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“‘Race’ as Construct: Different Presentations of Black and White in *The Clansman*, *Contending Forces* and *The Marrow of Tradition*”

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	7
2. Early-20th-Century Discourse on ‘Race’.....	17
2.1 An Ideology Backed by Science.....	17
2.2 The Spectre of Degeneration, or the White ‘Race’ at stake	21
2.3 The Institution of Slavery and ‘the Southern Way of Life’	24
2.4 Résumé - The Power of Discourse	30
3. Three Historical Novels on ‘Race’	35
3.1. <i>The Clansman</i> – a Novel in Line with Dominant ‘Race’ Ideology.....	37
3.2 <i>Contending Forces</i> – a Novel of Reconciliation.....	40
3.3 <i>The Marrow of Tradition</i> – a Novel of Revelations.....	42
3.4 Opposing languages of ‘Race’	45
3.4.1 The Appropriation of Belief Systems and how these can be Challenged	47
3.4.1.1. Science.....	49
3.4.1.2 Religion & Spirituality	57
3.4.1.3 Justice and Truth	63
3.4.2 Voices of the Suppressed – ‘There Shall be Separation’	68
3.4.2.1 Life along the ‘Colour Line’.....	68
3.4.2.2 The Designated Role of Blacks.....	76
3.4.2.3 Crime, Savagery and the Horror of Lynching	82
3.4.3 Unification vs. Disunity – the Vision of One People	91
3.4.3.1 North and South – the Reunion of Brothers	91
3.4.3.2 Man and Woman – the Family as the Nuclear Entity.....	97
3.4.3.3 Black and White – the Integration of a ‘Race’	103
5. Conclusion.....	111
6. Bibliography	121
6.1 Primary Literature	121
6.2 Secondary Literature.....	121
7. Appendix.....	128
7.1 Abstract	128
7.2 Lebenslauf	129

1. Introduction

Owing to this struggle for life, any variation, however slight and from whatever cause proceeding, if it be in any degree profitable to an individual of any species, in its infinitely complex relations to other organic beings and to external nature, will tend to the preservation of that individual, and will generally be inherited by its offspring [...] I have called this principle, by which each slight variation, if useful, is preserved, by the term of Natural Selection, in order to mark its relation to man's power of selection. (Darwin 60-61)

Charles Darwin and his path-breaking work on evolution not only revolutionized the state of the natural sciences of the 19th century, the naturalist also stands for an era when nature was deemed responsible for how society was constituted. Basic to this perception was the belief in the existence of different 'races', that is, groups of humans whose members assumingly shared a distinct set of physical and mental characteristics. According to this perception, the innate differences within the various 'races' also decided on their place within society and made them "intellectually, politically, and socially homogenous entities" (N. Gates vii).¹

Within this late-19th-century American society white supremacy was the dominant ideology, and this belief system was decisive when it came to make sense of mankind. In this regard, although slavery had been abolished and the black population officially been granted civil rights, the dominance of white supremacy 'enabled' the persistence of racially-grounded discrimination and suppression, most notably and severely in the Southern former slave states. Here, state legislation like the 'Black Codes' and 'Jim Crow' officially legitimized both segregation and sustained discrimination. However, generally speaking, in the entire American society blacks were met with suspicion, distrust and rejection.

¹ At the latest the mid-20th-century findings in genetics proved wrong this assumption of a causal relationship between physical and cultural characteristics (see N. Gates vii-ix). Today, although the awareness of 'race' still exists, and so does racism, its biological definition has been abandoned in favour of a concept of 'race' that perceives it as a social and cultural construct. Moreover, the concept of 'ethnicity' has gained wide acceptance and use (see "Race" 213-125 & "Essentialism" 89-90 & "Ethnicity" 92-93). Nevertheless, although the official definition of 'race' has changed, it is still an omnipresent concept and racism prevalent in many societies. In this regard, as pointed out by Smedley (7f), today various (multicultural) countries – such as the United States – officially employ racial distinctions with the effect, that an American with any known African-American ancestry is considered 'black', regardless of their distinct morphological traits. Moreover, official documents would not allow the choice for an 'in-between' of 'black' and 'white'. In his article "Race: The Mythic Root of Racism" Donal E. Muir gives an interesting insight into why and how 'race' could have manifested as the powerful and persuasive term it still is today.

This peculiar social context found its way into contemporary writing where it was responded to in different ways: generally speaking, turn-of-the-19th-century writing stood in the tradition of the revisionist public discourse of this time, which, however, was contributed to differently with regards to the ethnic background of the writer. White writers took advantage, for instance, of the 'Plantation Novel' that negotiated the past in terms of the 'Plantation Myth' and the myth of the 'Old South'. This genre told of an idealized ante-bellum South which featured submissive but assumingly contented and even happy slaves and their beloved noble and chivalrous white masters². The intention of this tradition was to reflect well on the Southern section and to provide the public with an image of it that opposed the opinion about slavery as an evil and corrupting institution. *This* perception, however, had been most famously pointed to by Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of 1852, a novel that can be regarded a forerunner of the kind of African American writing most popular and influential in the years and decades after Civil War: the provision of counter-discourses to the dominant white perspective in the form of social criticism. The primary goal, however, was not to incite hatred but rather to present an integrative tone, which is to be seen in connection with the pivotal theme addressed by African Americans at the turn of the 19th century: a successful integration into broader society. In order to achieve this aim of longed-for involvement and participation, black writers intended to prove wrong the assumptions of the allegedly natural inferiority of the black 'race'; they identified the need to remove the mask³ which so far had guaranteed survival in a society characterised by contempt for everything non-white. The time had come to present a voice that could no longer remain unheard; in order to make this voice a loud one, the unification of the black 'race' was regarded indispensable (see Diedrich 409-12).

In this diploma thesis I will take into account three novels I regard as symptomatic of a time when a racist worldview was common knowledge and white-supremacist ideology the dominant way of constituting 'race'. In this regard, generally speaking the joint consideration of Thomas Dixon Jr.'s *The Clansman*, Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces*, and Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of*

² Representative of this tradition is, for instance, Thomas Nelson Page and his *In Ole Virginia or Marse Chan and Other Stories*.

³ See Paul Laurence Dunbar's famous poem "We wear the mask" in *The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar*.

Tradition represents what Frederick Douglass famously termed the ‘colour line’ – the segregation along the line of ‘race’. While Dixon writes from a white propagandist perspective that fully relies on stereotypical depictions and mythology as employed, for instance, within the ‘Plantation Tradition’, Hopkins’ and Chesnutts’ perspective is an African American one which gives voice to the social inequality found within contemporary society. Moreover, they present counter-arguments to the attempts of generalizing humans in terms of ‘race’ and of creating essential images of ‘black’ and ‘white’. Of course, turn-of-the-19th-century writers abound which present one of these two perspectives in their narratives; however, for two basic similarities identified in the three novels I regard them as peculiarly appropriate for joint consideration and comparison. These similarities also constitute fundamental aspects for my argumentation:

First, I argue and will illustrate that the three authors share the intention to arouse emotions in their readership which is accomplished – to varying degrees though – by relying on the employment of pathos to reach the effect of sentimentalism: pathos is applied in order to “[...] evoke the feelings of tenderness, pity, or sympathetic sorrow from the audience” (“Pathos” 204), while sentimentalism is the “excess of emotion to an occasion, and especially to overindulgence in the ‘tender’ emotions of pathos and sympathy” (“Sentimentalism” 284). Is overindulgence in emotions often referred to in negative terms today, to the three writers it proved an approach to society and thus also to reality that utterly opposed one of the main literary traditions of turn-of-the-19th-century United States, i.e. naturalism. In this regard, a naturalist writer utterly rejects sentimentalizing as s/he regards it their “duty [...] to present to the reader reality without illusion, to offer a scientific, detached view of it rather than to adorn or mislead or simply please the reader” (“Naturalism” 152)⁴. This kind of language is, to varying extents, combined with a figurative and metaphorical one; for instance, the opening scene of *The Marrow of Tradition* – a newborn and its mother are on the verge of death – is being referred to by the narrator in the following way: a “[...] heavy scent of magnolias, overpowering even the strong smell of drugs in the sickroom, suggest[ing] death and funeral wreaths, sorrow

⁴ However, although in *The Marrow of Tradition* the author Chesnutt employs sentimentalisms, in chapter 3.3 I illustrate that his narrative also features conventions associated with the naturalistic tradition.

and tears, the long home, the last sleep” (Chesnutt, *The Marrow* 1). In *Contending Forces* it says, for instance, “Indeed Great Britain has been kind to the colonists of this favored [sic] island from its infancy, sheltering and shielding them so carefully that the iron hand of the master has never shown beneath the velvet glove” (Hopkins, *Contending Forces* 21). Last but not least, in *The Clansman* it says, “Ben Cameron and his father hurried Southward to a home and land passing under a cloud darker than the dust and smoke of blood-soaked battlefields-the Black Plague of Reconstruction” (Dixon, *The Clansman* 179). I argue that by arousing the emotions of the reader – supported by this kind of language – the three writers intend to gain sympathy for how they themselves make sense of the topic of ‘race’.

Second, I argue and will demonstrate that this sympathy is ‘projected’ to the level of the family that is to be regarded the centre of attention in all three novels. It is the social entity where emotions culminate and where the particular social and cultural environment shows its effect. In the three narratives, the focus is put on the lives of two families which differ in terms of social standing, ‘race’ and regional section: Dixon employs two white families – a Southern aristocratic and a Northern middle-class one – while Hopkins’s two families are a white Southern aristocratic and a black Northern middle-class one. Last but not least, Chesnutt identifies two Southern families as his main character cast – a white aristocratic as well as a black middle-class one.⁵ These families are opposed to each other and I will illustrate that the resulting comparison is supportive to the authors in order to reach the overall effect of their narrative as well as to indicate *their* significance of the concept of ‘race’.

⁵ The story line of *The Clansman* revolves around the entanglements of the Northern Stonemans and Southern Camerons. Austin Stoneman is the leader of Congress and implements radical measures in the Reconstruction South, which also includes the political emancipation of the black Southern population. The plot focuses on the love story between Elsie Stoneman and Ben Cameron as well as Philip Stoneman and Margaret Cameron, and the constitution of the Ku Klux Klan with Ben Cameron as one of its founding members.

In *Contending Forces* there are two main plots; the first takes place on the island of Bermuda as well as in North Carolina and tells the story of the Montforts, a white planter family. The second main plot focuses on black Sappho Clark as well as the black Smiths in late-19th-century Boston. The heroine and William Smith fall in love with each other and after hardship and drama live happily ever after. What is more, in the end it is revealed that the Montforts and the Smiths are related.

The Marrow of Tradition tells the story of the incidents culminating in a massacre in a North Carolinian town in the late 1800s. The violent act leaves a considerable impact on both families under consideration, the white Carterets and the black Millers. The fact that Olivia Carteret and Janet Miller have the same (white) father turns out to be of major importance throughout the story.

In here lies the main difference of the three novels and the reason why their comparison is of major interest: they negotiate reality as well as 'race' in different ways and they *diverge* in terms of their focus and point of view: in this regard, Dixon tells the reader why the preservation of society was only possible if the white race could hold to its superior position, while his contemporary Hopkins indicates the importance of Christian beliefs in order to advance as one human 'race'. Chesnutt, however, focuses on providing the reader with an outline of how a white-supremacist ideology affects both sides of the 'colour line' as well as how the dominant side can be 'unmasked'. In order to develop their interpretation of 'race', in *The Clansman*, *Contending Forces*, and *The Marrow of Tradition* it is drawn on various literary conventions: in this regard, Dixon and Hopkins rely on conventions associated with the sentimental and the romance novel as well as the movement of romanticism, whereas Chesnutt sticks to realism. The three authors aim at a certain effect in the reader and while in Dixon and Hopkins this is a romantic one, Chesnutt's novel 'produces' an effect of tragedy and disillusionment.

Hence, in order to enable the comparison of the three narratives, the following basic assumptions are made: I argue that Thomas Dixon Jr., Pauline Hopkins, and Charles Chesnutt are aware of the biological and social significance of 'race' and respond to society about this issue in their respective novel. In this regard, I will demonstrate that Dixon, Hopkins, and Chesnutt negotiate reality in their works and thus contribute to a discussion on 'race'. In doing so, it is important to keep in mind that the three authors share the particular *knowledge* of 'race' of their time: to them and their contemporaries, a racist worldview was perfectly normal and so were the dominance, power and influence of white-supremacist thinking, whereas today, to a rational mind, the adherence to the belief in the inequality of human beings appears disturbing and wrong. Nevertheless, despite this common cultural background, as will be outlined, the three writers differ in how they make sense of the then prevailing reality and the world in general.

In order to acknowledge the particular contributions of the three novels, it is essential to make some clarifications on 'discourse'; today the term is "generally used to designate the forms of [representation], conventions and habits of language use producing specific fields of culturally and historically

located meanings” (“Discourse” 78). Within cultural studies it is the French scholar Michel Foucault who has most famously contributed to the discussion of discourse, particularly by introducing the concepts of ‘dominant discourse’ and ‘discursive formation’. These concepts are of major interest in this thesis. Given the context of the 18th, 19th and early 20th century, I identify the ideology of white supremacy as such a dominant discourse while science and religion functioned as its major ‘discursive formations’. Power (relations) had been significant in the ‘invention’ of ‘race’ as well as the legitimization of racially-motivated suppression. Essential to the manifestation of American society as a racist one was also the establishment of stereotypes and social myths, which were being used to strengthen white-supremacist thinking. In this diploma thesis I will provide an insight to how these mechanisms of power worked within a racist American society as well as how this is negotiated in the three novels under consideration.

For the purpose of this paper, I regard Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin’s contribution to discourse analysis enormously helpful in approaching the three novels and their particular contributions to the discussion on ‘race’. The Russian scholar⁶ – Tzvetan Todorov calls him “the most important Soviet thinker in the human sciences and the greatest theoretician of literature in the twentieth century” (1984: ix) – places discourse into the focus of his approach towards the narrative; by rejecting the traditional, formalistic perception of literary works as ‘authorial monologues’ and instead acknowledging them as part of a larger unit, the focus of analysis can be put on the novels’ ‘inner dialogism’. In this sense, it is presumed that the utterances within a novel engage in a dialogue, held between the multitude of social voices a language is stratified into – “social dialects, characteristic group behaviour, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve

⁶ Born in 1895 into a life characterized by repression – he was forced into exile and/ or isolated from any cultural life for most of his lifetime – Bakhtin gained this acclaim late, which has to do with the fact that it has only been in recent decades that most of his works were published in the English language. Bakhtin’s intellectual legacy is broad and complex, and its relevance surpasses literary studies; in this regard, both his early philosophical, as well as the later works of literary and textual analysis have been taken up in disciplines like sociology, philosophy, politics, history, psychology (Danow 3-5; Gardiner and Mayerfeld Bell 2-4). Bakhtin’s outlines have been utilized by scholars “[...] for a progressive sociocultural critique and praxis, including Marxists, poststructuralists, and others” (Danow 3). Among these the most famous is probably Julia Kristeva and her essay “Word, Dialogue, and Novel” in which the French scholar draws on Bakhtin’s ideas and introduces the concept of ‘intertextuality’ (cf. Kristeva).

the specific socio-political purposes of the day [...]” (Bakhtin 262-63). As there are no neutral words, but only ones whose meaning and implications are deeply rooted in the particular context of the situation, the same holds true for these social voices found in a novel; these are associated with certain intentions, values and attitudes, and their meaning is dependent on their prior usage as well as the speakers and listeners involved in this very moment. According to Bakhtin, the author of ‘artistic prose’ is aware of this condition, as well as that s/he cannot free words from their particular “socio-ideological cultural horizons” (299); however, what the author can do is to consciously use these meanings, adapt and further appropriate them for the particular purposes of their works.

The dialogic orientation of the various social voices of the novel lets them communicate and interact, as well as establish links and interrelationships, and it is in this particular situation that what Bakhtin terms ‘heteroglossia’ can enter the novel. This concept stands for the heterogeneity or ‘polyphony’ within a novel, which results from the multitude of social voices and their opposition, incoherency, and disagreement. This condition makes the novel dynamic, incomplete and authentic as it unites different world views and concepts of interpreting the world, the respective meanings and values attached. It is the particular ‘heteroglossia’ of a novel that decides on its contribution within wider social discourse (see Bakhtin 262-92). The different languages and social voices can be introduced by the narrator as well as the various characters, and both – narrator and character cast – serve the author to objectivize the respective language/ social voice introduced; however, it is fundamental to keep in mind that it is the author who lets the narrator as well as the characters speak and act the way they do (see Bakhtin 314ff).

These thoughts and outlines lead me to the formulation of more fundamental arguments for this piece of writing: I will demonstrate that within the three narratives under consideration there are opposing social voices, which, in the form of utterances, respond and ‘talk’ to each other within the respective novel, on the level of all three narratives as well as within broader society. This dialogism enables a particular polyphonic condition or ‘heteroglossia’ to enter the respective narrative. I argue that there are social voices that support the dominant discourse on ‘race’ of their time – white supremacy – and other social voices that reject this ideology. In this regard, the characters which support the

dominant discourse on 'race' present it as something nature-given, as the only way of life decided and meant for American society and 'civilization'. In order to justify this claim, they refer to 'proof' allegedly provided by discourses on science and religion. In contrast, the voices that reject this dominant discourse provide counter-arguments in order to indicate that white supremacy is neither natural nor does it entail justice; instead it brings discrimination and suppression and is characterized by hypocrisy. Within the three novels, these disagreeing voices want to be heard and thus gain both significance and meaning, but, however, only one side (supportive or rejecting) can prove as the stronger one. I will illustrate, that what voice proves as the stronger one eventually is decided by what characters introduce the various social voices into the novel as well as what the narrator does with these in the progressing story. In this regard, the narrator of the respective novel 'makes' his characters reliable or unreliable, likeable or disagreeable, and might also give them particular authority within the novel. Furthermore, the narrator directly enters the novel via comments and by doing so s/he renders particular social voices the more persuasive, even logical ones, while s/he can debunk, ridicule, satirize etc. others and thus deem these as lacking significance. All this decides on the significance of the various social voices incorporated

The social voice that proves as the more persuasive one is identified as the one revealing the opinion of the author of the respective novel. In this regard, Dixon believed in the naturally superior position of the white 'race' and he makes this attitude more than obvious in his writing; Hopkins and Chesnutt, on the other hand, negotiate the world through the eyes of a people that has experienced racially-motivated discrimination and segregation in the United States ever since and they clearly question and challenge the belief represented by Dixon. As I will show in this thesis, the three author's attitudes are made most obvious when it comes to the disagreeing voices on science and religion. In this regard, these voices either support the idea of 'race' as an essential variable, or they reject it. I argue that in *The Clansman* the social voices supportive of 'race' as an essential variable prove as the more persuasive ones, whereas in *Contending Forces* and *The Marrow of Tradition* these are only incorporated to reveal that an essential image of 'race' is untenable. In this regard, these two narratives reject the foundations of a white-supremacist ideology while Dixon's narrative supports this.

In order to convince the reader of their respective perception – as already mentioned above – Dixon greatly relies on the validity of black and white stereotypical depictions as well as on myths. Although both Hopkins and Chesnutt also employ stereotypes, their significance is a totally different one; both African American writers indicate that these are mere constructs which serve white-supremacist ideology. This holds true for Southern mythology.

To my mind, the kind of negotiation of reality and history provided by the three narratives is of great value today as it allows an insight into how the dominant discourse on 'race' worked within early-20th-century U.S. American society and what it further entailed for individuals and for society in general. The combination of the novels taken into consideration in this diploma thesis enables a direct comparison of two opposing and disagreeing opinions about 'race'. From a contemporary objective perspective it seems easy to decide for one of these two contrasting sides and hence to acknowledge the injustice African Americans had to experience. However, back then only one side of the 'colour line' spoke truth and thus decided on what was right and what wrong. In order to gain an insight into how white-supremacist ideology could become such a dominant discourse within U.S. American society, prior to the discussion of the three novels I will provide fundamental background knowledge. I will illustrate that since its manifestation as a variable that divides humans across physical lines, the concept of 'race' proved fundamental to legitimize and justify discrimination, segregation, and suppression. The reliance on deeply-ideologically grounded, and long-forgotten pseudo-scientific and religious discourses further supported the superiority of one and the inferiority of another 'race'. However, by the turn of the 19th century the African American voice became so loud it could no longer be ignored, pointing to how American reality was and what a democratic and liberal society should rather look like. There was not only one side of the 'colour line' anymore, and it was for the reader to decide how to make sense of the issue of 'race'.

2. Early-20th-Century Discourse on ‘Race’

Since its first appearance in the English language in the early 16th century, the term ‘race’ has undergone a significant change in meaning. Originally it had not borne any implications of a biological identity, but denoted a class or category of people or things. In the progressing 16th century the term began to be used to refer to ‘lineage’ and ‘common descent’ and later also to denote a group of people with a common history or origin. However, only by the 19th century ‘race’ had manifested as a concept that divides humans across physical lines. The 19th century was also the time when major scientific efforts were put into the identification and categorization of living beings (including the human species) and their arrangement in terms of hierarchy (see N. Gates: vii-ix).

Still, at the time the three works taken into consideration were written, the Western world had been a racist one, to be more precise, the belief in white supremacy was predominant. The arrangement of the different ‘races’ in terms of hierarchy had been officially legitimized; it was regarded an undisputed fact that was proven by science and religion. But what did such a racist worldview entail? How had it been manifested within American society and what did it mean for the black population? The following sub-chapters shall give answers to these questions and in doing so provide the basic context for the analysis of the three narratives accomplished in chapter 3.

2.1 An Ideology Backed by Science

What is basic of a racist ideology or worldview is that the ideal of human equality is questioned, even rejected. In the United States, this had already been the case when the first English settlers arrived in the New World; shocked by the way of life and customs of the native American population – they usually were nudists, led a polygamous lifestyle and were obviously unfamiliar with the concepts of government, law and private property – to the Puritan settlers these ‘Indians’ clearly could not live up to their own particular ideologies of order, discipline, decency, and morals. The first impressions gained led the early ‘conquerors’ to declare the native peoples ‘savages’, humans, though, but inferior ones “who did not appear to make use of the bountiful land that God had given to them” (Smedley 89). These initial attitudes began to institutionalize, and the image of the ‘wild savage’ became something like a generic perception, applicable to other

groups of people also. With ever growing numbers of black people the slave trade forcibly brought to the shores of the colonies, the images of the 'savage' or 'barbarian' were also applied to the African slaves⁷ then. However, the growing numbers of black slaves also had other consequences: had all the British American colonies initially relied on bound white labourers, this changed when the tobacco culture began to prove highly profitable in the 17th century. Africans became commercially important human chattel, black slavery spread from Virginia – the state where the first slaves from the West Indies landed – to the other colonies, and throughout the colonial period slaves and indentured servants⁸ constituted the basic labour force. With the growing importance and profitability of the transatlantic slave trade⁹ dark skin was increasingly identified with slave status, resulting in the institutionalisation of this physical characteristic as *the* symbol of savagery and heathenism. Moreover, the subsequent centuries saw the implementation of distinct laws (e.g. granting the right to vote to whites only) which aimed at the recognition of slaves i.e. blacks as a distinct and inferior people without any claim to civil rights (see Smedley 89-118; Davis 52; "Slave Trade" 726-27 & "Slavery" 727-28). So far, the foundation had been laid for establishing a system within society that clearly disagreed with the concept of human equality; however, the biological concept of 'race' was only to evolve in the centuries to follow.

Hence, with the progressing 18th century, increasing efforts were taken to prove the presumed difference and separateness between black and white. Had biblical interpretations and dogmatic positions and doctrines once been the major sources to make sense of and explain the world, this thinking began to be seriously challenged by the presentation of naturalistic explanations and empirical research from the mid-18th century onwards. Science was regarded as

⁷ Nederveen Pieterse (1992: 30ff) provides an interesting outline on the official depictions and illustrations of the African in Western discourse from the colonial times onwards.

⁸ "[Indentured servants], or bound laborers [sic], were used principally in the Middle Colonies and the tobacco provinces during the colonial period. [...] Unlike slavery, indentured servitude, whether voluntary or involuntary, bound the laborer [sic] only for a specific time" ("Indentured Servants" 404).

⁹ Davies observes that "a full explanation of the transition from white and Amerindian servitude to Afro-American slavery must await more detailed studies of every colony, of transatlantic transport, and of the changing labor [sic] markets in the Americas, Europe, and especially Africa. For the Africanisation of large parts of the New World was the result not of concerted planning, racial destiny, or immanent historical design (52)". For a detailed discussion see his *Slavery and Human Progress* (51ff).

dissociated from religion and any other supernaturalistic perspectives, and its peculiar epistemology was grounded in the idea of man's rational mind. However, early scientific thought had not been able to free itself completely from all theologically-based assumptions and propositions; ideologies obviously influenced the results of scientific thought, theories had even been elaborated in a particular kind of way that made them compatible with basic cultural and religious themes (e.g. the earliest attempts of drawing classifications of humankind with distinct innate physical as well as mental characteristic¹⁰). To today's understanding of science, these methods could not have been called neutral, objective, or scientific at all (see Smedley 161-69). This becomes most obvious when considering the earliest attempts of hierarchically arranging humans around the turn of the 18th century; science referred to the so called 'Great Chain of Being', a Christian model that had faded into obscurity during the Middle Ages, but, however, was referred to again since it obviously was regarded useful. According to this creationist model, there existed an unquestionable hierarchy of all living beings, with God on top, followed by angels and below, the humans. The principle of a hierarchal order of beings functioned as an unquestioned assumption about the nature of the world and was thus applied to the different groups of humans, with the whites on top, and blacks below (see Smedley 183-91). With the identification and evaluation of a set of particular morphological characteristics innate to a particular group, the identified 'races' could then be arranged hierarchically.

What followed these attempts of taxonomy was an abundance of quasi-scientific findings gained via various anthropometric techniques allegedly measuring human differences with the results interpreted as proof of the existence of different human 'races' as well as a justification for social inequality. One of these techniques was phrenology, a branch of 'science' whose representatives held the belief that the comparison of form and size of the brain revealed the different stages of development found within the different 'races'. Numerous 'scientists' picked some of the (apparently) most obvious physical characteristics of blacks (e.g. black skin, woolly hair, big lips, flat nose, and

¹⁰ cf. Swedish botanist Carl von Linné (Carolus Linnaeus) who, in his *Systemae Naturae* published in 1735, identified four main human groups: the 'Americanus', the 'Asiaticus', the 'Africanus' and the 'Europeaeus'.

distinct body odour (!)), declared them as 'essentially black' and referred to them as alleged 'proof' of the white 'race' as the superior.¹¹ As most famously illustrated by the Italian professor of medicine and psychiatry and founder of criminology, Cesare Lombroso, the black 'race' was the most primitive one, because, in contrast to other lower 'races' like the Asians, it had hardly advanced in terms of 'civilization' for millennia; this made the black person an atavist and this alleged degeneration held true for their intellectual capabilities and emotional life; in this regard, in contrast to the white man, black people were passionate instead of rational and thus not only physically, but also mentally closer to animals (see Smedley 235-36 & 267-76; Greene 384ff; Gibson 100-107).

In the 19th century another biblical narrative, also fallen into oblivion since the Middle Ages, was again being referred to in terms of 'race': 'The curse of Ham'. Found in the Book of Genesis, it tells the story of Ham – next to Shem and Japheth the third son of Noah – who, as a punishment for 'seeing him naked', curses Ham's son Canaan to serfdom 'among brothers'. To 19th century Christian American belief this narrative provided the world with a divinely ordained taxonomy that enclosed all humanity: Noah's three sons Japheth, Shem and Ham were identified as the European, the Asian and the African, respectively, while the latter, as indicated by the fate of Ham's descendants, was allegedly meant to accept servitude as their God-given destiny (see Swift and Mammoser 3; cf. Goldenberg).

Regardless of the differences in the techniques implemented as well as the lines of argumentation proposed, what 18th and 19th century 'race science' had in common was the search for evidence to prove the alleged difference between black and white and to support racial determinism, i.e. the declaration that by nature the white 'race' was the superior one. The aim was to magnify this gap to the greatest possible extent, and, in hindsight, these attempts turned out to be successful: by the late 19th century blacks were deprived of all their humanity and – in the eyes of the white public – had slumped to the status of sub-humans, or monsters even (see Smedley 191 & 235-37).

¹¹ Others held the opinion that blacks did not even form another human 'race', but a distinct species that, in terms of hierarchy, was closer to the ape than to the white man (see Smedley 236).

To conclude, the ‘invention’ of the concept of ‘race’ as well as its further implementation was founded on ideology. This ideological motivation held true for the pseudo-scientific and religious discourses that were utilized to prove the alleged biological inequality of physically distinct groups of people and to legitimize the resulting social inequality. The perception of blacks mainly relied on stereotypical depictions and, as outlined in the subsequent chapter, in late 19th-century American society, the gap between black and white had become a seemingly insurmountable one; the black had been degraded to a sexually aggressive monster that aimed at the destruction of society and ‘civilization’.

2.2 The Spectre of Degeneration, or the White ‘Race’ at stake

Charles Darwin’s path-breaking and highly-influential findings and outlines on biological evolution posed a serious challenge to the attempts to order and arrange the various different groups of humans in terms of hierarchy; these taxonomic classifications required stability, but according to Darwinian argumentation evolution meant change, and adaptability as the prerequisite to enable further existence (see N. Gates: viii). But if humans were subject to change, what if this variation did not entail further advancement and complexity, but instead, the decline to inferior, degenerate forms?

The black population played a decisive role in the discourse on degeneration; however, they had been declared sub-human, degenerate, and barbarian already. As illustrated by Smedley (249), towards the turn of the 19th century, the fear had reached its peak that blacks would possibly spread degeneration, contaminate not only other individuals but whole Western society and ‘civilization’.¹² Due to this fear and as blacks could not be officially oppressed anymore via the status of slave, the need for more severe legislation was identified that would ensure the segregation of black and white as well as the former’s sustained suppression; in this regard, many Southern post-Reconstruction states saw the implementation of voting requirements like poll taxes, literacy tests, and the like, which effectually disenfranchised blacks. Moreover, the so called ‘Black Codes’ were introduced between 1865-66,

¹² One influential contribution on the discourse of degeneration was made by popular French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck; he famously claimed that characteristics, once acquired, could be inherited. As an example he pointed to anti-social behaviour like drug abuse and sexual perversion that, via acquisition and subsequent inheritance, eventually could lead to the demise of society (see “Lamarck, Jean-Baptiste de Monet, Chevalier”).

granting only limited civil rights to the former slaves and undermining their right to vote¹³. The 1890s saw the implementation of the not less infamous 'Jim Crow Laws'¹⁴, and in 1896, the Supreme Court decision 'Plessy vs. Ferguson' rendered the 'separate but equal' ideology legal. In accordance with white-supremacist tradition, racial separateness was declared a natural and distinct principle of American social and political life, ensuring social order (see "Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka" 113-114).

Due to the fear of contamination with 'black blood' and the possibly resulting in the demise of 'pure' and 'noble' white society¹⁵, interracial sexual relationships were perceived as the ultimate abomination; it was sinful, unnatural, and socially wrong. The same perception was then projected to the offspring of such relationships: as the "[...] tragic product of the unrestrained lust of black men, or of white morals gone awry [...]", the mulatto¹⁶, a hybrid, though possibly superior in intellect to the black, nevertheless, was still inferior to the 'pure' white (Smedley 249). Although this antipathy towards interracial unions was nothing new at all, however, the culmination of fear and hate towards interracial relationships as well as the perception of the white 'race' as something 'sacred' might be seen in the context of imperialism which also had its heyday in the 19th century: the increasing expansion of the white 'race' all across the globe was regarded obvious proof of its alleged natural supremacy, and it confirmed the validity of the 'scientific' ordering systems of 'race' established in earlier decades. Convinced of the truth of white supremacy, in the late 19th century history was

¹³ Further limiting legislature varied in the different Southern states: "South Carolina, for example, enacted that no Negro could pursue the trade 'of an artisan, mechanic, or shopkeeper, or any other trade or employment besides that of husbandry' without a special license. Alabama provided that 'any stubborn or refractory servants' or 'servants who loiter away their time' should be fined \$50 and, if they could not pay, be hired out for six months' labor [sic]. Mississippi ordered that every Negro under eighteen years of age who was an orphan or supported by his parents must be apprenticed to some white person, preferably the former owner of the slave" (Donald 382).

¹⁴ "The name 'Jim Crow' comes from a nineteenth-century vaudeville character who was called Jim (a common name) Crow (for a black-colored [sic] bird). Thus the name 'Jim Crow' was applied to things having to do with blacks". These laws, for instance, required separate drinking fountains, separate rest rooms, separate sections of theaters [sic], and so on and so on for the blacks and whites" (Shafritz 251-2).

¹⁵ "The modern definition of white began to solidify in the 1850s and came to be characterized in terms of the one drop rule, which in subsequent decades prevailed socially throughout the United States and in many states stood as the legal definition of *Negro* [sic]. The rule can be characterized as follows: one is white if all one's ancestors are white; one is black [sic] if any of one's ancestors are black" (Kawash 132).

¹⁶ The 'mulatto' posed a considerable threat to the white 'race' because, theoretically, if endowed with fair complexion, s/he could pass as white and thus 'infiltrate' white society (see Kawash 135).

elaborated in a way to match the racial worldview; facts incompatible with white superiority and/ or black degradation were either adapted or ignored. The source of all 'civilization' was believed to lie in the intellectual qualities of the offspring of Germanic peoples (Smedley 256).

Moreover, tremendously influenced by Darwin's findings, in late-19th-century dominant discourse the concept of 'civilization' was equated with 'race'; in this regard the former was perceived as a certain stage in human racial evolution, a stage superior to the more primitive ones of 'savagery' and 'barbarism'. However, only the white 'race' was believed to have evolved to such an advanced level while all non-white 'races' were 'stuck' in one of the lower stages. This racial discourse of 'civilization' was linked to the so-called 'Protestant millennialism', whereby 'millennium' indicated the disappearance of any evil from the world and the peaceful 1000 year-long rule of Christ. With the findings of evolution challenging this religious motive, the concept of 'civilization' proved useful in order to still be enabled to keep to the belief of an eventually perfect world; superior 'races' would out-survive inferior ones and eventually evolution would bring the perfection of the white 'race'. Darwin's trope of 'the survival of the fittest' was envisioned to be indicated in the survival of the most advanced and civilized 'races' over the inferior ones (see Bederman 25-26). Due to their "inherent inclination toward crime, debauchery, and sloth" many regarded the black population deemed not only to degeneration, but even utter extinction (Smedley 247). However, the black population was not the only source of danger for Western society and 'civilization'; as pointed out by Gibson (2), of course, there were also white lawbreakers and criminals, which Cesare Lombroso qualified as "atavistic throwbacks on the evolutionary scale". Marked by "physical anomalies like small heads, protruding cheekbones, flat noses, and large ears", just like blacks, their biological destiny was decided.

Apart from this proclaimed fear of devolution – the reversal of evolution, i.e. humans do not advance in complexity, but in the contrary, they degenerate – some contemporary contributors evaluated Western society as degenerate already. One of them was Max Nordau whose work *Entartung (Degeneration)* was of considerable influence. First published in 1892, Nordau appropriates the term known from anthropology and medicine and applies it to the late-19th-century state of the arts and culture. In reference to 19th-century discourse on

evolution, Nordau perceives the current state of society as naturally and organically decided, with numerous cultural movements and innovations of his time as the outcome of degeneration. These deviated from what was normal and thus would possibly be harmful to the further progress of society and 'civilization' (see Landry 500; cf. Nordau).

To sum up, although many years had passed since the abolition of slavery and the official emancipation of the black population, still late-19th-century American society was characterised by racial segregation and discrimination, which, however, was thought to serve a particular purpose: the war between black and white was fought on the field of 'civilization' now and the allegedly degenerate black person was perceived to endanger the maintenance of American society. Moreover, strongly supported by imperialism, the white 'race' was believed to reach its perfection in a stage of 'civilization' that was soon to come. However, in order to reach this and to not allow the black 'race' impede the natural perfection of its white counterpart, certain ways and means were deemed essential to further guarantee the suppression of the black population. In the South these were especially fierce, as outlined in the subsequent chapter.

2.3 The Institution of Slavery and 'the Southern Way of Life'

Had the colonies of the New World once relied on white and Native American labourers and indentured servants as well as black slaves alike, the high profitability of the Atlantic slave trade resulted in a tremendous increase of enslaved Africans to enter the colony's ground. As a consequence, the term 'slave' could manifest as synonymous with 'black', and the other way around (see chapter 2.1). The colonial times witnessed the manifestation of slavery as an allegedly normal and integral part of society, regardless of what was entailed by the turn of status of labourer to slave:

[slavery] is the complete denial of freedom. Unlike the feudal serf, the indentured servant, the battered wife, or the imprisoned thief, the slave is completely unfree, totally subordinate to the authority of the master. This means that the slave cannot enter into any of the commonly recognized social relationships that define people as human beings – marriage, work, citizenship, even parenthood – except to the extent that the master allows. (Oakes 1407)

In contrast to the Northern states, in the American South slavery had become a social institution, and in order to accomplish this establishing-process the concept of 'race' turned out to be essential; only the alleged 'proof' of the black 'race's'

inferiority as well as its reduction to the status of 'property' had made compatible the enslavement of millions of Africans with the main principle of a liberal democracy, the granting of universal civil rights. In this regard, by the 1770s and 1780s, the time the first Northern states abolished slavery, the Southern slave states had already manifested themselves as 'slave societies' with the institution of slavery not only essential to their economy, but also in matters political, social, and cultural (see Oakes 1407-11; "Slavery" 727).

Reasons for this development need to be seen with regards to the different geographical regions; as the area of settlement was enlarged and further territories accessed in the New World, the developments of the different geographical regions of the U.S. had taken increasingly distinct political, cultural, and economic trajectories, culminating in its perception as a conglomerate of different sections rather than a union of states. While the North's economy was characterized by an increased focus on industrial production, the rural South¹⁷ still relied on agriculture at a time when the industrial revolution already held the economies of Europe and Northern parts of the U.S. under control. By largely relying on agriculture, the Southern attitude held towards slavery began to oppose the Northern one where abolitionist sentiments grew in influence. The economy of the Southern slave states was based on slave labour, and although Congress outlawed foreign slave trade in 1808, it continued, as an illicit trade though (see "Sectionalism" 713; "Slavery" 727; Whitridge 299-300). Early 19th century even saw a downright boom in the slave trade, resulting from a growing demand 'caused' by the invention of the so-called 'cotton gin' (short for 'cotton engine') – a machine that allowed the processing of an ever growing amount of the fibre – which helped the U.S. cotton industry to overcome a severe crisis¹⁸. In contrast, in the agricultural sector of the North slavery had not manifested itself the way it had in the Southern states; rather than by slaves, labour was

¹⁷ Earle (1223) refers to the persistence of the rural way of life of the Southern population – by 1860, still around ninety per cent of all Southerners lived in the countryside – as particularly important in shaping the South's distinct regional identity.

¹⁸ Thanks to this machine, only within a few years the U.S. could multiply by ten the amount of exported cotton. As a result, by 1860, within the fifteen slaveholding states, the number of slaves had risen to approximately four million (see Whitridge 299-300). It does not seem an exaggeration that cotton was declared 'king' when in the years prior to the outbreak of the American Civil War cotton made more than half of the value of all American exports (see Earle 1228).

accomplished mainly by free families who also owned the land they worked on (see Larkin 1209; Whitridge 299-300).

However, what is more, in the meantime the Southern slave states had begun to rely on slavery as a means to maintain white supremacy:

In this respect, slavery was just as important to the mass of non-slaveholding whites – always a majority in the Old South – as to the small planter elite that controlled the region. For no matter how low the poor whites sank, no matter how miserable their lives, they were still better than the “nigger” in the levees and cotton fields. They were still white men. Moreover, yeoman and poor whites alike aspired to own Negroes, because slave ownership in the Old South was a tremendous status symbol. Many of these whites were also “expectant” planters who hoped some day to make a lot of money and live in a big white house like the gentry they admired and envied. Such aspirations and feelings melted away whatever class antagonism might have existed in the Old South and united nearly all whites against the Negro himself – ‘our internal foe’, Virginians called him, a common enemy in their midst, a sinister being of an alien and ‘inferior’ race who if liberated would bring about social chaos and racial catastrophe. (Oates, *Gods Stone* 322-3)

To the myth of the ‘Old South’ slavery was so essential because as a concept it was based on the traditional idea of plantation¹⁹ life which had the slave as one of its vital constituents. The myth of the ‘Old South’ was a romanticised and idyllic picture that had developed as a popular and influential cultural construct; in this regard, it evoked “[...] images of the kindly old marster [sic] with his mint julep, happy darkies singing in the fields, coquettish belles wooed by slender gallants” (Tindall 1097).

It is important to keep in mind that mythology has always played a decisive role in the lives of Southerners and its importance even increased in the 19th century when the sectional conflict exacerbated. It has been a means of identity as well as structure when it comes to its chronological development; in this regard, the colonial period had seen the establishment of the myth of the South as the ‘Garden of Eden’, which had been displaced by the myth of the democratic and egalitarian ‘South of Thomas Jefferson’ by the late 18th century. Post-Civil-War American society let the Southern population refer to the Reconstruction era in terms of the myth of the ‘Lost Cause’, which was rooted in the alleged injustice

¹⁹ The term ‘plantation’ can be traced back to the time of the early Virginian colonizers planting the back-then highly profitable tobacco. These “styled themselves as ‘planters’, their settlements ‘plantations’ – terms which meant nothing more than an agrarian commitment to a *planted* [sic] row crop such as tobacco, in contradistinction to ‘farms’ and farmers committed to sown or broadcast (farmed) crops such as wheat and other small grains” (Earle 1224). From the 1830s onwards, plantation life also became a dominant and popular literary construct (see Tindall 1097)

the defeated South had to experience: stylised as the fight between good and evil it “[...] told of noble, virtuous Christian warriors, the highest product of the Old South, defending the Southern homeland from rapacious Yankees. Defeat was inevitable because of superior northern resources, but Southerners defended their honor [sic] and in the process achieved spiritual victories” (Tindall 1097). Apart from these, the image of the Southern family can also be read in terms of myths; in this regard, Southern families were regarded as being of more importance to the identity of the individual as compared to the Northerners. As a powerful image, its alleged clannishness had been identified as a particular Southern family trait and this image had been intensified in the literature. Moreover, in terms of family, the ‘plantation myth’, mentioned above, built on the image of the white and noble patriarch, who ensured the protection of both the gracious white female as well as the submissive but contented slave, who was to him like a child that needed guidance (see Sharp 1104). This ‘aristocracy’²⁰ had developed as an institution by the 18th century, when the South’s class structure had undergone solidification; it was constituted of the wealthiest among the local Southern planters who composed society’s elite and had gained an increasing political and cultural influence already (see Boney 1391-92).

However, generally speaking, the Southern population saw their idealized way of life as increasingly endangered in the years prior to Civil War; on the one hand there was the growing number of slaves, the “internal foe”, – in some ‘cotton states’ slaves outnumbered whites – and the fear of slave revolts and uprisings was culminating in the progressing 19th century. On the other hand, the growing nation-wide influence of the newly-founded Republican Party was regarded a major threat, too. Since its founding in 1854, the Democrats’ dominating political position – it was the majority party of that time, dominated by

²⁰ The Southern ‘aristocracy’ composed the ruling class that not only held most of the important political offices, but also played a decisive role in the formation of the social and cultural mores of Southern society. Their status as well as power and influence, however, (usually) remained undisputed, since society generally acknowledged the aristocracy’s economic contribution to the general raising of the living standard of the whole society. In theory, (white) Southern society was characterized by egalitarianism and social mobility, with the bourgeois ideals of equal opportunity and individual achievement as basic constituents, which, however, highly depended on the owning of slaves; had a farmer family, for instance, saved enough money to buy only one slave, at least one of their children could attend school then instead of working on the family’s fields. To the owners of a larger number of slaves, this fact meant a growing independence of soil, since not the acreage, but the slave was the aspect guaranteeing income and wealth. The theoretical egalitarianism, however, might be regarded the main condition under which the myth of the ‘Old South’ was invented (see Boney 1391-92; Earle 1225-28; Clifton 1197; Oakes 1412-14).

Southerners who could control the presidency, the Cabinet, the Senate, and the Supreme Court during the two decades prior to Civil War – was increasingly questioned. Moreover, the Southern-based Democrats held to their sovereignty and particular state rights, while Lincoln's Republican Party seriously challenged this, in particular by opposing the planned extension of slavery to the western territories. In the very contrast to Southern intentions, slavery should be contained to the states and areas where it already existed, where, as the belief was held, sooner or later it would perish naturally. So although as an ideology white-supremacist thinking was as prevalent in the North as in the states of the South, among Northerners the perception had manifested to view slavery as a 'moral and social evil' that tainted the ideals of a liberal democracy. This attitude towards slavery and the course of action contemplated by Lincoln's Republican Party made many Southern leaders fear to lose influence to the federal government and to forfeit their individuality and sovereignty. The gap widened between North and South and as a consequence of the felt incommensurateness, by many Southerners secession was regarded the only possible way to preserve their region and its particular way of life (see Oates, *God's Stone* 324f; Oates, *The man* 338ff; Commager 363ff; "Kansas Nebraska Act" 443).

However, although Civil War brought the defeat of the slaveholding 'confederate states' and an end to slavery, what is essential to keep in mind is that the war was not fought over the abolition of slavery, but rather, with progressing war, its demise came to be regarded a "military necessity" in order to reach the war's main aim – the preservation of the Union and the restoration of national authority²¹. In this regard, the primary goal after the war was not to integrate a freed people into society, but to re-unite North and South, and rebuild the latter politically, socially, and culturally and incorporate it back into the Union. In this regard, besides federal troops, also a multitude of different interest groups went south to change and remake it according to their particular way of life; adherents of the Republican Party aimed at spreading their political ideas in the

²¹ In this regard, the reasons for sought emancipation were rather military than humanistic ones: due to the fact that the institution of slavery was of such crucial importance to the South and thus also for the war itself, it would only make sense to abolish it; otherwise, sooner or later, North and South would struggle over it again. Also, the belief was held that its abolition would weaken the Confederacy morally, while for the Union, the freed slaves would make good soldiers and ease their manpower shortages problem (Oates, *The Man* 339).

South while others would support the freedmen in finding their new place within Southern society, this mainly accomplished by religion and/ or education work. While the offer of education was greatly welcomed and accepted by the former slaves, the white population resisted vehemently. Generally speaking, they perceived the Reconstruction era as an occupation by a people forcing them on their beliefs and way of life. These sentiments of discrimination and occupation on the side of the Southerners were everything but limited to education, but felt in all parts of society, and also politics (see Oates, *The Man* 341; Wilson, *Reconstruction* 658-59); in this regard, Stamp (386) points to the attitude held towards the radical rule²² of the South during the Reconstruction period:

The new governments, they said, expelled from power the South's experienced statesmen and natural leaders and replaced them with untrained men who were almost uniformly incompetent and corrupt. Among the radical leaders, the Yankee carpetbaggers, crafty adventurers who invaded the post-war South for political and economic plunder, were the most notorious. The scalawags, who assisted the carpetbaggers, were mostly degraded and depraved poor whites, betrayers of their race and section who sought a share of the radical spoils. The Negroes, ignorant and illiterate, played an essentially passive political role, casting their votes as radical agents of the Union League and Freedmen's Bureau told them to. Since the members of the radical coalition owned little or no property themselves, they increased state and local taxes until they came near to ruining the whole class of white property holders. Their extravagant appropriations, their waste, fraud, and corruption, caused shocking increases in Southern state debts and brought some states to the edge of bankruptcy. [...] the radical governments threatened to destroy the white civilization of the South and to reduce it to African barbarism.²³

As a consequence of this experienced discrimination, resistance was soon to develop within the white population of the South, and 'redemption' was sought as early as the Reconstruction era actually started: 'redeemed' were those lucky states where the "process of replacing the radical government with conservative Southern white governments [had been successfully fulfilled]". Various efforts were taken to end Reconstruction as soon as possible, and apart from political

²² "[Radical Republicans] were those abolitionist reformers, and often political opportunists, who made common cause of the right of Congress, not the President, to determine the rules by which the secessionist states might be readmitted to the Union. They were resolved to constitute those state governments in such a way that neither politically nor economically would the representatives from the South in Congress be able to shape legislation. Many were committed to the ideal of racial equality which they wrote in the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments" ("Radical Republicans" 670-71).

²³ Obviously this only shows one side of the whole story of how the Reconstruction Era had been perceived and also entered history books. As outlined by Donald (376) it was only by the 1930s that a more detached and objective re-evaluation of the Reconstruction Era was accomplished. See Wilson, *Reconstruction* 658ff; Stamp 391ff

ones, these “involved economic intimidation, community ostracism, political fraud, and violence”. In this regard, the terroristic vigilante group Ku Klux Klan, among others, was founded and this secret circle of ex-Confederate soldiers clearly opposed to radical Republican rule and sought to maintain white supremacy in the South. The main aim was to “[preserve] the morality and virtue of white civilization” (Wilson, *Reconstruction* 659) and in doing so terror stood at the top of its agenda. Although it was formally disbanded in 1869 the Klan contributed to pave the way for continued suppression of the black population, which was, at the latest, made possible by the election of white Southern conservatives into the state governments (see Wilson, *Reconstruction* 658-59; “Ku Klux Klan” 453).

Reconstruction had long been referred to as “the tragic era” (Wilson, *Reconstruction* 658). In hindsight, the “real tragedy” of this era, however, was to be found in its legacy, as outlined by Degler (qtd. in Wilson, *Reconstruction* 658); the great humiliation experienced by the white Southern population only intensified their belief in the myths of the past and strengthened their awareness of white supremacy and made race [...] the key issue in the postbellum [sic] era” (Degler qtd. in Wilson, *Reconstruction* 659).

To draw a conclusion, the concept of ‘race’ had played a decisive role in legitimizing slavery and enabling its establishment as a decisive institution of the Southern slave states. Here, slavery also functioned as a means to strengthen white-supremacist ideology. After its abolition, however, this function was mainly fulfilled by the working of myths presenting the pre-war Southern society as the idealized way of life. The adherence to this mythology was also decisive in further sustaining racial segregation and suppression.

2.4 Résumé - The Power of Discourse

Since the colonial times when the term ‘race’ first had gained significance in the English language, the world has changed and with it the definition as well as the meaning of this concept. Hence, had it functioned as an essential characteristic once, today ‘race’ is acknowledged as a social construct that is ascribed to a person. However, the three narratives taken into consideration were written at a time when racism was ‘common wisdom’, and white supremacy the predominant way of how to develop an interpretation of the world. This belief in racial

inequality was the basis of 19th- and early-20th-century discourse on 'race' and it was supported by a multitude of scientific and religious texts.

In the sense of Foucault, these pseudo-scientific and religious texts functioned as the 'discursive formations' of a white-supremacist ideology, as they made it the only logical, plausible and natural conclusion and condition. As a dominant discourse that had more authority, status and social significance than any other way of making sense and meaning of 'race', on the one hand this racist worldview was also reinforced by already existing systems, for instance, by law; in this regard, as slaves, blacks were not granted any civil rights at all and this could be made compliant with the proclaimed ideal of a liberal American society because their status simply was an inferior one. On the other hand, the dominant discourse of 'race' then also enforced "certain already established identities or subjectivities [...]" ("Discourse" 79). Thus, it strengthened certain images of white and black and enabled the manifestation of distinct positively and negatively evaluated stereotypes. As has been illustrated in the previous chapters, the establishment of racial stereotypes had been initiated already at an early stage in American history when certain physical and mental characteristics were identified and declared as essentially black. Established and later shared as what Stuart Hall refers to as 'cultural codes', these 'race'-related concepts, images and ideas enabled the white population to make sense of black people in accordance with these stereotypes.

What is essential to keep in mind is that stereotypes are not per se negative, but, as particular generalisations and categorizations they are indispensable for ordering and processing the mass of data and information experienced in daily life. However, as both their construction and exertion have to do with power, stereotypes might be used in a harmful manner by those that define and control them. This obviously has always been the case in the context of a racist worldview, where stereotypes usually unite everything that is bad, unacceptable and inappropriate. The non-white person is the 'Other' and its representations in the form of stereotypes are used for denigration and ridicule (see "Power" 206 & "Discourse" 79 & "Other" 183-85; Dyer 12ff).

However, black stereotypes themselves were also used to strengthen dominant white-supremacist thinking; in late 19th and early 20th century, the time the white population seem to have been obsessed with the black body, the

attempts to declare the black as the 'sub-human other' were based on sexuality; in this regard, black types like the "sexually aggressive and dishonest 'Zip Coon'", the "violent 'Nat the Brute'" (Robinson 349) or the lustful 'Jezebel' were infamous. These depictions further strengthened the dominant discourse of white supremacy, as it legitimized the discrimination and segregation of blacks. Apart from these black sexual types, the 'Sambo' figure embraced rather a-sexual traits: it united a wide range of black types like 'Uncle Tom', the 'Mulatto' and 'Mammy' and it portrayed blacks as naturally innocent, always grinning and stupid; as child-like, naïve and gullible persons. These depictions were heavily projected in the media, novels and children bedtime stories and they were popular motives on postcards, comic strips and grocery advertisements (see Robinson 348-49; Wilson, *Sambo* 1141). As further pointed out by Nederveen Pieterse (152-54) these types were just indicative of the white-supremacist attitude to perceive blacks as helpless dependents who were in dire need of a white patron. However, the manifestation of such stereotypes had two main functions; first, a ridiculous and child-like figure like the 'Sambo' was used to mitigate the predominant fear and panic of possible revolts initiated by the black population; second, more generally speaking, the 'Sambo' was a device to create distance and to hold blacks at bay.

On the level of the narrative, the perspective to consider stereotypes in terms of their function instead of the power relations and ideologies involved in their creation is also the basic assumption of 'Imagology'. According to this approach that focuses on the communicative power of stereotypes, it is the function of a stereotype within a narrative that decides on their meaning and further implications within the text. In order to make sense of the stereotypes then it is essential to consider them as one stylistic element among others. Moreover, as stereotypes cannot be abstracted from the 'real world', the place where they actually exist, making meaning of the stereotypes in a text cannot be fully accomplished without taking into account the broader social and cultural context. In this regard, it is argued that stereotypes are employed by the author to negotiate reality, the world. They tell the reader something about the context of the narrative, as well as the writer who employs them in a particular way (e.g: ironically, seriously, denigratingly, etc.). The power of stereotypes then is to be found in the fact that they present familiar pictures of a person; any interpretative

effort seems made redundant since the reader already knows the qualities of this depiction. Moreover, stereotypes arouse emotions and the writer can make use of these for his own intentions (see Franke 11ff).

Similarly, the reliance on and appropriation of social myths were also enforced within a racist American society, particularly in the South; apart from the fact that as concepts of belief these are uniting and comprehending, and being made use of to establish a common identity, just like stereotypes they made the world explicable and simpler, because they allegedly resolve contradictions (see Campbell 9-10). However, social mythology also enforced both black and white stereotypes.

What all these thoughts indicate is that discourses are ideological in the sense that they constitute reality and influence people in making sense of the world. They construct what is perceived as right, appropriate and normal and what not; as in any process that generates 'truth' or 'reality', also in a discursive regime like society power is involved and this also is the case with social institutions like language. However, as a social process that gains meaning via discourse, a change in the dominance of certain discourses over others, meaning can also change. In this regard, had the knowledge production of 'race' mainly worked in favour of white supremacy, and the constructed racial knowledge decided on one's identity as well as on any further making sense and ordering of the world, this power and influence is also characterized by a certain fragility; the authority of 'scientific' knowledge, the basis for legitimizing racial difference and social inequality, as had been seen in terms of 'race', is subject to change. And if the concept of 'race' can be questioned, the same is to be done for the construction of the concept; the morphological differences found between people are undeniable, however, perceiving them as markers of 'race' is a cultural production. In this regard, science and religion – 'discursive formations' of 'race' – might be regarded as belief systems rather than ultimate truth; systems that are inextricably connected to the political, cultural and economic spheres of its social structure (see "Power" 206 & "Hegemony" 120; Robinson 351).

The changeability of power relations within society has always been made visible in writing. Within a society that was clearly separated along the 'colour line' this was indicated in the fact that it was usually from a white perspective that 'black' and 'white' were presented. Nevertheless, over the centuries African

Americans had gained an increasingly louder voice that aimed at challenging dominant white-supremacist thinking. *Contending Forces* and *The Marrow of Tradition* are regarded such counter-discourses and they stand in sharp contrast to Dixon's defence of white supremacy in *The Clansman*. In all three narratives the dominant discourse of white supremacy is omnipresent as well as its two "discursive formations" of science and religion. While Dixon fully relies on these two in order to 'prove' the allegedly natural supremacy of the white 'race', both Hopkins and Chesnutt only incorporate these in order to debunk them. The same proceeding holds true for the incorporation of racial stereotypes, and myths; while Dixon makes use of them to strengthen white-supremacist ideology, again, Hopkins and Chesnutt 'prove' that these are erroneous and fraudulent. All this is accomplished by the introduction of what Bakhtin refers to as social voices, which either support or reject the concept of white supremacy. The difference between Dixon on the one, and Hopkins and Chesnutt on the other side of the 'colour line', however, is to be found in what voice reveals as the 'winner'. As demonstrated on the subsequent pages, the acceptance or rejection of white supremacy is indicative of the three authors' background, their personal motivations and intentions. In this regard, while Dixon presents a white, Hopkins and Chesnutt present a black perspective and they make sense of history according to their own experiences. All three intend to arouse emotions, and in order to achieve this they rely on certain literary conventions.

3. Three Historical Novels on 'Race'

The three novels *The Clansman*, *Contending Forces*, and *The Marrow of Tradition* constitute particular contributions to an early-20th-century discourse on 'race' and they reveal how the respective author makes sense of and negotiates reality. The three narratives are symptomatic of the revisionist tradition of their time: although written within the first five years of the 20th century, they come about in the past and recount past conditions, events and social life. In this regard, the plot of *The Clansman* takes place in the first years after the Civil War, known as 'Reconstruction', while *The Marrow of Tradition* and *Contending Forces* come about in the late 1800s. The latter, however, also employs a second main plot taking place in Bermuda/ the South of the United States of the late 1700s. By presenting social life and conditions of the past, I argue that the three writers grant it particular significance and importance. They identify the need for providing clarifications on history, and this is also accomplished within their narratives.

Thus, Dixon, Hopkins and Chesnutt endow history with particular importance and significance and present a version they regard as authentic. In this regard, Dixon declares his novel a 'historical romance' that allegedly tells the "true story of the 'Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy'" (Dixon, *To the Reader*). Moreover, he employs the historical persons Abraham Lincoln, his assassinator John Wilkes Booth and Lincoln's successor as President, Andrew Johnson, and thus 'entrenches' the story in reality. Similarly, in the Preface to *Contending Forces* Hopkins assures the authenticity of (at least) the first chapters, while Chesnutt retells the story of the 'Wilmington Race Riot' of 1898, with some of his fictitious characters based on actual historical persons directly involved in the incidence.

The point of view employed in all three narratives – an intrusive third-person omniscient narrator – can be regarded supportive of the strategy to provide the reader with a seemingly objective and neutral account of what is happening; the narrator is the presenter of the characters, dialogues, actions, setting, and events and he is not part of the 'character cast', but an entity or uninvolved person. In the privileged position to know all the feelings, emotions and intentions of his characters as well as the links between the events and incidents, this narrator can provide the reader with information not accessible in 'real life'. Moreover, as an intrusive one, he not only supplies the reader with a

report of the characters, incidents etc., but also comments on and evaluates them. These direct authorial contributions are to be taken as authoritative; they are the facts and values of the novel (see “Point of View” 231-33).

The three writers share their motivation to illustrate ‘truth’ and reality in their novels, but, however, how this version of history looks like greatly depends on the perspective taken. In this regard, while Dixon writes from a white perspective that advocates white supremacy, the viewpoint adopted by the two African American writers Hopkins and Chesnutt is a totally different one; they give voice to the disillusionment the black population was confronted with after the Civil War: Therefore, although the emancipated former slaves officially had been granted many civil rights by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution²⁴, racial segregation and discrimination continued and in the Southern states became enshrined in the ‘Black Codes’ as well as the ‘Jim Crow’ legislation (see chapter 2.2). The years around the turn of the century – commonly known as ‘Progressive Period’ – became synonymous with random violence (lynching) and the systematic suppression of the black population (see chapter 2). For decades to come African Americans were declined integration into as well as participation within an ever-changing American society²⁵ and these experiences made the turn of the century commonly known as ‘the nadir of Black experience’ or the ‘Decades of Disappointment’. This exposure to discrimination, misery and torture was given voice to in African American literature²⁶, which experienced a major rise in popularity after the Civil War. What was essential about black writing of this time was that it should not only entertain its readership but also teach and inform, politically, religiously and spiritually (see Diedrich 409; Gates and MacKay 545-53; Taylor 836).

²⁴ The Fourteenth Amendment issued in 1868 “established Negro citizenship [...]” (“The Fourteenth Amendment” 308). The Fifteenth Amendment “to the U.S. Constitution (1870) states that the right of citizens to vote shall not be denied or abridged ‘on account of race, color [sic], or previous condition of servitude.’ Although intended to confer the right to vote on the Negro, it continued for nearly a century to be a guarantee on paper only, since several Southern states by law prescribed poll tax, resident and registration requirements, and literacy tests” (“The Fifteenth Amendment” 296).

²⁵ Despite all the drawbacks and the negative experiences made by black Americans, on a broader social scale, the turn of the century were also the years of big social reforms in terms of health, education and welfare. The standard of living also improved for most African Americans, a fact which might have also contributed to the generally speaking, optimistic perception of the new century. This optimism drew partly from the acknowledgment, that, in order to prosper as a people, the African American population had to take matters into their own hands (Gates and MacKay 545ff).

²⁶ For a further outline on the writing of the 1890s cf. Ziff’ *The American 1890s*

Before turning to the direct comparison of the three narratives, the following three chapters provide some first insights into the texts' particular style and composition.

3.1. *The Clansman* – a Novel in Line with Dominant 'Race' Ideology

The Clansman was first published in 1905 and it is also the narrative that Thomas Dixon Jr. is mainly remembered for today although it is only one out of twenty-two novels and many screenplays, sermons, and works of nonfiction. Born in 1864 in Shelby, North Carolina, apart from his artistic careers as writer, playwright and actor, Dixon also attended law school in Greensboro, N.C. However, after serving in the state's legislature for only one year, he opted for the career of Baptist minister that led him to Raleigh – the capital of his home state – as well as Boston and New York City.

The Clansman is part of a trilogy – *The Leopard's Spots* was published in 1902 and *The Traitor* in 1907 – that is centred thematically on Southern life during the Reconstruction Era. The story of *The Clansman* famously served as the basis for D.W. Griffith's epic movie *The Birth of a Nation*, which hit the cinemas across the country in 1915. Dixon's trilogy presents a picture of the post-war years that aims at creating sympathy for the South and its (white) population. In order to do so, Dixon draws on conventions of the romance. The subtitle even declares it 'romance', and there are various characteristics of prose romance that are made significant throughout the novel. In this regard, its plot deploys heroes and villains, sharply discriminated, and the 'quest for an ideal' is made a central theme (see "Novel" 192). In composing his work Dixon relies on basic characteristics of romanticism, a movement that is to be understood as "a reaction against rationalism and materialism", embracing "the importance of individuality and personal freedom, and [...] the value of spontaneity and self-expression as opposed to artificiality and restraint". Moreover, romanticism also has

important political, social and nationalistic dimensions. Its support for the ideals of [democracy] and republicanism derives from a fundamental belief in human equality, while as an optimistic, [utopian], philosophy, romanticism also envisions the perfectibility of the individual and of society through self-realization, progress and reform. ("Romanticism" 190)

In this regard, it can be argued that Dixon appropriates the romanticism of individuality and personal freedom in his novel in the context of the post-war Southern states, its people and particular ideologies. According to this presentation of the two sections North and South, the latter clearly differs from the former, a fact that had been neglected during Reconstruction, but, however, needed to be acknowledged according to Dixon. Nevertheless, the United States was one nation and that is why it needed reunion in order to further sustain. In this regard, I argue that Dixon appropriated the romantic theme of human equality which, however, is not incorporated in terms of 'race' but instead in terms of the two geographical regions North and South which had been separated so violently by the war.

With regards to further structural characteristics of the romance, Dixon employs a particular type of romantic narrative, the 'chivalric or medieval romance', a precursor to prose romance. The origins of this narrative type can be dated back to as far as the 12th century, and its "standard plot is that of a quest undertaken by a single knight in order to gain a lady's favor [sic]". It "stresses the chivalric ideals of courage, loyalty, honor [sic], mercifulness to an opponent, and elaborate manners [...]" ("Chivalric Romance" 35). In *The Clansman* these characteristics are held by the knights of the Ku Klux Klan which are portrayed as to live by these ideals, above all by Ben Cameron, one of the organizations' 'Grand Dragons'. He seems to have all it takes for a nobleman or hero even: the reader learns by the speech of the surgeon in the very first chapter that Ben Cameron proved courageous and brave on the battlefield of the Civil War where he provides his enemies with water. He also excels in terms of manners, and this is mainly acknowledged by Northern Elsie Stoneman who falls in love with the young Southerner: she perceives "[Ben's] love for his native State [as] genuine, his pride in the bravery and goodness of its people [as] chivalrous [...]" (Dixon, *The Clansman* 149). Elsie concludes that "[h]is gift of delicate intimacy, the eloquence with which he expressed his love, and yet the manly dignity with which he did it, threw a spell no woman could resist" (Dixon, *The Clansman* 148). From their very first meeting, the relationship between the two young people is characterized by mutual sympathy and fondness, and soon, in the sense of the chivalric romance Ben declares the winning of Elsie's love the mission in life: "His

creed was simple. The chief end of life is to glorify the girl you love. Other things could wait" (Dixon, *The Clansman* 148).

The novel is termed a 'romance' but it also is a highly political narrative. As outlined by Kinney (880-81), basic to Dixon's outlines is his perception that the black population's political participation would seriously threaten American society as to him, the resulting social equality could only result in 'miscegenation' and the end of known 'civilization'. At its basis, the purity and sanctity of the white family needed peculiar protection. In order to arouse sympathy within the readership, Dixon addresses these social fears and appropriates them in presenting his evaluation of the post-war United States to the reader:

The chaos of blind passion that followed Lincoln's assassination is inconceivable to-day. The revolution it produced in our Government, and the bold attempt of Thaddeus Stevens to Africanize ten great States of the American Union, read now like tales from 'The Arabian Nights'. [...] In the darkest hour of the life of the South, when her wounded people lay helpless amid rags and ashes under the beak and talon of the Vulture, suddenly from the mists of the mountains appeared a white cloud the size of a man's hand. It grew until its mantle of mystery enfolded the stricken earth on sky. An 'Invisible Empire' had risen from the field of Death and challenged the Visible to mortal combat. (Dixon, *To the Reader*)

Dixon perceives the Reconstruction South as politically discriminated, socially devastated and threatened by a 'black politics'. The author clearly advocates white-supremacist thinking and this obviously has an influence on how the various characters are presented as well as how the plot progresses. However, despite the allegedly desperate situation, there seems hope on the horizon in the form of the Ku Klux Klan.

Apart from content, the paragraph quoted also provides a foretaste of what can be expected from the novel in terms of style: a language drenched in pathos and sentimentalisms can be regarded Dixon's main tool in reaching his aim of gaining sympathy for the South, its people and especially the Ku Klux Klan and their acts of violence. Essential to his argumentation is the connection drawn to the Scottish descent of North Carolinian people. In fact, by the end of the 18th century, one fifth to one third of the Southern white population had been of Scots or Scots-Irish descent, and so is the Cameron family (see McWhiney 440). In *The Clansman* this particular ancestry makes the Southern white people an essentially heroic and courageous one.

3.2 *Contending Forces* – a Novel of Reconciliation

Due to the large body of prose – apart from her four novels, she also published numerous short stories, historical articles and biographical sketches – Pauline Elisabeth Hopkins was the most productive black female writer of fiction of her generation. She wrote at the time which entered literary history books as ‘The Black Woman’s Era’; in the period between 1890 and 1910 black women writers of fiction published more books than their male counterparts did in the prior five decades. Born in Portland, Maine in 1859 and raised in Boston, Massachusetts, Hopkins gained recognition for her talent at a very early stage in her life: she won her first writing contest at the age of only fifteen. While playwriting and acting also served to display Hopkins’ creative potential, she gained most recognition for her occupation with the ‘Colored American Magazine’. This black periodical was one of various journals founded at the turn of the century to serve as a platform for creative writing, politics and scholarship. While three of her four novels written and published at the turn of the century were serialized in the ‘Colored American Magazine’, *Contending Forces*, published in 1900, was her only novel initially available in book form (see H. Gates xvi; Gates and McKay 569; Yarborough xxviiiif).

Concerning the influence of her fiction, Hopkins shares with Chesnutt that she particularly acknowledges its value and power in the struggle for racial equality; to her fiction serves as a “[...] preserver of manners and customs – religious, political and social. It is a record of growth and development from generation to generation” (Hopkins, *Preface* 13-14). Moreover, she makes the intention of her writing more than clear with the following statement: “[...] I am not actuated by a desire for notoriety or for profit, but to do all that I can in a humble way to raise the stigma of degradation from my race.” However, to her as a piece of fiction *Contending Forces* not only contributed to this ambitious endeavour, but it also mirrored the “[...] hard struggles [...] in the North to obtain a respectable living and a partial education” (Hopkins, *Preface* 15).

Just like in *The Clansman*, in Hopkins’ novel the elaborate social and political implications are embedded in the (main) plot’s focus on a love story. Like her white contemporary, the female writer employs conventions of the romance as well as the sentimental; the particular setting(s), the characters – the opposition of heroes and villains –, the mysteriousness about Sappho’s past and

the resulting suspense, the introduction of highly unlikely coincidences create a certain atmosphere that aims at arousing feelings of sympathy within the reader (see “Plot” 224-25). With regards to the progress of the plot, the eventual ending of the story as well as the further implications of the novel, both *The Clansman* and *Contending Forces* can be classified as ‘sentimental novels’. The authors thus rely on a form of fiction that had reached the peak of its popularity in the 18th century and focuses on the “distresses of the virtuous and attempt[s] to show that a sense of honour and moral behaviours were justly rewarded. It also attempted to show that effusive emotion was evidence of kindness and goodness” (“Sentimental Novel” 616). In *Contending Forces* Hopkins presents a female perspective to late-19th-century black life and the focus is put on the heroine Sappho Clark’s quest for womanhood. The heroine displays certain inner developments that finally culminate in the recognition and acknowledgement of her identity and position in the world. These are also conventions closely associated with the ‘Bildungsroman’ (see “Novel” 193).

However, in contrast to Dixon who fosters romantic feelings for the South and its institution of white-supremacist ideology, Hopkins’ romanticism is particularly rooted in the belief in the equality of black and white. In *Contending Forces* the ideals of democracy acquire a deeply religious perspective, as it was, however, the case with many black writers of her time. Generally speaking, in the life of black Americans religion and faith have always played a crucial role, and in the South it did even more so when the black Church could finally be established as independent of any white influence after the Civil War. Prior to this emancipation, the white population intended to control black worship and service and made use of it to further foster the alleged biblical justification for black suppression (see Taylor 837-38). Due to its importance, in black writing, it was not unusual to employ “biblical types to configure black experience: Moses (liberator), Exodus (emancipation), Promised Land (destiny)” (Smith 2550).

Moreover, the relatedness of the two main plots of the novel – the life of the Montforts in Bermuda and North Carolina and the plot of the black Smiths of Boston taking place about a century later, at the turn of the 19th century – is only revealed with the progressing story. But these revelations on the relatedness between the two families prove tremendously functional in the achievement of the overall romantic effect of the novel. In addition, the sub plots dedicated to the

political discussion on the status of the black population in the United States also serve as substantial contributions to the overall message of the novel and opinion of the author.

3.3 *The Marrow of Tradition* – a Novel of Revelations

Charles Waddell Chesnutt – recognized for his outstanding contribution to African American writing – is the author of a great variety of literary works that comprises more than fifty stories, two collections of short stories, six novels as well as many essays, poems, letters, speeches and a biography of Frederick Douglass, former slave and leader of the abolitionist movement. Apart from writing, Chesnutt also pursued careers as teacher and lawyer. As writer he was a social activist, focusing on the racially-motivated injustice blacks were confronted with in their daily lives. Chesnutt himself had experienced racial segregation and discrimination all his life: born into a family of free blacks who both had a white father²⁷ in 1858 in Cleveland, Ohio, Chesnutt spent his child- and early adulthood years in the quiet town of Fayetteville, North Carolina, where his family had moved back to after the Civil War. There, young Chesnutt had the opportunity to attend one of the most notable free public schools for black children in the whole state, the Howard School, established after the Civil War with the support of the Freedman's Bureau. All his life he was aware of the insurmountable difference between him and the rural South's illiterate black 'mass' and thus consciously dissociated himself from these people, at least during his teenage and early adult years. However, later, he starts to appreciate black popular culture, and regards his future career of author giving him the opportunity to present black lives as well as the racial injustice done to them. Chesnutt's idealism, stated only at the age of 22, becomes clear in the following journal quote:

[...] If I do write, I shall write for a purpose, a high holy purpose, and this will inspire me to greater effort. The object of my writings would be not so much the elevation of the colored [sic] people as the elevation of the whites, - for I consider the unjust spirit of caste which is so insidious as to pervade a whole nation, and so powerful as to subject a whole race and all connected with it to scorn and social ostracism – I consider this a barrier to the moral progress of the American people. (Chesnutt, *The Journal* 139-40)

Chesnutt aims at a "moral revolution" (*The Journal* 140), and regards his writing as one contribution to this task. In the late 1880s, Chesnutt published the first of

²⁷ As a light-skinned person Charles Chesnutt probably could have passed as white, but, however, he refused to do so and identified himself as 'black' (see Sundquist xii).

his 'conjure stories' which provide a critical analysis of pre- and post-war 'race' relationships. He tried to come to terms with his 'mixed-race' background in the context of 'Jim Crow' legislation in composing his 'Colorline Stories'. Chesnutt published his second novel *The Marrow of Tradition* in 1901, which followed *The House behind the Cedars* of 1900 (see Brodhead 1-28; Chesnutt, *The Journal* 139-40; Gates and McKay 522).

As already mentioned above, in contrast to Dixon, Chesnutt does not decidedly term his narrative 'historical' although it is based on an actual historical incident, the 'Wilmington Race Riot' of 1898.²⁸ Chesnutt presents a version of this incident that stands in stark contrast to the picture created by its official press coverage which made the incidence consistent with the rhetoric of white supremacy. Thus, according to the popular representation, the riot was instigated by 'murderous blacks' in collaboration with white Republicans, but, however, fortunately could be quelled by the patriotic and brave acting of white Democrats. Only recent decades saw an objective revision of this version, with the conclusion that, not surprisingly, Wilmington's white population acted as racially-motivated agitators. This evaluation legitimizes the reference to the incidents in Wilmington

²⁸ Within the last decade of the 19th century North Carolinian Wilmington established itself as a town of considerable size with a population of two-thirds African Americans. The past years had witnessed – as in many other Southern towns – a shrinking political influence of the Democratic Party, which, as its basis, held to white-supremacist thinking. An increasing number of the white working-class electorate – disenchanted by the Democrat's inability to tackle the economic problems of late 19th century as well as the party's favouring of the aristocratic elite – abandoned the party that had been ruling the South since the end of Reconstruction, and instead turned to the working-class Populist Party. The black part of the population could increase their political as well as economic influence, although – to not skew the picture – their actual influence was in no way equivalent to their population number. In order to bring this assumed 'black dominance' to an end, nationwide white Democratic propaganda began to re-intensify the cause of white supremacy, with the intended aim to re-demarcate the 'colour line' they perceived as blurred. The campaign was mainly accomplished via the press, which began to continuously disseminate inflammatory warnings about the alleged influence of the 'negroes' as well as accounts of the 'atrocities' done to white women. The level of hostility reached a first climax with the intimidation efforts aimed at the African American population in the weeks prior to the 1898 fall election; the (white) Democrats won by a landslide. Two days later, 10 November 1898, the 'Secret Nine' – a group of local (white) Democrats – presented the 'The Wilmington Declaration of Independence' to the African American population, which demanded displacement of blacks from the local government. Also, the only black newspaper in town should be closed and its editor expelled from town – he wrote an editorial that openly attacked the institution of lynching and the white man's obsession with black sexuality. In the hours after the dissemination of this declaration, however, it came thick and fast: a mob of armed white men gathered and burned down the building of 'The Daily Record', the only black-owned and -managed newspaper in Wilmington; African American citizens got killed, and many others fled the town either immediately or in the weeks and month to follow (see Belau and Cameron 9-14)

as a 'massacre' or a 'coup-d'état' rather than 'race riot'²⁹ (see Belau and Cameron 7-14).

Plot and characters of *The Marrow of Tradition*, obviously, are fictitious, and the course of events presented in the novel – the fall election is set after the 'massacre' – also differs from the historical facts. However, some of the characters are based on historical persons who were decisive in the preparations made prior to the 'massacre'; in this regard, there are the members of the 'Big Three' – Major Carteret, General Belmont and Captain McBane – who, in the novel, are identified as the main instigators of the 'massacre', although the actual responsibility of the historical persons they base on has not been clarified yet by historians (see Belau and Cameron 7ff). Nevertheless, *The Marrow of Tradition* is of great historical value because it reveals not the black but the white town inhabitants as the ones responsible for the 'massacre', and this evaluation is also the one that has been acknowledged by historians in the meantime³⁰. However, the story of the novel is complex; it consists of various sub plots that turn out to be all interrelated and entangled. Nevertheless, they contribute in broadening the reader's perspective on the outcome of the novel, the 'massacre', as they provide an insight into the motivations of the different characters on both sides of the 'colour line'. Moreover, each of these sub plots is functional in contributing to the overall dramatic and tragic effect that is achieved in the novel. This is mainly accomplished by the arousal of sympathy with some of the black characters who, however, obviously are negatively affected by the 'massacre'. In this regard, Chesnutt decisively differs from Dixon and Hopkins whose respective novels aim at achieving a romantic effect. Although he also incorporates elements of romance and romanticism, as well as sentimentalisms into the novel – the love story between Lee Ellis and Clara Pemberton, the belief in self-expression as embodied in Josh Green, the tragedy about the death of the black Miller's only child etc. – the outcome of the narrative is disillusioning and gloomy. In this

²⁹ In order to be consistent with the version adhered to by revisionist historians, in the following analysis I will use the term 'massacre' instead of 'race riot'. Chesnutt, however, uses the term 'revolution'.

³⁰ Apart from the novel *Hanover; or, The Persecution of the Lowly: A story of the Wilmington Massacre*, published by Wilmington native David D. Fulton a.k.a. Jack Thorne in 1900, Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* also deals with the 'massacre' as well. His accounts on the incident support the white-supremacist version which refers to the incident as a 'necessity' in order to defend 'white womanhood' against the 'rapacious attacks' of black men.

regard, the incorporation of romantic and sentimental elements gains a different significance in *The Marrow of Tradition* than in the other two novels. It can be argued that to a certain extent Chesnutt adheres to the strong naturalistic tradition of his time, which, due its indebtedness in the philosophy of determinism, is “[anti-romantic] in emphasizing the limited ability of humans to impose will upon their own destiny, and also in devaluing the imagination’s embellishment of reality” (“Naturalism” 152). In this sense both his black and white protagonists are helpless in actively deciding on their own destiny; their abilities are limited in preventing the ‘massacre’ and positively influence its outcome. However, the ending is not a hopeless one: quite in the contrary, responsibility and power is with black Dr. Miller to save the white Carteret child and he is willing to do so despite all the racially-motivated hate he and his family have had to bear. In this regard, it is the sphere of the family that seems of great significance all throughout the novel, and it is this entity that finally is affected by white-supremacist thinking and its outcomes. It might be indicative that the story also opens with the sub plot of the family life of the Carterets, where emotions like glee and bliss, but also fear and despair regularly culminate.

3.4 Opposing languages of ‘Race’

This chapter is dedicated to the direct comparison of the three novels in terms of the languages and social voices on ‘race’ they incorporate. In this regard, I regard all three novels as distinct polyphonic compositions and I will indicate what voices prove the stronger ones in each narrative in the competition for being heard. In order to enable a comparison, the division into three thematic areas proves most useful. Since they all have the common denominator ‘race’, the three field inevitably overlap, but, however, this kind of arrangement enables to focus on a particular line of argumentation identified in the three narratives.

As has been outlined already, in Thomas Dixon’s *The Clansman* it is made sense of the world and of history – Reconstruction North and South – according to white-supremacist ideology and mythology (see Introduction and chapter 2.3). The narrative’s particular style as well as the progress of the story is in line with the intentions of the author, that is, the presentation of white supremacy as something positive and necessary even. In presenting his characters, both black and white ones, Dixon heavily relies on essentialism, that is, the perception that

the different 'races' naturally qualify by certain character traits and, as a consequence, a particular way of acting. Dixon presents almost only negative images of blacks, and just like these, the few positively evaluated ones merely serve to strengthen white-supremacist thinking. However, apart from blacks Dixon has one more image of the enemy on which he zeros in throughout the entire story: Northern radical Republicans. As outlined by the author, it is them who intend to provide the black man with the suffrage, and this being accomplished only to rely on their support in taking revenge on the South and annihilate it socially and culturally. Thus, Dixon draws the line between 'good and bad' along the line of 'race' as well as political affiliation. It is the Southern population that has to suffer from the discrimination caused by radical Republicans in complicity with blacks and by maximising both the greatness of the white Southerners as a people as well as the suffering they have to endure, the aim is to arouse feelings of sympathy for them. He establishes a clear and rigid line of division and the various characters can only belong to one side of this demarcation line.

In many ways, Pauline Hopkins and Charles Chesnutt continuously challenge the images and attitudes presented by Dixon. They write from an African American perspective and interpret history in line with the experiences gained by the black American population. What is fundamental in their lines of argumentation, however, is that they seriously question the picture of 'race' developed by Dixon; they present counter-discourses to the essentialist thinking basic to white-supremacist ideology. Nevertheless, they also make use of the concept of 'race'; they acknowledge their existence and thus are in line with the kind of reasoning so particular of their time. However, according to their outlines the belonging to the white or the black 'race' does not automatically qualify a person with particular character traits, but, instead, making-sense of the world necessarily needs to be much more complex. Like Dixon, both Hopkins and Chesnutt make heavy use of certain black and white stereotypes, nevertheless, what the two writers do with these stereotypes differs from Dixon's strategy. The same holds true for the various social voices and languages introduced into the novels. What is more, they also challenge essentialist thinking by presenting 'bad' and 'good' black and white characters alike.

The particular treatment of the various social voices as well as their arrangement within the respective novel allows a particular 'heteroglossia' to enter the work; one that either supports white-supremacist thinking or one that challenges or even rejects this dominant discourse. In this regard, although an abundance of voices speaking in favour as well as against a white-supremacist ideology is presented in all three novels and all of these long for being heard and thus gain meaning and significance, only one side is the more persuasive one and 'wins'. This is also to be regarded the belief or attitude held by the author. What social voices eventually prove as the more convincing ones greatly depends on who introduces them and what the narrator/ author does with these in the progressing story. As illustrated in this chapter, the three novels under consideration differ in terms of the position occupied by the respective narrator as well as how reliable, likeable, authoritative etc. the various characters are rendered. These characteristics greatly influence the status of the different social voices introduced by them and, as a result, also their respective meaning and significance.

The following three chapters discuss these voices, and their comparison is accomplished in terms of a dialogue, that is, each chapter is composed of the contributions made on this topic in all three novels. In this sense, it is demonstrated that and in how far the three novels 'talk' to each other and respond to early-20th-century society. However, the various chapters differ in terms of the 'amount' of contribution made by the three authors.³¹ For reasons of readability the quotations of the three narratives under consideration referred to in the following chapters do only indicate the page number, but not the title of the novel.

3.4.1 The Appropriation of Belief Systems and how these can be Challenged

As has been outlined already in chapter 2, for centuries white-supremacist ideology had served as the dominant discourse on 'race' and it was 'supported' by the two 'discursive formations' of science and religion. These two belief systems were made use of to legitimize racist thinking, and even more so, to

³¹ Due to the little contribution identified with regards to the focus of the thematic area, chapter 3.4.3.1 does exclude *The Marrow of Tradition* in the discussion while chapter 3.4.3.3 does not consider *The Clansman*.

justify racially-motivated discrimination and segregation. Furthermore, the particular appropriation of science and religion was influential with regards to the systems of law and justice as well as the production of truth. Similar to Foucault's terminology, white-supremacist ideology as well as the discourses of science and religion had served as what Bakhtin terms 'authoritative discourse':

[t]he authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. It is, so to speak, the word of the fathers. Its authority was already acknowledged [sic] in the past. It is a prior discourse. It is therefore not a question of choosing it from among other possible discourses that are its equal. It is given (it sounds) in lofty spheres, not those of familiar contact. Its language is a special (as it were, hieratic) language. It can be profaned. It is akin to taboo, i.e., a name that must not be taken in vain. (Bakhtin 342)

Such an authoritative discourse is deeply grounded in tradition and does not allow an in-between, it can either be fully accepted or utterly rejected, but there are no flexible transitions. This inflexibility and stability clearly sets it off from other kinds of discourse. Authoritative discourse is inextricably connected to the actual authority – e.g. a political power, an institution, a person; if this embodied authority is lost, authoritative discourse also loses all its meaning, it remains as a mere object (Bakhtin 343-44).

In this regard, the 'discursive formations' or 'authoritative discourses' of science and religion proved decisive in the meaning-making process of 'race'. As I demonstrate in this chapter, Dixon, Hopkins and Chesnutt incorporate various concepts of these two discourses being influential at their time of writing into their respective novel – accomplished both via their characters as well as the narrator. The three authors thus respond to these 'real life' concepts and make sense of and appropriate these in their particular kind of way. In the context of religion, for instance, although all three writers employ this belief system as well as the concepts of fate/ providence into their respective novel, to the female writer Hopkins religion also is of particular importance when it comes to the discussion of the advancement of the black 'race'. Apart from science and religion, the language of spirituality is incorporated in all three novels as well and regarded as a counter-discourse that challenges the dominance of the two established belief systems. Thus, spirituality – embracing the supernatural, superstition and conjure – provides alternatives to the two established patterns of how to make sense of the world. Within U.S. society spirituality had been strongly associated with the

black population and that is also why its incorporation gains particular significance within the discussion of 'race'.

3.4.1.1. Science

In *The Clansman* the author Dixon develops his own interpretation of the Reconstruction Era and the role blacks had played within it in accordance with what dominant 'race science' had manifested as truth and reality; he perceives the black 'race' as an essentially inferior one, a fact which is made most obvious in their outward appearance. In this regard, he refers to Southern Augustus (Gus) Caesar, former slave of the white Camerons, in the following way:

He had the short, heavy-set neck of the lower order of animals. His skin was coal-black, his lips so thick they curled both ways up and down with crooked blood marks across them. His nose was flat and its enormous nostrils seemed in perpetual dilation. The sinister bead eyes, with brown splotches in their whites, were set wide apart and gleamed ape-like under his scant brows. His enormous cheek-bones and jaws seemed to protrude beyond the ears and almost hide them. (216)

This is a direct rejoinder to the stereotypical image developed of blacks and it also fosters the opinion that the black 'race' was closer to the ape than to the white one. However, Gus rapes the two female neighbours of the Camerons – Marion and Mrs. Lenoir – and this fact makes his characterization particularly significant. In this regard, it can be argued that Gus's outward appearance, especially his facial traits, is also indicative of his inner qualities. According to anthropometry, a strand of science that was very influential within the 19th century, Gus is the 'born criminal' and due to this characterization also doomed to extinction (see chapter 2.1). Although no one had actually witnessed the raping of the two women and there are no evidences on the actual offender of this horrible crime, to the Camerons it is obvious that it was Gus. In order to prove this, Dr. Cameron, the head of the family, applies a technique he had learnt in France: he points to the assumption that the short-time memory of a person remained accessible in their eyes, even after their death. In examining the two dead women, Dr. Cameron – due to his declared "power of vision" – can identify his former slave in their eyes, a finding that is allegedly proof enough to hunt down the man. I argue that this outline on such a 'scientific' technique serves to strengthen the authority of science within the novel.

Apart from that, a white-supremacist perception towards the natural capacities of blacks is introduced in the political discussion between President Abraham Lincoln and Austin Stoneman, the leader of Congress. In this dialogue, the latter introduces the perception into the novel that the demise of the Southern white people was to be regarded as the working of evolution; nature had decided that the black population was the new “ruler of the South” (50) and the South’s ruling class, aristocracy, to be exterminated. In this regard, Stoneman reverses the dominant perception of evolution when it comes to ‘races’. It is not the black ‘race’ that proves as the weaker one, but instead, the Southern white population. However, in this discussion, the social voice represented by Abraham Lincoln clearly proves as the stronger one, a fact accomplished via various ways: The evaluations made on the authority and likeability clearly makes the reader ‘automatically’ sympathize with Lincoln and his attitudes on politics and ‘race’. What is more, while Lincoln is repeatedly being referred to in positive terms and in terms of mysticism, his opponent Austin Stoneman – this holds true for the chapters to follow this political discussion held between the two most powerful men in the United States – is repeatedly referred to in negative, derogatory terms; he is the “old Commoner” or “cynic” who “grunts” and “growls”. All the sympathy naturally is with Lincoln, and Stoneman’s performance in the discussion in combination with the evaluation of this character carried out by the narrator clearly make Lincoln the ‘winner’ of the political discussion stretching on to the entire narrative (see chapters 3.4.2.1 & 3.4.3.1). Moreover, Stoneman’s function merely confines to the raising of questions that are being used by Lincoln in order to present his own attitude. Although in theory they have a discussion, the perception is gained that it rather is a one-sided monologue that merely serves the author to let Lincoln support Southern sentiments. In this sense, this dialogue helps to pave the way for Lincoln’s outlines. To my mind, Stoneman only functions to present arguments which immediately are countered by Lincoln’s stronger arguments and outlines. What is also of high significance is that the leader of Congress acknowledges his failure in the end of the story. He admits that he was wrong and under the negative influence of his black allies. It is himself that admits his mistake.

In *The Marrow of Tradition* it is one of the story’s main white characters who initially picks up the topic of anthropometry and in doing so the significance

is utterly different to how it is made sense of and appropriated by Dixon. In this regard, it is Lee Ellis – colleague of Major Carteret and aristocratic Tom Delamere’s rival for the love of the major’s younger half-sister Clara – perceives the latter’s “erect and well-moulded form [as] the embodiment of symmetry”. Assuming that, as it was the case according to 19th century dominant discourse on ‘race science’, certain measurements of the head were regarded as being indicative of a person’s character, the presentation of Clara’s facial features ‘proves’ this correlation: Ellis also attests the young woman “a pure heart and a high spirit” (16) and what the reader learns about the young woman in the progressing story also supports this assumption. Similarly, declarations on the physical appearance are also made on Captain McBane – complicit with Major Carteret in the instigation of the Wellington massacre. He is opposed to the noble Carteret due to his dishevelled appearance and his offensive manner as well as his “broad shoulder, burly form, square jaw, and heavy chin [that] betokened strength, energy, and unscrupulousness” (32). With this characterization the narrator explicitly responds to what has been referred to as the ‘born criminal’ in chapter 2.3. The captain represents the person whose anatomy downright ‘shouts out’ his cruel mind to which the reader is given insight throughout the story. However, just like Clara, aristocratic Tom Delamere³² is also qualified by a “symmetrical face”, and his head is “of almost perfect contour” (15). However, with Tom the narrator broaches the subject again: on the subsequent page it says that “no discriminating observer would have characterized his beauty as manly. It conveyed no impression of strength, but did possess a certain element, feline rather than feminine, which subtly negated [sic] the idea of manliness” (16). Moreover, it is young Delamere who robs his aunt in order to clear his debts. Thus, with the aristocrat, a character is introduced whose features, in contrast to Clara and McBane, do not go hand in hand with his inner qualities. What is more, the evaluation of Tom Delamere as ‘weak’ can be interpreted as a rejoinder to the discussion on THE dominant theme of turn-of-the-century science, that is, evolution and the ‘competition for survival’. It is Major Carteret

³² Statements made by Captain McBane and Tom Delamere with reference to each other can be regarded a dialogue; in this regard, both speak from their very own perspective, McBane as a self-made millionaire, and Tom as the well-mannered aristocrat evaluating the other: Captain McBane attests Tom a “weak will” (155), while the latter claims that the former’s manners “[were] characterized by a veiled insolence which was exceedingly offensive” (161).

who introduces the topic into the novel when he refers to the African American people as a “race of weaklings [that is to be] eliminated by the stress of competition” (86); Tom Delamere can then be regarded proof that there are also weak persons among the acclaimed superior white ‘race’. It is a statement made by black Dr. Miller who also contributes to this ‘dialogue’:

The race which at the last shall inherit the earth – the residuary legatee of civilization – will be the race which remains longest upon it. The negro was here before the Anglo-Saxon was evolved, and his thick lips and heavy-lidded eyes looked out from the inscrutable face of the Sphinx across the sands of Egypt while yet the ancestors of those now oppress him were living in caves, practicing human sacrifice, and painting themselves with woad [sic] – and the negro is here yet. (62)

However, the major’s response to this argument follows suit when he identifies and evaluates on the attempts of blacks to physically imitate whites by applying bleach to their skin: “These grotesque advertisements had their tragic side. [...] These pitiful attempts to change their physical characteristics were an acknowledgement, on their own part, that the negro was doomed, and that the white man was to inherit the earth and hold all other races under his heel” (244). The significance of this statement is twofold: first, it is the language of white supremacy and presents the dominant perception of the evolution of the human ‘race(s)’ into the novel and what is of particular significance is that it is Major Carteret who accomplishes this. He and his family can be regarded as the epitome of the aristocratic ruling class of ante-bellum times. Both have a planter background – the major’s family is “one of the oldest and proudest in the state” (1) which once had owned several thousand (!) slaves. Naturally, the Carterets regard their social background as something precious and sacred, which is made most obvious in their decision to name their new-born Theodore, “a [Carteret] family name [that] had been borne by the eldest son for several generations [...]” (12). The respective virtues incorporated in the noble family are acknowledged, both from their own ranks as well as from ‘outside’. Second, however, the rejoinder to this remark follows when the reader learns that Tom Delamere dresses up as his grandfather’s black servant in order to rob his aunt, under disguise. Here, it is the white person intending to be black and not the other way around.

Apart from that, ‘miscegenation’ is a major topic in Chesnutt’s novel. Here, the black Millers clearly serve as a counter-argument to the 19th century scientific

discourse on 'miscegenation'; both Mr. and Mrs. Miller are of 'mixed-race' ancestry and nevertheless the total opposite of what one might call 'degenerate', but educated, cultured, and well-mannered. It is the narrator who explicitly refers to the discourse of 'miscegenation' when comparing Dr. Miller with the white Dr. Burns. After having revealed the two men's similarity when it comes to their character traits, the narrator refers to their physical characteristics: "[...] the mulatto's erect form, broad shoulder, clear eyes, fine teeth, and pleasingly moulded features showed nowhere any sign of that degeneration which the pessimist so sadly maintains is the inevitable heritage of mixed races" (49). By evaluating this white-supremacist attitude towards the offspring of 'mixed-race' relationships as 'pessimistic', the narrator clearly opposes the perception of degeneration as scientifically proven. Instead, the direct comparison of the appearance of the black and the white man and their obvious similarity, the narrator appeals to the 'common sense' of the reader. This serves as an authorial comment that can hardly be rejected because it is so obvious.

What these outlines aim at is to indicate that the gap between black and white is not as wide as the adherence to white-supremacist ideology might propose. The black Millers serve as direct counter images to this dominant assumption. However, the strongest argument for this is made by the twinning of white Olivia Carteret and black Janet Miller. The half-sisters bear such a striking resemblance that Janet has been taken for her sister on a recurrent basis in town, a fact that makes the fear arouse in Olivia people might also take her for the outcome of 'miscegenation'. In this regard, Olivia could 'pass'³³ for a white person and this condition seriously threatens the stability of 'race' as the clear-cut separation between black and white is seriously undermined

In *Contending Forces* the topic of 'miscegenation' is first introduced by the narrator's evaluation that on the island of Bermuda 'miscegenation' or "amalgamation" was nothing unusual, and as indicated by the rich planter family the Montforts, nothing disconcerting. It is perceived a threat to white supremacy only when the slave overseer Bill Sampson thinks to identify black blood in Mrs. Montfort. However, in the main plot taking place around a century later, the

³³ "The word 'passing' [...] refers to a crossing of a line that divides social groups. [...] Passing is used most frequently, however, as if it were short for 'passing for white', in the sense of crossing over the color [sic] line in the United States from the black to the white side. [...] Racial passing is a phenomenon of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries" (Sollors 2105).

Bostonian Smiths serve as the author's strongest and most obvious argument against the alleged degeneracy to be identified in people of mixed 'races'. Physically as well as mentally the Smiths definitely are far from the status of 'atavists', as it is made more than clear in the narrator's evaluation of Mrs. Smith's son William, being referred to as "tall and finely formed, with features almost perfectly chiselled, and a complexion the colour of an almond shell" (90). What is more, in his work in a hotel his "gentlemanly manners, and intelligent understanding of all that was required of him made himself invaluable to his employers" (84). Similar to Chesnutt, the writer Hopkins responds to the perception that the facial features of a person might reveal also their inner qualities. In the case of the story's hero William this correlation definitely is given. This is acknowledged also by one of the characters who perceives William Smith and his (black) friend John Langley as being far from the status of degenerates when stating that both young men were "fine specimens of the genus homo, whose physique demanded more than a passing glance of admiration" (290). What is of great significance here is that this acknowledgement is made by the (white!) Englishman Mr. Withington. As an aristocratic MP from Great Britain, the man functions as a neutral authority.

The narrator incorporates the topic of 'miscegenation' in her 'plead' for acknowledgement of what the black 'race' has achieved so far. In this regard, after giving an account of the "humble achievements" of the Smith family in the past decades, the narrator draws the following conclusion:

Man has said that from lack of means and social cast the negro shall remain in a position of serfdom all his days, but the mighty working of cause and effect, the mighty unexpected results of the law of evolution, seem to point to a different solution of the Negro question than any worked out by the most fertile brain of the highly cultured Caucasian. Then again, we do not allow for the infusion of white blood, which became pretty generally distributed in the inferior black race during the existence of slavery. Some of this blood, too, was the best in the country. Combinations of plants, or trees, or of any productive living thing, sometimes generate rare specimens of the plant or tree; why not, then, of the genus homo? Surely the negro race must be productive of some valuable specimens, if only from the infusion which amalgamation with a superior race must eventually bring. (87)

This statement is of particular interest for multiple reasons: the narrator directly responds to the influential position science (still) had within early-20th-century discourse on 'race'. In this regard, she gives a rejoinder to the working of

evolution, but, however, in doing so she rejects the dominant position proclaiming that evolution would finally bring an end to the black 'race'. The black Smiths are the best example for this counter-argument to the dominant discourse of white supremacy. Her awareness on the position of nature is so great that she even refers to plant life in order to further make her point. Moreover, she emphasizes that there had always been interracial relationships, a fact also indicating that there was nothing like a white or a black 'race', but rather one human 'race'. What is more, as illustrated by the Smith family, this 'race-mixing' is nothing negative at all. In this sense, the narrator introduces the perception into the novel that due to the commingling with the superior 'race' the black could 'produce' people of value. In how far the reference to the allegedly higher 'race' can be regarded an ironic comment is not clear; the reader cannot really conclude whether Hopkins' deference to the white 'race' is sincere. However, 'miscegenation' can also 'go wrong', as is the case with black John Langley:

[H]is hair was dark and had no indication of Negro blood in its waves; his features were of the Caucasian cut. [...] He was a North Carolinian – a descendant of slaves and southern 'crackers.' We might call this a bad mixture – the combination of the worst features of a dominant race with an enslaved race. (90-91)

With this statement the narrator again responds to the influence of science in the making-sense of 'race'. What is more, this remark can be regarded a rejoinder to the idea to rely on the facial features of a person in order to tell their inner qualities. As is revealed by the progressing story, John Langley is a liar, he blackmails Sappho Clark and acts in an opportunistic way; in this regard, Langley proves the fraudulency of the belief in anthropometry. What is also significant in this statement is that the negative characteristics to be possibly found in people of 'mixed-race' ancestry are united in a person who looks white, who has inherited the physical appearance of the white side of his ancestry. One of his ancestors is Anson Pollock – rich but cruel North Carolinian planter who killed Charles Montfort out of "his ruling passion [that] was covetousness" (49). Despite his cold-heartedness, as the narrator goes on, Pollock's "fair speech, auburn curls and deep-blue eyes, so falsely smiling, won his way and Mr. Pollock was the popular ladies' man of two counties" (50).

I argue that the outlines on the Smith family as well as on the story's heroine Sappho Clark serve as direct counter-arguments to the perception of a

white-supremacist ideology towards 'miscegenation', as it is introduced into the novel via the speech of a Reverend who "thank[s] God that the mulatto race was dying out, because it was a mongrel mixture which combined the worst elements of two races" (149). This evaluation is being discussed in the context of the 'Sewing Circle', a gathering of women not only dedicated to communal needlework, but to political debate also. The head of this club, Mrs. Willis, addresses this attitude and does that as an authority: before her opinion is given voice to, the narrator provides an outline on this woman's character; in this regard, she was "the brilliant widow of a bright Negro politician" (143), "[k]een in her analysis of human nature, [...] [s]hrewd in business matters [and] [w]ell-read and thoroughly conversant with all current topics [...]" (144-45). With this characterization of the leading female of the political discussions held within the 'Sewing Circle', Mrs. Willis's claim is given authoritative value. She declares the Reverend's comment one where "prejudices [...] dominate [...] better judgement" (152). What is more, she also refers to the perception that the whole black 'race' was to be regarded a mixed 'race', and this is nothing to regret or feel sorry for, as is emphasized by Dora's declaration, that, as of racially mixed ancestry, she does not feel unhappy about this condition at all. This discussion led by the women of the 'Sewing Circle' is one more counter-argument to the perception of the 'tragic mulatto'. The various rejoinders to the discussion on the state of 'mixed-race' people not only weaken the perception of their innate inferiority, they also 'speak up' for social coherency. By declaring the black 'race' a mulatto 'race' – this is also accomplished by the remarks that almost all the characters are said to be of white ancestry also – the narrator intends at bridging the gap between blacks alike; the black 'race' needs to regard itself as one!

However, concerning the popular assumption given validity in the 20th century – sooner or later evolution would bring the inevitable extinction of the black 'race' – the most direct comment is made by a seemingly neutral character; after William Smith's various contributions in the discussions of the 'Canterbury Club', the foreign 'secretary of legation' reasons: "No race is hopelessly lost to the world of progress that produces such manly specimens within fifty years of emancipation" (296). This statement made by a white and neutral person who, due to his status as government official, is entrenched with authority, serves as a compelling counter-argument to white-supremacist ideology on evolution.

3.4.1.2 Religion & Spirituality

As I have demonstrated in chapter 2.1, within 18th and 19th century dominant discourse on 'race', the two 'discursive formations' science and religion were often referred to in their combination. This is also the case in the three novels. In *The Marrow of Tradition*, the language of white supremacy is again introduced by Major Carteret, when he tries to convince his black porter Jerry to not use skin bleach: "The best negro is a black negro, of the pure type, as it came from the hand of God. [...] A man should be content to remain as God made him and where God placed him" (246). In this regard, reference is made to the perception of the position of the different 'races' as something God-given. However, old Mr. Delamere, a distant relative of the Carteret family, directly contributes to this discussion and gives voice to the idea that in their treatment of the black 'race' whites "[had] thought to overrule God's laws [...]" (211). What this statement indicates is that the white 'race' has also not stuck to their designated place, which obviously is *beneath* God. This evaluation thus contributes to the image of the white 'race' as hypocritical. It is of particular interest that this realization is made by one of the white characters and even more so, by one of the aristocratic ones. In this regard, as has been outlined already in the story, old Mr. Delamere belongs to the Southern nobility and unites all the positive values associated with this social class according to the myth of the 'Old South'; old Mr. Delamere is a gentleman through and through and he has been "[...] distinguished, during his active life [...], for courage and strength of will, courtliness of bearing, deference to his superiors, of whom there had been few, courtesy to his equals, kindness and consideration for those less highly favored [sic], and above all, a scrupulous sense of honor [sic]" (96). This makes old Mr. Delamere an authority.

Similarly, in *Contending Forces* the author Hopkins questions the proclaimed God-given inferior position of blacks, and she does so within the plot revolving around the Montfort family, taking place in Bermuda and later in North Carolina in the late 1700s. In this regard, it is in the context of slavery when she first introduces the perception that all living beings longed to be free, and so did the slave. Her conclusion is that slavery was inhuman and nothing that could ever be made coherent with the principles of humanity and 'civilization'. The suppression of one people only created hate and contempt as most vividly indicated by the discussion of the two slave overseers Hank Davis and Bill

Sampson, taking place while watching the Montfort's slaves being landed. It is in this particular context that the narrator draws the following conclusion:

Apologists tell us as an excuse for the barbarous practice of slavery, that it was a god-like institution for the spread of the gospel of the meek and lowly carpenter's son, and that the African savage brought to these shores in chains as most favored [sic] being. Such may be the thoughts of the careless and superficial mind; [...] The fruit of slavery was poisonous and bitter; let us rejoice that it no longer exists. (41-42)

This comment does clearly weaken the dominant perception that God had created the black person as an inferior one. By declaring the adherents to this presumption "careless and superficial", the comment itself gains authority because the narrator 'unmasks' the reason for this statement and posits herself in a position that goes beyond this 'carelessness' and 'superficiality'. She presents counter-arguments and these are grounded on facts. Moreover, Hopkins emphasizes the idea that blacks could advance, and that their destiny has not been decided yet. By doing this, she also weakens the importance of evolution and nature in deciding on the future of her 'race'. However, within this advancement, religion played a crucial role. The narrator points to the perception that Christian belief strengthened the morals of the black 'race' and that is also why she appropriates it in the novel in accordance with the importance of the sentimental as well as the overall progress of the plot and the eventual outcome of the story. In this regard, to the sentimental novel the belief is crucial that moral behaviour will justly be rewarded at a certain point (see chapter 3.2), in the case of *Contending Forces* this reward is made by God, 'Providence' or Fate³⁴. What these concepts have in common is the belief in a higher power that decides on the life of all humans. In *Contending Forces* the various characters could influence their destiny by abiding to Christian principles, which is best exemplified by the heroine of the main plot, Sappho Clark: an avid reader of religious pamphlets, she repeatedly states that she was doing her best to be a good Christian. Apparently, she proves a good Christian since, after long and hard struggles, eventually she shares a love with William Smith that has been "sanctified and purified by suffering" (398). However, one's fate can turn out in a

³⁴ 'The providence of God' or 'divine providence' is defined as "[t]he foreknowing and beneficent care and government of God (or of nature, etc.); divine direction, control, or guidance", while 'fate' is the "principle, power, or agency by which, according to certain philosophical and popular systems of belief, all events, or some events in particular, are unalterably predetermined from eternity. Often *personified*. [sic]" (OED).

negative way, when the Christian principles are not adhered to but instead ignored. In this regard, as proclaimed by the narrator of Hopkins' narrative: "Nature avenges herself upon us for every law violated in the mad rush for wealth or position or personal comfort where the rights of others of the human family are not respected" (65). This is indicated by the fate of the Montfort family – Charles and Grace Montfort get killed brutally – with the reasons to be found in Mr. Montfort's unwillingness to free his slaves and thus orientate at the proceedings of the British crown in the context of slavery; he ships them to North Carolina with the intention to free them only after having made more money with them. Apart from that, the lonely and peaked death of John Langley also serves as such a model for the working of fate. Besides these outlines on the destiny of the various characters, the belief in a higher power is encountered throughout the novel, stated either by the narrator herself – "fate or Providence was not done with him yet" (78) – or one of the characters – Abraham Peters won the fight with his friend due to "a reckless invention of Providence" (134).

Apart from that, in *Contending Forces* the language of religion is regularly introduced in ways regarded as 'typical' of black spirituality, that is, in terms of 'biblical types'. One of these biblical motives was to equate emancipation with the deliverance of the Children of Israel from the pharaoh of Egypt (see Smith 2550). This image is also employed by the narrator – she likens Mr. Montfort's slaves to the "children of Israel [who also sang] as they sat by the rivers of Babylon awaiting deliverance" (34). In this regard, it can be argued that by comparing the suffering of the black 'race' with biblical motives the author's strategy is to point to the importance of God and religion; there is a reason for this suffering, and – as exemplified by Sappho and William – a life according to Christian principles eventually is rewarded. In this sense, after the family ties between aristocratic Englishman Mr. Withington and the black Smiths have been revealed, the fact the Bostonian family is granted a bequest is interpreted as the work of a higher power. This is acknowledged by the Englishman himself when he perceives the revelations on their common ancestry – the Montforts – as a "direct intervention of All-wise Justice" (377). This presumption is pointed to and emphasized by the narrator as well.

However, returning once more to *The Marrow of Tradition*, although the narrator does give credit to the working of "God, or Fate, or whatever to call the

Power that holds the destinies of man in the hollow of his hand" (253), it does not necessarily bring justice. This evaluation contributes to the atmosphere of hopelessness achieved by the novel's outlines on the outcomes of the 'massacre'.

While Hopkins refers to Christian belief as an essential part of black life in order to progress as a people and Chesnutt's meaning-making of a higher power, however, is in terms of the helplessness in influencing their own fate and destiny, Dixon's appropriation of religion serves as one means to gain sympathy for the South and its people. As the epitome of everything positive and valuable southern, the Cameron family is being referred to as pious and devout people, as good Christians; in this sense, when asked by Phil if she would join him for the theatre, Margaret Cameron replies: "I should like to go [...] But you see we are old-fashioned Scotch-Presbyterians down in our village in South Carolina. I never was in a theater [sic] on Good Friday (64). Moreover, Mrs. Cameron decidedly appreciates President Lincoln's Christian deeds when he officially pardons her son Ben, a Confederate soldier. However, what is indicative here is that Abraham Lincoln also is of Southern origin and this fact is of particular importance in chapter 3.4.3.1. Nevertheless, Northern Elsie Stoneman seems to be in no way inferior to the Camerons as she declares the need to "[fulfil] the Commandments" (38) in helping and supporting the Southern family.

As has been illustrated so far, besides science the discourse of religion had been of major importance in order to make sense of 'race' as well as broader late-19th-century society. Apart from these two 'discursive formations', there has also been the realm of spirituality which proved helpful to comprehend the world. What is important to keep in mind, however, is that spirituality had been associated with black life, and in the Southern U.S. states in particular it took shape in conjure³⁵ (see Smith 2549-50). This concept closely linked to the supernatural has been one aspect of black North-American life and the multifaceted spirituality that had established in an environment shaped by both African ancestry and traditions and the cultural and religious conditions presented on the North American continent. The language of conjure and the supernatural

³⁵ The OED provides the following definition for conjure: "The effecting of something supernatural by the invocation of a sacred name or by the use of some spell; orig. [sic] the compelling of spirits or demons, by such means, to appear and do one's bidding" (741).

is incorporated via various ways into the three novels: in *The Marrow of Tradition* it is Mammy Jane – black servant of the white Carteret family – who introduces this language in the very first chapter already when she identifies the Carteret newborn as ill-fated and in need of a ‘good-luck charm’, provided by a conjure woman. Regardless of the enchantment, to Mammy Jane the baby remains in serious danger and this actually turns out to be true. What becomes obvious soon is that it is the sphere of the family that superstition and conjure is constantly made a topic; it is being made use of to enhance the degree of mystery and suspicion as well as the tragic effect. To Mammy Jane, the fact that Dodie choked on a rattle, for instance, only provides proof that the Carteret offspring was “born for bad luck” (10). In Olivia Carteret’s black half-sister Janet the black servant identifies a possible threat to the baby: Mrs. Miller passes the house when Dodie almost falls out of the window, which allows the black servant to draw the following conclusions:

Might she not have cast the evil eye upon the baby, and sought thereby to draw him out of the window? One would not ordinarily expect so young a woman to possess such a power, but she might have acquired it, for this very purpose, from some more experienced person. By the same reasoning, the mocking bird might have been a familiar of the witch, and the two might have conspired to lure the infant to destruction. (108)

Although she did not know “[w]hat this strange symbolism meant, or whence it derived its origin” (47), Mammy Jane attempts to prolong Dodie’s lucky charm by herself. What the reader learns via the thought of Olivia Carteret who notices the efforts of her servant to protect her child, is that she regards “these old negro superstitions [...] absurd” (108); however, she concludes that “if the charm did no good, it at least would do no harm” (108). Although the narrator lets Olivia state this doubt about the effect of conjuring, he does not ridicule the attempts of Mammy Jane. Rather, he incorporates the language of conjure as one aspect of black life into the novel but does not give any credit to the actual effect of Mammy Jane’s and the conjure woman’s acting. While in the novel conjuring merely belongs to the life of blacks, the supernatural and superstition also ‘affect’ Olivia, as she also has forebodings; for instance, when she intends to read the “missing papers” of her father the baby starts crying, which to Olivia seems “like a warning” (255). Moreover, the nightmare featuring her baby drowning and her half-sister Janet not coming to its rescue not only leaves Olivia in great distress,

but its memory “[comes] to her like a dim foreboding of misfortune” (273). Also her decision to burn the marriage certificate of her father and Julia Brown does not leave the topic closed for Olivia as she feels “its ghost still [haunting] her” (264). Although both Mammy Jane’s and Olivia Carteret’s forebodings seem to come true – Dodie is on the verge of death recurrently –, however, they are both wrong in assuming something bad in Janet Miller. It is Olivia’s half-sister who can decide on life or death of the Carteret baby towards the end of the story and she goes for the former. This incidence seriously weakens the white-supremacist perception of the ‘Other’ assuming the worst-possible in the black person.

In *Contending Forces* the language of the supernatural is first introduced by Anson Pollock – he develops a “superstitious fear of the [Montfort] children [...]” (71), whose parents he had killed. Also there are rumours about dead Mrs. Montfort: “It was common talk among the slaves that Mrs. Montfort ‘walked’ weeping and wringing her hands, night after night about the plantation” (71). Similar to Chesnutt, Hopkins’ intention in incorporating this language is to create mystery and feelings of suspense as well as to acknowledge the supernatural as one aspect of black life, of black spirituality; in this regard she lets Dr. Abraham Peters, a self-acclaimed ‘magnetic physician’, recount his experiences with his ‘evil/ bad eye’ and ‘hoodoo’ to Sappho, the female protagonist of the second plot. What Peters does is that he connects his assumed ‘supernatural strength’ with the working of fate; he claims that he won the fight with his friend, who could put spells, due to “a reckless invention of Providence” (134). With these thoughts the author might intend to indicate how close the two spheres of religion and the supernatural/ superstition are within black spirituality. The narrator does neither comment on Peter’s credibility nor on the validity of his experiences. However, she does so with the outlines on Madam Frances – Sappho’s aunt and a black “spiritualistic soothsayer and marvellous mind-reader” (197). Apart from this evaluation of her abilities, the author allows Madam Frances’ power speak for itself: all her forebodings actually come true. However, it is in the context of the fair where Madam Frances works as mind reader that the narrator refers to and acknowledges the (original) importance of the supernatural and superstition in the life of blacks: “Superstition is supposed to be part of the Negro’s heritage. They have brought much of it from their native Africa. [...] Claiming kinship with the Egyptians and other black races of the Eastern continent, the Negro is thought to

possess wonderful powers of necromancy” (198). The narrator’s statement on the next page seems of particular significance for the discussion on black spirituality; she claims that with “palmistry, phrenology³⁶, card-reading, mind-reading, lucky pigs, rabbit’s feet worn on the watch-chain for luck, and four-leaved clover enchased in crystal and silver for the same reason, who shall say that the Negro has not lost his monopoly of one great racial characteristic” (199). To my mind, this statement indicates that superstition was nothing peculiarly ‘black’ anymore. It is not something frightening or an aspect of life that can be used to create suspicion against her ‘race’. Rather, as Hopkins puts it, “[i]t gives color [sic], picturesqueness – light and shade we may say – to the darkness of life and complexion which so far has marked the Negro for its own” (198). These outlines again serve to gain sympathy for the black population as well as they bridge the gap to the white ‘race’.

In *The Clansman* spirituality also plays a certain role but, interestingly, it is not a black person who practices it, but white Dr. Cameron. The aristocratic Southerner perceives himself as being endowed with a certain ‘power of vision’ that enables him, for instance, to enforce hypnotism, a capability he has learned during a stay in Scotland. The ability of hypnotism comes in handy when a ‘Negro troop’ storms his house to arrest him: his capabilities enable the white Southerner to disarm the troop’s leader, his former slave Gus, and to scare off the remaining blacks of this group who then suspect Cameron of conjure. The outcome of this incidence clearly hints at the alleged superstition of black people; the black is the target of ridicule whereas the white is presented as the person being mentally superior. This is just indicative of Dixon’s proceeding throughout the story.

3.4.1.3 Justice and Truth

As the dominant discourse on ‘race’, the white supremacy worldview of early-20th-century American society not only influenced the life of people on both sides of the ‘colour line’, it even decided on the way people thought, how they acted and what they regard as truthful, just and appropriate. It goes without saying that life based on a racist ideology looks different for those on the superior and those on the inferior side, simply because the former always is the one to decide on right and wrong. In this sense, as has been outlined throughout chapter 2, within

³⁶ By declaring phrenology as part of superstition, the supernatural respectively, it can be argued that Hopkins minimizes its significance as an allegedly ‘scientific method’.

North American society white-supremacist thinking decided on what was regarded as truth and reality, and justice was made consistent with that.

In *The Clansman*, the perspective taken is a white-supremacist one with the focus not on the hardship the black population has to take, but instead the injustice white Southerners have to endure. In this regard, the harsh measurements implemented during Reconstruction precipitated the South into ruin. The white population had lost everything material, they suffered from undernourishment, taxes were constantly climbing, and above all, they had to endure the rule of the 'negro'. However, the language of justice enters Dixon's novel via two main ways: first, there is Austin Stoneman – the 'Great Commoner' and besides President Lincoln the most powerful man in Washington – who refers to justice in terms of how to further proceed in the South, the 'conquered province'. The leader of Congress evaluates the people of the South as traitors who did not deserve, by justice, the right to any political rights. Instead it was the black population's turn to be fully entitled to the suffrage. Stoneman regards it his duty to let justice prevail and even more so, the "highest wisdom and humanity" (50). However, at a later stage it is Stoneman himself who questions the truth and legitimization of his proceeding when he reveals his 'true' motivations to his counterpart Lincoln: the black suffrage was required in order to secure the influence and even the continued existence of the Republican Party. It is Stoneman himself who reveals his true intentions and thus, his confession of guilt weighs heavy. This insight deems the Congressman's behaviour and proceeding in the South as everything but truth and justice; rather he seems to act out of his own favour and his image as an bitter opportunist is further strengthened.

However, the second way of how the language of truth and justice enters the novel is by what Stoneman's perception of 'justice' further entails for the American people. Innocent white (!) people, both in the North and South, need to suffer and/ or die because of Stoneman's cruel intention to take revenge on the South. In this regard, after the assassination of Lincoln, the narrator points to the hanging of an innocent mother accused of complicity with the President's murder. What is of particular significance here is that this incidence is also condemned by Stoneman himself: within a conversation held with his daughter Elsie he refers to this lynching incidence as "insane" (105). This perception is also supported by the narrator who refers to the execution of justice after the assassination in the

following way: “it was an hour of lapse to tribal insanity. Things had gone wrong. The demand for a scapegoat, blind, savage, and unreasoning, had not spent itself” (104). However, the blatant injustice, as the author presents it to the reader, is most severely experienced by the Southern people with the Camerons leading the way. The list of the injustice they experience and have to endure seems endless. Over and over again, the members of the Cameron family are confronted with and have to take all kinds of drama, brought to them both by the black Southern population and the radical Republican ‘occupiers’. They are threatened, discredited and humiliated, but they take it bravely. Nevertheless, the Camerons as well as many other of the white Southern characters conclude that radical rule in the South was “a servile reign of terror” (110).

In contrast, in *The Marrow of Tradition* it is not so much whites who have to suffer under the law that allegedly speaks justice, but it is the black population. One of these is the worker Josh Green who puts the working of a white-supremacist ideology in a nutshell. In response to Dr. Miller and his pledge to Josh to prefer the Christian principle of forgiveness to his intention to fight the whites, the latter states:

Yas, suh, I’ve l’arnt all dat in Sunday-school, an’ I’ve heard de preachers say it time a’ time ag’in. But it ‘pears ter me dat dis fergitfulniss an’ fergiveniss is mighty one-sided. De w’ite folks don’ forgive nothin’ de niggers does. [...] De niggers is be’n train’ ter fergiveniss; an’ fer fear dey might fergit how ter forgive, de w’ite folks gives ‘em somethin’ new ev’y now an’ den ter practice on. A w’ite man kin do w’at he wants ter a nigger, but de minute de nigger gits back at ‘im, up goes de nigger, an’ don’ come down tell somebody cuts ‘im down. If a nigger gits a’ office, er de race ‘pears ter be prosperin’ too much, de w’ite folks up an’ kills a few, so dat de res’ kin keep on fergivin’ and bein’ thankful dat dey ‘re lef’ alive [sic]. (113)

The evaluation drawn by Josh Green is further emphasized by Dr. Miller who refers to Greek mythology in order to evaluate the status of blacks:

It was a veritable bed of Procrustes, this standard which the whites had set for the negroes. Those who grew above it must have their heads cut off, figuratively speaking, - must be forced back to the level assigned to their race; those who fell beneath the standard set had their necks stretched, literally enough, as the ghastly record in the daily papers gave conclusive evidence. (61)

This statement gives voice to the perception that whatever blacks did it would never suffice to please the white population. Regardless of their efforts, they would just never be able to live up to the standards and norms established for them. These two quotes conclude that white-supremacist ideology not only

physically and mentally separated humans along the 'colour line'; it also decided the dominant side to always speak 'truth' while the other was the one that had to live with the consequences. This is exemplified by Olivia Carteret who declares the marriage certificate of her father and his former slave as 'nothing'; this evaluation allows Olivia to make it consistent with her beliefs. The outline on the reasoning of Olivia Carteret serves the author as an argument against Major Carteret when he declares that the white 'race' held "the scales of justice with even and impartial hand" (230). In fact, the total opposite is the case and this is not only revealed by Olivia Carteret, but also by the acting of various other white characters. For instance, there is General Belmont who locks away the will of old Mr. Delamere, there is the major who does not want to reveal the real murderer of Mrs. Ochiltree, and there is Mrs. Ochiltree herself who steals the marriage certificate of Mr. Merrell and Julia Brown. This hypocrisy of white supremacy is explicitly given voice to by Major Carteret when he admits the motivations for not revealing the real murderer of Mrs. Ochiltree:

Such an outcome of the event which had already been heralded to the four corners of the earth would throw a cloud of suspicion upon the stories of outrage which had gone up from the South for so many years, and had done so much to win the sympathy for the North for the white South and to alienate it from the colored [sic] people. (228)

All these acts, however, are coherent with what is being referred to as the 'higher law', demanding "that the purity and prestige of the white 'race' [was to] be preserved at any cost [...]" (259). However, while the most obvious example of the partiality of Southern law is made obvious in the almost-killing of innocent black Sandy Campbell, it seems most explicitly referred to by Wellington's town's judge; although he states to disfavour lynching, however, he justifies when it happens: "[L]aws were made, after all, to express the will of the people in regard to the ordinary administration of justice, but [...] in an emergency the sovereign people might assert itself and take the law into its own hands" (193). I regard it significant that this declaration is made by an official who is assumed to speak justice and in accordance with the law. In this context the statement only contributes to persuade the reader of the very opposite.

In *Contending Forces* the fate of the Montfort family in North Carolina can be regarded a rejoinder to the discussion on the assumed impartiality of the law

as well as the working of mob law. White (?) planter Charles Montfort is killed by the 'Committee on Public Safety' for his plans to free his slaves in the future. According to this organization – represented by Anson Pollock and the two slave overseers Hank Davis and Bill Sampson – the Montfort family was a threat to Southern society, also because Bill Sampson assumes Mrs. Montfort being of 'mixed-race' descent. This claimed threat not only 'legitimizes' the murder of Mr. Montfort, but also the subsequent enslavement of Mrs. Montfort and her children. Anson Pollock puts the committee's motivation in a nutshell when he says that there was no place for sentiment: "Influence is great with certain people, and if niggers are tolerated in any way, it will end in weakening the law, and then good-bye to our institutions" (54-55). With the introduction of such an organisation as this 'committee', Hopkins posits a rejoinder to the discussion on illegal measurements taken in the South. It indicates how Southern white-supremacists were taking the law into their own hands, and creating their own truth – the committee invents a slave insurrection and the mere assumption of any black blood in Grace Montfort's ancestry legitimizes her enslavement. Pollock's committee reasons and acts like Carteret's 'Big Three'; the argumentation is the same, the difference, however, is to be found in the fact that a century lies between these two stories. However, as the reader learns later, Pollock is just as hypocrite as the whole white-supremacist worldview: he himself had a sexual relationship with one of his slaves – he is one of John Langley's ancestors. However, in the main plot of Hopkins' novel that revolves around the life of Sappho Clark and the Smith family, the strategy is a different one to reveal the hypocrisy and the faults of a system assuming impartiality: instead of the adherents to the dominant ideology to reveal their hypocrisy by their own acting, the evaluations are made by the narrator herself or her main black characters. When it comes to the perception of 'truth' and 'justice' this is addressed most directly within one discussion held during the dinner at the meeting of the 'Carpenter's Club'. To the question why black and white would not 'get along' in the South put by the English MP Withington, black John Langley replies: "[...] newspaper reports are doctored by local Southern writers who participate in the lynchings [sic]. Free speech and public discussions are not allowed. In the South you must think and speak as the mob dictates" (296). Mr. Withington goes on to

ask about the constitutional equity which should be granted to everyone; to William Smith this was mere “political fiction” (297).

3.4.2 Voices of the Suppressed – ‘There Shall be Separation’

Despite the abolition of slavery the decades to follow Civil War were characterized by racially-motivated suppression and segregation, and the utter rejection of the black as a valid member of society. As outlined in chapter 2.2, the black person was made the spectre, the ultimate evil; s/he was downgraded to the animalistic monster that allegedly aimed at harming the stability of society and even inhibiting the further existence of American ‘civilization’. This discourse of white supremacy aimed at the preservation of a demarcation line that was in dire need of protection to not be transgressed. This imagined border – former slave and social activist Frederick Douglass termed it the ‘colour line’ – served various purposes: it not only ‘allowed’ the division of society according to skin colour, it also enabled to establish an identity as well as feelings of social coherence for both the ‘black’ and the ‘white’ side of the line. In the post-war South, state legislation – the ‘Black Codes’ and ‘Jim Crow’ legislation (see chapter 2) – proved a powerful tool to uphold this segregation.

The ‘colour line’ and its further implications as well as significance within society are given voice to in *Contenting Forces* and *The Marrow of Tradition*. In this regard, both Hopkins and Chesnutt offer valuable insight into the lives of blacks and how these are affected by the dominance of a white-supremacist worldview. In contrast, in *The Clansman*, the focus is set on the white Camerons and the life they have to lead during the Reconstruction Era. Moreover, in all three novels the reader is presented a vast amount of violence, of misdemeanours and terror; although all three novels do, to certain extents, incorporate these languages into their text, they again differ in how violence is treated and what it means in the context of ‘race’.

3.4.2.1 Life along the ‘Colour Line’

In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Chesnutt presents a multitude of different opinions and attitudes on the ‘colour line’, and he does incorporate them into the novel via the speech of the narrator and the characters alike. The first chapter already informs the reader about how the ‘colour line’ is established in Wellington, and is indicative of how the relationship between black and white looks like; the reader

learns that there is the rich and aristocratic white Carteret family that is opposed to their black servant Mammy Jane. Apart from the case that white and black share a household because they are employer and servant, the two 'races' are physically separate, even greater and seemingly insurmountable is the imagined gap existent in their minds. The white protagonists, Mr. and Mrs. Carteret represent the attitude of avoiding any contact with blacks that do not stand in a servile position to them. This is made visible, for instance, in the scene when Major Carteret shakes hands with everyone in the office congratulating him on the birth of his first son, but Jerry, the black porter. Similarly, his wife Olivia is outraged when she realises that her nurse took the baby to the house of a black family, had she not strictly prohibited her to do so. However, who they do accept is their servant Mammy Jane, the epitome of the submissive black and remnant of the ante-bellum time. It is Jane and her nephew Jerry who represent the African American wish for public appreciation and recognition, thus the 'narrowing' of the imagined divide between black and white; as so indicatively outlined by Jerry, a public appreciation can only mean white appreciation, as "the white people [are] the public" (184).

In Chesnut's novel the language of segregation is also introduced to the novel via the experiences of another black character, Dr. William Miller. During his travel trip by train from the North to the South, Miller directly experiences the Jim Crow laws, allegedly providing equality by racial segregation in public spaces. However, what is indicated in this scene is that the system of racial segregation is everything but just. Miller does not state this perception explicitly but rather lets his black protagonist as well as the white minor character Dr. Burns experience and state this feeling of injustice. In this regard, the black physician needs to leave the 'white' car for the 'black' one and Dr. Burns, who by accident meets his colleague and friend in the train, declares his outrage about the fact that he is not allowed to join Miller in the 'black' car, which is, just like its white equivalent, dedicated to one 'race' only. To Burns this rule was "infamous" as it not only discriminated blacks, but, as he just had experienced, whites alike. To the conductor, the 'enforcer' of the law, "the beauty of the system lie[d] in its strict impartiality – it applie[d] to both races alike" (55). This statement is proven wrong in the very next scene when Captain McBane joins Dr. Miller in the 'black' car to use it for smoking, and, in contrast to the latter, does not encounter any

sanctions imposed by the official. In order to up the ante in this argumentation line, what follows this incident are two implicit sarcastic comments from the side of the narrator: first, he refers to the function of the omnipresent signs that is to be found not only in the depiction of the existence of separate places for white and black in the train and in society, but also in the constant reminding of both 'races' of this fact.³⁷ Second, by referring to the Spanish-American war, he states that the islands the United States have gained authority of recently were now introduced to "American liberty [and] the inestimable advantages which would follow [...]" (57). Subsequent to the prior revelation of the injustice of the American legal system, this remark is perceived as a 'dig' at the hypocrisy of a country that claims human equality. To summarize the argument, the reader gains an insight into the thoughts of Dr. Miller who declares the drawing of the 'colour line' "arbitrary, tactless, and, by the very nature of things, brutal" (61).

In *Contending Forces* the language of the separation along the 'colour line' is introduced differently, which has to do with the incorporation of two different (main) plots in the novel. The first is the plot of the Montfort family that takes place on the island of Bermuda as well as in North Carolina of the late 18th century. Obviously, at this time, slavery had not been abolished yet, that is why the racial segregation is manifested in the roles that the two sides of the line have; blacks are being referred to as slaves only within this plot. They are inextricably linked to the plantation, or the household of the Montfort family, respectively. The situation is different with the second (main) plot that revolves around the black Smith family in Boston. In contrast to the South, according to Hopkins's outlines the North of the United States enabled black people a totally different life. Although racial discrimination was also existent here – most obviously experienced on the job market – Hopkins creates the picture in the mind of the reader, that blacks could live a life similar to that of their white counterparts. Although the Smiths – the protagonists of the second plot – stick to their black community, the intermingling of black and white in daily life was

³⁷ "The author of this piece of legislation had contrived, with an ingenuity worthy of a better cause, that not merely should the passengers be separated by the color [sic] line, but that the reason from this division should be kept constantly in mind. Lest a white man should forget that he was white, - not a very likely contingency, - these cards would keep him constantly admonished of the fact; should a colored [sic] person endeavor [sic], for a moment, to lose sight of his disability, these staring signs would remind him continually that between him and the rest of mankind not of his own color [sic], there was by law a great gulf fixed" (56).

nothing completely unusual. In this regard, the fair is described as an occasion where black and white 'intermingle'. Moreover, the meeting of the 'American Colored League' as well as the dinner at the 'Carpenter Club' are occasions where black and white can exchange on a sophisticated political level.

In *The Clansman* Dixon supports a white-supremacist attitude towards racial segregation, and as legitimation for his belief, relies on the power and meaningfulness of a widely-acknowledged authority: in *The Clansman* this authority is no less a figure than Abraham Lincoln – 16th President of the United States of America – who advocates racial segregation and also gives voice to the allegedly logical facts justifying his claims. In this regard, in the discussion with Austin Stoneman – the radical Republican leader of Congress – Lincoln declares the inequality of the black and the white 'races' as sufficiently proven by the fact that in the North where slavery had already been abolished earlier, blacks had not been able to prove as intellectually equivalent to whites so far. This evaluation further strengthens the acclaimed natural inferiority of blacks. Moreover, although Lincoln declares slavery an evil, this does not mean that blacks were welcome in American society. In the very contrary, as an alien and inferior 'race', 'Africans' should have never been brought to the United States. As a consequence, the colonization of their home continent seems the only reasonable way to handle the 'race' issue³⁸, and although it might be expensive, these costs stood in now relation to the harm already caused by them so far: "[The] negro has cost [the United States five million dollars], the desolation of ten great states, and rivers of blood. We can well afford a few million dollars more to effect a permanent settlement of the issue" (46). In accordance with these outlines, there was no future for the black 'race' on the North American continent.

I argue that Dixon appropriates Lincoln in order to let him advocate white-supremacist thinking and due to his authority the social voice or language of this ideology gains particular significance in the novel. Lincoln's authority is

³⁸ When taking into account this 'appropriation' of the historical figure Abraham Lincoln, the author Dixon refers to actual historical statements made by the 16th President of the United States. In this regard, Lincoln declared his belief in the existence of different 'races' as well as their inequality. He regarded slavery a human cruelty – servitude equalled feudalism, that is, regress – which clearly stood in contrast to the values enshrined in the 'Declaration of Independence'. Moreover, although Lincoln once referred to the colonization of Africa as a possibility to solve America's 'race' issues, this idea had been left soon due to the high costs implied. As a consequence, to Lincoln, the integration of blacks into American society was indispensable, and this could only be attained by granting them the right to liberty (see Oates, *The Man* 331ff).

acknowledged and he is granted respect by Northern and Southern characters alike, although one of the latter ones – Mrs. Cameron – approached him with indecision when she visits him to beg pardon for her son Ben, a Confederate soldier. However, the President pardons him and this lets Mrs. Cameron change her mind and acknowledge Lincoln as a man “good down to the last secret depths of a great heart” (24). What is more, Northern Elsie Stoneman also identifies this ‘goodness’ in the nation’s most powerful man, and her brother Phil declares his respect for the man. However, the intention of these repeated praises of Lincoln is made clear when it is revealed that Lincoln actually was born in the South. With this in mind, it can be argued that the author Dixon ‘makes use of’ Lincoln in order to gain sympathy for the South, its people and their attitude towards racial segregation in particular and white-supremacist ideology in general. What is more, just like any Southerner, also Lincoln is a man of mysticism, and this is emphasized again and again by the narrator. In this sense, in the discussion between Lincoln and Stoneman only days prior to the former’s assassination, the narrator refers to the President’s heroism, to the “mystic light [that] clothed [his] rugged face [...]” (53) when declaring his love for the South to Stoneman. The descriptions of Lincoln in terms of mysticism and mythology, however, are no inventions of Dixon though, as made clear in the quote of *The Harper Collins Dictionary of American Government and Politics*:

Over the years, Lincoln’s qualities of honesty (he was known as Honest Abe), his rise from humble origin (he was truly born in a log cabin), his dramatic death immediately following his greatest victory (the surrender of the South and the salvation of the union), his granting of freedom through [Emancipation Proclamation] to millions of slaves (he was called the Great Emancipator), and his reverence for and eloquence on behalf of democratic government, particularly in the Gettysburg Address, have made him (along with George Washington) a secular saint in American political culture. (Shafritz 277-78)

This appropriation of President Lincoln’s attitudes on racial segregation is also indicative of how the South and its people are presented in terms of mythology throughout the whole story (see chapter 3.4.3.1). However, in *The Clansman*, the exclusion of blacks from American society is rendered Lincoln’s legacy which, due to his assassination, needs to be carried out by someone else. To Dixon, the Ku Klux Klan is the force capable of doing so.

The concept of ‘the ‘colour line’’, its stability and rigidity, however, can also be challenged. In *The Marrow of Tradition*, the basic components of the

concept 'colour line' are brought into question in various ways, and, what is of particular significance is that it is accomplished by the white side of the 'colour line'. Just to name an example, old Mr. Delamere seriously challenges the perception of the inequality of the different 'races' in terms of how he perceives his servant Sandy Campbell: he calls him "a gentleman in ebony" (25) and claims to take his word "as quickly as another man's oath" (199). Assuming this 'other man' white, this statement indicates that Mr. Delamere puts Sandy on the same level and thus ignores the limits of the imagined demarcation line. Apart from that the border's perceived stability and naturalness is seriously questioned by Tom Delamere's decision to dress up as Sandy. Tom, wearing Sandy's very prominent blue suit, participates as the latter in the 'authentic' cakewalk performed for the Northern visitors. This incident can be regarded a rejoinder to the way blacks were usually depicted in white 19th-century press, that is, in terms of caricature and parody; as vying to imitate whites in clothing as well as demeanour. This kind of representation contributed to the manifestation of certain black stereotypes (see Robinson 346; Lapsansky 217-18). However, in this case it is not the black vying to be 'white', but the other way around; Tom – he perceives "Sandy, in that particular rig, as a very comical darkey (24)" – functions as a reversal of this alleged wish, and as the other he can act in a way not possible the other way around. Lee Ellis, who sees the 'fake' and the 'real' Sandy walking on the street, perceives them as twin brothers, and this even more challenges the white-supremacist ideology of the 'colour line' as something fixed and rigid. Instead, as it is indicated by this example, it can be transgressed easily, also if it is only via masquerade.

However, the strongest symbolic value has the fact that Mr. Merrell – Olivia Carteret's late father – married his former slave Julia Brown and conceived a daughter, Janet Miller. This incidence points to the fact that interracial sexual relationships initiated by a white has never been something unusual in American society, although this truth had always been ignored in a white-supremacist ideology, since it puts the responsibility and blame not on the black but on the white. This relationship then not only serves as a counter-argument to the stereotype of the black rapist, but it also weakens the perception that interracial relationships are abominable. The fact that Olivia Carteret and her half-sister Janet Miller bear such a striking resemblance weakens the assumptions of

degeneracy to be found in 'mixed-race' people, since this degeneracy might then also be assumed in aristocratic Olivia Carteret. Moreover, the fact that Mr. Merrell married Julia Brown during Reconstruction poses another threat to the 'colour line' since this fact officially endows Janet Miller with the right to one part of the mutual father's inheritance. However, Olivia denies any rights to her half-sister since her attempts of making-sense of her father marrying his former slave can only make her draw the following conclusion: Julia Brown "ha[d] wrought upon her father's weakness as to induce him to think leaving so much valuable property to her bastard, - property which by right should go, and now would go to her own son, to whom by every rule of law and decency it ought to descend" (257). However, this right to inheritance is rejected anyway by Janet Miller in the novel's very last scene which is highly symbolic for the meaning of the 'colour line'. It is Olivia Carteret, epitome of white nobility and 'womanhood', who crosses and challenges the 'colour line' when she (physically and symbolically) throws herself at Dr. Miller's feet and begs him to save her child. The white woman seeks help from the black family who she utterly has despised before but changes her mind for the sake of her baby who is in dire need of medical help. It is only in this dramatic moment that her half-sister Janet decides to keep the demarcation alive, although, just like Mammy Jane and Jerry, she has always sought recognition from the 'other side'. Her despair about the loss of her only child as well as the revelations about the will of Olivia's and Janet's father 'allows' her to reject her white half-sister. It can be argued that the assumed main intention of Chesnutt – indicating the injustice that is both represented by the 'colour line' as well as persevered by it – is also made visible in this final scene: throughout the novel it is the whites who are in power and the ones to decide on right and wrong. The final scene, however, seems to be the only incident when blacks also consciously stick to this injustice. The Millers' son got accidentally killed in the massacre, but nevertheless, it is the black couple that eventually tries to save the Carteret baby. This fact can be regarded an answer to the statement made by Dr. Price after the lethal robbery of Mrs Ochiltree: should Sandy be lynched despite being proved innocent, "[black] people could console themselves with the reflection that Mrs. Ochiltree was also innocent, and balance one crime against the other, the white against the black" (194). In the last scene it is Janet and William Miller who can decide on justice; however, they do not act according

to the assumed balance, but, however, adhere to 'injustice' and try to save the child.

In *Contending Forces* the reader learns early that the mixing of black and white does not pose a problem to all whites. In this sense, the narrator outlines that "there might even have been a strain of African blood polluting the fair stream of Montfort's vitality, or even his wife's, which would not have caused him one instant's uneasiness" (23). However, according to white-supremacist thinking – it finds its embodiment in Anson Pollock – this racial mixing allows the 'white man' to act accordingly in order to save his 'race' (see chapter 3.4.1.3). Also, the fact that Mr. Montfort intends to give freedom to his slaves in the future poses a direct threat to the working of the 'colour line'. However, similarly to Chesnutt, Hopkins also presents counter-arguments to the perception of the black person being responsible for interracial offspring, and thus for a clear crossing of the 'colour line'; in this regard, the female protagonist Sappho Clark was forced into sexual intercourse with a white man. Moreover, the learning of the fact that Anson Pollock conceived a child with Lucy, the former slave of the Montforts, does further emphasize the hypocrisy of white-supremacist ideology with regards to the 'colour line'.

In contrast to Hopkins and Chesnutt, in *The Clansman* the deployment of stereotypical images of blacks serve the author to indicate the dissimilarity of black and white and to keep the distance between them as large as possible. In order to accomplish this, the narrator outlines the physicality of his black characters in a way so indicative of propagandist writing (see chapter 2.1). He refers to them as a barbaric people characterised by the stereotypical "kinky head, thick lips, white teeth and flat noses" (171) as well as flat-footedness and a particular "African odour" (155). In the novel, there are both Northern and Southern black characters and while the Southern ones are merely ignorant, stupid and ridiculous, at least in the Northern politician Silas Lynch – the right hand of Austin Stoneman – he acknowledges this man's charisma and his abilities as a politician: "He was an orator of great power, and stirred a negro audience as by magic" (93). The narrator also acknowledges Lynch's "charming features for a mulatto", but, however, his "dark yellowish eyes beneath his heavy brows glowed with the brightness of the African jungle" (93). This statement establishes the connection between Lynch and wilderness, that is, 'non-

civilization' and thus creates a clear division and opposition to the white 'race'. The narrator refers to Aleck, former slave of Dr. Cameron and politician now, in similar ways: he regards him "a born African orator, undoubtedly descend[ing] from a long line of savage spell-binders, whose eloquence in the palaver houses of the jungle had made them native leaders" (248). The narrator, in evaluating the black characters, repeatedly refers to the image of the jungle, the wilderness and thus broadens the gap between black and white. This jungle visible in the eyes of blacks is also identified in another former slave of the Camerons' – Augustus (Gus) Caesar – and it can be argued that the outcome of unrestrained wilderness comes to the surface when the latter rapes Marion and Mrs. Lenoir – the neighbours of the Camerons. In describing his black characters in this particular way, the author Dixon fully relies on *the* allegedly essential character trait of the black man/ woman, their emotionality. This feature is one that manifests the separation between black and white and which, as outlined in chapter 3.4.3.2, also defines the particular gender qualities.

3.4.2.2 The Designated Role of Blacks

In *The Marrow of Tradition*, as the epitome of the Southern nobleman and white-supremacist, Major Carteret introduces the language of white supremacy into the novel on a recurrent basis as well as this belief system's popular view towards the role of the African American population within society. The major feels nostalgia for the old times when blacks had still acknowledged their servile position. He clearly opposes that blacks are granted access to education, which, to him, would only spoil them, make them self-assertive and finally result in their questioning the black man's naturally inferior position. As a 'victim' of the Civil War – his family had lost all their fortune, based on slaveholding – he feels the need for "redemption of the state from the evil fate which had befallen it" (35). To him, this evil was embodied in the African American, who, despite his "unfitness due to his limited education, his lack of experience, his criminal tendencies, and more especially to his hopeless inferiority to the white race" (31) is granted participation in the government. Carteret feels that "the ballot in the hands of the negro was a menace to the commonwealth" (31), and instead emphasizes "the divine right of white men and gentlemen" (34). A similar opinion is held by Captain McBane who, together with the major and General Belmont, as 'Big

Three' initiates a campaign that seeks for the repeal of the 15th amendment. Despite their common ideology, in contrast to the major McBane represents the more militant white-supremacist who not only rejects black people, but totally despises them. This is made most obvious when, after the murder of Mrs. Ochiltree, he repeatedly calls to burn any of the 'damned niggers' in order to make an example.

However, the status of the black as the inferior within society is also acknowledged by Mammy Jane, who can be regarded the epitome of the obedient and submissive black³⁹. Apart from her stereotypical looks – in the very first chapter she is introduced with the essential "[...] red bandana handkerchief coiled around her head by way of turban [...]" (3) – the former slave of Olivia's mother had decided to stay with the Carteret family after the war. Mammy Jane is very fond of her employers who in turn repeatedly declare their affection for the servant, who, however, seems only to be able to exist in her particular system which she defends should it be challenged from outside. This is the case when she identifies her successor, a young black nurse, as not feeling honoured enough for being allowed to work for the Carterets. In defending the white, that is, 'her' system, Jane even goes so far as to join Major Carteret in declaring the young blacks – she refers to them as 'niggers' – as being spoilt by education. Similarly, there is her nephew Jerry who also works for Carteret; just like his aunt, Jerry acknowledges the nobility of a man like his employer. However, what is indicative of the significance these two characters gain in the novel is how they are treated by the author; in this regard, these two epitomes of the restrained and submissive black both deceive in the 'massacre'. Their death seems coherent with how Jane is evaluated earlier in the novel: the young black nurse succeeding her in the household of the Carterets calls her an "old-time negro" (42), and the narrator joins this sentiment and refers to her as a "venerable relic of ante-bellum times" (43). In this regard, it seems that it is Jane and Jerry who have grown unfit

³⁹ The 'mammy' was a popular icon of 19th-century American literature. According to white-supremacist thinking – when kept under white control – the 'mammy' formed an essential part of society. Today, however, it remains unclear in how far the 'mammy' was an actual, historical person at all, or whether she rather was an invention used for propaganda purposes only, as she served to present slavery as a 'humane' institution (see Manring 19-24). Another function of this 'Sambo' type is pointed to by Robinson (350): as a "middle-aged or older, overweight, de-eroticised Black woman [...], the iconic mammy negated the rape of Black women by white men; transferring the responsibility for hundreds of thousands of mixed race individuals to the Black rapist".

for society. With Jane the belief system of the 'Old South' perishes as well, which gains symbolic significance in the black woman calling out to her late mistress only instances prior to her death. To the former slave death means separation from the system of the 'Old South' as she turns from 'Mammy Jane' to 'aunt Jane Letlow'.

To the introduction of blacks (assumably) content with their inferior position in society, however, the first two pages of the chapter 'The cakewalk' can be perceived a critical rejoinder. Concerning the experiences made by Northern visitors to the South and the way African Americans are presented to them it says: "The negroes who waited on them at the hotel seemed happy enough, and the teachers whom they had met at the mission school had been well-dressed, well-mannered, and apparently content with their position in life. Surely a people who made no complaints could not be very much oppressed" (116-17). The undertone of this quote obviously is a sarcastic one, with a side kick to the perception that white-supremacist ideology creates its own 'truth' (see chapter 3.4.1.3). The performance of an allegedly "genuine negro cakewalk" is also to be seen in this regard, as well as the perception that it presents the "joyous, happy-go-lucky disposition of the Southern darkey [sic] and his entire contentment with existing conditions [...] (117)". The outline gains even more significance when taking under consideration the meaning of such a dance: with its heyday in the late 19th century, the cakewalk – originally a dance with black participants only – more or less equalled the caricatures found in the newspaper of this time: the black dancers wore ludicrous and colourful clothing and entertained the white audience with their bizarre dance moves. In this sense, the cakewalk contributed to the manifestation of blacks stereotypes (see Baldwin 205ff).

Anti-white-supremacist thinking is also given voice to via white characters; the strongest anti-racist opinion is held by Northern Dr. Burns who, as a former teacher and friend of Dr. Miller, refers to Major Carteret's negative sentiments towards the black Doctor as 'prejudices'. This attitude is held against by not less authoritative Southern Dr. Price who, defensive of the major, refers to the enforced racial segregation as "a sacred principle, lying at the very root of our social order, involving the purity and prestige of our race". He explicitly points to his Southern point of view, as "Northern gentlemen do not quite appreciate our situation; if you lived here a year or two you would act as we do" (72). However,

as revealed by his inner thoughts, white Southern Dr. Price is also the one who makes a confession to the assumed superiority of the white 'race', by stating that "he could claim no credit for [it], as he had not made himself [...]" (75). This notion introduces the idea into the discourse of the novel that there is no justification for being proud of something which is only a coincidence.

In *Contending Forces* the author introduces the reader to the language of white supremacy by referring to whites as the "higher race" (22). She does so without any sarcastic or cynic undertone, which allows the assumption that Hopkins does not intend to contribute to the discussion on the hierarchy of the different 'races'. The tone of her novel is a very reconciliatory one, leading to the assumption that Hopkins refrains from questioning or challenging the higher status of the white 'race', and instead focuses on outlining that blacks were in no way inferior to their alleged superior. However, what Hopkins does is to point to the discussion of the state of 'civilization' and emphasize that in order to progress and advance human equality was indispensable for a nation like the United States, "for the civility of no race can be perfect whilst another race is degraded" (20). This statement more or less summarizes her opinion on the status of blacks – they need to be put and perceived on the same level as whites. To the author, black and white were one people, a unity that had been segregated via slavery on the North American continent. Slavery does have a prominent position within the first (main) plot that takes place in the late 18th century. Here, the narrator introduces the language of slavery, but, however, strikes the reader by presenting an idyllic image of the plantation life on a Sunday when the slaves are off work:

Men were dancing with men, and women with women, to the strange monotonous music of drums without tune, relics of the tom-tom in the wild African life which haunted them in dreamland. [...] Over there waterfalls fell in the sunlight in silvery waves; parti-colored [sic] butterflies of vivid coloring [sic], and humming-birds flashed through the air with electrical radiance [...]. (26)

The narrator refers to Bermuda as a place of natural beauty and love, with slaves smiling at their kind master Mr. Montfort. In drawing these outlines, the narrator refrains from any sarcasm or irony about this representation, which lets the reader assume the reason for this positive image was to further strengthen the perception made clear earlier in the novel; the slaves in the West Indies had not been as harshly treated in the British colony as they had in the United States.

However, what the narrator emphasizes a couple of pages later is the wish innate in every living being to be free. Slavery was something wrong and sad and although the enslaved might not know the reason for their sorrowfulness, obviously it was their innate longing for freedom. The most 'kind' master like Mr. Montford would not change the fact that slavery was a "folly and wickedness" (24). The introduction of the language of slavery as well as the evaluation of the narrator indicated in the quote above pave the way for the second (main) plot of the story and the outlines made on the status of the black in late-19th-century American society. It is at the meeting of the 'American Colored League' that William Smith directly retorts white-supremacist ideology as this is held by the major in Chesnutt's novel (see above). Sophisticated William Smith debunks the arguments presented by white-supremacists allegedly proving "the inferiority of intellect, hopeless depravity, and God knows what not" as "wanton cruelty" (264). In his speech the young black man tries to reverse the pattern of responsibility in 'the formation' of the black: he points to the perception that blacks simply could not produce a "genius in science or art" when granted or rather 'allowed' elementary education only. He joins the narrator in debunking white supremacy and points to how society had constructed the essential black person: "Literature, politics, theology, history have been ransacked and perverted to prove the hopeless inferiority of the Negro and the design of God that he should serve by right of color [sic] and physique" (266). He replies to Chesnutt's major when he outlines that education was not spoiling blacks, but, in the very contrary, with "the brains as the organ of the moral and intellectual powers of man, education was of the highest importance in the formation of the character of the individual, the race, the government, the social life of any community under heaven" (266).

I argue that in *The Clansman* the author's white-supremacist attitude greatly influences the way he presents his black characters and how he makes sense of these. In doing so, he relies on stereotypes only in order to further foster his ideology, as already pointed to in chapter 3.4.2.1. His intention is to offer proof for the natural inferiority of the black 'race' and in order to achieve this aim the appropriation of President Abraham Lincoln again proves crucial. It has already been outlined that the President's evaluation of the enslavement of Africans as an 'evil mistake' is associated with the perception that the African should have never lived in the United States, but only in his own 'habitat'. This

assumption of the black as an alien 'race' on North American ground is the basis of the narrator's reasoning on its place and role in contemporary society: radical Republicans had made the black population the 'ruler of the South', a fact that substantially contributed to Reconstruction as a big tragedy. Just like Major Carteret in *The Marrow of Tradition*, the narrator of *The Clansman* gives voice to these sentiments of nostalgia for the good 'Old South' when blacks still acknowledged and abided by their naturally inferior position. This language of the glorious past is introduced, for instance, by the reference made to the 'Hall & Pemberton's gambling place' Ben Cameron and Phil Stoneman visit one evening. This palatial house represents the past where the subservient position of the black is still to be found. The narrator refers to the atmosphere at this venue of the past in the following way: "Negro servants, faultlessly dressed, attended the slightest want of every guest, with the quiet grace and courtesy of the lost splendours of the old South" (158). This is exactly the position and status the black, as a servant, is meant to be. Just like Chesnutt, Dixon also employs a black person supportive of this white-supremacist perception: it is Jake, one of Dr. Cameron's former slaves. When this man's former master is put into shackles by a group of Northern soldier, besides the white Southerners noticing the humiliation of their fellow citizen, Jake is also scandalized at what his former master has to endure; he comes to his rescue. In this regard, Jake is a representative of the submissive black who feels respect for and awe of the white aristocrat. What is more, Dr. Cameron's former slave rejects to become member of the Union League⁴⁰ and declares his contempt for the Republican Party. In this regard, the author Dixon kills two birds with one stone, so to say; there is a black man who calls his former master his 'best friend' and rejects the enabled political participation of his own people as well as the radical politics the white Southerners are enforced upon. Jake has the same function as Mammy Jane and her nephew Jerry have in *The Marrow of Tradition*. However, in Dixon's narrative it is the submissive black himself who declares himself old-fashioned ("ole-fashun [...] nigger [sic]" (250)), and like his female counterpart in Chesnutt's novel – Mammy Jane – introduces the language of the past into the novel. As

⁴⁰ "[Union League clubs] [...] were among the score of patriotic 'Loyal Leagues' established throughout the North during the Civil War. The Union League took part in state and local Republican politics, and during Reconstruction it was used in the South as a political machine by the [Radical Republicans]" ("Union League Clubs" 806).

representatives of the 'Sambo', in both novels the function of this type is of immense significance for the further meaning-making of 'race'. However, in contrast to Chesnutt who lets his submissive black deacease, in *The Clansman* it is not the submissive black being 'punished' but instead the black person who rejects his inferior position.

What immediately follows this particular scene is an outline on the ignorance of black people, who, and in here is to be found the injustice, are the new leaders of the state. In this regard, Aleck – another former slave of the Camerons and newly-elected official – is not only a drunkard, but ignorant and simply stupid. Due to his illiteracy he mistakes the tag of a rat poison with a voting ticket because he intends to vote for 'ratification of the Constitution' on Election Day. Being witnessed by Ben Cameron and Phil Stoneman, the two young man first fall into spasms of laughter over the black's stupidity, but the scene ends in their feeling of commiseration about the condition of their state. The emotionality of this scene is carried to its extremes when the two young men are joined by an elder white town inhabitant, who – being referred to as a 'respectable Presbyterian' – had been denied the right to vote for "[...] nursing one of [the] wounded boys [of the Confederacy]" (253). These incidences of humiliation the white population is forced to endure are recurrently being referred to by the narrator and 'lived' by his white characters. The continuous comparison of the black and white characters in the novel indicates and even proves the natural inferiority of the former.

3.4.2.3 Crime, Savagery and the Horror of Lynching

In *The Marrow of Tradition* one of the main subplots revolves around the death of Mrs. Ochiltree caused by her grand-nephew Tom Delamere. An evaluation of the young aristocrat has already been provided in chapter 3.4.1.1. Prior to committing this crime the reader also learns more about Tom via the thoughts of Lee Ellis – the major's working colleague at the newspaper – who, however, is also commented on by the narrator. In this regard, it is outlined that Lee Ellis was not only honest, but, more importantly, "an excellent judge of character" (95). Via this insight provided by the narrator, it is not the narrator who explicitly judges Tom, but instead an apparently reliable white (!) character who presents an objectivized evaluation to the reader. Lee Ellis describes Tom as "a type of the

degenerate aristocrat" (95), and the progressing story is supportive of this evaluation; however, neither the narrator nor Lee Ellis make further remarks on Tom, but it is the young aristocrat himself who, via his speech and acting, reveals that he is a liar, an opportunist and a criminal. The narrator puts the evaluation of Tom Delamere in a nutshell: "[Tom] had reached that degree of moral deterioration where, while principles were of little moment, the externals of social intercourse possessed an exaggerated importance" (160). This comment can be regarded an explicit answer to what Major Carteret concludes after the death of Mrs. Ochiltree: "The whole [black] race, in the major's opinion, was morally undeveloped, and only held within bounds by the restraining influence of the white people" (181). Mrs. Ochiltree's death caused by the aristocratic Tom is the counter-argument to this statement, and the narrator's comments serve to strengthen the argument. This is indicative of the author's proceeding in accomplishing his composition; in the case of the topic of aristocracy, he does not openly discredit the Carterets or Tom Delamere via the voice of the narrator or his own authorial voice. Of course the narrator comments on the character traits of all of his (main) characters, but, however, this is 'supported' by the speech of the other characters who do the evaluation work as well as the respective characters themselves who reveal their actual qualities via their acting. What this combination of different languages achieves in the case of aristocracy is that the hypocrisy is revealed of this unity entrenched with all the positive values of Southern society. This becomes most obvious in Tom Delamere whose greed lets him rob his own aunt as well as put the blame on black Sandy Campbell. A similar effect is achieved when the reader learns that the status of Olivia Carteret can only be upheld by the theft from her black half-sister. Again it is Lee Ellis who 'speaks out' what already has been made obvious when he concludes that "[i]t was a prerogative of aristocracy, [...], to live upon others [...]" (97). Moreover, there is one more statement made by Lee Ellis that supports this negative picture of white Southern aristocracy, although accomplished in an implicit way:

attending the cakewalk and watching the alleged Sandy Campbell participating in the performance, he contemplates that

[h]e would not have believed that a white man could possess two so widely varying phases of character; but as to negroes, they were as yet a crude and undeveloped race, and it was not safe to make predictions concerning them. No one could tell at what moment the thin veneer of civilization might peel off and reveal the underlying savage. (119)

When the reader learns a couple of pages later that the aristocratic Tom Delamere robs his aunt the meaning of this quote changes significantly and gets an ironic tone; it is not the African American who turns into the savage, but it is the allegedly noble aristocrat, the white emblem of the 'Old South'. This ironic effect is also achieved by the major's conclusion on the assumed murderer Sandy: "Left to his own degraded ancestral instincts, Sandy had begun to deteriorate, and a rapid decline had culminated in this robbery and murder [...]" (181-82). Irony turns into ridicule when the characters themselves comment on something they regard a fact, which has, however, already proven wrong to the reader. One example is old Mr. Delamere who states, after he has learned that his servant Sandy is accused of the murder of Mrs. Ochiltree: "I'd as soon believe such a thing of my own grandson as of Sandy" (198). With this statement the author employs dramatic irony, as it was already revealed to the reader who really caused the death of the old lady. However, old Mr. Delamere does not know that yet. Similarly, one statement made by Major Carteret can be regarded as such a case of dramatic irony that aims at ridicule: the white aristocrat draws the following conclusion of his late father in law, Mr. Merkell: "Why should [he] marry his negro housemaid? Mr. Merkell was never rated a fool, - he had one of the clearest heads in Wellington. I saw him only a day or two before he died, and I could swear before any court in Christendom that he was of sound mind and memory to the last "(265). As the reader already knows the truth about the marriage, the real fool seems to be the major himself.⁴¹

So far, I have both argued and illustrated that Chesnutt aims at unmasking the 'myth' of the noble aristocracy; entrenched with all the positive values of Southern society, the revelations made about the Carterets and Demaleres

⁴¹ This interpretation can then also be seen as an answer to the closing remark of chapter nineteen: "But while no one may be entirely wise, there are degrees of folly, and Jerry was not all kinds of a fool" (247).

suggest that aristocracy and its allegedly essential characteristics can be regarded a construct. What is deeply significant is the fact that this ‘debunking’ is partly accomplished via Lee Ellis, a man of modest circumstances who proves as what aristocracy is disclosed to lack most: honesty and straightforwardness. Considering the massacre instigated in the town of Wellington, it is also Lee Ellis – “horror-stricken by the tragedy of the afternoon” – who explicitly evaluates the act of violence as a

wholly superfluous slaughter of a harmless people. [...] In his heart he could not defend the deeds of this day. The petty annoyances which the whites had felt at the spectacle of a few negroes in office; the not unnatural resentment of a proud people at what had seemed to them a presumptuous freedom of speech and lack of deference on the part of their inferiors, - these things, which he knew were to be made the excuse for overturning the city government, he realized full well were no sort of justification, for the wholesale murder or other horrors which might well ensue before the day was done. He could not approve the acts of his own people [...]. (290-91)

In *Contending Forces* the concept of ‘savagery’ is introduced in the context of what has been outlined on slavery. In this regard, Charles Montfort’s friends warn him when they learn his plans to move to North Carolina since to them, the people of the Southern United States were known as “savages” (29). This evaluation goes hand in hand with what has been said on the fate of the Montforts already (chapter 3.4.2.3), and in the novel Hopkins seems to intend to ‘prove’ this claim by dedicating the subsequent chapter to a discussion held by the two slave overseers Hank Davis and Bill Sampson. These two white characters introduce the reader to the language of white-supremacist violence when one of them outlines having spent some time in jail for killing a dog whom he only shot accidentally, had his actual target been a black man. This evaluation – it is not the slave who is the savage but the white man – is also perceived by Charles Montfort: he regards Hank an “ill-favored [sic], beastly-looking fellow” (56), and this insight is also gained by the narrator who identifies a “savage instinct for revenge [...]” (68) in the brutal slave overseer. At last, this impression obviously is also supported by Hank’s own acting, that is, the complicity in the murder of Charles Montfort.

What is peculiar about Hopkins’ strategy is that she does not give voice to the horror of slavery by letting it be experienced by black characters – in the first three chapters taking place during times of slavery actually no slave is given

explicit voice – but instead, it is the white Montfort family that experiences the horror and terror. This turning-around of the ones experiencing terror might be an indication to the (white) reader to show how brutal and arbitrary racial terror was; it could even happen to a rich planter family like the Montforts.

The turn of the 19th century, however, had been the hey-day of lynching, and this is made a topic in all three novels. In *The Marrow of Tradition* the language of lynching is introduced to the reader via two incidents: first by Josh Green who recounts his experiences with the Ku Klux Klan in the discussion held with Dr. Miller. The physician asks the worker why he was so keen on fighting white men despite the fact that no one in town had done anything to him. This question provides Josh with the opportunity to reveal the most severe experience he has made with white hatred: his father had been murdered by the Ku Klux Klan, which, to Miller, is a “page of history [...] most people are glad to forget” (111). Today, Josh is still confronted with the tragic results of this horror in everyday life since his mother had witnessed the lynching, has been highly traumatized and known as ‘Silly Milly’ ever since. However, the author points to the fact that Josh himself was also a product of the horror that racism had let him experience. This assumption is clearly indicated in the very instant Josh recognizes Captain McBane as the murderer of his father. According to Miller’s outlines – he happens to witness this moment – Josh turned from “an ordinarily good-natured, somewhat reckless, pleasure-loving negro [...] toward a glance of ferocity. [...] The change that now came over [his face] suggested a concentrated hatred, almost uncanny in its murderousness” (59). With these outlines on Josh, Chesnutt makes a contribution to the discussion on the responsibility of the white population with regards to the contemporary black American population. In this regard, after the discussion with Josh, Dr. Miller reasons how very interwoven past, present and future were. To him, Josh’s story indicates that “the old wound [was] still bleeding, the fruit of one tragedy, the seed of another” (112). The conclusion made is the realisation that racism produced hate and fear, and this condition did not only make the black a savage in the eyes of the white person, it also affected the white side of the ‘colour line’ alike. In this regard, it is old Mr. Delamere who observes that the habit of lynching turned the white population into a “[...] mob of primitive savages dancing in hellish glee around the mangled body of a man who has never been tried for a crime” (212).

The second introduction to the language of lynching happens around the murder of Mrs. Ochiltree, allegedly committed by old Mr. Delamere's black servant Sandy Campbell. The crime does not only serve to give space to white-supremacist thinking (see chapter 3.4.3.2), but also to indicate how mob law works. In this sense, as illustrated by Bederman (46-47), according to this dominant ideology, lynching was a necessary means to protect 'pure womanhood' from the allegedly uncontrollable sexual desire held towards white women deeply rooted in the essential emotionality of the black. In this context, lynching was legitimized as an indispensable means to show the black population their place within society

In *The Marrow of Tradition* this perception is more than obviously given voice to by the 'Big Three'. Its legitimization, however, is seriously questioned by the fact that Sandy did not commit the crime. What is more, a statement made prior to the crime can be regarded a reply within the discussion of how white-supremacists 'prove' an offence like this. In this regard, the Northern visitors to town are ensured that "no negro was ever lynched without incontestable proof of his guilt" (116). The fact that only a couple of chapters later, innocent Sandy Campbell is threatened with lynching clearly functions as a sarcastic rejoinder to the Southern sentiment and points to the hypocrisy of white supremacy.

In *Contending Forces*, the reader is presented the topic of lynching first via a newspaper article which provides the reader with an insight into white-supremacist rhetoric, similar to *The Marrow of Tradition*. In here, it is being referred to "Jim Jones, a burly black negro accused of the crime of rape against the person of a beautiful white woman [...]" and the article ends with the remark: "We think the Negroes of this section have been taught a salutary lesson" (224). This language of white supremacy serves the narrator to explicitly comment on the act of lynching; she refers to it as "another illegal act of distorted justice [...]" (223). However, lynching is made a topic a second time in the novel when a meeting of the 'American Colored League' is summoned to discuss this latest act of violence. The lynching incidence is addressed by various speakers, the first being the white conservative politician Herbert Clapp who, although declaring his opposition to the working of the white mob, refers to the "unwritten law [...]" which demand[ed] the quickest execution, in the quickest way, of the fiend who robs a virtuous woman of her honor [sic] to gratify his hellish diabolism" (248). He calls the black population ungrateful and thus presents just the white-supremacist

perception that puts all the responsibility on the inferior side of the 'colour line'. His appeal sounds like a defence of white terror and this evaluation is also made by the narrator after Mr Clapp had delivered his speech. However, what follows the politician's outlines is the provision of an account of how the horror of lynching had been experienced by a black person. This person is Louisiana-born Luke Sawyer who recounts how his family got murdered by a white mob because his father – a successful business man in his hometown – refused to shut down his business to make way for a white competitor. Luke Sawyer is given authority by the following characterization provided by the narrator prior to his recount: Luke Sawyer was

a man of majestic frame, rugged physique and immense muscular development. His face was kindly but withal bore the marks of superior intelligence, shrewdness and great strength of character. He might have been a Cromwell, a Robespierre, a Lincoln. Men of his physiological development – when white – mould humanity, and leave their own characteristics engraved upon the page of the history of their times. (255)

This quote not only creates sympathy for the young black Southerner, but for the whole black 'race'. Moreover, it indicates that the 'colour line' had been created arbitrarily since it ignored capabilities and excluded a whole people simply because of a morphological trait. Sawyer's account on lynching and white terror arouses sobs and horror in the audience, and this is also the effect this language aims at; both in Chesnutt and in Hopkins, the presentation of violence and brutality – allegedly legitimate according to a white-supremacist ideology – shall achieve a tragic effect within the reader. The earlier characterization of both Josh and Luke only contribute to the feeling of injustice that arouses in the reader. However, in both novels the outlines made by Josh and Luke serve as rejoinders to the call for a peaceful living-together between black and white; in this regard, while in *The Marrow of Tradition* it is Dr. Miller who points to the Christian value of forgiving, in *Contending Forces* it is white Herbert Clapp, black John Langley, and black Dr. Arthur Lewis who – just prior to Luke Sawyer's recount of his experiences – advocate black passiveness in the South. However, with the experiences made by the horror of lynching, to both Josh and Luke peace was hardly possible. In both novels these outlines on lynching give voice to justifications for 'agitation'; however, while in *The Marrow of Tradition* this is only implied to by the character Josh, in *Contending Forces* this perception is directly

and officially (!) given voice to by the last speaker of the meeting of the 'American Colored League'. It is William Smith who explicitly attacks the institution of lynching and names what he – as a 'defender of his 'race' – identifies as its true meaning:

Lynching was instituted to crush the manhood of the enfranchised black. Rape is the crime which appeals most strongly to the heart of the home life. Merciful God! Irony of ironies! *The men who created the mulatto race, who recruit its rank year after year by the very means they invoked lynch law to suppress* [sic], bewailing the sorrows of violated womanhood. (271)

With this comment not only the institution of lynching is attacked, but also white responsibility in matters of 'miscegenation' is given attention. The image of the black rapist is further deconstructed by Smith's outline that only in one out of a hundred cases a black man accused of this crime had actually committed it. The sentiments and emotions aroused by the way the topic of lynching is introduced in this meeting serve Smith and, on a further level, the author to gain sympathy for the perception that lynching was a 'social evil'. In order to indicate the moral support the black characters are granted from 'outside' in terms of lynching, the discussion made at the 'Carpenter Club' can be regarded a substantial contribution. Here, after again declaring the image of the black rapist a lie – this time this evaluation is made by Dr. Lewis – the reaction of Mr. Withington, after he had been told the story of a famous lynching case, is deeply significant. The Englishman 'replies' with "a look on his face which expressed incredulous astonishment, combined with disgust" (299). This reaction reveals to the reader that blacks were not the only ones perturbed by the institution of lynching. Furthermore, the authority found within Withington is of great significance when it comes to the importance of this social voice.

In *The Clansman*, the situation is a totally different one and the roles of the two sides of the 'colour line' are reversed. It is not the black population that has to suffer from harassment and hardship, but the white Southerners that have to feel and experience the cruelties imposed on them by the empowered black population (see chapter 3.4.1.3). First it is only the Cameron family to give voice to the injustice found in Reconstruction South, but soon this is also realised by Northern Elise and Phil Stoneman. Their negative sentiments towards the 'terroristic regime' of blacks intensify steadily just like their contempt for the political programme causing this misery and forced upon the South by their father

Austin Stoneman. In this regard, Elsie perceives the Southern family she has developed such a great fondness for the “innocent victims of a great tragedy” (59) and reasons that her father was “wrong, and his policy cruel and unjust” (58). To my mind, this conclusion is just indicative of the intention of the author, that is, to gain sympathy for the white Southern population. As already outlined in chapter 3.4.1.3, the future of the American ‘civilization’ lied in the hand of the ‘Great Commoner’ Austin Stoneman, “the dictator of the Republic” (95). He dictates from the little house with the black shutters close to the Capitol – or simply “Black House” – that is run by Lydia Brown, a mulatto or “strange brown woman of sinister animal beauty and the restless eyes of a leopardess” (79). To the narrator, this woman is a “she-devil” (163) who “wears the mask of a sphinx” (100) and apparently influences the leader of Congress, without his notice, in his radical politics. In this regard, the narrator hints at the alleged conspiracy Stoneman’s housekeeper and his right hand, Silas Lynch, carry out in their greed for power.

However, in the context of the suppression and discrimination the white Southern population has to endure, the perception of black rule can be seen in close connection to the 19th century hysteria about slave insurrections that had swept the Southern slave states. After Civil War, this fear of the revenge of the black population culminated in the panic about the emancipation of the black population and their possible revenge. In *The Clansman* blacks actually do take revenge on the whites and aim at taking the final control over the state governments. In this sense, what was particularly disconcerting was their rising militancy: with “the intelligence of children and the instincts of savages, armed with modern rifles [...]” (289) there was a dire need for bringing this insanity to an end. This fear of the assaulting black is fanned among the Camerons, Stonemans as well as the neighbouring Lenoirs, and it is repeatedly being pointed to the assumption that under the current condition, no female shall go anywhere alone. Nevertheless, despite the rising awareness of the danger the white female was exposed to in the South, Marion and Mrs. Lenoir are raped, a fact that expresses the culminated fear as well as despise of the black person. This incidence of violence is the final straw and legitimizes a militant organization like the Ku Klux Klan. However, what I regard indicative of Dixon’s intention to gain sympathy for his white-supremacist ideology is the particular atmosphere he

creates in order to fan the fear of black domination. The recurrent outlines on the humiliation, degradation, the terror and discrimination the good, dignified and pious Southerners have to endure in their own state intends to legitimize punishment for the most horrendous crime that can be committed by a black man: the rape of a white woman.

3.4.3 Unification vs. Disunity – the Vision of One People

By arousing the emotions within the readership the three authors intend to gain sympathy for their particular point of view on 'race' and white supremacy. In aiming at this effect all three writers focus on the opposition of two families which differ in terms of origin regional section, social standing and/ or 'race'. These families are socially and culturally distinct entities and their comparison allows the three writers to make meaning of their separation and/ or union as well as of white and black in general. What is also of interest here are the discourses on 'womanhood' and 'manliness' within white-supremacist society as these two concepts were given fundamental importance with regards to the further existence of the family and, resulting from that, 'civilization'.

3.4.3.1 North and South – the Reunion of Brothers

In *The Clansman* the two regional sections of North and South are divided along the lines of politics and the picture constructed by Dixon presents this division as a rather insurmountable one. The novel tells the story of the 'Lost Cause' where the politics of Northern Radical Republicans brings blatant injustice, terror and humiliation to the white Southern population. This also establishes the connection to the black Southern population, who – according to Dixon's appropriation of the myth of the 'Lost Cause' – are meant to become the new and official masters of the South with their white counterparts as their slaves. Dixon strongly opposes this condition of ultimate humiliation of his fellow men and 'race' even. That is why he seeks sympathy for the Southerners and accomplishes this by one main 'formula': while he presents the white Southerners in a positive kind of way only, the images created of the black characters are almost only negative ones and stand in line with an essential making-sense of 'race'.

The narrator of the novel strengthens the perception of the distinctness of the Southern population, and this peculiarity clearly is evaluated as something positive. As has already been outlined in chapter 3.4.2.1, the Southern people

are a mystic and a heroic one, and Dixon makes this grounded in their Scots/Scottish-Irish ancestry (see chapter 3.1). That is why they can endure the hardship and discrimination they are met with in their home state. As has already been indicated, in *The Clansman* President Abraham Lincoln – born a Southerner himself – serves as the main advocate of this section and its people. In this regard, although Lincoln is a Republican, he opposes radicalism and respective measurements implemented whereas he acknowledges the South as a “mighty race of world-conquering men [...]” (52). What is of immense significance is the fact that the Northern Stoneman family, once they have got to know the land and the people, fall in love with it/ them, get convinced of the Southern way of life and, what is more, start to reject their own beliefs. In the case of Phil, he is increasingly impressed by “[...] the simplicity, dignity, patience, courtesy, and sympathy of these people [...]” (226). The South and its particular way of life is not only attractive, but almost ‘contagious’; the narrator puts it the following way: “This power of assimilation has always been a mark of Southern genius” (276). This aspect also concerns the inner life and emotionality of the Northern characters: Phil – initially restrained and self-conscious – gathers all his courage and openly declares his love for Margaret Cameron. A similar kind of change in emotionality is visible in his sister Elsie, who, at first being referred to as “practical little Yankee girl” (19), learns to give way to her emotions and passion.

In the political discussion held between the President Abraham Lincoln and leader of Congress Austin Stoneman the latter declares that he utterly despised the South and all southern. This contempt holds true for the particular mentality of this sections’ white population: Southerners were “ruled by impulse and passion” (51), an essential condition which made them senseless and thus influence them in a negative kind of way. However, the meaning of whether these character traits were something positive or negative is understood when considering how Abraham Lincoln is being characterised himself: he stands for all Southerners when “the dreaminess of the poet and mystic [steals] over [his] rugged face” (51) and he declares his faith in God who is “wiser and stronger than all others” (52). Hence, the Southern mentality clearly was something positive. Moreover, the idea of natural assimilation of the Southern way of life supports the idea of the reunion of the two sections but, however, with the North as the part that needed to assimilate and not the other way around. However, the

greatest symbolic significance in this regard is found in the twinning of Ben Cameron and Phil Stoneman; as is repeatedly referred to in the novel, they could be taken for brothers. They hardly differ in looks and outward appearance, but only by the fact that the one is dark and the other fair. The fact that Elsie Stoneman falls in love with Ben Cameron and her brother Phil with Ben's sister Margaret as well as the twinning of the two young men symbolize the union between the two regional sections so severely shattered by Civil War. To my mind this outcome of the story also stands for the perception that a horrendous experience like war could do no harm to the natural superiority of the white 'race' as long as their members acknowledged and held to the need for re-unification.

Within the political discussion held between Lincoln and Stoneman, the former is presented as the conciliator of the two sections so brutally severed, who aims at accomplishing the main task after the Civil War, that is, to reunite them, or, to use the Presidents' words, "to bind up the Nation's wounds" (54). Lincoln is explicitly opposed to Austin Stoneman, who acts as the agitator utterly despising the South and seeking its cultural destruction. To the 'Great Commoner' the South was "conquered soil" and its white population "traitors" (49) who do not deserve any civil rights. This attitude stands in utter contrast to Lincoln who takes the former Confederacy's side in terms of its state sovereignty. By referring to the American Constitution he concludes that there was no official legitimation to impose 'negro suffrage' in the South and that the proceeding of the radical Republicans equalled interference, and even more so, 'betrayal'. This sentiment is an obvious rejoinder to the Southern attitude of the pre-war years as indicated in chapter 2.3. As already mentioned, the clear winner of this discussion is Lincoln, and so is the social voice he introduces into the novel. The significance of the statements presented by Austin Stoneman is further minimized by two aspects: first, the leader of Congress declares his admiration of Lincoln, he acknowledges his opponent as a "constructive statesman" (43). Second, towards the end of this discussion, the 'Great Commoner' admits his 'true' intentions in providing the Southern black population with the suffrage: he reveals that his party needed their support in order to maintain the rule in the Southern section. However, as pointed to in the story, this radical proceeding seriously impeded national unity and, as a consequence, also the advancement of 'civilization' in general. This claim acquires major significance in the discussion between

Southern Dr. Cameron and Northern Austin Stoneman: the Northerner refers to the democratic principles enshrined in the 'American Constitution' which provided the black population – as an official equal to the white – with the suffrage. The Southerner, however, makes sense of the concept of democracy in a totally different way: not the 'Negro' was at stake, but American society should the white 'race' not be able to further secure their naturally superior position:

[W]e are great because of the genius of the race of pioneer freemen who settled this continent, dared the might of kings, and made a wilderness the home of Freedom. Our future depends on the purity of this racial stock. The grant of the ballot to these millions of semi-savages and the riot of debauchery which has followed are crimes against human progress. (291)

This statement is an obvious rejoinder to the prevalent early-20th century perception of 'civilization' and stands in striking contrast to what *The Marrow Of Tradition's* old Mr. Delamere reasons on the massacre committed in his hometown and its alleged link to the discussion on 'civilization':

[W]e thought to overrule God's laws, and we enslaved these people for our greed, and sought to escape the manstealer's [sic] curse by laying to our souls the flattering unction that we were making of barbarous negroes civilized and Christian men. If we made some of them brutes, we have only ourselves to blame, and if these prey upon society, it is our just punishment! [...] Time was, sir, when the law was enforced in this state in a manner to command the respect of the world! Our lawyers, our judges, our courts, were a credit to humanity and civilization. I fear I have outlasted my epoch, - I have lived to hear of white men, the most favored [sic] of races, the heirs of civilization, the conservators of liberty, howling like red Indians around a human being slowly roasting at the stake. (211)

With this statement the aristocratic Southerner does not only settle up with the belief of 'race' as a God-given fact, but also with the hypocrisy of white-supremacist perception of justice. In doing so, he turns around the perception of responsibility and puts the blame for the escalating situation solely on the white 'race'. Moreover, he holds the attitude that such an act of violence committed by white men obviously questions the state of American 'civilization'.

In *The Clansman*, however, with regards to the social voices introduced, the one presented by the Southerner again proves as the more persuasive one. Similar to the discussion held between Stoneman and Lincoln, the leader of Congress provides his Southern counterpart with space and time to put forward his arguments. The endangerment of both the white 'race' and 'civilization' in general became more than clear in Reconstruction politics as indicated, for

instance, in the perception the Southern states' conventions had turned into a "minstrel farce" (267). This evaluation is one more of Dixon's contributions to the image of the allegedly essentially ignorant and comical black person.

As has been demonstrated so far, in *The Clansman* the author Dixon recurrently refers to the South and its people in terms of myths, but, however, in contrast to Hopkins and Chesnutt, he does not debunk these and reveal them as constructs that serve to uphold a certain social power structure, but rather he fully relies on them and takes them for reality. He does so with the Southern people as well as with the black 'race' in general. However, this mythology also embraces the presentation of the South as the 'Garden Eden'. Continually, the beauty of the landscape is being referred to and despite the violence the Southern people are forced to endure, their country is one of natural peace, beauty, and easiness.

In *Contending Forces* the author Hopkins provides the reader with clear counter-arguments in terms of the natural incompetency of the black politician, as presented, for instance, in *The Clansman*. However, she does not merely declare this assumption a lie, but rather indicates that there was more than the naturally incompetent black person. In this regard, she presents both a corrupt white and black character: white "conservative" politician Herbert Clapp holds out the office of 'City Solicitor' to John Langley if the latter acted in accordance with the Party line. Both agree to this deal. The rejoinder to this aspect, however, is provided by William Smith who explicitly addresses the image of the naturally corrupt black politician and debunks it when he says that white Southerners were "ignoring the fact that for corrupt politics no race [could] or [would] ever excel the venality of a certain class of whites" (265). What is indicative here is that Hopkins does not reject the image of the corrupt black politician, as embodied in John Langley. In the contrary, her intention rather is to show that there are both black and white corrupt people. The perception of the essentially good white and the essentially bad black, however, did not mirror reality. In *Contending Forces*, although the theme of North and South is a different one than in *The Clansman* – the (main) story does not take place in the years after Civil War but in the late 1800s – the language of the two regional sections is also introduced to the novel. This is accomplished via various different ways and this difference holds true for how the opposition of North and South gains meaning in the novel. The comparison of the two sections is most obviously made clear via and represented by the two

different plots – the life of the Montforts in North Carolina as opposed to the one of the Smiths in Boston taking place around a century later. However, just like Dixon, the author Hopkins points to the distinct mentality of Northerners and Southerners. In this regard, Mrs. Davis – a minor character of the second plot and one of the tenants of Ma Smith's lodge house – immediately recognizes Sappho as a born Southerner, declaring that something like her could not have been raised by "col'-blooded Yankees" (108). Southern Sappho Clark stands for emotionality and passion and thus dissociates from Dora Smith who compared to Sappho wears a "shrewd business look on her bright little Yankee face" (126). The differences in the mentality of the two young women are also made clear in how they perceive love: while to Sappho "[a]ll things [were] possible if love [was] the foundation stone [...] (118)", her friend Dora is wondering whether there was "enough sentiment in [her] to make love a great passion [...] (119)" I argue that via this characterization of Sappho, the author intends to emphasize the importance of feelings and emotions, because as the reader learns, in the end it is her who finds true love and happiness, regardless of all that has been before in her life. What is of most significance is the fact that her chosen one is Northern William Smith.

However, 'North and South' also stands for a much larger gap in society, that is the different treatment blacks experience in these two sections. In this regard, the following statement made by Dora Smith can be regarded a rejoinder to the discussion on 'civilization' held in *The Clansman*: to Dora "[i]t was difficult to convince [Sappho] that she might enter a restaurant frequented by educated whites and meet nothing but the greatest courtesy [...]" (116). This evaluation indicates that education meant an advancement of 'civilization' and that – compared to the South – the North of the United States was already on a higher level on the imagined ladder of 'civilization'. This statement also further strengthens the opinion that blacks can be part of this advancement and do not pose a hindrance. Nevertheless, in *Contending Forces* the North is not presented as being free from any racial discrimination, as pointed out by the narrator, but is, however, "willing to see fair play" (224).

It can be argued that Hopkins' intention is to foster the social coherency between Southern and Northern blacks. The writer is a born Northerner but that does not keep her from finding positive and affectionate words for her Southern

black characters. This is made most obvious in the female protagonist Sappho Clark but also in how the narrator refers to minor Southern black characters, as well as things Southern; for instance, she declares the minor character Sam Washington a “[...] shrewd and good-natured and a bit of a wag” (163), and to her at the fair “the motherly women in black dresses, white aprons and bandanna handkerchiefs tied into fantastic head-coverings, added another charm which their soft Southern accent completed” (195-96). Clearly Hopkins wants to express positive sentiments about the reunification of the black ‘race’ as well as point to what proves impeding in order to accomplish this. In this regard, one dialogue held between Dora and her mother – Ma Smith – is of particular significance: the Northern girl asks: “‘why is it that Southern colored [sic] people seem to be so prejudiced against Northern colored [sic] people? I always fancied that we are all in the same boat, and that mere accidental locality was not to be considered’” (180). In return Ma Smith makes the following declaration: “sectional prejudice has always been fostered by the Southern whites among the Negroes to stifle natural feelings of brotherly love among us” (181). With this statement it is made clear that despite the differences in character traits that might be found between Southern and Northern blacks, nevertheless, they were one people separated by politics. The love between Sappho Clark and William Smith is the strongest sign of unification imaginable. However, the most explicit statement concerning the unification between North and South is made by the narrator herself:

We believe that the spirit of fair play is not yet dead in our beloved country. We believe that there still exists beneath the seething cauldron of prejudice with which the South would deluge the advance of the Negro, brave hearts that will answer the cry of distress with patriotic alacrity, and these same brave hearts will demand for every black face, North and South, the fullest opportunity to develop whatever is best within him. (289)

3.4.3.2 Man and Woman – the Family as the Nuclear Entity

As already pointed out in chapter 2.2, within 19th- and early-20th-century discourse on ‘civilization’ it was drawn on ‘race’ and evolution alike; evolution and thus also ‘civilization’ were thought of as to reach perfection in the white ‘race’ only, with the woman as the ideal of ‘womanhood’ and the man as the epitome of ‘manliness’: “Civilized women were womanly – delicate, spiritual, dedicated to the home. And civilized white men were the most manly ever evolved – firm of character; self-controlled; protectors of women and children” (Bederman 25).

Ideal man and woman occupied different spheres, and this separation was also deemed indispensable in order to further advance in and as 'civilization'. In contrast to the civilized 'race', savage 'races' were (allegedly) characterized by a total lack of these gender differences: "Savage women were aggressive, carried heavy burdens, and did all sorts of 'masculine' hard labor [sic]. Savage men were emotional and lacked a man's ability to restrain their passions. Savage men were creatures of whim who raped women instead of protecting them" (Bederman 25). With this particular perception of 'civilization' the white 'race' could claim characteristics that were regarded as noble and honourable as well as morally and emotionally highly valued. The black 'race', instead, was ascribed the utter lack of any of those virtues; the perception of the 'unmanly Negro' culminated in the image of the black rapist (see Bederman 7-27).

In *The Marrow of Tradition* Olivia and Philip Carteret unite all the positive values and virtues associated with white 'man'- and 'womanhood', which is mainly due to their planter background. In this sense, the major himself refers to the "glorious womanhood" (2) of his wife Olivia, while Lee Ellis notices in the major's half-sister Clara "a pure heart and a high spirit" (16). Mammy Jane, the family's servant, identifies in the major not only a gentleman, but the "quintessence of aristocracy" who calls out "all her reserves of deference" (43). The major is aware of his high status⁴² as well as of the fact that blacks allegedly lack these characteristics, which is made visible by his reference to them as 'negroes' instead of 'men'. The significance of the concept of 'man'- and 'womanhood' within white-supremacist thinking is made most obvious when Mrs. Ochiltree is found dead and black Sandy Campbell accused of murder. Here, the image of the alleged threat to the 'purity' of the white 'race' enters the novel when Major Carteret draws the following conclusions: "The criminal was a negro, the victim a white woman; – it was only reasonable to expect the worst" (182). With the alleged 'proof' of a sexually-motivated crime committed by a black man, the entire language associated enters the novel via the major: he declares the offence as "something more than an ordinary crime [...]. It [was] a murderous and fatal

⁴² The major's awareness of his own nobility 'allows' him to dissociate from Captain MacBane, an example of what he refers to as "upstart", that is, a "product of the democratic idea operating upon the white man, the descendant of the indentured bondservant and the socially unfit (87)". Despite the captain's wealth, due to his bad manners, tactlessness, rudeness and brutality, McBane could never be an equal to the nobleman.

assault upon a woman of [their] race, – upon [their] race in the person of its womanhood, its crown and flower” (182).

The choice of a language full of pathos aims at arousing emotions and sympathy for his intentions, and, as has been learned in the novel, is indicative of the speech of Major Carteret.⁴³ The personification of ‘the female’ allows declaring the murder of Mrs. Ochiltree a sign of general threat directed against all (white) women and their values and virtues attached. As “crown and flower” a woman’s ‘femaleness’ becomes something particularly precious but also fragile which was in need of protection from the “brutal, lascivious, and murderous assaults at the hands of negro men” (185). The answer to this ‘prominent’ theme of late-19th-century white-supremacist rhetoric follows after some pages when the black lawyer Watson states that “the old shopworn [sic] cant about race purity and supremacy and imperative necessity [...] always comes to the front whenever it is sought to justify some outrage on the colored [sic] folks” (190). This ‘common sense’ statement serves as a counter-argument to the claim of the major and encapsulates the intention of such emotionality-laden language. The strength of the major’s words is also weakened via ridicule and the achievement of a comic effect accomplished in the following quote when he addresses some of his white fellow citizens:

The white men of this city, impelled by the highest and holiest sentiments, were about to take steps to defend their hearthstones and maintain the purity and ascendancy of their race. Your purpose sprung from the hearts wounded in their tenderest [sic] susceptibilities.’ ‘Rah, ‘rah!’ shouted a tipsy sailor [...]. (229)

The significance and reliability of the statements representative of white-supremacist logics, however, is minimized by the fact that it is not black Sandy Campbell responsible for the death of old Mrs. Ochiltree, but her grand-nephew Tom Delamere.

Moreover, Chesnutt presents one of his protagonists as a clear counter-argument to the alleged lack of ‘manhood’ and ‘manliness’ to be found in the black male. This is accomplished by the direct comparison of black Dr. Miller and

⁴³ e.g. “[h]is elder brother had sacrificed his life on the bloody altar of the lost cause [...]” (2); “It was only another significant example of the results which might have been foreseen from the application of a false and pernicious political theory, by which ignorance, clothed in a little brief authority, was thought to be exalted over knowledge, vice over virtue, an inferior and degraded race above the heaven-crowned Anglo-Saxon” (185); “[...] of the swift and terrible punishment which would fall, like the judgement of God, upon anyone who laid sacrilegious hands upon white womanhood (186).

white Dr. Burns which reveals that both men represent “very different and yet very similar types of manhood” (49). This is an explicit rejoinder to the assumptions of white-supremacist thinking and Chesnutt renders this evaluation something like ‘common sense’. In addition, the argument gains further support by Southern white Dr. Price who acknowledges Dr. Miller as a ‘gentleman’.

In *Contending Forces* the author Hopkins pursues a similar strategy: the hero of the story’s second (main) plot, William Smith, is the epitome of a man; as outlined by the narrator there existed a “strong manhood and honesty of purpose” (90) in Smith. He not only had a “natural chivalry of a generous nature toward the weak and helpless” (168), but the love for a woman – Sappho – can arouse in him “the desire to shield, to protect, to love one being supremely above all others [...]” (169). Similarly, the narrator clearly opposes white-supremacist opinion of the alleged lack of ‘womanhood’ and virtue in the black female. In the very contrary, it is declared an essential characteristic of the black woman. This perception is introduced by Mrs. Willis, who, as has been outlined in chapter 3.4.1.1 already, is to be regarded as endowed with a certain authority. With her declaration of virtue as an innate character trait of the black ‘race’, she also elucidates the alleged lack in moral responsibility and standard to allegedly be found in the black ‘race’ as insupportable. It is the female protagonist Sappho Clark who introduces the motive of ‘black sexuality’ into the novel, the main aspect that makes white-supremacists conclude on the lack of ‘man’ and ‘womanhood’ in the black. As the reader learns in the progressing story, Sappho Clark herself can be regarded as what famously had been termed ‘tragic mulatta’: as pointed out by Robinson (348-49), originally an icon of the abolitionist movement – due to the mulatta’s resemblance to a white woman, a positive light was cast on black women in general – dominant white ideology transformed the positively-evaluated ‘mulatta’ into the lustful ‘Jezebel’ figure. This type – similar to the ‘black rapist’ – was deemed as being sexually obsessed and seeking at the seduction of white men to ‘produce’ offspring that would weaken society.

Concerning the discussion on the responsibility of the black woman in conceiving ‘mixed-race’ offspring, I regard Mrs. Willis’s statement indicative of the author’s opinion on the topic: “I believe that we shall not be held responsible for wrongs which we have unconsciously [sic] committed, or which we have committed under compulsion [sic]. We are virtuous or non-virtuous only when we

have a choice [sic] under temptation” (149). This statement opposes the perception of white supremacy with regards to the black woman as the seducer. The remark is a logical one and functions as a ‘common sense’ rejoinder to the discussion on black sexuality. This perception also serves as a rejoinder to what is revealed about Sappho in the progressing story; in this regard, it rejects the automation of Sappho with ‘Jezebel’ when the reader learns via the speech of Luke Sawyer that Sappho had been *forced* into a sexual relationship with a white man. In order to prove the virtuousness of the female protagonist, however, at an early stage the reader is provided with information and evaluation of Sappho that is thought to support the positive picture of her; in this regard, thanks to Dora we learn that Sappho is “the prettiest creature [she] ever saw” and her “shrewd common sense and womanly intuition discovered a character of sterling worth – bold, strong and ennobling;” (114); Father Andrew “gives her the best of character” (89) and Ma Smith “believe[s] her to be a girl of exemplary conduct. Sappho was always deferential to her, giving to the elder woman the gentle deference which, coming from youth, is so dear to those advanced in years” (177). These descriptions arouse sympathy for the heroine of the story.

In contrast to *The Marrow of Tradition* and *Contending Forces*, in *The Clansman* the total lack of womanhood and manliness of the black population is an indisputable fact. As ‘proof’ for this, the narrator again relies on Abraham Lincoln and his authority; in the novel, the 16th President of the United States comes to the conclusion that the ‘Negro’ could never rise to full manhood in the U.S. They could do so probably in their own habitat, that is, Africa, but this only with the help and under the guidance as well as surveillance of civilized white Americans. This is one of the arguments why the narrator appropriates Lincoln to speak up for the idea to colonize the American blacks in Africa. However, in the discussion held with Austin Stoneman, the leader of Congress, another side of the topic of manhood is introduced by Lincoln, that is, the tragedy of the Southern people and their allegedly lost manhood. How the author makes Lincoln say that is just indicative of the kind of style of the novel; in this regard, after Stoneman is again made to further strengthen the need for revenge on the South, Lincoln states that there definitely had been enough bloodshed: “When Sherman’s army swept to the sea, before him lay the Garden of Eden, behind him stretched a desert! A hundred years cannot give back to the wasted South her wealth, or two

hundred years restore to her the lost seed treasures of her young manhood –” (48-49). This statement is just in line with the general strategy employed in the novel: the presentation of the South as victim. However, the North disseminates a different picture of the South and its people. In this regard, the narrator refers to newspaper articles published after the assassination presenting the South as corrupted by the institution of slavery and degraded to barbarians and savages. In this image Stoneman allegedly identifies the legitimization required to “[...] blot [the South] from the map” (49). As a consequence, this evaluation also entails the lack of any ‘manhood’ or ‘manliness’ within Southern men. However, the incorporation of these claims serves the narrator only to prove the total opposite and, resulting from that, to prove the Northern attitude wrong. In order to do so, the progress of the story is indicative of the perception that emotionality and passion – characteristics deemed ‘savage’ and the opposite of ‘manly’ – are positive character traits. As already outlined in the previous chapter, these characteristics are distinctively Southern one. Eventually, it is also the family that ‘benefits’ from these character traits as their potential endangerment fans these emotions and awakens the protector and saviour within the (white) man who decides to oppose the denigration and suppression imposed on him. To my mind, this is how the narrator of *The Clansman* intends to legitimize the founding of the Ku Klux Klan as the protector of the family, and, as a consequence, also ‘civilization’. However, the strongest call for the release of emotionality and passion is made by Austin Stoneman himself; in this sense, when he learns that his children are in danger, he himself fully exposes his feelings and passions in order to save them. Hence, he appreciates the Southern way of life, because it is what the South and its people are made of.

When it comes to ‘womanhood’, just like Chesnutt, Dixon employs the image of the black rapist as *the* epitome of the savage. A similar language enters the novel: Mrs. Lenoir refers to her daughter as “living flower” (190). However, in contrast to Chesnutt, Dixon’s intention in employing the rape is a different one; in this regard, prior to the raping incidence, particular attention is given to the outline on Marion Lenoir’s ‘budding womanhood’, as indicated in her description at the

ball her mother organizes in honour of her:

Marion was a universal favourite. The grace, charm, and tender beauty of the Southern girl of sixteen were combined in her with a gentle and unselfish disposition. Amid poverty that was pitiful, unconscious of its limitations, her thoughts were always of others, and she was the one human being everybody had agreed to love. (254)

Moreover, the girl proved a real heroine when she saved her horse out of the burning barn, which makes the narrator conclude that she has developed to the “full tropic splendor [sic] of Southern girlhood” (284). All the outlines on Marion and Mrs. Lenoir aim at arousing sympathy for them, and, as a result, their rape makes the reader concentrate their hate and despise on the black ‘Other’. The raping incidence defiles their home and thus the whole family and, after having been deprived of their womanhood, suicide seems the only release to the two women. I perceive their decision to take their lives at Lover’s Leap as deeply symbolic; it is a place of love and peace and the venue where Phil Stoneman and Margaret Cameron have declared their mutual love to each other as well as Mr. Lenoir’s final destination prior to his death caused by malnutrition (!). All these aspects contribute to the creation of this place as a sacred one, which makes its defilement an even more horrid crime. All this emotionality and fear is used to legitimize the founding of the Ku Klux Klan, which the narrator refers to as “the last act of desperation” (262). The Klan unites everything worth fighting for as well as all the values the black population lacks: “This is an institution of Chivalry, Humanity, Mercy, and Patriotism: embodying in its genius and principles all that is chivalric in conduct, noble in sentiment, generous in manhood, and patriotic in purpose [...]” (320). Their symbol is the “fiery cross of old Scotland’s hills” – the “ancient symbol of an unconquered race” (326).

3.4.3.3 Black and White – the Integration of a ‘Race’

As has been outlined so far, in their respective novel both Chesnutt and Hopkins provide counter-arguments to the attitude taken by Dixon, the third writer under consideration. In contrast to his white-supremacist ideology, although acknowledging the existence of different ‘races’, the two African American writers perceive and present their respective black family in no way inferior to their respective white counterpart. In order to allow the reader to draw this conclusion, as well as to gain sympathy for them, both writers provide the reader with an insight into the life of their black as well as characters and let them have the

opportunity to acknowledge the claim made by the author. Apart from that, what is particular about Hopkins's intentions is that she intends to indicate the progress of *her* 'race' as exemplified by the Smiths. In this regard, her narrator points to the 'humble achievements' late Mr. Smith made and hence built the foundation for the further progress of his family and the whole black 'race'. What follows these accounts of the past is the narrator's direct addressing of the reader in order to seek appreciation for these accomplishments; in this regard, although "supposed to be beyond the reach of a race just released from a degrading bondage" (86), blacks could prove wrong their acclaimed inferiority – "[...] we see the steady advance of a race overriding the barriers set by prejudice and injustice [...]" (87). By elucidating the inferiority of the black 'race' as the result of 'prejudice and injustice', the narrator clearly debunks the idea that its status was something nature- or God-given. What directly follows this declaration is an outline on the way of living encountered in the Smith lodge house: here it says that "[...] even in palatial homes, a more inviting nest could not be found. The table was carefully spread with a nicely ironed cloth of spotless white, red-bordered napkins lay at each plate [...]" (88). These outlines can be regarded a direct rejoinder to the luxurious living of the Montfort family – "[b]eautiful rugs covered the floors, fine paintings adorned the walls, gleaming statuary flashed upon one from odd nooks and corners [...]" (43). The accounts on the receptions and musical evenings regularly held in the Smith lodge house, or the women's engagement in charity work not only further strengthens the image of progress a family like the Smiths can make. Moreover, these outlines also indicate that they are just as cultured as any other (white) family.

However, Hopkins goes even further when there is a connection drawn between the outlines on the Smith's everyday life and its added moral significance; in this regard, a statement made during the discussion of the 'Sewing Circle' can be regarded a rejoinder: "Trivialities are not to be despised. Inborn love implanted in a woman's heart for a luxurious, esthetic [sic] home life, running on well-oiled wheels amid flowers, sunshine, books and priceless pamphlets, easy chairs and French gowns may be the means of [...] freeing a race from servitude" (147). This comment made by the narrator is stated in the context of the discussion on morality and virtue and is itself a rejoinder to the interpretations of Mrs. Willis who declares it the duty of every individual to

contribute to the raising of morality, both in him-/herself as well as in his/her people or 'race'. A raise of morality equalled the emergence of virtue which, generally speaking, was to be understood as the "excellence in every duty of life" (149). The raise of virtue and morality had the power to "better the condition of mankind" (147), and, as pointed out by Mrs. Willis, this could be contributed to by the engagement in study or charity just as well as by "[being] happy and bright for the good of those about you" (157). According to these outlines the way of living of the Smiths can be read as a contribution to the raising of their 'race'. This perception receives further support and acknowledgement by an outsider, English Mr. Withington; in this regard, to him "the general good taste, even elegance of the apartment, appealed strongly to the artistic sense of the cultured gentleman who had been reared in the luxury of ample wealth" (371)

In *The Marrow of Tradition* the black middle-class Millers accomplish a similar task; they are represented as being in no way inferior to its white counterpart; in this regard, William Miller is a physician characterized by "earnestness of purpose, [...] excellent manners and fine physique" (50). He is dedicated to the general uplift of his 'race', and that is also the reason why he had decided to stay in the South, although he contemplated going north or to Europe. Similarly positive, Janet Miller not only has an education, but also qualifies by her "tender heart" (65) as well as that she "could never bear malice" (66). However, in contrast to *Contending Forces*, the reader does not get as detailed an insight into the family life of the Millers as into their white counterparts. In my opinion, this is due to Chesnutt's main intention: the provision of an insight into the working of white-supremacist thinking as well as the revelations on its hypocrisy and injustice accomplished by both their own speech and acting.

What both *The Marrow of Tradition* and *Contending Forces* have in common is that the advancement of the black 'race' is presented as an indisputable fact. In order to discuss how this can be accomplished in the future, both authors employ the opposition of arguments associated with the two most influential black scholars of the late 19th-century United States – W.E.B Du Bois and Booker T. Washington. Both their argumentation lines need to be seen as responses to the escalation caused by sustained racial segregation and the growing institutionalizing of white terror in the Southern states of the late 19th

century, and this is also the context in which they are introduced in both novels. In this regard, to W. E. B Du Bois, the epitome of the black intellectual and the “most multifaceted, prolific, and influential writer that black America has ever produced [...]” (Gates and McKay 606), racial segregation meant restraint; he identified the need to eradicate “the many forms of bigotry and inequality that had perverted what he called ‘the ideal of human brotherhood’ in America” (Gates and McKay 606). To him, this intention could only be accomplished if African Americans were granted full civil rights. Du Bois officially took a stand for this purpose and was a pivotal figure in the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Apart from political participation, to Du Bois the provision of education for the black population that surpassed the elementary one was essential; more precisely, he identified a focus on the classic instead on an industrial one as indispensable for the black population to be able to ‘produce’ what he referred to as the ‘talented tenth’ (Gates and McKay 606; Du Bois).

This attitude about the kind of education that should enable the progress of the black ‘race’ is a main point in which Du Bois differs from Booker T. Washington; instead, to *the* black spokesperson of the late-19th-century United States the keynote of progress of the black ‘race’ was to be found in “[...] industrial education; accommodation of Southern white supremacy; and an emphasis on racial pride, solidarity, and self-help [...]” (Gates and McKay 489). Although both white and black would need to contribute to this advancement, it was the latter that would need to further tolerate the political status-quo – white rule – in the South. Instead of involving in politics, the black population should prove as productive members of society and thus indicate their value and worth to the whites (Gates and McKay 489).

Both in *The Marrow of Tradition* as well as in *Contending Forces* the argumentation associated with these two influential black scholars is incorporated in the speech of two characters in the respective novel. This pairing and opposing enables a discussion on the progress of the black ‘race’; however, in how far the actual historical persons Du Bois and Washington find embodiment in the two characters differs in the two novels as well as how the argumentation is presented and eventually treated and evaluated. In this regard, Chesnutt limits his incorporation of Du Bois and Washington to the level of political and social

'agitation'; here, the black male protagonist Dr. Miller is opposed to the black worker and minor character Josh Green. The former represents the attitude of the retainer, who has accommodated to the racial segregation and discrimination found within society. This becomes clear in the train scene when Dr. Miller needs to leave for the 'black car'; he sees no reason for opposing the conductor's decision as "[i]t [was] the law, and [everyone] powerless to resist it" (55). Moreover, he is sure that sooner or later the problem of 'race' would solve itself:

He liked to believe that the race antagonism which hampered his progress and that of his people was a mere temporary thing, the outcome of former conditions, and bound to disappear in time, and that when a colored [sic] man should demonstrate to the community in which he lived that he possessed character and power, the community would find a way on which to enlist his services for the public good. (65)

In this regard, it can be argued that Miller incorporates the political voice of Booker T. Washington. In contrast, Josh Green represents the black agitator who totally opposes racial discrimination and claims the same civil rights as whites have. Indicative is the scene where Dr. Miller examines Josh after he had a fight with a white man for calling him "a damn' low-down nigger" [sic] (110). In the massacre, Josh fights the white mob and justifies his acting with the perception that "[he]'d rather be a dead nigger any day dan [sic] a live dog!" (284). This claim for social agitation can, in the widest sense, be associated with the reasoning of W.E.B Du Bois. However, the significance is to be found in what the author makes with these two opposing voices; Josh Green, the black who longs for racial equality and who opposes racial discrimination dies in the massacre while taking revenge on McBane, the murderer of his father. In contrast, to William Miller, who represents the acquiescent black who rather longs for friendship between black and white the massacre does not entail a lethal ending, but nevertheless, he experiences injustice when his child gets killed by accident. With this ending, the author does not present a solution to the 'race problem'; he does not declare one way or the other to fight racism as the 'true' one.

In contrast, in *Contending Forces* the author Hopkins does much more obviously embody the historical figures Du Bois and Washington in the novel, that is, in William Smith and Dr. Arthur Lewis; in this regard, the former is described as a "brilliant philosophical student destined to shine in the future in the world of science" (166); he goes to Heidelberg to finish a course – Du Bois studied in

Berlin – and holds the perception that only “the careful education of the moral faculties along the lines of the natural laws [...] [would] bring the best faculties of the Negro to their full fruition [...]” (167). In contrast, Lewis is referred to as a “fine scholar and a great business man [...] [who] has a large industrial school in Louisiana” (123). At the meeting of the ‘American Colored League’ he presents his opinion:

[investment] into education was essential], but politics the bane of the Negro’s existence. Those of us who eschew that subject, let matters of government take care of themselves, while we look out for our own individual or collective advancement, find no difficulty in living at the South in peace and harmony with our neighbors [sic]. If we are patient, docile, harmless, we may expect to see that prosperity for which we long, in the years to come, if not for ourselves then for our children. [...] We should strive to obtain the education of the industrial school, seeking there our level, content to abide there, leaving to the white man the superiority of the brain and intellect which hundreds of years have developed. (250-51)

The fact that both Smith and Lewis outline their argumentation in the ‘official’ context of the ‘American Colored League’ meeting can be regarded indicative of the importance and value Du Bois and Washington are granted by the author. However, how the two voices are further treated and evaluated in the novel is even more indicative of the author’s personal position towards the progress of the black ‘race’. Hopkins, as already outlined in chapter 3.4.1.1, agrees with Smith when he stresses the focus on morality in the advancement of the black ‘race’. And in this context Hopkins also gives an answer to the opinion about blacks as a doomed ‘race’; instead, to her, black advancement clearly was possible, however, only in the right environment: that is, “[...] subjected to the saving influences of the Christian home where freedom and happiness, education and morality abound, the Anglo-Saxon would lose the main arguments which he uses against the black brother [...]” (222). By stressing the importance of religion, Hopkins thus offers a plausible counter-argument to Dixon’s opinion that the advance of the black ‘race’ was only possible in its own ‘habitat’, that is, Africa. Concerning the white writer’s intentions it can be argued that his aim is to provide ‘proof’ not only for the allegedly natural inferiority of the black ‘race’, but also to indicate that racial segregation was the only possible way to handle the ‘race’ issue in the future. In contrast to Dixon’s sentiments, to my mind, what both Hopkins and Chesnutt try to bring across is to point to and emphasize the responsibility of the social environment for the state of the black ‘race’ at the late

19th century: there was no naturally inferior black 'race', but American society had made it this way. 'Race' was nothing more than a construct.

5. Conclusion

The three novels taken into consideration in this diploma thesis were written at a time when a white-supremacist worldview was the dominant discourse of how to make sense of mankind. Due to its status this racist ideology had far-reaching effects on the life on both sides of the 'colour line'. Hence, as I have demonstrated, the belief in the existence of a superior and an inferior 'race' not only resulted in random violence as well as discrimination and suppression of one part of the population; it also meant the official legitimization of this condition since as an allegedly inferior people, the African American population could officially be denied the civil rights their white contemporaries were granted. So after the abolition of slavery hopes were high that American society would eventually provide the black population with the social participation it had been denied so far; however, in the years and decades after the Civil War – the 'Reconstruction Era' and the 'Progressive Period' – the sought-for 'renewal' of society could not be obtained. In the very contrary, the late 19th century stood for an ever-widening gap between black and white. The national aim of the post-war years was to reunite North and South and white American society simply had no regards for its black fellow citizens. This sentiment resulted in the fact that in the late 1800s – united as one – white America zeroed in on the blacks among them; the African American was deemed a threat not only to the white 'race', but to whole American society and 'civilization'. In this regard, the late 19th- and early 20th-century discourse on 'race' stylized the black as the spectre, as the ultimate inhuman who – as an 'animal' driven by its allegedly innate emotionality and passion – stood in way of the progress of (white) Americans. This perception was supported by discourses on science and religion, which heavily relied on the findings gained throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

The three novels *The Clansman*, *Contending Forces*, and *The Marrow of Tradition* were composed in this particular context, and, as I have demonstrated, Dixon, Hopkins and Chesnutt respond in their respective narrative to the social conditions of their time and draw their own conclusions on 'race'. Hence, although the three authors share a particular *knowledge* of 'race', however, they represent two fundamentally opposing ways of how to interpret this concept: while Dixon is supportive of the dominant discourse on 'race' of his time – white supremacy –, both Hopkins and Chesnutt question and challenge what an

advocate of white supremacy takes for granted. As I have illustrated throughout this diploma thesis, this is the main and obvious division identified in the three works. Given these diverging positions as well as the particular sought-for effect of the three 'historical novels' three distinct versions of reality are presented: in *The Clansman* and *Contending Forces* the two writers Dixon and Hopkins rely on conventions associated with the romance and sentimental novel and aim at a romantic effect. In contrast, in *The Marrow of Tradition* Chesnutt adheres to the realist tradition and accomplishes to achieve a disillusioning and even tragic effect. However, what all three writers have in common is the intention to arouse emotions in the reader in order to gain sympathy for their cause as well as their belief about 'race'. In order to accomplish this, the three authors rely – to varying extents though – on the incorporation of pathos and sentimentalisms.

When it comes to the overall effect of the three narratives as well as the symbolic outcome, I have illustrated, that the opposition and comparison of the two families employed in each of the three narratives – they differ in terms of social standing, regional section and/or 'race' – is decisive. In this regard, in *The Clansman* the opposition of the Southern white Camerons to the Northern white Stonemans achieves a romantic effect: the two families – after their first meeting the various family members immediately develop a liking for each other – are representatives of their respective regional sections whose unity was so severely shattered by the war. However, eventually reunion is accomplished; this is symbolized by the love the children of the two families develop for each other, as well as indicated by the 'twinning' of Phil Stoneman and Ben Cameron. I have argued that this outcome represents the perception that despite conflicts of whatever kind, the white 'race' was one family that could prove its power only when it stood united as one.

Although Hopkins does also intend to achieve a romantic effect with the eventual outcome and significance of her novel, her making-sense of 'race' is an utterly different one: she provides proof for the perception that the black 'race' was in no way inferior to its white counterpart, it just needed the appropriate environment – provided by the belief in and the adherence to Christian principles. However, just like in *The Clansman*, the outcome of *Contending Forces* symbolizes the reunion of North and South – the story ends with the declaration of the love between Southern Sappho Clark and Northern William Smith. This

unification, however, does not only stand for the reunion of two regional sections, but it also represents the reunion of the black 'race'. Apart from that, the revelations made on the ancestry of the black Smiths – the white Montfort family featured in the first main plot of the story – further strengthens the perception of the existence of one human 'race'.

Similar to Hopkins, Chesnutt's intention is to indicate that the black 'race' was not essentially inferior to its white counterpart. However, in contrast to the female writer he does not rely on conventions of the romance novel to bring his message across. The ending of *The Marrow of Tradition* is not one that could be called a happy one: the hate and fear in the North Carolinian town of Wellington culminates in a 'massacre' where the black protagonists – the Millers – lose their only child. However, despite the racially-motivated hatred and despise the Millers have experienced so far, they try to save the baby. Although the effect of tragedy and disillusionment is brought about in the novel, however, this decision could also be interpreted as a reunion; the reunion of the two sides of the 'colour line' that has been separated ever since. So although I argue that Chesnutt employs a naturalistic convention instead of a romantic one – the Millers cannot decidedly influence their fate as it is the case with the black protagonists of *Contending Forces* – at least there is hope on the horizon that things might change for the better. What is more, the open ending of *The Marrow of Tradition* gives the reader the possibility to draw their own conclusions.

I have demonstrated that the three novels taken into consideration are written in the revisionist tradition so symptomatic of their time; the three authors intend to provide the reader with clarifications on the past in order to make implications for the present and future. I have illustrated that, in order to provide the reader with an image of the past, the three writers employ various settings and characters that represent it. In the sense of the Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin the authors of the three narratives incorporate 'languages' and 'social voices' of the past in their novels. In *The Marrow of Tradition* the language of the past is manifested in Mr. Delamere who represents the ante-bellum South, and so do the aristocratic Carterets as well as their former slave Mammy Jane. In *The Clansman* there are the Cameron 'Clan' and many other white Southern characters who reminisce the good 'Old South' and regret these bygone times as well as the manifesting self-assurance of the black population. In *Contending*

Forces this past is even explicitly referred to by the author: the first main plot of the story takes place in the late 1700s and tells the story of the Montforts, a rich planter family.

This perception to view the three narratives in terms of the languages and social voices they incorporate has proven a valuable ‘tool’ in approaching the three novels in terms of their contribution to the early-20th-century discourse on ‘race’. Bakhtin’s approach holds that the social voices of a novel enter a dialogue in which all the voices incorporated seek to being heard and thus gain significance. In the case of the three narratives considered in this piece of writing, it has been illustrated that there are social voices that support white supremacy and ones that reject this dominant discourse. However, only one of these two opposing sides can prove as the more persuasive one within the novel; this, however, depends on *who* introduces a voice into the novel and *how* the narrator ‘treats’ the opposing and disagreeing voices in the progressing story. In my analysis I have pointed to the following examples: in *The Marrow of Tradition*, for instance, Mammy Jane – the epitome of the restrained and submissive black person and relict of the ante-bellum South – perishes in the ‘massacre’ and so does her nephew Jerry, a minor character who represents the black person longing for recognition among his white fellow town inhabitants. In *Contending Forces* the heroine of the second main plot – Sappho Clark – can be regarded as the ‘Jezebel’ type: she has conceived a child with a white man. However, as the reader learns, she was forced into this sexual relationship. Hence, she is not the lustful black seducer who aims at harming white society, but she had to experience the outcome of slavery: the creation of hatred and contempt for everything non-white. However, Sappho can leave these experiences behind and finds her true love in William Smith. In *The Clansman*, however, just like in Chesnutt’s novel, there are black characters who abide by their alleged nature-given inferiority – Dr. Cameron’s former slave Jake – and those who decidedly put themselves and their ‘race’ on the same level as the white ‘race’ – e.g. Silas Lynch. However, in contrast to his African American contemporary, Dixon deploys the restrained black character in a positive way, while he finds words of ridicule and contempt for his black characters who explicitly question the natural superiority of the dominant side of the ‘colour line’.

As I have illustrated, these examples are indicative of what significance the various opposing social voices on 'race' gain in the novels. What is more, I have argued that in the three narratives there are characters that serve as particular authorities in the novels; these are entrenched with particular virtues and values, a fact which renders their speech and the social voice they present particularly significant. In *The Clansman* the leading authority is President Abraham Lincoln who speaks up for the Southern white and against the Southern black population as well as the radical Republican regime set up in the South. As I have argued, in *The Marrow of Tradition* such supreme authorities are old Mr. Delamere – a former lawyer –, the white physicians Dr. Burns and Dr. Price as well as white Lee Ellis and black Dr. Miller. In order to foster her argumentation, in *Contending Forces* Hopkins relies on the significance of black and white authorities alike: there are black Mrs. Willis and William Smith, but there is also the white Englishman Mr. Withington. In addition to this reliance on various authorities, in all three narratives the respective narrator *explicitly* renders some social voices persuasive ones while s/he deems others as insignificant: this is accomplished via 'common sense' remarks.

To conclude, the intention behind the introduction of the past, thus, is a different one with regards to the 'colour line': as I have demonstrated, both in *The Marrow of Tradition* and *Contending Forces* the authors intend to indicate and even provide evidence for the fact that the past was still visible in the contemporary condition of the black 'race'. In this regard, slavery and sustained suppression had made the black 'race' how it was at their time; their position in society was nothing nature-or God-given, but rather, it was the white 'race' constructing the black one. In contrast to this perception, Dixon draws a different conclusion of the past: the Reconstruction Era proved right the assumption of the natural inferiority of the black 'race'. The resulting significance for contemporary white America could only be to hold on to segregation and deny the black population the civil rights it was claiming.

In order to bring their message across, as I have outlined, the employment of stereotypes –black and white alike – serves a different purpose in Dixon on the one, and Chesnutt and Hopkins on the other hand: in *The Clansman* the white writer makes use of stereotypical depictions just to prove their validity. In this sense, the outcome of his opposition of the various social voices incorporated in

his novel is that a black person is essentially inferior to a white person. What is more, a black that does not abide by this white-supremacist principle is a good person, while a black not accepting his nature-given status only risks of being punished by his allegedly superior white counterpart. In the very contrary, both Chesnutt and Hopkins provide their readership with serious counter-arguments to this claim: according to their presentation of black and white characters, there was nothing like an essentially black or an essentially white person. There are good and bad black and white characters alike, regardless of where they were born and what social standing and ethnic background they have. By presenting counter-arguments the two African American writers challenge white-supremacist ideology in the sense that the thinking in stereotypes and generalisations simply was too easy to make sense of the world; as outlined in their two novels, it does not prove exhaustive to create a realistic picture of the world.

As I have illustrated, apart from stereotypes all three authors also employ and/ or respond to social myths; in this regard, in *The Clansman* the author Dixon repeatedly refers to the myths of the good 'Old South', to the image of the South as the 'Garden Eden', to the perception of Southerners as a 'mythic people' essentially entrenched with positive characteristics like passion, devotion and cheerfulness; in order to develop an interpretation of the Reconstruction Era he utterly relies on the myth of the 'Lost Cause'. To the white writer, these myths are reality and they enable him to easily reject everything that does not conform to the image created by mythology, which does not abide by, or questions it. In the very contrast, the two African American writers considered in this diploma thesis only employ these myths in order to debunk them and reveal their flaws. To them these myths are mere constructs, but reality was a different thing. In this regard, Chesnutt, for instance, employs in old Mr Delamere a textbook example of the white aristocratic noble Southerner. However, he does not explicitly declare this image as false or untrue, but, however, with Major Carteret and Tom Delamere he employs characters which qualify by hypocrisy and opportunistic behaviour. Similarly, with Anson Pollock, for instance, Hopkins creates a white character who qualifies by gentlemanly manners and looks, but who, however, would sell his own grandmother in order to get what he wants. Given these facts, the treatment of Southern mythology is similar to how stereotypical depictions are employed: to the two African American writers these are mere constructs that help

to make sense of the world, but which, however, do not suffice to depict reality in an adequate kind of way.

To sum up, this diploma thesis provides a comparison of three distinct contributions to the early-20th-century discourse on 'race'. The narratives are three particular versions of negotiated reality, which is not only decided by their support for or rejection of white supremacy, but also and even fundamentally by the literary conventions the writers regard as appropriate. What is more, in their narratives Dixon, Hopkins, and Chesnutt not only develop differing interpretations of reality, they also have diverging foci with regards to the message they want to bring across as well as the intention they have in mind: in this regard it has been indicated that Dixon writes in line with a dominant ideology of his time and that he intends to create hatred and contempt for the black 'race' and sympathy and understanding for the white one. He emphasizes the existence of the 'colour line' and indicates that everyone can only decide for one of the two sides. In the very contrast, Hopkins blurs the borders of this demarcation; she identifies the existence of one human 'race' which had been separated but which shall reunite in order to enable advancement. In contrast to Dixon's propagandist work, she does not intend to stir hatred but instead to point to the perception that it was time for reconciliation. Last but not least, Chesnutt constructs a rather gloomy picture of reality, the gap between black and white is a huge one and this is experienced in daily life where hatred and contempt meets the wish for a peaceful living-together. In contrast to Dixon and Hopkins, Chesnutt does not present a 'formula' for appropriate behaviour or a solution to the contemporary situation. However, to him there is hope on the horizon and it is with entire society to take action.

This piece of writing is not only to be regarded a contribution to a discourse on 'race' itself, by approaching the three narratives in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of 'heteroglossia' the focus is not only put on *what* is said on 'race', but also on *how* this message is brought across. This also indicates that just like with 'race', there is not only one way to depict this concept and negotiate it. In this regard, the three novels are three distinct ways of how 'race' *can* be perceived and negotiated. Given this perception, although none of the three contributions can be something like ultimate truth, nevertheless the reader learns about the different ways of how to cope with reality. By considering writers of both sides of the 'colour line' and comparing what they have to say on 'race', this

diploma thesis symbolically bridges the 'colour line', the imagined demarcation within North American society which officially could only be dissolved by the Civil Rights Movements of the 20th century. Hence, this piece of writing can be regarded an 'inclusive' contribution to ethnic literary studies; it does not reject one side per se.

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7. Appendix

7.1 Abstract

Die drei Romane die in dieser Arbeit herangezogen werden wurden zu einer Zeit verfasst – zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts – die geprägt war durch Rassismus. Es war eine Zeit als die Existenz einer weißen und einer schwarzen Rasse nicht angezweifelt wurde und der Glaube in die Überlegenheit der weißen sich als die allesbestimmende Ideologie erwies. Das beginnende 20. Jahrhundert war auch eine Zeit, die, obwohl Sklaverei schon längst abgeschafft war, für die afroamerikanische Bevölkerung vor allem eines bedeutete: Diskriminierung und Unterdrückung. Diese Realität wird nun in den drei Erzählungen, die in dieser Diplomarbeit betrachtet werden, verarbeitet. Mit der Auswahl der drei Werke wird dabei sowohl die weiße als auch die schwarze Perspektive präsentiert. In diesem Sinne bietet diese Arbeit Aufschluss darüber wie die drei Autoren Thomas Dixon, Elisabeth Hopkins und Charles Chesnutt diesen Hintergrund in ihren Werken bewältigen und inwiefern sie damit zum Rassendiskurs ihrer Zeit beitragen. Hierbei erweist sich das Konzept der „Heteroglossie“ oder „Polyphonie“ des russischen Gelehrten Mikhail Bakhtin als besonders hilfreich. Dieser Ansatz geht davon aus, dass jeder Roman eine Vielzahl von sozialen Stimmen enthält, die sich in einem kontinuierlichen Dialog miteinander befinden, dabei aber dadurch gekennzeichnet sind, dass sie sich gegenseitig widersprechen. Im Sinne Bakhtins erweisen sich manche dieser Stimmen aber als solche mit mehr Überzeugungskraft als andere. Diese „überzeugenden“ Stimmen sind dann auch jene, die der Autor des jeweiligen Werkes vertritt: in diesem Sinne erweisen sich in Dixon's Roman – einem klaren Vertreter des Glaubens in die weiße Überlegenheit – jene Stimmen als jene mit mehr Überzeugungskraft, die seine Ideologie unterstützen. Ganz im Gegensatz dazu präsentieren die beiden Afroamerikanischen Schriftsteller Hopkins und Chesnutt Gegenargumente zu diesem dominanten Diskurs, welche sich sodann auch als jene Stimmen mit mehr Überzeugungskraft erweisen.

7.2 Lebenslauf

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