but also places Eliza, despite her beautiful, white description, among the class of slaves. Mr. Haley wants to buy both of them.

Eliza is a refined young woman, who would attract high bids on the slave market. “Eliza had been brought up by her mistress, from girlhood, as a petted and indulged favorite. Safe under the protecting care of her mistress, Eliza had reached maturity without those temptations which make beauty so fatal an inheritance to a slave” (54). Similar to George Winston, Eliza has been cultivated as a “lady” by her mistress, or at least trained to emulate this role. Eliza is also allowed to marry a “talented young mulatto,” George Harris (54). The two have quite an extravagant wedding for slaves. “Her mistress herself adorned the bride’s beautiful hair with

orange-blossoms, and threw over it the bridal veil, which certainly could scarce have rested on a fairer head; and there was no lack of white gloves, and cake and wine,--of admiring guests to praise the bride's beauty, and her mistress indulgence and liberality" (57). Without knowing that Eliza and George are mulattos, one would think that this wedding is the union of a white couple. Moreover, one would think that Eliza is Mrs. Shelby's own daughter by allowing her wedding to take place in the parlor of the antebellum mansion versus a setting such as the Shelby's yard or a slave cabin on the plantation. Stowe emphasizes Eliza's purity and whiteness in the symbolic wedding accessories: the white gloves, white cake, and white wine (57).

Eliza's groom, George, is also quite the gentleman. "George was, by his father's side, of white descent. His mother was one of those unfortunates of her race, marked out by personal beauty to be the slave of the passions of her possessor, and the mother of children who may never know a father" (182). George was also very intelligent:

He had invented a machine for the cleaning of the hemp, which considering the education and circumstances of the inventor, displayed quite as much mechanical genius as Whitney's cotton-gin.⁹ He was possessed of a handsome person and pleasing manners and was a general favorite in the factory [where he worked]. George, who, in high spirits, talked so fluently, held himself so erect, looked so handsome and manly, that his master began to feel an uneasy consciousness of inferiority. (54-5)

George is controlled nevertheless by his "vulgar, narrow-minded, tyrannical master" (55).

Likewise, Mr. Haley requests to have Eliza as well. Mr. Shelby sternly refuses, informing Mr. Haley of his wife's (Mrs. Shelby) attachment to the slave. While he does not want to sell Harry, his debts are so extreme that he is left with no choice and agrees to sell both Harry and Tom to Mr. Haley. Eliza overhears the transaction and her "heart swelled and throbbed" until she confides in Mrs. Shelby about the tragedy that awaits her and Harry's fate (51). George tells Eliza that he plans to run away because of his master's ill treatment toward him. Stricken with

⁹ Stowe notes that the referenced machine was really the invention of a young colored man in Kentucky (54).

jealousy, George's master removes him from the factory and put him in the field with the other field hands to restore the balance of power between the master and the slave. Moreover, George is branded like an animal with the letter "H" on his right hand, literally marking him as property. Tired of the mistreatment at the hand of his master, George resolves to run away and escape to Canada to obtain freedom. He tells Eliza that " 'I'm a man as much as he is [Mr. Harris]. I'm a better man than he is. I know more about business than he does... I can read better than he can; I can write a better hand, --and I've learned it all myself, and no thanks to him,--I've learned it in spite of him and now what right had he to make a dray-horse of me?' " (60). Here, Stowe marks George as a potential citizen, literate enough to advocate his human rights.

Other another significant civil right, marriage, is also at stake in this scenario. Technically, a social privilege, marriage becomes a civil right when it is necessary to protect it against unjust laws. Abolitionists especially focused on how slaves were not allowed to marry as permissible under Christian theology and as a basic human right. George explains to Eliza that their son Harry can never be a man and they can never be more than chattel. He tells Eliza of the plans Mr. Harris has for him, to not let him see Eliza anymore, to have him take up with a new wife, Mina, and if he disobeys he will sell him down river (63). Eliza responds, " 'but you were married to me, by the minister, as much as if you'd been a white man!' " (63). George replies, in the voice of an abolitionist, " 'don't you know a slave can't be married? There is no law in this country for that; I can't hold you for my wife if he chooses to part us' " (63).

Stowe nullifies George's right as a patriarch, he cannot fulfill the role as the "mover" or "doer" in a democratic society. Bemoaning his son's fate, George asks " 'what pleasure is it that he [Harry] is handsome, and smart, and bright?' " (63). George recognizes that Harry's attributes make him a very valuable slave. Stowe uses George and Harry to relay how mulatto slaves have the same

attributes and characteristics as white people though treated as their inferior. Yet, Stowe uses this mulatto family to emulate a southern white family. However, there is no way for George, Eliza and Harry to be the ideal nineteenth century American family without rights to marry and treated as equals to whites.

Passing into Freedom

In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, we see the mulatto family separate and try to escape to freedom together. After confirming that Harry is to be sold, Eliza resolves to run away with him. She will eventually try to pass for white to secure their safety. "As she was also so white as not to be known as of colored lineage, without a critical survey, and her child was white also, it was much easier for her to pass on unsuspected" (107). Eliza's mannerisms, white appearance, and close associations with the Shelby family enable her to pass as a white woman and caring mother not an enslaved, mulatto nurse maid with her charge.

Similar to Eliza, George passes for white during his freedom journey. We first find George in a seedy bar-room:

great, tall, raw-boned Kentuckians, attired in hunting-shirts, and trailing their loose joints over a vast extent of territory, with the easy lounge peculiar to the race,--rifles stacked away in the corner, shot-pouches, game-bags, hunting-dogs. At each end of the fireplace sat a long-legged gentleman, with his chair tipped back, his hat on his head, and the heels of his muddy boots reposing sublimely on the mantel piece. (175)

There also stood a man of great stature, good natured and loose jointed with an enormous shock of hair on his head, and a great tall hat on the top of that (175). "Everybody in the room bore on his head this characteristic emblem of man's sovereignty; whether it were felt hat, palm-leaf, greasy beaver, or fine new chapeau, there it reposed with true republican independence" (175-6). This scene is significant in that when George enters the bar-room he blends in as a white gentleman and

is unsuspected of being a fugitive slave. After all, George Harris is

...very tall, with a dark, Spanish complexion, fine, expressive black eyes, and close-curling hair, also of a glossy blackness. His well-formed aquiline nose, straight thin lips, and the admirable contour of his finely-formed limbs, impressed the whole company instantly with the idea of something uncommon. He walked easily in among the company, and with a nod indicated to his waiter where to place his trunk, bowed to the company, and, with his hat in his hand, walked up leisurely to the bar, and gave in his name as Henry Butler, Oaklands, Shelby County. (180)

George enters the scene as an exotic *other* (like Clotel on the train) though a native southerner.

With his attire and mannerisms, he appears as a regular Kentuckian. Unfortunately, the bar is full of slave catchers with an advertisement for his capture: “*Ran away from the subscriber, my mulatto boy, George. Said George six feet in height, a very light mulatto, brown curly hair is very intelligent, speaks handsomely, can read and write; will probably try to pass for a white man; is deeply scarred on his back and shoulders; has been branded in his right hand with the letter H*”

(178). Even with his description publicly displayed, he goes unsuspected by his audience by performing a minstrel. He sees the advertisement and he says to his servant, “ ‘Jim, seems to me we met a boy something like this, up at Bernan’s’ ” (181). Jim responds “ ‘Yes, Mas’r, only I an’t sure about the hand’ ” (181). George’s disguise and demeanor is so flawless that even the law—represented by the advertisement for a fugitive slave—does not undermine his masquerade. Stowe allows George to pass to show his similarities to other white gentlemen around him in a public setting; his disguise is realistic in that his white complexion and demeanor protect him like they would for an ordinary “pure” white person.

Stowe further supports this claim when George invites Mr. Wilson, who is also in the bar room, into his room. Mr. Wilson, the factory owner George once worked for and who tries to help pacify Mr. Harris’s envy for George, enters the room, going from a public to a private setting. George dismisses his servants and locks the door. When Mr. Wilson looks him full in the face he

exclaims, “George! I couldn’t have thought it!” (182). George responds, “ ‘ A little walnut bark has made my yellow skin a genteel brown, and I’ve dyed my hair black; so you see I don’t answer to the advertisement at all,’ ” revealing to the reader how his cosmetic make-up he uses to mask his appearance and biological origins (182). With “a slight change in the tint of the skin and the color of his hair had metamorphosed him into the Spanish-looking fellow he then appeared; and as gracefulness of movement and gentlemanly manners had always been perfectly natural to him, he found no difficulty in playing the bold part he had adopted—that of a gentleman traveling with his domestic” (182-3). Stowe further displays how effective George’s disguise is when someone who is very familiar with him does not suspect him, thus the others in his company definitely cannot either.

Running the risk of capture, George claims *the right to his whiteness as property*,¹⁰ which undermines his identity as a slave considering that they could not own property but were property. George acts as a citizen, claiming a right only allotted for white males. Mr. Wilson tries to explain to George that his state of mind for someone in his position is very dangerous. However, George says, “ ‘look at me now. Don’t I sit before you, every way, just as much a man as you are? Look at my face,—look at my hands,—look at my body’ ” (185). Drawing himself up proudly he continues arguing, “ ‘why am I *not* a man, as much as anybody? ...I had a father—one of your Kentucky gentleman—who didn’t think enough of me to keep me from being sold with his dogs and horses, to satisfy the estate, when he died’ ” (185-6). Stowe creates a mirror image here placing George in front of Mr. Wilson to show the reader the innate similarities between them and their positions as equals. George asserts his manhood and racial inheritance. Stowe displays the thin line of color and black blood that lies between the two men. By presenting George as a

¹⁰ Homer Plessy, in *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, would make the same argument in the 1896 landmark Supreme Court case determining segregation as legal though discrimination law.

gentleman in appearance and mannerism, Stowe elevates him as “Henry Butler,” a Kentuckian gentleman, persuasive actor, and potential citizen.

When we return to Tom, we find that he has been sold from Mr. Haley, to Mr. St. Clare, a humble and kind master, and then to a horrible man, Mr. Legree in New Orleans, Louisiana. At Legree’s plantation, we meet two other mulattos, Cassy and Emmeline. When we are first introduced to Cassy entering the fields, she is described as “tall and slenderly formed, with remarkably delicate hands and feet, and dressed in neat and respectable garments...Her forehead was high, and her eyebrows marked with beautiful clearness. Her straight, well-formed nose, her finely-cut mouth, and the graceful contour of her head neck, showed that she must once have been beautiful” (501). Stowe places a heavy emphasis on Cassy’s face: “it was a face that once seen, could never be forgotten,—one of those that, at a glance, seem to convey to us an idea of a wild, painful, and romantic history...her face was deeply wrinkled with lines of pain, and of proud and bitter endurance. Her complexion was sallow and unhealthy, her cheeks thin, her features sharp, and her whole form emaciated” (501). This is a complete contrast from the initial description Stowe gives of Cassy, transforming her from blossomed flower bud to a withering flower. Most remarkable are Cassy’s eyes, “so large, so heavily black, overshadowed by long lashes of equal darkness, and so wildly, mournfully despairing...in her eye was a deep, settled night of anguish,—an expression so hopeless and unchanging as to contrast fearfully with the scorn and pride expressed by her whole demeanor” (501). This intense and distraught description of Cassy makes her appear as an exotic and mysterious other on the plantation. Stowe after all does not reveal Cassy’s name until later.

However, Cassy unveils her mystery to Tom and the reader while nurturing Tom back to health. Late one night, Cassy comes into the room where Tom has been left after his flogging and

nurtures him and his wounds while sharing her story. When Tom says ““Thank you Missis”” for her help she responds, ““don’t call me Missis! I’m a miserable slave, like yourself, --a lower one than you can ever be!”” (511). In this acclamation, Tom and Cassy are on the same level because they are both slaves, but Stowe separates them through Cassy’s narrative as sexually abused mulatto slave. She tells Tom, ““I’ve been on this place five years, body and soul, under this man’s foot; and I hate him as I do the devil! There’s no law here, of God or man that can do you, or any one of us, the least good; and, this man! There’s no earthly thing that he’s too good to do,”” (512).

Cassy was trained to be a “true” woman “delicately bred” and well educated (516). She tells Tom her father died of one of the first cases of cholera when she was fourteen and he meant to free her mother, but never did and when the property came to be settled they were added to list (516). She experiences a similar tragic fate as other female mulattos I have discussed. Cassy falls in love with a white man; though he initially makes her his concubine, he is unable to protect her fully in a legitimate marriage. They have two children together, Henry and Elise. Henry “ ‘was the image of his father,--he had such beautiful eyes, such a forehead, and his hair hung all in curls around it; and he had all his father’s spirit, and his talent too’ ” (517). Elise looked like Cassy who she is often told ““was the most beautiful woman in Louisiana”” (517). This seemingly perfect romance all came to an end when Henry’s cousin, Butler, came and sabotaged their union. Butler introduced Henry to gaming houses and to a new woman and Cassy soon saw that ““his heart was gone”” from her (518).

Considering her master’s gambling debts and his marriage to a white woman, Butler offers to buy Cassy and her children to settle the debt. Through Cassy and her children, Stowe enforces the importance of family for slaves in the antebellum era. Eliza risks her life in order to not lose her

son. Likewise, Cassy does everything she can to get her children back.

Significantly, Stowe displays the power Butler still has over Cassy and shows the true power and extent slavery has over a slave mother. With Stuart, a new owner, Cassy has another son, but when she reflects on the tribulations her other two children went through, she resolves for him not to have the same fate. “I gave him laudanum, and held him close to my bosom while he slept to death” (521). Stowe shows that out of a mother’s love Cassy murders her son, leaving her childless and freeing herself from having to lose anymore of her beloved children to slavery. Stowe also displays Cassy attempting to break the cycle of tragedy that befell slave families.

Cassy’s story is significant in that Stowe outlines the typical life of a female mulatto slave. Cassy is sold and resold throughout her life, loses all her children, and remains a slave where she has to submit herself to her master. Compared to Tom, she is lower than he will ever be. While Tom suffers from severe abuse by Legree, Cassy is sexually abused by Legree for some time until she rebels and is sent to the fields. Other female mulatto slaves like Emmeline are vulnerable just as Cassy.

Stowe, like Webb and Brown, presents death as freedom for the mulatto. While Cassy chooses death for her third born, neither she nor Emmeline uses it as their escape to freedom. Going off the fact the Legree is terribly haunted by the ghost of his past, Cassy and Emmeline make their way to freedom. Using Legree’s fear against him, Cassy disguises herself as the ghost of an abused Negro woman who was murdered by Legree. He is haunted by the spirit of guilt and shame. It is a strange twist of fate to see Legree becoming a heavier drinker who dies of consumption.

Disguised as ghosts, Emmeline and Cassy later escape the plantation. Near sunrise in a little knot of trees near town Cassy dresses herself as a Creole Spanish lady (597). Dress all in black, “a small black bonnet on her head covered by a veil thick with embroidery concealed her

face. It had been agreed that, in their escape, she was to personate the character of a Creole lady, and Emmeline that of her servant” (597). Cassy sheds her white disguise and takes on a black disguise for a convincing performance: “Brought up, from early life, in connection with the highest society, the language, movements and air of Cassy, were all in agreement with this idea; she had still enough remaining with her, of a once splendid wardrobe, and sets of jewels, to enable her to personate the thing to advantage” (597). She is assisted in this performance by Emmaline acting as Cassy’s slave. Like in Brown’s *Clotel*, Stowe elevates Cassy’s status to display the construct of master and slave relationships; her performance of passing as a superior appear more authentic. Similar to *Clotel*, Cassy also secludes herself to her room due to illness helping to shield her from detection. Stowe allows Cassy to remain an exotic other and uses this to aid her escape to freedom. Stowe’s usage of George and Cassy instances of passing allow the reader to see slavery as a moral evil, yet miscegenation gives them both the advantages and disadvantages of passing as a way to freedom.

A Happy Family Reunion

At the end of the novel, Cassy and Emmeline are on the same boat as George Shelby and they meet a French lady by the name of Madame de Thoux. After over hearing that George is from Kentucky, she asks him if he knows anyone with the name Harris (599). George responds yes and tells her that George Harri has escaped to Canada. Relieved, Madame de Thoux thanks God and tells George Shelby that George Harris is her brother and they were sold and separated from each other when George was a child (600). When Madame de Thoux inquires about what kind of girl her brother has married, George says she is ““a treasure, a beautiful, intelligent, amiable girl”” (601). Madame de Thoux asks if Eliza was born in their home and George

responds no, that his father purchased her for an extravagant sum on one of his trips to New Orleans from a man by the name of Simmons. Over hearing this, Cassy falls senseless on the floor coming to the realization that Eliza is her daughter. Madame de Thoux and Cassy, drawn together by the same family connection, travel together to Canada in search of their long lost relatives and with the help from the pastor in Amherstberg who assisted George and his family on their journey, they find George and Eliza.

With help from some Quakers, the Halliday family, and many other allies on their journey, Eliza, George, and Harry make it to Canada and to freedom. When we return to them we find they have been in Canada for five years and are comfortably settled in a new home. We find George in his study, a “small, neat tenement in the outskirts of Montreal. A cheerful fire blazes on the hearth; a tea-table covered with a green cloth, where was an open writing-desk, pens, paper, and over it a shelf of well-selected books” (604). The Harris family is in bliss with George as a machinist, Harry in a “good school and making rapid proficiency in knowledge,” and the addition of a new daughter, little Eliza (603). We find them preparing to have tea when there is a knock at the door. Eliza answers the door to find that it is the pastor who aided them on their journey, along with two other women. While the pastor wants to give an introductory speech, overly anxious and excited, Madame de Thoux throws her arms around George exclaiming ““O, George! Don’t you know me? I’m your sister Emily”” (605). Cassy would have played her part well, but when she sees little Eliza having the exact shape, form, outline, and curl as her daughter when she saw her last, she is speechless. “The little thing peered up in her face and Cassy caught her up in her arms, pressed her to her bosom, saying, what at the moment she really believed, ““Darling, I’m your mother!”” (605). With the ties of the Harris and de Thoux family reconnected and both free from the bonds of slavery, these mulattos have a happy family reunion. With the family in

happiness and bliss, they decide to move to France for some years, carrying Emmeline with them, who meets a man on the vessel and marries him soon after.

Each of these mulatto figures suffer tragic circumstances throughout the novel, but in the end are triumphed. Instead of death, they are reunited, something that scarcely happens for slaves once separated. George receives an education, as well as Harry, and Eliza is reunited with her mother and Madame de Thoux with her brother. Although Emmeline is not reunited with her mother, she is free and happily married. By making these mulattos the heroes and heroines of the novel, Stowe challenges the tragic mulatto stereotype. Addressing the institution of slavery, the Fugitive Slave Act, and miscegenation, Stowe brings the figure of the mulatto to the forefront of the novel, allowing multiple stories to be told, from multiple places, showing how slavery damages the dynamics of family both among slaves and whites in the antebellum era. With *Uncle Tom's Cabin* being the leading abolitionist text at the time and receiving an immense amount of attention internationally, Stowe encompasses the horrors of slavery from the perspective of the most vulnerable. Stowe shares the mulatto's experience with her white readers by depicting how this figure's white lineage gives them their tool to be free. Thus, the mulatto undermines the very institution that assisted in his/her existence.

Chattel Beauty

With slavery being one of the major issues of the American Civil War, Harper opens *Iola Leroy* towards the end of the war and assigns the quadroon protagonist, Iola, the status of a slave despite her remarkable white beauty. Iola appears "ez white ez anybody." Harper explains to the reader that this has not always been Iola's status and displays how this beautiful, white southern lady and citizen becomes chattel and is subjected to the cruelty of slavery.

Harper introduces a scene similar to Webb. Eugene Leroy, a wealthy plantation owner is in love with his mulatto slave Marie, who he has cultivated, educated, and wants to marry. While discussing the matter of marrying Marie with his cousin, Alfred Lorraine, Eugene says, “she [Marie] is very beautiful. In the North no one would suspect that she has one drop of negro blood in her veins, but here, where I am known, to marry her is to lose caste” (51). Similar to Clarence Garie, Eugene realizes that living in the South and being married to Marie would degrade his status as a white gentleman, but he goes on to say that “if I make her my lawful wife and recognize her children as me legitimate heirs, I subject myself to social ostracism and senseless persecution” (52). Along with taking this stance and accepting the degradation of his choice, he critiques American society regarding to the mulatto. “ ‘We Americans boast of freedom, and yet here is a woman [Marie] whom I love as I never loved any other human being, but both law and public opinion debar me from following the inclination of my heart’ ” (52). Harper is not only critiquing American society, but shows how Eugene, as a white citizen, is limited in his rights and privileges in that he must suffer degradation by marrying the woman he loves because she has black blood in her veins. Eugene continues by telling Alfred that “should not society have a greater ban for those who, by consorting with an alien race, rob their offspring of a right to their names and to an inheritance in their property, and who fix their social status among an enslaved and outcast race?” (52). Harper presents a switch in the notion of the offspring following the caste and race of the mother; instead, the offspring should be able to follow the caste and race of the father. Harper asserts that mulattos should have the right to claim their whiteness as property. Given the rights and privileges reserved for whites, whiteness appears visible by law in contrast to the invisibility of blackness as defined by law. Alfred’s response is similarly to Clarence Garie’s uncle in *The Garies and Their Friends* saying, “don’t you know that if she is as fair as a lily, beautiful as a

hour, and chaste as ice, that she still is a negro?" (52). Eugene's response is that "she [Marie] isn't much a negro," still emphasizing how Marie's whiteness by blood equations outweighs her black blood (52). Alfred responds "One drop of negro blood in her veins curses all the rest," revealing how even an ounce of black blood taints Marie and her children, upholding the one-drop rule.

Despite Alfred reasoning with Eugene, he decides to marry Marie and similar to the Garies, the Leroy's live in the privacy of their home contently until tragedy strikes. While traveling North, Eugene is stricken with the yellow fever in Vicksburg and dies three days later. However, before he dies he gives his will to Marie, but while Marie is indisposed from sorrow, Alfred, after hearing of Eugene's death, comes to visit and takes the will (73). After investigating Eugene and Marie's marriage, he finds a flaw in the marriage license, making their marriage invalid. Shortly after this discovery, Alfred divides the inheritance among Eugene's white relations and Marie and her children are remanded to slavery. In matter of days, we see Marie and her children go from freedom to enslavement with the law supporting this injustice. Harper is showing how the law is only in place for whites, significantly only those who are purely white. Alfred tells Marie that "by the authority of the law, which has decided that Leroy's legal heirs are his white blood relations, and that your marriage is null and void" (73). Harper displays that despite Eugene efforts, marrying Marie and preparing a will to protect and provide for his family in case of his death, both by legal precautions and arrangements are dismissed because of the tainting of his family's black blood. Harper is displaying how the law is not only fickle, but also how the law is white in that all Eugene assets are given to his white relatives even though he has heirs who are by complexion and demeanor white. Because Alfred is white he is able to take the law, a law established and allotted to him as a white citizen, and manipulates it for his own purposes. On the

other hand, Marie and her family are subjected to slavery with no protection or reprecution from the law despite being legally married. Harper paints the color of the law for the reader and shows how whiteness, distinctively pure whiteness, is only protected under law.

The White Southern Belle and Gentleman

At the time of Eugene's death, Iola and Harry are situated in the North while the youngest child, Grace, is in the South with Marie witnessing the fall of her family and the sorrow of her mother. In the North, Harper introduces Iola as a southern girl that have the same attitudes of most southerners of the time. She would say, "Slavery can't be wrong" and "Our slaves do not want their freedom. They would not take it if we gave it to them" (75). Little does Iola know, she has been subjected to a class and race because of her black blood, but because her black ancestry has been concealed from her, she is unaware of both her class and race degeneration. Literally moments after these comments are made Louis Bastine, Alfred's attorney, arrives to retrieve Alfred's property. Louis explains to Iola and the principal that Eugene is deathly ill and requires Iola's immediate presence and they take the earliest train back to Mississippi. During their travels, they stop at a hotel in a Southern city due to the train having a failed connection (79). While asleep, Iola wakes up to "a burning kiss pressed on her lips and a strong arm encircling her" (79). Frightened and trembling, Iola removes from Louis embraces. Harper shows how Iola's status as woman has been radically changed. Iola goes from a white citizen, protected and shielded by law, to a black slave unprotected and vulnerable to sexual exploitation, a common theme among mulattos. When Iola arrives home it is revealed to her that her mother never sent a telegram requesting her return, that her father has died, and it was all a ploy to get her to the South and subjected to slavery (80-1). Most importantly, when Marie reveals to Iola that she has negro

blood coursing through her vein “an expression of horror and anguish swept over Iola’s face” realizing that she is black and apart of the inferior race she once concluded as content. She exclaims “I used to say that slavery is right. I didn’t know what I was talking about” (81). From a southern white lady to a black slave, Harper shows the cruelty, injustice, and degradation of slavery with a white face. Iola is displayed as the epitome of a southern belle. Cultivated as a white lady in education, demeanor, and appearance, Harper, similar to Brown, shows a white lady being subjected to slavery and reduced to chattel.

Iola writes to Harry explaining everything that has happened to their family and advises him not to return home. Upon receiving the letter, Harry becomes ill for several months and when his health improves he believes the whole affair to be a dream, but Mr. Bascom, Harry’s principal, explains to him that it is the sad reality. Mr. Bascom gives him two alternatives: to stay in the North where he would be arranged with friends on his behalf or to enlist in the Union army, and he chooses to enlist in the Union army, not to fight for the government, but in order to avenge his mother and sister’s wrongs (95-6). Following this choice, Harry is faced with another choice when Mr. Bascom asks what regiment he would prefer, white or black:

Harry winced when the question was asked. He felt the reality of his situation as he had not done before. It was as if two paths had suddenly opened before him, and he was forced to choose between them. On one side were strength, courage, enterprise, power of achievement, and memories of a wonderful past. On the other side were weakness, ignorance, poverty, and the proud world’s social scorn. He knew nothing of colored people except as slaves, and his whole soul shrank from equalizing himself with them. He was fair enough to pass unchallenged among the fairest in the land, and yet a Christless prejudice had decreed that he should be a social pariah. (96)

Harper places Harry at a crossroad between being a white man and black man. Harry realizes that as white man he could continue to live in his current situation, a white man protected by the law and with all the rights and privileges of a white citizen open to him. However, as a black man he would be a part of the inferior and oppressed race, and would go from a white citizen to a black

slave. By Harry realizing that he only knows the black race as slaves and in opposition to himself, he also realizes that if he chooses to be black he would have to develop a whole new lifestyle and transform himself into a whole new person. After considering both options Harry tells the recruiting officer that he wishes to join the colored regiment and when the recruiting officer asks him why he proclaims ““because I am a colored man”” (97). While the recruiting officer considers Harry a fool he enrolls him in the color regiment. Significantly, we witness Harry “rewriting” himself by claiming his blackness by enlisting and documenting himself as a black man. Choosing not to pass, he dismisses his whiteness and claims his blackness, but he still maintains his rights as a citizen by joining the army and achieving multiple honors as a black man.

A Thirty Year Reunion

While on the battlefield, Harry is injured and hospitalized. When he wakes up he discovers his mother standing over him and both are overwhelmed with happiness at their unexpected reunion. Marie has been taken to Vicksburg by Alfred, where she became a nurse. Alfred’s plans to refugee with her to Texas were foiled when he enlisted in the Confederate army and died during the surrender of Vicksburg (146). With mother and son reunited at last, they decide to search for Iola, but find their searching to be in vain. Harry is informed about a Methodist Conference in the state and resolves to go to the conference to continue his search for Iola. At the conference, the bishop introduces a young lady and details her misfortunes: her mother and father marriage being null and void, being subjected to slavery, and robbed of her inheritance, saying “Miss Iola Leroy is the young lady’s name” and asks if anyone has any information regarding her case (147). Harry stands saying ““I am her brother and I came here to look for her”” (147). Shortly after Iola’s discovery, Marie, Harry, and Iola are finally reunited

with mother and children happily together. Iola reveals to her mother and brother how she was sold and resold and that her last master was “mean, brutal, and cruel,” (similar to Cassy’s story), but a man who she believed to be Marie’s brother, Robert, had her release from her masters clutches and given the position as a nurse in the hospital (149). Iola details how she sung the hymn her mother use to sing to her and how the soldier realized the hymn and recalled hearing it sung by his own mother. Iola notices his resemblance to Harry and received details about how his sister had a mole on her cheek and how he had the red spot on his forehead Marie spoke of in the past (149-50). Following these revelations, Iola writes to Robert and relays this new found information and Robert agrees to come see Marie. Upon Robert’s arrival, he is unrecognizable to Marie because of the passing time, but after reminiscing about their childhood they conclude that they are siblings, thus another reunion happens further completing and reconstructing the Leroy family. Through the Leroy family being reunited Harper, similar to Stowe, contradicts the tragic trope that surrounds the mulatto and the theme of separation that comes with the institution of slavery. Not only are each of these mulattos reunited, but they are in a state of bliss in this reunion and no longer in their down trodden and sorrowful state that slavery and separation imposed on them. Moreover, Harper displays them as blacks who are secure in their civil rights to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” privileges that only whites were thought to possess. The happiness, reunions, and rebuilding of family ties present the mulatto as strong, enduring, and victorious despite the tragic circumstance and obstacles they suffered.

Passing: An Undetected Crime

After the reunion of the Leroy family, we find them in a state bliss, but suffering the effects of the end of the American Civil War. Although now located in the North, Iola is having

difficulty finding equal employment. When Iola reveals her black lineage to one of her peers she “noticed a chill in the social atmosphere of the store, which communicated itself to the cashboys, and they treated her so insolently that her situation became uncomfortable. She saw the proprietor, resigned her position, and asked for and obtained a letter of recommendation to another merchant who had advertised for a saleswoman” (157). When she applies for another situation she informs the employer that she is a colored woman, and the employer instructs her not to say anything about her lineage to the other employees or they may not be willing to let her work (157). However, when asked what church she attends she reveals that she went to a colored church. When questioned why she attends a colored church she responds ““because I wished to be with my own people”” revealing her black lineage. Shortly after, this information is given to Mr. Cohen who in turn informs Iola that her services are no longer needed. After losing two jobs, Iola states that ““it seems as if the prejudice pursues us through every avenue of life and assigns us the lowest places”” (158). Despite the American Civil War being over and Iola having freedom, her blackness is still a tainting factor in her life. Because of her blackness she is unable to keep employment or be treated equally to the whites she works with. However Iola says ““I am determined to win for myself a place in the fields of labor”” (158). Despite her past experiences and her race, Iola asserts that she will make a place for herself as a black woman despite a society that has designated an inferior place for her and those of her race. When she tells her Uncle Robert about a situation in New England she is going to try and obtain, he tells her not to say anything about her lineage. Iola responds, ““I see no necessity for proclaiming that fact on the house-top. Yet I am resolved that nothing shall tempt me to deny it. The best blood in my vein is African blood, and I am not ashamed of it”” (158). Iola claims that she will not necessarily reveal her color, but if questioned about her life she will not deny that she is colored and that she will be proud in admitting so.

Similar to Harry, Iola, despite the advantages of claiming whiteness, she proudly embraces her blackness. With slavery abolished and the 13th Amendment giving blacks their freedom, Harper shows how blacks are still in an inferior and subservient position in society. On the contrary, Harper shows Iola rebelling against society and these notions without the assistance of her whiteness and proclaiming her blackness. While it takes multiple attempts, Iola finally finds a job as a nurse where the tainting of her blood does not compromise her employment. On the morning of Iola's arrival, Mr. Cloten, the father of Iola's patient, calls all his employees together and tells them that Iola is a colored woman and anyone who objects to working with her can receive their last pay and leave, stating “not a man remonstrated, not a woman demurred” (161). Despite her blackness being revealed she is still able to have employment and be treated equally and indifferent although she is black. As a black woman, Harper shows Iola gaining the equality and treatment of a citizen, making her equal to her white peers. She gains the rights and privileges of a citizen, having the right not to be discriminated against because of her color and the privilege of working in an admirable profession as a nurse, despite the forces of society.

Later in the novel we find Iola presented with the choice of passing again. Iola encounters Dr. Gresham, an old friend from the hospital she worked at during the Civil War, who became quite fond of her. Quite taken with her beauty and cultivation he eventually falls in love with her. Although years have passed, Dr. Gresham's love for Iola has not faded, but gotten stronger with time. Dr. Gresham proposes marriage to her again and as before Iola rejects his proposal on the account of her blackness. Dr. Gresham exclaims that “I learned to love you” (175). “Are you not free at last to share with me my Northern home, free to be mine as nothing else on earth is mine” (175). Iola responds “I feel now as I felt then, that there is an insurmountable barrier between us” and that “it is the public opinion which assigns me a place with the colored people”

(175). Iola explains to Dr. Gresham that despite the love he feels for her, it does not change the racialized space society has designated for her. She goes on to say that “I do not think that you fully realize how much prejudice against colored people permeates society, lowers the tone of our religion, and reacts upon the life of the nation,” further stressing how societal attitudes play a significant role in their union as people of two different races, significantly black and white. Dr. Gresham responds, “Iola, I see no use in your persisting that you are colored when your eyes are as blue and complexion as white as mine” (177). In this assertion, despite knowing about Iola’s black ancestry he only references what is visible, her whiteness. In comparing to his whiteness to hers, his white complexion and blue eyes, he places no differentiation between him and Iola, equalizing him to her despite the knowledge of her race. Iola responds, “Doctor, were I your wife, are there not people who would caress me as a white woman who would shrink from me in scorn if they knew I had one drop of negro blood in my veins? When mistaken for a white woman, I should hear things alleged against the race at which my blood would boil” (177). Iola explains that it would be difficult for her to pass a white woman in that it compromises her loyalty, respect, dignity, and pride she has imbedded in her race, the race she has chosen. “No, Doctor, I am not willing to live under a shadow of concealment which I thoroughly hate as if the blood in my veins were an undetected crime” (177). Not only is Iola asserting and refusing to pass and lived under a mask of whiteness, she also reveals that by doing so she would be committing a crime and breaking the law. Harper presents and asserts the fact that Iola’s birth was illegal in breaking anti-miscegenation laws of the time. Despite being free, Iola still does not have the right to marry who she wants to marry despite racial difference. Dr. Gresham proclaims “Iola, dear, surely you paint the picture too darkly,” in which Iola responds “Doctor, I have painted it with my hearts blood. It easier to outgrow the dishonor of crime than the disabilities of color” (177). Iola’s

black blood has been a means of tainting her position and status as a woman, being the main reason why she was subjected to slavery and displays how in a society dominated by color it is all that matters. Her black blood, although tangible and invisible, cannot be disposed of; it would always be a part of her, even if it is masked with her whiteness, that which is most visible. Although heartbroken, Dr. Gresham painfully accepts Iola's decision. Harper leaves Dr. Gresham as the heartbroken individual in the novel and leaves Iola proud of her decision not to forsake her race. Harper shows Iola not losing a white lover, one of the tragedies of being a mulatto, but having a strong loyalty to her race and displays a white person suffering from tragedy instead.

The Negro Question

With the Civil War and the 13th Amendment being ratified, the question pondering across country is what to do with this new class of freedmen and women who have now been granted citizenship through the 14th Amendment and the right to vote through the 15th Amendment. Harper sets the scene with Robert, Rev. Carmicle, Dr. Gresham, Dr. Latrobe, the southerner, and a young doctor, Dr. Latimer, discussing "the Negro question": black education, labor, and suffrage among other social issues. They debate the use of racial violence or expatriation to solve the problem of race. Dr. Latrobe explains that "I am not afraid of the negro as he stands alone, but what I dread is that in some closely-contested election ambitious men will use him to hold the balance of power and make him an element of danger. He [the Negro] is ignorant, poor, and clannish, and they may impact his as their policy would direct" (168). Latrobe realizes that with blacks being free and possessing the right to vote, the black man is now a political factor which creates the fear of "Negro domination," especially among white southerners. With their new

political rights and strength in numbers, Dr. Latrobe foresees blacks dominating the election and white supremacy deteriorating in effect. Dr. Gresham responds, “wisely, or unwisely, the Government has put the ballot in his hands. It is better to teach him to use that ballot aright than to intimidate him by violence or vitiate his vote by fraud” (169). Dr. Gresham proposes educating the Negro in using their right to vote, further saying that “the ballot is our weapon of defense, and we gave it to them for theirs” (170). With the right the vote, the Negro has the possibility of protection through the law as a citizen of the country. Dr. Latrobe retaliates saying “I think that we are right in suppressing the negro’s vote. This is a white man’s government and a white man’s country” (170). Despite blacks having freedom and rights, Dr. Latrobe explains that whites still have the power. “We [whites] own nineteen-twentieth of the land, and have about the same ratio of intelligence” (170). However, Rev. Carmicle states that “there are rights more sacred than the rights of property and superior intelligence,” the rights of life and liberty (170). Such inalienable rights were given to African Americans by the 14th Amendment, with the guarantee of due process of law (Thomas 14). Dr. Latrobe advocates denying these rights in order to maintain white supremacy; in essence, he wants to ignore democratic principles that define American citizenship. Rev. Carmicle asserts “it is your grand opportunity to help build up a New South, not on the shifting sands of policy and expediency, but on the broad basis of equal justice and universal freedom” (171-2). Rev. Carmicle sees this as a way to rebuild and restructure the South, and even America, to include the Negro as a full-class citizen equal to a white citizen. However, Dr. Latrobe proclaims “the only way to get along with him [the negro] is to let him know his place, and make him keep it” (172). Opposite of Rev. Carmicle, Dr. Latrobe shows separation, later segregation, as the solution of what to do with the Negro and leaving the South to remain the way it is, with white domination and negro degradation. Harper

presents multiple solutions, opinions, and facts in response to the Negro question, delineating the conflicting opinions of the time while addressing how the African Americans' transformation from slave, to freedmen, to citizen became a national issue in the nineteenth century and after.

CONCLUSION

Frank J. Webb, William Wells Brown, Frances Harper, and Harriet Beecher Stowe give detailed accounts of the mulatto as an important historical and fictional figure in the nineteenth century. Each author examines slavery, an institution based on race, and use the mulatto figure, whose black lineage is invisible, to show how it undermines the very principles upon which America is built. They reveal how the mulatto uses his/her mixed-race heritage to their advantage, crossing boundaries of race to achieve civil rights and social privileges. Within different contexts, these authors present the mulatto's tragedies and triumphs, while passing for a white person with certain inalienable rights. Clarence Garie, George Winston, George Harris, and Harry Leroy, for instance, all have an identity crisis trying to find where they fit in a patriarchal society dominated by racial prejudice and the power of whiteness. While Clarence Garie is "freed" by death from his dilemma, both George Winston and George Harris leave the United States to experience ultimate freedom as citizens of the world. Harry, on the other hand, claims his blackness as a "race man," empowered by his civil rights and commitment to the uplift other African Americans by improving their socioeconomic conditions. In essence, he achieves his own idea of freedom even in a Jim Crow society. The female heroines in these works are often trapped in gender conventions that limit their rights to civil equality; their primary escape through marriage ironically leaves them still as second-class citizens. In this political fiction, of the leading mulatto characters, one could choose to be either white or black, or not make the choice at all. Through such actions, the authors reveal the complexity of life on the color line and undermine whiteness in order to advocate social justice and racial equality.

All of the writers I profile show how passing is essential to the study of the mulatto figure

by allowing their characters to perform as white gentlemen and ladies, exotic others, and/or deviant/ marginal members of society—hiding their blackness within the text while yet exposing it to the reader and challenging notions about citizenship. From changing apparel (e.g. the exchange between Mary and George Green) to wearing masks (e.g. Cassy’s veil over her face), these texts show how easily and unsuspecting the mulatto figure can appear as invincible rather than “tragic.” Harper, especially, shows her mulatto characters claiming their blackness and still being happy in the end. Miscegenation, as a social practice (despite legal restrictions), undermined the institutions of slavery and Jim Crow; it made blackness *invisible thereby allowing the mulatto unlimited opportunities*. As “white” citizens, mulattoes gained access to life, liberty, and property as their civil rights. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin, The Garies and Their Friend, Clotel, and Iola Leroy* leave audiences with a new outlook for understanding the mulatto, who no longer appears as a tragic, distraught, sympathetic character, but a complex, empowered citizen.

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