The Anatomy of Resistance:

The Rhetoric of Anti-Lynching in American Literature and Culture, 1892 – 1936

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Contents

Abbreviations

Charles W. Chesnutt	
MT	*The Marrow of Tradition*
Sutton E. Griggs	
HH	*The Hindered Hand*
Angelina Weld Grimké	
R	*Rachel*
Corrie Crandall Howell	
F	*The Forfeit*
Georgia Douglas Johnson	
BBB	*Blue-Eyed Black Boy*
S	*Safe*
SM	*Sunday Morning in the South*
James Weldon Johnson	
AB	"An Army With Banners"
AG	"Anarchy in Georgia"
LAND	"Lynching – America's National Disgrace"
LM	"The Lynching at Memphis"
LUS	"Lawlessness in the United States"
M	"Memorandum from Mr. Johnson to Dr. Du Bois: Re: Crisis Editorial"
MTH	"More Toll for Houston"
NC	"A New Crime"
TA	"Three Achievements and Their Significance"
Ann Seymour Link	
L	*Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?*
Annie Nathan Meyer	
BS	*Black Souls*
May Miller	
NT	*Nails and Thorns*
Joseph S. Mitchell	
SB	*Son-Boy*

Thomas Nelson Page

LCP	"The Lynching of Negroes – Its Cause and Its Prevention"

Mary Church Terrell

LNPV	"Lynching from a Negro's Point of View"

Ida B. Wells-Barnett

SH	*Southern Horrors*
RR	*A Red Record*

Walter White

FF	*Fire in the Flint*
RF	*Rope and Faggot*

1. Introduction

On July 19, 1935 Rubin Stacy, an African-American man, was lynched in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. He was hanged to a tree within sight of Marion Jones's house, the woman who had made the original accusation against him. The New York *Times* reports that a mob composed of about one hundred masked men had taken Stacy from the custody of six deputies who had been escorting him to Dade County jail for safekeeping. A picture of the aftermath of the lynching was taken (Fig. 1-1). At its center is Stacy's hanged body, handcuffed and dressed in ordinary worker's clothes. Apart from a few rips in his trousers, no bruises, wounds or shots can be seen on his body, although, according to the New York *Times* quoting Deputy Wright, "[h]e was filled full of bullets."[1] The rope around Stacy's neck has cut deep into his throat but his face is neither distorted nor injured. He seems to have passed away without any pain. The narrative written into his body is one of a civilized and controlled execution devoid of any savage "rituals of blood."[2] In the background a group of white onlookers can be seen, consisting of three men, two women and four young girls, all dressed neatly in picnic-like and predominantly white clothing.[3] The man standing on the very left with his arms folded conveys the impression of profound satisfaction (but not lust for blood) over the lynching and the presence of women and children adds to the impression of overall approval of the event. The photograph creates the image of a civilized performance, enacted by a group of rational, determined and controlled people who did not kill "in fiendish glee," as Claude MacKay

Figure 1-1 "The Lynching of Rubin Stacy." July 19, 1935, Fort Lauderdale, FL. Taken from Allen, plate 57.

[1] Quoted after James Allen, et al., *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe, NM: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000) 185. All further quotes from the *Times* relating to the lynching of Stacy are taken from Allen. For the analysis of visual representations see esp. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Noonday Press, 1989). For a exhaustive discussion of visual representations of lynching as used in apologetic as well as oppositional texts see Dora Apel, *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 2004).

[2] The expression "ritual of blood" to describe lynching is taken from the title of Orlando Patterson's study *Rituals of Blood*: *the Consequences of Slavery in Two American Centuries* (Washington, DC: Civitas/Counterpoint, 1998).

[3] In my reproduction of the original photograph the second man from the left looks as if he had a dark skin color. A larger print of the photograph with a higher solution, however, clearly reveals that he is white. See Allen plate 57.

writes, but were meting out justice for the "usual crime" of rape and restituting a racial hierarchy visually reenacted in the contrast between the black victim and the white crowd.[4]

Soon after, the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People (NAACP) published a pamphlet (Fig. 1-2) that features on its front page the photograph depicting the aftermath of the lynching of Rubin Stacy. The use of such a photograph in the NAACP's anti-lynching campaign may seem strange since the impression conveyed by the picture is largely apologetic. The pamphlet, however, reinterprets the photograph by re-appropriating the meanings usually ascribed to blackness and whiteness. The caption under the photograph tells the reader "not [to] look at the Negro. His earthly problems are ended. Instead, look at the seven WHITE children who gaze at this gruesome spectacle." While the original intent of the photograph was to deter African-Americans from any assertion of equality, figured as the uninhibited access to white women, and to promote white supremacy, the pamphlet shifts the focus to the harmful effects lynching has for the moral development of children: "what psychological havoc is being wrought in the minds of the white children? Into what kinds of citizens will they grow up? What kind of America will they help to make after being familiarized with such an inhuman, law-destroying practice as lynching?" The pamphlet thus re-appropriates white supremacist discourse and stages resistance to lynching by redefining lynching from a physical threat to African-Americans to a moral threat to American civilization. It further challenges the dominant projection of lynching by relating the full story of the alleged crime. Quoting from the New York *Times*, the pamphlet discloses that "subsequent investigations revealed that Stacy, a homeless tenant farmer, had gone to the house to ask for food; the woman became frightened and screamed when she saw Stacy's face." Rather than being lynched for the "usual crime" of rape, Stacy was punished for "threatening and frightening a white woman," a crime which in the eyes of the lynchers justified "PHYSICAL torture for a few hours." The pamphlet thus re-inscribes lynching with a new meaning, presenting it as the quintessence of lawlessness and uncivilized behavior and

Do not look at the Negro.

His earthly problems are ended.

Instead, look at the seven WHITE children who gaze at this gruesome spectacle.

Is it horror or gloating on the face of the neatly dressed seven-year-old girl on the right?

Is the tiny four-year-old on the left old enough, one wonders, to comprehend the barbarism her elders have perpetrated?

Rubin Stacy, the Negro, who was lynched at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on July 19, 1935, for "threatening and frightening a white woman," suffered PHYSICAL torture for a few short hours. But what psychological havoc is being wrought in the minds of the white children? Into what kinds of citizens

Figure 1-2. "NAACP Pamphlet Supporting the Passage of the Costigan-Wagner Bill." NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 9, Frame 245. (Microfilm Edition).

[4] Claude McKay, "The Lynching," *Witnessing Lynching: American Writers Respond*, ed. Anne P. Rice (1920; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2003) 190.

implying that whenever an African-American is lynched the law is lynched, too.[5] By re-appropriating rather than directly contradicting the arguments used to represent lynching as civilized and justified reaction to a supposed black threat, it epitomizes the typical African-American response to lynching. In order to demonstrate to whites the need for their intervention in the fight against lynching it reiterates and subverts apologetic arguments in order to universalize the threat posed by lynching and presents resistance as a matter of intraracial and even national concern. Anti-lynching rhetoric turns what was originally intended to establish and legitimize African-American inferiority into a means of opposition.[6]

"The Anatomy of Resistance" is the attempt to explore representations of African-American responses to lynching from 1892 to 1936. My argument follows the rhetoric of anti-lynching through a time span of about forty-four years, covering what I consider the first phase of African-American response to lynching. The timeframe stretches from the publication of Ida B. Wells-Barnett's pamphlet in 1892 as one of the earliest texts protesting lynching to Ann Seymour Link's drama *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?*, which premiered in 1936. The texts written and published within these forty-four years all share two distinct characteristics. They all address a primarily (but not exclusively) white audience and attempt to involve them into the fight against lynching by emphasizing interracial sameness, figured for example as the common allegiance to civilizational progress. Resistance to lynching is presented as an interracial necessity since lynching threatens not only the life of African-Americans but also the ideological underpinnings of white civilization. The second defining feature refers to the mode of representation. African-American responses to lynching formulate an alternative history of lynching but remain "within" the dominant discourse. They reproduce prevailing racist notions about race, class, gender, and sexuality but reiterate them with a difference, that is, they subvert and re-appropriate them for the sake of resistance. Anti-lynching discourse thus is what Mikhail Bakhtin has termed a "double-voiced discourse" that seemingly imitates or reproduces dominant meanings but actually undermines them to voice opposition.[7]

During the mid-1930s, however, a decisive change of paradigm takes place and the emphasis on interracial sameness is replaced by the accentuation of more unilateral solutions

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[5] For the NAACP anti-lynching campaign see Charles Flint Kellog, *NAACP: a History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967) and Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1980).

[6] In her recently published book, Apel makes a similar point regarding especially visual representations of lynching. She states that visual representations were used to establish white supremacy but also to undermine it.

[7] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1981) 293-94.

to end lynching. This change was brought about by several social, historical, and cultural developments as well as scientific achievements. Lynching experienced an unprecedented publicity and received far more public attention than it had during the first two decades of the twentieth century, elevating it from a regionally restricted problem to a matter of national interest. W. Fitzhugh Brundage mentions as landmark events, which brought lynching to national and even international attention, the lynchings of Claude Neal (1934) and the Scottsboro trial held during the early 1930s, which even made American lynchings a matter of international concern. Furthermore, a wave of academic studies added to the publicity of lynching and helped to clear away several popular myths shrouding the public perception of the practice and expose it as a savage practice.[8] Finally, increasing black self-assurance, which culminated especially in the Harlem Renaissance, brought about the gradual demise of the aforementioned kind of rhetoric. To be sure, the strategy to create interracial sameness was not altogether discarded after the thirties but it was more and more overlaid by the emphasis on increased black self-confidence and direct confrontation as the antidote to end lynching. Interestingly, increased national awareness about lynching coincided with decreasing numbers of lynchings.

The exact number of lynchings in the USA is almost impossible to determine. Today, it is generally assumed that between 1880 and 1930 almost 5000 people were lynched, most of them in the former slaveholding states. The overwhelming majority were African-Americans.[9] Lynching became a mostly Southern and racialized practice, that is, a practice

[8] See Fitzhugh W. Brundage, *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880-1930* (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1993) 249. Further very "spectacular" cases were the lynching of Leo Frank (1915), Cleo Wright (1942), Charles Mack Parker (1959), and the recently reopened lynching of Emmett Till (1955). See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 224, 251, 255, 257. Harvard Sitkoff regards the lynching of Emmett Till as a starting point for the Civil Rights movement and the end of lynching as the dominating concern for racial relations. See Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1980* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) 49.

[9] For lynching totals see Richard Maxwell Brown, *Strain of Violence: Historical Studies of American Violence and Vigilantism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1975) 320-26; Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 8; James E. Cutler, *Lynch-Law: An Investigation into the History of Lynching in the United States* (1905; Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1969) esp. 155-192; Philip Dray, *At the Hands of Persons Unknown: The Lynching of Black America* (New York: Random House, 2002) viii; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign against Lynching* (New York: Columbia UP, 1979) 134-35; Monroe Work, ed., *The Negro Yearbook: An Annual Encyclopedia of the Negro, 1931-1932* (Tuskegee: Negro Yearbook Publishing Co., 1931) 293. For the totals of single states see Stewart E. Tolnay and E.M. Beck, *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930* (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1995) 269-70 and especially George C. Wright, *Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940: Lynchings, Mob Rule, and "Legal Lynchings"* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1990) 71, who found a deviation between the official totals and his own findings. He was able to document 353 lynchings as opposed to 205 officially registered lynchings and rightly suggests that also the totals of other states have probably been largely underestimated. The impossibility of determining the exact numbers of lynchings is not necessarily the result of wanton obscuring but also owing to the fact that many lynchings went unregistered. Also the problem of defining what exactly a lynching is makes it difficult to produce an exact number. For the problems about defining a lynching see Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002).

directed almost exclusively against African-Americans, only after the Civil War and Reconstruction. During that time, also the frequency and cruelty of the performance increased. While lynchings originally did not necessarily end with the victim's death, they now did and were more often than not accompanied by long and gruesome methods of torture and mutilations.[10] It was also during this time that the ritual character of lynching emerged and came to dominate representations of lynching.[11]

The study of lynching started around the turn of the century and approached it mainly from a sociological or psychological and later also historical angle. The earliest attempt to explore lynching was made by James E. Cutler in 1905. In his book *Lynch-Law,* he condemns lynching as "our country's national crime" and "national disgrace" and calls for the creation of "a strong public sentiment against it." Nevertheless, he undercuts his scientific achievements by reproducing the dominant apologetic discourse about lynching. Cutler defines the practice as rooted in basic democratic procedures and figures lynching as quasi legal justice. He argues that "[t]he people consider themselves a law unto themselves. They make the laws; therefore they can unmake them. Since they say what a judge can do, they entertain the idea that they may do this thing themselves."[12] It was not until the 1920s and 30s that less prejudiced studies attempted to alter the dominant image of lynching. Under the auspices of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), a group of Southern scientists including Arthur F. Raper, Howard W. Odum, Ruper B. Vance, and Thomas J. Woofter, jr., launched a methodical investigation of the motivations that lay behind lynching. Most of the studies produced during that time approach lynching from a sociological perspective and interpret it as a manifestation and result of Southern backwardness and as a relic of a

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The existence of so called "legal lynchings" further makes it almost impossible to give an exact number of lynchings. "Legal lynchings" were death sentences enforced by the imminent threat of mob violence. For legal lynchings see Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 133; Arthur F. Raper, *The Tragedy of Lynching* (1933; New York: Dover Publications, 1970) 46; Wright, *Racial Violence* 215-50; George C. Wright, "By the Book: The Legal Executions of Kentucky Blacks," *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the New South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1997) 250-270.

[10] See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 3-8; Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 130-32.

[11] Garland states that the staging of lynching as public spectacle or ritual reached its heyday between 1889 and 1893 but continued to influence lynchings until the 1930s. See David Garland, "Penal Excess and Surplus Meaning: Public Torture Lynchings in 20th Century America," March 2004, *The Center for Cultural Sociology, Yale University*, June 30, 2004 <http://research.yale.edu/ccs/wpapers/Garland%20David%20 pesm.pdf> 3, 51.

[12] Cutler 1, 277, 269. Katrin Schwenk therefore regards *Lynch-Law* as a prime example for the conflation of lynching as performance and cultural narrative. See Katrin Schwenk, "Lynching and Rape: Border Cases in African American History and Fiction," *The Black Columbiad: Defining Moments in African-American Literature and Culture*, eds. Werner Sollors and Maria Diedrich (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994) 313. For a general overview of the history of the study of lynching see W. Fitzhugh Brundage, introduction, *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the New South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1997) 1-20. For an overview of most studies and for a comprehensive history of lynching see Dray.

primitive past.[13] In *Lynchings and What They Mean*, the CIC names poverty, Southern backwardness, and cultural isolation as the motivation behind lynching.[14] The CIC explains lynching as an outlet for economic frustrations and recommends economic progress and the improvement of the educational situation in the South to prevent lynching.[15] One of the most influential monograph studies of lynching produced during the 1930s is Arthur Raper's *The Tragedy of Lynching*. He traces the liability of lynching in a region to the size of the black population and argues that lynchings are more likely in regions with a smaller and thus more defenseless black population. Stronger administrative forces in the South could easily solve the problem of lynching.[16] Interestingly, Raper integrates lynching into what he assumes to be an underlying tradition of Southern violence and therefore he is more concerned with answering the question why violence in the South takes the form of lynching and not why it erupts in the first place. One of the most prominent explanations for lynching developed during the 1930s is the South's dependency on the price of cotton. Many studies which approach lynching as an outlet for economic frustrations point to the inverse relationship between a decrease in cotton prices and an increase of lynching.[17] More recent approaches however challenge this explanation as too exclusive and reductive.[18] Amy L. Wood for example explains that a better insight into the geographical distribution of lynching is attained "not solely through the instability of cotton prices, but other social and economic conditions that cotton farming gave rise to." She refers to Tolnay and Beck who declare that

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[13] Scientific studies have made invaluable contributions to the exposure of lynching as barbaric practice. See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 215-17; Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: the Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1983) 28-31.

[14] See Committee on Interracial Cooperation, *Lynchings and What They Mean: General Findings of the Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching* (Atlanta, GA: The Commission, 1931), 43.

[15] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 9, argues that progress was not the remedy but reason for lynching. See also Grantham xviii-xix.

[16] See Raper 27. NAACP investigator Walter F. White presents similar findings in his study *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (1929; Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 2001). For a more detailed analysis of White's study see chapter five. Hubert Blalock, however, contradicts Raper. He assumes that the larger the black population, the larger its visibility and thus also the possibility of a lynching. See Hubert M. Blalock, *Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations* (New York: Wiley, 1967).

[17] See for instance Raper 30-31, 38 and CIC, *Lynchings and What They Mean* 43. For a discussion of studies citing variations in the price of cotton as responsible for the rise and fall of lynching as well as a revision of this theory see Tolnay and Beck. For an overview of the discussion about lynching and cotton prices as well as the "psychopathology of lynching" see Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 560-66.

[18] Brundage criticizes the exclusive reduction of lynching as a result of poverty and economic hardship dominant during the 1930s as insufficient as the South was already in the process of modernization. See Brundage, introduction 7. For other studies questioning the connection between lynching and cotton prices see Carl I. Hovland and Robert R. Sears, "Minor Studies of Aggression: Correlation of Economic Indices with Lynchings," *Journal of Psychology* 9 (1940): 301-10 and Donald P. Green, Jack Glaser, and Andrew Rich, "From Lynching to Gay Bashing: The Elusive Connection between Economic Conditions and Hate Crime," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 75:1 (1998): 82-85.

cotton regions had larger and more visible black communities as well as a greater indebtedness to the slavery past, which in turn heightened the possibility of lynching.[19]

The other major strain of lynching studies during the 20s and 30s approaches it from a psychological perspective. John Dollard pioneered the explanation of lynching as a form of publicly acceptable form of violence (defined as such by Southern culture) and an outlet for white aggressions (produced through economic or other frustrations) against a defenseless group. One of his most influential and insightful findings is that lynching supports and upholds a rigid caste system in the South, that is, he locates lynching as a means for upholding white (economic) superiority.[20] Other psychological approaches to lynching regard it as a practice founded in a deep-seated crisis about gender roles and sexuality. Lynching is the psychosexual projection of repressed white male desires and fears of castration upon the black male body. The ensuing destruction and mutilation of the black body purges the white community of their feelings of guilt. Through the symbolical and literal castration of the black victim white men are able to reclaim their own projections of masculinity.[21] Lillian Smith therefore regards African-American victims as "receptacle for every man's dammed-up hate, and a receptacle for every man's forbidden feelings."[22]

Apart from the pioneering studies by John Hope Franklin and Vernon L .Wharton, historical studies of lynching have been lacking until the 1970s.[23] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, Joel Williamson and Edward L. Ayers were the first to provide lynching with a necessary historical dimension. Hall and Williamson both approach lynching as an outgrowth of a society troubled with sexual morality and overemphasizing white supremacy, idealized masculine values and the Southern code of honor. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's landmark study *Revolt against Chivalry*, an autobiography of ASWPL-activist Jessie Daniel Ames, is one of

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[19] Amy Louise Wood, "Spectacles of Suffering: Witnessing Lynching in the New South, 1880-1930," diss. Emory U, 2002, 13. Tolnay and Beck, *Festival of Violence* 157-59.

[20] See John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (1937; New York: Harper, 1949); John Dollard, et al., *Frustration and Aggression* (1939; New Haven: Yale UP, 1968). For a new approach to the frustration-aggression theory see *Festival of Violence* chapter 5.

[21] See esp. Philip Resnikoff, "A Psychoanalytic Study of Lynching," *Psychoanalytic Review* 20 (1933): 421-27. Readings of lynching as propelled by psychosexual desires (hetero- and homosexual) or release for economically caused frustrations also inform Wilbur J. Cash's classic study *The Mind of the South* (1941; New York: Vintage Books, 1960) esp. 117-20, as well as more recent approaches like Trudier Harris, *Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literary Lynching and Burning Rituals* (Bloomington: U of Indiana P, 1984); Joel Williamson, *The Crucible of Race: Black-white Relations in the American South since Emancipation* (New York: Oxford UP, 1984); William F. Pinar, *The Gender of Racial Politics and Violence in America: Lynching, Prison Rape, and the Crisis of Masculinity* (New York: Lang, 2001) and Robyn Wiegman, "The Anatomy of Lynching," *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 81-113.

[22] Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (New York: Norton, 1978) 162-63.

[23] John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1941); Vernon L. Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi, 1865-1890* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1947).

the first studies to expose the ideological underpinning of the lynching-for-rape narrative and the translation of the struggle for economic and racial superiority into sexualized and gendered terms. Hall contends that lynching emerged as a reaction to the dislocations and upheavals attending the modernization of the South as well as the predominance of traditional race and gender constructions. She reasons that lynching has a vital social function as it buttresses the racial, cultural and social hierarchy of the South. Joel Williamson in *The Crucible of Race* compares the rhetoric of racism, especially the scientific racism rampant at the turn of the century, and the increase of lynching during the last decade of the nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century. He contends that the rhetoric of what he calls "radical racists" helped to make lynching possible and perpetuate it. Both, the radicals and lynching, provided each other with justifications and authority "while drowning out voices of restraint and moderation."[24] Similar to Hall he contends that lynching fortified the racial hierarchy of the South. Edward Ayers in his two studies *Vengeance and Justice* and *The Promise of the New South* situates lynching within the context of antebellum vigilantism and collective violence and argues that it emerged out of the combined impact of economic and social transformations as well as the dislocations after the Civil War.[25] He endorses Bertram Wyatt-Brown's explanation of the persistence and acceptance of lynching as the result of the integration of lynching into Southern customs (especially the Southern code of honor and chivalry) and its perception as an expression of a cultural tradition.[26] Ayers supplements Wyatt-Brown's explanation with political and economic motivations, especially the depression at the end of the nineteenth century. Growing racial alienation further added to white insecurity which found an outlet in lynching. In short, lynching is the result of "apparently immutable features of the nineteenth-century South: race hatred, sexual fears, honor, intense moralism, and localistic republicanism."[27] Recently, more and more historians concentrate their investigations on single states or their studies take the form of in-depth case studies of one particularly notorious lynching.[28]

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[24] Brundage, introduction 12.

[25] Edward L. Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th Century South* (New York: Oxford UP, 1984); Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992).

[26] Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford UP, 1982).

[27] Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice* 265.

[28] This list is just a rough overview and by far not exhaustive. For studies with a regionally limited focus see for instance Brundage, *Lynching in the New South*; Juanita W. Crudele, "A Lynching Bee: Butler County Style," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* (1980): 59-71; Walter Howard, *Lynchings: Extralegal Executions in Florida During the 1930s* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna UP, 1995); James M. SoRelle, "The 'Waco Horror': The Lynching of Jesse Washington," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 86 (1983): 517-36; Wright, *Racial Violence in Kentucky*; Beth Crabb, "May 1930: White Man's Justice for a Black Man's Crime," *Journal of Negro History* 75

Comparing the complexities of lynching in Virginia and Georgia, W. Fitzhugh Brundage provides one of the most insightful social-historical analyses of lynching. Unlike earlier studies, *Lynching in the New South* proposes an approach which takes into account the historical and regional variations of lynching in order to explain oscillations in the frequency and form of lynching as well as regional divergences. Brundage develops a matrix which distinguishes between four different kinds of lynching, including terrorist mobs, private mobs, posses, and mass mobs, depending on the size of the mob, its organization and motivation as well as the varying degree of ritualization. His most valuable contribution to the study of lynching is the correction of the assumption about the monolithic quality of lynching when he presents a far more detailed evaluation of the complex character of lynching than earlier studies.

The explication of variations in the performance of lynching also motivates the study by Tolnay and Beck. They employ statistical methods to account for geographical fluctuations in the frequency of lynching. Rather than focusing on state boundaries, they concentrate on local economic and political conditions. Areas dependent on cotton farming were especially taken with lynching. They argue that within the diverse geography of the New South, lynching totals in those areas which depended on cotton farming were higher than in the mountainous regions of the Appalachian states and areas dominated by tobacco or rice farming. Yet, as mentioned earlier, they deny a direct interrelation of lynching and the price of cotton.[29]

(1990): 29-40. For studies focusing on one especially notorious lynching see for instance Ann Field Alexander, "Like an Evil Wind: The Roanoke Riot of 1893 and the Lynching of Thomas Smith," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 100 (1992): 173-206; Dominic J. Capeci, jr., *The Lynching of Cleo Wright* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1998); Dennis Downey and Raymond Hyser, *No Crooked Death: Coatesville, Pennsylvania, and the Lynching of Zachariah Walker* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1991); Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1987); Mary Louise Ellis, "'Rain Down Fire': The Lynching of Sam Hose," (Dissertation, Florida State U, 1992); Gene L. Howard, *Death at Cross Plains: An American Reconstruction Tragedy* (Birmingham: U of Alabama P, 1994); James R. McGovern, *Anatomy of a Lynching: The Killing of Claude Neal* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1982); Christopher Metress, ed., *The Lynching of Emmett Till: A Documentary Narrative* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2002); Howard Smead, *Blood Justice: The Lynching of Charles Mack Parker* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986); Stephen J. Whitfield, *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till* (New York: Free Press, Macmillan, 1988); James Madison, *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

[29] Tolnay and Beck, *Festival of Violence*. Other studies using mathematical models relate the likelihood of lynching to the population density, education levels, per capita income, the frequency of legal executions, and the political parties dominant in a given area. See E.M. Beck and Steward E. Tolnay, "The Killing Fields of the Deep South: The Market for Cotton and the Lynching of Blacks, 1882-1930," *American Sociological Review* 55 (1990): 526-39; Jay Corzine, Lin Huff-Corzine, and James Creech, "The Tenant Labor Market and Lynching in the South: A Test of the Split Labor Market Theory," *Sociological Inquiry* 58 (1988): 261-78; James Inverarity, "Populism and Lynching in Louisiana: A Test of Erickson's Theory of the Relation Between Boundary Crises and Repressive Justice," *American Sociological Review* 41 (1992): 262-82; Sarah A. Soule, "Populism and Black Lynching in Georgia, 1890-1900," *Social Forces* 71 (1992): 431-49.

Many of the more recent studies concern themselves with the question whether lynching is a modern phenomenon or an obsolete relict. Orlando Patterson and Donald J. Mathews argue for a religious interpretation of lynching as archaic scapegoat ritual in times of social crisis which helped to facilitate the transition from one state of society to another.[30] Likewise, Brundage regards lynching as an ahistorical phenomenon and the attempt to arrest the progress of modernization.[31] He deems lynching the conservative and reactionary attempt to retain a threatened status quo in social, economic, cultural, and political matters.[32] Others like Grace E. Hale and Jacquelyn Goldsby contradict such views and instead regard lynching as a modern phenomenon. Especially the deployment of modern media like photography and the circulation of narratives and images through mass media, the advertising of lynching, or the use of trains to bring spectators make lynching a modern form of consumption and representation. Both regard the deployment of those new media and technical developments as responsible for the perpetuation of lynching.[33] Fuoss also interprets lynchings as performances employed to escape the suffocating restrictions of a vanishing Victorianism and thus as part of a process of modernization in the South.[34] Wood ties both positions together: lynch mobs made use of modern technology they felt both threatened by and also attracted to, but attempted to lend authority to their performance through aligning it with older and established rituals. As such, lynching was part of a transitional phase in Southern history.[35]

From a cultural perspective, lynching has been approached as discourse rather than as a social phenomenon. Robyn Wiegman, Martha Hodes, and Sandra Gunning explore the intertwining of race and gender in the discourse of lynching as well as the construction and legitimation of power structures. As they will be dealt with in more detail in chapter three, it will suffice to simply mention them here.[36] Christopher Waldrep in his book *The Many Faces*

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[30] Orlando Patterson, "Feasts of Blood," *Rituals of Blood*, ed. Orlando Patterson (Washington, DC: Civitas/Counterpoint, 1998), 171-224; Donald J. Mathews, "Southern Rite of Human Sacrifice," *Journal of Southern Religion* 3 (2000): 1-36.

[31] See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 3. For a similar view see Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice* 238-55; Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 144-45.

[32] See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 14, 19.

[33] See Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998) 199-239; Jacqueline Denise Goldsby, "After Great Pain: The Cultural Logic of Lynching and the Problem of Realist Representation in America, 1882-1922," Dissertation, Yale U, 1998.

[34] Lynchings provided the "opportunity to do things that Victorian social mores normally kept them from doing, to see things that that Victorian social mores normally kept them from seeing, and to speak of things that Victorian social mores normally kept them from talking about." Kirk W. Fuoss, "Lynching Performances, Theatres of Violence," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 19.1 (1999) 24.

[35] See Wood, "Spectacles" 21-24. For the interpretation of ritual as a means to facilitate the transition of a community into another state see especially Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 94-131.

[36] Wiegman, *American Anatomies*; Martha Hodes, "The Sexualization of Reconstruction Politics: White Women and Black Men in the South after the Civil War," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3.3 (1993): 402-17; Sandra

of Judge Lynch rejects the notion of lynching as a distinct form of human practice and argues for the purely discursive quality of lynching. He claims that lynching was not a certain kind of action which could be unambiguously identified but merely a word used to shape the public perception of violence. That is, lynching was a semantically variable label applied to various forms of violence in order to "justify or challenge the nation's tolerance for violence." Therefore, Waldrep clearly distinguishes between lynching as word and deed, discourse and practice, and asserts that lynching was first and foremost a discursive design.[37]

Other scholars have analyzed the historical memory of lynching. Charlotte Wolf explores the impact that the memory of white-on-black violence still has on the construction of black and white group meanings and interracial relations.[38] Ronal L. Baker examines the connection between local journalism and memory. Analyzing the lynching of George Ward in Terre Haute, Indiana, in 1901 he maintains that "newspapers […] offered legend makers ready-made material for oral stories in the development of a local legend about a lynching."[39] Lynching ballads as folk presentations of lynching are the focus of Bruce E. Baker's article. He explores how these ballads functioned to explain lynching to Southerners, to construct a "social memory" of lynching and to integrate it into Southern culture.[40] While Wolf and both Ronald and Bruce Baker examine lynching and memory on a regionally restricted scope, Jonathan Markovitz in his recently published book *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory* approaches the remembrance of lynchings on a national scale in order to determine how lynching became a metaphor for racial violence and relationships in America's collective memory. In chapter one of his study, Markovitz explores responses to lynching, which he approaches as a metaphor for racism in general:

> while actual lynchings worked to provide lessons about the nature of southern society, the trope of lynching has been used to make implicit comparisons between the nature of

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Gunning. *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890-1912* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996).

[37] Waldrep, *Many Faces of Judge Lynch* 4. See also "Word and Deed: The Language of Lynching, 1820-1953," *Lethal Imagination: Violence and Brutality in American History*, ed. Michael A. Bellesiles (New York: New York UP, 1999) 229-258. Also Vron Ware points to the semantic variability of lynching when she writes that "[t]he word [lynching] is now used so carelessly that its meaning has lost much oft its association with racial terror." Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History* (New York: Verso, 1992) 170.

[38] Charlotte Wolf, "Constructions of a Lynching," *Sociological Inquiry* 62.1 (1992): 83-97.

[39] Ronald L. Baker, "Ritualized Violence and Local Journalism in the Development of a Lynching Legend," *Fabula* 29.3-4 (1988) 317.

[40] Bruce E. Baker, "North Carolina Lynching Ballads," *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the New South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1997) 219-45.

> particularly contentious events in the contemporary United States and what is now widely understood to be an exceptionally horrific part of our national past.[41]

The struggle against lynching therefore was largely a struggle about the meaning of lynching. Lynching opponents "agreed that the struggle against mob violence had to be waged largely in the realm of public opinion and that they could not allow traditional lynching narratives to stand uncontested."[42] My study starts from a similar assumption, however, I do not regard lynching as metaphor but as discourse and I am not so much concerned with the collective memory of lynching than the actual construction of power relations lynching provoked.

Despite a growing interest in lynching within the last few years, the field of African-American responses to lynching is comparatively untouched. The few existing studies approach lynching as historical or social practice. Robert L. Zangrando's *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching*, Claudine L. Ferrell's *Nightmare and Dream: Antilynching in Congress*, Charles Flint Kellog's *NAACP: a History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* and Herbert Shapiro's *White Violence and Black Response* all chronicle the diverse forms and manifestations of black resistance to racist violence and black oppression. However, they largely limit their focus on such manifestations as parades, demonstrations, political activities or the passage of anti-lynching bills.[43] Brundage's chapter about the history of African-American resistance in Virginia and Georgia deals with the different motivations of anti-lynching in both states. He explains that in Virginia anti-lynching efforts were instigated by a conservative government which was worried about the outbreak of lawlessness and anarchy. In Georgia, the Bourbon Democrats and later the radical racists largely endorsed or tolerated lynching so that anti-lynching efforts were mainly instigated by social reformers like Henry Grady, editor of the Atlanta *Constitution*.[44]

Studies which explore anti-lynching as discourse fail to provide a comprehensive analysis or overall theory of resistance as they concentrate on either isolated and occasional representations or individual activist or writers. Gail Bederman, for example, examines Ida B.

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[41] Jonathan Markovitz, *Legacies of Lynching: Racial Violence and Memory* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2004) xviii.
[42] Markovitz 2.
[43] Herbert Shapiro, *White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1988); Claudine L. Ferrell, *Nightmare and Dream: Antilynching in Congress, 1917-21* (New York: Garland, 1987). The number of anti-lynching bills introduced into Congress between 1880 and 1951 was about 250. See Marlene Park, "Lynching and Anti-Lynching: Art and Politics in the 1930's," *Prospects* 18 (1993), 316.
[44] The proponents of radical racism were Tom Watson, Charles E. Smith (a.k.a. Bill Arp, editor of the Atlanta *Constitution*), John Temple Graves of the Atlanta *News*, Rebecca Latimer Felton, who published manly in the Atlanta *Journal*, and Hoke Smith, Governor of Georgia and editor of the Atlanta *Journal*. They all defended lynching as one of the most effective ways for protecting Southern white womanhood from the dangers of the black rapist. See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 198-200.

Wells-Barnett's anti-lynching campaign. Wells re-appropriated the dominant discourse on lynching, masculinity and civilization in order to redefine lynching as a threat to Northern middle-class conceptions of masculinity and thus enforce their involvement in the struggle for the abolishment of lynching.[45] In a similar way, Hazel V. Carby analyzes selected writings by Anna Julia Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Pauline Hopkins. From a feminist perspective, she approaches lynching and rape as instruments of internal colonization, especially of the female body, and states that the discourse of lynching "manipulate[s] sexual ideologies to justify political and economic subordination." Rather than attempting to formulate a theory of resistance she concentrates on the presence of black and white women in the discourse about lynching.[46] Apart from Markovitz's chapter in *Legacies of Lynching*, one of the most insightful studies of anti-lynching is Brundage's article "The Roar on the Other Side of Silence: Black Resistance and White Violence in the American South, 1880-1940." He explores "informal, unorganized resistance" and lists several forms of protest which all attempt to undermine white supremacy. Although rather cursory and largely indebted to a sociohistorical approach, his findings are among the most revealing in the field. He characterizes resistance to lynching as the re-appropriation of the language of the oppressor for the sake of resistance and thus revalues a formerly ignored manifestation of resistance. However, he fails to provide a methodological and profound analysis of anti-lynching as discourse.[47] Likewise, Dora Apel's study *Imagery of Lynching: Black Men, White Women, and the Mob* explores the use of visual representations of lynching (especially photography) by anti-lynching forces and artists. She focuses especially on the 1930s and later representations and similar to this study argues that resistance to lynching often evolved as the appropriation of apologetic motives, which were originally intended to feed the construction of white supremacist ideologies.

"The Anatomy of Resistance" is the attempt to examine this mostly unexplored field and contribute to the ongoing process of reconstructing a silenced African-American history and culture by providing an in-depth analysis of resistance to lynching. Conceiving of anti-

[45] Gail Bederman, "'Civilization,' the Decline of Middle-Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells's Antilynching Campaign (1892-94)." *Radical History Review* 52 (1992): 5-30.
[46] Hazel V. Carby, "'On the Threshold of Woman's Era': Lynching, Empire, and Sexuality in Black Feminist Theory," *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, jr. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) 309.
[47] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "The Roar on the Other Side of Silence: Black Resistance and White Violence in the American South, 1880-1940," *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the New South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1997) 271. The anthologies Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens, eds. *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) and Anne P. Rice, ed. *Witnessing Lynching: American Writers Respond* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2003)., provide material for the further study of resistance.

lynching not as social fact but discourse, I analyze paradigmatic representations of resistance to lynching in order to reveal the underlying strategies and methods employed to construct a counter-hegemonic history of lynching which challenges the authority and "truth" of lynching discourse. My selection of texts includes canonical works such as Charles W. Chesnutt's novel *The Marrow of Tradition* or Angelina Weld Grimké's drama *Rachel* as well as lesser known texts such as Annie Nathan Meyer's drama *Black Souls* or Walter White's novel *The Fire in the Flint*. Furthermore, my analysis will encompass several newspaper and magazine articles, editorials and other non-fictional texts in order to provide a more profound positioning and contextualization of anti-lynching rhetoric within American culture. The goal of my study is not to provide a catalogue of possible responses to lynching and spread out the diversity of anti-lynching rhetoric. Rather, I want to define the characteristics of what I consider a tradition of resistance and chronicle its emergence and demise.

The corpus of my study encompasses primarily texts written by African-American authors.[48] My selection is based upon the assumption that the discourse of lynching is a racial discourse which is first and foremost designed to legitimize African-American oppression. Therefore, I will focus my attention on the responses and reactions made by the primal recipients. Of course, lynching was opposed from many directions and resistance was not limited to one race. Historically, anti-lynching therefore cannot be understood as homogenous or uniform entity, even more so since the perception of lynching varied profoundly: while African-Americans experienced lynching as physical violence and an instrument of oppression, whites saw lynching more as a moral, legal or political problem (if they perceived it as a problem at all). Accordingly, the motivations to combat lynching differed markedly. African-Americans opposed lynching to resist their subordination and murder, others (mostly whites) were concerned about the decay of law and order, national unity and the South's reputation which, they feared, would suffer irreparable damages and shy away Northern investors. The history of responses to lynching unfolds as a continuum of possible reactions, ranging from the strategic or partial acceptance of lynching, to moderate or accommodationist responses, to militant strategies of violent resistance. I will focus my attention on those responses which regard lynching as the attempt to establish a racial hierarchy in the post-Reconstruction South and impose certain meanings upon blackness in order to define and legitimize power structures and the ascription of an African-American identity as Other. Most of these responses were written by African-American authors.

[48] I will include white authors only in the last chapter.

The perception of lynching as political or economic threat resurfaces in the rhetoric of anti-lynching. Since African-Americans tried to find ways to involve whites in the fight against lynching but the latter were "officially" not immediately affected, the rhetoric of anti-lynching integrates white concerns about lynching as moral, legal, or civilizational threat into its conception. Lynching is represented as harmful to white economic, political, moral and civilizational interests rather than as threatening to African-Americans. Nevertheless, the goal of anti-lynching rhetoric is not primarily to abolish a rampant spirit of lawlessness but to end African-American oppression.

In my analysis I will not progress chronologically but thematically. Chapter two will provide the necessary theoretical foundation for my analysis of the rhetoric of anti-lynching. I will briefly review existing approaches to the study of African-American literature and culture as well as theories of resistance. Based on these studies I will sketch the basic outlines of a theory of resistance to lynching and argue that until the mid-1930s anti-lynching texts tried to stage resistance to lynching by imitating the arguments used in the dominant discourse and subverting them for the sake of resistance. Homi K. Bhabha characterizes this mechanism of resistance as mimicry, as reiteration with a difference.[49] Addressing primarily a white audience, anti-lynching texts thus try to create sameness where the rhetoric of lynching constructs otherness. In other words, anti-lynching rhetoric represents lynching as a problem of national significance and tries to involve whites in the fight against lynching by presenting lynching as an interracial concern.

In chapter three, I will use Sutton E. Griggs's novel *The Hindered Hand: or, the Reign of the Repressionist* (1905) as well as Thomas Nelson Page's "The Lynching of Negroes: Its Cause and its Prevention" (1904) and Mary Church Terrell's "Lynching From a Negro's Point of View" (1904) to demonstrate how African-American texts reiterate the language of the oppressor but modify it to effectively voice opposition to lynching. I will first focus on Terrell's article, which was written as a reaction to Page's defense of lynching. Terrell meticulously reiterates Page's arguments, invalidates them and employs them to oppose the dominant projections of lynching and blackness. Her text paradigmatically exemplifies the aforementioned rhetorical strategy underlying all of the texts analyzed in this study. As both texts are directly related to each other, I will use them to demonstrate the parallels and modifications made by Terrell and as an introduction to the strategy of reiteration with a difference. The remaining part of chapter three will then concentrate on Griggs's novel in

[49] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994) esp. 85-91.

order position the strategy of reiteration with a difference within the wider network of lynching discourse. Although also Griggs's novel was written as a direct response to Thomas Dixon's novel *The Leopard's Spots* (1902), I will not limit my analysis to determining parallels and modifications between both texts. Instead, I situate Griggs within the larger field of lynching and anti-lynching discourse and use him to epitomize how African-Americans subvert arguments originally employed for their subordination.

The remaining four chapters deal with different variations of the rhetoric of anti-lynching. They are divided into two larger sections, which chronicle the emergence and demise of two distinct types of anti-lynching rhetoric. The chapters four and five analyze anti-lynching texts which try to create sameness by using the concept of civilization as a matter of interracial concern. Using Charles W. Chesnutt's novel *The Marrow of Tradition* (1899), James Weldon Johnson's editorials in the New York *Age* as well as other miscellaneous writings and Ida B. Wells-Barnett's pamphlets *Southern Horrors* (1892) and *A Red Record* (1895) I will demonstrate how anti-lynching rhetoric intersects with other turn-of-the-century discourses in order to represent lynching as a threat to white civilization. Chapter five is an analysis of Walter White's *The Fire in the Flint* (1925). The novel records the gradual demise of the strategy of resistance sketched in chapter four. Although White still uses civilization as a matter of interracial concern, he abandons the creation of sameness. His novel registers the growing frustration over the still unsolved problem of lynching and calls for a stronger African-American self-confidence to find a unilateral solution for lynching.

The chapters six and seven concentrate on motherhood instead of civilization. In chapter six, I will use Angelina Weld Grimké's *Rachel* (1916), Georgia Douglas Johnson's dramas *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* (1930), *Safe* (1929) and *Sunday Morning in the South* (1925), Ann Seymour Link's *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* (1936) and Annie Nathan Meyer's *Black Souls* (1924/32) as prime manifestations of the attempt to create interracial sameness based on affective empathy over black maternal sufferings. The final chapter includes Corrie Crandall Howell's *The Forfeit* (1925), May Miller's *Nails and Thorns* (1933), Joseph S. Mitchell's *Son-Boy* (1928) as well as several newspaper articles. They will be used to demonstrate the gradual demise of the aforementioned domestic anti-lynching texts. Similar to chapter five, the texts shift the emphasis away from interracial to unilateral solutions. Motherhood no longer functions to create a racially overlapping sameness but exemplifies a growing African-American self-confidence in the attempt to oppose lynching and white attempts to fight lynching as a threat to civilizational ideals.

2. The Anatomy of Resistance

In this chapter I will lay the foundation for the analysis of anti-lynching texts by considering several theoretical positions which will help to illuminate the inherent logic of those texts. In the first part I will provide an analysis of the rhetoric of lynching from two different perspectives. Firstly, lynching will be approached as discourse, that is, as a means of creating and sustaining power structures. Using the works of Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Henry L. Gates and several other scholars in the field of postcolonial and African-American studies, I will try to explain the workings of lynching as discourse, how it installs and justifies power structures and what the nature of these structures is. These preliminary considerations are a necessary preparation for the analysis of anti-lynching texts, which of course try to undermine those power structures. Secondly, I will examine how lynching was represented in apologetic texts. Yet, it has to be mentioned that this division of my analytical efforts is only of a hermeneutical nature. In fact, discourse and representation are not to be understood as separate entities that can be analyzed distinctly from each other. Rather, my goal in this second part is only a shift in the emphasis of my considerations. While the first part of this chapter will clarify the nature of the power structures produced by lynching, the second part will be more concerned with the means by which those structures are produced, that is, how lynching was represented in various texts. I will argue that at the turn of the twentieth century a mode of representing lynching emerged which shaped the construction of subsequent lynchings and is responsible for the enormous persuasiveness of lynching and the power structures it produced. The analysis of lynching as discourse and representation is necessary for the third and final part of this chapter. Predicated upon the analysis of the rhetoric of lynching I will sketch the outlines of a theory of resistance which will encompass some basic considerations concerning modes and strategies of resistance to cultural hegemony but also a specific theory of resistance to lynching. I will try to develop what I consider the unifying elements for all texts compiled in this study, namely, their use of lynching in the attempt to undermine African-American oppression and their strategy of resistance.

2.1. Lynching as Discourse

In this first section, lynching will be considered as a discourse which tries to construct power structures, which then install and legitimize white supremacy through the subordination of

African-Americans. My understanding of lynching starts from the assumption that the talk about lynching was not primarily the talk about an act of physical violence. Rather, when people at the turn of the century and after were talking about lynching they were talking about matters of race, class, gender, national identity, and most importantly power structures. Moreover, they were not just discussing those issues. The various texts dealing with lynching did not only "respond to" or "reproduce" existing tensions and discourses as Sandra Gunning assumes in her brilliant study *Race, Rape and Lynching*.[1] As Sielke contends citing Louis Althusser in her definition of rape: "literature does not *express* its historical conditions; it rather transforms […] a 'determinate given raw material into a determinate product'."[2] Accordingly, the talk about lynching was central for *shaping* and *determining* (not just reproducing) the perception and definition of race as the essential element in the construction of power relations. In other words, the rhetoric of lynching inscribes certain racial, gender and class identities for white as well as black men and women in order to resurrect white male dominance after the overthrow of traditional power relations, which was brought about by the abolition of slavery, the emancipation of African-Americans, the growing independence of white women, and the ensuing profound political, economic, cultural and social dislocations.[3] What Sielke notes for the rhetoric of rape thus also applies to lynching: "transposed into discourse, rape turns into a rhetorical device, an insistent figure for other social, political, and economic [and gender] concerns and conflicts."[4] Lynching becomes the major turn-of-the-century rhetorical device for determining black and white identities and the institutionalization of white supremacy. Although lynching was probably not the only rhetorical figure employed for the sake of identity formation it certainly was one of the most employed and most widely discussed figures. It was impossible to talk about race, gender, class, or national identity without talking about lynching.

Predicated upon the assumption that the rhetoric of lynching is the attempt to resurrect and legitimize white male power, this study further regards lynching as epistemic violence inscribing an African-American identity that serves to (re-)establish, legitimize and naturalize white male power over African-Americans (as well as white women) while preventing the

[1] Gunning 16.
[2] Sabine Sielke, *Reading Rape: The Rhetoric of Sexual Violence in American Literature and Culture, 1790-1990* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002) 3.
[3] See for example Tolnay and Beck 69ff., who contend that political fears were supplemented with economic fears of black competition and advancement.
[4] Sielke 2.

formulation of any alternative identities.[5] The dominant mechanism employed in the rhetoric of lynching is the creation of difference by ascribing sexually and socially deviant behavior to the racial Other. The resulting construal of a mutually exclusive racial hierarchy coordinates gender and class issues to fit this bifurcation and give meaning to the otherwise semantically variable term "race."[6] Finally, the identification of the white race with civilization makes lynching a defense of white civilization from an onslaught of black savagery and represents white male empowerment as the altruistic attempt to preserve the safety of white women, the survival of the white race, and the progress of civilization. Lynching, as Hazel V. Carby establishes, is therefore an act of "internal colonization" subordinating African-Americans (and white women) through representations as Other.[7] She demonstrates how the process inherent in the interlocking discourse of race, gender, and patriarchal power leads to the "colonization of the black female body to white male power and the destruction of black males who attempted to exercise any oppositional patriarchal control."[8] The main focus of my study is on the responses to this attempt of "internal colonization."

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[5] My understanding of "epistemic violence" draws largely on Spivak's use of the term. In "The Rani of Sirmur," Spivak is interested primarily in how "meaning/ knowledge intersects power." She wants "to inspect soberly the absence of a text that can 'answer one back' after the planned epistemic violence of the imperialist project." For her, imperialism is the attempt of "epistemic violence" and not the unbiased construction of facts: "the project of Imperialism is violently to put together the episteme that will 'mean' (for others) and 'know' (for the self) the colonial subject as history's nearly-selved other." Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur," *Europe and Its Others*, 2 vols., eds. Francis Baker et. al. (Colchester: U of Essex P, 1984) vol. 1, 134, 131, 134. For her the construction of the Other is one of the chief examples of epistemic violence. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1988) 280-81. See also her analysis of *Jane Eyre* in "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" as demonstration of the workings of epistemic violence. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, jr. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) 270.

[6] For the importance of the representation of African-Americans as Other to give meaning to race see for example Barbara Fields' article "Ideology and Race in American History." She states that since race is marked by a significatory lack and "[i]deas about color […] derive their importance, indeed their very definition, from their context" the othering of deviant behavior functions to ascribe meaning to the black as well as white race. Barbara Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," *Region, Race, and Reconstruction*, eds. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York: Oxford UP, 1982) 146.

[7] Although lynching was primarily addressed to African-Americans it also defines the limitations of acceptable sexual attitudes for white women and demonstrates the dangers inherent in interracial sex. Even if purportedly designed to protect white women, lynching served as a warning to women who dared go beyond the limits of acceptable – that is, traditional Victorian – behavior. The stereotype of the black beast rapist was designed to deter white women from sexual contact across the color line and recommend traditional Victorian gender restrictions and power relations as a safeguard against the ever-present threat of interracial rape. Moreover, the refiguration of white women according to Victorian gender constructions set in motion an automatism, which correlated interracial sex with rape because true white womanhood could never voluntarily agree to a liaison with a black man. The danger of consensual interracial relationships was thus disabled, which in turn negated any claims of African-American men to masculinity and social as well as political equality. See Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 149. The subordination of white women through lynching will be dealt with in more detail later in this chapter. Although lynching discourse also subordinated white women the focus in this study will be on the subordination of African-Americans.

[8] Carby, "On the Threshold of Woman's Era" 315. Walter Benn Michaels while generally agreeing with Carby suggests that "[t]here is […] an even more active sense […] in which American racism cannot be identified with

Before I sketch the theoretical outlines of a theory of resistance to lynching, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the rhetoric of lynching and the discursive mechanisms and strategies informing its construction since the rhetoric of resistance has to be understood as a reaction to an oppressive discourse and as the incorporation and reiteration of many of the strategies employed in its model.

2.1.1. The Nature of the Rhetoric of Lynching

The rhetoric of lynching is essentially a discourse of difference. It is the attempt to negotiate postwar relationships of power and resurrect white – especially male – dominance, which had become destabilized through African-American and white female emancipation. In order to compensate for the decline of white male power the combined rhetoric of lynching and rape ascribes deviant behavior to the racial and sexual Other and erects an oppressive racial hierarchy based on a strict denial of sexual contact across the color line.[9] Racial purity is interpreted as guarantee for white male political power and lynching as a defense of this racial hierarchy re-inscribes, legitimizes and secures white male patriarchic authority.

Threats to the racial hierarchy are figured in gendered terms as the rape of white womanhood through the black rapist. As a result, rape is endowed with racial significance and is not merely an instance of individual violence but becomes laden with racial significance. Interracial rape, therefore, is always already an instance of "communal rape" which threatens the purity and future of the white race and civilization.[10] Consequently, lynching as the re-installation of traditional racial and patriarchic power relations is represented as the defense of civilization from the onslaught of barbarity and savagery.[11]

In order to understand the nature of those power relations and how they are installed, it is useful to review briefly Michel Foucault's notion of power. He explains that power always operates through discourse and the construction of power evolves as the construction of

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expansionist imperialism." Based on his analysis of Dixon's *The Clansman* he argues that the difference between both lies in the fact that "white Americans are understood not as imperialists but as the victims of imperialism." Imperialism helped shape the form of an American race or America as race. Walter Benn Michaels, "The Souls of White Folk," *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. Elaine Scarry (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986) 187.

[9] In this study I prefer the Same-Other dichotomy instead of the center-margin or core-periphery model. While the center-margin model facilitates thinking about colonizer and colonized as a more heterogeneous array, this model is not useful for the analysis of lynching as the rhetoric of lynching works largely with mutually exclusive categories.

[10] Harris, *Exorcising Blackness* 23. See also Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995) 95-100 and Sielke 37.

[11] See Wiegman 147, 166-67.

knowledge and truth through discourse. The relation between power and knowledge, however, is not one-directional but mutually supporting. Knowledge gives rise to power, and power legitimizes knowledge or suppresses the production of alternative kinds of knowledge: "We should admit rather that power produces knowledge […]; that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations."[12] Discourse as a collection of statements or texts thus creates its own categories of truth according to which these statements and texts are evaluated and their production is either encouraged or rejected. Discourse articulates knowledge about a specific object and therefore it is through the construction of knowledge that institutions wield power.[13]

In a post-colonial context, Edward Said uses Foucault's notion of power to demonstrate the interrelation of colonial hegemony and knowledge. With reference to Foucault's insight that knowledge is the result and naturalization of power, he states that "[t]he Orient was a European invention" as knowledge about the Orient was produced (not found) with the intent of enabling and legitimizing European domination.[14] Orientalism such is a set of knowledge or Foucaultian discourse, which

> can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality [it] appear[s] to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Foucault calls discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of the author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it.[15]

As Europe's Other, that is, as a "contrasting image, idea, personality, experience" or "surrogate and even underground self, the Orient therefore says more about the producer of this knowledge than about the Orient."[16] Despite the assertion of the scientific nature of the knowledge about the Orient, it often takes the form of stereotypes. Said states that the colonizer's power is the result of the construction of an Other as the assemblage of all non-European characteristics. Colonial power is the result of silencing local histories and repre-

[12] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Allan Sheridan (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979) 27.
[13] See Michel Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) 77.
[14] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985) 1.
[15] Said, *Orientalism* 94.
[16] Said, *Orientalism* 1-2, 3.

senting the Other in their behalf.[17] Such a view is helpful to understand the nature of the rhetoric of lynching.[18]

The rhetoric of lynching constructs a system of knowledge about African-Americans, which evolves as the othering of immoral and sexually depraved behavior to the African-American male and the stereotyping of the latter as demonic rapist.[19] The result of this process of othering, according to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, is the creation of a "knowable" and controllable Other. The mechanism underlying this process is the projection of one's own system of signification upon the "uninscribed" terrain of the Other in order to produce the Other as a set of codes, which can be explained or understood by reference to one's own signifying system.[20] The result of the production of a "knowable" Other, according to Homi K. Bhabha, is the institution, justification, and naturalization of (colonial) power relations. The

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[17] For Said representations are always deformations. Far from depicting the "truth" about the object of representation, truth "is itself a representation." Said therefore proposes an understanding of representations "as inhabiting a common field of play defined for them not by some inherent common subject matter alone, but by some common history, tradition, universe of discourse." Said, *Orientalism* 272-73.

[18] While African-American Studies and Post-colonial studies are viably different fields, both fields show some interesting intersections in their focus on the construction and deconstruction of racial hierarchies and other issues such as representation, essentialism, and nationalism. The discussions of lynching, slavery and the relationship between master and slave often show a great affinity to the discussions of the nature of power relationships between colonizer and he colonized. Ann duCille for example states that "while the designation 'postcolonial' may be new, the thematizing of relations of power between colonizer and colonized is not." She refers to DuBois, Alexander Crummell, Pauline Hopkins, and Anna Julia Cooper as examples. See Ann duCille, "Postcolonialism and Afrocentricity: Discourse and Dat Course," *The Black Columbiad: Defining Moments in African-American Literature and Culture*, eds. Werner Sollors and Maria Diedrich (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994) 31. bell hooks even comments that "I believe that black experience has been and continues to be one of internal colonialism." bell hooks, *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1994) 148. Hazel V. Carby makes a similar point when she characterizes lynching as "internal colonization." Hazel V. Carby, "On the Threshold of Woman's Era" 315. For the intersections of African-American Studies and Post-colonial Studies see also Kwame A. Appiah, and Henry L. Gates, eds., *Identities* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995); Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford UP, 1987); Hazel V. Carby, "The Multicultural Wars," *Radical History Review* 54 (1992): 7-18; Mario T. Garcia, "Multiculturalism and American Studies," *Radical History Review* 54 (1992): 49-56; Henry Louis Gates, ed. *"Race," Writing, and Difference* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986); Henry Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1989); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, "African-American Women's History and the Metalanguage of Race," *Revising the Word and the World: Essays in Feminist Literary Criticism*, eds. Vèvè A. Clark, Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres and Madelon Sprengnether (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993) 91-114; bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End P,1990); Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992) and Ella Shohat, "American Orientalism," *Suitcase: A Journal of Transcultural Traffic* 2 (1997): 56-62. See also C. Richard King, ed., *Postcolonial America* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2000); Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, eds., *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature* (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2000). This study is not going to make the point that lynching is a form of colonialism. Resulting from the above stated intersections between African-American Studies and Post-colonial studies, many of the theories I am using are often referred to as "post-colonial." My use of these theories is motivated by the goal to make visible the underpinnings of the construction of power relations that inform the construction of the rhetoric of lynching.

[19] Although not immediately present in lynching discourse African-American women are also used as Other since "the mythical rapist implies the mythical whore." Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House, 1988) 191.

[20] See Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur" 132.

rhetoric of lynching, understood as a discourse of power, also produces a "knowable Other" which can be controlled and dominated. Lynching is thus a rhetorical "system of instruction," which aims at the (re-)creation of white male dominance through the ascription of difference to African-Americans and white women and the demonstration of black inferiority as well as white female dependency.[21]

Abdul R. JanMohamed, too, regards the creation of difference as motivated by the desire to conquer and dominate the colonial Other. The Other thereby functions primarily "as a mirror that reflects the colonialist's self-image" in a negative inversion and thus secures the colonizer's own cultural perspective, which had become destabilized through the contact with a terra incognita.[22] In that respect the rhetoric of lynching has to be understood as reaction to a new social, political, economic, and cultural situation after the Civil War and Reconstruction. It is the attempt to restitute or secure a white male identity as unquestioned patriarchal authority through the re-inscription of racial differences, which had become obliterated through the (at least theoretical) equality of African-Americans. African-American men in turn are projected as the negative inversion of the white masculinity, that is, as "black beast rapists" and feminized (that is, castrated and literally disempowered) manhood.[23]

Underlying the domination of the Other is a binary code of recognition, which JanMohamed calls the "manichean allegory." It allows the colonizer to understand the Other in the ideological mirror of his own significatory system and naturalize stereotypes and racist ideologies: "All evil characteristics and habits with which the colonist endows the native are thereby not presented as the products of social and cultural difference but as characteristics inherent in the race – in the 'blood' – of the native."[24] Such naturalization can even be elevated to the metaphysicalization of differences, releasing the colonizer from his role as their creator. The "manichean allegory" also allows the colonizer to efface history and modifica-

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[21] For the notion of colonial discourse as a "system of instruction" see e.g. Homi K. Bhabha's article "The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism," *The Location of Culture*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1994) 66-84, esp. 70.

[22] Abdul R. JanMohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) 84, 86.

[23] For the representation of African-American men as beast see e.g. George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 256-282. A more detailed discussion of the ambivalence of the simultaneous casting of African-American manhood as hypersexualization and feminization will follow later in this chapter. For definitions of African-American masculinity see for example Hazel V. Carby, *Race Men* (Harvard UP: Cambridge, 1998); bell hooks, "Reconstructing Black Masculinity," *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston: South End P, 1992) 87-113. For black female gender roles see esp. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, hooks, *Ain't I a Woman* and Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1984).

[24] JanMohamed 86.

tions in the makeup of the binary structure as it is a flexible code which can be adapted to the demands of the colonizer and provide "'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness."[25] It allows for extensions, which means that any difference can be integrated into what Frederic Jameson has called a "master code."[26] The master code underlying the construction of power relations structures the attribution of other oppositional pairs through associational interrelation. In the rhetoric of lynching, as in most other discourses of power, race is the "master code" structuring the perception of all differences. Civilization and disembodiment for example are thus associated with the white race, while savagery and corporeality become "natural" characteristics of the black race. Most often, gender and class become interrelated with race in order to convey the idea of order and unity and naturalize the construction of power.[27] Henry Louis Gates therefore regards race as the "ultimate trope of difference."[28] He explains that although race is by no means a marker for natural differences "Western writers […] have tried to mystify these rhetorical figures of race, to make them natural, absolute, essential. In doing so, they have *inscribed* these differences as fixed and finite categories which they merely report or draw upon for authority."[29] Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham similarly approaches race as metalanguage which "lends meaning to a host of terms and expressions" most of all gender, class, and sexuality. Race, according to Higginbotham, "is a highly contested representation of relations of power," which "not only tends to subsume other sets of social relations, namely, gender and class, but it blurs and disguises, suppresses and negates

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[25] Bhabha 66.

[26] Frederick Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1983) 25-33. Jameson understands a "master code" as a shared essentialism.

[27] For the connection between race and power see for example Benedict Anderson, who contends that "[w]here racism developed outside Europe in the nineteenth century, it was always associated with European domination." Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991) 150.

[28] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "Introduction: Writing 'Race' and the Difference It Makes," *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) 5, emphasis in original.

[29] Gates, "Writing 'Race'" 6, emphasis in original. Kwame A. Appiah blatantly denies the existence of race as empirically perceptible reality: "The truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask race to do for us […] [race] refers to nothing in the world at all. Talk of 'race' is particularly distressing for those of us who take culture seriously. For, where race works […] it works as an attempt at metonym for culture, and it does so only at the price of biologizing what *is* culture, ideology." Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In my Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992) 45, emphasis in original. Others, however, grant race "social significance." See for example Lucius Outlaw, "'Conserve' Races? In Defense of W.E.B. Du Bois," *W.E.B. Du Bois on Race and Culture: Philosophy, Politics, and Poetics*, eds. Bernard W. Bell, Emily Grosholz and James B. Steward (New York: Routledge, 1996) 21. Richard Dyer argues that only non-white people are "raced." Whites only regard themselves as a race when threatened by racial difference. Otherwise, they represent themselves a "'just' human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. Raced people can't do that – they can only speak for their race." Therefore, "[t]he invisibility of whiteness as a racial position in white (which is to say dominant) discourse is of a piece with its ubiquity." Richard Dyer, *White* (London: Routledge, 1997) 2, 3. A similar view is put forward by Hazel Carby in her article "Multicultural Wars."

its own complex interplay with the very social relations it envelops."[30] Also Bhabha identifies race as the dominant marker of difference. Race for him is "the ineradicable sign of *negative difference* in colonial discourse. For the stereotype impedes the circulation and articulation of the signifier 'race' as anything other than its *fixity* as racism. We already know that blacks are licentious, Asiatics duplicitous…" Colonial discourse therefore is the attempt "to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction."[31]

The concept of essentialism further adds to the understanding of race as the ultimate trope of difference. Essentialism is a definite, unambiguous and ahistorical "fact," which determines the ascription of truth or reality and legitimizes exclusion through the attribution of authenticity. Diana Fuss explains essentialism "as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the 'whatness' of a given entity." However, she contends, "essentialism is typically defined in opposition to difference" which may result in the effacement of "the differences within essentialism."[32] In a post-colonial context, Spivak explains, essentialism eradicates intraracial diversities in order to fabricate the notion of homogenous racial unity undisturbed by any interest- or class-based conflicts. Race becomes the sole marker of identity. As a typical feature of colonial discourse, essentialism is the basis for marginalization and exploitation.[33] Spivak's essentialism is similar to Foucault's notion of episteme as the disabling of the production of counter-knowledge and power.[34]

Race and the naturalization of racial differences also inform the underlying polarity of the rhetoric of lynching. Race, however, is marked by a significatory lack. As Ania Loomba notes, race "receives its meanings contextually, and in relation to other social groupings and

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[30] Higginbotham 95, 93, 95. Barbara Fields 162, regards race as "the ideological medium through which people posed an apprehended basic questions of power and dominance, sovereignty and citizenship, justice and right." Like Gates, she challenges the understanding of race as a "transhistorical, almost metaphysical" phenomenon. Rather, "the notion of race, in its popular manifestation, is an ideological construct and thus, above all, a historical product." Fields 144, 150.

[31] Bhabha 75, 70.

[32] Diana Fuss, *Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature & Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1989) xi-xii.

[33] For Spivak's understanding of essentialism see esp. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," *Selected Subaltern Studies*, eds. Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) 3-34.

[34] Foucault defines the episteme a follows: "The episteme is [...] the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period, between the sciences when one analyses them at the level of discursive regularities. Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1974) 191. My employment of "epistemic violence" follows Spivak in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, where she defines epistemic violence as the violent imposition of representation upon colonial people and as the creation of otherness to enforce subordination. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999).

hierarchies, such as gender and class."[35] The rhetoric of lynching is similarly "generated predominantly by the ideological machinery of the manichean allegory." The function of fiction thereby is not to reproduce a racist ideology but to create, legitimize and support it by insisting on the profound "moral difference" between white and black. The manichean allegory allows whites "to increase, by contrast, the store of [their] own moral superiority; it allows [them] to accumulate 'surplus morality'." To sum up, the function of the rhetoric of lynching "is to articulate and justify the moral authority of the colonizer [that is, the white male] and – by positioning the inferiority of the native as a metaphysical fact – to mask the pleasure the colonizer derives from that authority" by representing lynching as altruistic *re*action to a supposed black threat.[36]

2.1.2. The En-gendering of Race

Race, although it structures the perception of all other differences in the rhetoric of lynching, is itself marked by a significatory lack and receives meaning only through the "overt and covert analogic relationships" of other differences, most importantly, gender and class.[37] In the following I will survey existing studies of the rhetoric of lynching which focus especially on gender as one of the most important sources providing for the meaning of race.

The installment of racial differences in the rhetoric of lynching evolves largely as the intertwining of race and gender and the ascription of sexually deviant behavior to the racial Other. Blackness is equated with an unrestrained hypersexuality which reduces African-American women and men to criminalized gendered identities as either promiscuous black womanhood or, most notoriously, "black beast rapists." Moreover, even the interracial struggle between black and white is figured in sexualized terms as the rape of a white woman through the black rapist. The meaning of race is thus extremely sexualized and gendered. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham therefore rightly comments that "[t]he lynching of black men […] reeked of sexualized representations of race."[38] Most studies explain the sexualization of the rhetoric of lynching as the translation of the turn-of-the-century struggle for political and

[35] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 122. Also Bhabha 67, identifies gender and class as the two most common differences informing the construction of a racial hierarchy. See also Fields 146.
[36] JanMohamed 102, 103.
[37] Higginbotham 95.
[38] Higginbotham 104.

economic supremacy into the gendered language of lynching and rape.[39] African-American strivings for equality are represented as a longing for white womanhood and interracial rape. The struggle to preserve or re-establish white political and economic superiority is in turn figured as the protection of the flower of white civilization. Martha Hodes considers the almost fanatical fixation on sexual behavior and the en-gendering of the rhetoric of lynching as motivated by dependent definitions of masculinity and citizenship in the white mind. In an era when citizenship was equated with "manhood," the public demonstration of black freedom and equality became an affirmation of the black man's masculine authority.[40] In other words, political and economic equality was perceived as a frightening gender sameness between white and black men, which threatened to disturb the whole social stratum of the South, a fact white men could not accept. The sexualized rhetoric of lynching (re)articulates white male power and supremacy through the resurrection of white and the denial of black masculinity in the re-inscription and imposition of traditional Victorian gender roles.[41] What Sabine Sielke notes for the rhetoric of rape therefore also relates to lynching. "Realist" rape projects turn-of-the-century crises concerning racial, gender, and national identity onto the figure of the black rapist, which then functions to redraw boundaries and assign racial, class and gender traits through a process of othering of sexual violence and criminalized sexuality to African-Americans.[42] The emergence of the black rapist is thus the result of the destabilizing of traditional power relations and the rhetoric of lynching and rape is an instance of epistemic violence, which tries to re-inscribe traditional gender roles to secure the patriarchal power of white men.

One of the most insightful analyses of the ideological underpinnings of the gendered discourse of lynching as motivated by postwar dislocations of power is Robyn Wiegman's article "The Anatomy of Lynching." She regards "the interplay between the myth of the black rapist and the disciplinary mechanism of lynching and castration as a negotiation […] of the threat of African-American enfranchisement in the post-Civil War years." The post-Reconstruction collapse of traditional racial bifurcations and power structures entails a threatening "gender sameness" between white and black men, which lynching is designed to

[39] For the intertwining of race, politics, sex and gender in the rhetoric of lynching see Bederman; Hazel V. Carby, "On the Threshold of Woman's Era"; Gunning; Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 130-37; Harris, *Exorcising Blackness*; Hodes, "Sexualization"; Jonathon M. Weiner, "'The Black Beast Rapist': White Racial Attitudes in the Post War South," *Reviews in American History* 13 (1985): 222-26; Wiegman; Williamson 115.
[40] Hodes, *White Women, Black Men* 166-67.
[41] In addition, Hodes notes, lynching also helped to fix firm barriers between the races after the abolition of slavery. See Hodes, *White Women, Black Men* 147.
[42] See Sielke 35.

prevent. Wiegman therefore interprets lynching as "sexual encounter between the white mob and its victim," which re-inscribes a difference between white and black men through the symbolic feminization (castration) and corporealization of the African-American male: "the black male's social sameness […] is symbolically mediated by a disciplinary practice that seeks to literalize his affinity to the feminine."[43] The reduction of African-American men to an "extreme corporeality" further emphasizes their distance from the reaches of manhood. Traditionally, white male identity was defined among other things by disembodiment and the figuring of masculinity as the rationality of the mind, while white women as well as racial and class Others were characterized by means of the physical limitations and sinfulness of the body. The representation of African-American masculinity as overemphasized and criminalized physicality or "mythically endowed rapist" is thus the attempt to regain a "disembodied abstraction of [white] masculine priority." Lynching and the myth of the black rapist become the denial of black masculinity and citizenship against which a disembodied white masculinity can be achieved.[44]

> For the African-American male subject […] it was precisely the imposition of an extreme corporeality that defined his distance from the privileged ranks of citizenry. […] lynching emerged to reclaim and reassert the centrality of black male corporeality, deterring the now theoretically possible move towards citizenry and disembodied abstraction.[45]

The reduction of African-American men to criminalized sexuality and a threat to white womanhood enables the regeneration of white masculinity as chivalrous and heroic. Wiegman especially emphasizes the political dimension of sexualized lynchings when she remarks that in the performance of lynching the mob "aggressively denies the patriarchal sign and symbol of the masculine, interrupting the privilege of the phallus thereby reclaiming, through the perversity of dismemberment, the black male's (masculine) potentiality for citizenship."[46] Black male inferiority is restituted through the violent equation of African-American men to the feminine body they allegedly seek to penetrate.

The feminization of blackness, however, is only a racial feminization which does not contaminate the gender difference between white male and female.[47] Quite the opposite,

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[43] Wiegman 85, 82, 87.
[44] Wiegman 83, 88-90.
[45] Wiegman 94.
[46] Wiegman 83.
[47] Wiegman 98-99: "it is important to maintain the distinction between the imposition of feminization onto male bodies and the historical framework of the feminine as part and parcel of being born female. Such a distinction enables us to understand the force of the discourse of sexual difference as it constructs and contains hierarchical

lynching not only re-establishes racial oppositions but also enables white gender role differentiations. The representation of African-American men as hypersexualized and criminalized rapist therefore makes possible not only a definition of white masculinity as disembodiment but also the recasting of white womanhood in idealized terms.[48] Sabine Sielke notes that "[t]he projected affinity between black male and white female bodies in turn remasculinizes the white male. At the same time, the reduction of blackness to extreme corporeality […] helps to recast white womanhood in spiritual and figural terms."[49] The representation of white womanhood as incarnation of chastity and morality as well as her ideological overdetermination also impose restrictions and prescriptions on white female subjectivity and self-determination. Just as black emancipation unsettled the undisputed authority of white men, the growing independence of white women at the turn of the century further destabilized white male power. As teachers or activists in religious and social organizations white women were leaving the domestic sphere and thus also the control of their fathers and husbands. The latter feared that their daughters and wives would escape their control by working away from home in factories and earning their own money, thus being not only spatially but also economically removed from their paternalistic protection and dependency.[50] The New Woman threatened the ideological underpinnings of white male power just as black emancipation did.[51] The rhetoric of lynching therefore has to be seen as the attempt to regain male power through the joint subordination of African-Americans and white women, although in different ways. White women are restricted to the domestic sphere and prevented from formulating alternative gender identities while at the same time being enshrined as epitome of white civilization and guardians of virtue. Through the simultaneous representation as vulnerable and dependent as well as personification of civilization, white women "came to represent the weak element in the white race necessitating and enabling white male protection" and are

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relations among men without negating the specific materiality of gender oppression that accompanies women's variously raced positions in United States culture."

[48] See Wiegman 83.

[49] Sielke 37.

[50] Nancy MacLean regards the emergence of the New Woman as one of the chief motivations behind the lynching of Leo Frank. See Nancy MacLean, "The Leo Frank Case Reconsidered: Gender and Sexual Politics in the Making of Reactionary Populism." *The Journal of American History* 78 (December 1991) 935.

[51] See for example Edward Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, NY: BasicBooks, 1993) 254. As teachers, activists in religious and social organizations and through their growing influence on the literary market as the largest and dominant readership, women threatened the male dominance in the public sphere. Equally threatening to the exclusive male dominance of the public sphere was the increase in the number of women working and going to college as well as the suffrage campaign. As a reaction, men tried to defend the public sphere as the source of male "power and pleasure" from the intrusion of women. For the New Woman in the South oscillating between tradition and progressivism see Anne Firor Scott, "The 'New Woman' in the New South," *Making the Invisible Woman Visible*, ed. Anne Firor Scott (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1984) 212-221.

thus as central for white male re-empowerment as the black rapist. Wiegman therefore calls the white woman the "pivotal player in the rape mythology."[52] It is therefore certainly not accidental that rape triggers and legitimizes lynching. Yet, despite their crucial importance in the lynching narrative, white women were more a means than an end, serving primarily as a pretext to rearrange male power relationships and the guarding of caste restrictions. The white female body becomes the site for settling the struggle for male dominance: "The figure of the white woman thus displaces the complex relations between black and white men […]; her sacrifice 'on the altar of outraged civilization' […] legitimizes retaliatory attacks."[53] In other words, the rhetoric of lynching instrumentalizes and subordinates what it allegedly purports to protect. White women would have to "pay with a lifetime of subjugation to the men gathered in her behalf."[54] The rhetoric of lynching teaches emancipating women a lesson and is the re-contestation of the public sphere as a male dominance. The lynching-for-rape narrative thus reestablishes the traditional Victorian limitations concerning the separate spheres. The growing social mobility of women is translated into physical mobility and depicted in sexualized terms as potentially dangerous.[55] Reduced to restrictive Victorian gender roles, their presence in the lynching-for-rape-narrative legitimizes lynching as retributive violence and enables white male regeneration through violence. Sandra Gunning in her analysis of Thomas Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* even interprets the figure of the white woman as a fundamentally ambivalent existence. Her vulnerability at once threatens the future of the white race, but it also enables white male regeneration:

> All white women, simply by virtue of their being women, put their men in danger. It is precisely in their rape and death that white women can redeem themselves because their vulnerability enables their refiguration as icons in a white male culture of violence. […] she can only be truly made 'safe' when penetrated and reclaimed through male violence.[56]

Therefore, white women are only a means to an end and valuable only as victims of black male lust. Emphasizing the parallel restrictions imposed on white women and black men,

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[52] Wiegman 97; Sielke 41. See also Grace Elizabeth Hale, "Deadly Amusements: Spectacle Lynchings and Southern Whiteness, 1890-1940," *Varieties of Southern History: New Essays on a Region and its People*, eds. Bruce Clayton and John Salmond (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996) 70. Analyzing the lynching of Sam Hose, she states that newspapers transformed white womanhood from active participants into passive victims as white women could not "play so important and public a role in a ritual that brought out and created the white community, that made whiteness." For the involvement of white women in the discourse about lynching see also Carby, "On the Threshold of Woman's Era."

[53] Sielke 37.

[54] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 151.

[55] See Sielke 40.

[56] Gunning 37.

Jacqueline Dowd Hall therefore contends that "[t]he fear of rape, like the threat of lynching, served to keep a subordinate group in a state of anxiety and fear" and that "rape reasserted white dominance and control in the private arena as lynching reasserted hierarchical arrangements in the public transactions of men."[57] Lynching serves the re-construction of racial hierarchies as well as the renewal of the patriarchic control over white women and enables the white male to reclaim the realm of masculinity and power as his exclusive territory.

Hall further comments that in the rhetoric of lynching one of the nation's deepest preoccupations at the turn of the century, the opposition between savagery and civilization, was employed to resurrect white male power. The othering of savagery to African-Americans simultaneously absolved white men from the danger of slipping into savagery themselves while giving them the opportunity to control what they feared.

> For nineteenth-century Americans, the association between 'savagery' and sexual passion was central to the problem of social order. By setting white women apart as asexual guardians of morality, men could pursue acquisition and expansion secure in the knowledge that they were not abandoning the values of civilization. By projecting onto blacks the 'animal within,' the buried parts of themselves could be objectified and controlled.[58]

The "black threat" represents the steady risk of a return of the repressed or retrogression into savagery. The othering of what white men feared for themselves and the projection of savagery upon African-Americans disabled an associating of whiteness with primitivism and in turn rendered any action undertaken against African-Americans, including lynching, a defense of civilization.

Many critics have noted that lynching was not only motivated by the fear of retrogression in terms of civilization but mostly the symbolic reclaiming of male sexual potency and dominance over women and African-American men. The paradoxical hypersexualization of African-American men as rapists and their ensuing feminization through lynching and castration, according to Wiegman, is the symbolic reclaiming of "the hypermasculinity that his [the white man's] own mythology of black sexual excess has denied him, finding in sexual violence the sexual pleasure necessary to uphold both his tenuous masculine and racial identities."[59] The stereotype of the black rapist is thus the simultaneous recognition and disavowal

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[57] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 151; see also Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "'The Mind that Burns in Each Body': Women, Rape, and Racial Violence." *Southern Exposure* 12, 6 (November/December 1984) 63.
[58] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry*, 148.
[59] Wiegman 98. See also Bhabha 82: "The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is

of (sexual) difference. Lynching becomes the symbolic transferal of the alleged mythological sexual power of the African-American victim to the lyncher.

The inherent ambivalence of the black rapist stereotype Homi K. Bhabha explains as a typical feature of colonial discourse, namely the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of difference. Assuming that the difference between colonizer and colonized is not one of mutual exclusivity, he explains that the nature of colonial discourse centers less on the differences between colonizer and colonized (as Said's explanation does) than on their similarities. Key to Bhabha's understanding of colonial discourse is his notion of ambivalence, that is, the construction of the colonial Other as recognition and disavowal of difference. Consequently, the conceptualization of colonizer and colonized are interconnected constructs. Bhabha demonstrates his theory analyzing colonial stereotypes of the Other. He contends that colonial discourse is dependent on "fixity" or a "myth of historical origination" achieved through the use of stereotypes as its "major discursive strategy" which evokes the notion of "rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder."[60]

> The myth of historical origination – racial purity, cultural priority – produced in relation to the colonial stereotype functions to 'normalize' the multiple beliefs and split subjects that constitute colonial discourse as a consequence of its process of disavowal. The scene of fetishism functions similarly as, at once, a reactivation of the material of original fantasy – the anxiety of castration and sexual difference – as well as a normalization of that difference and disturbance in terms of the fetish object as the substitute for the mother's penis.[61]

It is through stereotypes that the colonizer constructs the Other "as a social reality which is at once an 'other' and yet entirely knowable and visible."[62] The stereotype, however, is a profoundly "ambivalent mode of knowledge and power" about/ over the colonized, denoting the assertion of difference and simultaneously identity, desire, and fear.[63] The rhetoric of lynching and the stereotype of criminalized black hypersexuality therefore is "a complex, ambivalent, contradictory mode of representation, as anxious as it is assertive."[64] Wiegman notes that

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mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces."

[60] Bhabha 66.

[61] Bhabha 74.

[62] Bhabha 70. Bhabha's understanding of stereotypes is informed by Freud's notion of fetishism (both structurally and functionally) as well as by Jacques Lacan's Imaginary as the simultaneous recognition and disavowal of difference. For Bhabha's use of Freud and Lacan see Bhabha 74-78.

[63] Bhabha 66.

[64] Bhabha 70.

> in reducing the black male to the body and further to the penis itself, white masculinity betrays a simultaneous desire for and disavowal of the black male's phallic inscription. To put this another way, the white male desires the image he must create in order to castrate, and it is precisely through the mythology of the black male as mythically endowed rapist that he has effectively done this.[65]

As will be detailed later, anti-lynching rhetoric makes use of the interconnectedness between colonizer and colonized, black and white. Rather than disavowing similarities, it foregrounds them in order to undermine the rigid discourse of difference trough the emphasizing of sameness or by exposing the underlying white insecurity informing or necessitating the construction of stereotypes.

2.1.3. The Racialization of Class

The empowerment of white men is only possible if all white men are defined entirely by their race as the sole marker of identity. Class or other differences dividing the white community into interest groups have to be suppressed in order to uphold the rigid racial binary. From a socio-historical perspective, John Dollard was one of the first to note the importance of class for the construction of power realtions through lynching. Based on the subsumation of class under race into a rigid and impenetrable binary, Dollard invokes the term "caste" in order to describe the nature of Southern race relations. In *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, he explains that lynching functions to support a rigid caste system in the South, which in turn upholds white (economic) superiority over African-Americans. This study will approch class as a set of norms and values associated with a certain group in society and will focus less on class as a concept denoting material difference among human beings. Moreover, class will be understood as a concept shaping the meaning of race. Similar to gender, the racialization of class functions to create a difference between blacks and whites and effaces intraracial diversifications in order to construct a homogeneous white sameness as the necessary prerequisite for the upholding of the racial binary. As Higginbotham comments: "[Race] unites whites of disparate economic positions against blacks. […] while Southern whites hardly constituted a homogenous class, they united for radically different reasons around the banner of white supremacy."[66] In the rhetoric of lynching class – like gender – becomes racialized and even effectively serves as a metaphor for race. Barbara Fields even goes as far as to contend that in American history race seems to entirely replace class: "Elsewhere, classes

[65] Wiegman 98.
[66] Higginbotham 99, 95.

may have struggled over power and privilege […]; but in the United States, these were secondary to the great, overarching theme of race."[67] Therefore, class, like gender, is a trope which functions to give meaning to race.

To be sure, the racialialization of gender traits to some degree already includes the ascription of certain class-bound norms and values to race. The representation of white women as Victorian mothers and wives or the construction of a new racialized white middle-class masculinity through lynching, as Gail Bederman notes, are both influenced by middle-class norms and values concerning sexual behavior and gender roles.[68] The conflation of race, gender and class is for example visible in the representation of white women as "ladies" and thus indicative of class, while black women were "merely" women.[69] The influence of class, however, is not limited to gender roles. Apart from class-specific gender constructions, middle-class norms of morality in general come to shape the meaning of race. The rhetoric of lynching creates an image of the white community as homogeneous entity defined solely through racial comonalities and thus not only renders gender a racial trait but it also declares middle-class norms of respectability to be natural features of the white race. That is, when racial divides are not only identified along gender but also class lines, class further informs the construction of the oppressive racial hierarchy.[70] Race and class merge, which enables whites of all social standings rhetorically and ideologically to gather under the banner of white supremacy.

Barbara Fields challenges readings of white supremacy as a monolithic belief shared by all whites alike. Rather, "[w]hite supremacy is a slogan, not a belief," which had varying meanings for people from different classes and was never enough to invalidate class stratifications.[71] However, white supremacy comprises at least one commonality whites of all classes could subscribe to: the conception of African-Americans as a common enemy and Other, who stands on the lowest level of the social hierarchy, affording lower-class whites the

[67] Fields 143.
[68] Bederman contends that as black male and white female emancipation threatened traditional definitions of male superiority based on racial and gendered subordination, white men tried to secure the trembling concept of middle-class masculinity by inserting race and civilization as fortifications into the traditional construction of manliness. See Bederman, "Civilization" 6-9.
[69] See Higginbotham 101.
[70] For discussions of lynching and the influence of class on the making of racial difference see Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class*. (New York: Random House, 1988); John Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (1937; New York: Harper, 1949); Fields; Fuoss; MacLean and Wood, "Spectacles of Suffering." For a more general approach to the entangling of race and class see Berel Lang, ed. *Race and Racism in Theory and Practice* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), especially the articles Andrew J. Gold, "Economics and Motivation: (Dis)Entangling Race and Class" 189-214; Johnny E. Williams, "Race and Class: Why all the Confusion?" 215-228, and Paul Lauter "The Race for Class" 243-52. For the intersection of race and class in a post-colonial context see Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998) 123-33.
[71] Fields 156, 156-58.

assurance to be at least better than the most educated African-American. In the rhetoric of lynching, the meaning of class is largely reduced to this one commonality and it is only those characteristics (usually associated with class), which distinguish whites from blacks – and not whites from one another – which become racialized. To put this differently, lynching and the racialization of class enable the empowerment of all whites simply by virtue of being white and unite whites against a common Other. Thus, lynching evolves as the temporary and partial formation of white racial homogeneity.

Such representations of the white community as race-only collide with the social developments at the turn of the century.[72] After the Civil War and spurred by industrialization and urbanization, the South experienced unprecedented social dislocations disrupting the image of white racial unity. The most evident manifestation of the growing social diversification was the founding of the Farmers Alliances and the Populist Party, both of which were motivated by increased class differences resulting from industrialization, the disastrous decline in agricultural prices during the 1870s and 80s and the sever recession in 1893. The wave of agrarian protests during the 1890s and the Populist movement challenged social customs and the integrity of the white community and produced a desire for social homogeneity, which was then one of the driving forces behind the social reformers of the Southern progressivist movement.[73] Yet, while these reformers sought to oppose the growing social diversification through education and the improvement of economic conditions, other Southerners resorted to lynching. The imbrication of middle-class norms and values with race was therefore not only motivated by the desire to reestablish traditional power relations but coincided with a more general longing for white unity.

Yet, the rhetoric of lynching was not motivated by a socialist desire for a utopian, classless society. As many scholars have worked out, lynching *as practice* even helped certain interests groups to formulate their own identity and distance themselves from ofter groups within the white but also black community. Hence, lynching might even have contributed to further cement the social diversification of the South. Roby Wiegman for example argues that lynching functioned especially for lower-class whites to formulate their

[72] For the development of a new class structure in the South after the Civil War both socially and culturally see for example Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1990) esp. 189-259; Paul M. Gaston, *The New South Creed: A Study in Southern Mythmaking* (New York: Knopf, 1970); Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: the Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1983); John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s," *Writing American History: Essays on Modern Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1970) 73-102.

[73] See Grantham 10-12.

own underclass consciousness "offering on the one hand the recognition of specific class-bound political interests, while often positing free African-Americans as competitors to the economic survival of the white working class."[74] But lynching also offered the possibility to (briefly) escape their underprivileged position through the display of chivalrous behavior and their commitment for the defense of civilization. Kirk W. Fuoss therefore interprets lynching as a performance which functioned to temporarily eliminate class divisions and give a sense of worth to otherwise underprivileged people. To elaborate on this matter, he cites the CIC pamphlet "Lynchings and What They Mean":

> The manhunt affords an opportunity for uninfluential whites, who play no responsible part in political life, to rise within a few hours into the heroic role of protector of Southern womanhood and white supremacy. Manhunts and lynchings make it possible for obscure and irresponsible people to play the roles of arresting officers, grand jurors, trial jurors, judges, and executioners.[75]

Also lower-class white women benefited from the rhetoric of lynching and the inherent racialization of morality as through their race they were automatically identified with Victorian norms of respectability.[76] While usually on the lowest level of the social hierarchy and in direct (economic) competition with African-Americans, the rhetoric of lynching empowered lower-class whites solely because of their race.

Amy Louise Wood argues that the meaning of class in the rhetoric of lynching is the result of the influence of a newly developing Southern white middle-class identity. Lynching, she argues, helped to shape the contours of this new identity by promoting traditional values which assured social recognition: "Like the rising middle-classes elsewhere, moral virtue and propriety came to define these groups' sense of their own social worth. They believed these traits distinguished them from poor whites, and most of all, from African Americans." For "middling whites," the othering of moral vice and sexual licentiousness was a matter of fortifying their own status as respectable middle-class citizens, which was by no means firmly established.[77] Also John Dollard notes that "[m]iddle-class people must stress sharply the differences between themselves and the lower-class whites and Negroes because they are none too sure that the differences are very important or permanent."[78] Through the adoption of certain norms of respectability "middling whites" tried to secure their newly acquired so-

[74] Wiegman 92.
[75] Fuoss 12.
[76] See for example Nancy MacLean's analysis of the lynching of Leo Frank and the representation of the alleged rape victim Mary Phagan.
[77] See Wood, "Spectacles" 15-16 and Ayers, *New South* 64-66.
[78] Dollard, *Caste and Class* 78. See also Fredrickson, *Black Image* 58-64.

cial influence while at the same time they delimitated themselves from lower-class whites and African-Americans and demonstrated social parity with the old elites.[79] The process of othering of moral degeneracy and the association of such behaviors as drinking, gambling, dancing, and sexual license with African-Americans therefore marks the racialization of morality. "Middling whites believed that moral integrity, including temperance, self-restraint, and a strong work-ethic, assured their social ascent and justified that ascent. Just as importantly, their virtue assured the solidity of racial boundaries."[80] Furthermore, the display of antebellum Southern chivalry in the avenging of black-on-white rape was considered a possibility to access a respectable masculinity and identification with traditional elites.[81]

A third interpretation of the racialization of morality argues that existing elites in the South benefited most from the emphasizing of racial commonalities over class dissimilarities. Fields for example identifies the former Southern planter elite as the group which profited most from the effacing of class differences. She contends that despite the image of homosocial whiteness, whites at the turn of the century were by no means a unified group and that the emphasis on racial commonalities helped to cover up social differences and competition, create social stability and sustain the dominance of a southern elite.[82] Similarly, Angela Davis regards lynching as a means of exploiting the black as well as white working class by prohibiting black progress and disabling working class solidarity through the over-emphasizing of racial over class commonalities. Lynching here is the attempt to secure the economic and political hegemony of the ruling capitalist class.[83]

Lynching, not surprisingly, also shaped the class-related identity of African-Americans, however, in a negative reversal of white tenets or morality. They were indiscriminately identified with vice and immorality and reduced to a totalizing racial depravity. The stereotype of the black rapist therefore not only denotes a profound gender difference but also a moral dissimilarity. According to the underlying logic of lynching, immorality had to be a feature of the black race so that whites of all classes and interest groups could pledge allegiance to the validity of morality. The racialization of class therefore means the installment of middle-class notions of respectability as racial traits.

As can be seen, through the practice of lynching many diverse groups were offered the opportunity to formulate their respective identities also in delimitation from other groups

[79] Wood, "Spectacles" 19. She also states that the journalists who wrote the articles propagating lynching rhetoric were themselves members of this rising middle-class.
[80] Wood, "Spectacles" 16.
[81] See Wood, "Spectacles" 17.
[82] Fields 156-58.
[83] See Davis 190.

within the white community. However, although in real life whites were by no means a unified group, the rhetoric of lynching sustains the image of a homogenous white community and prevents the disintegration of race through the blurring of interest-group based distinctions. Middle-class norms and values are incorporated into the Manichean allegory of race and lynching becomes the universal empowerment of all whites, who are represented as defenders of morality and chivalry. The rhetoric of lynching decreases the importance of socially dividing aspects and instead represents middle-class values such as self-restraint and the Southern code of honor as a point of convergence for all whites. Differences among whites vanish through the righteous indignation over the rape of a white woman and the lynching of her assaulter. The social diversity of African-Americans is likewise eclipsed and they are unanimously identified with immorality and vice. Lynching therefore is not the elimination of class but the installment and celebration of morality as a class-overlapping, racial trait. In that respect, class is turned from a dividing into a unifying racial feature. If, as mentioned above, diverse groups drew different and often adverse advantages from lynching, the rhetoric of lynching represents it as an act of communal white empowerment, and interest groups vanish through the adherence to allegedly racial values. In short, all whites are empowered simply by virtue of their being white.

The racialization of morality also lends lynching an air of respectability. The often quoted presence of "the best class of people" at a lynching demonstrates that despite existing diversifications and even social tensions, white racial unity is achieved through the allegiance to a set of norms and values usually associated with the emerging middle-class (and planter elite). Their attendance lends authority to an otherwise illegal performance and "served to legitimate the mob's violence as socially respectable and responsible action."[84] Lynching effaces the social reality of a growing social diversification through the emphasis on allegedly racial commonalities and even draws "its repressive power from the extraordinary caste solidarity it expressed."[85] Wood ascribes central importance to the construction of racial unity against a growing social diversification when she writes that "[t]he rhetoric used in defense of lynching very intently sustained its social acceptability by creating images of class unity and propriety."[86] The rhetoric of lynching offers a vision of a white community in which racial

[84] Wood, "Spectacles" 13.
[85] See Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 140.
[86] Wood, "Spectacle" 18. She also explicates that the mob usually was not composed of rednecks and lower-class whites. Despite contemporary views of lynching as the action of poor white trash, the best members of the community often had a leading role in the mob and gave authority to the proceedings through their presence or silent acquiescence. Also James McGovern contends that the members of the lynch mob were "middle to lower-

solidarity and the adherence to a set of norms and values such as the Southern code of honor or chivalry overlays social diversifications and creates the notion of a binary division of the South: "[L]ynching functioned as a means of uniting whites across class lines in the face of a common enemy, thus rekindling one of the major stumbling blocks to Populist success: the fear of 'Negro domination' and the powerful pull of the notion of the Solid South."[87]

2.2. The Representation of Lynching

Lynching has so far been analyzed as discourse, that is, as an instrument in the construction of power relations, which concocts African-Americans as Other and inscribes them with an identity of absence in order to reestablish white male dominance. In the following I will outline the components of the typical narrative of lynching, that is, I will shift the focus from the analysis of discursive strategies to representational conventions as they constitute another field which the resistance to lynching draws upon. I will sketch the basic contours of the mode of representation used to stage lynching especially in newspapers, which not only determined the form but also the meaning ascribed to lynching.

Considering the high degree of news coverage of lynching it is one of the most astonishing features of the rhetoric of lynching that the representation of lynching displays an exceedingly high degree of syntagmatic congruency and historical fixity. Although lynchings were performed in most American states and display a wide range of variations concerning their performance and motivation, the rhetoric of lynching is marked by an almost defiantly monolithic quality. In other words, unlike the performance of lynching, its representation more often than not imitates a predefined pattern of events so that Grace E. Hale even speaks of lynching representations as a genre.[88] The construction of an "archetypal," tradition-building, or prototypical lynching and initiation of an aesthetic repertoire that later representations of lynchings could draw upon was the lynching of Henry Smith in Paris, Texas in 1893 and of Sam Hose (also sometimes wrongly referred to as Sam Holt) in Newnan, Georgia, in 1899. Brundage, Garland, and Hale all agree that both lynchings inaugurated conventions which mark the beginning of a representational tradition. The broad coverage in national, local, and regional newspapers those two lynchings experienced as well as the widely

middle class: clerks, salesmen, mechanics, petty merchants, servicers, and farmers." See McGovern 4, 67-68. See also Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 140; Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 38.

[87] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 131-32. Hall also explains that the alliance of African-Americans and whites in the Populist Party was attacked by other parties and accompanied by threats of violence. Lynching therefore was also a means of political intimidation.

[88] See Hale, "Spectacle Lynchings" 68.

circulated photographs and postcards lastingly "established a formula that became the pattern for subsequent mass lynchings elsewhere."[89] Hale stresses that it was this formulaic character which attributed decisively to the cultural impact lynching representations sought to promote. Together with the use of modern mass media and the development of a consumer culture lynching was able exert a massive public influence although after the 1890s lynching totals were steadily decreasing.[90] According to Richard Wright the representation of lynching in the media even surpassed the effect that witnessing a real lynching would have had. He explains that it was not necessary for him to actually eyewitness a lynching in order to understand its threatening potential. Lynching was even more effective when experienced as a mediated event. Right states:

> The actual experience would have let me see the realistic outlines of what was really happening, but as long as it remained something terrible and yet remote, something whose horror and blood might descend upon me at any moment, I was compelled to give my entire imagination over to it, an act which blocked the springs of thought and feeling in me, creating a sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived.[91]

Nearly every African-American during the late nineteenth century must have felt terrorized by lynching as he or she must have "witnessed a lynching or known someone who had."[92] The most noticeable of all representational conventions contributing to this effect is most likely the staging of lynching as spectacle. Grace E. Hale makes out the Smith lynching as the invention of lynching as "spectacle," that is, the staging of lynching as huge public event, which would then come to dominate the public imagination of racist violence and to shape the semantics and rhetoric of lynching decisively. Hale writes that despite the existence of various forms of racist violence "spectator lynchings became the most widely known form of white violence against southern blacks even as less public lynchings claimed many more victims."

> Beginning in the 1890s, representations of spectacle lynchings increasingly fell into a ritualistic pattern as the narrative constructed by witnesses, participants, and journalists assumed a standardized form. Spectacle lynchings, then, became more powerful even as they occurred less frequently, because the rapidly multiplying stories of these public tortures became virtually interchangeable.

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[89] Garland 24.
[90] See Hale, "Spectacle Lynchings" 66-67.
[91] Richard Wright, *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth* (1937; New York: Harper & Row, 1989), 190.
[92] Ann Field Alexander, "Like an Evil Wind: The Roanoke Riot of 1893 and the Lynching of Thomas Smith," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 100 (1992), 199. See also Robert L. Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1980) 18.

The representation of Hose and Smith in newspapers and photographs thus invented lynching as ritualized form of violence. Especially with the lynching of Sam Hose and the accompanying sale of photographs and the overt news coverage through local and regional newspapers "began the development of a standardized, sensationalized narrative pattern that would dominate reporting of spectacle lynchings through the 1940s."[93]

Besides the representation of lynching as spectacle, several other elements constitute the "genre" of lynching representations. Referring again to the lynching of Henry Smith, Hale enumerates such essentials as the identification of the captured by the alleged rape victim, the announcement of the place and date of the lynching, a confession of guilt, mutilations and the ensuing hanging, burning, or shooting, and finally the postmortem collection of souvenirs. Additionally, the lynching was actively promoted in advance, trains were used to bring in spectators from outside, photographs of the lynching were take and sold afterwards, and the event was heavily narrativized. The lynching of Sam Hose, then, provided another key innovation as the newspapers standardized the performance and attributed great significance to the "determined," "orderly," "perfectly cool" and "civilized" behavior of the mob. Newspapers even took an active part in the lynching when they fueled the mob's fury with sensationalistic stories about the crime or proposed diverse methods of torture and execution.[94] Garland states that both lynchings informed mainly the actual performance of subsequent lynchings and less their representation.[95] Yet, Hale rightly argues that our access to lynching is mostly by way of newspaper reports and photographs. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to take the Smith and Hose lynchings less as the invention of a tradition of practice than the starting point of a rhetoric which would shape the perception of lynching and African-Americans until the mid-thirties when the lynching of Claude Neal and the huge publicity paid to the Scottsboro trial slowly brought about its demise.[96]

The intersection between representation and practice is also problematic when it comes to the analysis of probably the most prominent or notorious element of lynching, namely the staging of lynching as spectacle. Most studies concerned with lynching as ritual approach it from a historical or sociological perspective and try to determine what kinds of

[93] Hale, "Spectacle Lynchings" 66, 67, 70. Hale points out that our access to lynching is mostly by way of newspaper reports and photographs.
[94] Hale, "Spectacle Lynchings" 65-66, 68, 69-71. The most prominent re-telling of the event is probably *The Facts in the Case of the Horrible Murder of Little Myrtle Vance, and Its Fearful Expiation, at Paris, Texas, February 1, 1893* by an anonymous author.
[95] See Garland, 28. See also Susan Jean and W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Legitimizing 'Justice': Lynching and the Boundaries of Informal Justice in the American South," *Informal Criminal Justice*, ed. Dermot Feenan (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 157-178.
[96] See Hale, "Spectacle Lynchings" 73-74.

lynchings were performed as ritual, why they took the form they did, and for what purpose they were performed. Lynchings are read as "communal ritual that demonstrated and reinforced white unity" or as "scapegoat ritual" expressing a Southern commitment to such notions as male dominance, personal honor, or chivalry, which are celebrated and renewed through regular repetitions.[97] One of the earliest and still most influential studies of lynching as ritual is Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's *Revolt against Chivalry*. Interpreting rituals as demonstration and affirmation of cultural norms and values Hall regards lynching as the "ritualistic affirmation of white unity" and as "a communal ritual that demonstrated and reinforced white unity, intimidated blacks as a group, and ensured allegiance to caste roles on the part of both whites and blacks."[98] Trudier Harris shares Hall's understanding of lynching as dramatization of cultural norms. Analyzing the impact of ritualized lynchings on African-American literature, Trudier Harris in *Exorcising Blackness* interprets lynching as "reflecting" or "dramatizing" an already existing and stable creed of white racial superiority. Lynching is a scapegoat ritual in the course of which white feelings of guilt concerning sexual desires are transferred to the black victim and the ritualistic murder purges the white community from its sins. The frequent castrations are the symbolic transfer of the almost mythological sexual power of the black victim to the white lynchers.[99] The latest and most insightful study of lynching as ritual is Amy Louise Wood's Ph.D. thesis "Spectacles of Suffering: Witnessing Lynching in the New South, 1880-1930." She discusses lynching as ritual practice and stresses first and foremost its function as a means for creating a sense of community and solidarity among white Southerners usually and increasingly divided along class lines or by generational and geographical divisions.[100] Unlike earlier studies, which assume that lynching was merely dramatizing already established cultural norms, especially white solidarity, Wood argues that "the

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[97] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 139; Harris, *Exorcising Blackness* 12. See also Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 149-151; Harris, *Exorcising Blackness*, chapter 1; Williamson, *Crucible of Race* 183-89; Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor*, chapter 13; Garland 59.

[98] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry*, 141, 139. For a similar interpretation see Garland 50-51 and Andrew S. Buckser, "Lynching as Ritual in the American South," *Berkley Journal of Sociology* 37 (1992): 11-28.

[99] Harris, *Exorcising Blackness* 11-28. For the projection of white feelings of guilt caused by a desire for black women upon the black male lynch victim see Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812*. (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1968) 151-52. Fitzhugh W. Brundage in his aforementioned study *Lynching in the New South* refutes any claims asserting the universality of the ritual character of lynching. Only in what he terms "mass mobs" can ritual elements be detected. Brundage shares Hall's and Harris's understanding of ritual as demonstration of cultural norms. He argues that "[r]itual provided a degree of order." Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 39. Grace E. Hale challenges what she deems a too restrictive definition of lynching and ritual and explains that Brundage's categories are too inflexible. They fail to acknowledge that even private lynchings became spectacles through the use of modern publication media, especially lynching photographs and postcards. See Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998) 357.

[100] Amy Louise Wood, "Spectacles of Suffering: Witnessing Lynching in the New South, 1880-1930." Ph.D. Dissertation, Emory University, 2002.

spectacle of lynching – the ritualistic tortures, the photographs, the elaborate narrative defenses – also served to enact or help establish these beliefs in white moral superiority."[101] As a form of practice lynchings "did more than dramatize or reflect an undisputed white supremacy, or attest to an uncontested white solidarity. Rather, spectacle lynchings *constructed* and *coerced* a particular kind of racial supremacy, based on a belief in white moral superiority." She assumes that the notion of white supremacy was by no means stable and required constant reaffirmation.[102]

However, no study has so far attempted to deal with ritual as representation.[103] And despite declarations such as Wood's that "[w]e can only know and understand lynching through its representation" and her assertion "to take that representation seriously" the factual character of ritual has never been doubted or approached as embellishment or narrative device.[104] Both Trudier Harris and Ronald Baker for example assume that the textual representations of lynchings were more or less transparent and mimetic reproductions of the actual event. Harris's analysis therefore only tries to illustrate "how history and literature are tied together in this phenomenon [ritualized lynchings]," and Baker, although he contends that representations of lynching in local newspapers are "twice removed from reality" assumes that "[p]ortrayals of the lynching, though, whether in newsprint or oral stories, mirror actual behavior – ritualized violence in the lynching and mutilation of a black man by a white mob."[105] The distinction between ritual as rhetorical device and as practice is rather blurry and often nonexistent probably because narrative and practice are both approached as texts establishing white-over-black power relations. That is, lynching as practice and discourse both fulfill the same task.[106] The major difference for contemporary researchers lies in the accessibility of both texts. The ritual dimension of lynching as practice can only be approached though participation or observation, something which is no longer possible. All we

[101] Wood, "Spectacles" 18.
[102] Wood, "Spectacles" 19, emphasis in original.
[103] Some studies have tried to deal with the distinction between lynching (but not ritual) as practice and representation. Katrin Schwenk for example clearly distinguishes between lynching as practice and what she calls a "cultural narrative," which is "[w]hat made lynching so effective." Katrin Schwenk, "Lynching and Rape: Border Cases in African American History and Fiction," *The Black Columbiad: Defining Moments in African-American Literature and Culture*, eds. Werner Sollors and Maria Diedrich (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994) 312. See also Christopher Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch: Extralegal Violence and Punishment in America* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2002) and Angeletta KM Gourdine, "The *Drama* of Lynching in Two Black-women's Drama, or Relating Grimké's *Rachel* to Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*," *Modern Drama* 41.4 (1998) 535.
[104] Wood, "Spectacles" 14.
[105] Harris, *Exorcising Blackness* 2; Ronald L. Baker, "Ritualized Violence and Local Journalism in the Development of a Lynching Legend," *Fabula* 29.3-4 (1988) 317.
[106] Hale links both by describing the narrative as the explanation of the event. See Hale, "Spectacle Lynchings" 67.

are left with is textual and visual representations of lynching. Therefore, I will argue that a clear distinction between lynching as word and deed has to be made not only but especially when it comes to the application of ritual to lynching. In order to avoid any misunderstandings I will use the term "spectacle" to denote the *representation* of lynching as ritualized form of violence. The term "ritual" refers not to the representation but the actual *practice*.

In this study I propose that the representation of lynching as spectacle helped the establishment of a Manichean bipolarity of race by representing white-on-black violence as civilized and publicly – even divinely – sanctioned action. In short, the ritualization of lynching is the attempt to "give at least the appearance of regularity to the utterly irregular," that is, to render lynching a civilized performance by providing a degree of structure, regularity and formality and thus distance it from irregular, random or chaotic behavior.[107] Ritualization thus falls in step with the turn-of-the-century distinction between civilization and savagery and ascribes the latter to the African-American-as-Other, while preserving civilization as an exclusively white terrain.[108] In short, the representation of lynching as spectacle thus has to be understood as the civilizing of violence. While lynching as practice cannot be regarded as inherently ritualistic, the ritualization of violence is a constitutive element in the rhetoric of lynching and has to be understood as a representational strategy, which gave lynching as word its form and meaning.

2.2.1. Intersection with Other Rituals

To achieve the image or impression of ritualized (and civilized) behavior, the representation of lynching as spectacle is modeled after already established rituals. Wood develops a detailed analysis of the impact other rituals had on the semantic and representational molding of lynching and argues that lynching was performed the way it was because it intersected with other contemporary cultural practices. She especially refers to public executions and evangelical religious rituals which lent lynching an air of authority. Rather than being mere embellishments, the representation of lynching as spectacle therefore "shaped the meanings that perpetrators and witnesses wrought from the violence, and, ultimately, helped constitute and perpetuate white supremacy in the South." [109] Although her analysis is primarily concerned

[107] New York *Times*, August 13, 1901, quoted after Garland 32.
[108] Hale for example states that in apologetic representations lynching is rendered the "modern, civilized, and sane" inscription of the color line. Hale, "Spectacle Lynchings" 65.
[109] Wood, "Spectacles" 5. This authority and meaning of lynching was then extended through the use of visual and textual representations. Especially the development of new visual mass media like photography and film

with lynching as *practice*, her conclusions also help to illuminate the molding of the *representation* of lynching.

According to Wood, the South's inclination to lynch can partially be attributed to the growing privatization of public executions, that is, the exclusion of large crowds from witnessing the hanging of a convict, and a growing dissatisfaction with the law as either too slow or insufficient to deal with black criminality. Both factors created a propensity among white Southerners to compensate for the loss of the possibility to witness justice enacted through taking the law into their own hands in order to mete out a form of higher justice. Yet, the relatively high degree of social acceptability lynching provoked was not only the result of public disdain over the exclusion from public executions. In fact, the tradition of public executions also contributed markedly to the tolerance the South espoused for lynching as the rhetorical modeling of lynching on the highly popular event of public executions lent some air of the legality and acceptability to an otherwise illegal form of violence.[110] The parallels between the rhetoric of lynching and public executions are striking. Garland refers for example to the use of legal vocabulary in the representation of lynching. The victims are often "accused" of a crime and the mob is assured of their victim's guilt through the extraction of a confession. Also descriptions of lynching as "execution" or "lynch *law*" and the incorporation of narratives of the crime affirm the impression that "these public lynchings were understood by white participants as criminal punishments, not arbitrary and unprovoked acts of violence."[111] Wood approaches the similarities between lynching and public executions as well as the ritual implications in both by means of describing executions as "religiously-themed rituals." They followed a standard script which included a narrative of sin, the sinner's/ convict's confession, and his redemption. The confession was of crucial importance. It demonstrated the victim's acknowledgement of his guilt and rendered lynching an adequate form of punishment and appropriate means of achieving salvation. Simultaneously it relieved the mob

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"shaped the meanings that perpetrators and witnesses wrought from the violence, and, ultimately, helped constitute and perpetuate white supremacy in the South." Wood states that the use of modern mass media further attributed to the authority of lynching as it "endow[ed] white supremacy with the authority and realist certainty these technologies carried." Wood, "Spectacles" 5, 20. For the intersection of lynching with public executions see also Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 40. For the intersection of lynching and legal justice see also Jean and Brundage 164-166.

[110] Wood, "Spectacles" 33-35, 42-43, 60-61. See also See also Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 40-41. For public executions see Peter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering: Executions and the Evolution of Repression: From a Pre-Industrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) and Louis P. Masur, *Rites of Execution: Capital Punishment and the Transformation of American Culture, 1776-1865* (New York: Oxford UP, 1989). For historical surveys see Lawrence Friedman, *Crime and Punishment in American History* (New York: Basic Books, HarperCollins, 1993) and Stuart Banner, *The Death Penalty: an American History* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002). See also Jesse Jackson, *Legal Lynching: Racism, Injustice and the Death Penalty* (New York: Marlowe, 1996).

[111] Garland 41. See also Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 108.

from any feeling of guilt by assuring the criminal identity of the victim. His confession made lynching an "exaggerated and distorted form" of legal justice and validated the execution secularly as well as divinely.[112]

The association of popular and legal justice also established and re-affirmed the image of the African-American-as-Other in terms of black immorality. White spectators or readers of newspapers were then able to distance themselves from the black victim and perceive themselves as morally superior. Represented in strictly bipolar terms, the rhetoric of lynching thus enabled the conceptualization of whiteness as "morally guiltless and upright, especially in contrast to the criminal deviancy of the condemned." This act of "dis-identification" with the black Other also helps to understand why the graphic display of exceedingly gruesome tortures was appreciated and even welcomed by the mob/ reader.[113] Garland explains that the perception of a mob torturing, mutilating and burning an African-American at the stake was not received in terms of primitivism or savagery but as an adequate form of punishment. The graphic depiction of violence forwarded a political meaning and produced the African-American as degraded, subhuman Other by refusing him the same treatment afforded to white criminals. Lynching re-introduced a decidedly racialized from of "justice," which the American legal system was allegedly beginning to abandon. Until the 1930s Southerners conceived of lynching not as deviant behavior but as quasi legal form of criminal punishment.[114]

Apart from legal executions, the rhetoric of lynching also draws heavily on rituals of evangelical church discipline.[115] Confessions, prolonged tortures, the witnessing of the ritual, a jury, a final farewell and prayers of the condemned, and the focus on the victim's suffering are elements to be found in representations of both rituals. Wood especially refers to "the ritual of evangelical discipline whereupon the sinner is exposed, investigated and finally (in this case violently and fatally) expelled from a sacred community of believers." Although it is

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[112] Wood, "Spectacles" 45, 53, 37-38.

[113] Wood, "Spectacles" 54-56, 57, 55. Robyn Wiegman interprets the graphic display of torture as the extension of the surveillance function of lynching and as Foucaultian gaze: "the entire African-American population could be defined and policed as innately, if no longer legally, inferior." Wiegman 91. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall explains the deployment of graphic details in the depiction of lynching and the alleged rape preceding it as an attempt of a hyper-mimetic recreation of the actual event and thus as the attempt to make the reader re-experience both. "Rape and rumors of rape became a kind of acceptable folk pornography in the Bible Belt" and the detailed descriptions implied "a kind of group participation in the rape of the woman almost as cathartic as the subsequent lynching of the alleged attacker." Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry*, 150.

[114] See Garland 39, 44, 47. For a similar interpretation see also Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 140-41; Jean and Brundage; Wood 164-66;

[115] For the connection between rituals of human sacrifice, Christian theology and lynching see also Mathews and Patterson, *Rituals of Blood*. Both differ in their conception of lynching as ritual. While Mathews regards lynching as "cleansing ritual" and the restitution of a virtuous white community, for Patterson it was more a scapegoat ritual intended to absolve white Southerners from their own feelings of guilt concerning slavery and the ordeals of the Civil War and Reconstruction.

unlikely that the lynchers were consciously re-enacting those rituals, the metonymic relationship between both could provide lynching with an air of divine justice and sanctify the notion of white supremacy.[116] The similarities between lynching and evangelical rituals thus functioned to provide lynching with a superior rationalization as enactment of a higher law. The lynchers could conceive of themselves as "Christian soldiers" punishing a crime which secular law was unable to deal with owing to the enormity of the transgression and simultaneously absolve themselves from any moral culpability. Only within such a context could Senator Cole L. Blease of South Carolina state: "Whenever the Constitution comes between me and the virtue of the white woman of the South, I say to hell with the Constitution!"[117] Lynching could be conceptualized as the establishment of an idealized white community through the expunging of sin and moral disorder. The conception of the idealized community as well as immorality was decidedly racialized in that sin was figured as African-American racial trait and the virtuous community as white heterogeneity.[118] The representation of lynching as spectacle therefore further inscribes the Manichean bipolarity of race and defines white supremacy by

> counterpos[ing] the sinful degradation of the black man to both the triumphant heroism of the white man and the avenged purity and virtue of the white woman. In doing so, these rituals created, in very stark and visual terms, a dichotomy between black and white, as damned and saved, sinner and saint, dichotomies which came to define white supremacy.[119]

Lynching as "a hell on earth for black 'sinners'" collectively absolved whites from any immoral behavior by projecting all their anxieties on the African-American-as-Other and in turn figuring themselves as sanctified.[120]

One of the most obvious appropriations of an element originally associated with religious rituals is the confession of the victim. Yet, rather than implying the victim's salvation, confessions during lynching assured the mob of the divine righteousness of their actions. Wood explains that the African-American victim was seen as black demon and thus as "already a hellish creature" and his confession "signaled [to the mob] that their violence was justified in the eyes of God."[121] In a similar vein the infliction of exceedingly gruesome tortures was perceived as the acting out of divine punishment, which should equal the enormity

[116] Wood, "Spectacles" 65, 67.
[117] Quoted after Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 195.
[118] See Wood, "Spectacles" 70-78, 117-123.
[119] Wood, "Spectacles" 79.
[120] See Wood, "Spectacles" 125.
[121] Wood, "Spectacles" 119.

of the "sin" which initiated lynching: "[I]mages of black suffering were often counterposed to the suffering of the white woman who had endured his alleged assaults. It was her suffering, after all, that ultimately justified all the extremes of torture the mob inflicted."[122] The praying victim and the tortures absolved the lynchers from any feeling of guilt as for them "the black victim's suffering offered them, and the white crowd witnessing them, spiritual redemption. Divine justice was served and substantiated through his suffering, and that suffering needed to be rendered as palpable and visible as possible to the watching crowd."[123] Confessions also functioned to further demonize the black rapist. Henry Noles's confession for example not only removed doubts about his guilt but also functioned to depict him as ferocious beast. Asked why he had killed Mrs. Williams, Noles is quoted saying: "I just done that because I had nothing else to do."[124] To demonstrate the intersection of lynching representations with other spectacles as well as the deployment of other typical representational elements I will use the lynchings of Sam Hose, Henry Smith, Luther Holbert and his wife, Henry Lowry, and Jesse Washington as some of the most notorious and most widely known ones throughout American history and construct an archetypal or "model lynching" as a point of reference for further analyses.[125]

2.2.2. The "Model Lynching"

The New York *Times* in its report of the lynching of Henry Smith includes a very detailed description of the exceedingly cruel and sadistic methods of torture. The newspaper informs that Smith was tortured "inch by inch" for fifty minutes with red-hot irons until finally they "were thrust down his throat."[126] The description of the lynching of Luther Holbert and his wife in Doddsville, Mississippi, in 1904, which probably served as a model for Griggs's lynching of Bud and Foresta, is in no way second-rate concerning explicitness and cruelty. The Vicksburg, Mississippi, *Evening Post* prints an eyewitness report and describes in full detail the "most fiendish tortures" preceding the burning of the Holberts. Fingers and ears were chopped off and distributed as souvenirs, and one of Luther Holbert's eyes was knocked out and "hung by a shred from the socket." Yet,

[122] Wood, "Spectacles" 122.
[123] Wood, "Spectacles" 121.
[124] Record *Herald* (TN) August 25, 1901. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1899-1919, Reel 221, Frame 81 (Microfilm Edition).
[125] The name of Holbert's wife is not given in any report I could find.
[126] All quotes related to the lynching of Henry Smith are taken from New York *Times*, February 2, 1893.

> [t]he most excruciating form of punishment consisted in the use of a large corkscrew in the hands of some of the mob. This instrument was bored into the flesh of the man and the woman, in the arms, legs and body, and then pulled out, the spirals tearing out big pieces of raw, quivering flesh every time it was withdrawn.[127]

The description of the lynching of Henry Lowry in 1921 is yet another example of the seemingly endless repertoire of sadism. Reminiscent of the "inch by inch" torture inflicted upon Henry Smith and setting the tone for the report, the Memphis *Press* headlines its account: "Kill Negro by Inches." The paper emphasizes especially the sadistic cruelty of "one of the most horrible deaths imaginable" and the victim's suffering, witnessed by a crowd of about 500 men and women:

> Inch by inch the negro was fairly cooked to death […] Even after the flesh had dropped away from his legs and the flames were leaping toward his face, Lowry remained conscious. Not once did he whimper or beg for mercy. Once or twice he attempted to pick up the hot ashes in his hands and thrust them in his mouth in order to hasten to death. […] Each time the ashes were kicked out of his reach by a member of the mob.[128]

The question to be answered is how such graphic depictions of inhumane malice and suffering fit the conception of lynching as a practice which was (or should be) understood as expression and inscription of white civilizational and moral supremacy.

The presentation of appalling forms of torture and cruelty as manifestation of white civilization was only possible when it was connected with the construction of knowledge about African-Americans and lynching. Apologetic representations of lynching (textual and visual) never confront the reader with an unmediated or uncommented display of cruelty but always assure the correct consumption of their portrayals by embedding them into a framework of knowledge which rationalizes and explains lynching as appropriate from of punishment. The construction of this knowledge has already been touched on in the discussion of lynching and ritual. Wood explains that only through a certain degree of dis-identification with the victim achieved through the production of the African-American as Other was it possible to read the spectacle correspondingly. Furthermore, the association of lynching with legal and religious rituals rendered the black victim's suffering the "physical manifestation of the spiritual tribulation that precedes salvation." The mob could understand black suffering as offering them their own spiritual redemption: "Divine justice was served and substantiated through his suffering, and that suffering needed to be rendered as palpable and visible as pos-

[127] Quoted after Terrell (LNPV 854). A slightly different version can also be found in Ginzburg 63.
[128] Memphis *Press* January 27, 1921. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 2, Frame 793-94. (Microfilm Edition).

sible to the watching crowd."[129] In a Foucaultian sense, the construction of this kind of knowledge helps to construct or legitimize power. In the twisted logic of racism, the representation of cruelties actually becomes the ultimate inscription of African-American inferiority and white superiority.

To justify extreme tortures and cruelties, the image of the suffering black male is always juxtaposed with the image of the suffering white female, which functions as the definitive legitimation of the mob's actions. News reports of lynching often include the "story of the crime" (usually rape) preceding the lynching. In equally graphic terms the rape and/ or murder is presented in rigidly melodramatic terms as the counterposing of good vs. evil.[130] African-Americans are always stereotyped as burly brutes, who either act as cold-blooded killers or insane madmen. Henry Smith is for example addressed as "brute" and "burly negro" and Sam Hose is introduced as "murderer" and "ravisher."[131] At the same time, the female victim of the crime is presented in highly sentimental terms. Newspapers habitually attest to the respectability, young age, and often angelic innocence of the victim to create the desired melodramatic contrast. The juxtaposition of good and evil is further emphasized through the story of the atrocious crime and the helpless suffering of the white woman. Henry Smith's lynching is thus made palpable as "punishment [which] should fit the crime":

> On Thursday last Henry Smith, a burly negro, picked up little Myrtle Vance, aged three and a half years. […] Arriving at the pasture, he first assaulted the babe, and then, taking a little leg in either hand, he literally tore her asunder. He covered the body with leaves and brush, and lay down and slept through the night by the side of his victim.

The atrocities of the Lowry lynching are likewise presented as an adequate form of punishment when compared to the crime which supposedly caused it. To justify the sadistic malice of the mob, the report includes an account of the crime which led to Lowry's lynching and represents the latter as necessary evil, defensible as "grewsome [sic] work of avenging the death of O.T. Craig and his daughter, Mrs. C.O. Williamson." The lynching of Sam Hose provides probably the most palpable attempt to justify lynching as "penalty for his fiendish deeds" through the juxtaposition with the murder of his employer Albert Cranford and his family.[132] The Atlanta *Constitution* preventively counters any possible criticism by arguing

[129] Wood, "Spectacles" 121.
[130] See Hall, "The Mind that Burns in Each Body" 64. Hall notes the ample coverage of lynching and rape in white newspapers, which legitimated lynching by constructing melodramatic stories about an overly chaste and pure virgin ravaged by a demonized black male. Especially the detailed accounts about the alleged rape that caused lynching made rape "the folk pornography of the Bible Belt."
[131] Springfield, Massachusetts, *Weekly Republican* April, 28, 1899, printed in Ginzburg 12.
[132] Kissimmee Valley, Florida, *Gazette* April, 28 1899, printed in Ginzburg 10.

that "the facts" should "temper the judgment of the reader." The "facts" according to the *Constitution* consist of a highly sentimental and sensational story about the murder of Cranford and the rape of his wife. Cranford is described as "unassuming, industrious and hard working farmer" and caring husband and father. One day out of the blue Hose "noiselessly" advanced him "with uplifted ax […] from the rear and sank it to the hilt into the brain of the unsuspecting victim." After killing Cranford, Hose tore the child "from the mother's breast" and threw it "into the pool of blood oozing from its father's wound." The "black beast" then raped Mrs. Mattie Cranford "swimming in her husband's warm blood." The *Constitution* reminds its readers to "go back and view that darker picture of Mrs. Cranford outraged in the blood of her murdered husband" when considering the lynching of Hose.[133]

Aside from juxtaposing the cruelties of lynching with the (allegedly) even crueler details of the crime necessitating it, lynching is also rendered socially acceptable through the association with legal and religious rituals. The lynching of Henry Smith for example is represented as substitute for legal justice when it is described as the result of outraged citizens who "took into their own hands the *law*" (emphasis mine). The identification of the captive and the extraction of a confession also add to the impression that lynching was a form of extralegal justice and religious ritual. During his lynching, Sam Hose is quoted saying: "I am Sam Hose. I killed Alfred Cranford, but was paid to do it. 'Lige' Strickland, the negro preacher at Palmetto, gave me $12 to kill him."[134] Accordingly, lynching violence is not only made tolerable by the nature of its motivation but also by the quasi legality of its performance. The representation of the lynching of Henry Lowry is equally clad into legal terms. The report in the Memphis *Press* refers to lynching as "death sentence" and includes Lowry's confession as verification of his guilt. When Lowry admitted his guilt "[a] big six-footer put the questions to the condemned man, while another wrote answers down in a notebook. It reminded me of a lawyer and court reporter."[135] Also the mentioning of a last meal for Lowry gives the impression that "[o]ne witnessing the scene might have easily pictured themselves [sic] in a courtroom."[136] The reference to a last meal in addition fuses the representation of

[133] Atlanta *Constitution* April, 24 1899, printed in Ginzburg 17-19.
[134] New York *Times*, April 24, 1899.
[135] Memphis *Press* January 27, 1921. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 2, Frame 793-94. (Microfilm Edition). Ginzburg 145, re-prints the same account from the Memphis Press but describes the scene as "a courtroom scene with prosecuting attorney and court reporter."
[136] Further evidence for Lowry's guilt is given in the following passage: "As the negro slowly burned to death two men stood near his head and questioned him. The slayer answered their questions freely, and the general impression was that he was telling the truth." The questions and answers are even taken down in a book. The report also highlights the professionalism and detached nature of the mob when it remarks that "[o]ther members

lynching with religious rituals usually accompanying public executions. Before the execution, the condemned was given last rites, offered a last meal and the possibility to say goodbye to family and friends.[137] The description of lynching in religious terms is even more evident in the lynching of Luther Holbert and his wife. The report represents the torture as part of a religious ritual when it explains that "[w]hen the executioner came forward to lop off fingers, Holbert extended his hand without being asked."[138] Serving as a quasi-confession, this gesture signals to his acceptance of the form of punishment and his suffering as part of a religious process at the end of which, however, lies not the victim's salvation but the acting out of divine punishment by the mob and the absolving of the lynchers from any feeling of guilt.[139] As Wood comments, the spectacle of prolonged tortures offered the mob spiritual redemption and the assurance of having performed divine justice, which was substantiated through black male suffering.[140] The concluding sentence that the final burning of the Holberts "came as a relief to the maimed and suffering victims" therefore cannot be read merely as the welcoming of the end of the sufferings endured but also as the final redemption and cathartic relief of the mob. The most deliberate association of lynching and legal justice, however, is the 1916 lynching of Jesse Washington in Waco, Texas. Washington was lynched immediately after he had been tried for the assault and murder of Lucy Fryar and had been sentenced to death. Before the verdict could be carried out Washington was lynched in front of a mob numbering 15,000 after he had once more confessed to the crime and is quoted saying "I'm sorry I done it."[141]

Apart from its religious implications, the infliction of torture and the victim's reactions inscribed his moral and physical inferiority and further sanctioned his punishment. If, as Henry Smith did, the victim screamed or wept, the witnessing crowd interpreted it as manifestation of his inferiority.[142] Sam Hose is described as "shivering like a leaf" and "terrified negro," who gave "wild shriek[s]" and "pleaded pitifully for mercy and begged his tormentors

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of the mob crowded around, but not once did they attempt to interrogate the negro, leaving this to the pair who appeared to have been assigned this duty."

[137] See Wood, "Spectacles" 117.

[138] Quoted after Terrell (LNPV 854). A slightly different version can also be found in Ginzburg 63.

[139] The remorseful acceptance of lynching as adequate punishment is even more obvious in Tom Clark's confession: "I am guilty. I am a miserable wretch. I deserve the punishment that is about to be inflicted on me." Name of paper not given. September 28, 1902. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1899-1919, Reel 221, Frame 104 (Microfilm Edition).

[140] See Wood, "Spectacles" 121.

[141] Atlanta *Constitution* May 15, 1916. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1899 – 1919, Reel 221, Frame 367 (Microfilm Edition). According to Hale the lynching of Jesse Washington mimicked the pattern established by the Hose and Smith lynching. Hale, "Spectacle Lynchings" 73.

[142] See Wood, "Spectacles" 121-22.

to let him die."[143] The mob's refusal to do so in turn is rendered a testimony of their determination and sense of (divine) duty. If he remained calm, observers noted his bestiality or inhumanness, which again was seen as justification of the punishment. During the lynching of Luther Holbert and his wife "[n]either the man nor the women begged for mercy, nor made a groan or plea. […] Even this devilish torture did not make the poor brutes cry out."[144] Either way, the victim's reactions to torture justifies torture.[145]

The lynching of Henry Smith is also remarkable as it is represented as a spectacle testifying to the civilized and ordered behavior of a mob numbering up to 10,000 people. Although the *Times* states that the people were "in a frenzy of excitement," the lynching was performed "in a business-like manner." The restraint displayed on the part of the lynchers is even more astonishing when viewed in the light of "the most atrocious murder and outrage in Texas history." The newspaper also mentions that whiskey shops were closed. In a time of growing concern over the negative consequences of alcohol such a decision must certainly have added to render lynching a respectable activity and prevent any association with unleashed passions. To assure their readers of the calm and determined mode of execution the *Times* mentions that all "unruly mobs were dispersed."

Yet, despite the overwhelming convincingness of those accounts of lynching, some people doubted their veracity not only with regards to the motivation of lynching but also the representation of the protagonists, that is, the black rapist and the white female victim. White newspapers covering the lynching of Sam Hose, for example, made Hose a "monster in human form," fiendishly slaughtering his employer Alfred Cranford.[146] W.E.B. Du Bois and Louis P. LeVin, a private investigator hired by Ida B. Wells-Barnett, provide a different story.[147] Du Bois draws attention to the fact that the charge of rape had only been made up by newspapers to cover the real stimulus for the quarrel resulting in the death of Alfred Cranford: "The man [Cranford] wouldn't pay him [Hose], so they got into a fight, and the man got killed – and then, in order to arouse the neighborhood to find this man, they brought in the

[143] New York *Times*, April 24, 1899.
[144] Quoted after Terrell (LNPV 854).
[145] See Wood, "Spectacles" 121.
[146] Remarks by James M. Griggs, quoted in Donald L. Grant, *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia* (Secaucus, N.J.: Carol Publishing Group, 1993) 161. For the news coverage of the Hose lynching see also Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 60; Fuoss 13, 25; Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 150 and McGovern 50-51.
[147] The findings of the investigator were widely published in the North and also by black newspapers in the South. See for example *New York Age*, June 22, 1899; *Richmond Planet*, October 14, 1899; Terrell (LNPV 859-60). For apologetic accounts see *Atlanta Constitution*, April 13-16, 1899; *Atlanta Journal*, April 13-25, 1899; *MT*, June 9, 1903.

charge of rape."[148] LeVin's report explains that Hose wanted an advance of his wages to be able to go visit his sick mother. When Cranford refused to pay him, they started to fight. Hose finally killed Cranford in self-defense.[149] Brundage refers especially to the fact that Hose is turned from a hard-working tenant into a "burly black brute." For Brundage the lynching of Sam Hose is paradigmatic for the demonization of African-Americans and the victimization of white women in the press. The message conveyed by such accounts is that any African-American is a possible rapist and any white woman a possible victim. The Atlanta *News* for example describes the rapist as follows: he is "a thousand times more dangerous than a rattle-snake" and "personal contact [with a white woman] often fires the hearts of these drivers with the lusts of hell."[150]

Anti-lynching texts try to challenge the veracity and credibility of apologetic lynching representations by providing alternative histories. Resistance to lynching thus becomes a process de-colonization. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Franz Fanon describes resistance as the demythologization of the above outlined bipolar structures, the shedding of cultural hegemony and the overcoming of the representation-as-Other at the end of which lies the achieving of native autonomy.[151] Yet, anti-lynching texts do not attempt to blatantly replace one account with another. The rhetoric of anti-lynching re-appropriates, reiterates and re-inscribes elements and strategies of the dominant discourse about lynching and employs them to deflate the power structures lynching produced. In the following I will briefly review some general theories of resistance and then develop a theory of resistance to lynching.

2.3. Theoretical Approaches to Colonial Resistance

Just as most of the above mentioned approaches to post-colonialism are based on Foucault's notion of power and knowledge, theories concerning resistance to such constructions of power also refer to Foucault, especially his insight that "[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority to power." Foucault considers power to be something which can neither be possessed by a single person or an institution nor be located in a sovereign's relation to those he dominates. Rather,

[148] "I very early got the idea." W.E.B. Du Bois Interview, 1960 Oral History Project, Columbia University, 22-23, quoted from Dray 7.
[149] See Dray 16.
[150] *Atlanta News* August 14, 1903 quoted after Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 60.
[151] Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970). See also *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Markmann and Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1991) for Fanon's analysis of colonialism.

power is fluid and can be found everywhere in the social network: "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere."[152] It is a matter of constantly shifting relations, which Foucault conceives of as asymmetrical, yet not in such a way that they are hierarchically constructed from top to bottom, but emerge from "the support which force relations find in one another, thus forming a chain or a system, or on the contrary, the disjunction and contradictions which isolate them from one another."[153] He conceives of power as a dynamic, fluid, mobile and contingent construct and strategy.[154] Given that power is everywhere, Foucault argues, freedom is the condition and necessary prerequisite of power and resistance is inherent in his conceptualization of power, as otherwise power would degenerate into determinism.[155] Assuming that resistance is "present everywhere in the power network" several scholars try to develop a theory of resistance, which I will outline to introduce the main focus of my study: resistance to lynching.[156] Resistance, like power, has to be understood less as physical or armed resistance but as discursive formation. Edward Said for example delimits this form of opposition from armed resistance by defining the former as "ideological resistance" which tries "to reconstitute a 'shattered community, to save or restore the sense and fact of community against all the pressures of the colonial system'."[157] Yet, my use of the term resistance capitalizes less on the preservation of a community than on the restructuring of power relations. Resistance as discursive formation is the attempt to redefine the correlation of knowledges and reconstruct the distribution of power to liberate the colonized from the patronizing control of the colonizer. Resistance therefore is a counter-discourse which tries to re-inscribe a different meaning into colonial discourse.[158] The Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe for example assumes that power is the result of misrepresentations of the Other and the silencing of local histories. Further, he states that resistance arises from challenging the monolithic depiction of the Other and through the production of counter-hegemonic (historical) accounts: "I would be satisfied if my novels (especially the one set in the past) did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its

[152] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) 93.
[153] Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 92; see also Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge* 199ff.
[154] See for example Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 94. See also Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. With An Afterword by Michel Foucault*. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982) 225:
[155] Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. With An Afterword by Michel Foucault*. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982) 225.
[156] Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 95.
[157] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993) 252-53.
[158] For a general definition of "counter-discourse" see Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/ Counter-Discourse: The Theory and Practice of Symbolic Resistance in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985).

imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them."[159]

Jenny Sharpe in her article "Figures of Colonial Resistance" tries to develop a theory of colonial resistance and considers theorists like Bhabha, Spivak, JanMohamed and Benita Parry and their attempts to correct the predominant "tendency to presume the transparency" of literary resistance.[160] Based on Foucault's assumption that resistance is always already inherent in any construction of power and is even its pre-requisite, Sharpe notes that all theorists, despite diverging approaches to defining colonial resistance, converge in two assumptions: resistance is no reversal of colonial power structures and therefore not easily located since resistance is an "effect of the contradictory representation of colonial authority."[161] Moreover, resistance is always complicit in the dominant colonial discourse it seeks to overthrow. Accordingly, she regards resistance as utterly ambivalent phenomenon. A similar approach also informs Stephen Slemon's attempt to develop a theory of colonial resistance in his essay "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World." He rejects traditional approaches which start with the assumption of a simple binarism between colonizer and colonized as they fail to take into account "that centre/periphery notions of resistance can actually work to *reinscribe* centre/periphery relations," which then may result in the preservation of dominant narratives.[162] Furthermore, Slemon challenges the assumption of textual and representational transparency and the idea that literary resistance "is something actually *there* in the text." Instead, "resistance is grounded in the *multiple* and *contradictory* structures of ideological interpellation or subject formation – which would call down the notion that resistance can *ever* be 'purely' intended or 'purely' expressed in representational or communicative models." Finally, such older theories miss the Foucaultian notion that power inscribes and attempts to contain resistance. Referring to Sharpe's notion of resistance, Slemon defines resistance as "necessarily self-produced as a doubly-emplaced and mediated figure […] between the First and the Third Worlds, and within the ambit of a First-World politics."[163] He even regards the ambivalence of literary resistance as "'always already' condition of […] post-colonial literary writing" and argues that "this ambivalence of emplacement is the *condi-*

[159] Chinua Achebe, "The Artist as Teacher," *Hopes and Impediments* (London: Heinemann, 1988) 30. The emphasis on resistance as a form of counter-hegemonic history-writing is also inherent in Said's treatment of resistance. See Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 259-61.
[160] Jenny Sharpe, "Figures of Colonial Resistance," *Modern Fiction Studies* 35.1 (1989) 138.
[161] Sharpe, "Figures of Colonial Resistance" 145.
[162] Stephen Slemon, "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World," *World Literature Written in English* 30.2 (1990) 36, emphasis in original.
[163] Slemon, "Unsettling the Empire" 31, 36, 37, emphasis always in original. The "Second World" for Slemon is "at root a *reading position*."

tion of their possibility."[164] As can be seen, post-colonial theories of resistance reject former notions of resistance as a system of irreducible and mutually exclusive binaries and instead favor an interpretation of inextricable interconnectedness of resistance and power and an ambivalent nature of resistance.[165] Sara Suleri forwards a similar notion. She starts from the assumption that

> [t]he necessary intimacies that obtain between ruler and ruled create a counter-culture not always explicable in terms of an allegory of otherness: the narrative of English India questions the validity of both categories to its secret economy, which is the dynamic of powerlessness at the heart of the imperial configuration.

To avoid binarisms, we need "to locate an idiom for alterity that can circumnavigate the more monolithic interpretations of cultural empowerment" as the adherence to binarisms is the denial of "the impact of narrative on a productive disordering of binary dichotomies."[166]

Probably the most renowned theory of resistance as an ambivalent phenomenon is Bhabha's theory of mimicry and hybridity. To be sure, both concepts are no full-fledged theories of resistance. Although they illuminate the interconnectedness of power and resistance in a colonial context as mutually determining concepts and thus help the understanding of resistance, Bhabha uses both mimicry and hybridity first and foremost to describe the intrinsically ambivalent nature of colonial power per se. Mimicry, for example, helps the colonizer to create a knowable Other. He defines mimicry as "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite* […] so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace."[167] While basically "one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge," mimicry as a form of discriminatory knowledge and metonymic identity also contains the unsettling menace of the colonized's partial resemblance to the colonizer and thus the eradication of difference through the almost-duplication of representation: otherness becomes sameness. "The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from *mimicry* – a difference that is almost nothing but not quite – to *menace* – a difference that is almost total but not quite."[168] Bhabha emphasizes that mimicry is not an intentional form of resistance but integral to colonial discourse although "mimicry marks those moments of civil disobedience within the discipline of civility."[169] Resistance may arise from

[164] Slemon, "Unsettling the Empire" 38, 39 emphasis in original.
[165] For older approaches to resistance Slemon refers to Selwyn R. Cudjoe, *Resistance in Caribbean Literature* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 1989) and Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987).
[166] Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992) 3, 4.
[167] Bhabha 86, emphasis in original.
[168] Bhabha 85, 91, emphasis in original.
[169] Bhabha 121.

the contestation of the colonizer's sole authority concerning the determining of meaning, which is the basis for colonial power. As soon as other cultures inscribe their own meaning, authority crumbles. The oppositional dimension of hybridity therefore lies in the colonized's repetition of concepts introduced by the colonizer to establish his power as any reiteration can become a form of re-inscription. The reinterpretation in the light of the Other's culture can produce a shift in the relations of power. Bhabha's hybridity or liminality in conceiving of a theory of colonial resistance is the attempt to overcome dialectical forms of opposition and replace them with "a space of transition: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must, the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics."[170] Anti-lynching texts thus have to be read as the attempt to re-inscribe lynching with a different meaning and contest the representation of African-Americans as Other. Anti-lynching texts therefore constitute a form of "counter-discourse," which aims at redefining the meaning of lynching as probably the most dominant discourse determining the representation of African-American during the time analyzed in this study.

Allegory, according to Slemon, is one of the most common modes of resistance. Starting with the assumption that the allegorical mode of representation is an intrinsic characteristic of all colonial discourse and is employed as a means of appropriation and subjugation, Slemon tries to define the underlying mechanism of allegory in colonial discourse.[171] Fundamental to allegorical writing is a doubling of "extratextual material," that is, all allegorical signs are historical and refer to an anterior sign so that they comprise multiple layers of meaning.[172] Necessary for allegorical signification, therefore, is the establishing of a connection between the allegorical sign and what Frederick Jameson has called the "master code," a

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[170] Bhabha 25, emphasis in original.

[171] See Stephen Slemon, "Monuments of Empire: Allegory/ Counter-Discourse/ Post-Colonial Writing," *Kunapipi* 9.3 (1987) 8. See also JanMohamed's "Manichean Allegory." Post-modern theory regards allegory as ultimate trope for discourse itself in that all writing is allegorical writing. For postmodern interpretations of allegory see especially Stephen Barney, *Allegories of History, Allegories of Love* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1979); Carolyn van Dyke, *The Fiction of Truth: Structures of Meaning in Narrative and Dramatic Allegory* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985); Walter Haug, ed., *Formen und Funktionen der Allegorie*, Symposion Wolfenbüttel, 1978 (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979); Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Interpretation: Theory and Practice*, ed. Charles S. Singleton (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1969), 173-209; Stephen Melville, "Notes on the Reemergence of Allegory, the Forgetting of Modernism, the Necessity of Rhetoric, and the Condition of Publicity in Art and Criticism," *October* 19 (1981): 55-92; Craig Owens, "The Allegorical Impulse: Toward a Theory of Postmodernism," *October* 12 (1980): 67-86 and *October* 13 (1980): 59-80; Maureen Quilligan, *The Language of Allegory: Defining the Genre* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979); Paul Smith, "The Will to Allegory in Postmodernism," *Dalhousie Review* 62.1 (1982): 105-22. For a critical stance on the redefinition of allegory and especially Paul de Man see esp. Frank Lentriccia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980).

[172] Stephen Slemon, "Post-Colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 23.1 (1988) 158.

shared essentialist meaning of a reading community, "something already given, inherent in the tradition, and capable of acting as a matrix for shared typology between the allegorist and the reading community."[173] In colonial discourse, such an interpretation of signs is employed to naturalize and legitimize hierarchies and power relations. Allegory is thus a "mode of representation that energises the imperial enterprise."[174] However, allegory can also become a form of "critical intervention and cultural resistance": "Allegory becomes a site upon which post-colonial cultures seek to contest and subvert colonialist appropriation through the production of a literary, and specifically anti-imperialist, figurative opposition or textual *counter-discourse*."[175] Slemon distinguishes several modes of allegory which all aim at subverting the codes of recognition of colonial allegories by appropriating allegorical modes of presentation for their own sake. Resistance thus evolves as the subversion of the colonizer's discursive creation of power.

Also Helen Tiffin states that counter-hegemonic writings as "sites of resistance" are often the subversive reproduction of colonial texts but are not directed against one specific text "but address the whole of the discursive field within which those texts were/ are situated in colonialist discourse." She identifies the strategy of exposing the ideological and essentialist underpinnings of colonialism as one of the most common forms of destabilizing colonial power.[176] In her article "Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse," she describes this strategy as "canonical counter-discourse," that is, the verbalizing of the ideological underpinnings informing the production of a given canonical text as for example in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Jean Rhys's rewriting of Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre. Such a text "unveils those assumptions, subverting the text for post-colonial purposes." She further explains that "[p]ost-colonial counter-discursive strategies involve a mapping of the dominant discourse, a reading and exposing of its underlying assumptions, and the dis/mantling of these assumptions from the cross-cultural standpoint of the imperially subjectified 'local'."[177] Here Tiffin is very close to Spivak's proposition in her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?". Convinced that the voice of marginalized "minorities" is irretrievably lost in texts written by colonizers, who use the subaltern for the construction of an Other, Spivak defines it as the task of the historiogra-

[173] Slemon, "Post-Colonial Allegory" 161. See also Jameson 25-33 and Slemon, "Monuments of Empire" 7.
[174] Slemon, "Post-Colonial Allegory" 162.
[175] Slemon, "Monuments of Empire" 10, 11.
[176] Helen M. Tiffin, "Rites of Resistance: Counter-Discourse and West Indian Biography," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 3.1 (1989) 30.
[177] Helen Tiffin, "Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse," *Kunapipi* 9.3 (1987) 22, 23. Tiffin also lists several other modes of counter-discourse, such as magic realism, "the re/lacing of carnivalesque European genres like the picaresque in post-colonial contexts" or Slemon's use of allegory.

pher or critic to unearth the ideological underpinnings of the colonizers' representations of the Other. Similarly, according to Gates, one way of dealing with the dominance of race is "to deconstruct […] the ideas of difference inscribed in the trope of race, to explicate discourse itself in order to reveal the hidden relations of power and knowledge inherent in popular academic usages of 'race'. […] To use contemporary theories of criticism to explicate these modes of inscription is to demystify large and obscure ideological relations and, indeed, theory itself."[178]

The rhetoric of anti-lynching intersects with the above stated theories of resistance in many ways. For the purpose of this study, however, it will be necessary to develop a specific theory of resistance to lynching which reflects the historical and discursive contexts of its production.

2.4. The Anatomy of Resistance to Lynching – Reiteration with a Difference

Resistance to a discourse in which "black is the metonym for racial alterity" has to be understood as the attempt to produce a different kind of knowledge about African-Americans in order to challenge their representation as Other and lynching as the prime producer of this knowledge.[179] Anti-lynching rhetoric is a form of counter-hegemonic discourse which aims at de-colonizing an imposed African-American identity as inferior Other and thus redefining and resisting existing power structures of black oppression. It is decidedly propagandistic in that it tries to lobby support for the demise of lynching by revoking rationalizations for lynching as practice and attempts to undermine the discursive authority as well as the perpetuation of lynching. The main difficulty, of course, is *how* to challenge the dominance of lynching discourse and the representation of African-Americans. The debate between W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke over the representation of African-Americans on stage is rather illuminating here.[180] Although both converge in the goal of challenging stereotypical representations of African-Americans, they markedly diverge in the realization of their ambitions. While Locke favors the folk play as celebration of the everyday life of ordinary African-Americans and effacement of racial antagonisms, Du Bois proclaims that all art is propaganda. It should directly confront the experiences and consequences of racism suffered by respectable African-

[178] Gates, "Writing 'Race'" 6.
[179] duCille, "Postcolonialism and Afrocentricity" 38.
[180] For a comprehensive overview of the Locke-Du Bois debate see Samuel A. Hay, *African American Theatre: a Historical and Critical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).

Americans in order to prove to a white audience that African-Americans deserve equal social chances and protection. I am citing this conflict not to contrast two competing aesthetics but to sketch two basic types of resistance. While Locke chooses to oppose racist representations by building up counterstereotypes and largely conceals racism as making these productions necessary in the first place, Du Bois incorporates racism into his strategy of resistance and directly confronts it as the source of racist stereotypes. These are also the possibilities open for resistance to lynching: effacement or confrontation. In this study I will demonstrate that the extreme predominance of lynching discourse made it an actuality which could not be ignored or effaced if African-Americans wanted to resist their subordination. I will argue that lynching was not only one of the most prominent rhetorical figures during the time under scrutiny employed by a white-authored, supremacist but also black, resistant discourse to talk about matters of race, gender, and class. Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's description of the nature of African-American resistance to white supremacy in general therefore also applies to lynching. Higginbotham explains that

> black people endeavored not only to silence and conceal but also to dismantle and deconstruct the dominant society's deployment of race. Racial meanings were never internalized by blacks and whites in an identical way. The language of race has historically been what Bakhtin calls a double-voiced discourse – serving the voice of black oppression and the voice of black liberation.

Lynching, like race, connected African-Americans as a people and they fashioned lynching "into a cultural identity that resisted white hegemonic discourses."[181] The centrality of lynching in the supremacist discourse is mirrored by the employment of lynching in the attempt to undermine those power structures for the sake of resistance. The rhetoric of anti-lynching uses the talk about lynching to re-inscribe it with a new meaning, that is, it tries to produce a different kind of knowledge, to use lynching to redefine the meaning of race, class, gender and to change the representation of African-Americans. Raymond Williams's assertion that language is "a persistent kind of creation and re-creation: a dynamic presence and a constant regenerative process" thus also applies to the rhetoric of resistance to lynching.[182] Resistance here is understood as the attempt to challenge the dominance of supremacist representations through counter-hegemonic representations and as the "appropriation of the productive power

[181] Higginbotham 107.
[182] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford UP, 1977) 31.

of language for the purpose of resistance."[183] In other words, anti-lynching rhetoric uses lynching to resist lynching.

Still, the use of lynching in resistance rhetoric is not identical with apologetic appropriations. In resistance discourse, lynching as a trope is repeated with slight but significant alterations. While anti-lynching rhetoric adopts the basic characteristics of lynching as a means of creating differences and reproduces the coherence of its doctrines and the stubborn rigidity of its structural characteristics, it profoundly changes the meaning and formulation of oppositions for the sake of resistance. The basic mechanism of resistance in anti-lynching rhetoric, therefore, is what Bhabha characterizes as mimicry, that is, reiteration with a difference. Exploiting the ambivalent nature of colonial/ lynching discourse, anti-lynching rhetoric repeats the concepts and structures of the dominant discourse, especially the Manichean bipolarity, but only to exceed the rigid logic of racial binaries and thus expose the intrinsic contradictions of lynching from within. Chesnutt W. Chesnutt, Sutton E. Griggs, Angelina Weld Grimké, Walter F. White, Georgia Douglas Johnson, etc. all work within the Manichean model of race but each text bends the significations of race, class, gender, and also lynching to challenge the sole authority of supremacist discourse to determine meaning and surpass the singularity of the trope of lynching. Anti-lynching rhetoric directly engages the structures of apologetic representations and exposes, appropriates, inverts and finally subverts them to bring about its final demise. African-American representations of lynching thus are a means of resistance in that they re-define lynching as the ultimate trope of difference.

To work from within the dominant discourse is a typical feature of (colonial) resistance. Edward Said for example points out that resistance often has to work inside the dominant culture, that is, with forms, languages, etc. inherited from the colonizers – a fact that he interprets as a substantial limitation for voicing counter-hegemonic histories.[184] Forced to articulate their critique in the language of the oppressor and a culture which defines them as absence, the colonized are profoundly impaired in their possibilities. Anti-lynching rhetoric also voices its critique of lynching in the language of the oppressor. In fact, its shape, strategies and structures are determined to a large degree by apologetic representations as a model.[185] Yet, unlike Said, I do not regard the influence and appropriation of a white supremacist discourse as the result of a limitation. Although, according to Foucault, the struc-

[183] Higginbotham 110.
[184] See Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 259-61.
[185] The parallel use of othering in opposing discourses is a feature quite common at the turn-of-the-century. Analyzing the rhetoric of rape, Sielke for example explains that rape as well as opposition to rape formulates identities through the ascription of socially deviant behavior to the Other. See Sielke 5.

tures of discourse are inescapable, they are not necessarily an inhibition for voicing resistance. Rather, I will argue that the adoption of certain modes of presentation, mechanisms and meanings is not imposed or implemented out of a lack of alternatives and thus the demonstration of the impossibility of voicing resistance outside the dominant discourse. Rather, the staging of resistance from within the dominant modes of presentation and the deployment of the language commonly used to talk about race is intended to re-appropriate this language for the sake of resistance and to present the frustration of African-American strivings in a language familiar to larger (white) audience. In a way, anti-lynching rhetoric exploits the wide circulation of lynching discourse to promote its own message of resistance. Anti-lynching rhetoric is therefore the astute manipulation and subversion of its antagonist discourse to re-inscribe lynching with a new meaning.

The new meaning anti-lynching rhetoric tries to construct for lynching is the result of the above mentioned reiteration with a difference. At the beginning of this chapter I characterized the rhetoric of lynching as discourse of difference. The discourse of anti-lynching is the excessive reverberation of this difference, however, with a difference. Probably the most obvious re-appropriation is the reappearance of the Manichean bipolarity. Reproducing and re-making the hegemonic binary which triggered its composition and employing othering as a central mechanism to create difference, also anti-lynching rhetoric is essentially a discourse of difference. However, anti-lynching rhetoric changes the formulation of sameness and otherness: whereas lynching in apologetic representations signifies racial difference, its use in resistance discourse denotes *interracial sameness*. Or, to be more precise, anti-lynching rhetoric formulates a *de-racialized* sameness. What all of the texts in this study have in common is the attempt to overcome race as the prime marker of difference through the creation of a racially overlapping or race-eliminating sameness.[186] The formulation of those commonalities largely evolves within the categories and meanings provided by the rhetoric of lynching. Alterity or otherness is conceived of in terms of gender and class as the two most prominent bearers of racial meaning. Anti-lynching rhetoric does not try to formulate alterative meanings for feminine virtue, but adopts the dominant discourse of gender. Yet, it dissociates it from its integration into the Manichean allegory of race. The characters in domestic anti-lynching texts mostly materialize as "blackened" versions of white middle-class conceptions of morality and respectability. The partial adoption of white conceptions, however, does not testify to African-American capitulation to the dominance of an apologetic rhetoric of lynch-

[186] Texts as for example *The Hindered Hand* do not try to efface race but disqualify it as a dividing principle.

ing. Rather, it is the attempt to formulate commonalities across the color line. The attempt to create sameness where the rhetoric of lynching imposes otherness can be regarded as probably the most outstanding characteristic of the rhetoric of resistance. By presenting African-Americans and whites as identical in terms of gender for instance and by making lynching a threat to this commonality, anti-lynching rhetoric tries to demonstrate the necessity of white involvement in the fight against lynching. David Lloyd's emphasizing of sameness over difference in racist discourse thus also applies to anti-lynching rhetoric. Citing Paul Ricoeur's insight that "[t]o see *the like* is to see the same in spite of, and through, the different," Lloyd explains that "racism elevates a principle of likening above that of differentiation such that its rhetorical structure is that of metaphorization."[187] The adoption of the underlying principle of the apologetic rhetoric of lynching also encompasses the subordination of difference to the demand of de-racialized sameness as the central strategy of anti-lynching rhetoric. The texts analyzed in this study all demarcate lynching as a threat to de-racialized ideals and demonstrate the necessity for interracial anti-lynching alliances. Chesnutt in *The Marrow of Tradition*, for example, represents lynching as obstructing the progress of American civilization. Depicting civilization as de-racialized concern of whites as well as African-Americans, he promotes interracial cooperation as the only possibility for the prevention of lynching and for the progress of American civilization. Domestic anti-lynching texts posit the ideal of Victorian motherhood as universal value and make lynching its impediment. Gossett's characterization of race relations in post-bellum times therefore also relates to the basic outline for anti-lynching rhetoric. He writes that "[f]or a long time the opponents of racial injustice were obliged to appeal almost exclusively to the altruism of the dominant white race."[188] The appeal to the white race in anti-lynching texts, however, is not only a call for help. By installing lynching as interracial threat, white involvement is motivated not by selflessness but becomes a necessity. Like this, anti-lynching rhetoric replaces race as the "ultimate trope of difference" with support of or opposition to lynching. While the Manichean bipolarity in apologetic representations integrates oppositional pairs into the overarching racial opposition, anti-lynching rhetoric integrates all oppositional pairs (except race) into the overarching bipolarity of pro or against lynching to create a de-racialized sameness. The re-inscription of lynching is therefore not the reversal of the racial hierarchy by means of swapping racist stereotypes. Anti-lynching rhetoric installs lynching as the ultimate trope of difference. Reiterated with a dif-

[187] David Lloyd, "Race under Representation," *Culture/ Contexture: Explorations in Anthropology and Literary Studies*, eds. E. Valentine Daniel and Jeffrey M. Peck (Berkley: U of California P, 1996) 256.
[188] Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America*. (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 253.

ference, lynching again is the touchstone for determining masculinity, feminine virtue, civilizational refinement, etc. and in short the prime means to install power relations. Yet, this time not the membership to race determines one's virtue but the support of or the resistance to lynching.

Although anti-lynching rhetoric challenges the essentialism of race utilized in apologetic representations, it employs essentialism itself for the construction of sameness and otherness. As the goal of anti-lynching rhetoric is not so much the historicizing and pluralizing of meaning through multiple formulations of alternative outlines for black as well as white identities but the formulation of absolutes and unambiguous valuations, it has to a certain degree to employ a generalizing view effacing distinctions within the categories in use. Domestic anti-lynching dramas, for example, challenge the racist stereotyping of African-American women through a universal representation as worthy mothers. In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Chesnutt pluralizes the singular formulation of blackness and whiteness when he departs from a stubborn racial bipolarity and introduces a quadruple structure, dividing society into races but also classes. However, his representation of different perspectives is not the attempt to challenge white supremacy through the affirmation of multiple black identities and various black experiences, as bell hooks recommends as a strategy to challenge "essentialist blackness."[189] The forms of resistance examined in this study all presuppose a certain degree of generalization of certain categories to create sameness and difference. Accordingly, Chesnutt's characters are not the attempt to challenge lynching through a kind of cultural relativism. Rather, the proponents of each group personify different views of lynching to instigate identification or delimitation. Spivak has called the use of generalizations for the sake of resistance "strategic essentialism." She explains that sometimes it is necessary to "strategically" make essentialist claims, even while retaining the awareness that those claims prohibit the perception of the multiplicity of experiences: "You pick up the universal that will give you the power to fight against the other side, and what you are throwing away by doing that is your theoretical purity."[190] Strategic essentialism means employing the methods of the

[189] bell hooks problematizes the use of essentialisms. She regards the concept of essential blackness and the prescription of "authentic black identity" as prohibiting the perception of the multiplicity of black experiences. Her solution is to "engage decolonialization as a critical practice if we are to have meaningful chances of survival." The postmodern critique of essentialism should "affirm multiple black identities, various black experiences" and thus challenge white supremacy. "Abandoning essentialist notions would be a serious challenge to racism. Contemporary African-American resistance struggles must be rooted in a process of decolonization that continually opposes re-inscribing notions of 'authentic' black identity." bell hooks, "Postmodern Blackness," *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End P, 1995) 26, 28.

[190] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution. An Interview with Gayatri Spivak," *Thesis Eleven* 10/11 (1985) 184. Spivak does not condemn essentialism as such, but only its misuse. Her cri-

colonizer to understand them and use them against him/ her. Or, as she puts it, "[deconstruction] is not the exposure of error. It is constantly and persistently looking into how truths are produced."[191] To battle effectively against the dominance of lynching, therefore, requires the use of strategic essentialisms to highlight the anatomy of lynching. Transposed into resistance to lynching that means that anti-lynching rhetoric generalizes certain categories to define differences and commonalities and delineates lynching as a threat to whites and blacks alike. What distinguishes anti-lynching texts from apologetic representations, therefore, is not the formulation of authenticity for the purpose of creating difference. It is another characteristic of the texts analyzed in this study that they "strategically" adopt ideas about the authentic nature of certain categories. In Angelina Weld Grimké's drama *Rachel*, for example, Victorian motherhood is installed as an interracial ideal for all women. Deliberately effacing differentiations among black as well as white women, Grimké uses motherhood as the expression of authentic femininity to challenge lynching and the sustaining racial binary. Like this, anti-lynching texts redefine the meaning of authenticity as a means of creating racially overlapping commonalities instead of delimitations and overcome race as the ultimate essentialism of (black) exclusion.

Yet, the notion of essentialist blackness is adopted but in a reversal of racist appropriations. Rather than using blackness as signifying absence or functioning as Other, African-Americans are generalizingly represented as worthy but suffering.[192] Whiteness, on the other hand, is hardly ever represented in essentialist terms. The goal of forging interracial alliances forbids the use of whiteness as signifying a general moral degradation or savagery. Yet, the existence of lynching also prevents representations of whiteness in unambiguously positive terms. Owing to the existence of lynching and the need to find a sympathetic white audience, anti-lynching rhetoric therefore undermines the notion of white racial unity and instead highlights various inter- as well as intraracial alliances based on competing political, economic, class, and socio-cultural identities and differences. It divides the white race into two (or more) opposing groups and again makes lynching the touchstone for respective assignments.

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tique of essentialism is not intended to expose the falsity of the concept per se but interrogates the essentialist terms, that is, it tries to make visible the anatomy of colonialist essentialism. As one cannot avoid being not essentialist, Spivak advises a deconstructivist use of essentialism, which in earlier writings she called "strategic essentialism."

[191] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Bonding in Difference: Interview with Alfred Arteaga," *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*, eds. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York: Routledge, 1996) 27.

[192] bell hooks acknowledges that the experience of racial oppression is an authentic African-American experience and "affords us a privileged critical location from which to speak." Her solution to the problem of essentialism is to "critique essentialism while emphasizing the significance of 'the authority of experience'." hooks, "Postmodern Blackness" 29.

The struggle to abolish lynching is thus also presented as an interracial struggle between whites, which are defined in class terms as either "poor white trash" or "genteel elite." Lynching also becomes a concern for the dominance within the white race and who comes to represent whiteness. The involvement of whites into the struggle against lynching is thus also one of determining the meaning of whiteness: civilization or savagery.

The emphasis on difference and sameness also finds expression in the predominance of a melodramatic mode of presentation.[193] In fact, the melodramatic is a key to the reading of anti-lynching rhetoric. In the following, the melodramatic is used descriptively, that is, not to denote a dramatic genre but a Manichaean worldview. Most influential for my use of the melodramatic is Peter Brooks' *The Melodramatic Imagination*. Rehabilitating the nineteenth-century melodramatic mode and establishing its modernity, Brooks defines the melodramatic imagination as shaped by a "sense of fundamental bipolar contrast and clash" through the sentimental and antagonistic juxtaposition of good and evil/ vice and virtue as mutually exclusive concepts. Moral polarities, the doubling of plot, characters, and events in a narrative of victimization and rescue and the facilitating of affective identification and delimitation through the personalized figuration of good and evil are characteristic for the melodramatic mode. The driving force behind melodrama is "making the world morally legible."[194] Johann Schmidt also identifies antithetical and polarizing arrangements as typical for melodrama and explains them as the result of effect-oriented considerations intended to facilitate the affective identification with or distancing from typified, tautological, or hyperbolically represented characters and thus the mediation of certain creeds and unambiguous moral judgments.[195] Owing to its "fundamental manichaeism" melodrama therefore is the ideal form for staging lynching as "race melodrama," to borrow Susan Gillman's term in her study *Blood Talk:*

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[193] For a general overview of the historical development of melodrama see for example Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976); Daniel C. Gerould, ed., *Melodrama* (New York: New York Literary Forum, 1980); Michael Hays, *Melodrama: the Cultural Emergence of a Genre* (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1996); Frank Rahill, *The World of Melodrama* (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1967); James Redmond, ed., *Melodrama* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992); Johann N. Schmidt, *Ästhetik des Melodramas: Studien zu einem Genre des populären Theaters im England des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1986); James L. Smith, *Melodrama* (London: Methuen, 1963). For the use of melodrama in American theater see Silvia Eschbach, "Das populäre Melodrama-Theater des 19. Jahrhunderts in den USA: Überlegungen auf systemtheoretischer Grundlage," Dissertation, Universität Köln, 2000; Daniel C. Gerould, "The Americanization of Melodrama," *American Melodrama*, ed. Daniel C. Gerould (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publ., 1983) 7-29; Bruce McConachie, *Melodramatic Formations: American Theater and Society, 1820-1870* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1992); Jeffrey D. Mason, *Melodrama and the Myth of America* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993); Quinn, Arthur H. *A History of the American Drama, from the Civil War to the Present Day* (New York: Irvington Publishers, 1980); Klaus Schwank, "Das amerikanische Melodrama vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg," *Das amerikanische Drama*, ed. Gerhard Hoffmann (Bern: Francke, 1984) 27-38.

[194] Brooks 36, 42.

[195] See Schmidt, *Ästhetik des Melodramas* esp. 28.

American Race Melodrama and the Culture of the Occult. She assumes that "the Manichaean logic and affective intensity of the melodramatic mode are perfectly attuned to the heightened polarities, the sheer violence, of U.S. race relations and race representations at the turn of the century." Yet, she also marks the excess of the bipolar structure when transposed into race melodramas:

> When racialized, the melodramatic mode becomes relational rather than divided and divisive, imagining a range of crosscutting, contradictory alliances and conflicts across groups variously defined, not only by race, gender, and nation, but also by competing political, economic, and socio-cultural identities and differences.[196]

Anti-lynching texts therefore not only employ the melodramatic mode as it enables the providing of a definite (condemning) judgment about lynching and presentation of black protagonists modeled on accepted standards of morality the intended white audience can easily identify with but also because at the same time they exceed the moral Manichaeism and structural polarity of the race melodrama. For that goal, anti-lynching rhetoric constitutes a "reiterative excess of the melodramatic mode" to present lynching as the compromising of the assurance of a morally legible world. The use of binary structures is "in effect, required in order to be exceeded."[197]

A final feature which is to be found in most but not all anti-lynching texts is the assumption that the dominant, apologetic representation of lynching is a deliberate distortion of reality. Exposing or verbalizing the ideological underpinnings of those representations, anti-lynching texts challenge their authority and veracity. Moreover, they re-position them as a threat not primarily for blacks but whites as it distorts the latter's perception of reality and impedes the progress of American civilization. Especially Chesnutt emphasizes that apologetic representations of lynching are a deliberate misrepresentation which hamper the progress of American civilization. Others ascribe the existence of lynching to the dominance of those misrepresentations as the natural American sense for justice would never tolerate the existence of such barbarity on its soil. The goal of anti-lynching writings thus takes on national significance. As African-Americans (lamentably) are the only ones with an undistorted perception of lynching, it is up to them to educate the American public about the true nature of lynching. The fight against lynching is thus elevated from a racially and regionally limited

[196] Brooks 36; Susan Kay Gillman, *Blood Talk: American Race Melodrama and the Culture of the Occult* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003) 6.
[197] Gillman, *Blood Talk* 24.

problem to a problem of interracial significance, which can no longer be shrugged off as Southern peculiarity.

However, the establishing of African-Americans and (the upper classes of) whites as practically indistinguishable in terms of morality, virtue, and their respective valorizations of cultural ideals not only functions to overcome race and install lynching as universal threat to those commonalities but also to register the frustration of African-American strivings for equality. Notwithstanding the demonstration of African-American worth, the experience and memory of lynching as physical violence impairs attempts of black racial uplift and prohibits the complete convergence of black and white. The omnipresence of lynching in the everyday life of African-Americans reintroduces race into the discourse of anti-lynching despite the demonstration of the irrelevance of race as marker of difference. No matter how hard they tried, African-Americans would always be reminded of their (supposed) inferiority due to their likelihood of being lynched and the color of their skin as a permanent marker of their difference from whites. However, anti-lynching rhetoric is not the surrender to race as ultimate trope of difference and to the dominance of the discourse of lynching. Rather, anti-lynching texts use the simultaneous display of their identity with the "better" classes of whites and the demonstration of the inapplicability of those concepts to mold a strategy of resistance which invites white sympathy and empathy over the frustration of those goals. Especially domestic anti-lynching texts capitalize on the empathic identification of white mothers with the misery of their sisters of color to stage their condemnation of lynching in a domestic language of maternal suffering. They are made to feel with black mothers and their forced relinquishing of this universal ideal. Georgia Douglass Johnson in *Safe*, for example, features a black mother who suffocates her newborn in order to prevent it from being lynched. Aunt Doady in Ann Seymour Link's one-act play *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* poisons her grandson when a mob threatens to lynch him. All those maternal protagonists renounce or resign their desire for motherhood as impossibility owing to lynching. Their rejection, however, is not necessarily a defeat. Paraphrasing Hazel V. Carby's analysis of Harriet A. Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, their rejection has to be read as an intentional decision to oppose a restrictive discourse since to "[t]o be bound to the conventions of true womanhood [is] to be bound to a racist, ideological system."[198] Their abandoning of motherhood therefore is the rejection of the only kind of motherhood offered to them by the dominant discourse. Likewise, Dr. Miller's rejection of violence in *The Marrow of Tradition* as

[198] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood* 50.

defining component of masculinity becomes the rejection of white constructions of masculinity and is thus also the rejection of a discourse that denies their very existence. Anti-lynching rhetoric, therefore, not only addresses a white audience, which it tries to involve in the fight against lynching. It also demonstrates (the necessity of) defiance to a black audience.

3. Reiteration with Difference

In this chapter I will use Sutton E. Griggs's novel *The Hindered Hand: or, the Reign of the Repressionist* (1905) to exemplify the central strategy of anti-lynching rhetoric: reiteration with difference.[1] *The Hindered Hand* does not to blatantly contradict the arguments used in the rhetoric of lynching but reiterates its style of writing and formulates an alternative narrative of lynching, which exposes the inherent fallacies of its model. The formulation of a counterhegemonic narrative evolves as the endorsement and clever enactment of the conventions of lynching representations, which are then made the stating point for the redefinition of African-Americans as worthy citizens and lynching as savage practice. Especially the representation of lynching as spectacle and the rape myth are deflated and re-appropriated.[2] *The Hindered Hand* also embodies the attempt to create interracial sameness through the othering of deviant behavior. Griggs reiterates the rhetoric of lynching as a discourse of difference but revises the meaning of this difference. Rather than signifying to a racial difference, lynching divides society into promoters and adversaries of civilization.

Prefacing my analysis of Griggs's novel is my reading of Thomas Nelson Page's "The Lynching of Negroes: Its Cause and its Prevention" (1904) and Mary Church Terrell's "Lynching from a Negro's Point of View" (1904). The latter was written as a reaction to and revocation of the former and can be regarded as most representative of the turn-of-the-century method of reiteration with difference as a means of resistance to lynching. I am using both texts to introduce the basic outlines of this strategy as they are immediately related to each other and thus facilitate the demonstration of the parallels as well as modifications made by Terrell to subvert the arguments used by Page.

3.1. The Lynching of Negroes - its Cause and its Prevention from a Negro's Point of View

In the January 1904 edition of the *North American Review* Thomas Nelson Page published an article entitled "The Lynching of Negroes: Its Cause and its Prevention," in which he explains

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[1] Sutton E. Griggs, *The Hindered Hand: or, the Reign of the Repressionist*, 3rd rev. ed. (1905; New York: AMS Press, 1969). The novel will subsequently be referred to in the text as *HH*.

[2] In that respect Sielke's conclusion that Griggs's treatment of rape "exposes, rather than playfully enacts cultural deformation" does not apply to his treatment of lynching. Sielke 58.

his viewpoint of lynching and rape.[3] His article is an analysis of the causes of lynching and a weighing of the possibilities to stop it. Page voices the very widespread assumption that lynching is merely a *reaction* to the rising tide of black-on-white rape and that rape and not lynching is the root of the whole problem of racial animosities. His proposed solution therefore can be condensed into the simple formula that lynching will disappear as soon as African-Americans stop raping white women. As lynching and other means to deter African-Americans from rape have proved ineffective, the only remaining option is the education of African-Americans and the creation of a public opinion among them against rape. Page puts the responsibility to end lynching entirely on the black race as it cannot be stopped "until the negroes shall create among themselves a sound public opinion which, instead of fostering, shall reprobate and sternly repress the crime of assaulting women and children, the crime will never be extirpated, and until this crime is stopped the crime of lynching will never be extirpated" (LCP 46).[4]

Five months later, the *North American Review* printed Mary Church Terrell's article "Lynching from a Negro's Point of View."[5] As the title suggests, it is an alternative history of lynching and a direct rejoinder and revocation of Page's viewpoint on the issue. Terrell meticulously reiterates Page's argumentation but only to deflate it and re-appropriate it for the sake of opposition. She challenges the knowledge constructed to render lynching the adequate response to rape and exposes it as a mere pretext used to justify white violence. Most basically, both articles advocate the necessity of education as the only solution to the problem of lynching. Yet, while Page sees the need of educating African-Americans into deterrence from rape, Terrell emphasizes that it is not African-Americans who have to be informed about the true nature of lynching but the white race. In her article, she assumes that a distorted representation of lynching and African-Americans especially in the white press, the violent silencing of alternative, critical, or, according to Terrell, true accounts of lynching in the South ("[o]nly martyrs are brave and bold enough to defy the public will") and the misrepresentation of lynching in the North, which occasions that "errors are continually repeated

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[3] Thomas Nelson Page, "The Lynching of Negroes – Its Cause and Its Prevention," *North American Review* 178 (1904): 33-48. The text will subsequently be referred to in the text as LCP.

[4] See also Governor Candler's reply to W.E.B. Du Bois's request written under the impression of the lynching of Sam Holt in 1899. Du Bois had asked to provide African-Americans with better means of protection. The Governor of Georgia answered that the best way to stop lynching was to stop the crime which provoked it. African-American elites should build up "a sentiment in their race against the diabolical crimes which are always at the back of these lynchings." Atlanta *Constitution*, April 25, 1899.

[5] Mary Church Terrell, "Lynching from a Negro's Point of View," *North American Review* 178 (1904): 853-68. The text will subsequently be referred to in the text as LNPV. Trough the selection of *North American Review* Terrell tried to addressed a primarily white audience.

and inevitably perpetuated," are to blame for the social acceptability and existence of the practice. The greatest falsification is the assertion that rape is the sole motivation for lynching. Terrell believes that only education about the true nature of lynching will bring about the final demise of a practice which also threatens the foundations of white civilization: "prevention [of lynching] can never be devised, until the cause of lynching is more generally understood" (LNPV 853). Education (and thus also Terrell's article) becomes a mode of resistance to and means of abolishing lynching. Her essay is a clever exploitation of Page's arguments and some of the turn of the century's most commonly held assumptions about the nature of lynching and the possibilities of its prevention.

In his article, Page directly correlates lynching and rape and refers to history to support his argument. Owing to the civilizing influence of the "precious institution," rape was virtually unknown in antebellum times and during the Civil War. The increase of lynching during the 1890s is the result of an increase of black-on-white rape, which Page attributes to "the passing of the old generation from the stage, and the 'New Issue' with the new teachings [taking] its place" (LCP 37). During Reconstruction a new generation of African-Americans emerged and was taught two things: "that the white was his enemy, and that he must assert his equality" (LCP 36). According to Page, African-Americans automatically associated social equality with free access to white women since "to the ignorant and brutal young negro, it [social equality] signifies but one thing: the opportunity to enjoy, equally with white men, the privilege of cohabiting with white women" (LCP 45). Terrell contradicts Page's basic assumption that lynching and rape are directly linked. Like Page, she also consults statistics, yet not to prove the veracity but the absurdity of the rape myth and the essentializing of rape as a racial crime. To further validate her argument she reiterates Page's citation of history and agrees that before and during the Civil War the crime of rape was virtually unknown. Yet, rather than attributing this nonexistence to the civilizing influence of slavery, she cites it as proof for the loyalty and honor of African-Americans *even* under the burden of slavery. Why, she asks, should African-Americans suddenly start raping white women if the circumstances during the Civil War would haven been much more favorable to the acting out of supposedly innate primitive passions. Terrell's invocation of history thus invalidates Page's interpretation and appropriates his argument to fit her own rationales.

Terrell also reiterates Page's postulation that rape is the expression of an African-American desire for social equality. To undermine his claim, she skillfully manipulates existing stereotypes concerning African-American character and even blames the South for creating a climate supportive of rape. She first distinguishes between lower and upper class Afri-

can-Americans and identifies the former as the only ones capable of rape. Drawing on existing racist stereotypes she describes lower class blacks as "ignorant, repulsive in appearance and as near the brute creation as it is possible for a human being to be" (LNPV 855). Yet, she exaggerates their alleged ignorance into the impossibility of their knowing what the "binomial theorem" (LNPV 856) of social equality means. In other words, the only members of the African-American race capable of the crime of rape are incapable of comprehending it as expression of a desire for social equality. The solution to the problem of (the few existing cases of) rape would be to educate lower class African-Americans. However, the South's insistence on denying African-Americans access to education and treasuring of the "dear old 'mammy' or a faithful old 'uncle,' who can neither read nor write" (LNPV 856) attributes to the existence of rape. Not an excess (as Page states) but a lack of education is to blame for rape. Terrell reverses the claim that African-Americans are to blame for lynching and could prevent it if they stopped raping white women into the claim that the South is to blame for rape and could stop it (and lynching) if it provided better educational facilities for African-Americans. Using the same argument of omission, Terrell holds the South responsible for the existence of lynching and counters Page's assertion that lynching is a reaction to rape with the assertion that rape is the result of under-education.[6]

Page attributes the existence and also the decided cruelty of lynching to the inadequacy of the law to diminish the crime of rape. The people chivalrously resort to lynching to spare the rape victim the humiliation of having to appear before a court to recount the story of the crime. Also the often found statement that the law is too slow increases the readiness of many Southerners to replace legal methods with lynching. Finally, legal executions have lost their didactic function of deterring witnessing African-Americans from committing the same crime. As executions are usually accompanied by religious rituals the convict is absolved from his sins and "from the shadow of the gallows call[s] on his friends to follow him to glory" (LCP 38). Therefore, in order to fulfill a didactic function for African-Americans and deter them from rape, a new form of punishment had to be devised. The cruelty of lynching is thus rationalized as having an educational function to "strike a deeper terror into those whom the other method had failed to awe" (LCP 39). However, despite his endorsement of lynching as the desperate attempt to protect white womanhood, Page nevertheless concedes that it cannot be the final means of solving the problem of rape as lynching – despite being motivated

[6] Terrell also refers to white-on-black rape as "the only form of social equality ever attempted between the two races" (LNPV 857). Rape is more a white than a black racial crime, to which testifies the existence of thousands of mulattoes. The notorious figure of the "big, black burly brute" (LNPV 857) is an invention.

by the best intentions – creates an atmosphere of anarchy and "while to remedy this evil we may bring about a greater peril" (LCP 43). Therefore, the only way to end lynching is for African-Americans to end rape:

> The crime of lynching is not likely to cease until the crime of ravishing and murdering women and children is less frequent than it has been of late. And this crime, which is well-nigh wholly confined to the negro race, will not greatly diminish until the negroes themselves take it in hand and stamp it out. (LCP 44)

Page here also criticizes that the inactivity of the educated classes of African-Americans. Rather than publicly speaking out against rape and sympathizing with the victim of rape, they commiserate with the victim of the mob, which for them is always "innocent and a martyr" (LCP 45).

Terrell counters the reproach that the "better" classes of African-Americans are morally depraved when they shift the focus away from the ravished white female body to the mangled African-American male body and criticizes the representation of African-Americans as morally depraved as deliberate misrepresentation. In fact, when African-Americans sympathize with the black victim, it is only because of their higher degree of knowledge about the true nature of lynching, especially the fact that rape is only a discursively constructed excuse and that more often than not innocent or scapegoat African-Americans become the victims of a frenzied mob devoid of any rationality or distinguishing power.[7] Rather than being a sign of moral degeneracy, the sympathy for the black victim is the expression of lawfulness and "it is to the credit and not to the shame of the Negro that he tries to uphold the sacred majesty of the law, which is so often trailed in the dust and trampled under foot by white mobs" (LNPV 859). Terrell installs African-Americans as the only ones truly (and painfully) informed about lynching, which in turn lends further credibility and authority to her own arguments.

She mainly accuses Southern newspapers as the source for the unequal distribution of knowledge about lynching and the deception of white readers by (deliberately) presenting a distorted or eclectically selective version of lynching. To illustrate, she refers to Sam Hose, whose lynching was instigated and fueled by a sensationalistic and racist news coverage in the white press, which resulted in the fact that Hose would always be remembered as cold-blooded murder and bestial rapist. The findings of a Chicago investigator, however, prove

[7] Terrell uses several examples to counter Page's argument that the mob's fury "would not be satisfied with any other sacrifice than the death of the real criminal" (LCP 43).

that "the charge of assault was an invention intended to make the burning a certainty" (LNPV 859). A second example of the unreliability of white newspapers concerns the Atlanta riot from 1902. Richardson, a wealthy and respectable black merchant, tried to defend himself against a mob but "has gone down to history as a black desperado, who shot to death four officers of the law and wounded as many more" (LNPV 860). Like this, Terrell exposes the racist stereotyping of African-Americans in white newspapers and simultaneously undermines racial essentialisms. She states that "[w]henever Southern white people discuss lynching, they are prone to slander the whole Negro race" (LNPV 864) and cites statistics to prove that rape, rather than being a black racial trait is more likely to be found among the white race.[8] Again, the selectiveness of newspapers and their willful misrepresentation of African-Americans are to blame for the existence of essentialisms. While a case of white rape was paid no particular attention in the press, a black male committing the same crime would have roused national attention.

> if a colored man had committed the same crime, the newspapers from one end of the United States to the other would have published it broadcast. Editorials upon the total depravity and the hopeless immorality of the Negro would have been written, based upon this particular case as a text. (LNPV 864)

Stereotypes like the black rapist or the assumption of black racial degeneracy, which are usually cited to justify lynching, are inventions or deliberate distortions of the truth.

Having thus revoked several popular myths concerning the construction of blackness and lynching, Terrell directly confronts the causes of lynching. Rather than being a reaction to the rape of white womanhood, lynching is motivated first and foremost by race hatred and lawlessness. Again, she reiterates (with a difference) arguments put forward in Page's article. The latter regards racial antagonism, the talk about social equality, the lack of a strong public opinion opposed to rape among African-Americans and an innate African-American primitivism and adherence to primitive passions as the major motivations behind lynching. The credo of his findings is that not the South is to blame for lynching as it is only *reacting* to the crime of rape. Terrell reverses the argument that lynching can only be prevented by African-Americans themselves and puts the responsibility to stop lynching back on whites because "it is just as impossible for the Negroes of this country to prevent mob violence by any attitude

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[8] Griggs likewise criticizes the use of essentialism especially in the writings of Thomas Dixon. In "A Hindering Hand," the supplement discussion of Thomas Dixon's *Leopard's Spots*, Griggs accuses Dixon of employing essentialism to defame the whole African-American race: "he picks up the degenerates within the Negro race and exploits them as the normal type" (*HH* 311).

of mind which they may assume, or any course of conduct which they may pursue, as it is for a straw dam to stop Niagara's flow" (LNPV 861). She traces the roots of lynching back to the demoralizing influence of slavery, which has created an atmosphere of lawlessness and moral degeneracy that today affects the South's readiness to resort to lynching. Terrell revalues slavery as a degenerating institution promoting disrespect for law and order among whites and lynching as the final expression of this rampant spirit of anarchy. Therefore, as rape is merely a pretext for whites to lynch African-Americans, not the creation of a public opinion among African-Americans against rape is necessary but the education of whites about the true nature of lynching. Lynching cannot be stopped "until the masses of ignorant white people in that section are educated and lifted to a higher moral plane" (LNPV 867).

The Page-Terrell debate also exemplifies the centrality of the concept of civilization in the struggle about lynching. Both texts represent their respective goals as the attempt to help the progress of American civilization. Page criticizes lynching as a threat to American civilization and progress as it creates a spirit of lawlessness. Yet, rather than being a manifestation of a civilizational relapse on the side of the white race, lynching, according to Page, becomes the ultimate performance of white altruism and chivalry. Based on the assumption that civilization is an innate racial trait of whiteness and that the white race instinctively contributes to the progress of American civilization and maintenance of its principles, only the most horrible crime of rape could induce white Americans to resort to such methods as lynching: "Only, a deeper shock than even this is at the bottom of their ferocious rage – the shock which comes from the ravishing and butchery of their white women and children" (LCP 39). The existence of lynching and also the cruelty of its performance thus are less a testimony of the utterly depraved state of Southern civilization but African-American immorality, which is reflected in the brutality of lynching. Page considers civilization to be an inborn or at least highly treasured value among the white race, which is only reluctantly and temporarily laid aside to right a terrible wrong. Lynching, although barbarous, "has its root deep in the basic passions of humanity; the determination to put an end to the ravishing of their women by an inferior race, no matter what the consequence" (LCP 39). Rather than being a sign of white degeneracy, it becomes the heroic shedding of a treasured value for altruistic reasons.

Terrell adopts Page's description of lynching as savagery but rather than signifying to a heroic and reluctant discarding of precious principles, lynching is evidence for the low state of Southern civilization, which eventually threatens the nation as a whole. She calls on all Christians to "pray for deliverance from this rising tide of barbarism which threatens to deluge the whole land" (LNPV 867). Terrell de-racializes the concept of civilization, which is no

longer seen as an innate racial trait but as a thin veneer draped over primitive passions and impulses, which are about to erupt at any time. Therefore, rather than to "take up the white man's burden" and carry the torch of civilization to the Philippine Islands, Terrell echoes Ida B. Wells-Barnett's petition for a civilizing mission to the South and "to inaugurate a crusade against the barbarism at home, which converts hundreds of white women and children into savages every year, while it crushes the spirit, blights the hearth and breaks the heart of hundreds of defenseless blacks" (LNPV 866).[9] Within the context of imperialist discourse, Terrell puts America's self-proclaimed position as one of the world's leaders in civilizational development to the test and represents lynching as a stain on its self-imposed superiority. Only if America embarks on measures to diminish lynching will it avoid the risk of losing its superior morality and imperial legitimation and of becoming "a byword and a reproach throughout the civilized world" (LNPV 865). Similar to Griggs, however, Terrell is by no means anti-American and believes that "a renaissance of popular belief in the principles of liberty and equality upon which this government was founded" (LNPV 868) will stop lynching. She assumes that it will suffice to merely expose the true facts about lynching to provoke white intervention for the sake of African-Americans but also the principles of civilization and progress:

> It is not because the American people are cruel, as a whole, or indifferent on general principles to the suffering of the wronged or oppressed, that outrages against the Negro are permitted to occur and go unpunished, but because many are ignorant of the extent to which they are carried, while others despair of eradicating them. (LNPV 867-86)

Terrell refers to the cruelties committed in other countries, which were reported in newspapers and effected a strong reaction. Her example shows that as soon as Americans are truthfully informed about injustices, they act for the respect for law and the principles of constitution. Her article, like Griggs's novel, is a contribution to the education of the white race about the true nature of lynching and thus a contribution to the progress of civilization.

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[9] Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," *The Definitive Edition of Rudyard Kipling's Verse* (1899; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1973) 323.

3.2. Reiterating the "Policy of Misrepresentation": Sutton E. Griggs's Novel *The Hindered Hand: or, the Reign of the Repressionist*

The Hindered Hand and the four other novels by Sutton E. Griggs are most often discussed as either early manifestations of Pan-Africanism or Ethiopianism, as pre-Lockeian examples of the "New Negro"[10], as pre-Du Boisian expressions of a double consciousness or "two-ness"[11], as attempts to define a distinct form of African-American literature[12] or as novels about the dangers of miscegenation.[13] Much academic attention has also been paid to Griggs's seeming lack of artistic refinement. Sterling Brown for example palpably calls *The Hindered Hand* "a bad novel" and criticizes its overemotional and unrealistic rendering of Southern history.[14] Surprisingly, there exists no comprehensive analysis of Griggs's treatment of lynching, although *The Hindered Hand* provides one of the earliest and probably most graphic accounts of the practice in novelistic form. Such neglect, according to Wilson Jeremiah Moses, is even more surprising when considering that Griggs surpassed the public success of contemporary writers like Paul Laurence Dunbar or Charles W. Chesnutt and therefore possibly had a substantial influence on the discourse of his time.[15]

Existing discussions of Griggs's use of lynching in the respective studies of Trudier Harris, Arlene A. Elder and Sabine Sielke do not go beyond a cursory overview. Harris briefly mentions the ritual implications of lynching in *The Hindered Hand*, which she identi-

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[10] Arlene A. Elder, *The "Hindered Hand": Cultural Implications of Early African-American Fiction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978) 69, explains that Griggs's use of the term "New Negro" had primarily political and economic implications and is not to be confused with the Harlem Renaissance usage.

[11] The term "two-ness" is used by Wilson Jeremiah Moses in his article "Literary Garveyism: The Novels of Reverend Sutton E. Griggs," *Phylon* 40.3 (Fall 1979) 208.

[12] For Griggs's attempts to define a distinct African-American form of literature see for example Moses, "Literary Garveyism" 205f.; *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1978) 170ff. and Roy Kay, "Sutton E. Griggs (1872-1933)," *African American Authors 1745-1945: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson (London: Greenwood Press, 2000) 190f.

[13] See Moses, "Literary Garveyism" and his section on Griggs in his study *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism* 170-93, for an overview of scholarly criticism of Griggs's novels. For a summary of Griggs's critical reception see also Kay 188-193. One of the earliest scholarly treatments of Griggs comes from Hugh M. Gloster in his article "Sutton E. Griggs: Novelist of the New Negro," *Phylon* 4.4 (1943): 335-45. He mainly emphasizes Griggs as a militant writer, and characterizes *The Hindered Hand* as a novel concerned most of all with the effects of miscegenation. Robert E. Flemming, "Sutton E. Griggs: Militant Black Novelist," *Phylon* 34.1 (1973): 73-77, challenges a reception of Griggs as first and foremost militant writer and proposes a more detailed and comprehensive appreciation of his writings. See also Dickson D. Bruce, Jr., *Black American Writing from the Nadir: The Evolution of a Literary Tradition 1877-1915* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1989) 155-63.

[14] Sterling Allen Brown, *The Negro in American Fiction* (New York: Arno Press, 1969) 100. For an overview of the criticism concerning Griggs's style of writing see Moses, "Literary Garveyism" 203-05.

[15] See for example Moses, "Literary Garveyism" 204f. Elder, *The "Hindered Hand"* 100, notes that Griggs was forced to publish his books at his own expenses and most publications were a financial failure. Nevertheless, Griggs's novels reached a considerably large and mostly black readership. His goal was to educate them to recognize their own shortcomings.

fies as ritual of initiation.[16] Elder examines Griggs's use of lynching in *Overshadowed* and *The Hindered Hand* and assigns it a symbolic quality. Devoid of any sentimental or melodramatic implications, Griggs's lynching representations for her are most of all "metaphors for Black/white existence."[17] Sabine Sielke's study, focusing not so much on lynching than on rape and the construction of gender roles in *The Hindered Hand*, is interesting as it approaches *The Hindered Hand* from a different angle, that is, as a reaction to Dixon's *Leopard's Spots*. She reads the novel as a form of mimicry "that rhetorically enacts assimilation" in that it "exposes […] cultural deformation and directly responds to Thomas Dixon's *Leopard's Spots* (1902), the precursor informing Griggs's own rhetoric."[18]

My reading of *The Hindered Hand* starts from the assumption that the novel is a reiteration with difference and that it was written as a reaction to and refutation of an existing text and can only be fully appreciated when read against it. Yet, I would not ascribe Dixon's novel such a monolithic position, even less so when it comes to the analysis of lynching. Rather, Griggs's novel has to be read against the boarder and more general field constituted by the discourse of lynching (of which Dixon's novel certainly was an important component) and understood as the enactment of the aesthetics and conventions of lynching representations promoted especially in turn-of-the-century newspapers. Paraphrasing Helen Tiffin's characterization of counter-hegemonic writings, *The Hindered Hand* "address[es] the whole of the discursive field within which those texts [apologetic representations] were/ are situated in colonialist discourse."[19] In other words, *The Hindered Hand* enacts the conventions of the "model lynching" described in the previous chapter. Griggs assumes that the broad public acceptability of lynching is the result of a distorted representation of lynching and African-Americans in white newspapers and other, fictional texts. Similar to all the other writers in this study, he stylizes the concern for the black body as a national interest and represents the protection of the black body as the preservation of American morals as well as Christian, civilizational, and constitutional ideals for the further "advancement for our common country" (*HH* 159). Convinced of an inherent sense of morality and concern for the progress of civilization he believes that as soon as the truth is revealed America will intervene for the

[16] See Harris, *Exorcising Blackness* 79-80
[17] Elder, *The "Hindered Hand"* 72.
[18] Sielke 55.
[19] Tiffin, "Rites of Resistance" 30.

sake of African-Americans but also its own principles. *The Hindered Hand* is an appeal to principles and an admonishment to keep the ideals of Christian civilization.[20]

The problem, therefore, lies in the misrepresentation of the racial situation in the South and especially of lynching. Stating one of the basic assumptions about colonial discourse, Griggs insists that "a policy of misrepresentation [is] the necessary concomitant of a policy of repression. […] and he [Ensal] trembled at the havoc vile misrepresentations would play before the truth could get a hearing" (*HH* 207). Resistance to lynching in *The Hindered Hand* evolves as the presentation of an alternative history of lynching and racism and the deconstruction of knowledge imposed to justify the "Reign of the Repressionist." The novel's goal therefore is to "open the eyes of the American people to the gravity of this question and they will act." Implicit in Griggs's strategy is the assumption that the American public is actually sympathetic towards African-Americans and concerned about civilizational values but is prevented from intervention through the dominance of an apologetic and racially prejudiced discourse. Griggs wants to educate the American public about the true nature of lynching in order to arouse a dormant sense of justice as he is not "fearful of America awake, but of America asleep" (*HH* 144).

The novel's plot line is rather convoluted. If it is possible at all to make such a statement, it centers on the Seabrights, a black family passing for white. Mrs. Seabright intends to manipulate race politics in the South and marries her daughter Eunice off to the white politician Volree. Yet, shortly after the marriage Eunice flees together with her darker sister who sheds her old name and is baptized Tiara Merlowe by Ensal Ellwood, a black minister from Almaville. Both work together for the uplift of the race and finally fall in love with each other. Yet, Ensal embarks on a civilizing mission to Liberia and only after his return are the two finally united. Eunice later marries Ensal's friend Earl Bluefield, Volree's illegitimate son and exponent of a more radical solution to the race question. When Eunice's first husband learns about her whereabouts a trial is called to determine her legal status as either black or white. In one of the many climactic scenes of *The Hindered Hand*, Eunice is declared black, a decision which leads to her insanity. Finally, her now legal husband Earl cures her by solving the problem of African-American oppression in the South. A second black family, the Crumps, exemplifies the horror of racist violence as most of its members are killed throughout the novel: Henry is shot by mob, his father dies of grief over the loss, and Foresta, his

[20] For Griggs's reliance on white patriotism and devotion to civilization to solve the problem of lynching see Elder, *The "Hindered Hand"* 88.

daughter and friend of Tiara, is lynched together with her husband Bud Harper in an extraordinarily shocking scene. In short, the novel chronicles the manifold injustices suffered by African-Americans and weighs various forms of resistance.

3.2.1. Griggs's Understanding of Race

To fully explore the novel's strategy of resistance it is necessary to take into account Griggs's understanding of race. He assumes that society develops from lower to higher forms through the implementation of Christian virtues (love, patience, suffering, honesty, etc.) and concedes that the white race has further progressed than the black race on that scale.[21] Griggs sees the future improvement of the social and economic conditions of African-Americans in the strict adherence to those values. However, their development is "hindered" through the existence of lynching and racism. Griggs, then, makes the impediment of African-American racial development the basis for his opposition to lynching. As Kay outlines, Griggs adopts turn-of-the-century conceptions of race as a biological given and divinely installed difference. He thinks of race in spiritual rather than material terms as a teleological determination. Based on Gottfried Herder's theory of national destiny, Griggs assumes that also the black race has a destiny to fulfill, yet, is arrested in its development through the confines imposed by racism. Since all races contribute their respective share to the universal progress of mankind, lynching as the impediment of African-American progress also hampers the progress of the human race as a whole and awards resistance to lynching with a universal significance.[22] Griggs's retaining of race as the prime marker of difference stands out from all other writers compiled in this study. He conceives of racial differences as the result of dissimilar evolutionary developments and reproduces some of the basic tenets of the dominant turn-of-the-century scientific racism, especially the explanation of racial differences as the result of the exposure to different climates.[23]

Yet, whereas racist theories employ African-Americans as negative inversion of whiteness, Griggs reiterates the construction of the African-American-as-Other not to justify the racial hierarchy. Rather, he revalues allegedly innate black characteristics as the result of

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[21] The equation of civilizational progress with the acquisition of Christian values also explains Ensal Ellwood's valuation of slavery as providing former heathens with "the rudiments of civilization" (*HH* 197).
[22] In keeping with the logic of racial theories, Griggs therefore also rejects interracial mixing and promotes racial purity, which can be seen especially in the conception of his antagonists, who are either racists or mulattoes. See Kay 189-90.
[23] For the use of climate as explanation for racial difference see especially Gossett's study.

different climatic conditions and thus as "separate but equal" to white characteristics since the "greatness" of a race is determined by, but also restricted to a certain climatic region. He reproduces widespread racist assumptions about racial difference but abandons the inherent denigration of African-Americans and makes scientific racism the basis for a revaluation of blackness. Rather than constituting opposed and mutually exclusive qualities, black and white complement each other and represent different but equally valuable manifestations of a race's adaptation to different climates, which all work together for the progress of the human race as a whole.[24] Characteristics such as African-American "docility," "cheerfulness when at work," "uncomplaining nature," or "individualism" (*HH* 148), which usually feed the construction of stereotypes like the happy and content but mentally inferior and childlike "darky" and rationalize the installment of the racial hierarchy, are redefined to signify African-American worth and even superiority to whites. Like this, Griggs sustains race as a marker for difference, yet re-inscribes the meaning of this difference as denoting a mutually nourishing, separate-but-equal diversity.[25] His revaluation of race concentrates on achieving the acknowledgement of African-American worth and their contributions to American progress as well as the limitations imposed upon them through racism.

His redefinition of race starts from the assumption that the othering of African-Americans is the result not only of their exclusion from significant (esp. political) activities but also of the denial of any significance to those activities open to them. Yet, although he tries to challenge the othering of African-Americans on the level of value he nevertheless also tries to provide them with the tools necessary to acquire what he considers racially overlapping qualities, i.e., Christian values. The adoption of a (redefined) biological notion of race therefore does not preclude racial reconciliation on the basis of an essentialist racial difference. Unlike Chesnutt and Walter White, who both efface race and make class the common ground for the construction of racially overlapping commonalities, Griggs retains race as a

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[24] The qualities usually ascribed to the black race even mark them as superior to whites in the warmer climate of the South. As slaves African-Americans were used by whites as a "foil, a something thrust between itself [the white race] and the sapping influence of the weather, sun and soil" because "the white man was regarded as constitutionally unable to furnish the quality of physical service necessary to extract from the earth sufficient fruitage to have the South hold her own commercially" (*HH* 148). These "superior qualities" (*HH* 149) of African-Americans contributed to the economic as well as intellectual thriving of the white South.

[25] Griggs does not attempt to reverse the racial hierarchy and "take what is your curse and make it a salvation" (*HH* 109) as Mr. A. Hostility proposes to Ensal Ellwood. He explains that owing to their pigmentation African-Americans are immune to yellow fever and suggests poisoning the nation's water supplies to wipe out the white race though an epidemic. Ellwood condemns his proposition and rejects it as the "wholesale destruction of women and innocent babes" (*HH* 211). He refers to the Civil War, during which African-Americans proved their dedication to Christian values and racial honor, which would be stained through such villainy. Furthermore, it would "[smite] the bridge of sympathy which ages have built between man and man" (*HH* 212).

means to revalue blackness but finds interracial sameness in the commitment to Christian, civilizational, and constitutional values.

With his novel, Griggs tries to contribute to the prevention of lynching figured as the impediment of the progress of African-Americans and America in general. He follows the double task of representing African-Americans as worthy citizens and maintaining the notion of white supremacy, which, however, is not built on the subordination of weaker ones but understood as a "white supremacy in intellect, in soul power, in grasp upon the esteem of others through sheer force of character" (*HH* 175). In other words, Griggs concedes white supremacy, understood as a moral superiority, but represents it as threatened by the existence of lynching, which in turn becomes a test for white supremacy, civilization and the Christian principles upon which the American nation is based. Typical for a turn-of-the-century anti-lynching text, *The Hindered Hand* represents lynching as the ever-present threat of a civilizational relapse and warns of an outbreak of savage passions: "It has been one of the hardest of man's battles to leave behind him these depraved parts of his nature, and evidence that you carry your savagery with you will make the battle harder for the whole of the human family" (*HH* 172).[26] Representing the fight against lynching as a fight against the South's recess into barbarism, understood in economic but also moral terms, *The Hindered Hand* communicates to whites that "your" ideals are at stake and that "[i]f we [African-Americans] win it will not only free us from the repressionists, but will free the better element of Southern whites as well" (*HH* 284). Lynching creates an atmosphere of anarchy and lawlessness, which eventually also threatens the white race: "the lives of white men will be placed in jeopardy by a miscarriage of justice" (*HH* 172).[27] Griggs's appeal is a call to help from one civilized race to another: "From the depth of our dark night we cry unto you to save us from the oppression inherent in the present situation and clear the way for our highest aspirations" (*HH* 160). He plays upon a feeling of white superiority which should manifest itself in the helping of African-Americans and makes the handling of lynching a test for those principles. Resistance to lynching therefore does not evolve as the attempt to create interest- or class-based interracial alliances but as the appeal to white ideals and manifestations of civilization.

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[26] For a more detailed analysis of the meanings of civilization see chapter four.

[27] The argument that lynching produces a disregard for the law is restated twice in *The Hindered Hand*. Arthur Daleman fears that "[t]olerated and condoned for one thing it [lynching] spreads to other things and men are lynched for trivial offenses" (*HH* 101). The narrator describing the mob about to lynch Bud and Foresta is described as "so blunted" by past lynchings that they are able to torture and burn "without any qualms of conscience" (*HH* 125).

3.2.2. Modes of Resistance

Owing probably to the early date of publication and the absence of an organized and unified strategy of resistance, *The Hindered Hand* compares various forms of resistance. At the turn of the century, anti-lynching campaigns were only beginning to gain broader public visibility and attention.[28] Still lacking a public platform, access to mass media as well as public support to stage their protest, anti-lynching efforts had to fight an unequal battle to win over a public opinion shaped by a decade of lynching lobbying, racist stereotypes and the omnipresence of apologetic newspaper accounts, photographs and other texts. In other words, while readers at time of the publication of *The Hindered Hand* were probably well accustomed to texts representing lynching violence as reaction to rape and as substitute for legal executions and religious rituals, anti-lynching was only about to start to challenge such arguments. Brundage, in his historical analysis of Virginia and Georgia, likewise contends that black opposition to lynching at the turn of the century was largely uncoordinated. Its effectiveness was also impaired by the influence of what Williamson has called "radical racism" and the declining political influence of the Republicans after Reconstruction.[29]

The Hindered Hand compares three different modes of resistance, which can be described as the education about the true nature of lynching and racism, the incorporation of violence as a means to add intensity to the former strategy and violent resistance. Griggs makes his novel a testing ground for evaluating those strategies as he is convinced that "our cause is just and we must learn to plead it acceptably" (*HH* 161). He uses three different characters to exemplify those methods. The first and most radical is Gus Martin. Owing to his "Indian blood" Martin is rather choleric and regards the "Gospel [as] the Negro's greatest curse in that it unmanned the race" (*HH* 37).[30] He represents a new, more defiant spirit in the African-American race and propagates armed resistance as the only solution of the race problem. Similar to Chesnutt's Josh Green and White's Bob Harper, Martin records the desperate situation of African-Americans at the turn of the century, which often made violence appear the last remaining (yet impracticable) form of resistance open to them. Although Griggs categorically rejects violence, he nevertheless absolves Gus Martin's behavior as the result of the

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[28] See for example the pioneering work and findings of Ida B. Wells-Barnett.

[29] See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 162. Only during the second decade of the twentieth century were African-Americans able to organize their protest. The most visible manifestation of this attempt was the founding of the NAACP in 1910. Such a judgment only applies to "visible" (political or social) forms of resistance but not to the discourse of anti-lynching.

[30] Martin's rejection of religion disqualifies his attitude from the start since Griggs as a preacher regarded Christian values as precondition for civilizational progress.

hopelessness of his situation. Martin therefore not only exemplifies a mode of resistance but also the utter despondency most African-Americans were facing at the turn of the century. After his murder of Reverend Marshall, Gus barricades himself in the Seabright mansion and having shot several members of the mob chasing after him, he proposes to surrender if he could be guaranteed protection and a fair trial. Yet, neither the sheriff, nor the Governor, nor the White House, nor the British embassy are willing or able to warrant his safety (see *HH* 184-85).[31] Griggs thus explains African-American violence as the outgrowth of despair but he also demonstrates the inaccessibility of violence for African-Americans when Gus is lynched after his surrender.

The other two modes of resistance are represented by Ensal Ellwood and Earl Bluefield. Both want the acknowledgment of African-American rights and the abolishment of lynching but differ in their modes of realization. Ellwood, a deeply race-conscious black preacher and great admirer of Frederick Douglass, is the conservative and categorically excludes violence as a practicable mode of resistance. Instead, he proposes Christian values and the education of the American public about the true nature of racism and lynching as the only promising form of resistance. Earl Bluefield is the radical who would prefer death to slavery and who values "the sword as the final arbiter of the troubles between the races" (*HH* 50). He also identifies a distorted white perception of the racial situation in the South as responsible for the rampant racism but rejects Ensal's confidence in Christian values and education as fruitless because as a black preacher Ensal is unable to educate those who would need it most: "If the white people of the South permitted you to preach the Gospel to them, you would have some basis for the hope that you would be contributing your due share to the work of altering these untoward conditions" (*HH* 140). Although he basically agrees with Ensal about the necessity of revealing the true nature of lynching and racism he diverges from the latter's refutation of violence in that he incorporates it "as an exclamation point to what you [Ensal] have said" (*HH* 161). Later, disguised as John Blue, he implements Earl's proposed "campaign of education" (*HH* 254) and tours the South to convince "the radical South to pull off its mask and let the world see its real heart" (*HH* 263). Unlike his contemporary Chesnutt, Griggs was convinced that it would be enough to merely remove the knowl-

[31] Mark the hierarchical structuring of Martin's calls with the British embassy on top. Great Britain was still perceived as superior in civilization to America, a fact which also influenced Ida B. Wells-Barnett's strategy of resistance. She convinced her British audiences of the atrociousness of lynching and added further weight to her argument when her critique was expressed by the motherland of civilization. See Gail Bederman, "'Civilization,' the Decline of Middle-Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells's Antilynching Campaign (1892-94)." *Radical History Review* 52 (1992) 22.

edge about lynching and expose it to the sight of the nation to instigate white involvement or at least indignation.

3.2.3. Sameness through Othering

The creation of interracial sameness in *The Hindered Hand* evolves as the exposure of the undereducated state of Southern civilization, which Griggs attributes to the lower white classes and presents as the overthrow of the legal system. The rampant spirit of lawlessness not only threatens African-Americans through lynching but also the upper white classes are equally affected by the dominance of the lower classes. The need for an interracial coalition is thus figured as a necessity for the progress of civilization and brought about through the othering of uncivilized behavior to the lower white classes.

Griggs uses lynching as the most visible manifestation of the spirit of lawlessness and employs the conventions of lynching representations to expose it. In apologetic representations lynching is often associated with legal justice and executions. As has been outlined in chapter two, the representation of lynching as spectacle draws heavily on established rituals such as public executions depicting it as extension and surrogate of the law and thereby subsuming lynching under the legitimacy of legal public executions.[32] Continual references to "Judge Lynch," the labeling of lynching as lynch law as well as mentions of the extraction of a confession as proof of the victim's guilt and the assumed legitimacy of the execution make apparent those jurisprudential implications and lynching emerges in the rhetoric and act of representation as a kind of folk justice. Fuoss explains that the representation of lynching in legal terms gives it the appearance of due process and the extraction of a confession establishes the evident guilt of the accused. Possible "an-innocent-person-was-lynched claim[s]" are thus preemptively discouraged "before antilynching activists even had a chance to advance the claim."[33]

The Hindered Hand nevertheless does attempt to make such a claim. Griggs's novel seeks to dissociate lynching and legal justice and challenge the construction of knowledge making lynching the appropriate reaction to a supposed case of rape. For that purpose, Griggs reiterates the presentation of lynching as lynch law but redefines the meaning of this associa-

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[32] See for example John Cyril Barton, "An American Travesty: Capital Punishment & the Criminal Justice System in Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*," *REAL: Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature* 18, ed. Brook Thomas (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2002) 357-384. See also Wood's first chapter "Public Executions" in her dissertation "Spectacles of Suffering."
[33] Fuoss 17.

tion by foregrounding the racist as well as biased nature of Southern courts. He represents both, lynching and Southern courts, as manifestations of a permeating, intrinsically racist, and violent Southern culture so that lynching in fact *is* a surrogate of the law, however not of unbiased legal justice.[34] Mary Church Terrell in her essay "Lynching from a Negro's Point of View" similarly regards lynching as embedded within a culture of racism:

> [w]ith the courts of law entirely in the hands of the white man, with judge and jury belonging to the superior race, a guilty Negro could no more extricate himself from the meshes of law in the South than he could slide from the devil-fish's embrace or slip from the anaconda's coils. (LNPV 862-63)

Griggs declares that in a state where the law is contaminated by racism, the distinction between lynching and legal justice is missing. He removes lynching from the air of legality not by denying but by reiterating the above stated association, yet with a different import. He mimics the rhetoric of lynching to expose its inherent fallacy, that is, he exposes the legal system of the South as racially bigoted, disqualifying it in turn as objective legal authority and presents lynching as innately violent and unlawful instrument in the maintenance of white superiority. The trial of Henry Crump, Foresta's fourteen-year-old brother, is the first instance exposing the racist nature of Southern courts. When Tiara surprisingly provides the bail for Henry's release the court officials "fancied they scented a race contest in the matter and felt that Tiara was simply trying to show that it was alright for a Negro boy to stand up against white boys. They now decided to punish Henry to the limit of the law" (*HH* 56-57). To uphold a supposedly threatened racial hierarchy, the Criminal Court sentences Henry to ten month on a country farm, notorious for its inhumane and perilous conditions.[35] When he tries to escape such desperate prospects a mob composed of racially biased police officers and white Almaville residents tracks him down and kills him. Although the lynching is represented in keeping with established conventions as spectacle, the witnessing crowd does not distance lynching from illegality but legitimacy and emphasizes the overall racist contamination of the South. Significantly, the lynching of Henry Crumb takes place immediately after his conviction and his "execution" thus could be valorized as extension of legal justice. Yet, the before mentioned trial and the exposure of its racist nature forbid any interpretation of the lynching as surrogate for legal justice. It is only the most visible manifestation of the overall

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[34] See Elder, *The "Hindered Hand"* 90-91.

[35] See Grantham 128, 134. Turn-of-the-century reform movements criticized convict camps and the chain gang as brutal and degrading and wanted to abolish them as an obstacle for progress. Griggs's adopts those movements' concerns in his defamation of lynching.

moral debasement and racist contamination of the South and instead of highlighting the assumed legitimacy of lynching, Henry's violent death and the incidents leading to it function as a means of revaluating the discursive identification of lynching and legal justice.

Southern racism, however, is not an unequivocal phenomenon. In "The Hindering Hand," Griggs expresses clear class bias concerning Southern racism. He specifies his critique of lynching and racism by inserting a class element into the cultural matrix of the South and identifies lower-class whites as the prime proprietors of racial antagonisms. He states that in antebellum times "between the poor white and his every earthly hope stood the Negro slave," a fact which resulted in the development of "the strongest sort of repulsion" against the African-American race. The hatred bred during antebellum times became almost hereditary among them and is now the breeding ground for contemporary racism. As proponents of this lower-class hatred he names Benjamin Tillman and Nathan Bedford Forrest, who he summarizes as the "radicals" (*HH* 303-305) and identifies as the prime enemies of the African-American race. Griggs's skepticism concerning lower-class whites also informs his attempt to challenge the representation of lynching as quasi legal procedure when he identifies the jury system as the main cause and gateway for racism into the court room. John C. Barton in his analysis of Theodore Dreiser's *American Tragedy* makes a similar point. He also considers a destabilized jury system as one of the causes for the amalgamation of popular and legal justice as "the jury's prejudice subverts the popular notion of a jury as an arbitrator of natural justice and common sense."[36] Whereas Dreiser intended to participate in the discourse about the abolition of the death penalty, *The Hindered Hand*, written some twenty years earlier, uses almost the same argument to abolish lynching. In a long monologue explicating the position of liberal whites, Arthur Daleman, Sr. criticizes the racist subversion of the legal system.[37] He clearly distinguishes between the radicals who "hate the Negro and nothing is too bad for them to do to him" and his own liberal class who "like[s] him and want[s] to see him prosper" (*HH* 100). Likewise, he divides the support for lynching, the suppression of which he regards as "one of the hardest tasks among us," (*HH* 101) along these lines. He refutes the association of popular and legal justice and identifies the jury system and the public holding of trials as the entryway for racism. Inherent in his critique is an elitist distrust in the

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[36] Barton 362. For a discussion of Griggs's use of class see Elder, *The "Hindered Hand"* esp. 76, 83-85.

[37] His denigration reflects a seemingly still prevalent optimism about racial reconciliation because he emphasizes the significance of a reformed legal system as a means of protection against racial violence and a view of lynching as temporary phenomenon, an outlook which Paula Giddings characterizes as typical for the 1880s, when African-Americans were still convinced that "racial injustice was the handiwork of the lowly, an aberration that could be successfully challenged." Giddings 23.

potentials of lower class whites. Daleman proposes the exemption of lower class whites from court decisions and that trials should be held "secret[ly] and before a bench of judges" (*HH* 101) in order to restore a stable and unbiased legal system. The solution to prevent future lynchings therefore is a paternalistic exclusion of the lower white classes. The arguments employed to justify such a measure greatly resemble those used to justify the privatization of public executions in the North during the 1830s, which propose that executions should be held before "middle-class, white men – journalists, doctors, ministers – men who were considered to possess the proper respectability and moral strength to witness such an event."[38] Griggs's condemnation of lynching thus capitalizes on the anarchy it promotes, a condition which he identifies with the lower-white classes.

The trial of Bud and Foresta's lynchers also makes out the jury as one of the central instruments for the perseverance of racism and African-American oppression. Before the onset of the trial, a verdict of not guilty almost seems certain as in the jury "the race instinct would triumph over every other consideration" (*HH* 169). Prosecuting attorney Clay Maul's eloquent condemnation of lynching and race hatred has no effect on the outcome of the trial. Also the judge is clearly distinguished from the jury as objective but nevertheless helpless to the jury's verdict. The whole legal system is handed over to the judgment of racially bigoted and undereducated whites. The racial slanting of the jury's and the crowd's common sense, which should be the basis of their verdict, becomes even more apparent when Bud's father notices a violent crowd gathering around the lyncher. Lead by a common sense the jury is lacking and under the influence of Maul's speech he assumes that the crowd is about to kill the lynchers and implores them to abstain from their plan in favor of upholding the law. Yet, the judge disillusions Silas and explains to him and the reader, who is thus also identified to posses an innate sense of justice, that the members of the crowd are not lynching but "congratulating the man. […] The jury has said that he was not guilty" (*HH* 177). The overthrow of the legal system through lower-class racism is thus represented as not only a threat to African-Americans but white civilization as well. Likewise, Thomas Nelson Page states that lynching promotes a spirit of lawlessness and thus jeopardizes civilization as "respect for the law is the basic principle of civilization" (LCP 34). Yet, while he regards lynching only as a reaction to a greater threat to civilization (rape) and only as a temporary and reluctant relinquishing of treasured principles, Griggs, having exposed rape as a mere pretext, identifies lynching as the only and permanent threat to civilization. He reiterates Page's assumption that

[38] Wood, "Spectacles" 40-41.

lynching entails lawlessness, yet, abandons his faith in the South's allegiance to civilizational values. Sameness in *The Hindered Hand* develops as the result of a common concern for Southern civilization and in delimitation from racism and the lower white classes.

3.2.4. The Revocation of Knowledge

In the remaining part of this chapter I will explore Griggs's attempts to invalidate the knowledge constructed about African-Americans and lynching. He reiterates the arguments employed in the rhetoric of lynching and focuses especially on two aspects: the rape myth and the accompanying representation of African-Americans as hypersexualized Other as well as the representation of lynching as spectacle. Rather than denying the gendered dimension of lynching he uses the rape myth in order to reformulate an African-American gender identity and expose the rape charge as a mere pretext. Likewise, Griggs does not attempt to undermine the authority espoused for lynching by challenging its representation as spectacle but makes it the staring point for a redefinition of lynching as savage practice.

3.2.4.1. Rape and the Redefinition of Black Gender

In his attempt to educate his readers against lynching, Griggs attempts to revoke the rape myth as probably *the* most convincing valorization for lynching. Even the earliest efforts of resistance to lynching criticize the veracity and tenability of the reduction of lynching to a reaction to rape and the installment of racist stereotypes sustaining the rape myth. Ida B. Wells-Barnett, for instance, emphasizes that rape was neither the only nor even the prime motivation for lynching (see *RR* 148-153) and Frederick Douglass opposes the notion of an innate black criminality.[39] Yet, the rape myth retained its persuasiveness and power to silence alternative histories even until the mid-thirties.[40] The invalidation of the correlation of lynch-

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[39] For Douglass's refutation of black criminality see Frederick Douglass, introduction, *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition*, ed. Ida B. Wells-Barnett (Chicago: Ida B. Wells-Barnett, 1893) no pagination given, reprinted online as document one in "How Did African-American Women Define Their Citizenship at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893?" *Women and Social Movements in the United States, 1600-2000*, eds. Kathryn Sklar and Thomas Dublin, (1998) November 3, 2004 < http://www.alexanderstreet6.com/wasm/wasmrestricted/ibw/chap1.htm>: "We do not deny that there are bad Negroes in this country capable of committing this, or any other crime that other men can or do commit. There are bad black men as there are bad white men, south, north and everywhere else, but when such criminals, or alleged criminals are found, we demand that their guilt shall be established by due course of law."

[40] Also in the 1930s the rape myth was employed as validation for lynching. In a letter to the editor of the Columbus *Commercial Dispatch* Mary Blewett Ottley writing in behalf of the "true ladies of the South" appreciates lynching as a form of "protection of Southern gentlemen" for "helpless" women from African-American men,

ing and rape therefore had to be one of the prime objectives for Griggs if he wanted to inscribe lynching with a new meaning as savage practice. In *The Hindered Hand* he presents it as retaliation for minor offences, the protection of black women from rape and murder but never black-on-white rape. Rather, as Susie Baker King Taylor blatantly yet eloquently states, lynching is "for any imaginary wrong conceived in the brain of the negro-hating white man."[41] Southern mobs "lynch niggers down here for anything" and "the one crime" is exposed as a disguise for the real crime, namely, "the crime of being black" (*HH* 136). By presenting various motivations for lynching as well as the lynching of a woman (Foresta Harper) Griggs reveals the rape myth as simply an excuse to cloak lynching in the garb of chivalry and make it publicly acceptable.[42] Of central significance for the revocation of the rape myth is also Griggs's construction of his characters.

Griggs's characters function as counterstereotypes employed to challenge the fabrication surrounding and sustaining the rape myth, especially the dominant projection of black masculinity as beast rapist and femininity as signifying sexual immorality and promiscuity. In his attempt to revoke those stereotypes, he populates Almaville with highly respectable black characters embodying the idea of racial uplift and (frustrated) interracial reconciliation. Elder therefore rightly explicates Griggs's characters as "counterstereotypes designed to refute racist images of African Americans in the public mind."[43] Other scholars like Moses or Kay approach Griggs's characters as personifications of ideas exemplifying for example diverging solutions to the problem of African-American oppression.[44] Especially the black male characters in *The Hindered Hand* probably are both, counterstereotypes reversing racist black stereotypes as well as personifications of ideas. In the following, I will focus my analysis on two characters, which are of particular importance for the analysis of the anti-lynching import of *The Hindered Hand*: Bud and Foresta Harper, the black protagonists in the climactic

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who "turn to wild beasts" and are a constant threat to white womanhood. Columbus, MS, *Commercial Dispatch* July 22, 1935. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1934 cont. – 1935, Reel 229, Frame 533 (Microfilm Edition). In another letter to the editor of the Birmingham *News*, Demps A. Oden protests the sympathy espoused for the black victim of the mob instead of the white rape victim and demands "swift and exemplary punishment upon the black beast". In order to stop lynching, black men should refrain from raping white women. Birmingham, AL, *News* May 10, 1934. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1933 cont. – 1934, Reel 228, Frame 924 (Microfilm Edition).

[41] Susie Baker King Taylor, "Thoughts on the Present Condition," *Witnessing Lynching: American Writers Respond*, ed. Anne P. Rice (1902; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2003) 70.

[42] Griggs points to the abuse of the rape myth when he writes that "any white woman can have a Negro's life taken at a word" and has "unlimited power of life and death over Negro men" (*HH* 84).

[43] Arlene A. Elder, "Sutton E. Griggs," *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, eds. William L. Andrews, Frances Smith Foster and Trudier Harris (New York: Oxford UP, 1997) 328.

[44] See Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism* 174; Moses, "Literary Garveyism" 206-07; Kay 191.

lynching. By means of their characterization I will demonstrate how Griggs makes the rape myth the starting point for a revaluation of blackness and lynching.

Griggs's revocation of racist stereotypes materializes among other things in the conception of the outer appearance of his characters as the expression of inside composition. As Kay explains, "[p]henotype in Griggs's writings is very important and in his novel constitutes an outward sign of one's inward character."[45] Accordingly, Griggs deploys the portrayal of Foresta's and Bud's outer appearance to challenge racist stereotypes about black male and female hypersexuality. In chapter two, meaningfully entitled "His Face was Her Guide," Tiara for the first time encounters Bud and his outer appearance and "open, frank expression" (*HH* 21) immediately lead Tiara to trust him. Foresta's characterization likewise epitomizes the association of outside and inside when Tiara automatically equates good looks with moral decency. She tells Foresta that she is "a pretty girl […] – and a good girl" (*HH* 25), an impression which gains further substation through the story about Foresta and Bud's courting and marriage. Employing conventions of post-Reconstruction domestic novel marriage plots, their courtship and liaison further confutes racist stereotypes, especially with regards to the reduction of African-American men and women to a hypersexualized corporeality. Both are presented as almost disembodied reversals of their respective black gender projections in that Bud is described as rather "bashful" (*HH* 27) in his courtship and Foresta as virtuous, "womanlike" (*HH* 29) and as a "Negro wife, true to that impulse of the woman's heart that has made this old world worth living in, that has taught men that the fireside is worth dying for." She exemplifies the ideals of true womanhood and, referring to her lynching, the white lawyer Maul states that she "deserved better of us than what we gave her" (*HH* 174). Likewise, Bud and Foresta's marriage challenges gendered racist stereotypes as it is not defined as a sexual relationship but as a dutiful marriage for racial uplift, which follows turn-of-the-century norms for marriage propriety.[46] The foregrounding of Bud's timidity, sexual inexperience and trustworthiness, Foresta's decency and regard for her reputation and the amalgamation of those two exemplary characters into a perfect marriage reverses racist renderings of black masculinity and femininity and revokes the discursive framework substantiating the rape myth. However, not even those two exemplary characters are safe from lynching and their violent death serves to further expose the rape myth as forgery.

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[45] Kay 189.
[46] Elder, *The "Hindered Hand"* 98, also characterizes Griggs's conception of marriage as a dutiful relationship and "a way of solving racial problems." See also Tate 125.

Griggs's discussion of the rape myth and black gender constructions as the fabrication surrounding and sustaining it, becomes a site for voicing the novel's criticism of lynching. He borrows from the gendered language of the rhetoric of lynching and represents lynching as the physical obstruction and frustration of Bud and Foresta's aims to gender respectability. He figures lynching as the disabling of African-American masculinity, defined in keeping with the tenets of white masculinity as the ability to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Ensal's lamentation of the lynching of Foresta therefore is represented as African-American emasculation: "Poor Negro womanhood! Crucified at the stake, while we play the part of women" (*HH* 139).[47] *The Hindered Hand* reiterates the dominant gendered projection of lynching, yet, re-appropriates it for the sake of resistance. Rather than signifying to a presupposed African-American moral degeneracy and effecting the resurrection of an effeminized white masculinity, lynching is redefined as "unmanly" impediment of African-American aims to a respectability, which is predicated upon white gender norms. Especially Bud Harper's lynching becomes the frustration of his aspirations to a masculinity which is based upon white standards of conduct. During their flight from the mob, he defines himself "as her [Foresta's] protector" (*HH* 128). However, like their whole marriage, Bud's masculinity and role as guardian is encumbered by white racism and lynching. The demonstration of his vulnerability and symbolical emasculation is brought about when during the lynching his eyelids are forced open so that he helplessly has to witness Foresta's torture. Lynching is presented less as the protection of white womanhood but as the obstruction of black attempts to decency, which, according to Page, would have been the prerequisite for abolishing lynching. Challenging views of lynching as a means of resurrecting white masculinity *The Hindered Hand* makes it a manifestation of white degeneracy. Griggs also translates lynching into the gendered language of masculinity but ascribes gender respectability not to the mob but the suffering victim and presents lynching as the disabling of black and demise of white masculinity. Foresta's attempts to decency are similarly obstructed. *The Hindered Hand* undermines the substantiation of lynching as quasi legal retribution for rape through the exposure of its racial biases and uses the rape of black women to further disclose the rape myth as a mere pretext. Griggs states that "[t]he world at large has heard that the problem of the South is the protection of the white woman. There is another woman in the South" (*HH* 71). He installs white-on-black rape as a similar frustration of black gender respectability as lynching but

[47] Gus Martin similarly deploys a gendered language to criticize education and religion as unsuitable means of resistance and condemns both as having "unmanned" (*HH* 37) the race.

through "metaphoric alliance makes lynching displace rape as the dominant figure of racist violence. As gender difference is subordinated to (racial) identity, that identity becomes even more intensely marked by negation."[48]

The Hindered Hand chronicles the overwhelming convincingness of the rape charge but also dramatizes its inherent danger as rationality-impeding misrepresentation of reality. Ramon Mansford exemplifies the convincingness of "the one crime" and simultaneously the need for education. When after the murder of his fiancée Alene he encounters a black woman he automatically interprets her "rushing along in full speed" as testimony that she has "murdered some one" (*HH* 109). Predisposed in his perception of reality, he is robbed of his rationality and thus exemplifies the danger inherent in an essentialist perception of reality.[49] In that he resembles Dr. Melville in Paul Laurence Dunbar's short story "The Lynching of Jube Benson" (1904). Although Jube Benson, his faithful black servant, has proven his fidelity over years, has looked after him during a long sickness and even helped him with his courtship with Annie Daly, the cry of rape immediately effaces those experiences and overlays them with the dominant projection of African-American masculinity as beast rapist: "I could only think of him as a monster. It's tradition." Without any sign of doubt Dr. Melville joins the mob, tracks Benson down and lynches him. Soon after the lynching the real murder, a notorious white criminal in blackface, is found. The effect of essentialisms on the while protagonist and the loss of his reasoning power is represented as a deterioration into savagery. During the hunt he feels "the impulse of a will that was half my own, half some more malignant power's" and the "panther's desire for blood." When the mob has finally found Benson they "gathered round him like hungry beasts." While Dr. Melville is overcome by his passions and strikes Benson on the head, the latter is still able control himself.[50] Ramon Mansford is similarly affected by the prevalence of racial essentialisms. Yet, unlike Dr. Melville, he does not succumb to his basic passions but decides to investigate the background of the murder. His investigations function as part of Griggs attempt to educate his readers about the true nature of lynching. He discovers that Alene was murdered by a white man in blackface, who exploited the dominant projection of African-American criminality since "by dropping

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[48] Sielke 57.

[49] Likewise, Daleman, Sr. condones lynching as an appropriate punishment for crimes committed against white women and similar to Thomas Nelson Page, who condemns lynching only for the reason that it "may bring about a greater peril" (LCP 43), namely lawlessness, he is primarily worried about the possibility that "it spreads to other things and men are lynched for trivial offenses" (*HH* 101), plunging the South into a state of chaos and anarchy and debunking it in the eyes of the North.

[50] Paul Laurence Dunbar, "The Lynching of Jube Benson," *Witnessing Lynching: American Writers Respond*, ed. Anne P. Rice (1904; New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 2003) 95.

into the Negro race to commit a crime […] he has a most splendid opportunity to escape" (*HH* 117). The lynching of Bud and Foresta finally exposes to him and the reader that the rape myth is "all rot" and the South is rampant with "murder and lawlessness" (*HH* 136) hidden behind the mask of chivalry. Not only blackness but also the rape myth is thus exposed as pretense.

3.2.4.2. The Spectacle of Black Suffering

One of the crucial elements making up for the representation of lynching as spectacle is the presence of a huge crowd, which serves to legitimize lynching by associating it with a notion of "folk justice".[51] As has been mentioned above, the rhetoric of lynching borrows from the language regularly used to describe established "spectacles of suffering" and extends the authority those spectacles invoke onto lynching. The presence of a crowd "converted an act of 'private' justice into a public act. It *politicized* it, converting its significance from an act of unlawful violence into a law of its own."[52] Yet, not only the intersection of lynching with other rituals is to blame for its authority. The characterization and description of the composition of the witnessing crowd similarly promotes support for lynching. As Mary Esteve has shown, one of the causes for the broad public approval of lynching is the representation of horrifyingly violent mob gatherings as a nationalist virtue, that is, as political crowds: "As the national crime of lynching goes public, it thereby falls in step with the nation's preferred self-representation as modern and urban."[53] The success of apologetic lynching representations hinges upon the transformation of blood-thirsty, sadistic and chaotic crowds into a determined, law-abiding public. Lynching opponents reverse this strategy and direct attention to the affective, frenzied and sadistic behavior of the lynchers. People are no longer "a law unto themselves" but are caught in a mass hysteria, bereaving them of the ability to make independent judgments and thus of their status as political agents.[54] Walter White even condemns the South's "crowd-mindedness" as impeding the progress of civilization and proclaims that "[n]ot for the salvation of the Negro, but for its own sake must the South break away from its deadening mental inertia" and "crack the shell of its crowd-mindedness" (*RF* 17). In *The*

[51] For the notion of folk justice as the basis for the acceptance of lynching see Waldrep's studies. In Griggs's novel, folk justice even experiences a divine sanctification when the leader of a mob ready to lynch Dave Harper proclaims that "[t]he voice off the people is the voice of God" (*HH* 106).
[52] Garland 48, emphasis in original.
[53] Esteve 121, 136.
[54] See Esteve 137.

Hindered Hand the representation of the crowd evolves as the effacement of its self-dependent and rational quality put forward by apologetic representations and presents anonymous, faceless and largely nameless mob members, who do not materialize as individuals but as ruthless role players in the spectacle of lynching. The text deletes the underpinning of lynching as performed by a crowd of rational individuals and exposes the mob as anarchic disarray, which in turn renders the mob members unfit for citizenship in a democratic and modern nation. Instead, they are depicted as a menace to the roots and foundations of American civilization. Thus, the representation of the mob members intersects with the turn-of-the-century obsession with the distinction between civilization and savagery. While texts like Page's essay promote an image of the mob as epitome of civilized behavior, the rhetoric of anti-lynching reverses the association and renders lynching the manifestation of a deeply imprinted Southern backwardness and primitivism.

To clarify the connection between the importance of the individuality of the mob members and the evocation of sympathy for lynching, it is useful to take a look at Benjamin W. Kilburn's stereograph of the Chicago World's Fair, 1893 (see Fig. 3-1). In 1893, Benjamin Kilburn, the official photographer of the World's Columbian Exposition, published a widely distributed stereograph entitled "The Surging Sea of Humanity at the Opening of the Columbian Exposition." Mary Esteve interprets this stereograph as a prime example for a "representation of collectivity," which "renders indistinguishable the crowd and the public." Explains Esteve: "[t]he combined pictorial and verbal components of the stereograph concoct the illusion of a gathered 'humanity' that resolves itself simultaneously into a crowd and a public." The crowd in the stereograph combines "embodiment and abstraction," evolving as the joint presentation of detailed facial portrayals and a panoramic view of an abstract mass, both of which are joined together "as though to overcome their constitutive incompatibilities through rapid oscillation."[55]

About twelve years later, Griggs, sarcastically echoing the title of Kilburn's stereograph, describes the crowd lynching Gus Martin as "swaying, surging mass of frenzied humanity" (*HH* 188). As the insertion of the adjective "frenzied" indicates, Griggs does not oscillate between a representation of the crowd's unity as affective and rational but solely foregrounds the affective nature of the mob. He exposes the mob as chaotic and uncontrollably dangerous immersion of individuals into an indistinguishable, bloodthirsty horde. The effacing of individuality in *The Hindered Hand* therefore functions to represent the mob as mani-

[55] Esteve 135, 129.

festation of a relapse into savagery and a threat to American civilization. The members of the mob are reduced to nameless participants and role players, such as "leaders," "spokesman" or "first" and "second applicant" (*HH* 131-32), whose affective amalgamation is also apparent in the description of their reaction to an announcement as "universal" (*HH* 133). Caught up in an individuality- and rationality-dissolving mass hysteria, the mob, rather than acting orderly and determined and thus as manifestation of the white supremacy and civilization it is supposedly protecting, is "in a ferment" (*HH* 183), a "feverish anxiety" (*HH* 189), "in a furor of excitement" (*HH* 104) or makes a "mad rush" (*HH* 134) for the charred remains of Bud and Foresta. Griggs's representation of the mob capitalizes on the dominance of primitive passions and thus characterizes it with those attributes usually employed to justify lynching as the defense of white womanhood from primitive African-American rapists, who solely obey their animalistic impulses. Employing the same bipolar categories of savagery and civilization as used in the creation of the meaning of racial difference in the rhetoric of lynching, he reverses the ascription of deviant behavior between the perpetrators and the victims of lynching. Similar to apologetic representations, *The Hindered Hand* makes use of lynching as spectacle ascribing racial characteristics through a process of othering of deviant behavior but here it is not the white but the black race which emerges as the true incorporation of civilization.

The derogatory representation of the mob as the result of affective amalgamation, however, was not wholly unproblematic. At the turn of the century affective synthesis did not automatically signify to chaos and disorder but was often praised as a sign of patriotism.[56] Furthermore, the effacement of individuality also conveys the desired impression of a homogenous mob devoid of class differences and defined solely by its whiteness.[57] Griggs forestalls any misreading of the mob as homogenous white crowd and dissolves the widely held assumption about the connection between affect and patriotism. As has been mentioned before, he introduces clear class distinctions which also divide the support for lynching and render it a lower class phenomenon while characters like the white lawyer Maul are clearly opposed to it. Furthermore, also the mob is far from constituting a harmonized unity but is marked by selfish ambitions and disputes. Some members of the mob lynching Bud and Foresta are for example wrestling over the "privilege" of hosting the lynching (see *HH* 132-33).

[56] See Esteve 129, 135.
[57] See Wood 7, 18-20 and Fields 156-58.

Instead of signifying white racial homogeneity, the mob is a sign of petty egocentricity and disorder.

Griggs's decision to reiterate the representation of lynching as spectacle might at first seem odd because, as has been outlined before, it contributes to the authority of lynching discourse. *The Hindered Hand*, however, inscribes the presence of the witnessing crowd with a new meaning, signifying not civilized and legal behavior but an exaggeration of savagery and sadism. To fully explore this re-appropriation it is useful to briefly consider Catherine Bell's theory of ritualization. Bell defines ritualization as a process which creates ritual through the installation of a "privileged differentiation." According to Bell, ritual behavior is the result of the intensification or elaboration of certain features of normal, practical behavior. Ritual practice tries to differentiate itself from other kinds of practice in order to establish itself as dominant and more powerful.[58] The representation of lynching as spectacle in the rhetoric of lynching accordingly functions to differentiate lynching from simple murder and install it as a privileged form of execution by representing it as manifestation of civilization and white supremacy. The features usually intensified are the orderly performance of lynching or the presence and the civilized behavior of the crowd, which, then, removes lynching from the illegality of murder and approaches the legitimacy of public executions. Griggs's reiteration of the representation as spectacle adopts the concocting of a privileged differentiation, yet, selects other elements to differentiate lynching from murder as for example the senseless cruelty of the mob or the martyr-like suffering of the victims. Thus, while in the rhetoric of lynching the representation as spectacle is employed to distance lynching from murder and align it with legal or religious rituals and civilized behavior, Griggs intensifies the horror and savagery of lynching, which makes "normal" murder appear as a civilized act. In short, while the rhetoric of lynching employs the representation of lynching as spectacle to exaggerate its civilized character, Griggs's use expands the sadistic features of lynching and makes it an incredibly "diabolical carnival of blood" (LNPV 865).

For that purpose Griggs also borrows from the language regularly employed to describe established spectacles. Yet, while the rhetoric of lynching uses the solemnity of legal and religious rituals as a point of reference, Griggs selects spectacles which are intended to highlight the frivolity and entertainment character of lynching. Instead of promoting an image of lynching as serious and formal public performance, *The Hindered Hand* presents it as senseless and sadistic spectacle performed for the entertainment of a blood-crazed mob.

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[58] See Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992) 88-93.

Ramon Mansford for example emphasizes the "holiday appearance of the crowd" (*HH* 135) after Bud and Foresta's exceedingly cruel lynching. Devoid of any legal or religious associations lynching degenerates into a circus or pastime attraction "staged with all the deliberation of a blood-glutted Roman circus" and performed for the sheer lust of witnessing human suffering.[59] Reversing the ascription of civilization and savagery between the mob and its victim, lynching discloses the "weakness of our moral fibre" and signifies civilizational degeneration.[60] Griggs here takes up elitist fears about the meaninglessness of the public performance of for example executions. Wood explains that until the mid-nineteenth century also the North practiced public executions but had to abandon the practice as the original educational intent was no longer guaranteed. Originally, public executions should demonstrate the power and authority of the state or the church and required a crowd witnessing the performance of power.[61] From the 1830's on, however, executions were more and more privatized and held only before a group of selected witnesses as state and church officials feared the crowd's potential disorder. The crowd no longer seemed to identify with the convict or sinner and rather than deterring them from crime or sin, public executions turned into circus-like events as "crowds were not observing the solemnity of such occasions [but] were treating executions as carnivalesque entertainment."[62] Especially the lower classes were seen as particularly liable to give in to such baser passions and indulge in rather than being averted from crime and disorder. Griggs representation of lynching as devoid of any moralizing effects upon the witnessing crowd and his foregrounding of the entertainment character of lynching subverts the representation of lynching as public execution and falls in step with fears about lower class disorder. Rather than upholding the law, lynching becomes the dangerous outbreak of intense and uncontrollable passions of lower-class whites. Unlike Thomas Nelson Page, who valor-

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[59] The description of lynching as "staged with all the deliberation of a blood-glutted Roman circus" is taken from the Montgomery *Advertiser*, October 26, 1934. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1933 cont. – 1934, Reel 228, Frame 731 (Microfilm Edition); See also Raleigh, NC, *News Observer*, October 28, 1934. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1933 cont. – 1934, Reel 228, Frame 853 (Microfilm Edition). The strategy of re-appropriating the elements making up for the ritualization of lynching and defining it as savage amusement is quite common. The Carolina *Times* describe lynching as "party" or "pastime." Carolina NC *Times* June 20, 1928. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 19, Frame 80. (Microfilm Edition). See also Pittsburgh *Courier* January 6, 1927. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 8, Frame 922. (Microfilm Edition); Dallas, TX, *News* December 26, 1921. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 6, Frame 942. (Microfilm Edition).

[60] The Suffolk *News Herald* calls lynching an "orgy," which discloses the "weakness of our moral fibre." Suffolk *News Herald*, February 1, 1934. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1933 cont. – 1934, Reel 228, Frame 882 (Microfilm Edition).

[61] This understanding of ritual and power is predicated upon Foucault. See esp. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979).

[62] Wood, "Spectacles" 39.

izes lynching as altruistic and reluctant laying aside of civilization to right a wrong, Griggs's adoption of spectacle removes lynching from being a solemn and dignified ritual of execution to a form of entertainment which exposes and amplifies the savage nature of the mob.[63]

Rather than exerting any moralizing influence on the crowd, lynching even encourages moral depravity. The corrupting influence of lynching in *The Hindered Hand* is exemplified as the impediment of adolescent maturation and maternal education. "Little" nine-year old Melville Brant (*HH* 129), a white boy, ignores his mother's strict prohibition to witness the lynching of Bud and Foresta. He exemplifies the morally debasing effect of lynching, which is not only figured as the disregard for his mother's orders but also reflected in his consumption of lynching. Similar to Ramon Mansfield's description of lynching as a "holiday" event, Melville's perception of the spectacle of inhumane torture amounts to little more than something to brag with before his friends. In keeping with Griggs's representation of lynching as senseless and sensationalistic violence, Melville reads the cruelties inflicted upon the bodies of the black victims as part of and Sunday afternoon father-and-son-picnic and thus demonstrates the morally debasing influence lynching has even on children. Trudier Harris therefore correctly interprets the lynching as a ritual of initiation, introducing Melville into his role as "future ruler of the land" (*HH* 135) and echoing Griggs's pessimistic outlook on the future development of the South.[64]

The use of spectacle also features prominently in the representations of the African-American victims of the mob. In the construction of the lynching of Bud and Foresta, Griggs reiterates the intersection of lynching and religious ritual but reverses the meaning of the association though the foregrounding of African-American instead of white female suffering. Bud and Foresta are represented as "[*c*]*rucified* at the stake" (*HH* 139, emphasis mine) so that lynching is no longer the enactment of a divine wrath upon a black sinner but a crucifixion, representing the African-American victim as redeemer sacrificing his life for the sins of others: "By imagining lynching as a crucifixion and its victims as Christian martyrs, black Christians could claim African Americans as the true inheritors of Christian salvation and redemp-

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[63] In the Pittsburgh *Courier* lynching is called a "Roman Holiday" to capitalize on the entertainment character of lynching as senseless violence. Pittsburgh *Courier*, October 28, 1933. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1931 cont. – 1933, Reel 227, Frame 628 (Microfilm Edition).

[64] For the interpretation of the lynching of Bud and Foresta as a ritual of initiation see Harris, *Exorcising Blackness* 79-80. For theories of rites of initiation or rites of passage see for example Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (London: Routledge, 1960); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Antistructure* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969). For an overview see Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) 93-102.

tion, and their white oppressors as unholy savages."[65] The identification of lynch victims with the crucified Christ to oppose lynching was a strategy quite often employed. Richmond Barthé's "The Mother," for example, presents a Pieta with a black man as the fallen Christ and an article in the Chicago *Whip* figures the lynched body of an unknown man as crucified Christ (see Fig. 3-2 and 3-3).[66] *The Hindered Hand* likewise manipulates the religious associations between lynching and religious rituals to present the victims of the mob as Christ-like figures. Bud and Foresta both silently endure the ordeal without any sign of emotion or agency. As has been mentioned before, the silent endurance of torture was usually taken as a sign of depravity or inhumanity.[67] However, devoid of a rationalizing context and a sentimental narrative of white female victimization, their endurance is rendered the expression of the Christian ideal of suffering, which for Griggs was a pivotal component of civilization and which is presented in the novel as an inherent part of the African-American heritage when Ensal comments on the history of slavery that it has made African-Americans "wise through suffering" (*HH* 198). Bud and Foresta emerge as the true incorporation of Christian civilization. This impression is further intensified through the fact that both leave for Mississippi to embark on a civilizing mission and help the advancement of their race.[68] Foresta had chosen Mississippi as their new home because she thought it to be the state with the worst conditions for African-Americans and she wanted to use her education for the uplift of her race, hampered in its development by such ills as the peonage system or an abusive prison system. As a reaction to her "quiet influence" and blunted by past lynchings, local whites "who had been preying upon the more ignorant of the Negroes" (*HH* 124) decide to get rid of the Harpers.

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[65] Wood, "Spectacles" 79.

[66] Both works were part of the NAACP-organized anti-lynching exhibition. See Wood, "Spectacles" 80 and Garland 48-49. For an analysis of the exhibition see chapter three in Apel's *Imagery of Lynching*; Michael Hatt, "Sculpting and Lynching: the Making and Unmaking of the Black Citizen in Late Nineteenth-Century America," *Oxford Art Journal* 24.1 (2001): 3-22. Helen Langa, "Two Antilynching Art Exhibitions: Politicized Viewpoints, Racial Perspectives, Gendered Constraints," *American Art* 13.1 (1999): 10-39; Park; Margaret Rose Vendryes, "Hanging on their Walls: *An Art Commentary on Lynching*, The Forgotten 1935 Art Exhibition," *Race Consciousness: African American Studies for the New Century*, eds. Judith Jackson Fossett and Jeffrey A. Tucker (New York: New York UP, 1997) 168-170. Other examples of the re-appropriation of religious imagery include Prentice Taylor's painting "Christ in Alabama," which depicts a crucified black man and a moaning black woman. In W.E.B. Du Bois's short story "Jesus Christ in Georgia" Jesus Christ reappears as a poor vagrant and is lynched by Southern people who do not recognize him. W.E.B. Du Bois, "Jesus Christ in Georgia," *The Crisis* (December 1911): 70-74. See also Langston Hughes, "Christ in Alabama," *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed. Arnold Rampersand (New York: Knopf, 1994) 143.

[67] See Wood, "Spectacles" 121.

[68] The depiction of the lynch victim as crucified Christ and the mob as savages, necessitating a civilizing mission, also informs a cartoon in the Chicago *Defender*. Headlining the drawing "This is not Mexico – it is America," it renders lynching a savage or heathenish practice, demanding a Christian mission to the South. The divinity of black suffering is emphasized through the Christ figure appearing behind the burning body of the lynch victim. Chicago *Defender* May 27, 1916. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1899 – 1919, Reel 221, Frame 387 (Microfilm Edition).

Through the representation of Bud and Foresta as innocently suffering missionaries and victims of a frenzied mob, Griggs integrates their lynching into the opposition between savagery and civilization but reverses the ascription of both. Lynching materializes as a savage practice not only because of Griggs's description of the mob as driven by primitive impulses but also the representation of the mob's victims as a reversal of the mob's savagery. The talk about lynching (as spectacle) thus again becomes the talk about racial identities but in the rhetoric of anti-lynching whiteness comes to signify a lack of civilizational refinement. H. Clay Maul for example compares the lynchers to "cannibal kings" (*HH* 174) as the inhibitors of the lowest stage of human development.[69] African-Americans in contrast emerge as the true proprietors of Christian and civilizational values and when they are lynched, civilization is lynched with them.

Another element often employed in the representation of lynching as spectacle is the incorporation of the victim's confession of guilt. As has been outlined earlier, the "defendant's" confession carries legal as well as religious associations. It assures the mob of its divine righteousness and absolves it from any feeling of guilt. Simultaneously, a confession substantiates the legitimacy and adequacy of the execution through the victim's endorsement of his punishment.[70] The lynching of Bud and Foresta also contains the extraction of a confession, yet this testimony is not a remorseful acknowledgment of the legitimacy and appropriateness of lynching but functions to expose the proceedings as merely a travesty of legal or religious rituals. Griggs again refashions an integral element of typical apologetic lynching representations in order to subvert the support for the practice. Moreover, he directly refers to the role of the press in the creation of an atmosphere supportive of lynching and exposes the discursive distortion inherent in his model texts. To clarify the discursive model he is criticizing, Griggs refers to the extraction of the confession as being a component of a "trial" (*HH* 131) and the mob members as "administration of justice" (*HH* 133). Before the torture commences, the unnamed spokesman of the mob questions Bud.

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[69] Also the Chicago *Defender* headlines his account of the lynching of Bragg Williams "Southern Cannibals Feed Human Being to Furnace of Flames" and calls the members of the mob lynching Bud Johnson "white cannibals." Chicago *Defender* January 24, 1919 and March 21, 1919. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1899 – 1919, Reel 221, Frame 837 (Microfilm Edition). For other examples see Chicago *Defender* February 22, 1918. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 17, Frame 777. (Microfilm Edition); Chicago *Defender*, December day illegible, 1929. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1926 cont. – 1929, Reel 225, Frame 648 (Microfilm Edition); Baltimore MD *Evening Sun* August 30, 1921. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 6, Frame 902. (Microfilm Edition).

[70] See Wood 54. See also J.A. Sharpe, "'Last Dying Speeches': Religion, Ideology and Public Execution in 17th Century England," *Past and Present* 107 (May 1985), 156-57.

> "Did you kill Mr. Sidney Fletcher?" asked the mob's spokesman of Bud.
> "Can I explain the matter to you, gentlemen," asked Bud.
> "We want you to tell us just one thing; did you kill Mr. Sidney Fletcher?"
> "He tried to kill me," replied Bud.
> "And you therefore killed him, did you?"
> "Yes, sir. That's how it happened."
> "You killed him, then?"
> "I shot him, and if he died I suppose I must have caused it. But it was in self-defense."
> "You hear that, do you. He has confessed," said the spokesman to his son who was the reporter for the world-wide news agency that was to give to the reading public an account of the affair. (*HH* 131)

This passage demonstrates the role of the press in the creation of knowledge about lynching and African-Americans by misrepresenting what Griggs considers the reality of lynching. The verdict of "guilty" is only possible by a deliberate reduction of the truth to fit the purpose of the mob. The demonstration of the effacement of Bud's rationalization (self-defense) therefore exposes the description of lynching as trial as inaccurate. Also lynching photography is exposed as distortion of the truth. The inclusion of visual representations of lynching within his critique of lynching reports is particularly significant since at the beginning of the nineteenth century photographs were regarded as unmediated, objective and undistorted representations of reality.[71] Lynching photographs were received as transparent depictions of what really happened. Griggs disputes the ability of lynching photographs to objectively reproduce reality and aligns them along with textual representations as subjective and intentional falsifications. In *The Hindered Hand* he points to the prearranged nature of lynching photography as the actual lynching performance stops and the mob members pose for the photographer (see *HH* 134).[72]

The final reiteration of an element usually employed in the representation of lynching as spectacle is the graphic representation of violence. As has been mentioned before, extremely horrible forms of torture could be endorsed as compensating for the equally horrible crime of rape. The construction of knowledge about African-Americans therefore made it possible to incorporate even the most gruesome forms of torture as retributive violence and "root[ed] deep in the basic passions of humanity" (LCP 39). In *The Hindered Hand*, however, lynching is presented without the rape myth and racist stereotypes as rationalizing context.

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[71] See Suren Lalvani, *Photography, Vision and the Modern Production of Bodies* (Albany, NY: State U of New York P, 1996), 1-41; Don Slater, "Photography and Modern Vision: The Spectacle of 'Natural Magic'," *Visual Culture*, ed. Chris Jenks (New York: Routledge, 1995) 219-20.
[72] For the orchestration of photographs see also Apel's study.

What Griggs adopts, then, is the detailed description of physical violence, unfiltered, undiminished and unaccounted for by any apologetic knowledge. Instead of signifying to a noble shedding of civilizational restraints, lynching becomes the manifestation of savagery, which then is most clearly visible in the nauseatingly gory and sadistic methods of torture. Griggs changes the meaning of violence to denote the absence of civilizational ideals and thus regains the horror of lynching for the sake of resistance. The lynching of Bud and Foresta testifies less to the compensatory quality of lynching than to its barbarity.[73]

In this chapter I tried to detail the theory of reiteration with difference using the texts by Thomas Nelson Page, Mary Church Terrell, and Sutton E. Griggs. Essential for the above sketched strategy is the adoption of several modes used in apologetic writings, especially othering, as a mode of creating sameness and otherness, which then becomes the basis of resistance to lynching. In the following chapters, I will now focus more specifically on the ways in which sameness and otherness is created. In chapter four, I will analyze various writings by Ida B. Wells-Barnett, James Weldon Johnson, and Charles W. Chesnutt and their use of the concept of civilization as a racially overarching concern and a means of creating race-effacing sameness.

[73] To verify the mimetic and objective quality of his account of lynching Griggs includes the acknowledgement that "in no part of the book has the author consciously done violence to conditions as he has been permitted to view them" (*HH* 5). In the "Notes for the Serious" he even concedes that "some of the more revolting features of that occurrence [the Maulville lynching] have been suppressed for decency's sake" (*HH* 293). The model for the lynching of Bud and Foresta was very likely the lynching of Luther Holbert and his wife in Doddsville, Mississippi, in 1904. For a newspaper report of this lynching see Terrell (LNPV 854) and Ginzburg 63.

Figure 3-1. Benjamin W. Kilburn, *The Surging Sea of Humanity at the Opening of the Columbian Exposition*, 1893. Taken from Esteve 134.

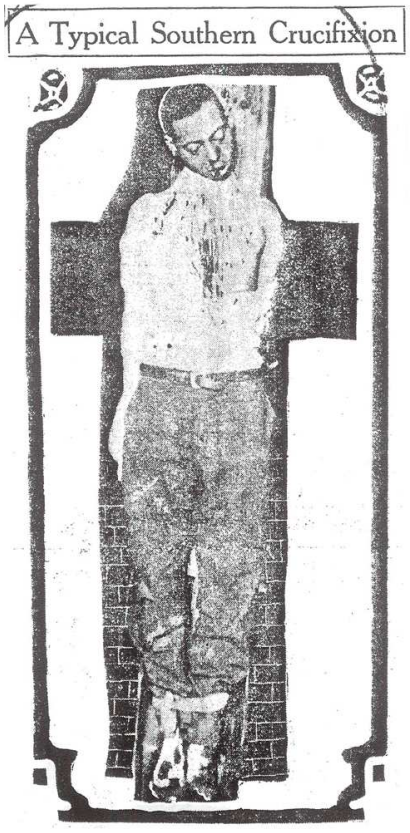

Figure 3-2. Chicago *Whip* June 18, 1921. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 8, Frame 217. (Microfilm Edition).

Figure 3-3. Richmond Barthé, *The Mother*, painted plaster, approximately life-sized, destroyed 1940. Photograph from the National Archives, Washington D.C. Taken from Vendryes 169.

4. "The Saving of Black America's Body and White America's Soul" - Civilization and the Construction of Sameness

In her article about the formation and application of the term "civilization" in American culture, Ursula Brumm points to its frequent propagandistic use to legitimize or rationalize a specific group's interests. To illustrate, she gives two examples. First, in the struggle over the abolition of slavery abolitionists as well as anti-abolitionists defended their respective goals by representing them as the defense or advancement of civilization. Second, she cites the application of the term to justify America's entry into both World Wars. America's way of seeing itself as the nation most highly advanced in the steady progress of civilization combined with a sense of a moral duty to defend civilization at home and abroad served as a powerful rhetoric to rationalize such a decision.[1] Brumm's selection of dates delimits a time span of about eighty years (starting in 1863 with the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation and ending in 1941 with the US entry in WWII), in which lynching or the fight against it was one of the nation's most heatedly discussed topics. Unfortunately, no attempt has been made so far to study the application of the concept of civilization in the promotion or discrediting of lynching, although, as I will show in this chapter, it was of central importance.

As has been outlined in chapter two, the rhetoric of lynching often represents lynching as manifestation and defense of civilization from the onslaught of savagery and thereby integrates the distinction between civilization and savagery into the Manichean bipolarity of race. Civilization is identified with whiteness and inscribed with racial meanings. By staging the performance as well as the motivation of lynching as appropriated to refined Victorian morals and culture, the notion of civilization thus lends lynching an air of authority and it becomes integrated into American civilization and progress as a practice celebrating, manifesting and constructing white supremacy. Counterhegemonic discourses reiterate the association of lynching and civilization but challenge the signification of both. Rather than being a civilized

[1] Ursula Brumm, "Fortschrittsglaube und Zivilisationsfeindschaft im amerikanischen Geistesleben des 19. Jahrhunderts," *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 6 (1961) 76. For the development of the pro- and anti-slavery argument see also John David Smith, *An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865-1918* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1991). Abolitionists regarded slavery as a blot on American civilization, which had to be removed if the nation wanted to move forward in its development. Anti-abolitionists argued that slaves were on a lower stage of civilization and through their contact with their white masters would advance in their development. Once the "precious institution" was removed, they would again degenerate. See also Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997); George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) esp. 43-96.

performance, protection of civilizational ideals, or contribution to the progress of civilization, lynching is figured as barbaric practice which threatens not only the lives of African-Americans but primarily American civilization as it represents a reversion into savagery. Associating the violation of the black body with the violation of civilizational ideals, anti-lynching rhetoric challenges the meanings inscribed into the distinction between civilization and savagery and their integration into the Manichean bipolarity. Rather than being a racial or innate trait, civilization is figured as the result of the devotion to such ideals as morality, restraint or altruism.

Anti-lynching rhetoric makes lynching a testing ground for the nation's state of civilizational refinement. Writers like Wells or Chesnutt make the reaction to lynching the prime means for determining one's state of civilizational refinement. While adopting the opposition between civilization and savagery as a structuring principle in their writings, they de-racialize both concepts and make the fight against lynching the key expression of and contribution to the progress of civilization. The rigid bipolarity of race is thus bridged through the interracial concern for the promotion of civilization, and the construction of sameness evolves around the notion of civilization. In the following, I will briefly outline the meaning and conception of "civilization" during the Gilded Age and at the turn of the century, a time during which the term "lynching" received its final semantic molding, and its deployment in the rhetoric of both lynching and anti-lynching.[2] Moreover, I will contextualize the notion of civilization historically as well as culturally in order to approach the question why anti-lynching rhetoric selects the opposition between civilization and savagery as central concept in its strategy of resistance.

4.1. "The End of American Innocence": The Crisis of Cultural Authority in America at the Turn of the Century

The turn of the century marks a time of radical changes in American. Starting in post-bellum times, industrialization, urbanization, increased immigration, the emancipation of African-Americans and women as well as technological developments effected a change from an

[2] The increase in the number of lynchings especially during the 1890s was accompanied by a cultural narrative, which would shape the American perception of the practice for generations. See Schwenk 312. See also Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch* 67-127. For a more symbolic use of "lynching" see for example Waldrep, *The Many Faces of Judge Lynch* 151-82 and Sandra L. Ragan, Dianne G. Bystrom, Lynda Lee Kaid, and Christina S. Beck, eds., *The Lynching of Language: Gender, Politics, and Power in the Hill-Thomas Hearings* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1996).

agrarian to a highly industrialized modern society. Henry F. May characterizes America's *fin de siècle* as the beginning of a "cultural revolution," which would eventually bring about the demise of the nineteenth-century Victorian conception of reality and system of values.[3] According to May, the disintegration of Victorianism was a gradual process and traditional nineteenth-century views still largely determined the perception and evaluation of reality during the 1890s and first decades of the new century. However, the changing social, political, economic and cultural climate exposed the inappropriateness of the old system to cope with the new reality and resulted in the need to conceive of new strategies in dealing with a different reality. The readiness to attack the weak points of the old cultural system increased as well. May writes that "many kinds of people [were] cheerfully laying dynamite in the hidden cracks."[4] Stanley Coben sums up this development when he writes that "Victorian culture virtually disappeared as a respectable idea."[5] It was now rejected as an effeminate culture and replaced with a growing emphasis on formerly defamed male qualities. This conflict is reflected in the understanding of the notion of civilization, which experienced a profound revaluation at the turn of the century.

4.1.1. The Meanings of "Civilization"

Civilization as understood by late nineteenth-century America is largely based on the Victorian conception of the term. It implies the confidence in a moral universe in which historical and social developments are expressions of an all-pervading moral norm and the conviction of the slow but steady, eschatological progress of civilization (understood to encompass as areas of life: politics, technology, economy, etc.) toward a state of perfection, which so far has only been achieved by western culture. The fusion of civilization with the notion of progress makes it possible to conceive of the rapid economic and technological expansion of the USA during the late nineteenth century as part of the steady progress of American civilization. Yet, civilization also means the perfection of man and therefore has to be a moral pro-

[3] Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence: A Study of the First Years of Our Own Time 1912-1917* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959) ix. For a timeframe of Victorianism see Howe's largely accepted definition: "Victoria reigned in Britain from 1837 to 1901, and these sixty-four years approximate the cultural dominion of what we call 'Victorianism'." Daniel Walker Howe, "Victorian Culture in America," *Victorian America,* ed. Daniel Walker Howe (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1976) 3.

[4] May x-xi.

[5] Stanley Coben, "The Assault on Victorianism in the Twentieth Century," ed. Daniel Walker Howe, *Victorian America* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1978) 170. See also Douglas L. Wilson, introductory, *The Genteel Tradition: Nine Essays by George Santayana,* ed. Douglas L. Wilson (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967) 5 and Larzer Ziff, *The American 1890s: Life and Times of a Lost Generation* (New York: Viking Press, 1966) 220, 206-28.

gress. The young American nation seemed to provide the perfect prerequisites for this venture.[6] Inherent in the notion of civilization is also a sense of a moral duty or civilizing mission, that is, the assumption of the necessity of disciplining and instructing those on a lower stage of civilization.[7]

At the turn of the century, however, newly developing cultural values challenge this idea of civilization and the whole Victorian conception of reality. They reject Victorian assumptions about a rationally comprehensible and logically explainable universe and abandon the confidence in the intrinsically rational, teleological, and moral nature of all historical, social and civilizational processes. Arbitrariness and chance become the new guiding principles and determinism, that is, the logics of heredity and environment, replaces the Victorian belief in a universal moral order. The ideal of an autonomous self and the possibility of sovereign decisions are replaced by the heteronomy and compulsion of every action.[8] Civilization, then, is seen as nothing more than a fragile habit draped over primitive impulses and instincts with the intention of holding them in check. Yet, those savage impulses can break out at any time. Therefore, civilization is no longer defined as a stage in human development but becomes "a thin veneer, which cracks and scales off at the first impact of primal passions" (*MT* 310).[9] The eruption of those primitive passions is interpreted as either a dangerous loss of control and succeeding moral degeneration or as the liberation from obsolete and effeminate Victorian ideals and experienced as revitalization.

This second interpretation was possible as the Victorian notion of civilization was increasingly understood as effeminized. George Santayana has coined the well-known term of the "Genteel Tradition" to denote this allegedly feminine orientation of nineteenth-century American culture.[10] It was this feminization of civilization that men were more and more

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[6] See Brumm 77-79 and Winfried Fluck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit: Der amerikanische Realismus 1865-1900* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1992) 78.

[7] See Fluck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit* 77. For an overview of the application and use of the term "civilization" in US history see Brumm's article. For an exhaustive overview of the history and development of the discourse on "civilization" see George W. Stocking, Jr., *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987). For the application of the term "civilization" to establish and rationalize racial hierarchies see for example George W. Stocking, Jr., "The Dark-Skinned Savage: The Image of Primitive Man in Evolutionary Anthropology," *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr. (New York: Free Press, 1968) 121-22 and Thomas F. Gossett's still unsurpassed study *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997).

[8] Winfried Fluck, "Realismus, Naturalismus, Vormoderne," *Amerikanische Literaturgeschichte*, ed. Hubert Zapf (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997) 207-217; Lee Clark Mitchell, "Naturalism and the Languages of Determinism," *The Columbia Literary History of the United States*, ed. Emory Elliott (New York: Columbia UP, 1988) 526.

[9] Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (1902; New York: Penguin, 1993) 310.

[10] In his essay "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy" (1911) he puts forward the theory of a feminine conception of culture, which becomes manifest mostly in realist literature but also in broader trends of American culture as a whole: "The American Will inhabits the sky-scraper; the American Intellect inhabits the colonial mansion. The one is the sphere of the American man; the other, at least predominantly, of the American woman.

rebelling against. In opposition to the traditional gender roles of the separate spheres, they redefined their "negative" qualities (manly passion and primitive impulse) and turned them into virtues to resist the effeminacy of masculinity and American culture in general.[11] The new figuration of civilization as a more "manly" concept and the accompanying revaluation of primitive passions also informs the rhetoric of lynching. Lynching is represented as heroic and altruistic defense of morality and thus as manifestation of one of the traditional constituents of civilization.[12] Simultaneously, the revaluation of physicality and primitivism made it possible to perceive violence as revitalizing liberation from an effeminate culture. The mob thus could be figured as expression of a more "manly" civilization, which probably added decisively to the acceptability of lynching. Lynching evolves as manly defense of morality and as the combination of "reason and restraint" and "a core of combative strength and vigor."[13] In addition, the integration of civilization into the Manichean bipolarity of race fur-

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The one is all aggressive enterprise; the other is all Genteel Tradition." George Santayana, "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy," *The Genteel Tradition. Nine Essays by George Santayana*, ed. Douglas L. Wilson (1911; Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967) 40. Santayana's conception of a Genteel Tradition to describe an effeminate American culture soon found broad support and acceptance to formulate the threat of an imminent degeneration of American culture. In 1915 for example Van Wyck Brooks used the term to describe Victorian America as divided into two spheres: "the one largely feminine, the other largely masculine." Quoted after Wilson, introductory 23. For an overview of earlier studies, applications and conceptions of the term see Danforth R. Ross, "The Genteel Tradition: Its Characteristics and Its Origins," diss. U of Minneapolis, 1954. Later studies however contradict the notion of a feminized late-Victorian culture in America and question the validity and applicability of Santayana's term. Tomsich regards it more as an "intellectual construct than as a description of American culture" and Katzin criticizes the vagueness of its definition denoting "everything Mencken's iconoclastic generation disliked in nineteenth-century life." John Tomsich, *A Genteel Endeavor: American Culture and Politics in the Gilded Age* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1971) 186; Alfred Kazin, *On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1942) vii.

[11] E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: BasicBooks, 1993) 251-55. After the Revolution and with the development of the theory of separate spheres the definition of civilization was closely interrelated with the notion of gender. According to the theory of separate spheres, men inhabited the rough public world of the marketplace and were dominated by basic and barbaric passions and impulses. Those passions had to be civilized by women, the guardians of morality and decency. Thus, civilization took on a thoroughly female implication. Rotundo explains this revolt as a reaction to the growing emancipation of women and their increased influence on the public sphere. As a result, men emphasized their traditional manly qualities as precondition for being able to survive in the rough public sphere. Rotundo stresses that they did not want to undo the concept of civilization in general and plunge American society into barbarism or redefine the conception of femininity. The primary motivation was to defend the public sphere as the source of male "power and pleasure" from the intrusion of women and enable the formulation of a rigid masculine identity. See Rotundo, *American Manhood* 254. Stephan L. Brandt characterizes the new conception of civilization as the collapse of the early-nineteenth-century binary opposition between civilization and nature, the former denoting a place within, the latter without society. At the turn of the century, this clear distinction crumpled and both categories became part of one imaginary space, that is, nature became an inbuilt element of the dominant culture. Worries about primitivism were no longer projected onto a space outside society but were now to be found within the realm of civilization. See Brandt 249-51, 267.

[12] The seminal values of morality, progress, and culture experienced varying degrees of modification or adjustment. While morality and progress were more or less adopted without major modifications into the new period (progress being adjusted more profoundly than morality), culture, understood as a proscriptive text determining the evaluation of reality, was subject to severe criticism and condemned as anachronism. See May 123.

[13] Rotundo, *American Manhood* 254.

ther cements the conception of African-Americans as Other and prevents a threatening sameness.

Nevertheless, anti-lynching rhetoric makes civilization the basis for the construction of interracial sameness. Rather than signifying to the resurrection of a "manly" civilization, lynching is the manifestation of a lack of civilizational refinement. Rather than representing the outbreak of primitive passions as liberation, anti-lynching texts define it as a dangerous reversion into savagery, threatening – not masculinizing – civilization. Anti-lynching texts here appropriate different conceptions of respectability prevalent in the North and the South. Wyatt-Brown explains that while in the North the Victorian ideal of self-restraint still dominated the valuation of turn-of-the-century behavior, the South sanctioned violence through its adherence to the code of honor.[14] The emphasis on self-restraint over roughness in anti-lynching rhetoric is therefore designed to appeal to a Northern audience (or one devoted to traditional Victorian ideals) and involve them into the fight against lynching. Furthermore, by representing lynching as the opposite of restraint, anti-lynching texts imply that the perseverance of lynching jeopardizes the progress of American civilization. They thus elevate the fight against lynching from a geographically and racially restricted struggle to a concern of national significance. James Weldon Johnson accordingly regards lynching as a "menace […] for all organized government and civilized society" (LAND 75) and therefore declares the fight against lynching to be a responsibility of national significance "because lynching and mob violence has to go or civilization in the United States cannot survive" (M 44). By joining late nineteenth century concerns for the promotion of civilization the fight against lynching becomes a fight for "the saving of black America's body and white America's soul" (TA 92).[15]

4.1.2. Anti-lynching as Civilizing Mission

But why did the rhetoric of anti-lynching select civilization to stage resistance? Kevin Gaines detects a similar use of civilization in the writings of Pauline Hopkins. Her strategy to oppose racism was to employ the dominant discourse on race and civilization to oppose racism. Gaines argues that writers like her tried to use "the idea of civilization at the turn of the cen-

[14] Wyatt-Brown 18-21.

[15] The abbreviations in parentheses refer to Johnson's articles printed in James Weldon Johnson, *The Selected Writings of James Weldon Johnson. Vol. II: Social, Political, and Literary Essays*, ed. Sondra Kathryn Wilson (New York: Oxford UP, 1995). Pagination refers to this edition. "Memorandum from Mr. Johnson to Dr. Du Bois: Re: Crisis Editorial" (M) 1922, 40-45; "Lynching – America's National Disgrace" (LAND) 1924, 71-78; "Three Achievements and Their Significance" (TA) 1927, 89-96.

tury to give credence to their own aspirations to status, power, and influence."[16] At the heyday of imperialism, the representation of anti-lynching as contribution to civilization, therefore, made it a civilizing mission, which on the one hand lent social recognition to these efforts and its promoters and on the other hand exposed the hypocrisy of American racism.[17]

The representation of lynching as civilizing mission is yet another example of reiteration with a difference as also the rhetoric of lynching renders lynching a reaction (not action) to the underdeveloped status of African-Americans. Page in his article "The Lynching of Negroes," for example, regards rape as the "cause" for lynching, which then is merely a *re*action to a threat caused by the savagery of the black race and the attempt to violently "civilize" them by "strik[ing] a deeper terror into those whom the other method had failed to awe" (LCP 39). Bhabha identifies such a conception as typical for colonial discourse. He explains that

> [t]he colonized population is then deemed to be both the cause and effect of the system, imprisoned in the circle of interpretation. What is visible is the *necessity* of such rule which is justified by those moralistic and normative ideologies of amelioration recognized as the Civilizing Mission or the White Man's Burden.[18]

The rhetoric of anti-lynching here again re-appropriates a strategy of the dominant discourse for the sake of resistance when it represents anti-lynching as reaction to white savagery and the attempt to preserve the progress of American civilization, which is not only for the benefit of African-Americans but also the under-civilized South. Such an interpretation gains further substantiation when we take a look at one of the major cultural developments following the end of the Civil War: American realism.

One of the most insightful approaches to American realism is Winfried Fluck's study *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit*.[19] Fluck's attempt to define American realism deviates from traditional methods as he approaches the American realist novel from its cultural function and not by means of a catalogue of aesthetic criteria.[20] Fundamentally, he defines the attempt to contribute to the advancement of American civilization as the commonality of the largely hetero-

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[16] Kevin Gaines, "Black Americans' Racial Uplift Ideology as 'Civilizing Mission': Pauline E. Hopkins on Race and Imperialism," *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, eds. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) 435.
[17] Gaines 450.
[18] Bhabha 83.
[19] For an overview of several other approaches to defining American realism see Fluck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit* 46-57. See also Winfried Fluck, "The Masculinization of American Realism," *Amerikastudien/ American Studies* 36.1 (1991): 71-76. Fluck explains that the misconceptionalization of realism as strength or as a masculine genre has for a long time influenced (and misguided) the interpretation of American realism.
[20] See Fluck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit* 55, 70. See also Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982) 182-207.

geneous corpus of the realist novel.[21] The end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery, considered the nation's most severe moral blemish, had brought the promise of a new America which was now able to ascend to a new and unprecedented stage in its civilizational development. Unfortunately, confidence in a moral universe and the steady progress of civilization was no longer unmarred during the Gilded Age as the moral perfection of America was lagging behind its political and economic progress.[22] Realists therefore regarded it as their duty to contribute to the nation's moral improvement by means of their cultural activities and that way help the unfolding of American civilization.[23] Sharing the Victorian understanding of civilization, they identified the persistence of obsolete cultural conventions promoted particularly through the popular literary genre of the romance as the reason for the still imperfect moral state of American civilization. Romances brought about a distorted perception of reality and were therefore responsible for deficiencies in people's decision making processes, self-discipline and intelligence.[24] The realist novel was designed to right these wrongs. It aimed at initiating a dialogue about the remaining blemishes of American civilization and freeing the American public from its emotional and intellectual limitations. In the end, it wanted to correct the romance-caused misrepresentation of reality and help realize the promise of a higher state of American civilization.[25] Anti-lynching texts try to abolish lynching by demarcating it as an obstacle to the progress of American civilization and forge an interracial alliance based on a common pledge to those norms and values. For that end, they fall in step with the realist appreciation of a distorted perception of reality as impediment of civilization. They transfer this conception to apologetic lynching representations and criticize them as misrepresentation of one specific part of reality, namely lynching, which seriously precludes the unfolding of American civilization. Like this, the prevention of lynching in the South can be justified and authorized as a civilizing mission which prevents the relapse of the South into a state of savagery and further conviction is added to the arguments used in the defama-

[21] Fluck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit* 87, identifies as the commonality the "Zivilisierungsprojekt."
[22] See Brumm 83.
[23] See Fluck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit* 78, 72-87.
[24] The realist use of the term "romance" was rather muddled. It was a derogative term applied to all kinds of texts which did not correspond to their conception of "good literature" and denoted an impeded and retarded discourse in terms of civilization. "Romance" stood for a deformation in the representation of reality through uninhibited idealization and romanticizing. For an overview of definitions and applications of the term, see Fuck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit* 57-72. Realists also criticized melodramatic plots and stock characters as distortion of reality. See Winfried Fluck, *Das kulturelle Imaginäre: Eine Funktionsgeschichte des amerikanischen Romans 1790-1900* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997) 257.
[25] See Fluck, *Das Kulturelle Imaginäre* 257-58.

tion of lynching. Several cultural and social developments culminating at the turn of the century add to the intensity and convincingness of this contention.[26]

The old cultural and social elite, generally referred to as gentry, had always regarded it as their duty to protect and promote civilization.[27] From colonial times to the Civil War, the composition of the gentry gradually changed from a largely homogenous, wealthy class, which represented the unquestioned leadership in economic, political and social matters, to a more and more permeable and heterogeneous group, which increasingly focused on cultural activities to secure and justify their influence on society.[28] Culture, education and self-cultivation, which had been intrinsic (but never exclusive and defining) constituents of the gentry ideal ever since, gradually began to emerge as the sole and dominant qualities of a new elite, which rationalized its claims to moral and social leadership through their refined cultural and educational qualities and the dissemination of cultural and ethic values and norms, which they regarded as preconditions for the progress of civilization.[29] When during the second half of the nineteenth century the gentry completely abandoned its leading political and economic position and concentrated its efforts entirely on the social and cultural sphere, they emerged as a thoroughly *cultural* elite.[30] The condemnation of lynching as opposed to civilization, therefore, integrates it into the catalog of the social problems the older elite sought to remove and made resistance to lynching a concern no longer reserved for African-Americans. Yet, not only members of the gentry could hope to gain or secure their social standing through aiding the progress of civilization. A newly developing white middle class could gain social influence and reputation through committing themselves to this ideal. Cultural activities such as writing became instruments to gain social authority.[31] In short, the

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[26] Howe rightly contends that the ideals of American Victorianism were not a monolithic and homogeneous set of ideals limited to the North. Rather, there existed geographical distinctions. The South is one and probably the most obvious "subculture of American Victorianism." Yet, New England represented probably the most influential group and was regarded as exponent of the "official" culture. Howe, "Victorian Culture in America" 15. For a detailed discussion of the values constituting American Victorianism see Howe, "Victorian Culture in America" 17-28.

[27] Fluck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit* 72-76. See also Stow Persons, *The Decline of American Gentility* (New York: Columbia UP, 1973); Frederic Cople Jaher, "The Boston Brahmins in the Age of Industrial Capitalism," *The Age of Industrialism in America*, ed. Frederic Cople Jaher (New York: Free Press, 1968) 188-262.

[28] See for example Jaher 190, 195-200 or R. Gordon Kelly, *Mother Was a Lady: Self and Society in Selected American Children's Periodicals, 1865-1890* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974) 58-60.

[29] For the gentleman ideal and its modifications in a time when the gentry was "divorced from privilege and power and affiliated with the literary, artistic, and educational elites" see Persons 55, esp. 51-71. See also Kelly 56-70.

[30] Kelly points to the function of the gentry as a "culture-bearing elite until late in the nineteenth century." What held the gentry together was "neither money nor political position but a commitment to culture and discipline." Kelly 58. Like the Victorian concept of civilization also the gentry was increasingly perceived as obsolete and effeminate. See for example Tomsich 2.

[31] See also Kelly 61-62.

deployment of civilization in the rhetoric of anti-lynching awards resistance with a standing of high social reputation and national significance. Anti-lynching texts become a form of cultural activity, by means of which to gain or secure influence on society. The representation of anti-lynching as civilizing mission, that is, as the attempt to contribute to the progress of civilization, adds prestige to this undertaking.

T.J. Jackson Lears's interpretation of Victorianism as a system of cultural hegemony further helps to illuminate the deployment of civilization in the rhetoric of resistance. As a result of the disintegration of the dominant cultural system and the devaluation of traditional metaphysical or religious explanations of reality a "crisis of cultural authority" emerged.[32] Lears explains that Victorianism as a dominant culture never constituted "a monolithic moral system uniting all of American culture," that is, Victorian ethics were never an unquestioned and unanimously accepted system. Rather, there was extensive dissent from those norms among immigrants and in less developed areas of the United States. Therefore, "[t]hose values were not descriptions of actual behavior; they were official standards of conduct." In that respect, Victorianism was more a guideline or touchstone for measuring and validating one's behavior. Lears therefore regards Victorianism as a system supporting the cultural hegemony of the gentility: "Victorian respectability did not create a genuine cultural consensus; rather, it played a key role in sustaining the hegemony of the dominant social classes."[33] Newly developing social groups and formerly repressed or defamed aspects of American culture as for example a revalued primitivism, which was now seen as the antidote to the threat of national degeneration pressed in the void left by the gentility and Victorianism.[34] Resistance to lynching could thus be presented as a welcome possibility for the older elite to fortify their shaky construction of authority.

4.1.3. Southern Progressivism

The reform movement known as Southern Progressivism further helps to understand the molding of anti-lynching rhetoric as the opponents of lynching employed arguments used in this movement to furnish resistance to lynching. This study argues that anti-lynching rhetoric represented lynching as a social disease comparable to alcoholism, licentiousness and other

[32] T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1994) 5. Brandt 60, contends that the dominance of religious discourse was replaced by a medical and psychological discourse.
[33] Lears 14-15.
[34] See Brandt 93-4.

forms of unrestrained behavior in order to expand the authority such organizations as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) enjoyed onto resistance to lynching.

Southern progressivism was a movement which started as a thoroughly Southern institution at the turn of the century and lasted until the beginnings of the 1920s. Its major concern was to achieve economic and social improvement in the South, a region which in the eyes of many contemporaries was still lagging behind America's overall progress toward civilizational perfection. The strategy of the proponents of Southern progressivism was to first achieve social reform and order as the necessary precondition for economic development in order to finally overcome the South's inferior position. The reformers shared "a yearning for a more orderly and cohesive community. Such a community was considered prerequisite for economic development and material progress"[35] Yet, despite the emphasis on improvement, Southern progressivism was on the whole only little revolutionary. A prime example of the combination of tradition and improvement is Walter Hines Page who "wanted to modernize the South through economic development and education but without major changes in its traditions and social arrangements."[36] The social composition of the proponents of Southern progressivism was largely white, Southern and middle-class.[37]

Race relations and the aim for interracial harmony was only one among other social issues confronted by Southern progressivism. The motivation to solve the race problem was to gain social control over African-Americans and assure their efficiency as laborers. It was therefore "an updated version of paternalism in which whites would offer blacks help, guidance, and protection in exchange for a commitment to the New South values of thrift and hard work, as well as a continued subservience."[38] Education and economic opportunities were seen as the prime means to achieve African-American progress. This overall emphasis on education (in a modified form) also reappears in most anti-lynching texts. Significantly, the understanding of racial animosities was largely determined by the rampant racism at the turn of the century and accordingly interpreted as "black threat." That is, interracial problems

[35] Dewey W. Grantham, *Southern Progressivism: the Reconciliation of Progress and Tradition* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1983) xvii.
[36] Grantham 28. In paternalistic rhetoric, also Henry Grady, editor of the Atlanta *Constitution*, advocates the leadership of a Southern elite to end lynching and hopes for the improvement of the racial situation through black progress. He defames lynching as having a demoralizing influence on whites and their respect for the law. Furthermore, it would increase the readiness armed resistance among African-Americans. See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 192-93.
[37] Grantham divides Southern progressivism into three categories: one group of reformers emphasized the necessity of stronger means of social control (state regulation) as panacea for such problems as race relations. Others favored social justice. They tried for instance to abolish child labor but also to solve racial tensions. A third group preaches social efficiency to improve the South especially economically. See Grantham xv–xxii.
[38] Daniel Joseph Singal, "Ulrich B. Phillips: The Old South as the New," 881, quoted in Grantham 231.

were seen as a threat to the white race. Education and economic advancement, therefore, were among other things the attempt to make African-Americans "lose any desire they might have to amalgamate with whites."[39] Lynching was largely interpreted as motivated by black immorality and sexual licentiousness. To protect African-Americans against lynching consequently meant to educate them. It never crossed the thought of those reformers to regulate or educate whites against lynching. A Trinity professor in 1905 wrote that "[t]he problem is not so much what to do to elevate the inferior race as it is to save the whites from the blighting influences of narrow-mindedness, intolerance, and injustice."[40] Lynching was not interpreted as an injustice done to African-Americans but an alarming sign for white degeneracy. The major focus thus was on the improvement of white morals. In that respect, anti-lynching rhetoric joins Southern progressivism as it also directs its effort toward the education of whites. Both interpret lynching as a social ill and sign of backwardness, which in turn renders the fight against lynching with the drive for the elevation of the South.

The partial identification of anti-lynching rhetoric and Southern progressivism is also evident in the incorporation of certain major concerns of the latter into the fight against lynching. A good example is the attempt of a politics of morality visible in the prohibition movement.[41] Most Southern progressives supported prohibition as one of the most important reform movements at the turn of the century.[42] A driving force behind the prohibition movement was the WCTU. At the turn of the century, the call for state regulation grew louder and the states increasingly passed prohibition laws. Prohibition like no other movement of Southern progressivism was a "means of moral reaffirmation of traditional values, the promise of cleaner politics, and an avenue to employ the authority of the state in the search for moral and social progress." It was also the "expression of concern about personal immorality and an instrument of social control with far-reaching class and racial implications." Prohibition wanted social uplift and justice.[43] It was also linked with the race problem. Alcohol was assumed to demoralize African-Americans, make them retrogress into primitivism, and reduce

[39] Grantham 232.
[40] Quoted after Grantham 31.
[41] The prohibition movement also experienced support from evangelical leaders who feared that the "highly visible spread of activities like drinking and dancing among the laboring classes were creating temptations for young white middling-class men and women." Wood, "Spectacles" 93-94.
[42] Grantham ascribes the broad support of prohibition to the fact that a lot of different tendencies could be brought together: "the countryman's suspicion of urban institutions, the puritanism [sic] of evangelical churches, the humanitarian concerns of social justice reformers, the identification of the liquor traffic with corporations and special interests, the need to 'purify' the political process, the desire to control the 'undependable' and 'criminally inclined' Negro, and the economic argument that the saloon 'breeds disorder and rime and demoralized the labor system'." Grantham 161.
[43] Grantham 172-74.

their efficiency as workers, a view also shared by Booker T. Washington. For the white middle class prohibition "was symbolic of a more influential social role."[44] Anti-lynching texts reproduce and incorporate the condemnation of the excessive use of alcohol in the representation of the mob. Lynching evolves as an outgrowth of alcoholism and the fight against it is associated with the larger struggle for moral and economic reform in the South.

The influence of Southern progressivism on the rhetoric of lynching can for example be seen in Georgia. Brundage analyzes responses to lynching between the mid 1880s to the 19030s and contends that the proponents of anti-lynching in Georgia were motivated by the ideals of law and order, their confidence in the power of government, progress, and new insights gained from new sociological methods and religious reform. Lynching was condemned as expression of Southern primitivism and as "barbaric holdover that had no place in the New South."[45] The Georgia campaign against lynching "drew upon the values of social harmony, efficiency, and orderly progress that were the order of the day following the turn of the century."[46] Its major contribution to the struggle against lynching was that they challenged racist arguments by verbalizing their ideological underpinnings. Many attempts to prevent lynching were, however, not sparkled by a genuine conviction of its inhumanity but by the acknowledgement of the harmful influence lynching had on the region's reputation and the economic losses resulting from it.[47]

4.2. Contesting the "Old Thread Bare Lie": Ida B. Wells-Barnett's Reiteration of the Discourse of Civilization and Masculinity

Before I present my reading of Charles W. Chesnutt's novel *The Marrow of Tradition*, I will review various writings by Ida B. Wells-Barnett and James Weldon Johnson as support. I am going to provide an analysis of Wells's *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* and *A Red Record*[48] as well as Johnson's New York *Age* editorials "Lawlessness in the United States" (1914), "A New Crime"(1915), "Anarchy in Georgia" (1916), "An Army With Banners" (1917), and "More Toll for Houston" (1918) together with several other writings includ-

[44] Grantham 176-77, 177.
[45] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 208.
[46] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 209.
[47] See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 212-13.
[48] The edition used here is Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* and *A Red Record: Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States, 1892-1893-1894* both printed in *Southern Horrors and Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*, ed. Jacqueline Jones Royster (1892; 1895; Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 1997) 49-72, 73-157. Subsequent pagination refers to this edition.

ing "The Lynching at Memphis" (1917), "Memorandum from Mr. Johnson to Dr. Du Bois: Re: Crisis Editorial" (1922), "Lynching – America's National Disgrace" (1924), and "Three Achievements and Their Significance" (1927).[49] Both, Wells and Johnson, mark the beginning and ending of a time during which lynching was one of America's most heatedly discussed topics. My analysis offers a brief introductory and supportive prequel to the analysis of *The Marrow of Tradition* as it sketches the basic outlines of a strategy of resistance which was dominant during the time under scrutiny. Though profoundly different in the realization of their common goal to abolish lynching, Wells and Johnson converge in two positions. They both try to depict lynching as savage practice by challenging white supremacist representations of lynching. They revoke the most prominent rationale for lynching – the rape charge – and undo the dominant association of popular and legal justice to expose lynching as gory performance and marker of moral degeneracy, resulting in retrogression into savagery. In a second step, they declare lynching to be a menace to basic American values and demonstrate the necessity of white involvement in the fight against lynching as a fight for the progress of civilization. Both try to educate the American public about the true nature of lynching as, according to Johnson, "[a]ll Americans do not understand about lynching" (M 45). Assuming apologetic representations of lynching to be distortions of truth, they wants to present the "cruel, naked, raw savage facts about lynching" and place them "before the American public and before the civilized world" (TA 89) in order to expose lynching as a threat to whites, especially white democracy and civilization. Like this, both try to create sameness where lynching constructs otherness and undermine the cultural hegemony imposed by the rhetoric of lynching.

One of the earliest and probably also most notorious and renowned revocations of the rape myth is Ida B. Wells-Barnett's pamphlet *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases*, one of the few (but meanwhile most heavily) canonized anti-lynching texts. Among other things, she reprints in her pamphlet an article originally published in the *Free Speech*, a Memphis newspaper she partially owned. Her article challenges the rape myth as the prime

[49] Johnson's New York *Age* editorials are printed in James Weldon Johnson, *The Selected Writings of James Weldon Johnson. Vol. I: The* New York Age *Editorials (1914-1923)*, ed. Sondra Kathryn Wilson (New York: Oxford UP, 1995). Pagination refers to this edition. "Lawlessness in the United States" (LUS), November 12, 1914, 55-56; "A New Crime" (NC), April 22, 1915, 59-60; "Anarchy in Georgia" (AG), April 27, 1916, 62-63; "An Army With Banners" (AB), August 3, 1917, 65-66; "More Toll for Houston" (MTH), February 9, 1918, 66-67. Johnson's other writings are taken from James Weldon Johnson, *The Selected Writings of James Weldon Johnson. Vol. II: Social, Political, and Literary Essays*, ed. Sondra Kathryn Wilson (New York: Oxford UP, 1995). Pagination refers to this edition. "The Lynching at Memphis" (LM) 1917, 23-29; "Memorandum from Mr. Johnson to Dr. Du Bois: Re: Crisis Editorial" (M) 1922, 40-45; "Lynching – America's National Disgrace" (LAND) 1924, 71-78; "Three Achievements and Their Significance" (TA) 1927, 89-96.

rationalization for lynching, an affront which infuriated a group of whites to the point that they destroyed the paper's office while Wells was away in New York. These events provide the background for *Southern Horrors*. What had aroused white feelings to such an extent was the nature of her revocation of the rape myth. While other anti-lynching proponents as for example Chesnutt, Johnson, or White after her expose the rape charge as a cover-up for political and economic motivations or destabilize its authority by challenging the stereotype of hypersexualized and criminalized back masculinity, Wells focuses her efforts on the ideal of pure white womanhood. In an often quoted sentence from her preface to the 1892 pamphlet, she states that many of the alleged rapes are in fact consensual interracial relationships and not white women but black men are seduced as they are "poor blind Afro-American Sampsons who suffer themselves to be betrayed by white Delilahs" (*SH* 50). Wells's pamphlet thus offers an alternative history of lynching and rape by reiterating several arguments used in apologetic representations and profoundly challenges the dominant discourse, which argues that lynching was intended to provide community retribution for black-on-white rape.

The revocation of the rape myth mainly evolves as the redefinition and exposing of gender constructions. Wells's demystification of idealized white womanhood is certainly most audacious in that respect. Most blatantly she states that "[n]obody in this section of the country believes the old thread bare lie that Negro men rape white women" (*SH* 52). The assertion of a white woman intentionally agreeing to sexual contact across the color line, however, amounts to the demise of the ideal of white womanhood since the latter's rejection or even revulsion of interracial relationships is inherent in the Southern notion of female respectability. As the flower of civilization and the future of her race, the white woman is the epitome of purity not only in terms of morality but also race. The idea of her cohabiting with a black man is an attack not only on her angelic status but allegorically also on the white race and white supremacy as the uninhibited access to white women is interpreted as the eradication of differences between black and white men and as the attempt to establish social equality. The allegorical overdetermination of white womanhood together with her centrality in lynching discourse partially explains the vehemence of the reaction to Wells's article. Yet, it also elucidates why it was the ideal of white womanhood that Wells put at the center of her strategy to undermine lynching: Wells's articles strike at the core of the whole ideological edifice informing the rhetoric of lynching. Drawing on many examples of consensual relationships between white women and black men and contrasting the ideal of white womanhood with the social reality of Southern life, Wells exposes it as ideological construction. The existence of consensual relationships not only revokes the most convincing rationale for

lynching by turning rape into relationship, it also allegorically represents the suspension of racial hierarchies through interracial reconciliation. Such a condition, however, white supremacists could by no means tolerate.

Apart from attacking the ideal of white womanhood, Wells points to the hypocrisy of white male chivalry and the silencing of white-on-black rape. That is, Wells not only undermines white female but also male gender models when she declares "that there are white women in the South who love the Afro-American's company even as there are white men notorious for their preference to Afro-American women" (*SH* 58). By criminalizing not black but white male sexuality, Wells exposes chivalrous white masculinity as ideological creation which together with the figuring of white women as pure and fragile functions only as a justification for lynching. At the same time, Wells invalidates racist stereotypes shaping the perception of African-Americans in order to demonstrate that "[t]he Afro-American is not a bestial race" (*SH* 50). Presenting African-American men as incarnation of true manhood, that is, as "peaceful, law-abiding citizens and energetic business men" (*SH* 65) she revokes the image of the black beast rapist and in a reversal of the typical lynching narrative shifts the focus from the mutilated white female to the lynched black male body. She explains that the black beast rapist is nothing but a stereotype "which the Southern white man has painted him" (*RR* 78). The dominant image of African-American masculinity is thus the result of his representation as Other and the ascription of sexually deviant behavior through white men. Wells voices those ideological underpinnings to expose their constructedness and employment in apologetic representations of lynching. With regards to black femininity, Wells refers to the silenced history of white-on-black rape. Challenging the dominant representation of African-American women as harlots by declaring that "virtue knows no color line" (*RR* 80), she uses the (silenced) rape of black women to further unmask the barbarity and hypocrisy of white men and install black women as the true proponents of femininity.

Wells not only invalidates the rape charge through the revocation of racist stereotypes but also by contrasting it with statistics taken from the Chicago *Tribune*. She explains the "one crime" to be a mere cover-up for publicly less valorized political and economic motivations and that "the South is shielding itself behind the plausible screen of defending the honor of its women" (*SH* 61). In fact, African-Americans are lynched for various reason, rape being stated only in one third of all cases, "to say nothing of those of that one-third who were innocent of the charge" (*SH* 61). As evidence she lists the alleged causes for those lynchings that took place between 1893 and 1894, ranging from self-defense and arson to no offence at all (see *RR* 82-87, 148-153). Furthermore, Wells historicizes the rape charge to undo its essen-

tialist character in the lynching narrative. She explains that after the abolition of slavery Southern whites first excused interracial violence with reference to the likelihood of race riots and later, after the enfranchisement of African-Americans, with the imminent threat of "Negro Domination." Disenfranchisement, however, annulled that danger so that the white South had to think of another excuse and finally found the rape charge as an ideal replacement. Wells contends that it is probably the most convincing rationalization whites could come up with as "[h]umanity abhors the assailant of womanhood, and this charge upon the Negro at once placed him beyond the pale of human sympathy" (*RR* 78).

For the Southern notion of white supremacy Wells's claims are – to put this moderately – a sacrilege. Aware of the radicalism of her pamphlet, Wells therefore substantiates its authority by stating that it is not a piece of propaganda. Rather, she wants to "give the world a true, unvarnished account of the causes of lynch law in the South" (*SH* 50). Implicit is the assumption that the dominant discourse of lynching is a distortion of truth brought about mainly by "the malicious and untruthful white press" (*SH* 62). Wells therefore presents her pamphlet as "a contribution to truth, an array of facts, the perusal of which it is hoped will stimulate this great American Republic to demand that justice be done though the heavens fall" (*SH* 50). The inclusion of Frederick Douglass's letter of appraisal was probably intended to lend authority to her daring arguments and to emphasize the objectivity of Wells's investigations, which are not a distortion but a recovery of truth. Rather than constructing another myth (as in the rape myth), Wells, according to Douglass, presents "the facts with cool, painstaking fidelity and left those naked and uncontradicted facts to speak for themselves" (*SH* 51). Objectivity and credibility probably also motivated the inclusion of various newspaper articles. To fend off any reproach of making up her stories in advance, Wells drew on white newspaper articles to point to the irrationality and cruelty of lynching as well as to demystify the rape charge. In her second pamphlet *A Red Record*, she therefore states that "[t]he purpose of the pages which follow shall be to give the record which has been made, not by colored men, but that which is the result of compilations made by white men, of reports sent over the civilized world by white men in the South. Out of their own mouths shall the murderers be condemned" (*RR* 82). Wells's pamphlets are thus a clever, subversive reiteration of the dominant discourse for the sake of resistance, presented as a contribution to racial advancement and civilizational progress.

Underlying Wells's revocation of the rape myth and racist stereotypes is the attempt to link up lynching and civilization and stress lynching as "national crime" (*RR* 81), that is, as a problem not only for African-Americans but also whites. Similar to James Weldon Johnson

after her, she therefore declares the fight against lynching to be "not for the colored people alone, but for all victims of the terrible injustice which puts men and women to death without form of law" (*RR* 82). She capitalizes especially on the air of anarchy and the lawlessness promoted by lynching, which threatens whites as well as blacks. Defining lynching first and foremost as an instance of public disorder and less as physical threat to African-Americans, she asserts that "it is the white man's civilization and the white man's government which are on trial. This crusade will determine whether that civilization can maintain itself by itself or whether anarchy shall prevail" (*RR* 155). Wells especially points to the discrepancies between the real and ideal of American civilization, especially with regards to justice and Christian values. Her goal is to awaken public conscience and educate the American public about the true nature of lynching and thus attribute to the progress of American civilization. According to Wells, most Americans can indifferently shrug off lynching as irrelevant as the dominant discourse constructs it as regionally and racially limited problem. Wells, however, contends that "[u]nchecked it [lynching] will continue until it becomes a reproach to our good name, and a menace to our prosperity and peace" (*RR* 136). Lynching here is presented as creating a racially-overlapping concern for the upholding of American civilizational values and ideals and therefore necessitating white involvement in the fight against lynching – not for the sake of African-Americans but for the further progress of white civilization.

One of the most insightful studies of Well's connection of lynching and civilization to concoct interracial sameness comes from Gail Bederman.[50] In "'Civilization,' the Decline of Middle-Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells's Antilynching Campaign (1892-94)," she first concentrates on the turn-of-the-century intersections between race, class and gender in the construction of middle-class identity. Cultural and social changes threatened traditional Victorian definitions of middle-class manliness based on manly self-restraint and self-control, which was the source of male authority and the basis for middle-class identity. Race was inserted as a fortification into the traditional construction of manliness, as both came to be linked as inseparable unit, that is, manliness was interpreted as a racial trait. Another element further stabilized white middle-class identity: the concept of civilization. Civilization was seen as a stage in human development and interpreted as a racial trait and thus "*naturalized* white male power by linking male dominance and white supremacy to human evolutionary development."[51] Ida B. Wells-Barnett skillfully plays on the white fear of declining manliness

[50] Gail Bederman, "'Civilization,' the Decline of Middle-Class Manliness, and Ida B. Wells's Antilynching Campaign (1892-94)," *Radical History Review* 52 (1992): 5-30.
[51] Bederman, "Civilization" 9, emphasis in original.

and manipulates the categories of race, class and gender in her struggle to mobilize Northerners against lynching. So far, lynching – if it was paid any attention at all – was regarded as the reassertion of manliness through the protection of white womanhood from the black beast rapist. Wells inverts the dominant discourse on lynching by redefining it as a threat to white – especially Northern – manliness, which could no longer be ignored. In her descriptions, lynching is the bloodthirsty murder by a lecherous mob, which is far from constituting the ideal of Victorian manliness. Instead, the black male comes to personify the ideals of manly gender construction.[52] But if lynching is an attack on civilization by savagery, it is the manly duty of Northerners to help those in danger. Otherwise they would risk their claim to manliness. Finally, Wells uses the ideas of race and civilization to further promote her arguments. At the turn of the century, England was regarded by many Americans as the most civilized race of all and as a fellow Anglo-Saxon race. Wells toured England twice in 1893 and 1894 and convinced it that her plea for help was "an appeal from one civilized race to another for protection from violent white barbarism." She thus added weight to her argument as it was now pronounced by a nation which was regarded as superior in civilization by many Americans. By this clever "mobilizing [of] dominant discourses in subversive ways" she was able to turn lynching into a topic which could no longer be ignored.[53]

4.3. "America's National Disgrace": Lynching as a Universalized Threat to American Civilization in the Writings of James Weldon Johnson

Putting lynching on the daily agenda is also the goal of James Weldon Johnson. Similar to Ida B. Wells-Barnett, he challenges rape as the most prominent defense of lynching and exposes the absurdity of lynching by presenting statistics and counterarguments "to clear away this myth" "that the Negro is by nature a rapist" (LAND 74). Rather than being a means of protecting white womanhood, lynching is an instrument for terrorizing African-Americans and sustaining white supremacy in politics as well as economics (see LAND 72-74). In several editorials and other writings, Johnson drives home the argument that rape is nothing but

[52] Bederman, "Civilization" 15: "the Southern lynch mob did not embody white manliness *restraining* black lust – it embodied white men's lust running amok, *destroying* true black manliness." Emphasis in original.

[53] Bederman, "Civilization" 22. See also Patricia A. Schechter, "Unsettled Business: Ida B. Wells against Lynching, or, How Antilynching Got Its Gender," *Under Sentence of Death: Lynching in the South*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997) 293. She also examines Wells's subversive employment of white discourse and states that "[b]y disrupting these texts with quotations and question marks, Wells mocked their authority and created space for her own findings and re-readings of the material."

the attempt to scrape support for lynching, which in turn aims to prevent the erosion of the racial hierarchy and a threatening sameness between white and black, as "according to professional Anglo-Saxon ethics, few things deserve to rank higher in the catalogue of 'causes for lynching'" (NC 59). Prerequisite for his rewriting of lynching is the revocation of racist stereotypes.

In his 1917 editorial "An Army with Banners," Johnson describes the "Silent Parade," a protest march in New York initiated by himself on behalf of the NAACP and intended to raise public awareness about lynching. Johnson uses the parade to challenge established black stereotypes and represent African-Americans as worthy citizens instead. Implicit in his description is a juxtaposition of the march as a civilized public performance and mob violence as frenzied outburst of barbarity. Underlying many apologetic representations of lynching is the assumption of the civilized nature of lynching. Many newspapers mention the almost proverbial "determined" and "orderly" behavior of the mob, which was intended to remove lynching from the sphere of savagery. One newspaper article from 1899, for example, describes the lynching of Ed Henderson as "orderly," "most methodical," and mentions that "[t]here were no shouts, no excitement."[54] And the New York *Times* describes the lynching of Henry Smith as "done in a business-like manner."[55] Johnson's editorial, however, relying on conceptions of lynching and anti-lynching as diametrically opposed contrasts, implies the savage nature of lynching. Yet, he does not directly condemn lynching as savagery but contrasts it with the Parade as epitome of civilized behavior: "Here were thousands of orderly, well-behaved, clean, sober, earnest people marching in a quiet dignified manner" (AB 65).[56] Most plainly visible is the incorporation of lynching as savage practice in another description of the parade. Johnson mentions that "there was no holiday air about this parade" (AB 65) and distances the parade as truly civilized performance from lynching as a carnival of blood.[57] Such juxtaposition fits into Johnson's larger strategy of aligning lynching and anti-lynching with savagery and civilization, as will be detailed later on. Part of that strategy is to educate a white audience about the true nature of lynching as a threat to white democracy and civilization. In "An Army with Banners," he therefore includes a portrayal of the white

[54] Name of paper illegible. September 15, 1899. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1899-1919, Reel 221, Frame 1 (Microfilm Edition).
[55] New York *Times*, Feb 2, 1893.
[56] The identification of popular and legal justice is also to be found in another article, in which the author mentions that a police Judge openly condoned the behavior of the mob as Richard Coleman would have been executed anyway. See New York *World* December 6, 1899. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1899-1919, Reel 221, Frame 3 (Microfilm Edition).
[57] As has been mentioned in the discussion of Griggs's novel, lynching was often described as "holiday" affair to mark it as senseless violence.

onlookers and describes their reaction to the dignified march: "There were no jeers, no jests, not even were there indulgent smiles; the faces of the onlookers betrayed emotions from sympathetic interest to absolute pain. Many persons of the opposite race were seen to brush a tear from their eye" (AB 65). Another editorial also clarifies his intent of altering the dominant perception of African-Americans as degenerates and make the fight against lynching the true expression of democratic values and civilization. He demands his reader to write letters of protest, which should be written "in restrained and respectful language, but let it plainly express the deep feelings of the American Negro on this matter" (MTH 67).

Johnson also tries to expose lynching as vulgar and dubious practice by removing the air of legitimacy encircling it through a comparison of various accounts of the lynching of Ell Person in 1917. As has been outlined before, one of the main elements in the representation of lynching as spectacle is the extraction of a confession. Johnson challenges the status of those confessions as irrefutable evidence of guilt and valorization of lynching as legal and even divine punishment and instead makes the extraction of a confession the manifestation of the irrational and savage nature of lynching. Using the Person lynching as an example, he relates the effaced history of the extraction of the confession. Rather than voluntary and borne out of remorse, the confession is the result of "third degree" methods, that is, torture. Johnson compares several newspaper accounts and the results of his own investigations to raise doubts about Person's guilt and point to irregularities in the investigations. Rather than being a substitution of legal executions, lynching is thus branded as irrational and anarchic violence (LM 23-29).

Having thus establish lynching as manifestation of degeneracy, Johnson goes on to install lynching as a threat to white civilization and involve whites in the fight against lynching as a fight for democratic and civilizational values. In the pamphlet "Lynching - America's National Disgrace," the title alone challenges conceptions of lynching as a regionally and racially restricted problem. Quite frankly Johnson declares lynching to be a "menace to civilization" and elaborates especially on the negative influence lynching holds "for all organized government and civilized society" (LAND 75). Installing lynching as opposed to American values and virtues, he states that "its danger [is] not only to the people of African descent but to our Government itself and to the people of all races" (LAND 75). Lynching is universalized as racially overlapping menace, necessitating in turn the involvement of both races to prevent the reversion of America into savagery. In a nation which regards itself as the crown of Western civilization the existence of lynching is not only a lamentable anachronism. Rather, lynching impedes the progress of American civilization as it undermines already

made achievements, most visible in the spirit of lawlessness it promotes. Johnson here reproduces a widespread concern, which also prompted Walter Hines Page to state that

> [t]he gravest significance of this whole matter lies not in the first violation of the law, nor in the crime of lynching, but in the danger that Southern public sentiment itself under the stress of this new and horrible phase of the race-problem will lose the true perspective of civilization.[58]

In "Lawlessness in the Unites States," Johnson declares America to be the "most lawless" country in the world despite steady claims of being the most civilized one (LUS 55). Juxtaposing lynching and civilization, he declares that "the stamping out of lynching has become a question involving not racial lines merely but the maintenance of order, good government and civilized society" (LAND 78). Since the government has proven incapable of dealing with lynching and mobs the only way to solve the problem is for African-Americans to educate the public opinion. While it is certainly also necessary to educate blacks about lynching and clear away the myth of their alleged inferiority, the special focus in Johnson's writings is on convincing a white audience of the necessity of their involvement and make the abolishment of lynching an interracial concern.

In "Anarchy in Georgia," he addresses the "law-abiding element in Georgia" to speak out against lynching. Representing lynching as illegal practice, Johnson divides his white audience into supporters and opponents of the law and in extension into civilized citizens and savage brutes and demands the formers' active involvement. Johnson thus breaks into the notion of homogenous white racial harmony and unity nurtured by apologetic lynching texts as "[t]he uncivilized world include[s] a very large section of the American people themselves" (TA 89). Comparing Georgia to Mexico and declaring the former inferior to the latter in civilizational development, his text is a warning call to action. Addressing especially a white audience he admonishes that the "only salvation for Georgia […] lies in the hands of the law-abiding and law-loving element of the white citizens." The danger of lynching is not only for the black body but also for democracy and white civilization: "Even if it does not care to act to save the Negro especially, it must do so to save the state and save itself" (AG 63). Fusing the black body and white civilization Johnson creates interracial sameness and universalizes the threat posed by lynching. In "Memorandum from Mr. Johnson to Dr. Du Bois," he becomes even more explicit and declares that

[58] Quoted after Gossett 272.

> [w]e are not the ones who need sympathy. They murder our bodies. We keep our souls. The organization most in need of sympathy, is that century old attempt at government of, by, and for the people, which today stand before the world convicted of failure (Dyer). Alone of civilized countries, it permits mob law, lynching and public burning of human beings at the stake. […] It is the failure and the disgrace of the white people of the United States. (M 41)

Johnson does not limit his efforts to defaming lynching and its supporters by representing them as opposed to civilizational progress and through the othering of deviant behavior. He also represents the fight against lynching and especially the NAACP as the incarnation of truly American values (see M 44). While organizations such as the newly revived Ku Klux Klan are subversive to the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, "[t]his organization has nothing to hide. It can declare its principles anywhere in the America and they square up with everything that every decent American stands for" (TA 91). Therefore, the NAACP's fight becomes a fight for American morals and democracy: "This fight against lynching is not merely a fight to save a few men who are put to a swift death and a few women, too. The Negro […] is fighting as much for the whole of America as for Negro America. In fact, this fight against lynching is in the whole idea of American democracy" (TA 91). Most blatantly, Johnson predicts that "if the Negro fails in what he is fighting for, then American Democracy fails with him" (TA 91).

Wells and Johnson both try to combine the fight against lynching with one of America's most profound concerns: the struggle between civilization and savagery. Representing the African-American body as testing ground for the civilizational status of America, both create interracial sameness through the common concern for the abolishment of lynching. Charles Waddell Chesnutt likewise tries to challenge the cultural hegemony of lynching and the rigid racial bipolarity it promotes through breaking up this polarity and proclaiming lynching an interracial threat.

4.4. Race, Class, and Civilization in Charles W. Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*

The Marrow of Tradition[59] has been hailed as "probably the most astute political-historical novel of its day" and as counter-hegemony, that is, as an attempt to rewrite the history of ra-

[59] Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (1902; New York: Penguin, 1993). The novel will subsequently be referred to in the text as *MT*.

cial violence in post-Reconstruction America from a black perspective.[60] Others like William Andrews point to the "aesthetic blemishes" of Chesnutt's novel. In his influential 1980 study, he concedes that *The Marrow of Tradition* is a significant "social statement in literature of its time," but "today […] reads like a period piece, and, in some respects, not too great a compliment to its literary period" as he understands Chesnutt's adherence to the conventions of the Victorian novel of manners, his deviances from those conventions and the implication of seeming contradictions and ambivalence within the text as artistic weakness.[61] Other critics, however, appreciate Chesnutt's incorporation of allegedly inner contradictions and unsolved problems as the reproduction of the racial, historical, and social context of the novel. Marjorie George and Richard Pressman for example explain that "[t]he novel's lack of resolution should be seen not as artistic failure but as a reflection of its sociohistorical context."[62] *The Marrow of Tradition* expresses Chesnutt's insight that "he had run into a conflict insoluble in fiction […] that his novels would fail to produce the results he wanted."[63] Jae Roe therefore sees the novel as the manifestation of the limitations of black resistance. Trying to reach a white audience and simultaneously to criticize black discrimination, "Chesnutt performs a kind of tightrope act throughout the novel, trying at the same time to appease and to challenge."[64]

In its attempt to challenge the overwhelming authority and hegemony of lynching discourse, *The Marrow of Tradition* exemplifies a strategy of resistance which creates interracial sameness through the representation of lynching as an obstacle for the progress of civilization. Chesnutt subverts the dominant associations between civilization, race, and lynching and renders lynching not the defense of civilization and the white race but its impediment. In *The Marrow of Tradition*, civilization is not a racial characteristic but a marker for class, that is, it is not an inborn trait but defined as the adherence to a set of moral norms and values. Reiterating the rigid bipolarity of civilization and savagery, Chesnutt employs the concept of civilization to produce a savage Other, which he identifies with a certain social group and

[60] Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1993) 13. For the interpretation of *The Marrow of Tradition* as counter-hegemonic account of history see Jae H. Roe, "Keeping an 'Old Wound' Alive: *The Marrow of Tradition* and the Legacy of Wilmington," *African American Review* 33.2 (1999) 231.
[61] William Andrews, *The Literary Career of Charles W. Chesnutt* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1980) 203, 208.
[62] Marjorie George and Richard S. Pressman, "Confronting the Shadow: Psycho-Political Repression in Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition*," *Phylon* 48 (1987) 288.
[63] Frances Richardson Keller, *An American Crusade: The Life of Charles Waddell Chesnutt* (Provo: Brigham Young UP, 1978) 278.
[64] Roe 8. See also Roe 9: "We have already seen how unready the genteel white literary market was for such a lesson, especially from the pen of a black writer."

juxtaposes with the proponents of civilization as mutually exclusive entities. Sameness in *The Marrow of Tradition* arises from the delimitation of the "better" classes of both races from the lower (white) classes, signifying the absence of civilization.[65] Chesnutt thus redraws the line between civilization and savagery and replaces the color line as the dominant structuring principle of society with class and the adherence to civilization. Simultaneously, he defines lynching as the absence of morality and civilized behavior, which hampers the progress of civilization. The fight against lynching thus becomes an interracial necessity to help the advancement of American civilization.

By employing conventions of the realist novel and drawing on the authority associated with civilization as well as the old elite's fear of declining social influence Chesnutt defines lynching as the result of a detrimental distortion of reality impeding the progress of civilization, which in turn renders white involvement in the fight against lynching a necessary requirement for upholding their own social standing.[66] To direct white middle-class sympathies towards the opponents of lynching, Chesnutt's representation of the supporters of racist violence incorporates several turn-of-the-century developments threatening the gentility's claim to leadership and endangering middle-class whites' social standing as for example pessimism about culture and civilization or the emergence of a proletariat and a new aristocracy of unrestrained materialism. Lynching thus not only becomes a physical threat to African-Americans but also an existential threat to civilization, which in turn necessitates a civilizing mission to the South. Drawing on the prestige the promotion of civilization evoked and the gentility's identity as prime proponents of American civilization, Chesnutt elevates anti-lynching to a problem of national concern. *The Marrow of Tradition* registers as a text promoting the necessity of refined moral values as well as the indispensability of moral guidance through a cultural and social elite to prevent society's degeneration to a lower level of civilization. Simultaneously, it calls for the acknowledgment of African-American social, moral, and political achievements as the antidote to the degeneration of the gentility and as indispensable for the future of black and white society.

In his journals, Chesnutt describes his motivations to become an author, his goals as well as the strategy through which he intends to achieve them. I quote his entry in full length as it reveals a strategy of writing which can be called almost paradigmatic for a number of anti-lynching writers at the turn of the century:

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[65] For the "black elite" see Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: the Black Elite, 180-1920* (Fayetteville: U of Arkansas P, 2000).

[66] See Richard F. Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth Century America* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993) 206.

> Besides, 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 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; and I would be one of the first to head a determined, organized crusade against it. Not a fierce indiscriminate onslaught; not an appeal to force, for this is something that force can but slightly affect; but a moral revolution which must be brought about in a different manner. The Abolition[ist]s stirred up public opinion in behalf of the slave, by appealing in trumpet tones to those principles of justice and humanity which were only lying dormant in the northern heart. The iron hand of power set the slave free from personal bondage, and by admitting him to all the rights of citizenship – the ballot, education – is fast freeing him from the greater bondage of ignorance. But the subtle almost indefinable feeling of repulsion toward the negro, which is common to most Americans – and easily enough accounted for –, cannot be stormed and taken by assault; the garrison will not capitulate: so their position must be mined, and we will find ourselves in their midst before they think it.
>
> This work is of a twofold character. The negro's part is to prepare himself for social recognition and equality; and it is the province of literature to open the way for him to get it – to accustom the public mind to the idea; and by while amusing them to familiarize lead them on imperceptibly, unconsciously, step by step to the desired state of feeling. If I can do anything to further this work, and can see any likelihood of obtaining success in it, I would gladly devote my life to the work.[67]

Chesnutt defines as the goal of his writings the abolition of racial discrimination. What is particularly striking is the denunciation of lynching and racial discrimination as obstacles for the progress of American civilization and thus the "crusade" against lynching becomes a necessary prerequisite for the unfolding of American civilization. One audience which Chesnutt does not directly mention in his journal but most likely had in mind was especially susceptible for such arguments: a white Northern middle class and gentility, urgently in need to fortify their shaky social position and claims to social leadership. His decision to reject armed resistance as futile and attempt a "moral revolution" through education instead as the only solution to the problem of racial discrimination is not only reminiscent of the methods of Southern progressivism but also reflects the tenets of his intended audience.

As the severest obstruction to the prevention of lynching he makes out the misrepresentation of African-Americans and the existence of racist stereotypes, which "cannot be stormed and taken by assault." Rather, he proposes as more subversive manipulation of representational conventions to achieve a rectification of the image of blackness. *The Marrow of*

[67] Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Richard F. Brodhead (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) May 29, 1880, 139-40.

Tradition reiterates arguments used in defense of lynching and subverts them for the sake of resistance. Brodhead sums up Chesnutt's strategy as follows:

> Chesnutt here seizes the idea that if the forms of literary expression must be found in a dominant culture, they can still be used in the interest of subordinate people. He grasps that if writing must be directed to Northern white audiences, it can nevertheless aim to further black causes *with* those audiences – can make itself a means to enter the minds and remodel the mental habits of white readers as they read. On this way to writing every writer must first build from the available cultural materials a practice-governing idea of what writing *is* and *does*, and this is the idea Chesnutt constructs: that by mastering the literary conventions in which a distant culture images Southern racial life, a black author can make himself a personal success, while also helping a society prejudiced against people like him to change its mind.[68]

The Marrow of Tradition exemplifies the strategy of reiteration with a difference in its attempt to overcome not only the misrepresentation of African-Americans but also the creation of interracial sameness.

The historical background for *The Marrow of Tradition* is the Wilmington Riot of 1898, which is also mirrored in the name "Wellington" as the setting of the novel.[69] The plot centers around two families, the lilywhite Carterets and the light-skinned black Millers, both of which are interconnected by their family history. The link between them is Samuel Merkell. Together with his first wife Elizabeth he had a daughter, Olivia, who later married Major Carteret. After the death of Elizabeth, Samuel Merkell married his black housekeeper Janet Brown in order to keep his sister-in-law Polly Ochiltree out of his house. His second marriage yielded another daughter: Julia, the future wife of Dr. Miller. Julia and Olivia therefore are half sisters, a fact which is acknowledged in their close resemblance. Like her husband, Julia is so light-skinned that she could easily pass for white. Yet, Olivia denies any kinship with Julia as the latter has no legal proof for their common descent. After Samuel Merkell's death, Polly Ochiltree had embezzled Janet's marriage certificate and Merkell's last will, which would have left Janet and Julia a considerable share of the Merkell estate. Olivia therefore illegitimately receives her father's whole inheritance. Polly keeps the illegitimacy of

[68] Brodhead 195, emphasis in original. For the publication history of *The Marrow of Tradition* see also Brodhead 204. He explains that the dominant means for the publication of "high" literature were periodicals for leisure-class readers. He therefore describes Chesnutt's readers as "genteel hearers."

[69] For the Wilmington Riot and the Manly-Felton debate as the historical background for Chesnutt's novel as well as Chesnutt's adaptation see Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations* 406-435; Eric J. Sundquist, introduction, *The Marrow of Tradition*, by Charles W. Chesnutt (1902; New York: Penguin, 1993) xv-xxi; Williamson 61-67, 195-201; H. Leon Prather, *We Have Taken a City: Wilmington Racial Massacre and Coup of 1898* (London: Associated UP, 1984) and David Traxel, *1898: The Birth of the American Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998) 279-283.

Olivia's situation hidden from her until shortly before her violent death during the novel. Olivia's brings her inheritance into her marriage with Major Carteret.

Major Carteret is an aristocrat and owner of the influential local white newspaper the "Morning Chronicle" and a staunch proclaimer of white supremacy. Together with General Belmont and the nouveau riche Captain McBane he forms a triumvirate to cleanse Wellington of the dangers of "Negro domination." Their activities and agitations result in the near lynching of Sandy Campbell, the loyal servant of old Delamere, and the outbreak of a violent riot, which even threatens the life of Carteret's only son Dodie. The only one to save him is the black Dr. William Miller, Julia Brown's husband.

Dr. Miller is a Northern and European trained physicist, who has come back South to help elevate his people. With the money his father had left him he had build a black hospital. Miller belongs to a light-skinned black elite and promotes patience and accommodationism as the solution to the race problem. Together with his wife Julia he has a son, who dies during the riot. The parallel structure of the two families comes together during the riot when Carteret and his wife Olivia beg William and Julia Miller to saver her only son and only after some long and painful conversations does Miller decide (on his wife's advice) to save the Carterets' son.

4.4.1. The "Noospaper's" Distortion of Reality

Underlying Chesnutt's strategy to challenge the dominant discourse about lynching and the accompanying installation of a racial hierarchy is the assumption that racism, lynching, and the dominant projection of blackness are the result of deliberate misrepresentations. Chesnutt exposes the fabricated nature of the knowledge created to rationalize lynching through the stereotype of the black rapist and accordingly deflates the claim of white supremacy. In short, the rhetoric of lynching is branded as a deliberate distortion of truth. Such a condemnation, however, must have been particularly startling for middle-class whites, who regarded the undistorted perception as prerequisite for the progress of American civilization and the promotion of progress as their raison d'être. The rhetoric of lynching is thus redefined as racially overlapping threat and resistance to lynching is elevated to a concern of national significance. In the following I will first demonstrate how Chesnutt manages to expose the rhetoric of lynching as willful misrepresentation and then how he tries to influence its valuation and consumption.

Chesnutt dramatizes the preparations for the campaign of the "Big Three" (Major Carteret, General Belmont and Captain McBane) against "Negro domination" and exposes them as intentional and unsubstantiated falsification and deliberate manipulation of the public opinion in order to demonstrate the misrepresentational character of racist stereotypes and lynching. He especially concentrates on Carteret's newspaper, the "Morning Chronicle," as the prime means for creating a distorted version of reality. The selection of a newspaper to illustrate the distortion of reality is by no means accidental. At the turn of the century "noospapers" were the prime source for the construction and dissemination of racist stereotypes.[70] Chesnutt's critique of the Morning Chronicle, therefore, has to be understood as an attempt to undermine the credibility and reliability many people evinced for newspaper accounts in general and instead expose them as unfounded fabrication. Such an interpretation seems even more evident when taken into account that the Wilmington Riot, the historical model for Chesnutt's novel, was largely the result of the famous Manly-Felton debate (held in newspapers) and racist agitation in the local newspapers. In 1897 Rebecca Latimer-Felton, the first female US Senator and resolute white supremacist, defended lynching as a necessary means to protect white womanhood. She declared that "if it needs lynching to protect woman's dearest possession from the raving human beast – then I say lynch, a thousand times a week if necessary."[71] Replying to Felton's address, Alexander Manly, the founder of the black Wilmington *Record*, condemned lynching as illegal practice and claimed that many relationships between black men and white women were in fact consensual. Only the distortion of the press turned them into rape. The local Democratic Party of Wilmington later used Manly's article and his outrageous insult to white womanhood to whip up public feelings for the riot.[72]

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[70] Chesnutt uses the evocative idiosyncratic spelling of "newspaper" in his short story "A Deep Sleeper," *The Short Fiction of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Sylvia Lyons Render (Washington, DC: Howard UP, 1974) 119.

[71] Atlanta *Constitution* December 19, 1898, quoted in Williamson 128.

[72] The accomplice role played by newspapers is also a matter for Jesse Daniel Ames. Speaking before the Southern Newspaper Publishers' association in 1936 she accuses the press of nurturing a spirit of hatred which finally finds an outlet in lynching. In that respect it is less the editorial treatment of lynching, which is to blame, but news stories which are written in a "language which fairly bristles with expressions calculated to awaken the ever-present fear and hate in the less-privileged members of the white race." The representation of lynching as community sanctioned violence places a "halo of chivalry" around the lynchers. Rather than reporting "facts," newspapers are a medium for propaganda. Part of her speech is printed in the Daytona Beach, FLA *News-Journal* July 3, 1936. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1936 -1938, Reel 230, Frame 24 (Microfilm Edition). Two years later, however, she especially blames editorials for being responsible for providing ready excuses for lynching: "[e]ditorial screams of justification [are] accepted as noble harmonies by the public." In her essay "Editorial Treatment of Lynching" she accuses newspaper editors of relieving the lynchers from any feeling of guilt by interpreting lynching as regrettable yet excusable under certain circumstances they contribute to lynching by creating an air of understanding and acceptance. Jesse Daniel Ames, "Editorial Treatment of Lynching," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (January 1938) 79. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1926 cont.-1929, Reel 225, Frame 828-32 (Microfilm Edition). Also the Chicago *Defender*, reporting the lynching of Lloyd Warner, reprimands newspaper articles for

In *The Marrow of Tradition,* Carteret's Morning Chronicle is the prime means for the concocting and dissemination of racist stereotypes and an apologetic view of lynching. Rather than trying to revoke the arguments used in defense of lynching, Chesnutt dramatizes the making of the rhetoric as the construction (rather than reproduction) of knowledge about African-Americans and exposes it as motivated by ruthless personal ambitions. Most significantly, the Morning Chronicle is disclosed as the attempt to deceive and manipulate its white readership for the aspirations of the "Big Three." The threateningly powerful position of the Morning Chronicle in *The Marrow of Tradition* is owing to its monopoly standing in Wellington, a critique, which also applies to the US as a whole as the overwhelming majority of the nationwide and most influential newspapers at the turn of the century were in the hands of whites.[73] The result of this unequal access to the mass media is an often racially biased news coverage, which Chesnutt demonstrates by means of the nationwide reporting of the near lynching of Sandy Campbell. While the news about the murder and alleged rape of Polly Ochiltree receive national attention, reports about Sandy Campbell's innocence are treated far less sensationalistic:

> All over the United States the Associated Press had flashed the report of another dastardly outrage by a burly black brute, - all black brutes it seems are burly, - and of the impending lynching with its prospective horrors. This news, being highly sensational in its character, had been displayed in large black type on the front pages of the daily papers. The dispatch that followed, to the effect that the accused had been found innocent and the lynching frustrated, received slight attention, if any, in a fine-print paragraph on an inside page. The facts of the case never came out at all (*MT* 233-34).

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his death by printing "lurid and mob-inciting stories." Chicago *Defender* December 8, 1933. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1931 cont.-1933, Reel 227, Frame 641 (Microfilm Edition). See also the article in the *Daily Worker* February 2, 1926. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1924 cont.-1926, Reel 224, Frame 743 (Microfilm Edition). In another article, the *Defender* exposes white newspapers as misrepresenting the protagonists in the lynching of John Glover in 1922. Glover had killed Deputy Walter Byrd who, according to the *Defender*, was a brutal and "big, brutish looking man" with a reputation for handling the prisoners in his custody with extreme cruelty. White newspapers, however, painted him a "gentle, peaceable citizen" while simultaneously criminalizing Glover, "a petty, mischievous youngster, who meant no harm," as "desperado." Those representations are criticized as attributing to the lynching. Chicago *Defender* August 11, 1922. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1919 cont.-1922, Reel 222, Frame 774 (Microfilm Edition).

[73] African-American newspapers were also less influential than white newspapers. The article in the "Afro-American Banner" first receives no attention. Only when it is reprinted in the "Morning Chronicle" does it stir public feelings. For the black press at the turn of the century see Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 164 and Myrdal, *American Dilemma* 908-24. For the black press in the South and the Midwest see Henry Lewis Suggs, ed., *The Black Press in the South, 1865-1979* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1983); Henry Lewis Suggs, ed., *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1996). See also two case studies of two black newspaper editors: W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "To Howl Loudly: John Mitchell and the Campaign against Lynching," *Canadian Journal of American Studies* 22.3 (1991): 325-42; Henry Lewis Suggs, *P. B. Young, Newspaperman: Race, Politics, and Journalism in the New South, 1910-1962* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1988).

The asymmetrical distribution of attention directed to the alleged rape and Campbell's later exoneration clarifies Chesnutt's reproach of the misrepresentational quality of newspaper accounts. The sarcastic annotation that "all black brutes it seems are burly" in the quote above further signifies to their essentializing and manipulative quality. Likewise, the rape charge is exposed as the result of a distorted presentation because "not until the paper came out" (*MT* 190) the murderer of Polly Ochiltree is accused of the "usual crime."[74] While the result of the coverage concerning Polly Ochiltree's rape produced a lasting image of African-American savagery, its revocation went unheeded without being able to challenge the before created stereotype. *The Marrow of Tradition* undermines the dominant projection of blackness and the rationalization of lynching and exposes both as the result of a distorted perception, which in turn affects America's civilizational development.

In that respect, Tom Delamere's cakewalk functions as a prime metaphor illustrating the results of a defective perception of reality. Staged by the managers of the hotel, the cakewalk evolves as a tourist reproduction or extension of antebellum minstrelsy images of the happy and content "darky." Used to those falsifying stereotypes, the cakewalk is received as a true-to-life reproduction of the African-American character and also welcomed by Northern visitors as it removes images of Southern savagery, represents African-Americans as "a people who made no complaints" and therefore "could not be very much oppressed" (*MT* 117) and facilitates the reconciliation with the South in post-Reconstruction times. However, as turns out later, the cakewalk is performed by a white man in blackface. *The Marrow of Tradition* thus makes the cakewalk a prime metaphor for the white misconceptions of blackness and exposes the dominant projection of blackness as the result of deliberate misrepresentations. The fact that a white person in blackface wins the cakewalk further removes those racist stereotypes from any claim of representing or reproducing innately racial traits. Tom's victory is the result of his meeting the expectations of the exclusively white audience. He comes closest to the dominant projection of blackness, which in turn exposes race as performance or enactment rather than a natural trait. Only Ellis regards the performance as absurd and bizarre. While a real cakewalk was the expression of "some graceful dancing and posturing" the performance for the Northern visitors was a "grotesque contortion" and "somewhat overdone, even for the comical type of negro" (*MT* 119). This cakewalk is a mere minstrelsy performance staged by whites to present their version of blackness. The South as it

[74] Belmont concedes that "there's some truth" (*MT* 85) in the Afro-American *Banner's* claim that rape is not always the motivation for lynching and that some relationships between white women and black men are consensual. The offence lies in the fact that "[t]ruth or not, no damn nigger has any right to say it" (*MT* 86).

is presented to Northerners is nothing but another misrepresentation which functions to rationalize white supremacy in the South.

In *The Marrow of Tradition*, the "Big Three" are the major proponents of a racist ideology and therefore responsible for the impediment of the perception of reality. Carteret as the owner and editor of the Morning Chronicle, Wellington's leading white newspaper and acknowledged mouthpiece of the local Democratic Party, reproduces in his editorials the dominant scientific racism rampant at the turn of the century.[75] However, notwithstanding his steady and often inflammatory warnings of "the domination of a weak and incompetent electorate" the narrator sarcastically comments that despite "the force and intelligence with which Carteret had expressed these and similar views, they had not met the immediate response anticipated" (*MT* 79). Wellington's apathetic reception of Carteret's outline of the social and racial climate reveals a marked discrepancy between the construal of reality of both, depriving the newspaper in turn of the standing as a medium objectively reproducing the broad general opinion. Prescriptive rather than descriptive, the Morning Chronicle becomes a means of patronizing and manipulating the public by imposing a minority interpretation upon them. Chesnutt emphasizes the inherent menace of the Morning Chronicle's view when the narrator describes its impact as a destructive invasion upon a community which "[u]ntil Carteret and his committee began their baleful campaign [was] living in peace and harmony" (*MT* 80). The composition of the opponents of the campaign or those who at least reject Carteret's views further attribute to such a valuation of the newspaper.

Chesnutt's rendering of the opposition to Carteret's campaign evolves as a skillful embodiment of some of the basic tenets of his intended white audience and thus enables their identification with them. He skillfully manipulates his readers' valuation of Carteret's campaign as divergent from and even hostile to their own values when he describes the opponents of the campaign as "thoughtful men [...] who saw no necessity for such a movement. They

[75] The term "scientific racism" is taken from Fredrickson and refers to pseudo-scientific racial theories, which prospered at the turn of the century. Craniology, eugenics, social Darwinism or historical explanations of African-American inferiority were cited to justify claims to white supremacy. For an overview of these theories see the studies by Gossett and Fredrickson, *Black Image*. In the novel Carteret justifies white supremacy by arguing that African-Americans are members of a degenerate race of savages and criminals, tamed only through the civilizing influence of slavery. Yet, after the abolition of the "precious institution" the former slaves regress back into their actual state of savagery. Mentally and physically inferior to the white race and unfit to contend with the advanced stage of American civilization, it is harmful to trust them with the responsibility of being entitled to decide about the political future of the community by granting them the privilege of citizenship and the right to vote. Uneducated, mentally diminished and suitable only for menial work, African-Americans disqualify as full and equal citizens and the only possible form of black and white coexistence lies in a system of master and servant, that is, in a de facto restitution of slavery. It goes without saying that racial intermixture would endanger the purity and therefore the superiority of the white race and is therefore no alternative to the strictly hierarchical model of racial segregation. Carteret regards it as his duty to convince the public of the necessity to prevent the imminent threat of "Negro domination" (*MT* 31, 79-80).

believed that peace, prosperity, and popular education offered a surer remedy for social ills than the reopening of issues supposed to have been settled" (*MT* 79). Apart from the denouncement of racism as an anachronism, the mentioning of the concept of education is crucial here as it touches upon one of the old elite's last remaining means of social influence.[76] The gentility rationalized its claim to social leadership through its function as guardian and disseminator of moral and ethic values, as educator of the public and thus as preserver and promoter of civilization.[77] As mentioned above, one of their main goals was to emancipate the public from an impaired perception of reality. Carteret's racist newspaper articles, however, disable or compete with the social elite's attempts to emancipate the public from an impaired vision by attributing to a distorted perception of reality. Like this, *The Marrow of Tradition* not only installs racism and education as diametrically opposed concepts and simultaneously defames the former as opposed to white middle-class ideals, it also makes the overcoming of racism the object of white educational attempts and the necessary prerequisite for the future progress of civilization.

The preference for peace and economic progress as alternative modes of dealing with social problems reveals Chesnutt's proximity to the ideas of Southern progressivism. As has been outlined before, the movement's goal of improving race relations was not motivated by a humanitarian desire but economic considerations. Social problems were seen as impediment of economic and in extension civilizational development of the South. Chesnutt cleverly incorporates the economic rhetoric of those reformers into his resistance against lynching, which can most clearly bee seen in the association of peace and economic progress as the proposed alternative for solving interracial problems. Brundage comments on the impact of the progressivist movement on lynching by stating that during the Progressive Era "the thrust of progressivism, in particular the emphasis placed upon the link between economic development and social harmony, also reduced the tolerance of some southerners for the most strident forms of racial extremism, including extralegal behavior."[78] *The Marrow of Tradition* incorporates economic arguments usually associated with Southern progressivism into its general defamation of lynching as impeding the progress of civilization.[79]

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[76] See May 39. He writes that "[f]or those who intended to fight and win the great battle for culture in democracy, the main battleground was clearly education."

[77] See May 7. May explains that "men of education and ability and even of inherited tradition had some special responsibility for maintaining standards."

[78] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 210. See also George M. Fredrickson, *The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism, and Social Inequality* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 1988) 180.

[79] In a similar way Chesnutt also enlists among the opponents of Carteret's campaign advocates of democracy, representative government and the rule of law. Some resent racism as they are convinced that "a class constitut-

Similar to Johnson and Wells, Chesnutt manages to make apologetic representations of lynching appear to be intentional misrepresentations of the "truth" employed for propagandistic reasons. He reiterates with a difference the Wilmington Riot to provide an alternative history, which claims to remove those calculated falsifications and thus transfers the credibility attributed to newspaper accounts to his fictional narrative. He presents racism as a treacherous attempt to distort the perception of reality and achieves the conception of racism and civilization as mutually exclusive concepts, which in turn mediates the necessity of involvement in the struggle to abolish lynching and racism in general to his intended audience. As an instrument for public education about the true nature of lynching, *The Marrow of Tradition* becomes a contribution to the further progress of American civilization.

4.4.2. Sameness as Othering – Sameness through Othering

The othering of deviant behavior and its ascription to two social groups, namely the lower white classes and a newly emerging group of nouveau riches, is of central importance for Chesnutt's strategy to create sameness in *The Marrow of Tradition*. The construction of an un-civilized Other evolves as the incorporation of white middle-class fears about immorality and vice as well as concerns of turn-of-the-century reform movements. Lynching is thus exposed as the culmination and combination of several social ills affecting the South. Chesnutt translates and integrates the racialized threat posed by lynching into the dominant discourse about the promotion of civilizational development and thus renders lynching alongside such social ills as alcoholism, under-education and irrationality a national problem, which not only endangers African-Americans but mainly the moral tenets and ideals of the white middle-class. He installs the white mob, which consists mainly of the above mentioned two groups, as the embodiment of primitivism and savagery and the threat of a civilizational relapse. That way, Chesnutt presents resistance to lynching as civilizing mission and awards it with social recognition and national significance. The creation of sameness evolves in delimitation from the savage Other and as the shared interracial concern for the progress of American civilization. Finally, Chesnutt also addresses the members of the old social elite as the self-appointed defenders of civilization and makes their condemnation of lynching the necessary prerequisite to secure their influence on society and in extension their own continued existence. While

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ing half to two thirds of the population were fairly entitled to some representation in the law-making bodies" or that "all men were entitled to equal rights before the law" (*MT* 80).

probably not expecting their direct involvement, the counterposing of lynching with genteel ideals lends further authority to resistance.

The representation of the lower classes and nouveau riches as opposed to civilizational ideals has to be read within the context of the declining influence of older elites. At the end of the nineteenth century, industrialization and urbanization had produced a new economic elite of unrestrained materialism, which Tomsich aptly describes as "a new aristocracy of wealth," and a more and more visible proletariat.[80] Both groups at the upper and lower level of the social scale threatened to escape the moral control of the dominant cultural system and thus posed a threat to the older elites' claim to cultural leadership.[81] Therefore, the latter were constantly in need to fortify their threatened social influence and claims to community leadership. Chesnutt makes use of the dominant representation of the lower classes and nouveau riches as opponents of civilization in his figuration of the mob, which he presents as driven by impulse, instinct and uncontrolled impetuosity and thus as dissenting from the ideals of civilization. He incorporates white middle-class fears about an unleashed mayhem of uneducated lower class workers and farmers and an uncivilized materialism of a new economic elite. His representation of the mob progresses as nightmarish image of chaos and savagery. Unrestrained by any civilizing or moral authority, both groups give in to their baser instincts and revert into savages and barbarians, inhibitors of the lowest stage in human development.[82] The identification of the protagonists of lynching with the adversaries of civilization is designed to appeal to a white audience upholding the values of civilization. McBane as representative of the new economic elite will be dealt with later. I will first concentrate on the representation of the lower white classes in the mob.

4.4.2.1. The Construction of the Mob as Other

Chesnutt's deployment of civilization is predicated upon the pessimistic turn-of-the-century conception of civilization as nothing but a fragile habit draped over primitive impulses and instincts with the intention of holding them in check. Civilization is no longer defined as a stage in human development but as an evanescent habit, "a thin veneer, which cracks and

[80] Tomsich 78.

[81] See Fluck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit* 80-81. See also Jaher 199, who contends that nouveau riches were "corruptors of American life, vulgarizers of culture, dangers to national existence, and displacers of established elites." In the end they would destroy Western civilization. For the fear of an unleashed mob rule see 204-207.

[82] See Howe, "American Victorianism" 24-25: "The intended product of Victorian didacticism was a person who would no longer need reminding of his duties, who would have internalized a powerful sense of obligation and could then safely be left to his own volitions." The mob on the other hand reverts in terms of civilization when left unchecked.

scales off at the first impact of primal passions" (*MT* 309). In *The Marrow of Tradition* as well as in many other anti-lynching texts, it is the lynch mob which embodies the threat of unleashed primitive passions. An article in the *New Republic* for example highlights the random and chaotic character of lynching: "We have no way of predicting where it [lynching] will break out next. […] We live on this volcano of communal savagery. Any day the crime of a Negro – almost any crime, almost any Negro – may set off this volcano."[83] The Richmond *Times Dispatch* commenting on the lynching of Robert Jones and Smith Houey is convinced that "man is first of all an animal, with all the instinctive feral ferocities. Civilization is something which he constantly resents and chafes under. Ethical conceptions mean to the most of him what a parrot's talk means to the parrot." Lynching brings out man's primitive passions and the lyncher's "artificial civilization falls off him like a loosened garment. Mankind, in the mass, is much closer to cannibalism than civilization."[84] As has been outlined before, the eruption of those primitive passions was interpreted as either a dangerous loss of control and succeeding moral degeneration or as the liberation from obsolete and effeminate Victorian ideals and experienced as revitalization.[85] In *The Marrow of Tradition*, the breakout of primitive passions is far from constituting a liberating force. Rather, the riot evolves as a terrifying collapse of morality plunging not only the black but also the white community into chaos and disorder and threatening to disqualify the notion of civilization and progress.[86] As Dr. Watson explains: "[w]hen the race cry is started in this neck of the woods, friendship, religion, humanity, reason, all shrivel up like dry leaves in a raging furnace" (*MT* 280). Yet, *The Marrow of Tradition* does not advocate the demise or devaluation of the ideals of civilization and restraint. Rather, it registers as a text promoting the necessity of refined moral values as well as the inevitability of moral guidance through a cultural and social elite to prevent the omnipresent threat of a reversion of society to a lower level of civilization.

Chesnutt's emphasis on the necessity of social leadership through a social elite falls in step with one of the claims of Southern progressivism. The reform movement intended "to

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[83] *New Republic*, no date given. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1899 – 1919, Reel 221, Frame 431 (Microfilm Edition).

[84] Richmond *Times Dispatch* August 20, 1934. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1933 cont. – 1934, Reel 228, Frame 894 (Microfilm Edition). Another newspaper expresses fears that the South "may be drifting back to barbarism" and the New York *World* predicts that "[t]he civilization tht [sic] does not […] in all sternness punish every defiance is neither fit nor able to endure." Name of paper not given. August 13, 1899. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1899 – 1919, Reel 221, Frame 15 (Microfilm Edition); New York *World* October 26, 1911. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1899 – 1919, Reel 221, Frame 15 (Microfilm Edition).

[85] See Fluck, "Realismus, Naturalismus, Vormoderne" 208-09. For the re-masculinization of civilization see Rotundo, *American Manhood* 251-55.

[86] Also Henry F. May lists the pessimist naturalist conception of civilization as one among many other trends threatening the nineteenth-century conception of civilization. See May 169-83.

expand the regulatory function of the state in behalf of economic opportunity and to apply more effective social controls in the interest of an orderly and cohesive community."[87] At the same time Chesnutt touches upon white middle-class fears of declining influence and attempts to convince them of the necessity of their involvement in the fight against lynching and racism. In *The Marrow of Tradition*, the mob dramatizes the necessity of thoughtful leadership when after the removal of the initial leaders, the "revolution" to overthrow the local administration soon deteriorates into a "murderous riot" (*MT* 298) as "[t]he baser element of the white population, recruited from the wharves and the saloons, was now predominant" (*MT* 304). Chesnutt's description of the mob evolves as the incorporation of several reformist groups' demands and elaborate combination of middle-class fears about the lower white classes, which results in the creation of an Other to middle-class white ideals of civilization. By fusing his representation of lynching and the mob with turn-of-the-century concerns about immorality and civilizational development, *The Marrow of Tradition* renders anti-lynching a civilizing mission. Particularly, Chesnutt identifies the mob with drunkenness, irrationality, and a lack or denigration of education.

> Crowds of white men and half-grown boys, drunk with whiskey or with license, raged through the streets, beating, chasing, or killing any negro so unfortunate as to fall into their hands. Why any particular negro was assailed, no one stopped to inquire; it was merely a white mob thirsting for black blood, with no more conscience or discrimination than would be exercised by a wolf in a sheepfold. (*MT* 298)

What is immediately striking is the description of the generational composition of the mob, especially the presence of "half-grown boys." Chesnutt's selection of an adjective hints at his warning of the degenerating influence of the mob. Physically as well as ethically not yet fully matured, these children are in a critical stage of their development. According to middle-class ideas and the Victorian cult of domesticity, maternal education usually assured a child's righteous development into a civilized and respectable citizen. Through piety and purity, the mother is the embodiment of all achievements of civilization and she communicates these values to her children through her virtuous example. The riot, however, disables the function of motherhood as the prime educative authority and thus hampers the children's maturing into morally sane adults. Chesnutt hereby echoes the domestic critique of his contemporary Sutton E. Griggs in *The Hindered Hand*, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and James Weldon Johnson and prefigures what would become a major argument in anti-lynching writings during the next decades: the devastating influence of lynching on the moral development of (white) children.

[87] Grantham 111.

Johnson for instance reviles that "even children" watch the torture and burning of human beings and citing psychiatrist A.A. Brill he clarifies the danger for their moral development since "no one can take part in a lynching or witness it and remain thereafter a psychically normal human being" (LAND 75). Wells gives the report of a Reverend King describing the lynching of Henry Smith. King portrays the effect lynching has on little children as follows: "I love children, but as I looked about the little faces distorted with passion and the bloodshot eyes of the cruel parents who held them high in their arms, I thanked God I had none of my own" (*RR* 97). The mob is represented as threatening to take over or impair an essential educational function and its debasing influence has already effected that the men and "half-grown boys" are drunk from alcohol and a feeling of authority.

The emphasis on the drunkenness of the mob also figures prominently in the description of the mob inclined to lynch Sandy Campbell when a "tipsy sailor" interrupts Major Carteret's speech (*MT* 229-30).[88] While often regarded as fortifying one's manhood, turn-of-the-century temperance movements condemned drinking as a self-destructive and dangerous habit and "expressed a middle-class disdain for such working-class masculine sociability."[89] The excessive consumption of alcohol became a sign of degeneration as it contradicted the genteel ideal of moderation and self-control.[90] Drinking among boys and young men was regarded as particularly problematic as it posed a threat to the basic integrity of society. Through excessive drinking young men gave reign to uncontrolled impulses, a habit which threatened their development into responsible fathers, husbands and political leaders. Abstinence, on the other hand, assured upward social mobility.[91] Southern progressivism and temperance movements demanded greater self-restraint, an ideal also employed in the construction of middle-class respectability and gentility.[92] One of the most influential groups was probably Frances Willard's WCTU. Primarily motivated by worries about family life, it condemned drinking as immoral and warned of the results of excessive drinking, such as a loss of control over one's body and mind, an inclination to violence and the destruction of the

[88] Nathan G. Hale, *Freud and the Americans: The Beginnings of Psychoanalysis in the United States, 1876-1917* (New York: Oxford UP, 1971) 76. Interestingly, also lynching apologists referred to the excessive consumption of alcohol as responsible for lynching. However, they argued that African-Americans under the influence of alcohol easily reverted to their primal status as savages, which in turn made lynching necessary to protect Southern women. See for example Rebecca Latimer Felton's articles in the Atlanta *Journal*, August 12, 1897 and April 23, 1899.
[89] Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1997) 125.
[90] For concerns about the negative consequences of alcohol also in the field of psychology see Hale, jr., *Freud and the Americans* 76 and Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989) 67-69.
[91] See Wood "Spectacles" 114.
[92] For temperance groups and youthful drinking see for example Rotundo, *American Manhood* 72-73; Traxel 74. For the gentleman ideal and middle-class masculinity see Persons 51-71 and Kelly 56-70.

emotional ties bonding the family together.[93] Interestingly, the rhetoric used to describe the disastrous results of excessive drinking is the same one Chesnutt employs to describe the deterioration of the mob. Robert L. Griswold quotes from a legal case in which the court condemned the abuse of alcohol as jeopardizing an intact family life. Just as the mob members in *The Marrow of Tradition* revert into primitive savages, alcohol would make an "amiable and intelligent gentleman" "absolutely crazed and maddened." Drunkenness renders men "quarrelsome, profane, profuse in threats of violence" and their presence in the home "repulsive and intolerable."[94] Chesnutt's description of the mob as drunk therefore refers to an already existing middles-class fear about an unleashed and uncontrollable working-class and aligns the fight against lynching with the struggle for sobriety and temperance. While further strengthening the working-class character of the mob, the excessive consumption of alcohol presents the mob in the language used by several temperance movements as adverse to middle-class values. *The Marrow of Tradition* thus identifies its goal of abolishing lynching with Southern progressivism as the broad support for prohibition made it an ideal vehicle for Chesnutt as it assured broader acceptance.

Moreover, Chesnutt calls into question the qualification of the lower white classes as citizens in a mass democracy. Similar to the discussion of Griggs's novel, representations of crowds in American literature usually oscillate between two poles. A crowd is depicted as either the total immersion of an individual into a mass hysteria resulting in the loss of the ability to make rational and independent judgments, or as consisting of autonomous, self-determining, rationale subjects, that is, political-liberal agents, necessary for the functioning of a mass democracy.[95] Chesnutt's description of the mob completely disqualifies the lower white classes as political agents capable of making rational decisions. They kill randomly "with no more conscience or discrimination than would be exercised by a wolf in a sheep-fold" (*MT* 298). As the prequel to the riot shows, the lower white classes are also easy to manipulate and instrumentalize. Their "childish fickleness" (*MT* 232), however, makes it almost impossible to exert any influence over them, a fact which is even the more problematic as they constitute an essential component of mass democracy.[96] Chesnutt warns that without any

[93] For the connection of masculinity and drinking see Kimmel 48-51, 124-26.
[94] *McGill v. McGill*, 19 *Florida Reports* 345 (1882) quoted from Robert L. Griswold, "Divorce and the Legal Redefinition of Victorian Manhood," *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, eds. Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990) 104.
[95] See Esteve 137.
[96] Chesnutt compares the mob to Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: "The workings of the human heart are the profoundest mystery of the universe. One moment they make us despair of our kind, and the next we see in them the reflection of the divine image. Sandy, having thus escaped from the Mr. Hyde of the mob, now received the benediction of its Dr. Jekyll" (*MT* 233). Again Chesnutt refers to the

moral guidance exerted by a cultural elite the mob can easily be instrumentalized or can become unleashed to give reign to its uncivilized impulses. For the American Republic to function it is necessary to control and educate this class into reliable and civilized citizens. Chesnutt demonstrates the devastating consequences of the lower classes unleashed in his rendering of the mob during the riot. Whipped up and stultified by Carteret's inflammatory articles, the mob deteriorates into raving and uncontrollable madness. When Carteret finds that he has lost control over his "revolution" he unsuccessfully attempts to stop the mob.

> "Gentlemen!" he shouted; "this is murder, it is madness; it is a disgrace to our city, to our state, to our civilization!"
> "That's right!" replied several voices. The mob had recognized the speaker. "It *is* a disgrace, and we'll not put up with it a moment longer. Burn 'em out! Hurrah for Major Carteret, the champion of 'white supremacy'! Three cheers for the Morning Chronicle and 'no nigger domination'!" (*MT* 305)

Carteret's racist articles in the *Morning Chronicle* have thus made it impossible for him to gain control over the mob again. The racist distortion of reality has created an under-educated and one-dimensional public mind unable to make independent judgments: "Their oracle had spoken; not hearing what he said, they assumed it to mean encouragement and cöoperation. Their present course was but the logical outcome of the crusade which the Morning Chronicle had preached, in season and out of season, for many months" (*MT* 306). The consequence of Carteret's articles is the disabling of moral leadership. The racist relapse of the local gentry and their failure to thoughtfully educate the public has made it impossible to exert any influence over the lower white classes. It therefore poses a threat not only to African-Americans but also to American civilization (a threat Chesnutt also translates into the physical endangerment of Carteret's only son Dodie). The necessity as well as effectiveness of thoughtful intervention can be seen in old Delamere's successful attempt to prevent the lynching of his servant. As the personification of the old gentleman ideal, Delamere's word alone is enough to convince the mob of Sandy Campbell's innocence and to disperse it.[97] Carteret's word, however, is unable to stop the mob.

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new conception of civilization and the assumption that man is not an inherently moral creature and the underlying savage is about to break out at any time. See also Brandt 302, who uses *Jeckyll and Hyde* as representative for the conflict between primitive and civilized definitions of masculinity at the turn of the century.

[97] For the gentleman ideal and its modifications in a time when the gentry was "divorced from privilege and power and affiliated with the literary, artistic, and educational elites" see Persons 55, esp. 51-71. See also Kelly 56-70.

4.4.2.2. The "New Aristocracy of Wealth"

The second social group which threatened the traditional tenets of civilization is the new aristocracy of wealth. In *The Marrow of Tradition*, McBane personifies this powerful yet uncivilized and unrestrained materialism. Similar to Frank Norris in his novels *McTeague* (publ. 1899) or *Vandover and the Brute* (publ. 1914) Chesnutt stresses primarily McBane's physical features, which are only imperfectly suppressed and signify to his underlying brutishness.[98] Only temporarily restrained by the conventions of civilization and his will to power, McBane can tear himself away from the bonds of civilization at any time. His rejection of civilization and final degeneration into savagery make McBane a threat to the shaky construction of turn-of-the-century leadership through the old elites and middle-class identity.

McBane is a nouveau riche, who after the abolition of slavery and the ensuing increase in social mobility and economic opportunities had accumulated an enormous amount of wealth through the unscrupulous exploitation of a convict lease contract with the state. The last elections and the victory of the Fusion ticket, however, had cost him his contract. His involvement in politics and his coalition with Carteret and Belmont therefore is motivated by economic necessity but also by a longing for social prestige as although he is rich "he had never been invited to the home of either General Belmont or Major Carteret, nor asked to join the club of which they were members" (*MT* 82). His ambitions are "for greater wealth, for office, and for social recognition" (*MT* 34). What must have made him especially dangerous in the eyes of Chesnutt's implied readership was the fact that his money and not education or character should be the source for his social rise and ensuing social influence. Uncontrolled materialism threatened to replace character and morality as foundations of social leadership:

> Men of no better birth or breeding than he had represented Southern states in Congress since the war. Why should he not run for governor, representative, whatever he chose? He had money enough to buy out half a dozen of these broken-down aristocrats, and money was all-powerful. (*MT* 82)

Taken together, the story of his non-aristocratic origin, his status as a nouveau riche and his purely economic motivations for his political involvement evidently reproduce some of the most commonly held threats to the ideals of education, morality, and moderation and make McBane its menacing incarnation. The association of McBane with the system of convict-lease is also telling of Chesnutt's aligning of anti-lynching with Southern progressivism. Sev-

[98] For Norris's heroes as representing a "Darwinian double existence," that is, characters only superficially civilized and still controlled by underlying animalistic and primitive passions, which can break through at any time see Richard Chase, *The American Novel and its Tradition* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1957) 189-90.

eral reform movements at the turn of the century took a critical stance towards the newly developed method that demanded work instead of payment for the inmates' accommodations and criticized it as inhumane. In fact, "the leasing of convicts was both attacked by southern progressives and frequently cited in other sections as an illustration of southern backwardness."[99] Associating McBane with the convict-lease system attributes to his degradation in the eyes of social reformers. At the same time, it once more depicts lynching as the result of Southern civilizational degeneracy, which has to be removed for the sake of its moral progress.

Chesnutt pays great attention to the portrayal of McBane's outer appearance as the manifestation of his underlying uncivilized nature and enormous, yet uncultivated energy. Chesnutt first describes Belmont, the seemingly perfect incarnation of this ideal in order to set McBane off from a "real" gentleman and to use him as an example of an uncivilized upstart. General Belmont is introduced as a

> dapper little gentleman with light-blue eyes and a Vandyke beard. He wore a frock coat, patent leather shoes, and a Panama hat. There were crow's-feet about his eyes, which twinkled with a hard and, at times, humorous shrewdness. He had sloping shoulders, small hands and feet, and walked with the leisurely step characteristic of those who have been reared under hot suns. (*MT* 31)

His elegant and tasteful clothing, small extremities and delicate physical appearance clearly set him off from McBane, who is marked by his coarse and sloppy outfit as well as his physical strength.

> His broad shoulders, burly form, square jaw, and heavy chin betokened strength, energy, and unscrupulousness. With the exception of a small, bristling mustache, his face was clean shaven, with here and there a speck of dried blood due to a carelessly or unskillfully handled razor. A single deep-set gray eye was shadowed by a beetling brow, over which a crop of coarse black hair, slightly streaked with gray, fell almost low enough to mingle with his black, bushy eyebrows. His coat had not been brushed for several days, if one might judge from the accumulation of dandruff upon the collar, and his shirt-front, in the middle of which blazed a showy diamond, was plentifully stained with tobacco juice. He wore a large slouch hat, which, upon entering the office, he removed and held in his hand. (*MT* 32)

What is particularly striking about Chesnutt's choice of adjectives is the selection of "burly" to describe McBane's form. In turn-of-the-century racist rhetoric "burly" was usually em-

[99] Grantham 128, 130. The convict-lease system is another example of the growing drive towards more efficiency in all walks of life.

ployed as a derogatory term to create images of criminalized African-American masculinity, characterized by their disproportionally developed physicality and primitive mind. The "burly black brute" was a common expression to refer to the stereotype of the black beast rapist. Chesnutt sarcastically hints at the (exaggerated) racist instrumentalization of the term when he writes that "all black brutes it seems are burly" (*MT* 233).[100] The use of an adjective so highly laden with discursive significance here is striking as it reiterates with a difference popular expectations about (supposedly innate) racial traits and utilizes allegedly black characteristics to describe a white man. Rendering McBane a violent, primitive, and dangerously savage character therefore evolves as the invocation and simultaneous cross-racial transferal of a well know supply of racist prejudices and associations, which in turn invalidates any claims about an innate African-American savagery and instead replaces the black with the white brute as a menace to society.

The remaining description of McBane's exterior further reflects his dormant aggression. His deficient and careless clothing reproduces his uncultured and unsophisticated character and barely conceals the underlying savage who believes in the social Darwinist doctrine of the survival of the fittest, which, in his interpretation, is dependent upon physical strength and the exertion of violence (see *MT* 81). McBane's history of violence as a slave driver and member of the KKK is even permanently inscribed into his face in the form of his lost eye. Moreover, the blood stains on his face resulting from a "carelessly or unskilfully handled razor" and dandruff on his collar herald McBane's cultivation as a mere façade. Finally, his shirtfront with the "showy diamond" and the stains of tobacco juice are a prime metaphor for the dangerous amalgamation of material wealth and an uncivilized character and render McBane a lacking imitation of a gentleman.[101]

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[100] Chesnutt reproduces Alexander Manly's statement that "[e]very negro lynched is called a 'big, burly, black brute,' when in fact many of those who have thus been dealt with had white men for their fathers, and were not only not 'black' and 'burly,' but were sufficiently attractive for white girls of culture and refinement to fall in love with them as is well known to all." Alexander Manly, "Mrs. Felton's Speech," Wilmington *Daily Record* August 18, 1898, September 25, 2004 <http://www.mindspring.com/~lmno/riot.html>. See also Harry Hayden, *The Story of the Wilmington Rebellion* (1936), September 25, 2004 <http://1898wilmington.com/Hayden.htm>. See also *Chicago Defender* August 9, 1919, which criticized the essentializing representation of African-Americans as "big, burly black brute[s]."

[101] When Dr. Miller later recognizes McBane on the train, Chesnutt again includes a reference to the latter's diamond pin and again foregrounds his "burly" physical features as well as his unkempt appearance: "As this passenger turned his head and looked back toward Miller, the latter saw a broad-shouldered, burly white man, and recognized in his square-cut jaw, his coarse, firm mouth, and the single gray eye with which he swept Miller for an instant with a scornful glance, a well-known character of Wellington, with whom the reader has already made acquaintance in these pages. Captain McBane wore a frock coat and a slouch hat; several buttons of his vest were unbuttoned, and his solitaire diamond blazed in his soiled shirt-front like he headlight of a locomotive" (*MT* 53).

McBane is an excellent example of what Brandt has called "conspicuous masculinity." Citing Thorstein Veblen's concept of "conspicuous consumption," he defines a new spectacle masculinity, which came to challenge the genteel definition of masculinity as gentleman. As a result of the development of a consumer culture, masculinity was no longer seen as the result of character. The public display of materialistic objects and prestige symbols could substitute deficient intellectual and social qualities and become a marker for masculinity. Through the public staging of wealth, masculinity became a spectacle.[102] McBane's display of wealth is the attempt to veil the imperfections of his character. Jerry's observation exposes McBane's masculinity as devoid of any character refinement:

> He ain' nothin' but po' w'ite trash nohow; but Lawd! Lawd! look at de money he's got, - livin' at de hotel, wearin' di'mon's, an' colloguin' wid de bes' quality er' dis town! 'Pears ter me de bottom rail is gittin' mighty close ter de top. Well, I s'pose it all comes f'm bein' w'ite. I wush ter Gawd I wuz w'ite! (*MT* 36)

Like this, McBane not only disqualifies as a true gentleman, he also rivals the gentility's and white middle class's dominant definition of masculinity. Moreover, despite the new "manly" discourse rampant at the turn of the century and the revaluation of masculinity through the elevation of passions and impulses, McBane's rough and uncontrolled nature deviates from the new image of masculinity in a significant way and prevents any positive identification. Again, it is useful to cite Brandt, who explains that not all aspects of the new physicality and emphasis on passions were valorized. Rather, only those characteristic which could be redirected for the good of the community were taken in. Hedonistic and selfish energies were rejected. The masculine primitive had never been broadly accepted as an ideal, but when confronted with over-civilization, it was rhetorically presented as a necessary antidote. Instead, the cultivation of primitive instincts through character, the combination or hybridization of mental and primitive, wild and intellectual features was what made man the master animal.[103] McBane, however, is instinct without character and represents the unleashing of the animal side. His impulses and energies prevent any positive valorization as they are clearly egocentric. His involvement with the mob for example only satisfies his lust for diversions.

His true character breaks through during the riot. After Carteret and Belmont have resigned from the mob, McBane takes the lead. Chesnutt describes his decision to stay with the mob as motivated by the fact that "he found the company and the occasion entirely congenial" (*MT* 304), emphasizing the lower class composition of the mob as well as McBane's

[102] See Brandt 127.
[103] See Brandt 191, 302.

moral degeneracy. Also after the murder of Polly Ochiltree McBane eagerly wants to join the mob, a fact which makes it quite obvious that he is closer to the less civilized lower-class whites than the gentility. More than once he prefigures the cries of the mob to "burn the nigger" (*MT* 182) while Carteret rejects any direct involvement with the proceedings of the mob.[104] McBane's motivations to join the mob are a desire for revenge and a lust for killing, stimuli which reveal his insufficiently developed and degenerate character. His not fully tamed physicality now fully breaks out. He is a "tamed tiger," which "one does well to distrust" (*MT* 304). In his description of McBane, Chesnutt confirms the turn-of-the-century pessimism about the firmness of civilization. Yet, the pessimism about culture and civilization expressed through McBane is not to be understood as the invalidation of the conception of elitist leadership. Quite the contrary, Chesnutt calls for a restoration and reformation of the true code of gentility as custodian of civilization and disseminator of moral values.

McBane's (and the public's) moral collapse is the result of his environment, personal past and his nonexistent education. Chesnutt describes him as "a [puppet] in the hands of Fate" (*MT* 304), who is more driven by his primitive passions and impulses than by rational and autonomous decisions. Chesnutt's critique therefore is not only directed toward McBane but also toward the deficiencies of Wellington's ruling class. Contaminated by racist fervor, it has not only failed to thoughtfully educate the public but also promoted its empowerment through their disastrous alliance. Apart from the lower-white classes and the new aristocracy of wealth, Chesnutt therefore identifies a third social group as to blame for threatening the progress of civilization: social leaders corrupted by racism, personified by Carteret and Belmont.

4.4.2.3. The "Genteel Racist" – Racism as the Impediment of Civilization

McBane's "showy diamond" is not only a metaphor for McBane's detrimental combination of material success and moral degeneracy but also an indicator of a broader tendency reflected in *The Marrow of Tradition*: the disintegration of gentlemanliness into mere pretence. R. Gordon Kelly explains that in the original conception of gentlemanliness flashy, fashionable and pretentious clothing was regarded as veiling a gentleman's true character, a fact which was only the more deplorable as "[t]he essence of the cultivated gentleman or lady was the congruence in their behavior between impulse and act," that is, the congruence between in-

[104] Carteret distances himself from the mob about to lynch Sandy Campbell: "I, for one, would prefer that any violence, however justifiable, should take place without my active intervention" (*MT* 183). After his failure to persuade the second mob to disperse he absolves himself from any guilt: "I am not responsible for these subsequent horrors, - I wash my hands of them" (*MT* 307).

side and outside. Fashionable clothing undermined this ideal. It "perverted true gentility because it was ever compelled to seek out new stimulants." Therefore, the real gentleman has to be "unostentatious in dress" and to prefer honest and moderate clothing as the outside expression of his inside disposition.[105] In *The Marrow of Tradition*, however, the identification of the outside (manners, clothing) as a manifestation of the inside (character) is dissolved in favor of the outside. McBane but also Carteret and Belmont are indicative of the disintegration of gentlemanliness into a mere superficial layer draped over ungentlemanly and uncivilized intentions.

General Belmont for example is introduced as "a man of good family" and "[a]ristocratic by birth and instinct" (*MT* 33). Outwardly a gentleman by birth, upbringing and profession, Belmont's racist fervor and his belief in "the divine right of white men and gentlemen" (*MT* 34) have diluted his faithfulness to the ideals of civilizational refinement. His decision to participate in the campaign is prompted by the results of the last election, yet, he understands the threat of "Negro domination" less in economic terms than as an imperilment of the "obligations and rights of his caste" (*MT* 33). Although he and Carteret justify their campaign as a means to protect the white community from the devastating influence of a degenerate race and thus as an undertaking for communal well-being, from the very beginning Chesnutt inserts hints at distinct deviances from idealized masculinity and leadership and makes the cracks in the surface of the ideal gentleman visible. Carteret and Belmont are what Marjorie George and Richard S. Pressman have fittingly described as "genteel racist[s]," that is, the sublimation of the code of gentility through racism.[106]

Belmont's degeneracy can for instance be deduced from his disregard for his own conscience and attempts to "trick that docile organ into acquiescence" (*MT* 34) when it comes between him and his ambitions. His actions are determined by an amoral wielding of his political and financial power to increase the "Big Three's" political clout and for selfish ambitions but not communal altruism.[107] Belmont's betrayal of the code of gentility is most obvious in his embezzling of Delamere's last will, a deed which "was justified by the usual race argument." Against the outspoken will of old Delamere, his inheritance is given to his disinherited grandson Tom and not donated to Dr. Miller's hospital as in Belmont's view "Mr. Delamere's property belonged of right to the white race, and by the higher law should remain in

[105] Kelly 67, 68, 58.
[106] George and Pressman 288.
[107] R. Gordon Kelly defines dedication to the community as a trait of gentlemanliness. See Kelly 64. Carteret himself highly valorizes this principle as can be seen in the fact that he prevents Miller's expulsion arguing that "it would be a loss to the community" (*MT* 252).

the possession of white people. Loyalty to one's race was a more sacred principle than deference to a weak old man's whims" (*MT* 235).

Major Carteret is the other major propagator of the doctrine of white supremacy in Wellington and the driving force behind the riot. Being the last in a line of "one of the oldest and proudest [families] in the state" (*MT* 1) he regards it as his duty to prevent the threat of "Negro domination."[108] For that purpose, he is even willing to enter into a coalition with McBane, a man far below his social standing. The "Big Three" are only a functional partnership of convenience, based less on shared ideals or sympathy than on mutual dependency and the promise of gaining advantages from the other party. While McBane hopes to win social respectability and economic benefits, Carteret and Belmont regard his wealth and energy as an indispensable supplement to their campaign to save their community. They are even ready – if also grudgingly – to ignore his social and moral deficiencies. For them the alliance with McBane seems to be the lesser of two evils: "It was distasteful enough to rub elbows with an illiterate and vulgar white man of no ancestry, - the risk of similar contact with negroes was to be avoided at any cost" (*MT* 87). Carteret's dislike of McBane is evident from their first encounter in the novel when he greets him "with an unconscious but quite perceptible diminution of the warmth with which be had welcomed [Belmont]" (*MT* 32). Later in the novel, he has to suppress his annoyance about McBane's ungentlemanly behavior of giving orders to Carteret's servant Jerry Letlow in a very offensive manner (*MT* 87). In short, McBane is never accepted as a full-fledged gentleman but only tolerated as a necessary evil. Yet, despite his snobbish rejection of McBane, he and the self-appointed captain are almost indistinguishable on the basis of their convictions. The only difference between both seems to be the diverging expressions of their principles. What for McBane is "hypocrisy," Carteret calls "poetry":

> "What's the use of all this hypocrisy, gentlemen?" sneered McBane. "[…] This is a white man's country, and a white man's city, and no nigger has any business here when a white man wants him gone!"
>
> Carteret frowned darkly at this brutal characterization of their motives. It robbed the enterprise of all its poetry, and put a solemn act of revolution upon the plane of a mere vulgar theft of power." (*MT* 252-53)

[108] Carteret assumes that he acts according to "high and holy principles. We wish to right a wrong, to remedy an abuse, to save our state from anarchy and our race from humiliation." His goals are to replace the local government not produce chaos and disorder: "I don't object to frightening the negroes, but I am opposed to unnecessary bloodshed" (*MT* 250).

The emphasis on empty formalities disconnected from character and the reduction of gentlemanliness to a mere disguise of baser motivations is what both have in common. Carteret's indignation over McBane's recurring outbursts and his distasteful behavior therefore is not so much about the latter's lack of education and heritage as the source for his deficient manners but about McBane's inability or unwillingness to hide them behind a mask of formality: "when among men of that [gentleman] class he might at least try to imitate their manners" (*MT* 87). Moreover, when McBane blatantly calls for the removal of all African-Americans, Carteret silently acquiesces and only takes offence at the latter's uncivilized manner of expression: "Carteret had nothing to say by way of dissent. McBane's sentiments, in their last analysis, were much the same as his, though he would have expressed them less brutally" (*MT* 87). Carteret's preference for moral pretentiousness to transparency reveals his own dissociation from the genteel ideal of the outside as the reflection of character. In a way McBane even seems to be more straightforward as he deliberately applies this empty gentlemanliness to achieve his goals, while Carteret is blind to his own erosion of the ideal of gentility.

To save his campaign, Carteret does not even shrink from manipulating old Mr. Delamere. After Sandy Campbell's innocence has been proven, Carteret convinces old Delamere not to reveal his grandson as the real murder as this would imperil his campaign through the injuring of "race prestige" and the undermining of the racial hierarchy (*MT* 228). Pretending to act for the preservation of Delamere's family honor he convinces him to swear an oath exonerating his servant in the face of the mob. Carteret's real motivation, however, is to save the reputation of the race and also his crusade. He readily sacrifices Delamere's gentlemanly honor for the sake of his campaign.

With Carteret and Belmont, Chesnutt supplements the two threats to the gentility's claim to social and moral leadership with a third one: the racist degeneration of the social elite. Their alliance with a group of uncivilized upstarts threatens not only the physical well-being of African-Americans but the future of the community as a whole: "So powerful a combination of bigot, self-seeking demagogue, and astute politician was fraught with grave menace to the peace of the state and the liberties of the people, - by which is meant the whole people, and not any one class, sought to be built up at the expense of another" (*MT* 92). Most obviously, the threat to the future of the white community and civilization is allegorically presented in the illness of Carteret's only son Theodore Felix "Dodie" Carteret. As a result of the riot, no white physicians are available to save him from a certain death. Help for Dodie must therefore come from Dr. William Miller, a mulatto.

4.4.3. The "Apex of an Aristocratic Development" – Delamere as Chesnutt's Idealized Model for Whiteness

The last preserver of the true code of gentility and "the apex of an aristocratic development" (*MT* 96) is old Mr. Delamere. Chesnutt characterizes him as a gentleman distinguished by his "courage and strength of will, courtliness of bearing, deference to superiors, of whom there had been few, courtesy to his equals, kindness and consideration for those less highly favored, and above all, a scrupulous sense of honor" (*MT* 96). In the novel, he functions as the representation of gentlemanliness untainted by racism and thus as counterpart to Carteret. Significantly, both are distinguished on the basis of their respective attitude towards lynching. While Carteret justifies and supports the practice as a defense of the white race against the black scare, Delamere condemns it as an uncivilized and illegal crime. The valorization of each stance comes when both try to intervene with the proceedings of the mob. While Delamere succeeds to convince the mob of his servant's innocence through the persuasiveness of his word and his honor, Carteret is unable to stop the second mob as his racist demagoguery has perverted the ideal of gentlemanliness and in extension also the gentility's capability to social leadership. Reaction to lynching thus becomes the touchstone for true gentlemanliness and the incorporation of resistance to or at least the condemnation of lynching an integral part of true civilizational refinement.

After the murder and alleged rape of Polly Ochiltree and the capture of Sandy Campbell, Carteret argues in favor of lynching. He explains the crime on the basis of the post-bellum pro-slavery argument and turn-of-the-century racist theories as the logical outcome of the degenerate state of an innately criminal race "only held within bounds by the restraining influence of the white people" (*MT* 181). Sandy Campbell, normally a "model servant" (*MT* 181), has reverted to his original primitive nature when Delamere's civilizing influence on him began to wane as a result of the latter's advanced age. Carteret thus interprets the crime not as an individual crime but essentializes it as a race crime, that is, as an attack of the black race upon the white race in the form of "a murderous and fatal assault upon a woman of our race, - upon our race in the person of its womanhood, its crown and flower" (*MT* 182).[109] The enormity of this crime demands a retaliation the law cannot afford. Although he does not want to get personally involved in the proceedings of the mob, Carteret nevertheless approves of their behavior and rationalizes it in his editorial.

[109] In this he concurs with McBane who – in a less poetic language – also interprets the murder as a race crime, which in turn "would justify the white people in burning *any* nigger. The example would be all the more powerful if we got the wrong one. It would serve notice on the niggers that we shall hold the whole race responsible for the misdeeds of each individual" (*MT* 182).

> If an outraged people, justly infuriated, and impatient of the slow processes of the courts, should assert their inherent sovereignty, which the law after all was merely intended to embody, and should choose, in obedience to the higher law, to set aside, temporarily, the ordinary judicial procedure, it would serve as a warning and an example to the vicious elements of the community, of the swift and terrible punishment which would fall, like the judgment of God, upon any one who laid sacrilegious hands upon white womanhood. (*MT* 185-86)

Similar to Griggs, Chesnutt here reproduces the prevalent identification of legal and popular justice and the representation of lynching as a form of folk justice. Clad in the religious language of destiny and divine retribution, Carteret rationalizes lynching as motivated by the enormity of the crime and the ineffectiveness of the courts. The will of the people temporarily dismisses the regular judicial procedures to follow a "higher law."[110] Yet, Chesnutt makes it quite clear that despite the invocation of a higher law and the representation of the mob as the instrument of a divine will, the "Big Three" are "clothed with no legal authority" (*MT* 180).[111]

Unlike Carteret, Delamere juxtaposes lynching and legal justice as opposites and condemns mobism. In his denunciation of lynching he also invokes the concepts of civilization and the law, yet reiterates them with a difference. Trying to convince Carteret of his servant's innocence, he defames lynching as illegal and a threat to civilization and its achievements.

> "The law," retorted Mr. Delamere, "furnishes a sufficient penalty for any crime, however heinous, and our code is by no means lenient. To my old-fashioned notions, death would seem an adequate punishment for any crime, and torture has been abolished in civilized countries for a hundred years. It would be better to let a crime go entirely unpunished, than to use it as a pretext for turning the whole 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." (*MT* 212)

Devoid of any religious transfiguration, lynching is neither a form of divine intervention to rectify the violation of a higher law nor is it the expression of the people's "inherent sovereignty." Rather, lynching is an illegal form of most brutish violence, making "white men, the most favored of races, the heirs of civilization, the conservators of liberty, [howl] like red Indians around a human being slowly roasting at the stake" (*MT* 211).[112] Delamere figures

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[110] The Populist politician and newspaper editor Tom Watson makes a similar remark commenting on the lynching of Leo Frank in 1915: "All power is in the People [...] when the constituted authorities are unable, or unwilling to protect life, liberty and property, *the People must assert their right to do so*." Quoted in MacLean 944, emphasis in original.

[111] Also the absence of a repentant and remorseful criminal impairs the seamless identification of legal and popular justice (see *MT* 180-81).

[112] Chesnutt's use of Native Americans as examples for a lower stage of civilizational development is the attempt to reproduce and subvert the discourse about racial advancement. Kevin Gains, analyzing Hopkins's writings, describes the use of racial discourse as motivated by a desire to give credence to anti-racist arguments:

lynching as the inherent danger of moral degeneration and civilizational relapse as it turns the allegedly most civilized of all races into "primitive savages, dancing in hellish glee around the mangled body of a man who has never been tried for a crime." He understands the crime not as a race crime and states his servant's excellent character, which is the result of his education, and his own experiences with him as proof for his innocence. For him, Sandy Campbell is a "gentleman in ebony" (*MT* 25).[113] He challenges Carteret's view of lynching by presenting a de-essentialized account of the alleged crime and reiterates with a difference the dominant discourse about racial advancement.

Both views clash when Delamere demands Carteret to print an article exonerating his servant and the Major asks for a more convincing piece of evidence than Delamere's mere assurance of his servant's innocence. For Delamere, the word of a gentleman should be enough proof: "[t]ime was, sir, when the word of a Delamere was held as good as his bond, and those who questioned it were forced to maintain their skepticism upon the field of honor" (*MT* 211). Here Chesnutt clearly juxtaposes Delamere's idealized gentlemanliness with Carteret's racist perversion of the ideal. Unfortunately, Delamere's viewpoint seems to have become obsolete. He himself fears that he probably has "outlasted [his] epoch" (*MT* 211) and Carteret characterizes him as "ideal gentleman of the ideal past, - the past which he himself so much admired and regretted" (*MT* 214).

Delamere's interference to save his servant testifies to the effectiveness of a moral and civilized elite to prevent lynching as well as the degeneration of the white community into savagery: "Thus a slight change in the point of view had demonstrated the entire ability of the leading citizens to maintain the dignified and orderly processes of the law whenever they saw fit to do so" (*MT* 232). His death shortly after the rescuing of his servant, however, leaves the fate of the community in the hands of a group of people perverted by racist fervor and unfit for moral leadership. *The Marrow of Tradition* therefore testifies to the indispensability of a moral and social elite but simultaneously advocates the necessity of its reform to preserve the true code of gentility. Such a reform however can neither come from within an already infected gentility, nor from the extinct class of real gentleman like old Delamere, nor from a morally underdeveloped class of whites as represented by McBane. Rather the revival of the

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"Hopkins's genteel discourse on race was limited in its attempt to refute crudely irrational racist ideologies, which nevertheless possessed a formidable veneer of normalcy and authority." Gaines 450.

[113] In his essay "Race Prejudices: Its Causes and Its Cure," Chesnutt prefers individual worth and common humanity over race: "Why should a man be proud any more than he should be ashamed of anything for which he is not responsible? Manly self-respect based upon one's humanity, a self-respect which claims nothing of color, every man should cherish." Quoted after Arlene A. Elder, "'The Future American Race': Charles W. Chesnutt's Utopian Illusion," *MELUS* 15.3 (1988) 125.

gentility has to come from an interracial coalition of the "better" classes. In Chesnutt's novel, Dr. William Miller and his family represent the "better" class of light skinned blacks.[114]

4.4.4. The Idea(l) of Sameness

Dr. William Miller, a mulatto of very light complexion, belongs to a small class of educated African-Americans, which Chesnutt regarded as necessary for the elevation of his race. In the novel, he represents the replacement of the racial bifurcation of society with a more permeable class-based model and advocates a coalition of the "better" classes of both races predicated upon interracial devotion to the progress of civilization and the interests of the community as the only possible way for the regeneration of the community. Lynching is condemned as the denial of interracial sameness, that is, as the disabling of the necessary amalgamation of the races and thus as a threat to the progress of civilization.

Miller, as the prime agent of the black elite, is portrayed as indistinguishable from the white elite in terms of manners, morals, and masculinity. Chesnutt's deliberate application of white standards of respectability to represent black masculinity testifies not so much to his surrender to a dominant culture but to his astute manipulation of its conventions. As stated in his journals, Chesnutt intended to write for a white audience. Therefore, if he wanted to present a non-white protagonist, who was able to demonstrate convincingly to a white audience the necessity of racial amalgamation as the compulsory requirement for preventing the destructive consequences of racist violence, he had to model him according to their conventions of respectability. As May writes: "Negroes […] had to break into the dominant respectable culture of the day before they could break out of it."[115] In that respect, Miller's rejection of violence and simultaneous admiration for Josh Green's readiness to "throw away his life in a hopeless struggle" (*MT* 285) has to be read in the light of Chesnutt's attempt to reach a white audience.[116] As has been shown in the discussion of Delamere's and Carteret's gentlemanli-

[114] Chesnutt argues for intermarriage as the only possible way to eradicate racial differences. Accordingly, his heroes as always mulatto characters like Dr. Miller. For Chesnutt's views on racial reconciliation see Elder, "Future American Race" and Anne Fleischmann, "Neither Fish, Flesh, nor Fowl: Race and Region in the Writings of Charles W. Chesnutt," *African American Review* 34.3 (2000): 461-73. Frederick Wegener in his essay "Charles W. Chesnutt and the Anti-Imperialist Matrix of African-American Writing, 1898-1905," *Criticism* 41 (1999), October 25, 2004 <http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2220/is_4_41/ ai_61487431> examines Chesnutt's outlook on race under the impression of imperialism.

[115] May 86.

[116] In *The Marrow of Tradition* Miller regrets that he decided to reject Green's proposal to lead a group of African-Americans into a fight: "Every manly instinct urged him to go forward and take up the cause of these leaderless people, and, if need be, to defend their lives and their rights with his own" (*MT* 282). See also Roe 5: "Chesnutt introduces Josh as a stronger, blacker, and - above all - freer counterpoint to the meek and ideologically inscribed Miller."

ness, a character's attitude towards lynching fundamentally determines his respectability. Therefore, in order to make Dr. Miller a model of idealized gentility, Chesnutt had to oppose any form of lawless violence, be it lynching or Josh Green's retributive violence.

The condemnation of lynching by a mulatto is not surprising. Notable, however, is the way he denounces it. Condemning the near lynching of Sandy Campbell as deplorable and illegal practice, he echoes Delamere's denunciation of lynching as savage practice. Dr. Miller generally excludes the possibility of extralegal violence as an alternative to legal justice and states that "[t]hey ought not to lynch him, even if he committed the crime [...] but still less if he didn't" (*MT* 188). The identity of Miller's and Delamere's argument thus testifies to a similar character and evinces Miller's gentlemanliness. Further substantiation of Miller's character comes through his likeliness with the white Dr. Burns. Significantly, Chesnutt employs the term "manhood" to describe their similarity: they "represented very different and yet very similar types of manhood" (*MT* 49). The use of gendered language to highlight their sameness is the attempt to prevent any allusion to a possible black male effeminacy arising from Miller's antiviolence attitude. Extending the nineteenth-century definition of white masculinity also to include black men, Dr. Miller is not only level with Dr. Burns in terms of professional skills and character but also in terms of masculinity.[117] Miller's description clearly sets him off from McBane's crude, animal physicality and imperfect imitation of gentlemanliness as well as from Tom Delamere's feminization and effeminate degeneration of the gentleman ideal. He is introduced as virile personification of the white gentleman ideal and "almost too good to be true."[118] His outside description is a combination of a robust and delicate manly physicality with a good taste for decent clothing and excellent manners, showing "nowhere any sign of that degeneration which the pessimist so sadly maintains is the inevitable heritage of mixed races" (MT 49).[119]

The language employed by Miller and Delamere to defame lynching is reminiscent of Thomas Nelson Page's denunciation of lynching as a practice promoting disregard for the law, a condition he in turn interprets as "the basic principle of civilization" (LCP 34).

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[117] Likewise, the description of Miller's disappointment of having been refused to assist Dr. Burns's in the operation of Dodie evolves in class as well as gendered terms: "He had the heart of a man, the sensibilities of a cultivated gentleman; the one was sore, the other deeply wounded" (*MT* 77).

[118] Sylvia Lyons Render, *Charles W. Chesnutt* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980) 83.

[119] The valorization of Miller's gentlemanliness exclusively through white characters is understandable as African-Americans were seen as the absence of masculinity and could therefore not be the primary valuators of Miller's gentlemanly qualities. Only a member of the white race could convincingly valuate Dr. Miller as "essentially a gentleman as himself" (*MT* 74). The exclusive identification of gentlemanliness with the white race is acknowledged by Carteret. When Dr. Burns states that "I am a gentleman, sir, before I am a white man" Carteret retorts that "the terms should be synonymous" (*MT* 73).

Chesnutt here reiterates the dominant discourse about lynching and civilization and appropriates it to lend authority to his argument. While Page regards lynching as necessary evil to prevent rape and as temporary deviance from the principles of civilized behavior, Chesnutt adopts his juxtaposition of lynching and civilization as well as his defamation of lynching as promoting a spirit of lawlessness, yet relinquishes his rationalization as retributive violence as in *The Marrow of Tradition* lynching is never the punishment for the "usual crime" but employed for petty, manipulative reasons, individual gains and the preservation of the system of white supremacy. Miller comments on lynching that "[t]hose who grew above [the color line] 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" (*MT* 61). Exempt from the knowledge (which Chesnutt exposes as a willful distortion of the truth) usually employed to legitimize it the meaning of lynching is reduced to Page's equation with lawlessness. Chesnutt reiterates (with a difference) the dominant discourse of lynching and deploys it for the sake of resistance.

Miller's rejection of Josh Green's "ennobling, idealized violence" is more problematic.[120] Turn-of-the-century definitions of masculinity often included violence as a means of resurrecting and rejuvenating an effeminate masculinity. In fact, the emphasis on and revaluation of otherwise problematic and untamed male passions provided a new meaning for masculinity, which also surfaces in apologetic representations of lynching as demonstration and revitalization of white masculinity through violence.[121] The pervasive association of violence and masculinity therefore makes Miller's pacifism problematic as it implies the danger of devaluing his manhood. Therefore, Miller shows understanding for Green's use of violence owing to the hopeless and desperate situation of African-Americans and even questions his own pacifist conviction verging on "a distinct feeling of shame and envy that he, too, did not feel impelled to throw away his life in a hopeless struggle" (*MT* 192). However, the presentation of Miller as a character endorsing violence would have disqualified him as a worthy ally in the eyes of a white audience. Miller's representation as incorporation of civilizational values necessitates the complete rejection of violence. In order not to feminize Miller, Chesnutt falls back on the traditional Victorian definition of masculinity, which on the one hand prevents Miller's effeminacy and on the other hand underscores his gentlemanliness. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, masculinity was the result of the ability to control and

[120] Gunning 71-72. Gunning uses the term to set Green's retributive and defensive violence off from that of McBane and the mob.
[121] See for example Rotundo, *American Manhood* 251-55.

overcome one's impulses and passions. Only when a man could master his own deficiencies was he able to take over his role as husband, father or political leader.[122] At the turn of the century, this definition was increasingly associated with the middle-class and was competing with the above mentioned new definition of "physical" masculinity, which revalued what the older definition wanted to suppress. Chesnutt's presentation of Miller's masculinity as adhering to the older, middle-class definition, together with his defamation of violence as ungentlemanly behavior and the rendering of violence as a marker for the uncivilized lower classes (black and white) clearly prevents any allusion to effeminacy. Rather, Miller's masculinity fits into the broader definition of gentlemanliness and awards him with a respectability Green's or McBane's violence never could afford and no other character in *The Marrow of Tradition* is able to achieve. Sandra Gunning therefore describes Dr. Miller's character as the invalidation of the popular concept of violence in the construction of masculinity.[123] Moreover, Miller's rejection of violence literally emasculates traditional lynching representations, as it presents the overcoming of the urge to violence (no matter how justified) as the true basis for masculinity and gentlemanliness, and denounces violence as a marker for lower classes as well as primitivism and savagery. In that respect, Leroi Jones's critique of *The Marrow of Tradition* as not radical enough and therefore a complete failure seems inappropriate. Rather than propagating that "the Negro, somehow, must completely lose himself within the culture and social order of the ex-master" and rather than being "another aspect of the slave mentality," *The Marrow of Tradition* represents Chesnutt's skillful maneuvering through and manipulation of cultural as well as literary possibilities and necessities.[124]

Miller's anti-violence stance and accommodationist strategy for racial reconciliation gains further substantiation through the prevalence of a racially biased perception and valorization of black violence. Owing to a "diseased […] public opinion in matters of race" the valuation of violence entirely depends on the skin color of the actor so that "[t]he qualities which in a white man would win the applause of the world would in a negro be taken as the marks of savagery" (*MT* 296). Like male gender constructions, violence is integrated into the Manichean bipolarity of race, which implies its essentializing appreciation in such a way that white violence is always defensive, chivalrous and a manifestation of true masculinity, while black violence is always already aggressive, insidious and the outcome of a degenerate,

[122] See for example Brandt 117-120; Rotundo, *Manhood in America* 44-50 and Bederman.
[123] See Gunning 70-73. Miller's masculinity experiences its ultimate validation when Olivia falls to his knees begging him to save the life of her son.
[124] Quoted after John Edgar Wideman, "Charles W. Chesnutt: *The Marrow of Tradition*," *American Scholar* 42 (1973) 131. Also Render contends that Chesnutt's style was typical for the turn of the century while his themes and treatment of certain issues were more controversial and progressive. See Render 120.

criminalized mind: "in the white man's eyes, a negro's courage would be mere desperation; his love of liberty, a mere animal dislike of restraint. Every finer human instinct would be interpreted in terms of savagery" (*MT* 296). Although Chesnutt condemns the biased double standard concerning the exercise of violence and the hypocrisy of its evaluation, he also registers the pervasiveness of a discourse preventing the application of violence for molding an African-American character. Therefore, Josh Green's endorsement of violence is no alternative to Miller's accommodationism. Although Miller shows sympathy for Josh Green's decision and also admits that McBane would deserve to be killed, he immediately relativizes his appreciation of violence. Borrowing from the religious language of divine retribution he declares that

> such a revenge would do no good, would right no wrong; while every such crime, committed by a colored man, would be imputed to the race, which was already staggering under a load of obloquy because, in the eyes of a prejudiced and undiscriminating public, it must answer as a whole for the offenses of each separate individual. To die in defense of the right was heroic. To kill another for revenge was pitifully human and weak: "Vengeance is mine, I will repay," saith the Lord. (*MT* 114)

Adding divine sanctification to Miller's pacifism, Josh Green's stance, while certainly understandable and also heroic, disqualifies as a possible solution to the problem of racial antagonism. Only Miller's gentlemanliness as well as his restraint and composed masculinity can achieve racial reconciliation through the amalgamation of the "better" classes.

His gentlemanliness surfaces in his altruism and his decision to return South after his studies in Europe to help the elevation of his race and spend his inheritance on building a hospital. Inherent in the description of his motives is the idea of a moral as well as social elite contributing to the progress of the lower classes and therefore simultaneously American civilization. Yet, despite Miller's inclination to help elevate his race, he is clearly distinguished from its lower classes. Unlike McBane, who feels more comfortable in the presence of the mob than that of Carteret and Belmont, Miller is annoyed by a group of "noisy, loquacious, happy, dirty, and malodorous" (*MT* 60) African-American field workers entering the train. His aversion is not a sign of snobbishness but rather the attempt to overcome an essentializing view of African-Americans through emphasizing class differences within the race. For Miller "these people were just as offensive to him as to the whites in the other end of the train" (*MT* 61). Miller's clear delimitation from other African-Americans undermines the dominant essentializing representation of the African-American-as-Other and introduces class as a more useful category for the creation of sameness. Class here has to be understood

mostly as encompassing civilizational ideals and less as defined as a category of economic distinction. Resistance to lynching is inherent in Chesnutt's definition of class. Defining lynching as the outbreak of primitive passions and predicated upon a definition of civilization as morality and restraint, class membership in *The Marrow of Tradition* is determined decidedly by a character's rejection and condemnation of lynching. Since concern for the progress of civilization is not limited to one race, as Miller's distancing from the lower classes of the black race and his simultaneous representation as indistinguishable from white middle-class ideals shows, the prevalence of class over race in *The Marrow of Tradition* is also the attempt to abandon race as the ultimate trope of difference. In fact, class becomes the prime means of creating a de-racialized sameness predicated upon a common concern for civilizational progress and ideals and revokes race as the prime means of determining identity. Sameness in *The Marrow of Tradition* thus evolves similar to the dominant discourse by means of the othering of deviant behavior, its ascription to the lower-classes and the construction of sameness as the negative reversal of that class. *The Marrow of Tradition* challenges the dominant discourse about lynching as a means to install and justify white supremacy through the devaluation of race and the exemption of class as providing the meaning for race.

However, despite his demonstration of morality, character and all the traits which make a white gentleman, Miller is denied an alternative, non-violent manhood as lynching and the accompanying discourse of difference prohibit the social acknowledgement of his manhood. To prevent the danger of gender sameness and sustain the racial hierarchy, Miller will always be perceived as Other, that is, as either black rapist or "good old darky," neither role is acceptable for him. Suspended in an in-between situation of aspiration and limitation, Miller exemplifies the impossibility of generating an alternative African-American identity at the turn of the century outside but also inside the binary confines of the dominant racial discourse. The rigid bipolarity of the Manichean allegory excludes violence as the basis for formulating African-American manhood but it also prevents the inclusion of gentlemanly and civilizational values for the production of black gender roles, while offering no ground for alternative constructions. *The Marrow of Tradition* thus registers African-American frustration over the disabling of claims to black male gender respectability, which, according to Page, would have been the necessary requirement for the prevention of lynching. By demonstrating the inherent absurdity of the dominant discourse of lynching, Chesnutt's novel demonstrates the limitations imposed upon the construction of African-American masculinity. The definitive frustration of Miller's attempt to overcome the confining essentialism of race comes with the death of his son during the riot. Lynching is represented as ultimate racial

leveler and elimination of intraracial differences as well as interracial sameness. Despite Miller's acknowledged worth to the community (see *MT* 252) he and his family are not exempt from racial violence. Yet, Chesnutt's novel is far from being a demonstration of the pervasiveness of lynching and the futility of resistance. Rather, Chesnutt makes resistance to lynching the prerequisite for the survival of both races and condemns racial essentialism and the discourse of difference as the prime means for disabling interracial sameness, which in turn is the prerequisite for survival. *The Marrow of Tradition* therefore reiterates the racial essentialism propagated by apologetic representations but subverts the meaning of difference in that it is not a means of sustaining but preventing the future of the white race.

In the novel the future of the white race is symbolized through Carteret's only son Dodie, who falls seriously sick during the riot. Help can only come from Dr. Miller as all white physicians have either fled from the riot or are treating other patients. Yet, frustrated and angry over the death of his own son Miller declines Carteret's request, which the latter accepts because "as he has sown, so he must reap" (*MT* 321). So far, *The Marrow of Tradition* reproduces the strict binary logic of racist discourse and accordingly valuates Miller's rejection as justified since Carteret "[i]n Dr. Miller's place […] would have done the same thing" (*MT* 321). However, such a decision would only have helped to cement the unyielding racial discourse of exclusion. The novel therefore overcomes the creation of exclusive differences and simultaneously condemns the racist discourse of difference as imperiling not only African-Americans but also the white race. Instead, Chesnutt's novel postulates the acknowledgment of interracial sameness as the basis for racial reconciliation and condemns lynching as the precarious denial of that sameness. In a scene highly laden with symbolic significance, Olivia Carteret begs Julia Miller for her son's life as Dr. Miller, moved by Olivia's appeal to humanity, leaves it to his wife to decide. To save her son, Olivia eventually recognizes her inherited sameness with Julia and even grants her birthright. Embittered, Julia first rejects her half-sister's request and her legacy but finally masters her passions and grants Olivia's wish. In an often quoted statement, she at once installs black femininity as the (only) embodiment of a truly noble womanhood and overcomes the racial divide through the postulation of humanity and compassion as the only essentialism, which, however, is not a dividing but unifying one:

> I throw you back your father's name, your father's wealth, your sisterly recognition. I want none of them, - they are bought too dear! ah, God, they are bought too dear! But that you may know that a woman may be foully wronged, and yet may have a heart to

> feel, even for one who has injured her, you may have your child's life, if my husband can save it! (*MT* 329)

By installing the Millers as the true representatives of civilizational ideals and gender models, Chesnutt implies that racial reconciliation is the necessary precondition for a badly required white regeneration and the further progress of civilization. Roe rightfully comments that Chesnutt depicts the "moral enlightenment of the Carterets through the moral high ground taken by the Millers."[125] Chesnutt introduces the history of interracial contact to challenge any racial essentialism and at the same time uses it as the basis for the construction of sameness. Together with the racially overlapping allegiance to the progress of civilization and the accompanying resistance to lynching, *The Marrow of Tradition* demonstrates the necessity and possibility of interracial reconciliation as "[t]here's time enough, but none to spare" (*MT* 329).

The Marrow of Tradition is a prime example of the turn-of-the-century strategy of resistance of reiteration with a difference, which opposes the racist discourse of difference with the demonstration of interracial sameness. Chesnutt's novel challenges the essentialism of race and the ensuing rationalization of African-American subordination through the proclamation of the necessity of a class-based interracial alliance, which he regards as "more logical and considerate" (*MT* 61) than the rigid racial bifurcation of society, described as "arbitrary, tactless, and, by the very nature of things, brutal drawing of a color line," that is, as an artificial division of society with no rational underpinning. He highlights the inevitability of abandoning the rigid discourse of racial difference and instead proclaims the necessity of interracial alliances based on such commonalities as the allegiance to the progress of American civilization but also the rich (yet silenced) history of contacts across the color line.

In the same way as apologetic representations depict lynching as the ultimate disavowal of sameness, *The Marrow of Tradition* makes lynching and its prevention the starting point for the construction of sameness, which, however, is based on the exclusion of the lower classes. However, what distinguishes Chesnutt's novel from racist texts is the meaning of this difference which is not the prerequisite for upholding a strict racial hierarchy but implies the threat of a civilizational relapse. Lynching prevents racial reconciliation and as a consequence also the further progress of American civilization as it creates chaos and disorder and disables the moral leadership of a social elite. Rather than reversing the racial hierarchy, Chesnutt deconstructs it and proposes the acknowledgement of an essential interracial

[125] Roe, 7

sameness to abandon race as the ultimate trope of difference. Yet, typical for turn-of-the-century writings, he introduces another hierarchical model, which, however, is based on education and the allegiance to civilizational ideals, which Chesnutt locates in the "better" classes of both races class. Owing to the propagandistic goal of his writing, *The Marrow of Tradition* does not attempt to argue on the basis of a cultural relativism but works by means of constructing a rigid binary erected along the demarcation between civilization and savagery. Interracial sameness is thus created through the commitment to the code of gentility and the progress of American civilization and therefore has to include resistance to lynching. Like this, Chesnutt challenges the prevalent racial essentialism and replaces it with a discourse of sameness, which nevertheless is still the result of the othering of deviant behavior. In short, resistance to lynching becomes the ultimate trope of sameness.

Until the 1930s, civilization continued to dominate the rhetoric of anti-lynching. However, the growing disillusionment about the still unsolved problem of lynching effected a gradual change in the use of civilization rhetoric. It was no longer used as a means to create interracial sameness but to condemn lynching as savage practice and propagate the need for unilateral forms of resistance. In the following chapter, I will use Walter White's novel *The Fire in the Flint* to exemplify these alterations in the deployment of civilization.

5. The Failure of Civilization and the Impossibility of Sameness - Walter White's *The Fire in the Flint*

Sinclair Lewis once hailed *The Fire in the Flint* as "splendidly courageous, rather terrifying, and of the highest significance" and predicted that "[i]t seems probable to me that *The Fire in the Flint* and *A Passage to India* will prove much the most important books of this autumn, and it is a curious thing that both of them deal with the racial struggles."[1] Other critics were less enthusiastic about Walter Francis White's first novelistic attempts and especially lamented the novel's formal weaknesses.[2] Yet, whatever the aesthetic quality of *The Fire in the Flint*, White's novel is an invaluable document recording the conclusion of the patterns of resistance provided by Chesnutt, Wells, and Johnson. While White still clings to the notion of civilization as a matter of national significance, he no longer regards it as a means of creating interracial sameness. Similar to Chesnutt, he represents lynching as hampering the progress of civilization and as an expression of savagery, rendering resistance to lynching the true manifestation of civilizational values. He also identifies a distorted perception of reality especially nurtured through white newspapers as to blame for creating an atmosphere supportive of lynching. However, what distinguishes *The Fire in the Flint* from Chesnutt's, Wells's, and Johnson's writings is White's conception of the nature of resistance. While Chesnutt propagates a coalition of the "better" classes of both races and regards interracial dedication to civilizational progress as the common ground for the construction of sameness, White is far more skeptical about the practicability of interracial alliances. The solution to the race problem cannot come from the cooperation between the "better" classes of both races as the influence of the lower white classes has made social leadership impossible. In his novel, he propagates a unilateral solution to the race problem, prerequisiting in turn the development of a self-confident black identity. *The Fire in the Flint* is a contribution to this development as it challenges the racial hierarchy and the othering of African-Americans by exposing the purely discursive nature of race. Simultaneously, it revalues and redefines the meaning of blackness but still remains within the limitations prescribed by the dominant discourse. White does not go so far as to revalue or celebrate allegedly innate African-American traits. Rather, he seeks ways to provide his black characters with the tools necessary to acquire respectability accord-

[1] Quoted after Edward E. Waldron, *Walter White and the Harlem Renaissance* (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1978) 41. Walter F. White, *The Fire in the Flint* (1924; New York: Negro UP, 1969). The novel will subsequently be referred to in the text as *FF*.

[2] For an exhaustive overview of the history of criticism on *The Fire in the Flint* see Waldron 41-78.

ing to accepted white standards. Resistance to lynching in *The Fire in the Flint* therefore largely evolves as the exposure of race as public image and the propagation of African-American worth.

The Fire in the Flint is far more pessimistic in its outlook on the possibilities of racial reconciliation than its predecessors. While also *The Marrow of Tradition* registers black frustration over the failure of emancipation it nevertheless ends with the hopeful recognition that "there is time enough but none to spare." *The Fire in the Flint*, however, implies that the time for interracial reconciliation has run out as lynching has made interracial alliances impossible. White's novel registers a growing disillusionment about racial reconciliation and the possibilities of black attempts to prove themselves worthy in the eyes of whites. It points to a growing radicalization of anti-lynching writing based on a growing African-American self-confidence and disappointment about the still absent white intervention for the sake of African-Americans.[3] More and more African-American texts no longer seek a sympathetic genteel white audience but write for the elevation of black people and start to abandon the allegiance to the dominant discourse by forming new identities outside a racist discourse. White, however, despite clearly discernible tendencies to break out of this discourse, still retains it.

The selection of White's novel to illustrate the gradual demise of the pattern established before is owing to the similarities with Chesnutt's novel. Both use a black physician who tries to work for the uplift of the black race but is impaired by white racism. Yet, while Chesnutt overcomes the discourse of difference through the construction of interracial sameness based on the mutual allegiance to civilization, White registers the failure of civilization to provide a common ground for both races to meet and points at the impossibility of sameness.

The Fire in the Flint is about Kenneth Harper's initiation into the realities of Southern racism. After years of studying in Harvard, Paris and New York, and serving as a physician during WWI in France, Harper returns to Central City in Southern Georgia to open a doctor's office. Inclined to help his people and spurred by high principles he intends to build a hospital to contribute to the uplift of his race. His brother Bob, who has lived in Central City ever since and is well aware of the situation of racial relations, is more pessimistic about the possibilities of black progress. Yet, Kenneth believes that if he sticks to his father's honesty, efficiency, and accommodationism he can avoid the race problem: "I'm going to solve my own

[3] Part of the growing frustration probably resulted from the failure of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill to become federal law in 1922. The NAACP had put great efforts into supporting the passage of the bill and even succeeded in getting it through the House of Representatives but failed in the Senate.

problem, do as much good as I can, make as much money as I can! If every Negro in America did the same thing, there wouldn't be any 'race problem'" (*FF* 28). Throughout the novel, however, Kenneth Harper awakens to the impossibility of his accommodationist stance and turns into a conscious race man, a decision rewarded with the love of Jane Phillips, an intelligent and deeply race-conscious young woman. Together both help the founding of "The National Negro Farmer's Cooperative and Protective League" (NNFCPL), an organization designed to abolish the economic exploitation of black farmers in the South. Kenneth's growing popularity, however, puts him on the Ku Klux Klan's list of "problematic" persons and the novel ends rather disillusioning with the gang-rape of Kenneth's sister Mamie and the lynching of Bob and Kenneth.

5.1. "The Mind of the Lyncher": White's Analysis of Lynching and Racism

Walter White is probably best known as anti-lynching activist and investigator for the NAACP. His experiences with and analysis of lynching were published in his 1929 *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch*, one of the earliest and most insightful studies of lynching.[4] In the following I will give a short summary of some of Whites main findings in *Rope and Faggot* in order to introduce White's understanding of lynching.

In *Rope and Faggot*, White reasons that economic interests and not rape are behind lynching. Blatantly he states that "[*l*]*ynching has always been the means for protection, not of white woman, but of profits*" (*RF* 82, emphasis in original).[5] More than once he emphasizes that rape is nothing but a pretext to mask publicly discredited economic motivations for lynching, in particular the maintenance of the plantation economy with its sharecropping and peonage system. The rape myth renders lynching acceptable and silences possible critical voices as "the charge of sex crimes is a red herring for the obfuscation of those who would ordinarily think clearly upon and be opposed to such barbarism" (*RF* 82). White attributes the South's great susceptibility to lynching to a general Southern backwardness, the prevalence of religious fundamentalism, the existence of psychological compulsions and a Southern obsession with sex.[6] In short, he argues, the South's overall lack of civilizational refinement consti-

[4] Walter F. White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (1929; Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 2001). The text will subsequently be referred to in the text as *RF*.
[5] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 108, criticizes White's purely economical explanation as exaggerated.
[6] What helped to discredit lynching was the changing attitude of the urban middle-class toward the rural population and a revaluation of violence. "For the small, self-conscious middle class in the regions towns and cities,

tutes the ideal breeding-ground for an atmosphere supportive of lynching, which also impairs the region's future development. Lynching, therefore, is not only the *result* of Southern economic problems and cultural as well as intellectual backwardness, but also as the *source* of those and also further problems and has to be abolished for the sake of Southern and national progress. To illustrate, White reproduces the often found condemnation of lynching as having a devastating effect on the moral development of children. As adults, those children, "handicapped and stunned in their mental and moral growth" (*RF* 6), will not be able to elevate the South above its present state of primitivism but will perpetuate its stagnation. White's complex and extensive critique can be condensed into the condemnation of lynching as enforcing a rigid conformity that prevents any mental, cultural, or economic growth and keeps the South in a state of intellectual status quo. As the South is wasting too much energy on sustaining a contrived system of racial oppression, it retrogresses in terms of civilization and also impairs national progress. Therefore, the fight against lynching is not only for the benefit of African-Americans but also for the white South and America as a whole.[7] Nevertheless, White is most convincing when he represents lynching as motivated by economic reasons.

In *The Fire in the Flint*, White mirrors Wells, Johnson, and Chesnutt, as he tries to reinscribe lynching with a new meaning and define it as a threat to civilization and thus as a racially overlapping problem. His letters, written in an attempt to get his novel published, are quite revealing of his strategy to address primarily a white audience and present to them a counter-hegemonic view of the racial situation of the South. White wanted to give a voice to a silenced alternative perspective and convince a white audience of the threatening potential lynching holds not only for African-Americans.[8] In his autobiography *A Man Called White*, he explains that he rejects existing representations of African-Americans as they are largely "written from the outside looking in." Encouraged by H.L. Mencken he therefore decided to give the view of an educated black character on the racial situation, a decision which explains the selection of Kenneth Harper as protagonist.[9] Eugene Saxton and several other contempo-

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rural traits and habits only recently perceived as marks of traditional values became instead the stigma of degeneracy. As the cultural gulf between middle-class townspeople and rural dwellers widened, mob violence increasingly became a sign o backwardness, not civilization; of rural decadence, not virtue." Instead, the emphasis on values ranging from "orderliness, economic expansion, and middle-class moralism to humanitarianism" destabilized the ideological underpinnings supporting the rhetoric of lynching. Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 211.

[7] See Kenneth Robert Janken, introduction, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* by Walter F. White (1929; Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 2001) xix-xx.

[8] Kenneth Robert Janken, *White: The Biography of Walter White, Mr. NAACP* (New York: New Press, 2003) 103, however contends that White's decision to become a writer was motivated by ambitions "to join the center of Harlem's celebrity-studded nightlife."

[9] Walter White, *A Man Called White: The Autobiography of Walter White* (New York: Viking Press, 1948) 65.

rary publishers and reviewers, however, reproached White for exaggerating his attempt and for presenting a biased and one-sided depiction of African-American characters and an almost overall demonization of whites. In a letter White counters Saxton's criticism by arguing that is was about time "to give the other side of the picture": "For fifty years or more the argument has been all on one side i.e. the defense." The "defense," according to White, consists of some of the most prominent chroniclers of the "good old South" like Thomas Nelson Page or Thomas Dixon, who "all have painted the Negro as a vicious brute, a rapist, a 'good old nigger', or as happy-go-luck, irresponsible and shiftless type." To further weaken the reproach of exaggerating his accusations, White states his personal experience as an investigator for the NAACP as proof for the mimetic quality of his novel.[10] In another letter to Saxton, White even argues that his white characters are far from being exaggerations or stereotypical representations. Rather, "[a]nd there lies the tragedy […] the South has so dehumanized and brutalized itself by its policy of repression of the Negro that my characters are true to life. They *are* ineffectual. They *are* depraved. They *are* rotten."[11] The only problem is that America has so far closed its eyes to this sordid truth. Being primarily a scientist and investigator, the emphasis of White's novel *The Fire in the Flint* is clearly on the propagandistic side, that is, his style of writing is rather mimetic and declaratory and White is "more interested in establishing his thesis than in exploring the complexities of the issues he has introduced into the narrative."[12]

In keeping with James Weldon Johnson's belief that the fight against lynching is also a fight to save "white America's soul," White argues that *The Fire in the Flint* is necessary to prevent America's self-destruction:

> what will be the ultimate effect on white America and civilization by perpetuation of the system of which the Negro is the victim in America? […] it is relatively unimportant what happens to the eleven million Negroes in America if there were not an inevitable reaction on those who either oppress them or acquiesce in that oppression by their silence. […] As Mr. Mencken points out with characteristic force in his "Prejudice II" the South is "as sterile, artistically, intellectually, culturally, as the Sahara Desert" al-

[10] Quoted after Waldron 49. Waldron rightly remarks that White tried to counter criticism about artistic flaws especially in the construction of his characters with the different claim that the incidents reported in *The Fire in the Flint* actually happened. "White seemed unable, or unwilling, to distinguish between 'truth' in life and artistic 'truth'." Waldron 50. Sinclair Lewis has criticized the black characters in *The Fire in the Flint* "as practically faultless, as superhuman saints." Quoted after Waldron 63.

[11] Waldron 53, emphasis in original.

[12] Emmanuel S. Nelson, "Walter White (1893-1955)," *African American Authors 1745-1945: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, ed. Emmanuel S. Nelson (London: Greenwood Press, 2000) 471. Janken characterizes White's novelistic attempts as follows: "Walter White thought his role as a novelist complemented his NAACP duties as an investigator and reporter of racial violence." Janken, *White* 110.

> most solely because its energies have been consumed in "keeping the nigger in his place."

White's warning of artistic, intellectual, and cultural barrenness is most probably directed towards a cultural elite in the North. He defines his intended audience more clearly in a letter to Mencken in which he reclines the latter's suggestion to get *The Fire in the Flint* published by a black publisher. Similar to Chesnutt, White wanted to write for "the elevation of the whites" and therefore wanted *The Fire in the Flint* published by "as conservative and respectable a white firm as would do it." He reasons that

> [c]olored people know everything in my book […] It is not the colored reader at whom I am shooting but the white man and woman who do not know the things that you and I know […] the white man who has never suspected that there are men like Kenneth Harper, who believes that every lynching is for rape, who believes the ex-Confederates are right when they use every means, fair or foul, "to keep the nigger in his place."

In an unsympathetic editorial also the Savannah *Press* contends that the novel was "undoubtedly published largely for Northern consumption." Finally, also James Weldon Johnson's suggestion that every member of the NAACP buy two copies of *The Fire in the Flint*, "one for yourself and one for some white person," underlines that White probably wrote for a white, Northern audience.[13] What was probably most shocking to most readers was the explicitness and directness with which White exposed the ruthlessness of Southern racism and the inadequacy of the Northern view of lynching and racism. Edward E. Waldron for example states that "to a number of American readers, *The Fire in the Flint* was an initial adventure into the world of the black experience as written from that perspective."[14] In fact, the narrative structure of *The Fire in the Flint* largely progresses as a modified version of the convections of local color fiction and is presented as the protagonist's initiation into the sordid realities of Southern racism.

5.2. *The Fire in the Flint* as Modified Local Color Fiction

White's novel is similar to Griggs' *The Hindered Hand* in that it tries to remove the knowledge constructed to justify lynching and to reveal it as inhuman violence. Yet, while Griggs largely limits his attempt to merely exposing what he regards as the true nature of lynching, White skillfully enacts the cultural deformation he has exposed and makes it the basis of

[13] Quoted after Waldron 50, 59, 71, 74.
[14] Waldron 69.

more extensive criticism. Furthermore, White also differs from Griggs in the way he exposes lynching. Rather than counteracting racist knowledge about lynching and race through the staging of an alternative account of lynching, White directly juxtaposes two diverging interpretations of lynching to expose the falsity of the Southern system of racism but also the liberal, Northern view of lynching as the result of a distorted representation of reality. For that purpose, White features Kenneth Harper as black protagonist who embodies a liberal and apologetic attitude toward racism and is initiated into Southern racism through a series of painful experiences. Structurally *The Fire in the Flint* therefore shows an affinity to the conventions of local color fiction.

At the center of local color fiction is the comparison of two diverging states of civilization through the negotiation and mediation of two conflicting cultural perspectives. Usually, a representative of the dominant Victorian culture (tenderfoot) leaves the area of his own culture's validity and is confronted with a representative of a different culture. Although the strangeness and exoticism of this representative is the reason for much of the popularity of the genre, local color stories don't strive for a documentary and objective style of presentation. Rather, local representatives and peculiarities are always presented from the authoritative narrator's cultural perspective and mediated through the voice of the dominant New England civilization. Regional peculiarities are identified as such only through their distinctness from the dominant culture. In the hierarchical structuring of dominant and regional perspectives the essential goal of local color fiction becomes obvious: the repatriation and integration of an extra-civilized world, which threatens to escape the control and authority of the dominant genteel culture. The comparison of two diverging forms of civilization only serves to demonstrate the superiority and authority of New England civilization and thus underscores the claim to social leadership of its representatives.[15] The apex of local color fiction was during the 1870s through the 1890s, a phase of American history during which regional distinctiveness was in danger of extinction. However, local color fiction was not the attempt to record, preserve and promote cultural pluralism but was part of a process of cultural assimilation. By presenting regional peculiarities in a recurring representational pattern, diverging cultural norms were made available for a middle-class New England audience and integrated into the dominant Victorian understanding of civilization in order to complement American civilization.[16]

[15] My fleeting excursus into the form and function of local color fiction is based on Fluck's *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit* 148-63. See esp. 151-52.
[16] See Fluck, *Inszenierte Wirklichkeit* 148-49.

The Fire in the Flint can be read as a modified local color story, for which White adapts the conventions of traditional local color fiction to introduce a Northern audience into the cruel realities of Southern racism and lynching.[17] In a slight but significant modification of the conventional pattern, White presents a character who on the one hand is unaccustomed to the Southern culture of racism and approaches it from an outsider perspective but who on the other hand is not outside this culture owing to his skin color. As a result of his eight years absence from the South, Kenneth Harper's perspective on the race question and lynching is not shaped through firsthand experiences but mostly apologetic newspaper reports and the liberal social climate in the North and Europe. Accordingly, he propagates a moderate and accommodationist handling of the race problem and thus reproduces and exemplifies a Northern white perspective. As a protagonist, Kenneth is black and white at the same time: his skin color is the permanent marker of his African-American heritage, yet, his education and sentiments are largely white, Northern and middle-class. The employment of an in-between character is one of the achievements of White's novel. Kenneth is able to investigate (for the reader) convincingly the situation of African-Americans in a small Southern town and contrast it with the dominant Northern or apologetic view. A white character would never have achieved the same authority and immediateness as Kenneth because he would not have been able to exemplify the results and experiences of race hatred. In a similar vein, Waldron explains White's selection of "naïve hero" as protagonist as follows:

> A seasoned cynic would hardly remark the obvious discrepancies of what the whites preached about segregation and what they practiced […] Through the eyes of the innocent Kenneth Harper, though, White can let his white reader see a world through eyes that are just as unused to the light as his own.[18]

Through a series of disillusioning and epiphanic experiences, Kenneth is confronted with the inaccuracy of his and therefore also the Northern view of the racial situation in the South and at the same time exposes the misrepresentational character of apologetic lynching representations. Unlike traditional local color fictions, however, it is not the regional perspective which is integrated into the dominant New England perspective but the Northern interpretation of lynching is relativized and exposed as the result of cultural conventions preventing the full perception of the true nature of a racist Southern culture. Similar to Griggs and Chesnutt,

[17] The use of established conventions probably also functioned to facilitate the access to white Northern publishers and audiences.
[18] Waldron 47.

White especially points to the role of the white press in the creation of an atmosphere supportive of lynching.

He is rather outspoken in his condemnation of white newspapers as the prime creators of the rhetoric of lynching, foregrounding lynching as retributive and justified violence for the benefit of the white community. In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Major Carteret uses his newspaper for the propagation of a view which – although racist in nature – is at least in accordance with his convictions and his (misguided) motivation to work for the benefit of the community. In *The Fire in the Flint* however, newspapers become a medium of manipulation and for the deliberate obscuring of discredited intentions. In the hands of the lower classes, the newspaper is employed to concoct excuses for violence and justify a knowingly discredited behavior for a Southern and Northern audience. Newspapers are depicted as deliberately playing upon the ever-present fear of African-American insurrections, a phobia which had persisted since the times of slavery, and creating an atmosphere of terror.[19] The founding of the NNFCPL, a purely economic association for organizing the fair sale of African-American products, thus becomes the formation of a black mob intent on killing whites. More explicit than Chesnutt, White condemns the misrepresentational character of white newspapers, which become merely a means of justifying white violence by using generally accepted rationalizations as a pretext for economic motivations. During a meeting of the local Ku Klux Klan, some "Kluxers" lament the founding of the NNFCPL as they fear an end to the profitable system of black exploitation and plot its destruction. To justify their actions, some members propose using the newspapers to create an atmosphere supportive of violence: "We'll put in th' papers they [African-Americans] were formin' to kill white folks and they'll never know but what that ain't true. […] An' them damn fools really think they're sho'ly goin' to be murdered by the damn niggers!" (*FF* 207). Deliberately deceiving also whites, newspapers are deprived of their standing of objectively representing reality and White defames Southern newspapers as purely propagandistic media employed to further a rhetoric of justified violence. In a similar way the murder of Tom Tracy, another founding member of the Protective League, is also prearranged through the announcement of the self-defensive character of the crime. Ed Steward informs the Sheriff that he need not bother coming to his place to investigate the death of Tracy as "[i]t'll be se'f-defence. Tom Tracy's goin' t' come up on me with an open knife. I'm goin' to shoot t' save my life" (*FF* 238). The often found rationalization of lynching as self-defense is exposed as the deliberate abuse of a storehouse of predefined ex-

[19] For the fear of African-American insurrections see for example Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1969).

cuses to hide the real intentions. The exposure of the purely manipulative character of Southern white newspapers deprives them of their credibility and defames it as the prime producer of a distorted perception of reality.

The Fire in the Flint addresses the rape myth as the most fundamental justification of lynching. More direct and elaborate than many earlier anti-lynching texts, it exposes the rape myth as a disguise for economic motivations and lynching as a means to prevent black economic independence. White challenges the rhetoric of chivalrous revenge in *Rope and Faggot* by verbalizing the ideological underpinnings informing its construction. Quite outspoken, he argues that the rape myth is merely an attempt to hide the murder of African-Americans for economic reasons behind a mask of chivalry.[20] He outlines the political, economic and social context into which lynching is woven and represents it as a means of economic oppression. In *The Fire in the Flint*, Hiram Tucker explains to Kenneth that the past lynching of Joe Todd was motivated by economic rivalries but was represented in the newspapers as the prevention of rape as "[d]ey knew dat if dey say he 'sulted a white 'oman, de folks up Nawth won't crit'cize dem for lynchin' a nigger down here in Georgy" (*FF* 115-16). In a similar way, Sheriff Parker, Commissioner Henry Lane and Ed Steward plan to get rid of Kenneth Harper as his organization is becoming more and more popular. Afraid of Kenneth's growing reputation they decide to justify his lynching as a reaction to an attempted rape: "We'll fix it so's we can say that Harper insulted a white woman" (*FF* 241). To counter Lane's objections that Harper has been "stayin' out where he b'longs in the nigger section" and make even more obvious the purely discursive nature of the rape myth, Sheriff Parker explains to Lane and the reader that "[i]t ain't necessary for him to bother with white women in Central City for us to put that on 'im. […] Nearly all white folks ev'n up No'th b'lieves that ev'ry time a nigger's lynched down this a way, its 'cause he's raped a white woman" (*FF* 242). Therefore, before they finally murder Kenneth, they assure that they have got "the newspaper fixed" (*FF* 284). The Northern interpretation of Southern violence thus comes to be seen as the effect of the creation and imposition of knowledge and a distorted depiction of reality. Decades of racist agitation have resulted in the establishing of the black beast rapist as the dominant projection of African-American masculinity and thus the increase in the credibility of the rape myth. What distinguishes White's revocation of the rape myth is the frankness with which he ex-

[20] Typical for White's overall conception of lynching, he also understands the rape myth as motivated by economic reasons. In the rhetoric of lynching the threat of racial sameness is represented as social equality, which, according to the logic of lynching, leads directly to intermarriage and the legitimation of thousands of mulatto babies. Entitled to their white fathers' heritage, those babies would seriously threaten white economic dominance. According to White, lynching therefore actually does prevent interracial relationships but it is not for the protection of white womanhood but white economic dominance.

poses its purely rhetorical quality and its intentional abuse. He especially blames the distribution of newspapers for the propagation of the myth, which in turn become instruments for manipulating and deceiving a Northern audience and in extension obstruct the progress of civilization.

White also includes a fictitious news dispatch at the end of the novel. Reproducing typical apologetic newspaper articles, he demonstrates the divergence between what he considers as fiction and reality by contrasting his own account of the proceedings which lead to the lynching of Kenneth Harper and the "official" version. Waldron calls the insertion of the newspaper article one of the "climactic events of the novel" as it "avoids the didacticism which is so characteristic of the rest of the novel."[21] The article reproduces the typical demonization of African-Americans as rapists as well as the sentimental rendering of the white female victims and rationalizes Kenneth Harper's lynching as a reaction to his attempted rape of the white Mrs. Mary Ewing. In fact, Kenneth had been called by Mrs. Ewing to treat her sick daughter. The dispatch also includes Harper's alleged confession, promoting the impression of a quasi legal and religious ritual backed by the support of five thousand members of the community. However, as the preparations for the lynching show, the fifteen members of the KKK had to sneak and hide and had to think of an excuse to justify their actions to the public. The article also mentions the lynching of Bob Harper. Suppressing Mamie's rape as Bob's motivation and instead presenting the rapists of his sister as having an "excellent reputation in the community," Bob's murder is presented as the act of a "temporarily insane" criminal. His lynching is rendered an act of communal self-defense. In almost minute detail White reproduces typical newspaper accounts as they were circulated after lynchings. Juxtaposing this account with the version in his novel, he exposes the fabricated and manipulative quality of those accounts and deprives white newspapers of a standing as objective representations of the true nature of lynching.

Yet, *The Fire in the Flint* is not only about revealing the divergence between Kenneth's/ Northern expectations and the real conditions in the South. Kenneth Harper's awakening to the realities of Southern racism also functions to expose Southern racism as inherently irrational and artificially imposed system, which forcibly denies interracial sameness in order to preserve the notion of white supremacy and thus staggers the South's intellectual and economic progress. Through the eyes of Kenneth Harper, White contrasts the social conditions of both races and focuses especially on economic hardships as a common problem for both

[21] Waldron 45.

blacks and whites and delineates white supremacy not as a set of real social conditions but as invention designed to jealously guard caste restrictions and uphold a desired difference between black and white workers and farmers. White deprives white supremacy of the standing as an appropriate representation of the Southern condition as it is not the result of an actual white racial superiority but a discursive construct to uphold racial difference. White supremacy as an all-encompassing, all-integrating, and timeless truth is exposed as equally distorting the perception of reality as Kenneth's too liberal and accommodationist conviction. Not only African-Americans but also whites suffer from this self-deception as they are impaired in their mental and economic growth. Lynching as the primary means to maintain white supremacy, therefore, is truly harmful to whites as well since it prevents them from perceiving the "truth" (as White sees it), namely, that lynching harms the civilizational progress of whites and blacks and in fact of the whole nation. The invocation of economic hardships undermines any claims to racial essentialism and destabilizes the Manichean bipolarity through the introduction of a violently silenced sameness.

In a reversal of typical local color stories of the 1870s, *The Fire in the Flint* does not aim at incorporating the South as a region of deviant culture into the dominant system. Nor does Kenneth's confrontation with this culture lead to cultural amalgamation or a mutual fertilization. Rather, the novel exposes the inadequacy of the dominant cultural system's view on race and lynching and demands a readjustment and removal of conventions blurring the perception of reality. Simultaneously, the Southern state of civilization is compared to and contrasted with the Northern state and exposed as primitive and far behind the North. Through Kenneth's eyes and the mediation of the narrator, the South undergoes a test of its state of civilization and is exposed as an underdeveloped region. White therefore calls for a readjustment of Northern views as the underdeveloped South impairs the civilizational progress of the nation as a whole, which in turn really makes lynching "a national disgrace," to quote James Weldon Johnson's article again. Written some forty years after the climax of the production of local color fiction, White employs the pattern of intercultural comparison to expose the South as lacking in civilizational refinement and demonstrate the need for intervention and reform. My goal is not to examine or define *The Fire in the Flint* as a special kind of local color story. I am arguing, however, that White is employing and manipulating a narrative structure typical for local color fiction to demonstrate the need for intervention for the progress of American civilization.

5.3. "Like a Scroll Slowly Unwinding before his Eyes" – Kenneth Harper's Initiation into the South

The Fire in the Flint is mostly a story about Kenneth Harper's gradual initiation into the sordid realities of Southern race relations. As an African-American he has insight in and access to the black community but as an academic estranged from the South through the more liberal social climate in the North and France he approaches Southern life with an outsider point of view. Throughout the novel Kenneth goes through numerous situations in which he is confronted with (for him) strange and deviant modes of behavior and is forced to mediate between his own and the new and unknown cultural system. Misunderstandings, misjudgings, and mishaps finally effect his initiation into the new culture. *The Fire in the Flint* therefore deals with Kenneth's disillusionment and his epiphanic recognition of lynching as a means of creating and maintaining a rigid racial hierarchy through the establishment of a Manichean bipolarity in which not individual gains but only race determines his perception. Deviating from the conventions of local color fiction, however, his conversion does not result in the amalgamation of the two cultural systems but Kenneth's death and the demonstration of the incompatibility of both cultural systems. Moreover, Kenneth's initiation also functions to expose the harmful effect lynching and the existence of essentialisms have for the white community as they prevent the acknowledgment of sameness, necessary for the survival and progress of the South.

Molded as gentleman, Kenneth is a representative of the Northern middle-class. The description of his outer appearance combines a strong and muscular physicality, hardened through baseball, football as well as army training, with the graceful and elegant features of an artist (see *FF* 13). Apart from the description of his physicality, White foregrounds Kenneth's intellect and distinguished character. An almost four page long enumeration of the books Kenneth has read testifies to his cultivated character. Kenneth's favorite writer is W.E.B. Du Bois, a fact which is notable as Kenneth defines himself as a follower of Booker T. Washington. The narrator however explains that he did not read Du Bois "as a factor in forming his own opinions as a Negro" but "with a curious sort of detachment" (*FF* 46). Kenneth's interest in Du Bois thus only further underlines his "detachment" from the South and highlights his outsider perspective. His preference for a Washingtonian accommodationism is designed to further characterize his initial attitude towards the race question as well as to emphasize his academic education. Kenneth is the character the liberal white Northern reader should identify with. The basis of this identification is a set of common values and norms,

which White employs in his construction of his black protagonist. Similar (yet a little more naïve) to Dr. Miller in *The Marrow of Tradition* also Kenneth Harper is represented as perfect gentleman and skilled physician, who distinguishes himself through his altruistic devotion to racial uplift, a flawless and determined character and the dedication to his family. To counter the dominant representation of African-American men as hypersexualized Other, Kenneth's masculinity becomes the revocation or even reversal of the rapist stereotype as Kenneth's life – owing to his dedication to his profession – "had been singularly free from feminine influence, other than that of his mother" (*FF* 132). Before he meets Jane Phillips, he had only had one serious relationship, which never went beyond holding hands and which he broke up when his girlfriend refused to move from New York to the South to support the uplift of their race. His relationship with Jane is more of a dutiful and romantic than sexual nature and largely determined by their work and his attitude towards the race question. The most explicit adherence to the Victorian ideal of gentlemanliness comes with Kenneth's mastering and final overcoming of his urge to avenge the death of his brother and rape of his sister and instead decides to treat Mrs. Ewing's daughter.[22] Similar to Chesnutt's Dr. Miller, who relinquishes his anger and helps the Carterets, Kenneth's mastering of his emotions rewards him with a kind of masculinity his anger never would have granted. Yet, unlike *The Marrow of Tradition, The Fire in the Flint* ends with a far more pessimistic undertone.

After having been removed from the bleak realities of Southern racism for eight years and owing to his experiences in the North and abroad where he was treated "like a human being" and realized "that all white folks aren't bad" (*FF* 15), Kenneth believes that he can avoid the race problem when he follows his father's advice "that the best way to get along with white people [is] to stay away from them and let them alone as much as possible" (*FF* 17). Kenneth pursues an accommodationist policy of maintaining the rigid racial binary as a protection against lynching, a fact which is also evident from his admiration of Booker T. Washington. Although he deviates from a meticulous adherence to the Washingtonian dogma of industrial training, he nevertheless proclaims that

> Booker Washington was right. And the others who were always howling about rights were wrong. Get a trade or a profession. Get a home. Get some property. Get a bank account. Do something! Be somebody! And then, when enough Negroes had reached that stage, the ballot and all the other things denied them would come. (*FF* 17-18)

[22] There are several other instances in which Kenneth overcomes his instincts. When Dr. Williams out of hurt pride provokes Kenneth by hesitating to assist him in an operation, the latter "swallowed his anger" (*FF* 58) for the good of his patient.

Individual economic improvement and an immaculate character are his proposition for solving to the race problem. Kenneth, however, misunderstands that the racial bifurcation of society is not a separate-but-equal segregation as the inscription of racial differences always pursues the construction of power relations and black subordination through the establishing of racial essentialisms. Therefore, Kenneth wrongly assumes that he will be judged as an individual and not primarily as a member of the African-American race: "[W]hy bother with it [the race problem] any more than one was forced by sheer necessity? Better it was for him if he attended to his own individual problems" (*FF* 47).

His emphasis on individuality over race also shapes his understanding of lynching. Reproducing the dominant discourse on lynching and race, which effaces their essentialist character and instead foregrounds the rational nature of the practice, Kenneth regards lynching as a regrettable yet (somewhat) understandable punishment for black criminals, which can be evaded by means of his above state principles of individual progress and impeccable conduct. He downplays what he regards as an unfounded hysteria created through black newspapers which are "always playing up some lynching or other trouble down here" (*FF* 26). Instead, he trusts that "only bad Negroes ever [get] lynched" (*FF* 17), simultaneously delineating the practice as a quasi-legal form of punishment, devoid of any racial or racist tendencies. Significantly, Kenneth Harper's interpretation of lynching is not the result of firsthand experiences but shaped to a large degree by newspaper accounts and the liberal social and racial climate in the North and France and largely tallies with the white Southern view. When he for example meets with Roy Ewing, one of the town's white leaders, the latter defends lynching as a means of keeping "some of these young nigger bucks in check" and assures Kenneth that "lynching never bothers folks like you" (*FF* 70, 69). Yet, while Kenneth understands his alleged exemption from lynching as the result of his economic progress and excellent behavior, Ewing actually holds his and his father's acceptance of white supremacy as distinguishing them from "these young nigger bucks." In the course of the novel, Kenneth is forced to recognize the falsity of his outlook and approaches more and more his brother's position.

Kenneth's optimistic, pacifist and accommodationist interpretation of the racial situation is contrasted with his brother Bob's pessimistic, disillusioned and antagonistic outlook on the prospects for African-American development in the South. After the death of their father, Bob had to abandon school and support their family. As administrator of his father's estate he experienced the reality of Southern racism firsthand. The exposure to the Southern system of African-American economic exploitation, oppression and the fact that he was completely at

the mercy of whites without any legal redress have profoundly embittered him. Accordingly, while Kenneth is described as "more phlegmatic, more of a philosophic turn of mind, more content with his lot, able to forget himself in his work, and […] his books" Bob is "of a highly sensitized nature, more analytical of mind, more easily roused to passion and anger" (*FF* 22). While Kenneth reproduces the apologetic or Northern view of lynching, Bob is the spokesperson of the black South. Accustomed to the system of white supremacy and the means of upholding it, Bob scolds Kenneth's decision to come back to Central City and his motivation to help their people. Based on their different experiences, Bob clearly reproves Kenneth's interpretation of the Southern race problem as unfounded and as the result of misrepresentations. He rejects Kenneth's argument that economic advancement effects racial reconciliation as it is economic envy and a threatening sameness between the races rather than black criminality which lies behind lynching. He also scolds Kenneth's argument that the leading citizens of Central City (Judge Stevenson, Roy Ewing and Mr. Bairs) would protect any decent African-American as erroneous. Therefore, Kenneth's remark to his mother that "Bob's seeing things like a kid in the dark" (*FF* 28) is more appropriately applied to himself.

Kenneth's disillusionment and his initiation into the South function to expose the Northern interpretation of lynching as the result of a deliberate downplaying of African-American oppression in apologetic representations, mostly in newspaper articles. White contrasts apologetic representations of lynching with the bleak reality of life in small-town Georgia. The exposure of the belittling character of the apologetic stance on lynching, however, prevents its effacing as regrettable, yet justifiable temporary outbreak of quasi-legal violence to avenge the atrocious crime of rape. The Northern view of lynching is exposed as the result of a dangerously distorted perception of reality and becomes the prime trope denoting the downfall of American civilization. Similar to Chesnutt, White tries to motivate and involve a white audience into the fight against lynching by redefining lynching from a practice revitalizing white masculinity, creating a homosocial white community and defending as well as demonstrating white supremacy to a manifestation of backwardness and demise of civilization also threatening America as a whole. Unlike Chesnutt, however, White is far more skeptical about the success of interracial alliances. He states that the adherences to civilizational values is a commonality to be found in both races but the mental inertia of the South has produced a degenerated pack, which no longer pursues those values. While Chesnutt construes sameness out of a common adherence to civilization, White uses civilization to depict the South as debilitated and propagates black self-help for the survival of civilization in the South.

5.4. The Social Stratum of the White South and the Prevention of Sameness

5.4.1. The "Leading Citizens" of Central City

Chesnutt and White diverge in their estimation of the Southern white elite. While Chesnutt places his hopes for racial reconciliation on the cooperation of the "better" classes of both races, White, writing some twenty years later, doubts the effectiveness or even existence of such an elite in the South and promotes African-American self-help instead. Whereas in *The Marrow of Tradition* the growing influence of boorish social upstarts and the lower white classes is represented as a lingering yet preventable threat, *The Fire in the Flint* depicts the surrender of the older elites to those forces, leaving African-Americans with no possible allies. The leading citizens of Central City are composed of businessmen, devoid of any cultivation, and relicts of an antebellum gentility who have lost their social and moral influence. Both are represented by Roy Ewing and Judge Richard Stevenson respectively. The recognition of the demise of the older elites is revealed as part of Kenneth Harper's initiation. At the beginning of the novel he is convinced that "Judge Stevenson and Roy Ewing and Mr. Baird at the Bank of Central City and a lot of others run this town and they aren't going to let any decent colored man be bothered" (*FF* 27). However, these leading people are neither willing nor able to protect African-American citizens from the mob. In a reversal of traditional conceptions of social leadership it is not the elite which exerts a moralizing and civilizing influence over the lower classes but the lower classes control the (mis-)"leading citizens". The dominance of the lower white classes first becomes evident to Kenneth during a discussion with his brother Bob, in which the latter informs him that black farmers are deprived of fair settlements for their crops from their white landlords. When Kenneth proposes to hire a lawyer Bob explains "with mingled triumph and despair" (*FF* 29) that no white lawyer would take the case of black farmers as either the court would be against him or the landowners, storekeepers, and bankers would oppose him and even threaten his life. White supremacy forbids (and depends on preventing) even the slightest touch of sameness between the races and uses lynching as a means to enact a mutually exclusive difference. This notion of course also includes the preclusion of equality before the law. White especially capitalizes on the leading citizens' economic dependency combined with the pressure of conformity imposed by the lower classes as inhibiting the exertion of their educational influence.

The full scope of the leading citizens' impotence and dependency on the lower classes is revealed through a meeting with Roy Ewing. When Bob tells his brother Kenneth about some white boys hanging round Ewing's store and insulting any black girl passing by, Kenneth proposes to discuss the matter with Ewing instead of following Bob's proposal to form a purely African-American Protective League. Rejecting Bob's intraracial solution, Kenneth proposes a class-based solution of interracial cooperation between the "better" classes of both races. He reproduces the traditional genteel conception of leadership through a culturally and morally superior elite, educating the lower classes. Still clinging to the code of gentility and its standards of conduct, Kenneth interprets Ewing's inactiveness as the result of the latter's lack of information. Unfortunately, the genteel conception of social guidance turns out to be an illusion in the South. The growing economic dependency of Ewing on the lower classes has rendered any educational intervention impossible. Although Ewing contends that "things aren't altogether as they ought to be" (*FF* 68) he is unable to intervene. Rather than being able to guide the lower classes, the lower classes control the former elite's reactions as can be seen in Ewing's response to a past lynching. Relating the story of the unfounded lynching of Jerry Bird, Ewing's trusted servant, the shop owner explains to Harper that if he had intervened with the proceedings of the mob he would have experienced severe financial losses as "[m]ost of them [the lynchers] trade at my store" (*FF* 69), his family would have been socially ostracized and he would have been called a "nigger-lover" (*FF* 70). Apart from undoing the possibility of an interracial solution for lynching, White thus challenges the rhetoric of lynching as denoting a practice for the benefit of the white community and sustained by the unanimous support of all whites. Instead, he represents it as the disabling of sensitive social leadership and as a danger to the further progress of civilization. Economic dependence and lacking morality (as can be seen in Ewing's general appreciation of lynching) have invalidated traditional conceptions of genteel guidance.

Also Dr. Bennett, the resident white physician, disqualifies as reasonable leader and potential ally. Although not restricted through economic dependencies, he enviously guards his leading position and supposed medical superiority. He immediately understands Kenneth Harper's correction of his diagnosis from Mrs. Emma Bradley's stomach ache to critical appendicitis as an attack upon his professional as well as racial superiority and as the attempt to invalidate or reverse racial differences. Rather than working for the benefit of the community, he feels embarrassed and angry about being compromised by a younger and black doctor. Therefore, he drops his initial cordiality and Kenneth Harper "realized for the first time that in spite of the superiority of his medical training to that of Dr. Bennett's, the latter did not

recognize him as a qualified physician, but only as a 'nigger doctor'" (*FF* 62). He is initiated into the logic of the Manichean allegory as described by JanMohamed, according to which professional abilities are always already integrated into the racial bipolarity and the display of equal or superior competence is perceived as the attempt to undermine the racial hierarchy. Bennett's estimation of Kenneth Harper is predicated upon racial essentialisms and fiercely disallows any touch of sameness between them. Kenneth's initial conviction that flawless conduct and self-improvement will exempt him from being lynched turns out to be an illusion. He begins to understand that his blackness and the inferiority inscribed therein is the sole determinant for his behavior and that the unshakeable presupposition of racial difference precludes the possibility of interracial alliances between equal partners.[23]

Also the other part of the leading citizens is unable to exert any civilizing influence over the lower classes. As a representative of the old but obsolete antebellum gentility, Judge Richard Stevenson had to adapt to the new order but he still remains a gentleman with uncompromising high principles and morals: "He boasted proudly that never had he cheated any man or been a party to any transaction from which he emerged with any stain on his honour" (*FF* 154). He explains to Kenneth and the reader the social developments which finally led to the demise of the old gentility. After the Civil War "had come the rise of the poor whites with none of the culture and refinement of the old Southern aristocracy, a nation of petty minds and morals, vindictive, vicious, dishonest, and stupid." They were "[l]acking in nearly all the things that mad the old South, at least the upper crust of it, the most civilized section of America at that time" (*FF* 152). Similar to Chesnutt, White points to the decay of Southern civilization owing to the exaggeration of materialism over morality. The "new regime," Judge Stevenson states, was "no longer poor in purse but eternally impoverished in culture and civilizing influences" (*FF* 152). The result of the abandoning of cultural and moral leadership is the reversion especially of the lower classes in terms of civilization. What must have been particularly threatening to genteel white readers was that the lower classes had disabled the social elite's claim to leadership. In that respect, the persistence of lynching is proof for the growing influence of the "poor white trash" over the former elite: "These po' white trash stopped everybody from talking against lynching nigras, and they've stopped us from talking

[23] According to the logic of the Manichean bipolarity, a "good nigger" is not one who makes progress but who keeps his place, as for example the resident black Dr. Williams. He is introduced as an incompetent quack doctor, who tries to impress with "long words, especially of Latin derivation" (*FF* 49) and who tries to curry favor with whites through the display of inferiority. Despite a lack of education and decent manners, he considers himself the leader of the black community and the favorite of whites. He also feels affronted by Kenneth's growing popularity and instead of working together for the advancement of their race he willingly sacrifices Kenneth to secure his position.

about *anything*" (*FF* 160, emphasis in original). White changes the rhetoric of lynching to denote a threat to civilization as its existence is due to the growing dominance of the lower and undereducated classes, which in turn threatens not only the gentility's claim to leadership but also its sheer existence and the values upon which it rests.

The rhetoric of lynching silences alternative explanations of lynching put forward by more liberal-minded whites and African-Americans. Although Judge Stevenson states that it is common knowledge that the rape myth is only a pretense to cover up consensual relationships and save the reputation of white women, it prevails together with the accompanying racist stereotype of black criminality and hypersexuality. The silencing of alternative accounts of lynching here is also to be taken literally when the judge states that "they lynch the nigra to hush the matter up" (*FF* 159). More frankly than in preceding anti-lynching texts, lynching is represented as epistemic violence which prevents the production of alternative kinds of knowledge and instead legitimizes and naturalizes existing knowledge and power structures. Yet, rather than merely exposing or lamenting the overall authority of lynching as the sole producer of meaning, White defines lynching first and foremost as limitation and restriction. Instead of concentrating on what lynching produces, White focuses on what it effaces and precludes: the development of intellectual proliferation. Lynching is thus responsible for what he calls "mental inertia" (*RF* 17) and, as a result, the disabling of moral guidance through the older elites as well as the civilizational retrogression of the South. Similar to his condemnation of the white press, White criticizes the persistence or violent safeguarding of racist misrepresentations, especially those accompanying the rhetoric of lynching, as responsible for the demise of the gentility, the rise of the lower classes, and finally the civilizational retrogression of the South: "[T]he South is farther behind in civilization than any other part of the United States – or the world for that matter. Aren't they ever going to see how they're hurting themselves by trying to keep the Negro down?" (*FF* 161). Similar to Wells, Johnson, and Chesnutt, White alters the meaning of lynching and turns it into a trope signifying not civilizational progress but regression. Resistance to lynching in turn becomes a civilizing mission and an indispensable prerequisite for national advancement, which also necessitates the involvement of whites. In the novel, Jane Phillips voices the interrelation of black and white destiny and defines the race problem as a national one. She propagates black intervention not only for her own race's sake but also for national renewal: "the race problem is going to grow so big it's going to consume the South and America. It's almost that big now" (*FF* 139). Simultaneously, she challenges the "whitening" of civilization, that is, the integration of civilizational achievements in the Manichean bipolarity of race and instead highlights

the contributions other races have made to American civilization: "'[W]hite civilization' was made by black hands, as well as by yellow and brown and red hands, too, besides what white hands have created. You've got to learn that the Negro to-day is contributing as much of the work that makes this civilization possible as the white race, if not more" (*FF* 139). Resistance to lynching becomes the final contribution to this civilization. However, owing to the impotence of the white elite, this resistance must come from a black elite. Kenneth's initiation is mainly about the recognition that not through interracial alliances or patience and accommodationism but only African-American initiatives can lynching be abolished and civilization saved. Typical for White's focus on economic matters, the first instance of black self-help is the founding of the NNFCPL. Rather than providing alternatives or propositions for black self-help, however, *The Fire in the Flint* mainly registers black frustration over the disabling of those attempts.

White includes the demonstration of the necessity and effectiveness of thoughtful leadership and guidance into his novel. For that purposes he compares two organizations, the local branch of the Ku Klux Klan and the NNFCPL. Although both organizations are inherently different in their conception and character, White nevertheless capitalizes on the fact that both are identical in their respective target audience, namely the lower classes of both races, which both are defined especially by their low educational standards. It is above all this lack of education which establishes the necessity of leadership and the divergence between the "better" classes of both races concerning their respective conceptions of leadership. The founding of the Protective League is the result of intense research, intelligent planning and able realization. Its motivation is to work for the improvement of the situation of the lower black classes and it grows such a success that it even attracts the interest of whites from Atlanta. The meetings of the KKK are chaotic and unruly events mainly consisting of many highly theatrical but hollow ceremonies, designed only to appeal to the members' innate instincts for entertainment. Interestingly, both organizations resemble each other in that they mold their respective strategies of leadership on the expectations and requirements of the people they intent to lead. Both have to take into account the "natural love of the mysterious and adventurous" (*FF* 123). White here reproduces the tension between what Mary Esteve has called the aesthetic and political crowd, that is, the individuality-effacing immersion in a crowd and a collectivity of rational and independent individuals, which has been discussed in connection with Griggs' novel *The Hindered Hand*.[24] As a true representative of a genteel

[24] See Esteve 121-37.

notion of leadership, Kenneth rejects affective immersion and instead argues for educating people into autonomous individuals who are able to make rational decisions. Yet, while Griggs blatantly condemns affectivity as the obliteration of the ability to make rational decisions, White is more pragmatic in his conception of black leadership. Rather than categorically excluding emotional involvement, he regards it as necessary adjustment to the facts as they are resulting from the low level of education. Part of Kenneth' initiation therefore encompasses the realization of the inevitability of modifying his ambitious principles. While he would have preferred a short and simple name for the organization, he is overruled as the "simple and illiterate class to which most of the prospective members belonged" wanted a "sonorous, impressive name." Furthermore, "signs and passwords" as well as "some 'ficials with scrumptious names, and passwords and grips" are accepted because "[d]ese here ign'ant folks need somethin' like dat to catch their 'magination" (*FF* 175-76). Kenneth's awakening includes the revelation of the necessity of adjusting his large-scale expectations to the requirements of life in the South. While after his opening speech at the NNFCPL meeting he still is "a bit ashamed of having made so direct an appeal at the end to emotion instead of reason" (*FF* 180) he accepts it as a necessary evil. Yet, while the KKK leaders abuse emotional involvement to manipulate and agitate, Kenneth agrees to use emotional involvement to communicate his altruistic ideals. In the hands of a sensible elite affective involvement can be used to guide the lower classes for the common good.

5.4.2. The Lower White Classes

White challenges the racial hierarchy through the proclamation of interracial commonality figured as the endurance of economic hardships. In a letter to Will Alexander, the director of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC), White states that it was his intention in *The Fire in the Flint* "to show that the lot of the poor white man in the South is, physically, but little better than that of the Negro and that mentally he is somewhat worse off."[25] Owing to his experiences as an investigator of lynchings for the NAACP and his conviction that most lynchings are motivated by economic envy, White includes a detailed description of the social and economic condition in Central City (see *FF* 32-41). Most of the inhabitants are farmers and although the bifurcation of society is reflected in the division of the town into a "Darktown" and the Cotton Spinning-Mill district, both blacks and whites are economically indistinguishable since black as well as white farmers are plagued by the boll weevil or land-

[25] Quoted after Waldron 55.

lords "both working dire distress on poor white and black alike" (*FF* 33). Both have to live under the same grim conditions as can be seen from descriptions emphasizing particularly the similarity of the conditions in both parts of the town: "Here [in the Spinning-Mill district] were the same dingy, small, unsanitary, unbeautiful, and unpainted dwellings. Here were the same muddy or dusty unpaved streets. Here were the same squalor and poverty and filth and abject ignorance" (*FF* 37). Part of Kenneth's awakening is the recognition of the dire living conditions and economic hardships determining the life of Southern blacks and whites. Unaccustomed to these conditions, it is "a rude shock when he began to see these things through an entirely different pair of eyes than those with which he had viewed them before he left Central City for the North" (*FF* 41). White employs this very detailed description of the social and economic condition of Central City to clarify the nature of actual interracial sameness and as the common ground for a race-effacing solidarity. While Chesnutt considers the commitment to a civilization largely understood as moral refinement as the point of convergence between the races, White capitalizes more on shared economic hardships. He anticipates to some degree a later and more Marxist interpretation of lynching as the prevention of working-class solidarity through the over-emphasizing of racial over class commonalities. Lynching here is the attempt to secure the economic and political hegemony of the ruling capitalist class.[26]

Yet, White does not regard lynching as the capitalist attempt to exploit a white and black working-class through the prevention of solidarity. Rather, he introduces comparable living conditions to efface race as the ultimate trope of difference and to expose the constructedness of racial essentialism as well as racial hierarchies. However, despite an actual similarity in terms of economic conditions, lower-class whites vehemently oppose even the slightest trace of sameness. In that respect, lynching becomes the attempt to maintain an artificial hierarchical system, which not only prevents the undisturbed recognition of reality but also prohibits its solution. Both black and whites would prosper from the Farmer's Union as it would end an exploitive economic system. Kenneth naïvely misinterprets the white reception of an interracial organization, which would not be welcomed as economic union but would solely be seen as the attempt to create sameness where should be otherness and thus as an attack on the system of white supremacy. Rather than providing the common ground for both races to meet, the sordid economic conditions actually feed racism and white superiority: "Here [in the Spinning-Mill district] was but one strong conviction, but on strong rock of

[26] See Angela Davis, *Women, Race and Class*. (New York: Random House, 1988) 190. For an example for a more socialist view of lynching see for example Langston Hughes's play *Scottsboro Ltd*.

faith to which they clung – the inherent and carefully nurtured hatred of 'niggers' and a belief in their own infinite superiority over their dark-skinned neighbors" (*FF* 38).

Lower-class whites therefore disqualify as potential allies in the fight against lynching. Owing to their intellectual desolateness and the lack of moral guidance, the lower classes are even the prime proponents of lynching. Appealing to the valuations of his intended readership, White especially emphasizes the intellectual depravity of the lower-class whites, which becomes manifest in the fact that the whites inhabiting the Spinning-Mill district are "amazingly ignorant in the finer things of life" (*FF* 39), namely literature, music, and art. His description of the inhabitants of the white working class is indicative of their mental and intellectual stagnation:

> [T]he children wore […] a pale, emaciated, consumptive air because of the long hours in the lint-laden confines of the mills. The men were long, stooped, cadaverous-appearing. The women were sallow, unattractive, sad-looking […] The children, when they played at all, did so in listless, wearied, uninterested, and apathetic fashion. (*FF* 37-38)

Alcohol and sex are the only releases from their daily monotony. Similar to Chesnutt, White uses heavy drinking and sexual licentiousness to describe the lower white classes as given to basic impulses and passions, which in turn would necessitate guidance through a moral elite. This elite, however, is almost non-existent in Central City as has been outlined above and the field has been surrendered to a mob of uncivilized savages. Devoid of an elite willing and able to guide the lower classes, the South has reverted into a degenerate and uncultivated state and retrogressed in civilization. White criticizes not so much the racist contamination of the old elite of the South but the dominance of the lower classes. The leading citizens of Central City are more anxious to avoid any involvement with the proceedings of the lower classes than trying to educate them. Therefore, the lower classes pose the greatest threat to American civilization. White's detailed description of the social conditions of the white working class in Central City thus grounds lynching in economic hardships and intellectual barrenness.

One of the manifestations of the dominance of an underdeveloped lower-class is lynching. White's description of the mob lynching Bob Harper further attributes to his characterization of the lower classes as uncivilized. His representation of the mob mirrors Chesnutt's or Griggs's renderings. With special emphasis on the primitive and savage nature of the mob, White uses animal metaphors to put forward this impression. The mob chasing after Bob is described as a "howling pack" (*FF* 236) composed of "human dogs" (*FF* 234), and the fifteen men inclined on lynching Kenneth, stole "[l]ike some silent, creeping, wolf-

like denizen of the forest" (*FF* 283) to their meeting place and "crouched like tigers in the shrubbery" (*FF* 297). A "cursing, howling crowd" (*FF* 297) attacks Kenneth Harper when he leaves the Ewings' house and after having shot their prey in the back, they "howling, gloating fiendishly" (*FF* 299) assail his wounded body. White implicitly compares the mob to cannibals, inhibitors of the lowest stage of human development: "Women, tiny boys and girls, old men and young stood by, a strange light on their faces. They sniffed eagerly the odour of burning human flesh which was becoming more and more faint" (*FF* 236-37). Orlando Patterson understands the often quoted reference to the mob's communal smelling of a lynching victim's burnt body in newspapers as a form of cannibalism. Approaching lynching as a form of ritual scapegoating, which facilitates a time of social transition and is rooted in archaic rituals of primal sacrifice, he chiefly points to the cannibalistic element in lynching when he writes that "[t]he experience […] of being suffused with the odor of the lynch victim's roasting body amounted literally to the cannibalistic devouring of his body." Using Claude Levi-Strauss's terminology he interprets the burning of African-Americans as the transformation of the raw, uncultured, and uncivilized African-American into a cooked "properly roasted" object, which thus "has been tamed and culturally transformed and can now be eaten communally."[27] White's incorporation of the mob's communal inhalation of the smell of burnt human flesh therefore further attributes to its representation as the outcome of a depraved mind. Such an understanding gains further substantiation through the mentioning of the presence of children in the mob. Similar to Chesnutt and several domestic anti-lynching texts, White draws attention to the morally debasing influence lynching has on young children when he mentions that a twelve year old boy searches the charred remains of the pyre for souvenirs and "laughing hoarsely" he "triumphantly exhibit[s] a charred bone he had secured" (*FF* 237). What distinguishes *The Fire in the Flint* from Chesnutt's novel is that the depravity of the mob is not depicted as the eruption of primal passions through the shedding of the restraining conventions of civilization. Rather, the South constantly is on a lower stage of civilization and lynching is only the most obvious public performance of this degeneracy. The lower as well as the upper classes of the white race, therefore, both disqualify as potential allies in the fight against lynching. Hope for the further progress of American civilization as well as the "the black body" can only come from the black community and the "better" class of this race.

[27] Patterson 198, 200. John L. Mitchell, editor of the Richmond Planet in one of his editorials sarcastically commented upon the Southern habit of lynching: "Southern white folks have gone to roast Negroes […] we presume the next step will be to eat them." Richmond *Planet*, June 11, 1891, quoted after Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 164.

Finally, Kenneth recognizes the deceptiveness of his own and the Northern view of lynching and the race relations in the South. After the meeting with Roy Ewing and Reverend Wilson's mass he realizes that the hands of Central City's social elite are tied by economic dependencies and they therefore disqualify as possible allies in the fight against lynching. White represents the lower white classes as uncivilized and undereducated "crackers" or "pecks," who are impaired in their mental and civilizational development by wasting too much energy on upholding a system of white supremacy. He regards the perseverance of white supremacy as the result of a distorted perception:

> They had been duped so long by demagogues, deluded generation after generation after into believing their sole hope of existence depended on oppression and suppression of the Negro, that the chains of the ignorance and suppression they sought to fasten on their Negro neighbours had subtly bound them in unbreakable fashion. They opposed every move for better educational facilities for their children, for improvement of their health or economic status or welfare in general, if such improvement meant better advantages for Negroes. (*FF* 126)

In that respect, the situation in Central City is similar to that in Wellington in Chesnutt's novel as neither the upper nor the lower white classes are willing or able to intervene for the sake of African-Americans. Yet, while Chesnutt's novel still includes interracial alliances of an educated black and a reformed white elite as the solution to the problem of lynching, White is far more pessimistic about the possibility of interracial ties. Lacking potential allies, the black community has to help itself and the progress of civilization rests entirely upon their efforts.

The conclusion Kenneth draws from his insights is the abandoning of his initial passiveness and accommodationism: "He had determined to stay out of reach of the long arms of the octopus they call the race problem – but he felt himself slowly being drawn into its insidious embrace" (*FF* 98). The rhetoric of lynching invalidates any attempt to escape the essentialism of race or the Manichean bipolarity. Claims that "only bad Negroes were ever lynched" (*FF* 138) are exposed as deliberate distortion of the true nature of lynching, even more so, as the definition of "bad Negroes" is entirely incumbent upon whites. Rather than denoting criminal behavior, any African-American threatening the racial hierarchy through, for example, acquiring property is branded a "bad Negro" as "[p]oor whites resent seeing a Negro more prosperous than they" (*FF* 138). Likewise, education threatens the racial hierarchy. When Kenneth wants to report the death of Bud Ware to Henry Lane, the County Commissioner of Health and names as his murder George Parker, the brother of Sheriff Harper, the sheriff scolds him a being spoilt by "eddication" (*FF* 101). He even threatens to lynch

him since Kenneth has unknowingly violated the unwritten but deeply inscribed law of white supremacy by assuming equal justice for white-on-black violence.

Kenneth Harper's newly gained insights into the true nature of lynching and race relations in the South ultimately make him abandon his initial accommodationist stance and his final recognition that "Bob is right! Something must be done" (*FF* 72-73) disqualifies any apologetic approach to lynching as appropriate for dealing with the reality of lynching. Kenneth Harper "begun to comprehend the delicate position a Negro always occupies in places like Central City - in fact, throughout the South" (*FF* 73). The "Negro" is

> a chip of wood floating on the surface of a choppy sea, tossed this way and that by every wind that blew upon the waters. He must of necessity be constantly on his guard when talking with his white neighbors, or with any white men in the South, to keep from uttering some word, some phrase which, like a seed dropped and forgotten, lies fallow for a time in the brain of the one to whom he talks, but later blossoms forth into that noxious death-dealing plant which is the mob. (*FF* 73)

He realizes that his former conviction of economic growth does not further but prevent racial reconciliation as "the more intelligent and prosperous the Negro and the more ignorant and poor the white man, the graver the danger, for in the mind of the latter are jealousy and ignorance and stupidity and abject fear of the educated and successful Negro." "Like a scroll slowly unwinding before his eyes" (*FF* 74) Kenneth at last recognizes the deceptiveness of his interpretation. As a result he changes into a "determined and purposeful and ardent worker" (*FF* 149), a decision which is rewarded with the love of Jane Phillips.

5.5. Violence in the Formation of Black Masculinity and as a Mode of Resistance

More pessimistic about the possibilities of racial reconciliation or interracial alliances than *The Marrow of Tradition*, White's novel registers even more visibly the disappointment over the still unsolved problem of lynching. It disqualifies accommodationism as well as interracial cooperation and sameness as appropriate to solve the race problem or abolish lynching. In his attempt to dramatize the frustration over the failure of reconciliation, White mirrors Chesnutt by enacting alternative modes of resistance to lynching as well as the inescapability of the bipolarity of race as the disabling of African-American masculinity. Similar to Chesnutt and Griggs, White features two characters exemplifying two diverging approaches toward solving the race problem as well defining African-American manhood. Yet, while *The*

Marrow of Tradition and *The Hindered Hand* valorize at least one of their proposed alternative reactions to lynching as appropriate or at least promising, *The Fire in the Flint* disqualifies Kenneth's accommodationist and reconciliationist attitude as well as Bob's "ennobling" violence as providing a viable model for masculinity as well as mode of resistance to lynching. What further distinguishes White's novel from its predecessors is its valorization of violence as a mode of resistance and a defining feature in the construction of masculinity. While Chesnutt excludes violence as ennobling yet unfeasible form of resistance as well as marker of masculinity, White is far less moralizing in his usage of violence and marks a growing radicalization in African-American resistance texts.

African-American responses to lynching from the very beginning included the possibility of militant resistance. John L. Mitchell, editor of the black newspaper *Richmond Planet*, condemns accommodationism and instead favors active and, if necessary, armed resistance.[28] Frederick Douglass warns that if the South should not abstain from violence and abandon lynching, African-Americans would eventually tire of patience and mimic the violence of the mob.[29] Even Ida B. Wells-Barnett recommends "that a Winchester rifle should have a place of honor in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give" (SH 70).[30] A final example for the valorization of violence is Mary Powell Burrill's anti-lynching play *Aftermath* (1919), which features a young African-American man who returns from WWI and learns that his father has been lynched. He despairs over the hypocrisy of whites who send black troopers to Europe to make the world save for democracy and lynch them at home. Knowing that revenge means suicide, he nevertheless takes his gun and avenges his father's death.[31] However, those warnings function as an exclamation mark to the attempt to involve whites into the fight against lynching. The predominant strategy of resistance is to create interracial sameness and represent lynching as a threat not only to the physical well-being of African-Americans but American civilization in general. White, however, abandons the hope for interracial alliances predicated upon the demonstration of African-American sameness with whites in terms of civilizational standards. He propagates a new black self-confidence which encompasses violence as both a form of (suicidal yet glorious) resistance as well as marker for black manhood. Simultaneously, however, he chronicles

[28] See Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 164-65, 185-86.
[29] See Frederick Douglass, "Lynch Law in the South," *North American Review* 155 (1892): 17-24.
[30] For Mitchell and Wells see also Brundage, "Black Resistance" 281.
[31] Mary Powell Burrill, *Aftermath*. *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*, eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (1919; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 82-91.

the impossibility of alternative African-American gender constructions owing to the confines imposed by racial essentialisms.

At the beginning of the novel, the brothers Kenneth and Bob Harper extrapolate two diverging attitudes toward violence. From the start, Bob Harper incorporates violence as a possible reaction to racial injustice. His experiences with Southern racism have made him a character easily given to passion and anger and he is introduced as "the natural rebel" (*FF* 24). Bob rejects Kenneth's accommodationism as futile and instead announces that "[i]f they ever bother me, I'm going to fight – and fight like hell" (*FF* 131). What finally brings him to resort to violence is the rape of his sister Mamie. Aware that revenge means certain death, he nevertheless kills her white rapists. The depiction of Bob's reaction to rape and his resolving to violence discusses the applicability of violence for the construction of black masculinity. On the one hand, the dominance of racial essentialisms and the accompanying establishing of exclusive differences (instead of sameness as the basis for reconciliation or interracial alliances) renders violence the only possible reaction to white racism and Bob's choice to accept a certain death in order to avenge the rape of his sister is described as a manly decision: "He'd show 'em [the mob] a 'damned nigger' knew how to die! Like a man!" (*FF* 234). Bob's masculinity is not modeled after the gentleman ideal of restraint but evolves as the incorporation of a newly developed conception of physical masculinity and the revaluation of manly impulses as antidote to an effeminized culture of "long-suffering patience" (*FF* 66) as represented by Kenneth.[32] Bob is filled with a "blind, unreasoning fury" (*FF* 230), which finally breaks out. On the other hand, the incorporation of violence for the construction of black masculinity is a cul-de-sac as Southern culture denies African-Americans the same access to violence as whites. While lynching as the protection of white womanhood ennobles and revives white masculinity, the same logic is barred to African-Americans. In that respect, Bob's death is prefigured by the murder of Bud Ware. Ware, a black man, is shot by George Parker, the brother of Sheriff Parker, when Ware finds him in bed with his wife Nancy.[33] Bud Ware acts for the "preservation of the sanctity of the home, protection of the purity of womanhood" (*FF* 97) and tries to shield his wife from rape. However, predicated upon the othering of deviant behavior Southern culture regards black women as naturally promiscuous and disreputable and therefore not worthy of protection: "They ain't no nigger gal that's pure after she's reached fo'teen years ol'" (*FF* 103). Black violence as a reaction to rape is therefore perceived

[32] See for example Brandt 249-51, 267 and Rotundo, *American Manhood* 251-55.

[33] To prevent the representation of African-American women as prostitutes, the relationship between Nancy Ware and George Parker is not consensual but the result of extortion. Parker threatens to have Bud arrested for illegally selling alcohol if Nancy doesn't consent.

differently than white violence. As such, the employment of violence for the construction of black masculinity is almost impossible as it is integrated into the Manichean bipolarity and interpreted not as motivated by chivalry but seen as the outcome of a savage lust for blood. Bob Harper's decision to avenge his sister's death therefore on the one hand exemplifies the impossibility of violence for African-American men but on the other hand it testifies to the desolate situation of African-Americans in the South. In that respect, Bob is similar to Josh Green who is ready to "throw away his life in a hopeless struggle" (*MT* 285) in order to regain self-respect and resist black exploitation and oppression.

His brother Kenneth is a "pacifist" (*FF* 24), who rejects Bob's attitude and regards violence as "foolish" and "certain death" (*FF* 264). However, after having learnt about the rape of his sister and the lynching of his brother, he abandons his pacifism and instead states that "Bob had been right! Bob had been a man!" (*FF* 271). Kenneth revalorizes violence as the only form of opposition left open to African-Americans and his brother's attitude as suicidal yet ennobling and manly form of resistance. He finally recognizes the inadequacy of his initial accommodationism as well as the impossibility of his intention to avoid the race problem. In fact, it is his initial convictions which finally lead to his own lynching and the frustration of any attempt to racial reconciliation. When Kenneth learns about the violation of his sister and the death of his brother he declines Mrs. Ewing's inquiries to treat her daughter by stating that "if by raising one finger I could save the whole white race from destruction, and by not raising it could send them all straight down to hell, I'd die before I raised it!" (*FF* 279). However, Kenneth finally overcomes his passions and impulses to run amuck and into a certain death. His responsibility toward his mother and sister is more demanding than suicide and as a worthy representative of the old gentleman ideal Kenneth not only demonstrates extreme self-restraint but also shows altruism for the sake of his family and the Ewings. But rather than figuring this decision as the final and definite form of African-American masculinity as in *The Marrow of Tradition*, Kenneth's selflessness and the mastering of his impulses lead to his lynching. When fifteen members of the KKK observe him leaving the Ewings' house, they automatically assume that he has raped Mrs. Ewing and her daughter. The prevalence of racial essentialisms and racist stereotypes disables the construction of a gentlemanly African-American masculinity so that Kenneth's lynching dramatizes the ultimate disabling of interracial alliances as a possible solution to the race question. Furthermore, it precludes the formation of an alternative African-American male gender identity as has been outlined before in the discussion of Bob Harper.

The Fire in the Flint abandons the signification of violence as an indicator for an underdeveloped and uncivilized mind and lower-class descent. Unlike Chesnutt, who at once appreciates and rejects Josh Green's violent stance in favor of restraint and self-discipline, White incorporates violence as liberating, honorable, and even revitalizing form of resistance despite the simultaneous demonstration of its unfeasibility. Kenneth's fight is thus a shedding of limiting confines and his rebirth as a man. After having been informed about the death of his brother and the rape of his sister, he is stripped of "all the superficial trappings of civilization" and "[t]he fire that lay concealed in the flint until struck, now leaped up in a devastating flame at the blows it had received!" (*FF* 268-269). When he is attacked, Kenneth fights "madly, desperately, gloriously" with "superhuman strength" (*FF* 297) born out of frustration and embitterment. Similar to McBane, Kenneth removes civilization as a limiting corset but White is different in his valorization of this shedding. Kenneth's transformation into "the primal man – the wild beast" (*FF* 269) is not represented as degeneration into savagery but as rejuvenating liberation from a moderation Kenneth has now recognized as futile and deceptive. What further distinguishes Kenneth's violence from McBane's is the nature of its motivation. While McBane kills out of boredom, Kenneth acts in self-defense. His final struggle therefore has to be read as the dramatization of the situation of African-American in the South, which valorizes and naturalizes violent resistance as the normal reaction to white aggression. In this way, *The Fire in the Flint* registers black frustration over the impossibility to abandon the racial bipolarity and representation of African-Americans as Other, which would have been the necessary prerequisite for the formation of interracial alliances. White regains violence as a possible means for African-American male gender constructions while simultaneously discussing the realization of such a violent attitude. Yet, Kenneth's and Bob's resolving to violence is not represented as irrational or marker for an uneducated mind. Rather, their decision to sacrifice their life in a "hopeless struggle" at once chronicles the still profoundly desperate situation of African-Americans after WWI and awards their masculinity with a tragic greatness no other character in the novel is able to achieve. White's different estimation of violence is the result of his insight into the despondency of interracial alliances. Kenneth's lynching thus becomes his final and most brutal initiation into the realism of Southern racism.

5.6. Race as Public Image

The Fire in the Flint dramatizes and condemns the persistence of essentialisms and sketches the limitations of black resistance to lynching. The most decisive departure from the model established by Chesnutt, Wells, and Johnson is the surrender of the attempt to form interracial alliances. Instead, White propagates the necessity of an increased black self-confidence as prerequisite for a unilateral solution of lynching. Crucial for the development of an independent and positive African-American identity which is not defined by absence is the disposal of the prevalent representation of African-Americans as Other and a persistent racial essentialism, which, according to JanMohamed, naturalizes the racial hierarchy and the accompanying inscription of power relations.[34] In *The Fire in the Flint*, resistance to lynching largely evolves as the removal of the notion of an innate African-American inferiority and the development of a positive alternative African-American identity trough the exposing of the pretentious nature of race. Rather than being an innate trait, white superiority as well as black inferiority is merely a form of imposed knowledge which justifies black oppression. White exposes the purely discursive quality of white superiority by pointing to the divergence between real and ideal, that is, between self-imposed defaults and actual enactment. As a result, he destabilizes established power relations by demonstrating the unsubstantiatedness of white supremacy and racist black stereotypes and de-naturalizes the racial hierarchy, which in turn enables the development of a positive African-American identity.

White regards the persistence of racist stereotypes as hampering African-American progress and the development of an identity outside the confines of an oppressive discourse. Having internalized the racial essentialism propagated through the rhetoric of lynching, African-Americans impair their own progress through a low self-esteem and the assumption of their own inferiority. Typical for White's argumentation in *The Fire in the Flint*, he identifies economic motivations behind this heteronymously constructed ignorance: "Kenneth saw his people kept in the bondage of ignorance. Why? Because it was to the economic advantage of the white South to have it so" (*FF* 91). Unlike Chesnutt, White does not concentrate entirely on universalizing the consequences of lynching and the accompanying rhetoric to clarify the necessity of their involvement and resistance to a white readership. Rather, White sees the need of informing an African-American audience about the dangers of black self-deceptiveness. To clarify, he translates it into a threat to the physical well-being of Mrs. Emma Bradley, one of Kenneth's patients, who refuses to be treated by a black physician and

[34] See JanMohamed 86.

prefers the incompetent but white Dr. Bennett instead. Having internalized the Manichean bipolarity, she judges Kenneth's professional skills as a physician solely by his race so that even the most highly qualified black doctor is estimated less than any of his white colleagues. However, the white Dr. Bennett, whose lack of professional skills as well as cultural refinement White inscribes among other things into his sloppy and careless outer appearance, incorrectly diagnoses Mrs. Bradley's critical appendicitis as mere stomach ache. White therefore propagates black self-confidence and self-esteem as necessary for black advancement but he also points to the problems of abandoning the "slave mentality" (*FF* 48). His novel contributes to this project by unmasking race and racist stereotypes as public image.

To expose the signification of whiteness and white superiority as a mere façade, *The Fire in the Flint* particularly focuses on the representation of lynching as spectacle. White here reiterates the prominent conception of lynching as public demonstration and performance of whiteness. He reiterates this mode of presenting race but modifies it for the sake of resistance. In his novel, the description of a ritual of initiation of the local Ku Klux Klan becomes the enactment of race but not white supremacy. White ridicules the meeting as a clumsy enactment of bizarre, absurd, and empty rites, whose decorous formality is constantly disturbed by an uncouth crowd coughing, sneezing, and warding off mosquitoes, a fire in the underbrush and the inept attempts of some KKK members to extinguish it. More "circus" (*FF* 128) than meeting, the Klan's leaders are mocked as incapable of providing the sensible guidance urgently required to educate a crowd consisting of "simple minds" and "stodgy, phlegmatic, stupid citizens" (*FF* 127,123). White makes this public spectacle the instance for disclosing what he regards as the true makeup of whiteness. Similar to the dominant representation of lynching as spectacle, the KKK meeting is the public performance of race, but rather than signifying white superiority it becomes the demonstration of white degeneracy and testimony to their lack of civilizational refinement. White reiterates with a significant difference the dominant representation of lynching as spectacle to expose the divergence between the defaults of white supremacy and the actual depravity of whiteness. That way, he not only exposes the purely discursive quality of race but also challenges the dominant signification of lynching as the manifestation of white supremacy. In brief, race and the system of white supremacy are revealed as a "smoke-screen to hide something more sinister" (*FF* 92), namely, a system of economic exploitation.

White not only exposes the constructed nature of race but he also re-inscribes the existence of racist stereotypes and lynching with a new meaning. Rather than being the expression of self-assuredness and true superiority, White makes them a testimony to a lack of

white self-confidence and the instability of allegedly innate racial traits. Similar to Bhabha's interpretation of colonial discourse and the employment of stereotypes, White redefines lynching not as reaction to black inferiority but as manifestation of white fears over the loss of their superiority. Bhabha states that although allegedly innate and "common knowledge," the colonial stereotype relies on continuous repetition so as if its signifying process cannot be proved otherwise. The existence of the colonial stereotype therefore testifies to the colonial subject's fear of a loss of authority and dominance.[35] Kenneth's initiation exposes the divergence between the actual situation in the South and the claim to white supremacy. Through him, White reiterates the system of white supremacy but reinterprets it to signify not innate racial superiority but white male fear of the loss of power and disability to enact control over those it pretends to dominate, which not only includes African-Americans but also white women. The lynchers waylaying Kenneth are not only concerned about the safety of Mrs. Ewing and her daughter but even more about the possibility of a consensual relationship, something which according to the tenets of white supremacy is unthinkable. Their doubts therefore expose white womanhood as a purely discursive design employed to justify lynching. They decide to circulate that they intercepted before he could fulfill his deed in order to uphold the image of lynching as the public enactment of white supremacy and the purity of white womanhood. To prevent any insinuation to the existence of a consensual relationship they prepare a story as they "can't let the niggers know a white woman willingly went to bed with a nigger" (*FF* 292).[36] Another example clarifying to Kenneth and the reader the emptiness of white supremacy is Roy Ewing's secret visit to Kenneth's office. Ewing has caught a venereal disease from a secret affair with a black girl in Atlanta and in order to conceal his affair from Dr. Bennett and the public he contacts Dr. Harper. The much proclaimed declaration of white superiority and the accompanying othering of African-Americans as essentially inferior is exposed as mere eclecticism and dropped whenever it seems agreeable to preserve its public performance. The destabilization of race as an innate trait also has consequences for the conception of lynching. As has been outlined before, lynching is usually represented within the context of white racial supremacy and African-American degeneracy. Yet, when lynching is not the outcome of chivalrous behavior and not for the protection of white wom-

[35] Bhabha 78. Griggs forwards a similar interpretation of colonial discourse. In *The Hindered Hand*, Maul states "a man's manhood is exceedingly feeble when it has to have an army of sentinels to be always on the alert, to keep somebody from kidnapping it" (*HH* 278).

[36] Equally, intermarriage laws are the manifestation of the white man's fear of consensual relationships between white women and black men and prolong a system of black female exploitation: "the laws were passed because white men wanted to have their own women and use coloured women too without any law interfering with their affairs or making them responsible for the consequences" (*FF* 92-93).

anhood, it becomes a testimony to the white man's fear over the loss of his allegedly innate racial authority. That way, White undoes any essentialism and re-inscribes lynching with a new meaning: it is the attempt to subjugate African-Americans through the installment of (unfounded) racial knowledge in order to sustain a system of white male and economic superiority and hide it behind the mask of chivalry. In short, lynching does not manifest white superiority but it testifies to the white man's fear of decreasing power.

In a similar way, White reveals the dominant representation of blackness as imposed to justify lynching and a system of black oppression and prevent black emancipation. The performative quality of blackness is exposed as part of Kenneth's initiation when he meets Reverend Ezekiel Wilson. During a mass he encounters him for the first time and is at once appalled by his vernacular speech, his "fat, pompous, oily" appearance and his ostentatious and theatrical sermon, which involves the congregation more through emotion rather than reason. Doubting whether "this religious fervour [is] the best thing for his people" (*FF* 91) and repelled by Wilson's "coarseness" (*FF* 105), Kenneth has serious reservations concerning the preacher's qualities as a leader of his people. Yet, later Wilson drops the "benevolent mask which he wore most of his waking hours" (*FF* 105). He explains to Kenneth and the reader that his enactment of blackness is motivated by the necessity of negotiating his peculiar position as an educated African-American. For his congregation he enacts "a preacher that's [not] too far above them." In order to be able to lead his people he "has to talk with them in [a] language they can understand" (*FF* 106). As a young preacher he tried to preach "religion based on intelligence instead of just on feeling and emotion." Soon, however, he had to recognize that he was unable to reach his congregation. He had to "come down to my folks if I wanted to do any good at all" (*FF* 107). For a white "audience," he wears the mask of the "white man's nigger" (*FF* 108). The existence of an educated African-American is a menace to the racial hierarchy as it implies the danger of sameness or even black superiority. Therefore, Wilson cheats whites into believing that he conforms to the stereotype of the harmlessly amusing "Negro." In a way he anticipates Ralph Ellison's nameless protagonist in *Invisible Man,* who is advised "to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or burst wide open."[37] To be sure, Wilson's enactment of white expectations of blackness is not a call to violence but rather demonstrates the delicate position held by African-Americans in the South. He exposes the performative quality of racist essentialisms and undermines the validity of the racial hier-

[37] Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Vintage, 1995) 16.

archy. The dopey, harmlessly amusing "good old darky" is only the projection of white ideas, which can also be used to manipulate whites.

Dr. Williams, the resident black physician, exposes the put-on quality of blackness. Unlike Wilson, however, he wears the mask of the "white man's nigger" not only as a defense but uses it to actively manipulate whites like Ed Stewart. When Stewart plans to sound Williams on Kenneth and the founding of the NNFCPL by using the "old custom of flattering and praising fulsomely the Negro," Dr. Williams easily sees through his deception. Rather than being exploited, Williams plays with Stewart "as it is done so often by the Negroes in the South with the whites, though the latter, in their supreme confidence that they belong to an eternally ordained 'superior race,' seldom realize how often and how easily they are taken in by Negroes" (*FF* 222, 221-22). Although Dr. Williams, driven by jealousy, manipulates Stewart against a member of his own race, his enactment of blackness nevertheless exposes race as nothing but the result of white projections and accordingly removes any claim to white superiority based on the assumption of African-American inferiority. Unlike Chesnutt, who still regards the congruence between inside and outside as the manifestation of a civilized character and uses Tom Delamere's cakewalk to demonstrate his deviance from this ideal (but also to expose race as mere pretense), White revalues deception as a possible form of resistance against white othering, which fits into his overall strategy of advocating black self-help and an increased African-American self-confidence through the shedding of imposed distorting self-perceptions and othering.

6. "What a Mighty Foe to Mob Violence Southern White Women Might Be" – Motherhood as Sameness in Domestic Anti-Lynching Texts

The January 1911 edition of the *Crisis* contains a drawing of a gray-haired black woman reading a newspaper (see Fig. 6-1). The woman has collapsed over the news that an African-American, presumably her son who can be seen in a photograph, has been lynched. Although it is not discernible whether she is crying or has fainted her face expresses profound sorrow. The drawing exemplifies another attempt to create sameness where the rhetoric of lynching tries to produce otherness. Yet, unlike Chesnutt, Wells, or Johnson, the creation of sameness does not evolve as the representation of lynching as an impediment of civilization. Instead of agitating rationally against lynching the drawing relocates lynching in the domestic sphere of motherhood, translates it into a domestic language of maternal suffering and invites affective identification. Although the newspaper headlines reproduce traditional rationalizations for lynching which include the victim's confession, the representation of the mob as civilized, and lynching as manifestation of the "American People['s] Love [of] Justice and Fair Play," they are all overlaid with the drawing's focus on maternal grief. Rather than exposing lynching as the result of misrepresentations and a threat to civilization, or trying to lobby support through legal action and public exposure, the impact of the drawing comes not from its attempt to rationally convince viewers of the injustice of lynching but through the affective empathy with maternal suffering.

6.1. Domestic Anti-Lynching Texts – Historical Conditions of Development

Domestic anti-lynching texts constitute a very widespread form of resistance to lynching. The texts compiled in this chapter form an alternative domesticated account of lynching which reinterprets and resituates the outcome of lynching in the domestic sphere and thus domesticates the threat posed by lynching. Motherhood is central for all domestic anti-lynching texts both as reflective basis of lynching as well as a jeopardized ideological concept.[1] Lynching is

[1] For motherhood and the "cult of true womanhood" see especially Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860," *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio UP, 1976) 21-41 and Gerda Lerner, *The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in American History* (New York: Oxford UP, 1979). Most fundamental for the notion of true womanhood is the role of motherhood as *the* essen-

represented as the psychological and emotional pain of an individual black mother and redefined as a savage and primitive form of violence. Domestic anti-lynching texts recontextualize the political problem of lynching through its relocation in the private sphere of motherhood and stage their resistance to lynching as a sentimental allegory of threatened motherhood.[2] Furthermore, domestic anti-lynching texts present an alternative history of lynching from a black female/ maternal point of view, which had been silenced by the dominant discourse, and use domestication for propagandistic reasons to make the devastating effects of lynching emotionally comprehensible.[3]

The dramatization of the imperilment of motherhood, family life and the moral development of children through the negative influence of lynching can be found as part of a larger resistance strategy in many anti-lynching texts. Wholly domestic anti-lynching texts relying exclusively on this strategy of resistance, however, did not emerge until the second half of the 1910s. Paradoxically, the heyday of domestic anti-lynching texts during the 1920s and early

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tial female quality. Dominating the domestic sphere, the mother represents the emotional center of the family, is the source of spiritual recreation, and is responsible for the education of the children. "[T]he attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues – piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. […] With them she was promised happiness and power." Hall contends that the identification of white with true womanhood make her worthy of protection and explain her centrality in apologetic lynching representations as the center and the future of the race. See Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 151ff.

[2] For motherhood as crucial component of sentimental rhetoric see E. Ann Kaplan, *Motherhood and Representation: The Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama* (London: Routledge, 1992); Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-century America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985); Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Design: The Cultural Work of America Fiction 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985).

[3] See Judith L. Stephens, "Anti-Lynch Plays by African American Women: Race, Gender, and Social Protest in American Drama," *African American Review* 26.2 (1992): 329-39; Judith L. Stephens, "Lynching Dramas and Women: History and Critical Context," *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*, eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) 3, defines lynching dramas as a distinct genre in American culture. According to her, a lynching drama is "*a play in which the threat or occurrence of a lynching, past or present, has major impact on the dramatic action*." As a distinctly womanist/ feminist literary tradition lynching plays share three commonalities: the domestic sphere as setting; alternative modes of expression like poetry or prayer; and women as messengers relating the story of a lynching. Stephens particularly highlights the womanist/ feminist tradition of lynching dramas. The fight against lynching in those plays concentrates mainly on challenging the "black beast rapist" and the ideal of true womanhood as the foundation of lynching. For a further elaboration on her theory of lynching dramas as distinct genre in American literary tradition see Judith L. Stephens, "Racial Violence and Representation: Performance Strategies in Lynching Dramas of the 1920s," *African American Review* 33.3 (1999): 655-71. Analyzing plays by black female authors of the Harlem Renaissance, Elizabeth Brown-Guillory also contends that a majority of the plays written at that time were protest plays. She marks four major objectives of those plays, two of which also occur in domestic anti-lynching texts: the hypocrisy of white Christianity, mostly in relation to lynching, and the fact that black soldiers were fighting to make the world for democracy but were denied those very rights back home in the USA. See Elizabeth Brown-Guillory, *Their Place on the Stage: Black Women Playwrights in America* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988) 3, 5. See also Helen Rich Chinoy and Linda Walsh Jenkins, *Women in American Theatre* (New York: Richards Rosen Press, Inc. 1979) 130. For an interpretation of *Rachel*, *A Sunday Morning in the South*, *Safe*, *Blue-Eyed Black Boy*, *Mine Eyes Have Seen*, *Aftermath* and *Climbing Jacob's Ladder* as female propaganda plays see Kathy A. Perkins, introduction, *Black Female Playwrights: An Anthology of Plays Before 1950*, ed. Kathy A. Perkins (Bloomington Indiana UP, 1989) 9-12.

1930s coincides with a perpetual decrease in lynchings.[4] Why, then, did so many black as well as white writers take up a topic which, according to the annual statistics, was slowly disappearing? Part of the answer to this question is that during that time the news coverage of lynchings reached unprecedented heights. Lynching was given massive and nationwide attention in the press and a few highly "sensational" lynchings were made into the pet object of the yellow press. Additionally, public opinion concerning lynching was slowly changing. While at the turn of the century lynching was perceived (if at all) as a regionally limited problem of minor importance, scientific studies and the development of organized resistance as for example the NAACP with its massive publicity work and lobbying for anti-lynching legislation exposed the rape myth as an ideological creation and declared lynching a national menace and disgrace. James Weldon Johnson, for example, names as one of the greatest achievements of the anti-lynching campaign the growing public awareness of lynching. Without the NAACP "it is most likely that the Aiken lynching would have passed as an ordinary piece of news" (TA 90). It now, however, gets nationwide attention and condemnation. The combined impact of an increased national visibility of lynching in the mass media and the simultaneous discrediting of lynching gave the fight against lynching a new dynamism, which also found an expression in domestic anti-lynching texts.

Starting in the decades before WWI, increased news coverage combined with the sensationalism of the yellow press as well as technological developments in communication and photography gave lynching a vividness it had never attained before. Reporters were thus able to broadcast their messages of black inferiority and white supremacy, and later also the horrors of lynching all over the country: "the mass media, together with the late-Victorian relish of the details of death, spread the image of rope and faggot far beyond the community in which each lynching took place."[5] Lynching was now able to reach a nationwide audience. Furthermore, also the way lynching was presented in the press changed. While at the turn of the century the number of up to 155 lynchings a year made investigative and profound news coverage almost impossible and rendered lynching an abstract crime with a nameless and faceless victim, the decrease in the number and increase in the brutality of the lynchings made it possible to concentrate on some very spectacular lynching. This occurs as an example with the lynching of Leo Frank in 1915 or with Jesse Washington in 1916.[6] The articles about

[4] For lynching totals see Brown, *Strain of Violence* 320-26; Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 8; Cutler 155-192; Dray viii; Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 134-35; Work 293.
[5] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 136.
[6] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 8, names the year 1892 as the climax of a wave of lynchings starting in the late 1880s. 1892 saw the lynching of 155 blacks and 71 whites. See also White, *Rope and Faggot* 34. He

their lynchings were now consumed by a public that was found to be increasingly concerned about the harmful effects of lynching on the economic and civilizational development of the South, but also the nation as a whole. Lynching came to be perceived as a symbol for Southern backwardness, which was "retarding the South's progress and, as a result, that of the entire nation."[7] In his study *Rope and Faggot*, Walter White defines lynching as a practice, by which "Southern whites have been handicapped and stunned in their mental and moral growth" (*RF* 6). It must have been equally disturbing to claim that lynching was harmful to the economic development. The most prominent proponent of this theory is Gunnar Myrdal, who in his book *An American Dilemma* states that racial animosities thwart economic progress. Increased interest in lynching also spurred the production of several other scholarly studies which all attributed to the demystification of the rape myth and the exposing of the ideological underpinnings of lynching. Sociological studies supplied ample evidence for the various motivations which lay behind lynching and thus brought about the slow demise of its most convincing rationale. They challenged the essentialist notions of scientific racism and employed a meticulous environmentalism as the determiner of personality or intelligence in order to dispel the still prevalent notion of the innate biological inferiority of the black race. The aforementioned studies published by sociologist Arthur Raper and the CIC are doubtlessly the most renowned in this field.[8] The nation's new perception of lynching, according to Jessie Daniel Ames, thus came about "not because we've grown more law-abiding or respectable but because lynchings became such bad advertising."[9]

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lists several very gruesome lynchings such as the lynchings of Mary Turner (1918), Henry Lowry (1920), J.P. Ivy (1925) and Sam Lowman (1925) and states that earlier lynchings were received by a largely indifferent public. A watershed event, which gave American lynching even international attention, was the Scottsboro Case and the accompanying ILD (International Labor Defense) sponsored speaking tour of Ada Wright, mother of Roy and Andy Wright, two of the nine defendants. The two standard histories of the Scottsboro case are Dan T. Carter, *Scottsboro: a Tragedy of the American South* (London: Oxford UP, 1971) and James Goodman, *Stories of Scottsboro* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994). See also the recently published book by Lita Sorensen, *The Scottsboro Boys Trial: A Primary Source Account* (New York: Rosen Pub. Group, 2004). For an excellent account of the speaking tour of Ada Wright including an extensive bibliography see James A. Miller, Susan D. Pennybacker and Eve Rosenhaft, "Mother Ada Wright and the International Campaign to Free The Scottsboro Boys, 1931-1934," *American Historical Review* 106 (2001): 387-430.

[7] Paula Giddings, *When and Where I Enter: The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow, 1984) 206. See also Hall, Revolt Against Chivalry 168f.

[8] See Giddings 238f. Giddings lists as proponents E. Franklin Frazier, Ashley Montagu, H.J. Muller, Otto Klineberg and Franz Boas. Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 160f., mentions as a center of pioneering sociological and legal research on lynching Howard Odum's Institute for Research in Social Science at Chapel Hill, North Carolina and enumerates as classical studies Arthur Raper's *The Tragedy of Lynching* and James E. Chadbourn's *Lynching and the Law*. Furthermore, Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 73f., points to Lily Hardy Hammond's 1914 study *In Black and White*, which also substitutes biological racism ("race prejudice") with environmentalism ("race consciousness"). Also psychoanalytical studies as by Helene Deutsch attributed to the changing attitude of lynching. Deutsch defined lynching and the accompanying rape charge as signifying to masochistic fantasies of white women. See Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 203, and Giddings 207.

[9] Louisville *Courier-Journal* (November 29, 1939) quoted after Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 169.

The flourishing of domesticated forms of resistance thus coincides with several social, technological, cultural and political developments which support the acceptability of these texts and satisfy the expectations of twentieth-century readers. The end of WWI marks a turning point as it saw growing urbanization and industrialization in the South (Southern industry, mainly textile industry, experienced an unprecedented boom, which made it the world's leader) and a crushing of regional isolationism. By 1930, the KKK was disappearing and the New Deal and CIO were on the rise while providing the context for sexual as well as racial reform.[10] The question still to be answered, however, is why of all possible forms of resistance it was domesticity that flourished most. To answer this question, one must take into account that at the end of the 1910s, women still were largely excluded from economic and political power and were confined to a static society. Female reformers, therefore, often replaced activity with sentiment and emotion and found the common experience of motherhood and domesticity as well as religious sentiment to be the basis for overcoming racial and class distinctions.[11] The 1920 conference of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) at Tuskegee, for example, also had two white women in their audience. Carrie Parks Johnson and Sara Estelle Haskin were invited to initiate a process of interracial cooperation. Overwhelmed by the spirit of the meeting, Johnson later commented that she saw in "the hearts of those Negro women […] all the aspirations for their homes and their children that I have for mine." She continues that "[m]y heart broke and I have been trying to pass the story on to the women of my race."[12] She was convinced that "from such contacts [between black and white women], and such only, can genuine understanding take place."[13] The increasing active involvement of women in anti-lynching organizations attributed to the amplified use of domesticity.[14] Moreover, white women, on the one hand, began to realize that lynching was not an exclusively racist discourse merely directed to African-Americans but also had sexist implications that patronized white women. On the other hand, the rise of an urban white middle-class with well educated, economically and socially independent women provided a reservoir

[10] See Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 168.
[11] See Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 105.
[12] Quoted after Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 89. See also Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 95 and 98f.
[13] Report of Director of Woman's Work, July 15, 1924, NU Papers, quoted after Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 99. Although the appeal to interracial alliances resounds with both black and white organizations, interracial organizations, however, were quite rare.
[14] For an historical overview of the involvement of women in anti-lynching see Mary Jane Brown, *Eradicating this Evil: Women in the American Anti-Lynching Movement, 1892-1940* (New York: Garland Publ., 2000).

of women willing and able to join organizations aiming to abandon this practice.[15] Campaigns like that of the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching (ASWPL) gave them the opportunity to challenge the accusation of being the rationale for lynching, to get involved in activities compatible with their traditional church and community roles and "it identified them with an ideal of social order that looked to the urban-industrial future rather than to the agrarian past."[16] A very prominent example for (predominantly) black female involvement in an anti-lynching project is the promotion of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill. In 1922 the NAACP initiated the Anti-Lynching Crusaders, a group of women led by Mary B. Talbert, which was intended to lobby support for the passage of the bill by enlisting one million women and one million dollars.[17] Popular female support broadening and even instigating the acceptance of female involvement in anti-lynching undertakings also came from Eleanor Roosevelt, who in 1934 began to take an active stance in racial matters such as the passage of the Costigan-Wagner-Bill.[18] Additionally, the concept of motherhood experienced a revaluation during the time around WWI. Increased immigration and ethnic pluralism stirred fears about cultural and moral degradation among Americans and as a reaction motherhood was redefined as a means for Americanizing immigrants. It was perceived

> as the most significant factor in assimilating increasing and potentially dangerous cultural diversity. If immigrant women could be taught to mother like white middle-class women, instilling in their children the values of the dominant culture, then the 'positive' aspects of their native cultures could thrive while the 'negative' features would die out. Hence, cultural harmony and national peace would result.[19]

Although not addressed in the context of immigration politics, this revived emphasis on motherhood as an institution of national significance most likely gave additional weight to the focus on the domestic.

[15] See Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 168. Hall contends that the new (individual) woman, who questioned her role in lynching both sexually as well as racially, was also the result of the secular suffrage campaign, the interracial movement, and the struggle for women's rights within the church.
[16] See Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 169f., 171. The ASWPL campaign will be dealt with in more detail in the following chapter.
[17] See Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 165.
[18] See Giddings 209.
[19] Ericka M. Miller, *The Other Reconstruction: Where Violence and Womanhood Meet in the Writings of Wells-Barnett, Grimké, and Larsen* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000) 64.

6.2. The Domestic Allegory

The use of domesticity has to be understood allegorically. Unlike Judith L. Stephens's interpretation of the domestic setting as the attempt to promote black respectability, this study will approach the use of domesticity and motherhood as the allegorical mediation of the black frustration over the failure of black emancipation and the attempt to stage resistance to lynching as an interracial necessity based on female empathy over motherhood as racially overlapping strategic essentialism.[20] The domestic setting certainly attributes to the prerequisite revocation of negative African-American stereotypes as Paula Giddings also rightly establishes.[21] Motherhood, marriage, and familial harmony, however, are concepts heavily fraught with ideological significance. The focus on domesticity therefore has to go far beyond a purely mimetic interpretation of those concepts. In fact, domestic anti-lynching texts are a form of resistance which employs domesticity as an allegory to find a sympathetic white female audience and mediate the horrors of lynching in sentimentalized terms as an attack on one of the nation's most treasured ideals.

In apologetic representations of lynching, the rape of a white woman allegorically retells the story of black strivings for equality and the jeopardizing of white superiority. Moreover, the ideological overdetermination of motherhood gives lynching the meaning as the defense of American civilization and an expression of white male superiority. Domestic anti-lynching texts subvert this allegorical dimension by re-appropriating the code of reference especially for motherhood and domesticity, and make lynching an attack on the nation's most treasured symbol of civilization.[22] In order to fully appreciate the use of domestic allegories in the struggle against racial discrimination, it is useful to take a look at the literary precursors of the texts analyzed here. In her study *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire*, Claudia Tate examines ante- and postbellum domestic novels by black female authors and points especially to the predominance of idealized domesticity of those novels. Rather than being an

[20] See for example Stephens's article "Lynching Dramas and Women." She attempts to define lynching dramas as a distinct literary genre and regards the domestic setting as one of the characteristics of anti-lynching plays by women. See especially 8-11 for her definition of lynching dramas. Perkins, introduction 2, lists the domestic setting and the focus on female characters as a feature of plays by women in general. The essentialist dimension of domestic anti-lynching texts can be seen in the effacement of social differences among black as well as white women and their representation as mothers as the prerequisite for interracial sameness.

[21] See Giddings 49. She explains that women who work outside their homes are perceived as unwomanly, which explains the setting of many anti-lynching plays by women. The occupation of for example Rachel's mother is also represented in respectable terms because as a seamstress she does not have to leave her home.

[22] Domestic anti-lynching texts make use of the same master code, that is, the idealization of motherhood. The use of established and acknowledged master codes probably intensified the acceptability of this form of resistance and gained domestic anti-lynching texts a respectability it would never have reached (especially among a white audience) through an overall rejection of white standards. For the use of allegory as a form of resistance see Slemon in chapter 2.

attempt at escapism, Tate holds that this domestic idealism has to be understood symbolically and formulaically as an allegory of political desires. Set in a time of severe social dislocations, the presentation of idealized stories of bourgeois courtship and marriage is not the attempt to efface rampant problems of racist violence, but to produce arguments on social reform. Domestic novels are

> allegorical performances of political desire that (re)tell a surface story about an exemplary marriage and a deeper story about the social climate that would promote such a marriage. Hence the story about ideal family formation refers implicitly to another - a public discourse about an equitable political system that distributes rewards on the basis of personal integrity, commitment, and hard work.[23]

They translate a racial code of protest into a gendered code of courtship and promote individual improvement and familiar harmony as the microcosmic realization of interracial reconciliation as well as racial, sexual, social, and political equality.[24] As a result, "the desire for social equality, which these novels represent in domestic figuration, reflects black people's chronic quest for civil liberty, a quest that has been and continues to be fundamental to virtually all aspects of their lives."[25] The concentration on family, marriage, and motherhood in post-Reconstruction domestic novels is thus "a fundamental cultural symbol of the Victorian era for representing civil ambition and prosperity as a nineteenth-century 'metonym for proper social order', a symbol that black women writers in particular used to promote the social advancement of African Americans."[26] These novels testify to a rather optimistic outlook on the improvement of racial relations and represent a very moderate form of resistance to the racist stereotyping and oppression of African-Americans, thereby calling for individual progress as the basis for national advancement. Domestic anti-lynching texts adopt the special focus on the domestic but abandon the domestic idealism and optimism concerning the possibilities for the improvement of race relations and constitute a form of resistance to lynching, which can be labeled "domestic tragedies in which racial *protest* displaces racial affirmation."[27] Angelina Weld Grimké's *Rachel* for instance exemplifies an altered deployment of

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[23] Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroines Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992) 101.
[24] See Tate 117.
[25] Tate 107. The use of domesticity is also an attempt to reclaim and redefine the domestic sphere as a place for female empowerment and political participation. See Tate 5. See also Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in US Women's History*, eds. Ellen Carol DuBois and Vicki L. Ruiz (New York: Routledge, 1990) 66-91 for an overview of female participation in the political sphere.
[26] Tate 5. Giddings 23 remarks that during the 1880s African-Americans had a rather positive outlook on their future and thought that lynching or racism in general was "an aberration that could be successfully challenged."
[27] Tate 17, emphasis in original. For the analysis of Grimké's dramas and short stories see 209-30.

domesticity and "marks a place where the domestic plots of social optimism become outmoded, and explicit depictions of social alienation and racial protest commence to satisfy the expectations of twentieth-century black readers."[28] *Rachel* and the other texts examined in this chapter constitute a form of resistance to lynching which expounds the threat of lynching by concentrating on the devastating consequences lynching has for motherhood. In that context, the use of motherhood has to be understood as a dual strategy: on the one hand, motherhood is employed as an essentialist, interracial commonality, employed to seek a sympathetic white female audience through the instigation of the latter's empathic identification with their sisters of color. Domestic anti-lynching texts call attention to shared maternal sensibilities which cross racial boundaries and use motherhood as the fertile ground for the construction of empathy, as the base for solidarity, and as recognition of a common commitment. Apart from the sentimental arousal of empathy, motherhood is also employed as the sacred symbol of American civilization. The destruction or disabling of motherhood thus becomes an attack on one of the foundations of American civilization.

6.3. Black Gender Respectability

The adoption of idealized white womanhood for the modeling of black female characters as counterstereotypes to the prevalent reduction of African-American women to promiscuous corporeality is an inevitable prerequisite. The necessity for the creation of counterstereotypes is for example specified in Grimké's "'Rachel' the Play of the Month: The Reason and Synopsis by the Author." Detailing the structure of her play, Grimké explains that she wanted to put on stage "the best type of colored people" in order to challenge the racialized stereotypical perception of African-Americans as "grinning, white-toothed, shiftless, carefree-set, given to chicken-stealing, watermelon-eating, always, under all circumstances, properly obsequious to a white skin and always amusing."[29] In *Rachel* and all other domestic anti-lynching texts, the revocation of racist stereotypes is therefore of central importance and an indispensable requirement for the invocation of interracial female solidarity as well as the designation of lynching as harmful to the concept of motherhood and civilization. To avoid redundancies in the description of the maternal protagonists, I will in the following focus first on Angelina Weld Grimké's *Rachel* as one of the earliest and probably most renowned and influential do-

[28] Tate 210.
[29] Angelina Weld Grimké, "'Rachel' the Play of the Month: The Reason and Synopsis by the Author," *Selected Works by Angelina Weld Grimké*, ed. Carolivia Herron (New York: Oxford UP, 1991) 415, 414.

mestic anti-lynching plays. Grimké's drama establishes an exemplary revocation of racist stereotypes which is paralleled by most plays in this chapter. Although not all domestic anti-lynching texts share Grimké's overt employment of sentimental language, most of them make use of melodramatic modes of characterization in order to present their African-American female characters in a reversal of racist stereotypes as utterly upright and decent characters modeled after white models of gender and class respectability.[30]

By modeling Rachel after the ideals of white motherhood, Grimké presents her in respectable terms comprehensible to and acceptable for white women and a white audience, shaped in its perception of femininity by the tenets of white womanhood. The construction of counterstereotypes in *Rachel* evolves by means of a candidly melodramatic mode of character development and the abandonment of complex characterizations in favor of a use of characters as personification or exemplification of one specific trait or quality, the most important being, of course, motherhood.[31] Grimké's deployment of sentimentality and melodramatic characterization (as well as plot development) has often been criticized as exaggerated.[32] Recently, however, this mode of presentation has experienced a new evaluation as the form best suited for the mediation of universally valid moral judgments by facilitating affective identification with, as well as delimitation from, characters clearly defined as either good or evil.[33] In Grimké's play, the identification of the audience is undoubtedly with Rachel and her family against the disembodied evil of white racial prejudices. Grimké counters prevailing racist stereotypes concerning African-American women with the sentimentally charged presentation of the Loving family as a harmonious, honest and respectable family, and with Rachel as the incarnation of the ideal of motherhood.

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[30] For the use of sentimentality see for example Shirley Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-century America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992) and Cathy N. Davidson, "The Novel as Subversive Activity: Women Reading, Women Writing," *Beyond the American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism*, ed. Alfred F. Young (DeKalb: Northern Illinois UP, 1993) 283-316.

[31] References to and quotes from *Rachel* (subsequently referred to in the text as *R*) are taken from Angelina Weld Grimké, *Rachel, Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*, eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (1916; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 27-78.

[32] See for example Sterling Allen Brown, *Negro Poetry and Drama* (New York: Arno Press, 1969) 129; Robert J. Fehrenbach, "An Early Twentieth-Century Problem Play of Life in Black America: Angelina Grimké's *Rachel*," *Wild Women in the Whirlwind: Afra-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance*, eds. Joanne M. Braxton and Andree Nicola McLaughlin (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1990) 97 and James V. Hatch, ed., *Black Theater, U.S.A.: Forty-Five Plays by Black Americans, 1847-1974* (New York: Free Press, 1974) 138. A summary of this critique can be found in Hull 117-24.

[33] See Udo J. Hebel, "'Sweet World of Motherhood'?: Angelina Weld Grimké's Rachel (1916) - Afroamerikanisches Melodrama zwischen Innovation und politischer Propaganda," *Amerikastudien/ American Studies* 41 (1996), 249f. and Stephens, "Anti-Lynch Plays by African American Women." For the use of a melodramatic mode of presentation see chapter two of this study.

6.3.1. Rachel as Paradigmatic Formulation of Motherhood

The stage instructions describing the setting as "a room scrupulously neat and clean and plainly furnished" (*R* 27) clearly reveal the Lovings as an upright and reputable family.[34] Their family life is utterly amicable and filled with hyperbolic demonstrations of mutual love and altruistic care as well as exchanges of affection in the form of ever-present kissing and hugging, playful teasing between the siblings and the use of pet names like "Ma dear," "Tom dear" or "chickabiddy." The eponymous female protagonist is depicted as the paradigmatic (though sentimentally overcharged) personification of the ideal of motherhood.[35] From her very first appearance on stage Grimké makes sure that Rachel is associated entirely with this ideal. Otherwise a responsible and obedient daughter, Rachel upon entering the stage explains her being one hour late as the result of having met "the dearest, cutest, darlingest little brown baby boy you ever saw," an incident which prompts her mother to comment that Rachel is "not happy unless some child is trailing along in [her] rear" (*R* 29). The first part of act one then further produces Rachel as the ultimate mother, who more than once declares that the fulfillment of her life lies in having children: "I think the loveliest thing of all the lovely things in this world is just […] being a mother!" (*R* 33). Exemplifying and prefiguring her motherly devotion for her own children is the "little brown baby boy," Jimmy, a neighbor's son, who she "nearly hug[s] […] to death" (*R* 29) and who she introduces to her mother as "my brown baby" (*R* 36). Rachel understands her assumed maternal designation as an almost divine annunciation and the disabling of her deepest wish as worse than death: "if I believed that I should grow up and not be a mother, I'd pray to die now" (*R* 33). In keeping with the religious implications of her name as biblical mother and one of the four Hebrew matriarchs, Rachel believes that God has spoken to her in a dream and predicted her motherhood.[36] (These religious implications, moreover, add further weight to the condemnation of lynching. In the book of Genesis, Jacob reminds Rachel that children are a gift from God [see Gen. 30:1-2], which in turn renders lynching the disabling of a divine plan). Accordingly, Rachel wants to "live for it [her child]" and "to protect and guard" her future child (*R* 34) although at the beginning of act one she does not yet know what to protect him from.

[34] For a more detailed analysis of the setting, especially the use of colors and paintings see Hebel 250-51.
[35] Grimké describes her as "a highly strung girl, a dreamer and an idealist" who reacts to "race prejudice." Synopsis from intro 23.
[36] "[O]nce I dreamed, and a voice said to me [...] "Rachel, you are to be a mother to little children." […] Ever since I have known how Mary felt at the Annunciation. […] God spoke to me through someone, and I believe" (*R* 33f.).

6.3.2. Motherhood as "Unattained Luxury" and Oppressive Discourse

So far, it seems that the modeling of the African-American maternal protagonists consists of the sentimentally exaggerated "blackening" of the concept of Victorian white motherhood.[37] Portrayed according to white standards of respectability, the maternal heroines revoke the racist stereotypes of black female promiscuity and provide the basis for interracial association. Nevertheless, such a reading is only able to partially grasp the scope of the domestic in the anti-lynching texts analyzed in this chapter. While it is certainly the adoption of motherhood for the portrayal of the maternal protagonists which enables and facilitates white female identification and emotional involvement, it would be misleading to regard domestic anti-lynching texts as an unequivocal celebration and espousal of the cult of true white womanhood. Rather, domestic anti-lynching texts also dramatize the impossibility and prevention of white Victorian motherhood for African-American women owing to their memory or experience of lynching. Domestic anti-lynching texts therefore evolve as the simultaneous demonstration of (attempted) identity and (factual) difference between black and white women. In fact, domestic anti-lynching texts can even be read as the rejection of Victorian motherhood as a model for respectable black femininity. Following Carby's analysis of Harriet Jacobs's novel *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, the demonstration of the impossibility of white womanhood as a model for black female respectability is a form of resistance. *Incidents* makes it evident that black women have to seek their identity outside the confines of the dominant white discourse, for "[t]o be bound to the conventions of true womanhood [is] to be bound to a racist, ideological system."[38] Juxtaposing the ideal of true white womanhood with the inapplicability to her own life, Jacobs exposes the ideological underpinnings of white womanhood and "reveal[s] the concept of true womanhood to be an ideology, not a lived set of social relations." Revealing the constructedness, hypocrisy, and inherent contradictions of white womanhood and Victorian motherhood, Jacobs "confront[s] an ideology that denie[s] her very existence as a black woman and mother, and, therefore, she ha[s] to formulate a set of meanings that implicitly and fundamentally questioned the basis of true womanhood."[39] The verbalization and subsequent deflation of the ideological underpinnings of lynching discourse also features prominently in some domestic anti-lynching texts. Newspapers, for example, often juxtapose the fiction and reality of white womanhood when they report that women were in the mob and involved in the shooting of the lynch victim, a behavior diamet-

[37] See also Hebel 253ff., who contends that the presentation of Rachel departs from a one-dimensional and melodramatic characterization at the end of the play when she decides in favor of her self-elected spinsterhood.
[38] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood* 50.
[39] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood* 49.

rically opposed to Victorian norms of feminine decency.[40] The majority of domestic anti-lynching texts, however, does not go so far as to question the veracity of Victorian motherhood but rather concentrates on demonstrating the inapplicability of the concept for black women. To be precise, the emphasis on interracial commonalities even presupposes to a certain degree the acceptance of both concepts and forbids the development of alternative black female gender roles. However, the demonstration of this inapplicability is also implicit in the rejection to participate and extend a discourse denying the existence of respectable black femininity. Ericka M. Miller in her analysis of Grimké's anti-lynching short stories "The Closing Door," "Blackness," and "Goldie" rightly explains that domestic anti-lynching texts are not written exclusively for a sympathetic white female audience but also attempt to reach African-Americans and instill within them the need to resistance. In particular, Grimké challenges the equation of black and white mothers and the applicability of the concept of white womanhood for African-American women.[41] Miller explains that Grimké "makes the point that black women at the turn of the century do not experience motherhood in the same way that white women do, even when the two *appear* to be similar in regard to class […] motherhood, as defined by white feminists, cannot be a burden to black women, for it is a still-unattained luxury."[42] Agnes Milton's murder of her child and rejection of motherhood in "The Closing Door" is a rejection of the only kind of motherhood offered to her as a black woman: "In other words, she refuses to participate in the cycle of violence that feeds on the children of young black mothers."[43] The disabling of motherhood in domestic anti-lynching texts thus embodies resistance to or rejection of the dominant racist discourse. The black female protagonists either abandon their wish of having children or kill their newborns to prevent them from being lynched. However, domestic anti-lynching texts offer no alternative gender roles for black women.[44] Domestic anti-lynching texts therefore combine the invocation of interracial commonalities to seek a sympathetic white female audience for the molding of a racially overlapping alliance against lynching with a more resistant, defiant and self-reliant condemnation of Victorian motherhood as part of an oppressive discourse. Paula Giddings traces this duplicity back to the middle of the nineteenth century: "Black women activists traversed a tricky and sometimes contradictory path in responding to the challenge. On the one hand they

[40] For the invalidation of the ideal of white womanhood see the following chapter.
[41] See Miller, *Other Reconstruction* 81.
[42] Miller, *Other Reconstruction* 82, emphasis in original.
[43] Miller, *Other Reconstruction* 86.
[44] Giddings 85 also mentions that black women had to "redefine morality and assess its relationship to 'true womanhood.'" The redefinition of black womanhood was achieved not by dividing the race along class lines but by "defending the history of all black women and redefining the criteria of true womanhood."

agreed with the fundamental premises of Victorian ethic. On the other hand, they opposed its racist and classist implications."[45] While the invocation of commonalities is directed toward a white audience, the demonstration of the inadequacy of the tenets of white womanhood for black women is directed toward a black audience. Domestic anti-lynching texts oscillate between the attempt to find an empathic white female audience and the demonstration of the need to resist an oppressive discourse.

6.3.3. Motherhood and Civilization

The second deployment of the domestic and especially motherhood links up with the ideological meaning of motherhood as the sacred sign of American civilization. Domestic anti-lynching texts have to be read as allegories of frustrated political aspirations and the dramatization of the need for interracial alliances for the preservation of the national ideal of motherhood. Just as post-Reconstruction novels are not escapist celebrations of domestic idealism, domestic anti-lynching texts are more than mere exemplifications of maternal grief. Owing to the ideological overdetermination of motherhood, the representation of lynching as an attack on this concept elevates a seemingly regional and domestic problem to one of national significance. The selection of the concept of Victorian motherhood as the means for representing lynching as an uncivilized practice is indicative of a larger strategy typical for anti-lynching texts ranging from the late 1880s to the early 1930s. As has been outlined in the previous chapters, the first instances of African-American resistance to lynching try to revaluate the connection between lynching and civilization. While apologetic lynching representations established lynching as the defense and ultimate expression of American civilization, anti-lynching texts reverse this connection in order to render lynching an obstacle for the progress of American civilization and resistance to lynching a defense of American civilization from the onslaught of savagery. Interracial alliances between for example the "better" classes of both races and the invocation of interracial, genteel commonalities are at the center of those attempts. Domestic anti-lynching texts adopt the juxtaposition of lynching and civilization as mutually exclusive categories. What distinguishes domestic anti-lynching texts from texts like *The Marrow of Tradition* or *Southern Horrors* is the figuration of civilization. While Chesnutt locates civilization as a set of genteel middle-class norms and values encapsulated by a specific social group, and which Ida B. Wells-Barnett makes white middle-class masculinity the supreme delimitation from savagery, domestic anti-lynching texts focus on the ideal

[45] Giddings 49.

of Victorian motherhood as the epitome of and future for American civilization. The allegorical dimension of domestic anti-lynching texts therefore lies in the exploitation of the metonymical association of motherhood and civilization. Domestic anti-lynching texts are allegories of resistance depicting lynching as destructive to institutions fundamental to civilization. They render the fight against lynching a necessary prerequisite for the progress of American civilization.

6.3.4. Conventions of Presentation

Interestingly, most domestic anti-lynching texts written between the 1910s and 30s are dramas. The narrowing down to one genre is to some extent attributable to the tradition-building character of *Rachel* and the topicality, popularity, and innovation of the genre during the first decades of the twentieth century. Especially the aforementioned debate between Alain Locke and W.E.B. Du Bois about the nature of African-American theater gave the theatre unprecedented publicity and relevance particularly as a medium for the dissemination of propaganda (at least in the eyes of Du Bois).[46] Furthermore, the possibility to get the often relatively short plays published in the *Crisis*, the founding of various theater groups such as the NAACP Drama Committee, the Krigwa Players, the Workers' Drama League, the Federal Theater Project, or the Harlem Experimental Theater as well as the establishment of such theater awards as the Krigwa Playwriting Contest and later the ASWPL contest for plays provided formerly unknown writers with the possibility to make their texts available for a larger (and often illiterate) audience, although it has to be mentioned that neither of the plays discussed here was a resounding public success and some were even never produced.[47] Nevertheless, the moderate attention awarded to *Rachel* made it a model – at least in terms of genre – for other writers. The most important reason why most domestic anti-lynching texts were written as dramas, however, is that the stage provided the best means for disseminating anti-racist propaganda. Schroeder defines the stage as the ultimate place to challenge prevailing racist stereotypes as "the mimetic power of theater to mirror reality in an unmediated way" intensifies the immediacy of anti-lynching texts. She adds that the often realistic mode of presentation "could vividly protest the oppression of its members." The general artistic conditions as

[46] For the Du Bois-Locke debate and early African-American theater see Samuel A. Hay, *African American Theatre: A Historical and Critical Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994).
[47] For a concise overview of the publication and production history see Perkins and Stephens 411-16.

well as the contemporary understanding of the dramatic genre therefore made the stage the ideal place for promoting resistance to lynching.[48]

The emphasis on propagandistic goals therefore influences the mode of presentation. Most anti-lynching dramas make use of stage realism, which, according to Patricia Schroeder, is the form most suitable for propagandistic goals because it presents one irrefutable and irrevocable statement. Stage realism also achieves three goals central for African-American female playwrights: "to protest racial discrimination, to correct degrading stereotypes, and to reclaim something of African-American women's unrecorded history."[49] Moreover, a realist mode of presentation offers the possibility to counter racist black female stereotypes by presenting "coherent and developing characters who are shaped by and respond to their environments."[50] The black female protagonists of domestic anti-lynching plays, however, are basically the result of a one-dimensional and melodramatic characterization and the adoption of the positive stereotype for white female respectability. While this adoption certainly revokes racist stereotypes, the African-American women in domestic anti-lynching plays are far from constituting complex characters. Yet, this stereotypical, essentialist, and one-dimensional characterization has to be read as determined by the propagandistic goals and strategies of domestic anti-lynching plays of concocting interracial sameness through the invocation of white female empathy. Owing to its fundamentally bipolar structure, the melodramatic mode of presentation is the ideal form for staging resistance to lynching as it enables the providing of a definite (condemning) judgment about lynching and presents black female protagonists modeled on accepted standards of morality with which the intended white female audience can easily identify. Moreover, the rejection of motherhood through the murder of newborns or self-elected spinsterhood departs from melodramatic conventions and represents a response to a racist environment. This slight but significant departure awards the character with a certain psychological depth without losing the likelihood of affective identi-

[48] Patricia R. Schroeder, "Remembering the Disremembered: Feminist Realists of the Harlem Renaissance," *Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition*, ed. William W. Demastes (Tuscaloosa: The U of Alabama P, 1996) 92. See also Wahneema Lubiano, "But compared to What?: Realism, Essentialism, and Representation in Spike Lee's *School Daze* and *Do the Right Thing*, and the Spike Lee Discourse," *Black American Literature Forum* 25.2 (Summer 1991) 262 and Fehrenbach.

[49] Schroeder 94. For the connection between the possibility of presenting alternative accounts of race, class and gender from a female point of view and a realistic mode of writing see also Joyce W. Warren, "Performativity and the Repositioning of American Literary Realism," *Challenging Boundaries: Gender and Periodization*, eds. Joyce W. Warren and Margaret Dickie (Athens: The U of Georgia P, 2000) 6.

[50] Schroeder 93. For an overview of African-American drama see Hay, *African American Theatre*; Errol Hill, ed., *The Theater of Black Americans: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Applause Theatre Book Publishers, 1987); Doris E. Abramson, *Negro Playwrights in the American Theatre, 1925-1959* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969); for black female drama see Perkins, introduction.

fication but even heightening it, as Hebel contends in his analysis of *Rachel*.[51] Domestic anti-lynching plays are therefore not so much the celebration of white womanhood as they are the condemnation of its disabling.

The employment of melodrama mirrors apologetic lynching representations which also present lynching as a struggle between good and evil – figured as the struggle between the two races – and employ a sentimental language about male chivalry and female fragility to describe it. Domestic anti-lynching texts to a large degree develop by the underlying pattern of apologetic representations, which, as has been stated in the introduction, is one of the defining features of African-American resistance to lynching until the mid-1930s. The Manichean allegory of race as a structuring principle, the use of (strategic) essentialism, othering and the understanding of class and gender as racial markers are features which determine the makeup of domestic anti-lynching texts. They adopt the idea of race as the dominant marker for difference but attempt the reappraisal of race through the redefinition of black gender and class respectability. They do, however, not attempt a reversal of the racial hierarchy but capitalize especially on interracial sameness in order to bridge the racial bifurcation and undermine the ideological rationales of lynching and black inferiority. This emphasis on interracial commonalities also explains the more or less unquestioned adoption of white standards of respectability. Trying to find a sympathetic white audience, anti-lynching texts revoke rampant racist stereotypes through the representation of African-Americans in already established and accepted terms and thus render them reliable representatives of civilization as well as trustworthy allies in the fight against lynching. Accordingly, domestic anti-lynching texts do not attempt to produce alternative definitions of class and gender roles in order to subvert the predominance of apologetic representations of lynching. Rather, they (largely) adopt the binary outlines for gender and class respectability, and therefore their models for middle-class male and female respectability evolve largely along the lines defined by the dominant discourse. The most visible incorporation of a white code of respectability is presumably the concept of Victorian motherhood as *the* most fundamental female quality and marker for true womanhood. Domestic anti-lynching texts do not challenge this ideal but disconnect it from its racial connotations and regard qualities such as one's motherly devotion to her children as universal and racially overlapping gender traits.[52] Setting up lynching as opposed to the na-

[51] See for example Hebel 253-56.

[52] See Tate 119. Class may sometimes be understood as metonymy of race due to the fact that black people often belonged to the social class of working poor. In African-American novels class prejudice is often erased, implying that the same is possible for race. The dissolving of class divisions in post-Reconstruction domestic novels is often an allegory for the possibility of overcoming racial boundaries.

tional ideal of motherhood as an indispensable institution for the progress of civilization, domestic anti-lynching texts remove one of the most essential strategies of lynching discourse: the association of lynching as the defense of civilization and manifestation of civilized behavior. Instead, lynching is branded as a barbaric, backward and savage practice and defamed as obstructing the progress of American civilization, while resistance against lynching, in turn, comes to be figured as civilizing mission and expression of genteel norms and values.

6.3.5. The Formulation of Black Masculinity in Domestic Anti-Lynching Texts

The redefinition of black masculinity is of equal importance. In apologetic representations African-American men are reduced to black beast rapists. Maternal suffering for the death of a son as the basis for interracial empathy, however, can only come from the moaning over the death of a reputable son. Georgia Douglas Johnson therefore repositions black male gender roles.[53] In *Safe*, Johnson uses dialogues about the impending lynching of Sam Hosea to introduce Sam and his mother as respectable characters.[54]

> John: […] I reckon his ma is plum crazy if she's heered they got him.
> Liza: I knows her. She's a little skinny brown-skinned woman. Belong to our church. She use to bring Sam along pretty regular all the time. He was a nice motherly sort of boy, not mor'n seventeen I'd say. (*S* 111)

Sam's characterization is a tightrope walk between a sentimentalizing depiction of Sam as a rather young and caring "motherly sort of *boy*" (*S* 111, emphasis mine) and the restitution of black masculinity which evades feminization or infantilization: "[H]im [Sam] working hard to take kere of his widder mother, doing the best he kin, trying to be a *man* and stan up for hisself" (*S* 112, emphasis mine). Johnson's correction of the dominant black male stereotype thus serves the double objective of resurrecting black masculinity as well as presenting Sam as sympathy evoking son. In *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* she also counters the stereotype of the black rapist by a construction of black masculinity that oscillates between a sentimental de-

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[53] Georgia Douglas Johnson, *Safe* (subsequently referred to in the text as *S*), *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*, eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (1929; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 110-115. For a general introduction to her plays see for example Brown-Guillory 6-8; Jeanne-Marie A. Miller, "Georgia Douglas Johnson and May Miller: Forgotten Playwrights of the New Negro Renaissance," *CLA Journal* 33.4 (1990): 349-366; Megan Sullivan, "Folk Plays, Home Girls, and Back Talk: Georgia Douglas Johnson and Women of the Harlem Renaissance," *CLA Journal* 38.4 (1995): 404-419. Her lynching plays are treated by Stephens, "Racial Violence and Representation"; "Anti-Lynch Plays by African American Women" and "'And Yet They Paused' and 'A Bill to be Passed': Newly Recovered Lynching Dramas by Georgia Douglas Johnson." *African American Review* 33.3 (1999): 519-22. See also Margaret B. Wilkerson, ed., *9 Plays by Black Women* (New York: A Mentor Book, 1986) xviii.

[54] Johnson probably had in mind the 1899 lynching of Sam Hose in Newnan, GA.

scription of Jack, distancing him from the stereotype of the black beast rapist and foregrounding his relation to his mother and sister ("Lynch my son? My son?" [*BBB* 118]; "Poor brother! Poor boy" [*BBB* 119]) and the inauguration of black masculinity as hardworking and intelligent prospective husband:[55]

> Rebecca: Well, there's one thing sure and certain: he's [Jack] not running after girls.
> Pauline: No, he shore don't. Just give him a book and he's happy. Says he's going to quit running that crane and learn engineering soons you get married. (*BBB* 117)

The delineation of black masculinity as husband again introduces the domestic discourse about marriage and family and renders him a son "worthy" to moan about.

In *Rachel*, the revocation of racist male stereotypes follows the melodramatic juxtaposition of good and evil as well as the extreme embellishment of the victim and the demonizing of the murderer, yet reverses the assignment of roles in the victim-murder/ rapist dichotomy. Using religious imagery, Ma Loving delineates her husband as "Saint" (*R* 40) and her son George as "a man" (*R* 41) who unselfishly sacrifices himself to help is father. However, she avoids the feminization of both by not depicting them as helpless and innocent victims. Rather, she replaces racialized outlines of hypersexualized and criminalized black masculinity with a defiant, tragically heroic, and almost savior-like notion of black masculinity dying to uphold their dignity, free will and in defense of their family: "There never lived anywhere – or at any time – any two whiter or more beautiful souls" (*R* 41). Simultaneously, Grimké juxtaposes her saint-like husband and son with their lynchers, who hypocritically claim to be "Christian people – in a Christian land" (*R* 40). What distinguishes her account of lynching from those in apologetic texts is a shift in the assignment of the role of the lynch victim from the white woman to the black male. Most notably, the white woman is markedly absent in her account of lynching. The reason for lynching is not rape, but justified (yet unfulfilled) black male political and economic emancipation. However, re-humanized and innocently suffering black masculinity is not at the center of this alternative lynching story. The cruelty of lynching is mediated more proficiently by depicting not the sufferings of the victim directly, but the effect of lynching on the surviving relatives of this victim, most specifically the mother. Richmond Barthé's sculpture "The Mother" (see Fig. 3-2) which has already been used to demonstrate the religious implications in the rhetoric of resistance, exemplifies this use of a domesticated form of resistance. Rather than lashing out at the oppressor, he focuses on the

[55] Georgia Douglas Johnson, *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* (subsequently referred to in the text as *BBB*), *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*, eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (1930; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 116-120.

victim of the mob and those who are left behind. He depicts a mother who in a pieta-like position is holding the body of her dead son in her lap. Significantly, Barthé avoids the representation of the actual lynching, but the son's face is inscribed with the narrative of the horror of the preceding lynching. His nudity renders him highly vulnerable. The mother's face directly confronts the viewer (when standing in front of the plastic) and gives expression to her profound grief and suffering.

6.4. The Representation of Lynching in Domestic Anti-Lynching Texts

The emphasis on commonalities instead of differences also has consequences for the representation of lynching. Domestic anti-lynching texts usually abstain from a direct and unmediated portrayal of the actual performance of lynching. The intrusion of lynching into the domestic sphere usually takes place by means of a messenger reporting the events, sound effects, narration, newspaper articles, or, according to Trudier Harris, is written into the bodies of the female protagonists. Analyzing *Rachel*, *Aftermath*, *A Sunday Morning in the South*, and *Blue-Eyed Black Boy*, she explains that the maternal protagonists of the plays are always elderly black women with physical infirmities, who possess "neither the spiritual fortitude nor the physical stamina that would suggest a stereotypical notion of strong black women."[56] Lynching has left a mark on the body of these women and rendered them helpless, which is also implied by their physical inability to leave the domestic sphere or call for help. By means of their clothing, constant praying, and vernacular speech these women are reminiscent of plantation literature stereotypes. Harris, however, contends that as counterstereotypes to black female promiscuity, they are depicted not altogether negatively but reflect the physical obstruction of motherhood through lynching as well as the ill state of the society: "The bodies of these black women are the sites upon which these playwrights explore the development of racism in America."[57] The noticeable lack of any unmediated confrontation with lynching and the dominance of offstage performances of lynching may be the result of the fact that many anti-lynching texts are plays and the production of a play including the graphic depiction of a lynching might have been problematic. Harris attributes the offstage performance of lynching to theater conventions and the impossibility of staging even a stylized lynching on stage due to the fact that "[w]hile lynching might have been the national pastime, eve-

[56] Harris, "Before the Strength, the Pain" 33.
[57] Harris, "Before the Strength, the Pain" 39.

rybody wanted to ignore it."[58] Another explanation links up with Stephens's interpretation of domesticity as a marker for black female respectability. A play promoting domesticity and black respectability cannot include the graphic depiction of violence as it would have worked against the overall outline of the play. Both considerations have most likely played an important role in the conception of the plays. Another aspect is still more important. The onstage representation of lynching would most likely have necessitated the insertion of a mob and thus a group of people which would have been excluded from the interracial unification against lynching. The invocation of commonalities would thus have been imperfect. Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* for example includes a very detailed fictional account of the Wilmington Riots and of a mob composed of lower-class whites and uncivilized social upstarts, endangering blacks as well as the genteel white elite. Lynching is thus unmistakably associated with one clearly discernible social group, which is created as the Other of the "better" classes of both races. In the same way as apologetic representations of lynching employ othering to create a clearly discernible Other against which whites have to unite to protect civilization, Chesnutt's novel uses othering to establish a difference. Eventhough *The Marrow of Tradition* does not regard the association with either group as determined by birth or skin color, it unfolds as a discourse of exclusion. The different emphasis on commonalities in domestic anti-lynching texts, however, forbids the incorporation of such mechanisms of exclusion. In order to avoid the reproduction of yet another binary, they abstain from a direct portrayal of lynching. The othering of disreputable behavior in domestic anti-lynching texts is not directed against one specific group but presents lynching as disembodied evil.[59] Owing to the lack of a concrete Other, domestic anti-lynching texts are more concerned with integration based on interracial commonalities.[60]

It can therefore be concluded that for this reason, Ma Loving in *Rachel* does not focus on the actual performance of lynching. The hanging of her husband and son is only alluded to: "It was very still when I finally uncovered my ears. The only sounds were the faint rustle of leaves and the 'tap-tapping of the twig of a tree' against the window. [...] It was the tree – where they were" (*R* 41). Instead, Grimké foregrounds the psychological effect lynching has

[58] Harris, "Before the Strength, the Pain" 27.

[59] Domestic anti-lynching texts thus remove the assurance apologetic lynching texts imply when they define one's appreciations of lynching as determined by race. Instead, one's consummation of lynching becomes aligned with one's appreciation of motherhood and civilization, which in turn makes the deploring of lynching a necessary prerequisite for respectability. No one is "by birth" opposed to lynching, yet, everyone can and will have to join the good side to preserve his respectability as to support lynching is to support the demise if motherhood and civilization.

[60] Tom in *Rachel* for example only refers to "them" (*R* 49) and Liza in *Safe* mentions "[t]hese white folks" to describe the makeup of the typical lynch mob (*S* 112).

on the surviving members of the family, especially the mother. While her children are innocently sleeping, she loses her faith when confronted with such incredible cruelty. Her narrative ends with a warning to her children not to let lynching determine the memory of their family but to resist racialized constructions of African-Americans and remember their father and brother as presented in her alternative lynching narrative. In *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* lynching only exists as Aunt Doady's memory and is not even staged as narration or recollection. Nevertheless, the impact it has on the characters is the same. Johnson's use of sound effects in *Safe* and of two different families, the Hoseas and the Pettigrews, allows her to include – if only offstage – an actual lynching into her play without having to abandon the domestic sphere of motherhood as the primary reflective basis. Lynching is not related by one single person in a coherent narrative. Rather, the actual lynching of Sam Hosea takes place offstage during the play and is reported by messengers and sound effects:

> [*J*]*ust then a shot is heard* […]
>
> *There is an increasing sound.* […]
>
> *Another shot rings out.* […]
>
> [*A*] *confusion of many footsteps and tramping horses as the roar becomes louder* […]
>
> *Then a voice rises above the men outside shouting, "Don't hang me, don't hang me! I don't want to die! Mother! Mother!"* […]
>
> *Hoarse laughter is heard outside as the noise grows less and less.* […] *The noise of countless passing feet is heard and an occasional curse or laugh.* (*S* 112-13)

The effect of lynching is then translated into maternal sufferings when Liza exclaims: "Oh my God, did you hear that poor boy crying for his mother? He's jest a boy – jest a boy – jest a little boy!" (*S* 113).

6.5. Maternal Sufferings and Interracial Empathy

Angelina Weld Grimké's aforementioned explanatory comment to *Rachel* can be considered an almost paradigmatic agenda laying down the strategy of creating interracial empathy.[61] In this attempt, Grimké acknowledges the vital role white women play in sustaining lynching by

[61] See for example Gloria T. Hull, *Color, Sex, and Poetry: Three Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987) 128.

functioning as its justification.[62] She even regards them as "the worst enemies with which the colored race has to contend," a view shared by many of her contemporaries, as can for example be seen in Dr. M. Ashby Jones's labeling of white women as "the Hindenburg line" in preserving racial segregation.[63] Likewise, Mary Church Terrell comments:

> [W]hat a tremendous influence for law and order, and what a mighty foe to mob violence Southern white women might be, if they would arise in the purity and power of their womanhood to implore their fathers, husbands and sons no longer to stain their hands with the black man's blood! (LNPV 862)

Rachel therefore aims at persuading white women against the practice of lynching by striking them at their "vulnerable point," motherhood:

> If anything can make all women sisters underneath their skins it is motherhood. If, then, the white women of this country could see, feel, understand just what effect their prejudice and the prejudice of their fathers, brothers, husbands, sons were having on the souls of the colored mothers everywhere, and upon the mothers that are to be, a great power to affect public opinion would be set free and the battle would be half won.[64]

Written (allegedly) for a white female audience, *Rachel* tries to awaken white maternal understanding for black maternal sufferings brought about by lynching. The clarification of the necessity of white intervention and resistance against lynching thus evolves not in the form of a direct address as for instance in Griggs's *The Hindered Hand*. Where Griggs relies on embedded pamphlets and speeches elaborately detailing the dangers and injustices of lynching in order to convince the reader with rational arguments of the threat posed by lynching for both blacks and whites, *Rachel* and all other domestic anti-lynching texts aim at emotionally involving the audience into the fight against lynching and imaginatively create the horrors of lynching through words and thoughts, not action.[65] They represent lynching through the psychological pain and physiological deformity of African-American women, who feel the im-

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[62] See Wood, "Witnessing": not only passive women.

[63] Grimké, "Reason and Synopsis" 414; Wilma Dykeman and James Stokely, *Seeds of Southern Change: The Life of Will Alexander* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1962) 88, quoted in Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 65. At the 1920 NACW-conference at Tuskegee, Charlotte Hawkins Brown, one of the black speakers at the meeting, addressed all white women as the key to end lynching. Drawing on notions of the moral superiority of women and their influence over their husbands and sons, she was convinced that "if the white women would take hold of the situation […] lynching would be stopped." Charlotte Hawkins Brown Address, Memphis Conference, October 7, 1920, Ames Papers (NC), quoted in Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 93.

[64] Grimké, "Reason and Synopsis" 414. In the play, Ma Loving also points to the color-blind universality of motherhood when she describes her feelings after having lost her son and father: "And I suppose my experience is every mother's" (*R* 34).

[65] Tate 110, also distinguishes between a male and female mode of resistance to racism. Female texts "rely on settings, tone, and 'situational thematics' that call attention to an affirmed, ideal black domesticity as the site of improvement." Male texts are more explicit in addressing racial discrimination, relying on "polemics that evolve as explicit arguments about the immorality and racial injustice."

pact of lynching on their male relatives.[66] Instead of candidly proclaiming lynching to be a "disgrace to Christian civilization," domestic anti-lynching texts sentimentally dramatize the sufferings of African-American mothers, represented as "blackened" versions of the white ideal of Victorian mother- and womanhood, and rely on motherhood as an interracial strategic essentialism to stimulate white feelings against lynching.[67] The core element of domestic anti-lynching texts therefore is the sentimental invocation of motherhood as a racially overlapping ideal clarifying the horrors of lynching in order to create interracial female empathy. Using Angelina Weld Grimké's *Rachel*, Georgia Douglas Johnson's *Safe* and Ann Seymour Link's *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* I will in the following try to sketch the outlines of this strategy. All three plays attempt to reach a white female audience through the depiction of the frustration of black motherhood but differ in their respective realizations.

6.5.1. "If anything can make All Women Sisters Underneath their Skins it is Motherhood": the Disabling of African-American Motherhood in Grimké's *Rachel*, Johnson's *Safe* and Link's *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?*

The revelation of the horrors of lynching in *Rachel* is realized through the dramatization of the protagonist's discovery of lynching as an omnipresent threat for the life of black children and the ensuing decision to surrender her most passionate desire of becoming a mother. In an exemplary way, Grimké's play exploits the discourse of family and marriage and translates lynching into the domesticated language of maternal suffering and simultaneously into a threat to the most basic values and future of society in order to "chronicle respectively the preservation and ultimately the deterioration of black Americans' collective dream of freedom as full U.S. citizens."[68] At the end of act one, the seemingly perfect harmony of the Loving family is disrupted by Mary Loving's story of husband's and son's lynching exactly a decade ago. Her disclosure of the threat posed by lynching acts as a moment of epiphany for Rachel,

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[66] See Trudier Harris, "Before the Strength, the Pain: Portraits of Elderly Black Women in Early Twentieth-Century Anti-Lynching Plays," *Black Women Playwrights: Visions on the American Stage*, ed. Carol P. Marsh-Lockett (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999) 39, who contends that the physical deformities and fragility of the female protagonists reflects the horror of lynching.

[67] Booker T. Washington in 1911 condemned the lynching of eight persons in Florida and Georgia on one Sunday as "carnival of crime" endangering the South as a whole and thus also the whole of American civilization. The interview with Washington is quoted in Detroit *Informer* May 25, 1911, Hampton University, Peabody Newspaper Clipping File, "Lynching: Opposition: Comments by Writers, 1903-15," Item 314, 2 of 2, Frame 144, (Microfilm Edition).

[68] Tate 214. Tate 219 also explains that her strategy failed and "fell on deaf ears" as the focus of white women at that time had shifted away from racial oppression toward their own sexual subjugation. Hull 118, calls Grimké's attempt to seek a sympathetic white female audience "idealism." See also Carolivia Herron, introduction, *Selected Works by Angelina Weld Grimké*, ed. Carolivia Herron (New York: Oxford UP, 1991) 17.

who (according to her one-sided and monothematic outline) reads lynching automatically as a threat not only to her later-to-be adopted child Jimmy but to all African-Americans and realizes that "the South is full of tens, hundreds, thousands of little boys, who, one day may be – and some of them with certainty – Georges" (*R* 42).

> Then, everywhere, everywhere, throughout the South, there are hundreds of dark mothers who live in fear, terrible, suffocating fear, whose rest by night is broken, and whose joy by day in their babies on their hearts is three parts – pain. Oh, I know this is true – for this is the way I should feel, if I were little Jimmy's mother. How horrible! Why – it would be more merciful – to strangle the little things at birth. And so this nation – this wide Christian nation – has deliberately set its curse upon the most beautiful – the most holy thing in life – motherhood! Why – it – makes – you doubt – God! (*R* 42)

The reading of lynching as a threat to black children, which is prefigured in the cruelty Jimmy and Ethel experience in school, finally brings about the demise of Rachel's conviction of her divine destiny and makes her abandon her maternal aspirations: "You God! – You terrible, laughing God! Listen! I swear – and may my soul be damned to all eternity, if I do break this oath – I swear – that no child of mine shall ever lie upon my breast, for I will not have it risen up, in the terrible days that are to be – and call me cursed" (*R* 61). The contrast between the almost tautological depiction of Rachel's notion of motherhood and her final decision to abandon this very motherhood and also the marriage with John Strong as it is "more merciful – to strangle the little things at birth" (*R* 42) than to see it lynched, renders her sacrifice and the impression upon the audience even more intense.[69] Rachel destroys the roses John Strong has given her and thus symbolically renounces her maternal aspirations and marriage plans. Lynching becomes a threat to motherhood as the very foundation of the American Republic as well as Christian faith and to the possibilities of racial conciliation.[70] In her poem "Motherhood," Georgia Douglas Johnson likewise renounces any maternal ambitions. Addressing her unborn child she states that "I cannot give you birth" because "You know not what a world this is/ Of cruelty and sin."[71] The frustration of maternal ambitions and the resituating of lynching in the domestic sphere of motherhood presents an alternative maternal account of lynching, which transforms an abstract crime into an affectionately comprehensible and empathically understandable threat, and creates a link of empathy between white and black women.[72] Yet, Grimké also demonstrates the inadequacy of Victorian motherhood for

[69] Tate 223: "Grimké's heroines protest racism by refusing to produce its victims."
[70] Tate interprets Rachel's loss of faith also as a typical modernist feature in Grimké's play. See Tate 220.
[71] Georgia Douglas Johnson, "Motherhood," *The Crisis* (October, 1922) 265.
[72] See Angeletta KM Gourdine, "The *Drama* of Lynching in Two Blackwomen's Drama, or Relating Grimké's *Rachel* to Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*," *Modern Drama* 41.4 (1998) 535, who also mentions that *Rachel*

black women.[73] Their collective experience and memory of lynching disables the white ideal of motherhood as a model applicable also to African-American women and *Rachel* unfolds as the demonstration of the discrepancy between black aspirations and capabilities to live up to the requirements of white womanhood and the possibilities of their realization. The only kind of motherhood possible for black women is one of "suffocating fear" (*R* 42). Rachel's surrender of motherhood has therefore to be read as the rejection of the only kind of motherhood offered to her and her self-elected spinsterhood thus becomes a form of resistance to an oppressive racist discourse. Grimké's drama therefore also appeals to a black audience and dramatizes the frustration over black oppression but also the possibilities of defiance and resistance. Significantly, *Rachel*, like most other domestic anti-lynching texts, provides no alternative definitions for black female respectability and motherhood. It does not try to opt out of the dominant discourse but rather gives expression to the hopelessness of the situation of black women. As a drama situated in the early realism of American theater, the problem of lynching is not solved.[74] Departing from the conventions of the melodrama, *Rachel* leaves the audience with a deep sense of frustration and pessimism concerning the possibilities of racial reconciliation.

Georgia Douglas Johnson's one-act play *Safe* differs from *Rachel* in its mediation of the horrors of lynching, although both make use of domestic discourse. Set in a "Southern town" in 1893, Liza Pettigrew is pregnant and about to give birth. However, the news of the lynching of Sam Hosea, whose mother goes to the same church as Liza, makes her strangle her newborn in order to save him from being lynched. Similar to *Rachel*, *Safe* also dramatizes the female protagonist's realization of lynching as a threat to the life of her child. Assuming that only men are lynched, Liza hopes her baby will be a girl: "What's little nigger boys born for anyhow? I sho hopes mine will be a girl. I don't want no boy baby to be hounded down and kicked 'round. No, I don't want to ever have no boy chile!" (*S* 112). Her fears intensify when she hears Sam's cries and interprets lynching from a maternal point of view: "He's jest a

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presents an alternative account of lynching from a female point of view. Yet, she interprets the play as the attempt to redefine lynching as a crime not only directed towards black men but also black women. For Gourdine, the talk about lynching is the means with which to rectify racialized sexual stereotypes: "through the trope and the reality of lynching, Grimké […] combat[s] particularly racialized sexual stereotypes. Primarily, these plays defy the received opinion that lynching is or was only about black males and that black women were merely emotional accessories of this attack on black males." Gourdine 534.

[73] See Stephens, "Anti-Lynch Plays by African American Women" and Gourdine. See also Carby's analysis of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* by Harriet Jacobs: "Jacobs used the material circumstances of her life to critique conventional standards of female behavior and to question their relevance and applicability to the experience of black women." Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood* 47.

[74] See Brenda Murphy, *American Realism and American Drama, 1880-1940* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1987) xii.

boy" (*S* 113). The link between lynching and motherhood and the sentimental apex of this connection become most obvious in Sam's cries for his mother "*'Don't hang me, don't hang me! I don't want to die! Mother! Mother!*" (*S* 113). Yet, like in *Rachel*, it is not the mother of the actual lynch victim who is the center of attention, but a soon-to-become mother. In *Safe* it is Liza, who gives birth immediately after the lynching. Driven to madness by fear and sorrow, Liza decides to "born him [her child] safe" (*S* 114). In highly sentimental terms, Liza after having been informed that it is a boy chokes her baby offstage with the words: "Now he's safe – safe from the lynchers! Safe!" (*S* 115). Johnson uses sentimental language in order to challenge traditionally held assumptions about lynching as the natural reaction to rape and black stereotypes to provide an alternative interpretation of lynching as a threat to motherhood. While *Rachel* is most effective in its appeal to motherhood when it juxtaposes Rachel's initial excitement of becoming a mother with her decision to surrender her designation owing to the threat of lynching, Johnson achieves a sense of immediacy by using sound effects and messengers to present an offstage lynching paralleling the action on stage.[75] Furthermore, she lets her female protagonist actually and not only symbolically kill her baby and thus adds directness. Johnson's employment of such an outrageous act is also to be attributed to the fact that *Safe* is a rather short one-act play and does not encompass such an extensive characterization of the female protagonist as *Rachel*. While the audience in Grimké's play understands the enormity of Rachel's abandoning of motherhood owing to her preceding portrayal, the audience in *Safe* is traumatized through the incredibility of Liza's action. The horrors of lynching are thus mediated through a shock brought about through the use of sound effects and the doctor's narration of Liza's offstage strangulation of her newborn: "[*A*] *baby's cry is heard from the next room* […] *They wait for what seems like an eternity listening to the muffled sounds in the next room* (*S* 115). As a form of resistance, Liza's rejection of motherhood is more radical and definite than Rachel's. Similar to *Rachel*, the exploitation of the domestic discourses about family and marriage represents lynching as the intrusion into a harmonious family and the provocation of the strangulation of an innocent child. *Safe* thus testifies to a departure from a more optimistic outlook on the possibilities of racial reconciliation and records a feeling of helplessness against racial violence. While domestic novels of the post-Reconstruction area depicted adherence to Victorian class and gender norms as a guarantee for personal, family and, ultimately, social improvement, domestic anti-lynching texts give a picture of the disappointment of the hopes for racial harmony through proper conduct. Mar-

[75] May Miller's play *Nails and Thorns* also uses sound effects to dramatize the proceedings of the mob.

riage and family are neither a romantic relationship nor a duty for the advancement of the race.[76] Overshadowed by lynching, marriage and family becomes a source for sorrow, despair and futility.

The ultimate frustration of African-American motherhood comes in Ann Seymour Link's one-act play *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?*. Aunt Doady hears about the formation of a mob intent on lynching her grandson Jim for having killed Mr. Watkins. When Jim returns home, she decides to kill him preventatively in order to save him from the mob. However, the real murderer is found and the mob leaves without lynching Jim. *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* combines the elaborate characterization of the maternal protagonist of *Rachel* with the shocking directness of *Safe*. She also parallels both plays' domestic settings and presentations of an upright and god-fearing black mother as the focal point of a supportive and caring African-American community and the main reflective basis of lynching.[77] The use of domestic tropology is also palpable in the prospective marriage between Aunt Doady's grandson Jim and Epsie Lee.[78] Yet, *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* modifies the pattern provided by *Rachel* or *Safe*. It foregrounds most of all the overwhelming influence of the memory of past lynchings and its devastating influence on the life of African-Americans, particularly black mothers. Those memories bring Aunt Doady to precautiously kill her grandson in order to protect him from the torture and cruelty of the mob. She gives him cyanide, a poison Jim uses to kill butterflies and of which he says that "it doan huht de li'l wil' things. They just takes a sniff an' goes to sleep" (*L* 198). However, in a tragic twist of events, the real murderer of Mr. Watkins is found and Jim exonerated. *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* surpasses the sentimental and emotional effect of *Safe* by intensifying maternal sufferings, as Aunt Doady is bereft of the consolation of having saved her grandson from a crueler death. Even the last resort for black mothers in their opposition to lynching and their ultimate expression of racial protest are rendered inoperative. While "Grimké's heroines protest racism by refusing to produce its victims" and Liza saves her newborn by committing infanticide, Aunt Doady's attempt to

[76] For different interpretations of marriage see Tate 125.

[77] Ann Seymour Link, *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* (subsequently referred to in the text as *L*), *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*, eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (1936; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 191-201. According to Lewis T. Nordyke, "Ladies and Lynching," reprint from *Survey Graphic* (November 1939) for the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. No pagination. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1938 cont. – 1940, Reel 231, 841 (Microfilm Edition), *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* together with Walter Spearman's *Country Sunday* was the winner of an ASWPL contest for anti-lynching plays. Both plays were widely produced by Little Theater groups. *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* also appeared in *Representative One-Act American Plays of 1938*, which had a circulation of 20,000.

[78] Other parallels are that the mother has experienced the loss of a family member through lynching and the play gives different accounts of lynching (Aunt Doady's son was lynched for killing a white man in self-defense and Jim is innocently accused of having killed a white man). The mode of presentation is realistic and sentimental.

defy lynching with the only possible means left to her is frustrated – tragically and paradoxically without a lynching even taking place.[79]

Aunt Doady's agony is given even more cogency as the play dramatizes her decision-making process, lending her anguish more intensity and immediacy. *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* presents on stage how Aunt Doady finally brings herself to kill her grandson. Torn between her religiosity and the memory of her own son's lynching, she finally decides against her previous god-fearing life without being able to relinquish her doubts: "Lawd, I wondah, does you undahstand'…" The play thus not only discredits lynching by deeming it the opposite of religiosity, but also by making the audience see the enormity of Aunt Doady's sacrifice. Yet, despite her altruistic and self-sacrificial decision, which is not only in opposition to her motherly feelings but also contrary to her whole previous life, she is not able to overcome lynching and find tranquility. Instead, she has to live with her guilt, a fact she acknowledges with her final sentence that "[t]hey's things crueler than death" (*L* 201). The staging of her decision-making process, however, also absolves her from possible reproaches since the killing of Jim turns Aunt Doady into a victim of lynching as well. Making the audience understand her intentions, the blame for Jim's death lies not with her but with white racism. Moreover, Aunt Doady's action is purged from the odium of immorality and un-womanly behavior as neither the audience, nor a white moral standard but only she herself judges her own action. Accordingly, the killing of her grandson becomes the only possible maternal reaction to lynching and even renders it the ultimate manifestation of racial despair, altruistic heroism and the inauguration of black motherhood per se.[80] Unlike the heroines in *Safe* and *Rachel*, Aunt Doady remains mentally sane and decides to live on. To live with the knowledge of having killed her grandson for her is even worse than death and qualifies her womanhood as different from – yet not inferior to – white womanhood. Accordingly, her decision cannot be measured or judged by the ideology of white womanhood but only by Aunt Doady and a redefined black womanhood.

[79] Tate 223.

[80] Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood* 59. Aunt Doady's last sentence calls to mind Linda Brent's appropriation of the ideology of white womanhood that "Death is better than slavery." Linda Brent in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* has to define her womanhood and motherhood against the dominant ideology of white womanhood, which regarded the loss of purity as worse than death and advocated suicide as the only possible reaction to rape. Based on her experiences as a black woman, for Linda "[t]he consequences of her loss of innocence […] rather than being presented as the fruits of shame, were her links to life and the motivating force of an additional determination to be free."

6.5.2. Georgia Douglas Johnson's Challenging of the Dominant Representation of Lynching in *A Sunday Morning in the South*

In her protest play *A Sunday Morning in the South*, Johnson again translates lynching into the domesticated language of female suffering but significantly changes her mode of presentation. Rather than simply condemning lynching as obstructing black motherhood, the play challenges the traditional lynching narrative by concentrating specifically on deflating the representation of lynching as rational performance.[81] Unlike many other domestic anti-lynching plays, *Sunday Morning* dramatizes onstage the "identification" and capture of Tom Griggs as the alleged rapist of a white woman and the intrusion of lynching into the domestic sphere is also taken literally, not only symbolically. Two police officers enter the house of Sue Jones, grandmother of Tom and Bossie Griggs, and bring a white girl to identify Tom as her alleged rapist. While *Rachel* and *Safe* challenge the typical lynching-for-rape story by means of staging an alternative account from a different, maternal point of view, Johnson here abandons this corrective mediation of lynching. Instead, *Sunday Morning* undermines lynching by the (comparatively) unmediated onstage action. It does not simply replace one explanation of lynching with another but juxtaposes two different perceptions of lynching: the dominant lynching narrative and a domestic account. Whereas in *Rachel* and *Safe* an authoritative voice presents a counterhegemonic history of lynching, *Sunday Morning* juxtaposes both hegemonic and counterhegemonic accounts without asserting either one as authoritative. It is left to the audience to decide which one is more appropriate. Yet, the presentation of both accounts clearly manipulates the audience's opinion by establishing lynching as being against the law and also Christian principles.[82] First, the play exposes the hypocrisy of the mob by contrasting the purportedly civilized nature of lynching with the religiosity of Sue Jones. Throughout the play, songs and prayers from a nearby church can be heard onstage, symbolizing Christian faith as one of the pillars of American civilization as well as guiding principle for Sue, exemplified by her constant praying. The mob, on the contrary, lynches Tom in the very vicinity of the church on a Sunday morning while church service is taking place. Lynching is thus branded as a barbarous practice and incongruous with Christianity,

[81] Georgia Douglas Johnson, *A Sunday Morning in the South* (subsequently referred to in the text as *SM*), *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*, eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (1925; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 103-109. Brown-Guillory 7, 15 classifies *A Sunday Morning* as a protest play and a folk play.

[82] May Miller in *Nails and Thorns* also uses Christianity and legal discourse to expose the uncivilized nature of lynching. Using religious imagery, she likens the lynched victim to the crucified Christ, thus turning the mob into the murders of the son of God. Moreover, *Nails and Thorns* makes a travesty of the association between legal and popular justice. When asked where the mob is heading, Gladys recounts: "Right to the town hall to make mockery of all we ought to be" (*Nails* 183).

while African-Americans, on the other hand, are represented as the humbly suffering personification of the true Christian faith. The play ends with the words of a song: "Lord have mercy./ Lord have mercy,/ Lord have mercy over me" (*SM* 109). Furthermore, the estimation of lynching is influenced through the revocation of the commonly accepted association of lynching and legal justice.

In a discussion between Sue, Tom, and Liza Twiggs about an impending lynching, all agree with Sue's evaluation: "I don't hold wid no rascality and I bleves in meting out punishment to he guilty but fust ought to fine out who done it tho and then let the law hanel 'em." (*SM* 105). Tom even wants to "git a little book learning" (*SM* 105) and study law, which in turn characterizes Tom as law-abiding. Their reliance upon the judicial system is juxtaposed with the two officers taking away Tom in a manner making a farce of legal proceedings since they base their accusations and subsequent conviction on the vague testimony of the intimidated and confused victim of the alleged rape. Tom is convicted because the description of the rapist, based on age, size and skin color "fits like a glove" (*SM* 106). Furthermore, they ignore Tom's alibi and any other evidence proving his innocence: "[*to Bossie*] Shut up. Your word's nothing. [*looking at Sue*] Nor yours either. Both of you'd lie for him" (*SM* 106).[83] The renunciation of typical pro-lynching accounts in *Sunday Morning* is even more effective as it not only revokes the typical justification for lynching, but also puts on display the constructedness and irrationality of apologetic lynching stories and unveils the absurdity of a racialized perception. It relinquishes the authoritative replacement of one account for another and lets the audience decide. Contrasting the discourse and practice of lynching, *Sunday Morning* exposes the constructedness of the dominant appreciation of lynching and instead establishes it as a heinous crime.

6.5.3. The Departure from Traditional Definitions of Motherhood and the History of Rape in Georgia Douglas Johnson's *Blue-Eyed Black Boy*

Georgia Douglas Johnson's *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* marks the beginning of the gradual demise of the pattern of domestic anti-lynching plays outlined above while still being rooted in the basic strategy of domestic anti-lynching texts. What distinguishes her play is the surprise ending with the prevention of lynching and the portrayal of black femininity. Unlike the maternal

[83] Johnson in *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* also takes up again the cynical skepticism concerning lynching and the protection of African-Americans by the law. Lynching is presented as the opposite of justice and defined as its absence and as anarchy since even the judge is "a lyncher his own self" (*BBB* 118).

figures sketched above, Pauline Waters introduces a new kind of African-American woman- and motherhood. She actively resists the lynching of her son and successfully appeals to Governor Timkham for help by revealing the true identity of Jack as his son. The play overcomes traditional patterns for racial reconciliation based on female adherence to Victorian gender norms and seeks other forms for racial survival without relinquishing black female respectability (Pauline for example never leaves her home but sends a messenger to the governor). Johnson promulgates active intervention as the only possible means for preventing lynching and preserving black family life. Similar to her other plays, she records the inadequacy of traditional conceptions of female participation in the development of race relations, revalues domesticity, and casts lynching as a menace to family, marriage and motherhood, but substitutes despair and hopelessness with active and positive black maternal intervention. The appeal to a white male, however, still resounds with the dominant strategy of demonstrating the need for interracial collaboration to end lynching as an attack upon motherhood. But rather than making the imperilment of motherhood the basis for creating interracial sameness, *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* points to the history of interracial relationships as an already existing, yet effaced and denied link between both races. Johnson's strategy therefore is based not so much on the sentimental involvement of white women as it is on a more self-confident demand for keeping a mutual, interracial responsibility.[84]

The intervention of Jack's white father is also significant in two other ways:[85] first, the saving of his son revokes notions about undivided white support for lynching. Apologetic representations of lynching often mention the presence "of the best elements in society" to efface diversifications within the white race.[86] The opposition of lynching from the governor renders lynching a sadistic pastime of "poor white trash" or white "hoodlums" (*BBB* 117).[87] *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* represents lynching as improper and deplorable behavior and depicts it as a means of widening, not reconciling, interest- and economic-based diversifications within

[84] This new self-confidence also finds expression in such statements as "Your father was shore one proud man," "I sure have tried to walk straight all my life"

[85] The Governor's fatherhood is evident from the fact that Jack "is the only one in our family with blue eyes" (*BBB* 117). Also Pauline's instructions to Rebecca to tell the Governor that the person about to be lynched is Pauline Waters's son born twenty-one years ago, "Look in his eyes and you'll save him" (*BBB* 118) clearly reveal the boy's ancestry. Once Pauline almost blabs and calls the Governor the son's "father" (*BBB* 119).

[86] See Wood, "Witnessing" 13, "Newspaper accounts of large spectacle lynchings regularly emphasized that all classes of citizens were present in lynching crowds (as spectators, if not actual participants in the violence), an emphasis that served to legitimate the mob's violence as socially respectable and responsible action. Even when the social elite did not participate directly in the violence, lynching undoubtedly persisted through their tacit support and sanction. "

[87] See for example Williamson 291-295, who explains that lynching mobs consisted by no means only of lower class whites.

the white race.[88] Second, alleged black female immorality and depravity is revoked by employing the white pro-lynching outline of gender, which foregrounds that white women are worthy of protection only because of their purity, chastity, and piety; in short, because they are "true women." *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* presents a mutually accepted (though hidden) relationship between Pauline and the governor, as can be seen in the governor's willingness to intervene. Johnson thus not only repudiates the degradation of black femininity by way of her presentation of Pauline onstage but also the governor's help equates black and white femininity. Lynching is thus deprived of its foundation by its prevention. Finally, although *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* presents a mutually agreed upon relationship between Pauline and the governor, it nevertheless calls to mind the rape of black women by white men. Hence, the drama counters notions about a rigid racial dichotomy and foregrounds the hypocrisy of lynching by highlighting the possibility of voluntary interracial connections.

6.6. Marriage and the Formulation of Domestic Resistance in Annie Nathan Meyer's *Black Souls*

Apart from the centrality of revalued black motherhood, some texts also focus on marriage as a major allegorical device and "the sanctioned sign of civilization."[89] Implicit in the representation of family life in domestic anti-lynching texts is an understanding of marriage as "the foundation of the family and indeed the very foundation of society, without which there would be neither civilization nor progress."[90] Many of the texts compiled in this section therefore present black families, which are almost archetypal renderings of Victorian middle-class standards, seemingly fulfilling the promise of racial advancement. Nevertheless, unlike the post-Reconstruction texts analyzed by Tate, domestic anti-lynching texts do not depict marital harmony as allegory of racial reconciliation, but portray the destruction of marriage and accordingly the obliteration of racial progress. The prevention of marriage and family thus becomes the allegorical expression of a long-term pessimistic outlook on the possibilities

[88] See Wood, "Witnessing" 18, "The rhetoric used in defense of lynching very intently sustained its social acceptability by creating images of class unity and propriety." See also Barbara Fields, "Ideology and Race in American History," *Region, Race, and Reconstruction*, eds. J. Morgan Kousser and James M. McPherson (New York: Oxford UP, 1982) 156-58, who states that Southerners were not at all a homogenous group. Quite the reverse, by means of promulgations of white solidarity Southern elites tried to deflate class conflicts and enact their dominance over other whites.

[89] Tate 91.

[90] Tate 91, quoted after *Judicial and Statutory Definitions of Words and Phrases,* collected, edited, and compiled by members of the editorial staff of the National Reporter System (St. Paul, Minn.: West Publishing Co., 1904-05) 4390-93.

of interracial progress, and domestic anti-lynching texts become the domestic plotting of the failure of racial reconciliation. Although in many of the aforementioned plays marriage is also thematized (Rachel and Tom in *Rachel*, Jack and Pauline in *Blue-Eyed Black Boy*, Jim and Epsie Lee in *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?*), the focus in these plays is primarily on the destruction of black motherhood. Therefore, in the following, I will focus on Annie Nathan Meyer's play *Black Souls* because it concentrates entirely on marriage rather than motherhood.

Annie Nathan Meyer's *Black Souls* stands out from other domestic anti-lynching texts in its use of domestic tropology as it shifts the focus away from motherhood and its imperilment through lynching and instead concentrates on marriage in order to undermine public support for lynching.[91] The focus on marriage is tied up with the introduction of an issue largely effaced even in anti-lynching texts, namely the rape of black women and the accompanying white hypocrisy concerning white-on-black rape. *Black Souls* explores the connection between lynching and rape as mutually dependent concepts and treats both as equivalent, yet gender-specific means for sustaining black inferiority at the beginning of the twentieth century.[92] To dramatize the harmful effect both lynching and rape have on the life of African-Americans, *Black Souls* reverses the dominant perception of rape as the expression of (exclusively) black male degeneracy and lynching as the defense of white womanhood and depicts both as obstructing the racial progress of African-American men and women by thwarting decent black male and female gender formation and hampering the possibilities for a dutiful marriage. Rather than only invoking interracial empathy, Meyer's play juggles accusations of white hypocrisy and a racially distorted perception and registers black frustration over the failure of black emancipation and the thwarting of black progress through white racism. While still clinging to white definitions of gender to seek a white audience and stage its protest of lynching, *Black Souls* is extremely skeptical about the success of interracial cooperation and leaves the audience with a deep sense of despair.

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[91] Annie Nathan Meyer, *Black Souls* (subsequently referred to in the text as *BS*), *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*, eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (1924/ 1932; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 138-173.

[92] For the parallels between rape and lynching as racial violence see Bettina Aptheker, ed., *Lynching and Rape: An Exchange of Views* (New York: The American Institute for Marxist Studies, 1977); Hazel V. Carby, "'On the Threshold of Woman's Era': Lynching, Empire, and Sexuality in Black Feminist Theory," *"Race," Writing, and Difference*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1986) 301-316; Sandra Gunning, *Race, Rape, and Lynching: The Red Record of American Literature, 1890-1912* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "'The Mind that Burns in Each Body': Women, Rape, and Racial Violence," *Southern Exposure* 12.6 (November/December 1984): 61-71; Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia UP, 1979); Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, eds., *Rape and Representation* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991).

The conception of marriage in *Black Souls* is modeled after post-Reconstruction domestic novels by black female authors and their understanding of marriage as first and foremost a social duty for racial advancement and not a romantic liaison.[93] The marriage between Phyllis and Andrew Morgan is the almost prototypical manifestation of this ideal. Andrew Morgan is the founder and principal of the Magnolia School for Colored People in the Black Belt and endorses the principles of Tuskegee and Booker T. Washington's accomodationist policy for racial reconciliation. A "true leader of his people" (*BS* 147) he emphasizes the progress the race relations in the US have made since the Civil War and counts on the goodwill of white philanthropists such as Senator Verne for further improvement. His wife Phyllis supports his educatory activities and is mother of two children, whom she raises with pride in their African-American heritage (*BS* 153-54). Accordingly, at the opening of the play, the post-Reconstruction appreciation of idealized domesticity as a precondition and consummation of racial justice seems to be accomplished. This impression gains further substantiation through the plans of two Magnolia students, Ulysses and Corinne, of a similar marriage and founding of another school somewhere in the South to secure the continuance and expansion of racial reconciliation through idealized black family formation. Yet, two incidents spoil the optimistic outlook on race relations: the lynching of Phyllis's brother David Lewis and the discovery of Senator Verne's rape of Phyllis. Corresponding to lynching as a means of obstructing black racial progress, rape is thus cast as the equivalent obstacle for African-American improvement. Significantly, the devastating impact both lynching and rape have on marriage is represented in gendered terms as the frustration of the very foundation of marriage, that is, decent black woman- and manhood. *Black Souls* appropriates stereotypical perceptions of black men as rapists and black women as prostitutes and discusses the possibilities and limitations of defining black masculinity and femininity under the influence of and as a reaction to lynching, rape and black oppression. It presents respectable black characters that destabilize the dominant construction of lynching but also registers the frustration over the impossibility of realizing black attempts to live up to the standards of respectability. Rather than using the frustration of maternal ambitions, Meyer employs the disturbance of the ideal marriage between Andrew and Phyllis and the destruction of the interracial relationship between David and Luella (Verne's daughter) to protest lynching as a deterrent of racial progress and interracial harmony, as well as to demonstrate the obliteration of the optimistic outlook on racial advancement.

[93] See Tate 125.

Black Souls discusses alternative reactions to racism while simultaneously addressing the possibilities of black masculinity in times of lynching by contrasting two different black male reactions to the racial situation in the South. Andrew Morgan represents the principles of Booker T. Washington's accommodationism. Confident about racial reconciliation, he promotes "patience instead of defiance," which to him is "Christ's way" (*BS* 147). His brother-in-law David, a renowned poet, in contrast, advocates "Jesus the rebel, denouncer of hypocrisy and injustice" and brands Andrew's attitude as the remains of the "slave mind," thereby legitimating resistance as being in accordance with the Christian faith. Owing to his experiences of equal treatment and respect as a soldier in France where he and the other black soldiers "were being treated like men" (*BS* 147), he will not accept his position of inferiority in the USA. Unlike Andrew, he is far more pessimistic about the possibilities of his race and wishes to return to France.[94] Both men are forced to renegotiate their masculinity when confronted with lynching and rape.

David's supposed rape of Luella is an almost ironic reversal of the typical lynching narrative as it is Luella who follows David into the woods. She naïvely misjudges that, unlike in France where both were able to publicly carry out their relationship, the perception of a relationship between a black man and white woman in the USA is perceived allegorically as interracial rape undermining the racial hierarchy and must therefore be prevented. David, instead, is aware of the impossibility of an interracial relationship and tries to avoid Luella's advances. The representation of their relationship, however, is not the attempt to reverse the racialized ascription of female gender roles and cast white women as driven by carnal lust, eventhough Andrew's wife Phyllis equates white male and female sexuality: "How dare you think you can take us black women into your arms without your lusts getting into the blood of your children? If you want your women to stay clean, you've got to stay clean yourselves" (*BS* 172). Rather, *Black Souls* depicts a romantic relationship of mutual consent and exposes the notion of pure white womanhood, which, according to the dominant discourse, would never voluntarily agree to a relationship with a black male, as ideological fabrication. The play evades the racist fixation of white female respectability on their categorical disavowal of interracial relationships and exposes the dominance of a racist discourse as responsible for the designation of Luella as a fallen woman. Because it is not moral degeneracy but the racist perception that renders her immoral, *Black Souls* exposes the misrepresentational character of

[94] Yet, Andrew convinces him to stay by reminding him about his responsibilities for educating his people and keeping the memory of lynching alive: "You may escape physical lynching, but let me tell you, you will be morally lynched" *(BS* 156).

racist discourse. Reversing the dominant association between rape and lynching, in *Black Souls* it is not lynching but a staged rape that is designed to protect Luella. When both are discovered in the woods by two men, David pretends to rape Luella to save her from losing her reputation as a white woman, knowing that his deed will result in his certain death. The play thus not only challenges the substantiation of the rape charge but also rejects the projection of lynching as chivalric violence. The revocation of the latter is most evident in Luella's rejection of David's lynching and the assertion of her solidarity with him when she declares: "I loved him" (*BS* 172). The refutation of the rape charge together with Luella's rejection of lynching as a means for white female protection destabilize the dominant lynching-for-rape justification. Instead, the play constructs lynching as the prevention of the symbolic amalgamation of black and white in an interracial marriage and of racial reconciliation.

David's behavior further attributes to the redefinition of lynching. His attempt to protect Luella revokes the dominant projection of black masculinity and the racialization of male gender traits. According to the tenets of white masculinity, one of the central elements of masculinity is the ability to protect those who cannot protect themselves, most of all one's own wife.[95] David's sacrifice to save Luella's reputation would therefore have to be judged as manly behavior. *Black Souls* thus contradicts retrogressionist views of African-Americans by presenting David as willing and able to live up to those standards. However, it simultaneously demonstrates the inadequacy of white conceptions of masculinity for African-American men as a result of white racism because for David the only way to uphold the dominant projection of masculinity (understood as the protection of others) is to pretend to rape Luella and accept being lynched.[96] Nevertheless, *Black Souls* overcomes the victimization of African-Americans by reinterpreting David's lynching as an altruistic sacrifice initiated at least to some degree by his own will. What apologetic representations delineate as the reaction to black unmanliness becomes an almost savior-like assertion of black masculinity, which can be seen in Luella's description of David's lynching: "there was a tree behind him – a bough like a cross – I prayed to him – to forgive me" (*BS* 172). The religious transcendence of the lynch victim is also evident from a scene deleted in the final version of the play. The introduction to *Black Souls* mentions that this scene produced onstage the actual performance of the lynching. Meyer wrote in her stage directions that the victim should be rendered like "the

[95] See Wyatt-Brown 435-461 and Bederman, "'Civilization'" 5-9.
[96] Contemporary critics of *Black Souls* often attacked the character of David Lewis as unconvincing. See Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens, introduction, *Black Souls*, by Annie Nathan Meyer, *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*. Eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 134 and Brown, *Negro Poetry and Drama* 129.

Christ figure, crucified."[97] David's rejection of a masculinity defined by absence becomes a self-sacrificial form of resistance to an oppressive discourse. However, although his self-elected death (similar to Rachel self-elected spinsterhood) awards him with an almost divine masculinity, *Black Souls* nonetheless registers black helplessness and the frustration over a racist system impairing the formulation of black masculinity.

David's brother Andrew heralds a different kind of masculinity. When he learns about the rape of his wife he is on the verge of killing Verne; he is trying to re-establish his violated masculinity according to the imperatives of white middle-class masculinity. His responsibility to his people, however, who would suffer from their leader killing a leading white politician, restrains his impulse and finally helps him to overcome his and his wife's urgings for retaliation. Similar to David, Andrew is well aware that black assertions of manhood are perceived differently from white assertions. Due to the representation of black women as promiscuous and therefore unworthy of protection, the killing of a white man for raping a black woman would not be taken as restoration of masculinity but as the attempt to undermine the racial hierarchy. Therefore, David rejects violence as an inherent gender constituent but still despairs over the impossibility of asserting his black masculinity. Andrew's decision not to kill Verne represents the rejection of the emotional, personal urge for revenge as the rational, altruistic decision to put aside personal feelings for the benefit of his race. The mastering of his emotions defines Andrew's masculinity not through, but against, violence and thus challenges the dominant outline for masculinity as achieved through lynching. Deconstructing the binary outline of gender roles and resisting an oppressive discourse, *Black Souls* here attempts to provide an alternative definition of black masculinity. To validate this alternative model, Meyer largely incorporates the ideals of white middle-class definitions for respectability based on self-control, humanity and restraint. Despite David's and his brother's assertions of black masculinity, defined as the result of selfless sacrifice and therefore as an essentially Christian value, the play closes with a somber undertone: neither David's pessimistic defiance nor Andrew's accommodationist optimism are able to save them or their families from lynching and rape.[98] The play closes with Andrew condemning his own former accommodationism, interestingly in gendered terms: "I've bowed and scraped, and kowtowed till I have no manhood left" (*BS* 165). Despairingly he declares: "A man would have let nothing, nothing

[97] Perkins and Stephens, introduction, *Black Souls* 134, quoted after 1924 manuscript, Library of Congress.
[98] Andrew for example states that as a result of lynching and rape he has lost his optimistic outlook on racial reconciliation and has abandoned his accommodationism. Interestingly, he translates his loss of faith into gendered terms: "I've bowed and scraped, and kowtowed till I have no manhood left" *(BS* 165).

come before his own wife! Oh God! No human being has the right to rob another of his manhood" (*BS* 173).

Parallel to the demonstration of the impossibility of black masculinity, *Black Souls* also demonstrates the unfeasibility of black femininity owing to rape. Years ago, Senator Verne had "taken advantage" (*BS* 152) of sixteen-year-old Phyllis, a fact she hides from her husband so as not to endanger their marriage. Verne shrugs off Phyllis's reproaches by reproducing the dominant notion of black femininity as the absence of all those female gender traits which are seen to constitute white womanhood: purity, piety, chastity, submissiveness and domesticity. Disparagingly he postulates: "I know too many colored women" (*BS* 153). *Black Souls* appropriates the racialized monopolization of decent female gender roles by means of presenting on stage respectable black female characters living in a dutiful marriage but also by clearly stating the bigotry of white racism. Challenging Verne's stereotyping of black women, Phyllis offers a more differentiated perception of womanhood, which effaces race and implicitly foregrounds the penetrable and dynamic category of class as the distinguishing marker for female decency: "You know easy-going black women and you know plenty of easy-going white women" (*BS* 153). Fending off Verne's advances, Phyllis asserts her womanhood according to white standards: "I'm just as proud of my honor as a white woman is of hers […] We are mothers – don't you think we want our children to respect us and look up to us?" (*BS* 152-53). However, the final valorization of her femininity, the avenging of her rape through violence, is denied to her. Although, according to the imperatives of white womanhood, she asks her husband to retaliate her disgrace and swears at him when he decides against killing Verne, she at last surpasses the confines of white female gender respectability when she admits: "I was wrong to ask it" (*BS* 173). Phyllis finally acknowledges the restrictions imposed upon black gender constructions and therefore revalues her husband's restraint, not as capitulation to the dominant discourse, but as the only reaction open to him as leader of his people. Nevertheless, similar to male gender constructions, *Black Souls* also records the inapplicability of white womanhood for black women and a sense of profound disappointment over the disabling of respectable black womanhood.

The incursion of lynching into the fragile pastoral of the Morgan family and the Magnolia school exposes the hypocrisy behind seeming white philanthropy and official damnations of lynching and thus adds to the pessimism inherent in *Black Souls*. Meyer supplements her domestic rendering of lynching as the disabling of black marriage and, in extension, the loss of confidence in the future progress of racial improvement by means of applying conventions of the epic or expressionistic theater in order to stage the destruction of racial optimism

through lynching. The six scenes of the final version of *Black Souls* encompass a whole day from sunrise to sunset and indicate the passing of hope for a better future. David's speech in front of the renowned and most influential benefactors of his school, which should have been the climax of his career, becomes interrupted by the noise of the lynch mob tracking down his brother in law while he is proclaiming the steady improvement of race relations:[99]

> There has been in the past years encouraging lessenings in the number of lynchings. (*The Sound of hounds baying is heard, at first faintly. Andrew starts, but quickly recovers himself.*) Last year there were half as many as disgraced the South the year before. (*The baying grows nearer. Those behind him show signs of restlessness. The quartette leaves in excitement*) There were fifty-seven lynchings in 1922 – and only twenty-eight in 1923 – (*His voice is drowned out in the nearer approach of the hounds. Confusion*). (*BS* 168, italics in original)

So far, it may seem that Meyer's play departs from the conventions of domestic anti-lynching texts in that it does not present the fight against lynching as an interracial necessity and limits her play to the demonstration of the negative effects lynching has on black families. However, the end of the play again exposes the misrepresentational character of lynching and points to the dangers for proponents of white supremacy. When Andrew reveals the liaison between Luella and David as an intentional one, Verne, unable to overcome his own racist tenets, is forced to classify his own daughter as un-womanly and "Nigger-Lover" (*BS* 172). Finally, Andrew gets his revenge when Verne declares: "Oh kill me kill me, I ask it!" (*BS* 173). The dominance of lynching discourse thus has not only prevented the marriage between David and Luella as well as impaired the marriage between Andrew and Phyllis, but it also damages the relationship between father and daughter. The play thus demonstrates the harmful effects of lynching also and especially for the proponents of white supremacy.

Black Souls also exposes white constructions of masculinity as self-deceptive attempt to shroud insecurity and infirmity. Verbalizing the divergences between the practice and discourse of lynching, Phyllis explains that lynching is only the attempt to uphold the image of true white womanhood and serves as a cover-up for white male jealousy and fear about uncontrolled white female sexuality. By means of these subtle manipulations, Meyer achieves a redefinition of rape as the source of white female immorality and lynching as a pathetic attempt to shroud white degeneracy.

[99] Furthermore, the stage directions for Andrew's speech add a sense of immediacy and directness to the play as they propose that "*the audience becomes the school audience*" *(BS* 166, italics in original). The incorporation of the actual audience effaces the distance between them and the stage and situates the play and the speech within the everyday life of those watching. Contemporary critics disapproved of this technique as it turns the play into a purely propagandistic platform. See "Annie Nathan Meyer" 135.

> You know it isn't always the black man who runs after the white woman, sometimes it's the other way round. That's why you become wild beasts and burn and slay and cut up living bodies – you're afraid the truth will come out – you're afraid your saintly, white women will be known for what they are. (*BS* 173)

As the construction of white masculinity hinges upon the existence of pure white womanhood, the exposing of the fabricated nature of this ideal simultaneously reveals the former as a fragile construction, brought about by insecurity and anxiety. A self-assured (white) masculinity can only be found outside or as the result of resistance to a discourse of oppression and othering.

Other than just employing lynching and rape as tropes in the domestic plotting of racial oppression and designating them as opposed to the domestic ideal of marriage, Meyer supplements her purely female domestic allegory with what Tate identifies as "male text," which approaches lynching as a political condition, which is usually effaced in the dominant discourse.[100] *Black Souls* verbalizes the underlying motivations for lynching and thus undermines the typical lynching narrative. In a discussion between Verne and David, the latter denounces lynching as a shame to "the good name of our state." He cites President Wilson saying that lynching is "a blow at the heart of the nation," and finally condemns lynching as the work of "cowards," "[l]ip servers" and "[f]alse Christians" (*BS* 164,165). When Andrew entreats Senator Verne to prevent David's lynching, the latter rejects such an undertaking as "political suicide" (*BS* 163), because although "the people of the South are beginning to wake up to this national disgrace," these are "[n]ot the people who nominate for second terms" (*BS* 164). The disclosure of Verne's assessment and acquiescence of lynching as an unalterable reality of Southern life is not only attributed to the pessimism of *Black Souls*, but simultaneously serves as an instrument for revoking dominant pro-lynching arguments, which claim that lynching is primarily a reaction to an omnipresent black threat to white womanhood as attempts to shroud its real and socially discredited motivations, like political or economic opportunism.[101] Written in the time shortly after WWI, Meyer takes up one of the dominant anti-lynching arguments and draws attention to the fact that black soldiers had fought a war to make the world safe for democracy but were denied those very rights in the USA: "'Protectors of Democracy' for the whole civilization. And we can't even abide by the laws we make for ourselves" (*BS* 165).

[100] For male modes of writing against racial discrimination see Tate 27-29.
[101] Andrew argues that lynching more often than not is for economic reasons *(BS* 163).

Domestic anti-lynching texts and the focus on black motherhood continued until the late 1930s. However, similar to the disillusionment which effected an altered use of civilization also the deployment of domesticity experienced a decisive modification. It was no longer used to generate interracial sameness but as a means of formulating a more self-confident black identity and a form of resistance which advocated unilateral solutions to lynching. In the final chapter of my study, I will use several newspaper articles as well as texts written by Joseph S. Mitchell, Corrie Crandall Howell, and May Miller in order to trace the development of domestic anti-lynching texts.

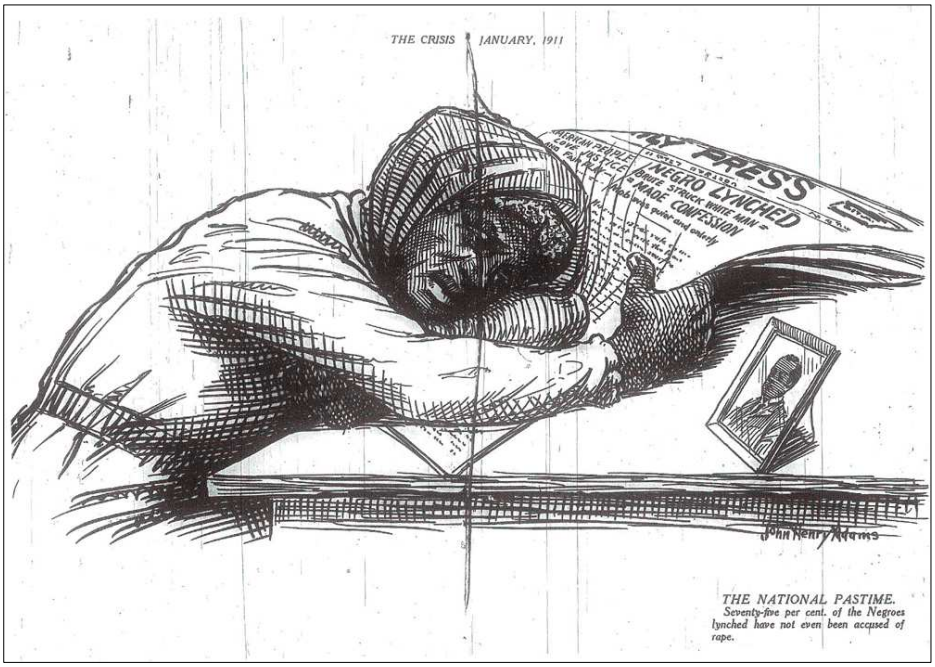

Figure 6-1. John Henry Addams, "The National Pastime. Seventy-five Per Cent. of the Negroes Lynched Have not even been accused of Rape," *The Crisis* (January 1911), 18-19.

7. The Demise of a Tradition – Strategies of Unilateral Domestic Resistance

The texts in this chapter chronicle the gradual demise of a tradition established by texts such as *Rachel*, *Safe*, or *Black Souls*. While still dependent on the domestic as the prime means to mediate resistance to lynching, all the texts compiled here abandon the creation of interracial sameness and instead focus their attempts to oppose lynching on unilateral solutions. Rather than functioning as an interracial commonality inviting white female empathy with black maternal suffering, motherhood here serves primarily to demonstrate the devastating effects of lynching. Addressing either a white or black audience without trying to efface race as the ultimate trope of difference, lynching is presented either as a physical threat to African-Americans or as existential threat to the moral integrity of the concept of white motherhood. Unlike earlier domestic anti-lynching texts, which try to oppose the rigid racial bifurcation of the discourse on lynching through the creation of racially overlapping commonalities, the texts in this chapter present their critique of lynching as intraracial issues. Similar to White's *The Fire in the Flint*, domestic anti-lynching texts register a growing frustration over the failure of what at the turn of the century seemed to be the only promising solution to the race problem, namely, to challenge lynching and white supremacy by addressing a white audience with a call for help or an admonishment to live up to self-imposed moral standards. While earlier anti-lynching texts unfold as an attempt to invalidate the racial bifurcation of society and its accompanying establishment of a racial hierarchy, the following texts largely restrict their efforts to the education of either one or the other race.

This chapter also includes anti-lynching texts by white authors. They critically approach lynching by demonstrating how white motherhood is rendered meaningless and redundant as a result of female participation in the mob. They are therefore further evidence of the growing rejection of lynching in the white race. To be sure, white resistance to lynching did not develop only during the 1920s. The examples of Alexander Manly or Mark Twain's "The United States of Lyncherdom" as well as many other texts, protest marches, or white support for the passage of an anti-lynching bill testify to the contributions whites have made to oppose lynching and the oppression of African-Americans. However, this chapter is not the attempt to record white involvement in the fight against lynching but an endeavor to follow the developing pattern of domestic anti-lynching texts established in the previous chap-

ter. In my analysis, I will distinguish between two different approaches. The first section will contain texts, which either efface the ideal of white womanhood or adopt it as an endangered ideal. The second section contains texts which directly attack the ideal of white motherhood as ideological construct and thus mark the ultimate departure from the attempt to create interracial sameness through maternal empathy.

7.1. The Abandonment of Domestic Sameness

The texts in the first section can roughly be divided into works that address either a black or a white audience. Joseph S. Mitchell's play *Son-Boy* belongs to the first group. It completely departs from earlier plays in that it does not try to invite white female empathy but calls for a self-confident black resistance to lynching and acknowledgement of African-American worth. Such an alteration in the conception of resistance has decisive consequences for the structural outline of the play, especially the construction of his characters. Mitchell rejects white womanhood as the paradigmatic formulation of femininity and tries to construct a new black femininity outside the confines of an oppressive discourse. Similar to earlier anti-lynching texts, lynching is again given central importance in the reformulation of black identity and the characters in *Son-Boy* materialize largely through their reaction to lynching. This reaction, however, deviates from earlier plays in that the black female protagonist does not despair or hope for white intervention for the sake of African-Americans but actively (and successfully) intervenes to protect her son from the mob. *Son-Boy's* strategy of resistance is therefore no longer a reiteration with difference but the attempt to self-confidently stage a direct confrontation with lynching.

The second part of this section addresses a white audience. In addition to relinquishing the attempt to oppose lynching through an interracial alliance from which not only the black but also the white race benefits, the texts in this section employ a domestic language that defines lynching as a moral threat to their own ideals. Motherhood, as one of those ideals, is depicted as jeopardized by lynching. White involvement in the fight against lynching is thus no longer motivated by an altruistic impulse but by sheer necessity.

7.1.1. The Reformulation of Black Motherhood in Joseph S. Mitchell's *Son-Boy*

Although similar to other anti-lynching plays in its setting and the focus on black motherhood, *Son-Boy* departs almost completely from the pattern described in the previous chapter.[1] While still grounded in the plot of domesticity, Mitchell's one-act play abandons traditional black gender constructions as well as the use of sentimentality. He accordingly renounces any endeavor to create interracial sameness based on maternal empathy and promotes a unilateral solution for lynching through the reformulation of blackness. Mitchell's play opts out of the dominant discourse on race and lynching, especially the binary outline of gender roles. Rather than modeling his maternal protagonist on the ideal of white womanhood or staging resistance as the rejection of the only form of motherhood open to black women, he formulates an alternative black femininity outside the stereotyping and polarizing gender schemes provided by the dominant discourses about lynching and race. Similar to earlier domestic anti-lynching texts, he incorporates lynching into his construction of gender roles and makes a character's reaction to lynching their basis. However, rather than falling back upon white standards of conduct and the exclusion of violence, which is characteristic for Chesnutt's or Meyer's characters, Mitchell advocates female defiance and armed resistance to lynching and thus breaks the pattern of African-American victimization prevalent in earlier anti-lynching texts. Motherhood in *Son-Boy* is not used to translate the horrors of lynching into the domestic language of maternal suffering but to exemplify a new and more defiant form of resistance. Likewise, lynching does not frustrate but triggers this new conception of black motherhood. In keeping with this more self-assertive tone the mode of presentation also changes from the melodramatic to a more realistic staging of African-American characters and social life. Abandoning the juxtaposition of good and evil as well as the reduction of his characters to the embodiment of one specific character trait, Mitchell presents alternative depictions of men and women which do not invite affective identification from a white audience but speak primarily to African-Americans. Finally, what distinguishes the play most tellingly from many earlier anti-lynching writings is that it closes with a happy ending, that is, an averted lynching.

The departure from the attempt to create interracial sameness also influences the use of othering and the meaning of lynching. Similar to its precursors, the play still relies on the othering of deviant behavior but abandons it as a means of effacing racial differences and creating a de-racialized sameness. In *Son-Boy*, othering is employed to emphasize intraracial

[1] Joseph S. Mitchell, *Son-Boy*, *Lost Plays of the Harlem Renaissance, 1920-1940*, eds. James V. Hatch and Leo Hamalian (1928; Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1996) 76-92. The text will subsequently be referred to as *SB.*

diversities evolving around African-American reactions to lynching. The black community is thus divided into traditional, servile, and meek representatives of an obsolete blackness and insubordinate and self-assured African-Americans whose identities are predicated upon their defiance of lynching.

Like many other domestic anti-lynching texts, *Son-Boy* situates lynching within a black domestic setting. The Johnson family, however, is entirely different from the Loving family in *Rachel*. While the construction of the Lovings on the one hand struggles to correct notions about black degeneracy by presenting idealized families according to white middle-class standards, complete with clearly defined gender roles, and on the other hand depicts this type of black family as endangered by lynching, the Johnson family in *Son-Boy* deviates from this idealized family pattern. Dinah and Zeke Johnson do not constitute the conventional patriarchic family. Both parents exemplify two different reactions to lynching, which can be characterized as defiant resistance and frightened evasion.

The construction of Dinah, Son-Boy's mother, is a reversal of the suffering and despairing mothers found in, for example, *Rachel, Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?*, or *Safe*. While most of the previous plays employ a sentimental portrayal of black motherhood following the ideals of white motherhood, *Son-Boy* introduces a resolute and almost masculinized version of black femininity, promoting racial pride, defiance, and self-confidence, as can be seen for example in the song she sings at the beginning and end of the play: "Before I'd be a slave, I'd be buried in my grave" (*SB* 77). Likewise, Dinah's insubordination and racial self-assurance materializes in the assertion of her son's equal intelligence as compared to whites and her revocation of her docile husband's admonishment not to question black inferiority. She boldly counters his statement that this is a "white man's town" by saying that "[i]t's much mine 'tis his" (*SB* 78). The presentation of lynching in *Son-Boy* is also less deterministic than in the previous plays. Accordingly, Dinah's attempt to save her son does not result in her killing him to spare him an inevitable and more gruesome death, but would lead her to armed resistance if necessary. The closing of the play then sanctions the message of resistance over resignation and despair. Similar to *Lawd, Does You Undahstan'?* the lynching is called off by the discovery of the real rapist. Fortunately, Son-Boy is not killed precautiously and unnecessarily and Dinah's and Son-Boy's defiance is rewarded with the latter's rescue.

Significantly, help for African-Americans no longer comes from whites or depends upon interracial alliances. While for instance Jack in *Blue-Eyed Black Boy* is saved only through the intervention of his white father, Son-Boy and his mother do not even attempt to call for help but rely entirely on themselves. The play testifies to a growing African-

American self-confidence – the result of a revaluation of blackness – that finds its legitimation not through its sameness with whiteness, but as justified in its own right.

The construction of African-American masculinity in *Son-Boy* is also defined by the characters' attitude toward lynching, which is either passive submission to its inevitability or active resistance. Son-Boy takes after his mother ("He's got too much uv de Battle fam'ly in 'im" [*SB* 79]) and is ready to fight for his life. Zeke, his father, represents a compliant, docile blackness, reminiscent of the "good old darky." Always afraid of "de whar fo'ks" and mindful not to step out of his place by for instance "too much learnin' ter be a 'good nigger'" Zeke advocates a strict obedience to the racial hierarchy as a safeguard against lynching. The play, however, disqualifies his attitude as cowardliness. Using the gendered language of the rhetoric of lynching, Zeke, according to his wife, has lost his masculinity as he is "too skeered ter 'sert yer rights ez a man" (*SB* 78). While his wife is willing to supports their son's self-defense with force if required, Zeke hides Son-Boy's gun in fear of his own life. Although his fears are by no means without foundation, his precautions are depicted less as an understandable act of protection than egoistic cowardice. Dinah accuses her husband: "Don't min' 'em lynchin' me an' Son-Boy so long ez yer hide ez safe" (*SB* 83).

The influence of past lynchings on the present is almost as pervasive as in the previous plays. Yet, the horror of those lynchings does not lead to lethargy and despair but instead calls to action and vigilance. Accordingly, the question of Son-Boy's guilt is never a matter of importance. He declares that he will fight for his life, no matter if he has done anything or not: "ef dey HAD ter lynch me fer nothin' I wuz gwine ter make 'em lynch me fer somethin'" (*SB* 90). The play rejects lynching on basic principles and marks a complete departure from moderate defamations which condemn it as lawless violence but still incorporate it as an understandable reaction to rape. In *Son-Boy*, the rape myth is never even mentioned and the play represents lynching as devoid of any rationalizing context and as an instance of brutal physical violence, which in turn additionally sanctions armed resistance as an act of self-defense.

Son-Boy marks the passing of a tradition established by the texts discussed in the previous chapter. It abandons the sentimental mode of presentation, the construction of black motherhood and the strategy of stirring sympathy among white women by appealing to motherhood as an interracial value. Instead, Mitchell's play presents a new kind of resistant black motherhood and addresses a black audience directly. *Son-Boy* overcomes the victimization of African-Americans and optimistically advocates resistance to lynching, not only as a means of establishing black male but also female respectability. The play challenges lynching by

presenting new and self-assured constructions of black gender roles, which incorporate violence as a means of self-protection while simultaneously challenging the stereotype of the criminalized black beast rapist.

The play approaches gender from a different angle than most other plays. While *Rachel* constructs black femininity according to white standards and reflects lynching from that perspective, *Son-Boy* does not fall back on already established gender models in order to contemplate lynching. Rather, it generates new gender roles out of diverging reactions to lynching. As a result it overcomes the bipolar dissemination of gender traits according to the men-women dichotomy and defines a brave and active stance against lynching as ennobling for both sexes. While the blurring of gender lines has often been regarded as a marker for uncivilized and underdeveloped races, *Son-Boy* assures the respectability of its characters by the dignity of their motivation. Moreover, the play does distinguish between male and female modes of resistance and thus keeps up traditional distinctions based on the separate spheres. In the play only Son-Boy intends to fight actively and his mother hides him under a heap of laundry in her kitchen, both reminiscent of traditional gender role models. The play challenges the rigid gender bifurcation of pro-lynching texts without damaging the respectability of its new constructions. The distinction is no longer men vs. women, but active defiance vs. passive subordination. Resistance becomes the site for the construction of true black masculinity and femininity and a new way of dealing with lynching.

7.1.2. Lynching and the Invalidation of White Womanhood

The texts in this section primarily address a white audience and focus on the threats to white instead of black motherhood in order to stage their critique of lynching. Similar to Mitchell's play, they adopt the translation of lynching into the gendered language of domesticity and abandon the attempt to create interracial sameness based on affective empathy over maternal suffering. Most texts analyzed here accept the figuration of lynching as having a morally debasing influence on the mob members and the white race in general as it creates an atmosphere of lawlessness and anarchy. The ideal of white motherhood is employed to dramatize the degrading effects of lynching and install both as opposed to each other. White involvement in the fight against lynching is therefore not motivated by a patronizing desire to help an endangered race, but by the need to preserve white ideals. The metonymic relationship between white motherhood and civilization further integrates the former into the opposition between savagery and civilization and awards resistance to lynching with additional signifi-

cance. In short, the creation of interracial sameness is renounced in favor of the fight against a more immediate threat to white motherhood and civilization.

The ASWPL campaign against lynching, led and initiated by Jessie Daniel Ames, is probably the most renowned attempt to counterpose lynching and white motherhood. Relying on the moral authority of white womanhood to exercise control over their husbands in order to prevent lynching, Ames regards it as one of the Association's primal goals to reach the "mothers, sisters, wives of the men who lynched."[2] Underlying her efforts is, however, not a genuine concern about African-Americans but the assumption that lynching is not a means to protect white women from the African-American rapist but to control and subjugate them by representing them as frail and dependent on male protection. Especially "[t]he fear of rape, like the threat of lynching, served to keep a subordinate group in a state of anxiety and fear."[3] Southern white women, according to Ames, therefore decided "no longer to remain silent in the face of this crime done in their name."[4] The ASWPL represents lynching not only as a physical threat to African-Americans but also as an oppressive discourse for white women, who should be taught that "[t]he black brute is lurking in the dark, monstrous beast, crazed with lust."[5] Lynching is condemned as a means of white male empowerment at the expense of white female subordination and the obstruction of white female emancipation.

The success of the whole campaign hinges upon the women of the ASWPL to exemplify the ideal of southern white womanhood.[6] Therefore, the ASWPL does not so much aim to undermine this ideal as to "dissociate the image of the lady from its connotations of sexual vulnerability and retaliatory violence."[7] They promote a more self-confident model of white femininity and reject lynching as a means for their protection. Accordingly, they attack the paternalism of white male chivalry as a disguise for sexism and racism. Instead of being cast into the role of sexual objects under the steady threat of being raped, they assert their "identity as autonomous citizens, secure in their rectitude and their confidence in the established agents of law enforcement."[8] Moreover, the ASWPL argues that lynching obstructs the progress of American civilization, promotes disrespect for the law and is a shame to Christian-

[2] Quoted after Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 231.
[3] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 151, 154.
[4] Quoted after Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 164.
[5] George T. Winston, "The Relation of the Whites to the Negroes," (1901) 108-09, quoted after Fredrickson, *Black Image* 278.
[6] Giddings 206-7, comments that part of the success of the association is owing to the fact that opposition to lynching came from those persons lynching was allegedly designed to protect and who were seen to possess an inherent moral authority.
[7] Hall, "The Mind that Burns in Each Body" 66.
[8] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 194.

ity.[9] The greatest advantage of the ASWPL is most likely that the appeal to abandon lynching comes from the group lynching was allegedly designed to protect:

> the southern lady enjoyed extraordinary moral authority, and mob violence spectacularly breached the social order and amity supposed to be her special responsibility. Ames hoped to draw on women's resentment at the anachronistic chivalric ideal and to assert middle-class feminine values against the violent ethos of a masculine world.[10]

Ames was convinced that "an organization of impeccably respectable white southern women expressing their abhorrence of masculine violence would […] have an impact on white public opinion that a biracial or black protest movement could not achieve."[11] Ames and the ASWPL campaign thus epitomize the departure from the strategy of concocting interracial sameness and are representative of the growing emphasis on unilateral solutions to the problem of lynching. While black texts like *Son-Boy* address a black audience to promote a reconsideration of black resistance and a reformulation of blackness, the white women of the ASWPL admonish the members of their own race to oppose lynching as a threat to their own ideals.

Evelyn Seeley shares the ASWPL conservatism concerning the definition of white female respectability, which she uses as the basis of her condemnation of lynching. However, rather than advocating a more self-confident womanliness and denouncing lynching as obstructing the development of white women, she represents lynching as the contamination of a very traditional conception of white womanhood. In her article "Women at Lynchings are Weak Followers" she argues that women should prevent men from lynching since they possess a higher moral authority, but "[i]nstead of forcing men to abandon horrible acts they join in grim orgy." Seeley locates the reason for the moral downfall of white women in the erosion of the traditional social system, especially through the equal rights movement. Accordingly, she proposes a return to a rigid social and gender system based on the ideology of the separate spheres as a solution to the problem: "Women who go to lynchings should be sent back to the kitchen, where they belong." Unlike Ames, her juxtaposition of lynching and white womanhood, however, focuses less on the depiction of lynching as a restrictive discourse imprisoning female emancipation, than on the destabilizing of traditional gender roles. The debasing influence of lynching has stripped white women of their moral authority so that "the kitchen is too good for them." Seeley further elucidates her critique using the 1934

[9] Hall emphasizes that "[t]o women schooled in the idiom of evangelicalism, no appeal [the appeal to Christianity] could be more appropriate." Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 196.
[10] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 180.
[11] Hall, *Revolt against Chivalry* 181.

lynching of Claude Neal in Marianna, Florida as a particularly shocking manifestation of white female degeneracy since women also brought their children and babies to the lynching: "[s]ome mothers held their youngsters high so they could see all that happened." Domesticating the threat posed by lynching, she mainly emphasizes that not the lynching but the sight of the crowd, especially the women in the crowd, was most shocking. She also refers to a photograph of a lynching in San Jose, which depicts the mob members' eyes as "shining with crazy excitement" and their lips as "distorted into wild orgiastic grins." Otherwise respectable members of the community, the women turned into barbarians. Playing upon assumptions of female moral authority, she states that "women sank to men's level," as they not only forgot to prevent them from lynching, but also participated themselves.[12]

The growing unilateralism of resistance also informs Corrie Crandall Howell's drama *The Forfeit*, which parallels Ames's use of white womanhood as the essentialist ideal of white femininity.[13] However, rather than using the ideal of white womanhood to lend authority to her critique of lynching, she installs lynching and white womanhood as conflicting concepts. Howell's representation of lynching does not capitalize on white female subjugation but emphasizes white womanhood as unattainable or unsustainable ideal. Lynching is represented as creating an atmosphere of anarchy and chaos which disables the ideal of white womanhood, especially its moral foundation.

The Forfeit is reminiscent of other domestic anti-lynching plays in that it records the intrusion of lynching into the domestic sphere and depicts the subsequent maternal attempt to rescue her son from a cruel death. The use of the domestic here differs from others plays as it does not seek a sympathetic white female audience. Rather than concentrating on black motherhood and the stimulation of interracial sympathy by sentimentally portraying maternal sufferings, the major focus of Howell's play is on the dreadful influence of lynching on white domestic tenets. The play construes lynching as the revocation and even the disabling of the ideal of white womanhood. *The Forfeit* depicts the active involvement of Fanny Clark, a white mother, in the lynching of the African-American Jeff, whom she denounces as having raped and killed the local school teacher, knowing, however, that her own son Bud has committed the crime. Aware of the fact that an African-American and not a white man is the most obvious culprit in a case of rape, she saves her son by exploiting the dominant projection of

[12] Evelyn Seeley, "Women at Lynchings are Weak Followers," New York *World Telegram* October 30, 1934. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1933 cont. – 1934, Reel 228, Frame 819 (Microfilm Edition).

[13] Corrie Crandall Howell, *The Forfeit, Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*, eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (1925; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 94-98. The text will subsequently be referred to as *F*.

black masculinity as hypersexualized and criminalized corporeality. Although the play thus registers a divergence between white womanhood as a "lived set of social relations" and ideological construct, Howell does not question the basis of true womanhood. Rather, she laments the disabling of white woman- and motherhood as a result of the harmful impact of lynching. In short, lynching, which is purportedly designed to protect white womanhood, actually undermines its moral foundation.

Howell especially capitalizes on an assumption nurtured by apologetic lynching representations, namely, white exemption from lynching. Her play removes the image of lynching as a civilized and controlled form of punishment reserved exclusively for African-Americans and effaces the racially determined, disproportional designation of the jeopardizing potential of lynching in order to universalize the threat of lynching and include white men and women as well. She propagates that everyone can fall prey to a blood-thirsty and frenzied mob. The jeopardizing of Bud, a white man, exemplifies the broadened scope of the physical threat of lynching. Yet, the strategy of resistance promoted in *The Forfeit* surpasses the "whitening" of domestic anti-lynching plays written by African-American women, who lament the disabling of motherhood owing to the existence of lynching. Howell does not locate the threatening dimension of lynching in the *physical* obstruction of white motherhood but in the *moral* degradation it brings about. Confronted with the choice of surrendering her son to the mob and saving him by sacrificing Jeff as a scapegoat, Fanny decides to save her son but simultaneously forsakes the moral purity constituting her designation as white mother. Unlike her black sisters, she is in a position to exploit the racialized perception of lynching and rape and dodge the threat of mob violence. However, this places her in a catch-22: in order to come up to the ideals and expectations of motherhood, that is, to look after her children, she has to dispose of other moral ideals when confronted with lynching. That is, if Fanny wants to save her son from being lynched, she has to abandon the ideals of true white womanhood. Notably, *The Forfeit* is not the attempt to expose the falsity and emptiness of the ideal of white womanhood by contrasting it with the social reality of white women. Rather, Howell juxtaposes the social reality of lynching and the maternal ideal in order to define the former as the impediment of the latter. She employs the dominant discourse of white woman- and motherhood and depicts the destruction of this ideal through lynching when she features a white mother whose motherhood becomes "forfeited" when she sacrifices an innocent man to save he son.

Through the emphasis on the disabling of decent white womanhood, *The Forfeit* is not exclusively addressed to white women as many of the above plays. The ideal of white womanhood as applied in apologetic representations of lynching is also of significance to con-

structions of white masculinity. The latter is not only predicated upon the disavowal of African-American male gender sameness but also the persistence of traditional definitions of white femininity. White masculinity hinges upon the idea of pure white womanhood and lynching as a means of protecting it. Howell's play reverses this connection: if lynching makes women forfeit their status of idealized femininity, then only the prevention of lynching can retain their saintly white womanhood and, by extension, also white masculinity. *The Forfeit* achieves a redefinition of lynching as a menace to both white masculinity and femininity and asks for the prevention of lynching to uphold these constructions.

In May Miller's *Nails and Thorns* lynching is again translated into the language of domesticity.[14] However, the one-act play differs from all previous dramas in that it features a white mother's fight against lynching. The play is set in "a small town ruled by frenzy" (*NT* 177) and opens with Gladys, the wife of Sheriff Steward Landers, urging her husband to take steps to prevent the impending scapegoat lynching of the innocent and insane African-American Lem. She is "worr[ied] about the kind of world Junior will have to live in" (*NT* 180) if the lynching will take place. Yet, her husband underestimates the seriousness of the situation and Lem is lynched. When Gladys learns that her husband is not able to prevent the lynching she decides to change the mind of the mob by showing them her son, which she considers a symbol for the future of white civilization. She intends to remind the mob of the devastating influences lynching and the climate of lawlessness and savagery it produces has for the moral development of her child and therefore also for the future of the community. The play, however, closes with the news of her son's death, who has been trampled to death by the mob. As a domestic anti-lynching play *Nails and Thorns* translates the threat posed by lynching into a domesticated language in order to address a white audience and render lynching an attack on white civilization. Miller's drama also acknowledges the necessity for white intervention to stop lynching because it threatens "every soul" (*NT* 180).

Similar to Howell's play, *Nails and Thorns* no longer regards lynching as a racially specific threat and therefore does not vindicate the necessity of white intervention through the invocation of interracial sameness. The domestic plotting of lynching no longer aims at invoking white sympathy for black maternal sufferings but demonstrates the imminent moral and physical threat lynching poses for white motherhood and civilization in general. Al-

[14] May Miller, *Nails and Thorns*, *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*, eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (1933; Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 177-188. The text will subsequently be referred to as *NS*. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens, introduction, *Nails and Thorns*, by May Miller, *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*. Eds. Kathy A. Perkins and Judith L. Stephens (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) 174-176, highlight that the use of white characters is a general feature in Miller's oeuvre.

though Annabel, the Stewards' black servant, counters Gladys's exclamation that "[t]hey can't do that to our children. They're all we have. They're our promise – our future" by saying that "mah chillun's all I got, too" (*NT* 183) and thus renders the prevention of lynching an interracial necessity, the focus in *Nails and Thorns* is not on interracial sameness. Apart from Annabel's one comment, no other references can be found which define lynching as a racially overlapping concern. *Nails and Thorns* is not a call for help from one mother to another but a call to action to abandon lynching – not for the sake of black mothers but as a defense of white civilization from the onslaught of white savagery. While the symbolic meaning of motherhood also features in Grimké's, Johnson's and Link's plays, here it is given more cogency and prominence.

Nails and Thorns capitalizes especially on the harmful effect lynching has on the moral development of children and the community where lynching takes place: "it isn't only the Negroes that suffer. Every time any injustice is done or any disgrace falls, all of us feel it. Our children feel it" (*NT* 180). Haunted by the memory of a past lynching, Gladys reads lynching not only as a physical threat to the lynch victim but as a moral threat for the community and its civilizational ideals. Using religious imagery to compare lynching to Christ's crucifixion, she emphasizes once again the moral degradation lynching brings about especially for children:

> It wasn't what they did to the unfortunate man alone. He was out of his misery. It was what they did to every soul in that town. They crucified everything that was worthwhile – justice and pride and self-respect. For generations to come the children will be gathering the nails and thorns from the scene of that crucifixion. (*NT* 180)

Nails and Thorns adopts the representation of lynching as a crucifixion. Unlike Griggs, however, who focuses primarily on the figuration of the black lynch victims as crucified Christ, Miller employs religious imagery to highlight the savagery of the mob and lynching as the crucifixion of the Christian ideals of American civilization. Miller's unilateralist approach shifts the emphasis of the use of religious imagery from a savior-like victim to the mob as the incorporation of un-civilized barbarism. The ideal of Christian civilization is symbolically mediated through Gladys's son, whom she presents as the savior who "will show them [the mob] the way" as the sight of a child will "make them forget this afternoon, forget the poor crazy fellow and look at themselves and their children" (*NT* 183). Nevertheless, unlike in the typical lynching narrative, the mob is not composed and controlled but "plumb crazy" (*NT* 183) and tramples her son to death. The physical and moral danger of lynching is thus symbolically amalgamated in the killing of Gladys's son. The death of her child not only demon-

strates the danger of lynching for the physical well-being of the white community but it simultaneously wrecks the ideal of motherhood and thus symbolically the moral center and the future of the white race. The sentimental climax is reached when she comments on his death: "He's dead, dead, I tell you, and I'm glad. [...] He'll never have to see a lynching" (*NT* 186). Miller's play thus appropriates the allegedly racialized monopolization of the harmful potential of lynching and depicts lynching as a menace to all motherhood and to the future of humankind and humanity. Written by a white woman, *Nails and Thorns* redefines the effect lynching has on the concept of motherhood: it is not a means of preserving but endangering it. Lynching is most dangerous as it destroys "everything that [is] worthwhile – justice and pride and self-respect" (*NT* 180). The play represents lynching as the original sin and Gladys's fight therefore as the (unsuccessful) attempt to "to save us all from sorrow" (*NT* 182).

Nails and Thorn can also be read as the demonstration of the necessity of privileging female perceptions of lynching. At the opening, the play presents the dysfunctional communication between husband and wife. Stewart downplays his wife's worries and interprets lynching according to the version provided by apologetic representations of lynching. He denies the likeliness of a lynching as no mob is gathering in the street and no charge of rape been placed against Lem. His confidence in a version of lynching as following certain rules seemingly absolves him from any responsibility or feelings of guilt. His wife, however, reproaches him for effacing the reality of lynching, namely, that African-Americans are lynched for any crime or no crime at all: "You know well enough what I mean, but you won't let it pass your lips. Stewart, why can't we be frank with each other?" (*NT* 178). While Gladys is seriously concerned about the imminence of a lynching, her husband tries to calm her down. "Gently" forcing her away from the window and back into the confines of the domestic sphere he tries to divert her attention with a cartoon: "Here, read this. The comic will be good for your nerves" (*Nails* 178). Ironically, the comic entitled "Desperado Joe" depicts Joe's capture by a mob and prefigures the Lem's lynching. Gladys's view is thus valorized as more accurate. Motherhood and her worries about the well-being of her child provide her with a privileged and superior prudence. Yet, Cassandra-like, she can convince neither her husband nor the mob, which does not understand the symbolic significance of the child and frantically tramples him to death.

7.2. "A Horde of Screaming Women" – the Demystification of White Womanhood

Other domestic anti-lynching texts are more skeptical about the ideal of white woman- and motherhood. Unlike Miller or Howell, who both treasure it and thus elaborate upon the morally debasing effects of lynching, the texts in this section directly attack the tenability of such a conception and point to the centrality of white womanhood as a discursive design in apologetic lynching representations. Unlike Ames, however, who reads the presence of women in the discourse of lynching as a sexist attempt to prevent female emancipation, the following anti-lynching texts interpret the deployment of white womanhood primarily as an instrument of racial oppression. White women are not victims of but participators in lynching; they function as an affective incentive and rationale for lynching. The strategy of resistance therefore focuses on the demystification of the ideal of white womanhood by exposing the divergence between its real and ideal manifestations. The defamation of white womanhood, which ultimately precludes interracial sameness, is the final stage in the demise of the pattern provided by such plays as *Rachel* or *Safe*.

In order to render female participation in lynching a manifestation of their unwomanliness, anti-lynching texts counter apologetic representations of lynching as a quasi religious or legal spectacle and re-inscribe it with new meaning as an uncivilized practice. Since the depiction of torture and mutilation could be excused as the compensatory violence and punishment for the even more hideous crime of rape, the attempts to undo the image of lynching as a civilized performance concentrate less on the graphic depiction of violence to emphasize the savage nature of lynching than on the nakedness of the victims. A newspaper reporting the lynching of Elias Clayton, Elmer Jackson and Isaac McGhie in Duluth, Minnesota in 1920 comments that women and children looked "unabashed" at the naked bodies of the victims. Concerned less about the display of torture literally written into the corpses of the three men, the paper is more "worried" about the fact that lynching exposes white women to the sight of black male nudity. The participation of women in such an offensive and uncivilized spectacle revokes their idealized status and deprives lynching of its prime justification. In a similar vein, it also attacks the notion of white male chivalry and reproaches the male mob members for not protecting their women from such a disturbing sight: "These knights of the South have no quibbles about showing their women and children the nude bodies of their

victims, and these members of the family have no shame in viewing them."[15] The public display and unashamed consumption of black male nudity establishes lynching as a practice incompatible with respectable behavior and renders it an uncivilized and un-womanly practice. The fact that several women are nevertheless present testifies to their moral depravity and exposes the divergence between white womanhood as an ideological construct and a "lived set of social conditions." Likewise, the Baltimore *Afro-American* headlines its article about the lynching of Leonard Woods in Whitesburg, Kentucky in 1927: "Kentucky Mob of Lynchers Half Women - Unmasked Woman Also Drove Car That Took Prisoner to Funeral Pyre" and makes the active involvement of white women the prime manifestation of their moral depravity.[16]

The active participation of white women furthermore contradicts representations of white women as helpless and passive victims and, even more disturbingly, erodes the binary distinction between male and female gender roles. Violence and (revalued) primitive passions were supposed to be exclusively male characteristics, which had to be restrained by the "angle of the house." Lynching thus not only brings to light the divergence of white women from the ideal of white womanhood, but it even makes them appear un-womanlike. Lynching, then, is condemned as causing the erosion of gender diversifications which was considered one of the basic ideological underpinnings of white civilization. References to the attendance of white women are not limited to anti-lynching texts. Apologetic representations of lynching also mention the presence of white women. During the lynching of Sam Hose, according to the Atlanta *Constitution*, "women cheered them [the mob] on while men waved their hats and gave vent to other demonstrations of sympathy as the party passed."[17] What distinguishes this account from the one in the Baltimore *Afro-American* is the maintenance of a clear distinction between the manner of male and female participation. While only the men are entrusted with the actual execution, women have a purely acclamatory function. Those depictions are predi-

[15] No title or date given. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1919 cont. – 1922, Reel 222, Frame 812 (Microfilm Edition).
[16] Baltimore *Afro-American* December 10, 1927. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1926 cont. – 1929, Reel 225, Frame 138 (Microfilm Edition). For another example of the active involvement of women see Washington (DC) *Times* February 13, 1918. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 17, Frame 723 (Microfilm Edition). During the lynching of Jim McIlherron at Estill Springs, TN, in 1918, the sister of one of the murdered white men made a speech to the maddened crowd "urging that his death be avenged." The *Times* headlined its article: "Urged by Woman Tenn. Mob Burns Negro in Chains." The Nashville *Tennesseean* reporting the same lynching describes the ensuing lynching and burning as extremely gruesome as hot irons were applied to the victim's body while he was still alive. Nashville *Tennesseean* February 12, 1918. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 17, Frame 722 (Microfilm Edition). See also McMinnville, TN *Southern Standard* February 16, 1918. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 17, Frame 151 (Microfilm Edition).
[17] *Atlanta Constitution*, April 16, 1899.

cated upon the assumption of the civilized nature of lynching and the casting of white women as victims whose presence sanctions the violence conducted in their behalf. Wood therefore interprets the presence of women as testifying and even adding to the cultural importance of lynching. She refers to news reports about Roy Mitchell's execution in Waco, Texas in 1923 and the fact that out of a crowd of 5000 reportedly only 500 were women. Nevertheless, the news reports tended to inform their readers that "many" women and also children were among the crowd "since presumably their presence added to the sense of public spectacle and sensationalism of the event."[18] Similarly, Brundage explains that in apologetic representations the attendance of women "gave the violence of mass mobs power to articulate and, in turn, help perpetuate time-honored cultural preoccupations to a far greater degree than any other form of mob violence."[19] Anti-lynching texts reiterate and subvert the presence of women in the mob and employ it to demonstrate the divergence between white womanhood as an ideological construct and social reality. To illustrate, I refer to the 1930 double lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abraham Smith in Marion, Indiana. In order to remove the image of a civilized performance, the New York *Evening Post* first capitalizes on the barbarous and chaotic nature of the mob. Descriptions such as "maddened mob," "maddened throng," or "the mob's fury" are clearly designed to invalidate any claims to a composed and determined execution. The impression of the mob's frenzied disposition is further nurtured by the description of its intrusion into the jail where Shipp and Smith, along with two accomplices, were held. The article emphasizes the brutality with which the mob forced entrance into the jail using sledgehammers to "smash […] a hole in the masonry" of the jail. Furthermore, the newspaper disjoints the association between legal and popular justice and emphasizes the irrationality of the mob. Thomas Shipp, Abraham Smith, Herbert Cameron and Robert Sullivan were jailed for killing Claude Deeter and attacking (not raping!) his girl friend. However, only two of them, Shipp and Smith, were even accused of the crime and only Smith admitted to his involvement. The mob, however, attempted to lynch all four and even made a mistake in the selection of its victims. Instead of taking Sullivan, who was implicated in killing Deeter, it erroneously took Cameron, whose connection with the other three was only that of an accomplice in past robberies.[20] The most shocking detail about the lynching is the active participation of women in this frenzied and chaotic mob action. The newspaper implicitly con-

[18] Wood, "Spectacles" 46.
[19] Brundage, *Lynching in the New South* 38. For the presence of white women in the mob see also Hale, "Spectacle Lynchings" 68.
[20] For a full narration of the Marion lynching see James Madison, *A Lynching in the Heartland: Race and Memory in America* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

trasts the image of true white womanhood with the women present in the mob, who it describes as a "horde of screaming women [who] trampled on him [Shipp] and tore his body with their fingernails" and as "feminine avengers" who "kick and claw [his] body on [the] ground."[21] The New York *Evening World* even regards the presence of women of such tremendous importance that it headlines its article about the Marion lynching "Women in Mob Aid Lynching of Indiana Negroes" and mentions that they "joined with men in belaboring the youths with clubs and hammers. Some women in the throng tore with their fingernails at the victim."[22]

The Louisville *News*, commenting on the 1926 lynching of Albert Blades in Butel, Arkansas, does not only condemn the presence of white women, but it also skillfully enacts and subverts the cultural deformation it seeks to expose. In his condemnation of lynching, the author demystifies and simultaneously makes use of the cult of white womanhood and its allegorical role as the future of the white race. He reiterates the assumption about the higher moral authority of women and renders the presence of women in the mob a threatening sign for the moral degeneracy of the nation as a whole:

> It staggers the imagination to picture women engaging in the brutal, barbaric past time of lynching. If no race can rise above its women it must be discouraging to intelligent white men to learn that anywhere in the confines of the United States, the leader of Nations, there can be found white women who could sink so low.

Casting the "[f]emale of the species [as] more deadly than the male" the article reappropriates traditional conceptions about female morality and white womanhood as the cradle and future of white civilization and in turn makes female participation in the mob the ultimate expression of racial degeneracy, also obstructing the progress of civilization as well as America's claim to civilizational leadership.[23]

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[21] New York *Evening Post* August 8, 1930. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1929 cont. – 1931, Reel 226, Frame 132 (Microfilm Edition). See also the articles "Women Giggled: Held up Children." Baltimore *Afro-American* August 30, 1930. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1929 cont. – 1931, Reel 226, Frame 159 (Microfilm Edition) and "Women and Children Look on While Victim is Hanged and His Body Incinerated" in the New York *Age* July 5, 1919, Hampton University, Peabody Newspaper Clipping File, "Lynching: Overview: The Crime of Lynching, 1919," Item 318, 1 of 2, Frame 68, (Microfilm Edition). See also the article in the Washington *Times* which mentions that "a [l]ady [a]pplauds" the lynching she has initiated herself: "And, note this refining touch of civilization, a lady made a speech requesting the burning of the negro, and other ladies seconded the motion." Washington (DC) *Times* February 13, 1918. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 17, Frame 151 (Microfilm Edition).

[22] New York *Evening World* August 8, 1930. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1929 cont. – 1931, Reel 226, Frame 132 (Microfilm Edition).

[23] Louisville, KY *News* May 29, 1926. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1924 cont. – 1926, Reel 224, Frame 704 (Microfilm Edition).

The immoral behavior of white women also has consequences for their children. Drawing on the middle-class notion of motherhood, which comprised among other things the duty to "ward[] off sexual threats to children perceived as coming from class or racial others," part of the resistance strategy of the ASWPL is to criticize deviances from these norms and focus on the negative influence of lynching on children.[24] In "Ladies and Lynching," the association criticizes the negligence of white mothers who take their children to see a lynching:

> Women had been present at all lynchings of recent years and in a number of cases had participated. Some of the women were mothers with young children who, on several occasions, were actually balanced precariously on parents' shoulders so as to have a better view. Young boys and girls were contributing their numbers to the mobs, both as spectator and as leaders.[25]

Likewise, the *Richmond Planet*, commenting on a news report which details that several white boys tried to lynch a black boy in Richmond, Virginia, expresses concerns that as long as lynching continues it will have a negative influence on the moral development of children for "lynching is demoralizing to young and old."[26] Implicit in such warnings is the reproach of negligence of the maternal duty to protect children from moral degradation. The newspapers foreground the divergence between real and ideal motherhood but present their critique not as a direct assault on the notion of white motherhood. Rather, they focus on the "victims" of maternal disregard for proper education.

Other newspapers not only warn against the negative influences of lynching on children, but also imply that lynching has already produced morally debased children. The Chicago *Defender* reports that a "football crazed crowd," which held a "pre-Christmas celebration" when it lynched J.B. Grant in Laurel, Mississippi in 1936, also included young boys. It headlines the account "Small Children Pump Lead into Lifeless Form of Victim" and relates that at the sight of the body of J.B. Grant being dragged behind a car, "women and children cheered madly. At intervals along the route th [sic] car dragging the body halted so that little children, using their parents' firearms, could pump lead into the inert form." [27] The Baltimore *Afro-American* reporting the lynching of Oliver Moore in Tarboro, North Carolina in 1930 plays up on the mob's extreme disregard for human suffering, especially women and children.

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[24] Elizabeth Wilson, "'Not in This House': Incest, Denial, and Doubt in the White Middle Class Family," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 8 (1995) 53.

[25] Quoted after Lewis T. Nordyke, "Ladies and Lynching," reprint from *Survey Graphic* November 1939 for Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching. No page. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1938 cont. – 1940, Reel 231, Frame 839 (Microfilm Edition).

[26] *Richmond Planet* March 30, 1900.

[27] Chicago *Defender* December 11, 1936. Tuskegee Institute, News Clipping File, Series II, Part A, Lynching File 1936 – 1938, Reel 230, Frame 19 (Microfilm Edition).

An eyewitness explains that when he came to the site of the lynching he saw no terror in the men, women and children. "There was nothing but giggling and laughter as the blood dripped from the nose and from the bullet-riddled body of the victim." Accordingly, the report is headlined "Women, Children Turn Lynching into Picnic."[28]

* * *

During the late 1930s, 40s, and 50s, anti-lynching texts further digressed from the strategy of creating interracial sameness and emphasized even more the need for unilateral solutions. The tendency to build up a defiant black self-confidence, which had begun with texts like *The Fire in the Flint* or *Son-Boy*, was continued by such writers as for example Richard Wright. In his short stories "Big Boy Leaves Home" and "Bright and Morning Star," Wright completely departs from the strategy of resistance determining anti-lynching writings between the 1890s and mid 1930s.[29] "Bright and Morning Star" exemplifies the further emancipation of black female gender roles from their fixation on white womanhood as a model. Having discarded the goal of creating interracial female empathy, Wright features a black female protagonist who emerges as the combination of traditional maternal features and tragically heroic defiance against black oppression which also includes the use of physical violence. The story centers on Sue and her son Johnny-Boy, the leader of a local communist organization, who is kidnapped by the sheriff in order to extort the names of the other members of the organization and prevent an alliance between black and white workers. While Johnny-Boy refuses to speak, Sue unknowingly passes the information on to the white stoolpigeon Booker. However, before he can impair his information to the sheriff, Sue kills him. The story ends with the death of both Sue and her son. Clearly departing from the conventions of true white womanhood, Wright features a black female character whose womanliness is not the result of domesticity but gets its sanctioning through the greatness of her sacrifice. Through her self-elected death, Sue resists lynching, which is understood not primarily as physical violence but as the imposition of power structures. While the white mob has the power to destroy her

[28] Baltimore *Afro-American* August 30, 1930. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 15, Frame 843-44. (Microfilm Edition). For other examples see New York *World-Telegram* November 28, 1933. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 8, Frame 735. (Microfilm Edition). The paper prints a photograph of the mob and comments "parents holding children aloft so they could get a good view of the attack on the jail and the subsequent lynching." See also Philadelphia *Public Ledger* October 19, 1933. NAACP Papers, Part 7, Series A, Reel 12, Frame 873 (Microfilm Edition).

[29] "Big Boy Leaves Home" and "Bright and Morning Star" are published in Richard Wright, *Uncle Tom's Children* (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1963) 18-49 and 162-192.

body and that of her son, they cannot break their will. Sue's death is thus not a sign of her defeat or inferiority but a victory over black exploitation, victimization, and powerlessness. In "Big Boy Leaves Home," Wright likewise demonstrates how a strong family unit is able to battle the white power structure and depicts the need for as well as effectiveness of black solidarity against white oppression. When Big Boy and his friend Bobo are wrongly accused of rape and kill a white man in self-defense, the black community responds to the impending lynching by helping Big Boy escape. Resistance to lynching is successfully organized by the black community and demonstrates the effectiveness of unilateral solutions to the problem of lynching as well as the falsity of the conception of lynching as deterministic inescapability for African-Americans. Nevertheless, Big Boy's friend Bobo is tortured, mutilated, and finally lynched and reminds the reader of the still lingering threat of lynching.

Erskine Caldwell's attempt to discredit lynching is completely different. In his novel *Trouble in July* he concentrates mainly on the reactions of the white community to the impending lynching of Sonny Clark.[30] The novel challenges traditional apologetic representations, especially such notions as the rape myth, the alleged unanimous white support for lynching and the representation of lynching as civilized performance installing white supremacy. In Caldwell's novel, lynching destroys white social harmony and brings to light varying attitudes to the practice, most of which are adversative to it and based on egoistic or personal interests and not motivated by racial considerations. Instead of having a unifying impact upon the white community, lynching becomes a restrictive and oppressive force also for whites.

Wright and Caldwell are only two examples of the huge and still largely unexplored reservoir of anti-lynching writings.[31] The recent academic interest in lynching, the reopening of the Emmett Till-case or the attempt made by Senator George Allen, who had been reproached for displaying a noose in his office, to introduce a bill to apologize officially for the Senate's role in impeding anti-lynching legislation, however, show the need to come to terms with one of the darkest chapters in American history.[32] Yet, the necessary exploration of

[30] Erskine Caldwell, *Trouble in July* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1940).
[31] Both writers have of course been the object of much academic research, however, their treatment of lynching is still largely unexplored.
[32] Determining from recent interest in Emmett Till, he seems to be growing into a symbol for lynching and racism. Among the many publications are for example Toni Morrison's play *Dreaming Emmett* (1986) or David Barr's *The State of Mississippi vs. Emmett Till* (2004), which he wrote together with Till's mother Mamie Till Mobley. Two documentary films are also noteworthy: Stanley Nelson's documentary film *The Murder of Emmett Till* (2003) and Keith Beauchamp's *The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till* (2004). The information uncovered especially by Beauchamp led to the reopenig of the case in 2004. See for exmple the CNN-article by Amita Nerurkar, "Lawmakers Want 1955 Mississippi Murder Reopened," *CNN on the web* April 13, 2004, April 13, 2004 <http://edition.cnn.com/2004/LAW/04/13/till.murder.case/>. For the bill to excuse the Senate's filibus-

lynching should not result in a monolithic focus on the culprits but also the victims. More often than not African-Americans are reduced to their role in the spectacle of lynching. Their attempts to oppose lynching often go by unnoticed. Nevertheless, the history of African-American resistance and especially the rhetoric of anti-lynching is an indispensable constituent of the history of lynching. Only if anti-lynching is awarded the same attention as is currently paid to lynching will it be able to grasp the full immensity of lynching and to avoid the casting of African-American as objects. The history of lynching is not only one of white aggression and black victimization – it is equally the history of black resistance.

tering see for example the article "Senators Introduce Lynching Apology" in the New York *Times* on the web February 3, 2005, February 3, 2005 <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/02/national/02lynch.html>.

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