Obscure, Unclassed and Undefinable: Social Immobility for Mixed Races in the Nineteenth Century Presented in Jude the Obscure and Of One Blood

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OBSCURE, UNCLASSED AND UNDEFINABLE: SOCIAL IMMObILITY FOR MIXED RACES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY PRESENTED IN JUDE THE OBSCURE AND OF ONE BLOOD

BY

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Abstract

This paper examines the problematic nature of western reliance on class-based societies through looking at postbellum United States and Victorian England through a transatlantic lens. I prove how the classification system produces a group of “unclassed” peoples based on a racial and intellectual status, by looking at Thomas Hardy’s Jude the Obscure and Pauline Hopkins’ Of One Blood. These two nineteenth-century novels expose the production of unclassifiable who are outcast based on what I call a “class-race-intellect disagreement.” By revealing the life and struggles of the mixed-raced individual, I will show how the class systems used by western nations not only maintained the financial, social, professional, educational, etc. disparity between the upper and lower classes, but created an entire class of outsiders who are not welcome to participate in the world in which they live. This paper will not only show how these “unclassed” individuals were produced in the nineteenth-century, but how their status has maintained across oceans, borders and time.
This paper is dedicated to my parents, Christine and Doug Geed, for without them, none of this would be possible.
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Introduction
“Class Across Oceans—Transatlanticism, Race, & the Novel”

What role does an author play in his or her own text? Of course, he or she is the artist who creates the world and characters we find in the pages, the one who decides the growth, struggles and successes of those characters, the teacher who sets the tone for the story, decides how it will come to a close, and what readers will be left with. The author constructs the novel, so undoubtedly, the author’s role is a major one. But at what point should we stop considering the author? Should the author’s background and history be brought into the text? Should his or her racial, ethnic or cultural status affect how the readers understand the characters, themes, or message of the novel? At what point does knowledge of the author interfere with truly understanding what a text is about, perhaps preventing the readers from grasping a major idea or appreciating a text for what it really is?

As a white, male author writing in the late nineteenth-century, Thomas Hardy produced novels that remained within a typical framework—following the life of a hero or heroine who lives, or at least begins in, a pastoral setting, written through an honest and critical lens. However, if we reduce all of his texts one genre and plotline and assume the goal is always the same then we will miss important details about the text. *Jude the Obscure* was published in 1895, during Britain’s fin de siècle, a period characterized by both hope and anxiety for what the new century would bring. While the novel followed Hardy’s typical writing schema—grave, socially conscious and critical—it was perhaps *too* blunt and tragic, receiving harsh and severely negative reviews, which prompted Hardy to give up writing altogether. *Jude the Obscure* is set in Wessex, a fictional, English country supposedly modeled after Dorset County, and follows the life of a man living in the countryside with dreams of a better life. Hardy sets the tone in this text early on, raising
questions about morality, British institutions (ie. marriage, work, social status and the university,) and the truth behind these “pastoral” visions have been frequent themes in critical commentaries on this text. However, there has been a major layer to this novel that has thus far been overlooked—Jude Fawley’s status as a racially-mixed man. While outlining the details that lead to this conclusion, this paper will also expose why too much reliance on the author and outside context, and continuous assumption and generalization will cause the audience to entirely misinterpret a novel.

Pauline Hopkins also received the negative impacts of authorial knowledge in her novel Of One Blood. While this novel is not her best-known work, it does have a scholarly following, and has also received significant critical attention, but many of the critics showcase a lack of understanding of the novel and the assumption of what Hopkins’ role as a novelist should be. As an African American woman living in postbellum United States, many civil rights and race activists expected that Hopkins would fill the role of outspoken, honest and critical activist for the rights of non-white and newly freed individuals in America. While Hopkins is regarded as an activist and civil rights movement leader, her novel was not viewed as any sort of contribution to that fight, and in fact, was regarded as blatantly “escapist” and a missed opportunity to share the true horror stories of the plight of non-white Americans. However, as this paper will demonstrate, Hopkins choice of genre and form do not disregard the honest and brutal history of black men and women, but instead suggests the entire racial system is simply a hoax and the truths we accept often times have less substance than a fictitious, supernatural story.

Both Hardy and Hopkins tackle issues in unique ways, revealing how much a novel can truly accomplish when it’s understood at its full capacity. The novels challenge modern ideas of race, and in particular, the often-disregarded life of the mixed-race and ultimately unclassed man
in the nineteenth century. What is really remarkable, is that while the authors take different approaches and tell distinctive narratives, the stories they tell are very much the same. But how could this be? Why do these two authors, who come from entirely different backgrounds, live in entirely different spaces, and have separate literary interests essentially write the same book? This paper will demonstrate that although the two nations and societies that these novelists critique were different, they have a joint reliance on systems of classification which prioritizes categorized understanding of different places, animals, plants, weather, landscapes, and even people. This Western construct is what lead to class-based societies which places individuals into a hierarchized and categorized system where each person must fit within a specific caste and fulfill the “requirements,” typically stereotypical traits that force individuals into a general “type.” This caste system however has produced a group of unclassed members, who do not fall within the constraints of any specified class level, and therefore do reap the benefits of “belonging,” and in societies such as the United States and Britain, “belonging” and status are essential to social mobility and access to even the most basic rights of property, education, family, work, etc. These unclassed individuals are then forced into states of invisibility, where there is no recognition of their existence because the system, whether it be political, educational, professional, economic or social, only recognizes the preconceived classes and thus ignores anyone who falls outside of this caste system. While this invisibility is a symptom of being unclassed, the status of the unclassed is tied to race and levels of intellect, because within each class level there is a presumption for which racial groups fall within its boundaries (where dominant races are higher classed and assumed subservient racial groups fall into the lowest classes) and thus a link between the class level and racial identity leads to an assumed level of education and intellect. If there is a perceived mismatch of these identity markers—race, class and intellect—then the individual(s) who are subject to this perception are
forced into a position of being unclassifiable. This perceived mismatch violates what I refer to as the race-class-intellect agreement, where societal presuppositions of dominant and superior identities produce an understanding of what each individual has access to and where (s)he must fall in the social hierarchy. Any disruption to the predetermined classification system is then considered a threat to the social, political, economic, etc. systems in place, and thus a threat to the position of the powerful members of any given society.

In both *Jude the Obscure* and *Of One Blood*, the protagonists possess an ambiguous racial identity which plays a significant role in their success academically, professionally, romantically and socially and in turn effects the way in which they view themselves. The racial ambiguity found in these texts reflects the underlying issues in both Victorian England and postbellum United States of categorical race, social immobility and access to education and professional success. The authors of both texts reveal the multi-tiered issue of race by writing dramatized and mystical novels, which despite the unrealistic nature of the texts, expose very real, and exceptionally debilitating results of minority status. Although written during historical periods of turmoil and social upheaval, these novels and their respective messages retain extraordinary relevance to current issues of race, class, and social mobility and help prove that these issues have existed for centuries and highlights the absurdities that have yet to be resolved.

To bridge the gap between these two texts, there are two important theoretical lenses to consider: Transatlanticism and Critical Race Theory. The latter connects these two novels through the theme of racial ambiguity, mixed-race status and the intermingling of race and class, which while very different, cannot be fully separated from one another. Viewing these novels through the transatlantic lens allows these two texts, separated by an entire ocean and thus by national, cultural, political, and many other identifying differences, to be united through their fundamental
reliance on a class-based society and race-based classification systems. Relying on these theories opens up the ability to connect these two authors and their works to see how the worlds they have built actually revolve around similar themes and concerns and create a bridge between these nations despite the space and time between them. However, while these lenses allow the conversation to begin, the unique similarities between Hardy’s and Hopkin’s novels are not inherently tied to these theories as they currently exist. The Transatlantic studies that have recognized the existence of minority groups across oceanic borders have not fully acknowledged the existence of the “unclassed” minority, which falls somewhere between preexisting boundaries of identity. Similarly, Critical Race Theory has made tremendous strides in the recognition and progress of non-white individuals, particularly in Westernized nations, but typically non-white refers to those who fall within specific category of racial status, whereas those who cannot fully identify with any particular group tend to fall into the unknown and therefore are indefensible. By highlighting these gaps in these two particular theories, both Of One Blood and Jude the Obscure reveal the gaps made by Westernized society’s reliance on categorization, classification and the need to fit-in. Hardy and Hopkins raise the question: what happens to those who fall outside the box?

Theoretical Perspectives: Transatlanticism

Transatlanticism exists as a specific sector of the transnational theoretical conversation which argues that state and nation borders are not the only significant factors in understanding a societal, cultural or global issue. Transnationalism offers the perspective of an international link and potential collaboration and mutual understanding of what would otherwise be considered an individualized or specific topic. Transatlanticism then, proposes a linkage between the Americas, Europe and Africa—all nations connected by the Atlantic. This particular focus is inherently tied
to issues of race, as the birth of this triad can be traced to the transatlantic slave trade, as well as issues of technology and Western advancement, considering the seemingly unavoidable movement of industrial progress westward from European nations to the Americas. It is within these two major categories that most Transatlantic theorists fall, with variations and additions being made over time.

During its initial construction, the field of Transatlanticism focused heavily on ideas of slavery and race, finding its crux in the transatlantic slave trade. Considering the triangulated path of the slave trade, it seems natural that the topic of transatlantic connection would center around slavery, arguably one of the first major connections between Europe, Africa and the Americas. Paul Gilroy focuses heavily on the idea of “the public sphere” and black diasporic intellectual, cultural and political production in one of his most famous works, *The Black Atlantic*, where he discusses a specific element of the Slave Trade. Gilroy’s transatlantic approach focuses on a shift in the mindset of nations and borders from separate entities towards an idea of “publics,” which have complicated relationships, engage in cultural and intellectual exchanges, demonstrate the power of thinking and position the Atlantic as a geo-political participant in a global, capitalist market. Transatlanticism here suggests that the Americas, Africa and Europe are “publics” which form a hybrid, political-cultural space that promote capitalist ideals uniquely tied to the African Slave Trade and the significance slavery had on the formation of modernity. Ian Baucom also discusses the connection between the transatlantic market, capitalism and slavery through his exploration of “the Zong,” a slave ship in the eighteenth century, and the impact this singular tragedy had on the abolitionist movement and the powerful conception of materiality, exchange, and value. Baucom explains that due to navigational errors, what was meant to be a six- to nine-week journey from Africa to Jamaica took four months. During this time, a sickness broke out
killing some crewmembers and around sixty slaves on board. Concerned about the insurance associated with his “cargo,” the almost 500 human bodies on the ship, Captain Luke Colligwood decided to jettison over 130 slaves under the guise of conserving water. This decision lead to a trial against the insurers which ended with Colligwood being owed the full value of the lost merchandise. The story of “the Zong” reveals an extraordinary truth about the role of slavery as it attributes to the commodifying of bodies and power of capital, which predates what is traditionally known as the start of modernity; as Baucom writes, the Zong case “function[s] as a sign in which modernity finds itself anticipated, demonstrated, and recollected.”¹ While Baucom’s transatlantic study focuses on a particular incident, his contribution to the theoretical framework incorporates themes of tragedy, race, and commodity which adds to Gilroy’s assertion of the publics which exchange, and thus commodify, not only materials, but culture, intellectual property, and even human beings. The commodifying of bodies becomes a major element of the transatlantic connection, extending even beyond slavery and into much more modern ideas of neoliberal personhood, where the individual becomes his/her own commodity and creates commodities through intellect, creativity, labor, etc.

Relying also on Baucom’s and Gilroy’s foundational assertions, Joseph Roach adds a unique perspective to geo-cultural exchange in his text Cities of the Dead. Here Roach outlines the role of performance and its impact on gender, class, race, and power in two specific cities: New Orleans and London. Roach’s focus follows the path of “orature,” non-written performance, and how it migrates across space, time and most importantly, borders. While this commodifying is not tied to bodies, Roach does assert that what these bodies create become marketable, and therefore enters into the economic and political spheres of Western culture. Unlike Gilroy however, Roach

¹ Baucom, Ian. 159.
does not so much resist the idea of fixed boundaries but instead sees a transatlantic fluidity in the production and continuation of performance cultures, suggesting that there are connections between cultures instead of a unified transatlantic culture. Roach creates the term “circum-Atlantic” to emphasize this relationship referring to an Atlantic connection made through travel and the intermingling of bodies, and thus cultures, that circumvent the borders of nations. He finds a triangulated relationship between performance, memory and substitution, which leads to a collective form of performance and understanding that he calls “kinesthetic imagination” or the shared practices and bodily movements of a community. Roach’s approach incorporates a long lineage of New Orleans performance culture across centuries, his focus on London is nestled almost exclusively in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, ignoring contemporary connections of culture and politics. This lack leads to missed information and a seemingly forced connection between these two cultures by ignoring entire centuries of British history and highlighting aspects of modern (nineteenth century) culture in New Orleans without connecting it to nineteenth century culture in London. While his addition of “orature” into the transatlantic conversation is beneficial in expanding the idea of commodity, cultural capital, and the role of borders, what Roach truly contributes is the question of whether Transatlanticism unifies these cultures or simply exposes threads that connect these nations across the Atlantic.

While race and commodity are major themes in this theoretical field, a larger component is the understanding of connection and community. Paul Giles adds to this understanding of Transatlantic community through his study of British and American literatures. He offers these as potential alternatives to one another, exemplifying the fluid co-evolution of these two cultures and recognizing the complex and different national, cultural and literary identities of each. Giles views the interplay of British and American narratives as “a series of reciprocal attractions and repulsions
between opposing national situations”\(^2\) which challenges the postcolonial notion of the rebellious nation against an opposing power which no longer possesses the nation but nevertheless “haunts” it. Giles suggests then that American and British literatures are not in opposition nor identical, but “heretical alternatives to each other” that are not “independently asserted” but parallel to one another “incorporating their own particular local perspectives.”\(^3\) This perspective on the transatlantic connection opens the possibility that literatures which are seemingly juxtaposed actually have paralleled ideas and a conjoined sphere of national, cultural and literary analysis and agendas. This is a major focus in Giles’s text *Transatlantic Insurrections* where he makes unique and surprising comparative readings between what were considered incomparable authors and texts, such as Alexander Pope and Mather Byles, and the Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*. These unorthodox yet revealing comparisons contribute a great deal to Transatlantic theory and the ability to bridge the gap between American and British literature, culture and national identity without conflating the two. Giles’ perspective aligns more closely with Baucom than with Roach, but still suggests that while threads may exist, there are also important contrasts to consider and perhaps these cultures can be viewed as mirror images rather than simply carbon copies.

As is suggested by Giles, literature is a major element of the Transatlantic field. While race and slavery were foundational aspects, literary connections have proven to be critical when comparing these Atlantic nations. Giles suggests the appearance of “American” culture in British literature at length and this perspective is met by Kate Flint, except she actually takes the alternate approach. Flint expands on this idea tremendously while incorporating the influence of race and ethnic identity in *The Transatlantic Indian*. Flint exposes how the Native American, as an iconic

\(^2\) Giles, Paul. *Transatlantic Insurrections*.

\(^3\) Ibid. 2.
figure, found itself immersed in British literature through fiction, poetry, travel narratives, and non-fiction journalism, as well as performance art, such as cinema, theater, paintings and drawings. By exploring the complex relationship between Native Americans and the British, where Native American were positively regarded by the British but the British also seemed to challenge their cultural identity, Flint also reveals how race and gender are presented in Native American texts (both those written by and about Native Americans), and the influence of power, and economic and political conceptions on then conception of individuals. Flint offers the field of Transatlanticism yet another layer to the circum-atlantic studies where native perspectives are essential and yet predate the Transatlantic relationship. Flint’s writing also offers, similar to Roach and yet uniquely presented, the inclusion of non-traditional forms of literature (ie. pictures, paintings, cinematic and theatrical performances, etc.) into the discussion of international overlap. By considering aesthetics in the movement to remove borders of nation-state as a boundary of cultural and literary comparison, Flint allows this theoretical perspective to contemplate a connection that goes beyond language, beyond both the written and oral word. Flint’s nuanced reading of the British and American relationship opens the possibility that there are underlying, unspoken connections in the formulations of these national identities.

The role of literature in Transatlantic theory goes beyond the idea of literary identity and expands into the technological side of literary production as well. Tom Standage and Tom Wright both attribute the Transatlantic connection to the development and expansion of literature in the eighteenth century. Standage suggests that the development of the telegraph commenced the real intertwining of British and American culture by allowing political, cultural, national, economic, etc. perspectives to be shared across the ocean with minimal effort or time commitment. It is the ability that opened the door for literary connection and allowed literatures from these nations to
transcend the borders and distance that otherwise were not simply traversed. Wright on the hand attributed this international connection to the increase in print culture, which expanded not only written word but oral literacy practices as well. Orality and print culture added to the dynamic and layered relationship between public cultures, which extended across oceans and made the interconnectivity and shared practices between nations flourish. Embedded in the American and British relationship are the cultural implications of technological advancement and literary expansion.

All of these Transatlantic scholars and contributors have expanded the theoretical field to incorporate multiple forms of literature, include conceptions of race, gender and thus class, expose political, economic, and national powers to reveal the similarities between nations across the Atlantic, and demonstrate the multiple ways a Transatlantic community can be formed. These expansive considerations of this sector of Transnational studies has given voices to minority groups, shed light on the injustices that exist in multiple forms of Western culture, and have bridged the gap between societal issues and ideologies, exposing many of the “forgotten” groups that inherently develop in class-conscious societies. The racial component of Transatlanticism revealed the struggle of black individuals during the periods of the Atlantic slave trade, the capitalist desire for continued slavery and indentured servitude, and extended beyond the abolition of slavery into the years of civil right movements and the attempted integration of former slaves into participating and equal sects of society. Through Joseph Roach, Kate Flint and others, the plight of the Native American has been exposed and considered, revealing the role of Britain during colonization and post-American Revolution as well as the struggle for identity in the developed United States. Kate Flint, Linda Hughes and others have also incorporated the conceptions of gender and the struggles for gender equality into the conversations of Transatlantic
minorities, revealing the layers behind suffrage and the movements into activism. In bridging the gaps across the Atlantic, this theoretical practice has subsequently exposed and enveloped the struggles of minorities and revealed how those who fall into the lowest caste are produced in Western culture, capitalist ideologies, and class-conscious societies. I will rely on the ideas of commodified people found in Baucom and commodified intellectual property found in Roach to understand how class segregation is formed and social mobility can take place in a space where commodified beings produce marketable intellectual and non-material creations. I will also consider the connections found in Flint, where she understands literary presentation of culture, ethnicity and racial identity as a form of connection between Britain and the United States and her belief in transatlantic links that transcend language. Additionally, I will use Giles’s understanding of literature that argues works that appear to be opposite or void of any connection can actually have mirrored foundational ideas and reveal a fundamental similarity between nations. By relying on these contributions, I will argue that there exists a Transatlantic connection based on class-based societies that prioritize a universal understanding of the world and all its participants and creations, at the cost of producing “unclassed” beings. I will prove that the novels *Jude the Obscure* and *Of One Blood* not only highlight the existence of these “forgotten” societal members but show how detrimental it is to fall outside the predetermined box in a nation where status and fitting-in is considered the fundamental step in participating even to the smallest degree. The existence of the “unclassed” has been missing from the Transatlantic Theoretical field thus far, whereas other minority classes have proven to exist and have similar struggles in nations separated by the Atlantic. Uncovering the tragedy that accompanies life as a minority and member of the lowest classes has been crucial in understanding the negative impacts of racial segregation and the consequences of incorporating race into class structure. However, it is now integral that we
discover that the system of class-based societies is entirely flawed and must be dismantled, because we are and have always been producing not only minorities but forgotten and entirely invisible groups of people. By showing the existence of the unclassed, this paper will show that the Western reliance on classification and categorization displaces members of minority classes so harshly that they cannot hope to be seen or actively participate in the world that has displaced them.

“The unclassed,” those who cannot identify one way or the other, the individuals who do not fit neatly into the categorizations of rigid Victorian society or the eighteenth century American classification systems which both cultures held steadfast; it is these individuals who have fallen through the cracks of society and have still remained unseen in the contemporary movements to give a voice to the dismissed members of lower classes. To be caste into one of the lowest classes of American or British societies, particularly in the eighteenth century, was to be sentenced to a life of dismay, struggle, and tragedy. However, to not even have the ability to partake in the lowest class, to be considered unclassifiable, meant more than misery but a certain kind of political, cultural and societal death. It is this gap in Transatlantic theory that I hope to fill through the discussion of the racially ambiguous members of society, who do not fulfill the necessary race-class-intellect agreement, the term I have developed, required to be classified at all and participate, even to the smallest degree, in eighteenth century Western societies. I posit that Thomas Hardy and Pauline Hopkins sought to give voices to these unclassed members through their novels, presenting this need to societies that were not equipped to recognize the extreme consequence of class-consciousness and unable to view the existence of these individuals as real, necessary or worthy of political and social reworking.

Critical Race Theory is an expansive theoretical field that encompasses an array of different perspectives and methodologies, has transformed tremendously over time, and has been utilized
by many different theoretical groups since its development. The general history and creation of Race Theory can be traced back to W.E.B. Du Bois, a critical and foundational voice in the development and continuation of CRT. Although the initial discussion of Race Theory may have started earlier, Du Bois’ influence during the start of the twentieth century, when he began lecturing⁴, and introduced the “color line,” an idea he explores heavily in his novel *The Souls of Black Folk*, is what truly founded Critical Race Theory. Du Bois engages with a multidimensional analysis of the intersection of race and class with his term “color line,” which refers to an underlying and invisible yet powerful “line” that divides everyone into categories of race and subsequently dominant and subordinate classes. This idea was first presented in his lecture “The Present Outlook for Dark Races of Mankind” where he criticizes social constructs and modes of domination and resistance, stating that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line, the questions of how far differences of race—which show themselves chiefly in the color of skin and the texture of hair—will hereafter be made the basis of denying to over half the world the right of sharing to their utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization.” In this one statement, Du Bois at once introduces the intersection of race and class, the power of the dominant, white, upper-class, suggests “race” as a construct, and the extent to which the “color line” impacts not only the nation but “half the world.” Here, Du Bois creates the foundation for Critical Race Theory and begins a conversation that lasts even until today.

Race Theory is heavily integrated with sociological and sociopolitical movements, which was initially criticized by Du Bois for its inherently racist assumptions. After bringing these to light, the field of sociology underwent a heavy change in conjunction with the birth of CRT. After WWII, with the rise of the civil rights movements and the reconstruction post- European

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⁴ Du Bois lectured at the third annual meeting of the American Negro Academy in 1900.
colonialism, the sociology of race became a central conversation and theoretical perspective. In the U.S. especially considering the rise of fascist ideas in Europe, CRT began to intertwine with inclusionist and democratic desires, undeniably tying race and politics together. Besides Du Bois, scholars in Chicago are widely considered founders of this theoretical perspective, with studies on the macro-dimensions of race conducted by Robert E. Park\(^5\), and the symbolic-dimensions of race, which was a focus of George H. Mead and Herbert Blumer.\(^6\) Both of these perspectives have been critical to the understanding of race issues and the impact of the color line. “Macro-dimensions” refer to the larger consequences of racial bias and subordination—denial of education, denial of professional development and jobs, legal policies such as marriage laws, rights to property owning, etc. These “macro-dimensions” may be large but were also largely ignored and assumed to be simply science-based, lawful policies. Mead and Blumer then introduced “symbolic-dimensions,” which are similar to “micro-aggressions.” The “symbolic-dimensions” refer to limitations that are not overt, but rather implied or consequential of racism; issues of maltreatment, derogatory remarks, being turned down for a job or denied access to tools needed for education or being disregarded in the classroom. These issues are all outside of the realm of the law and cannot be fixed through changes in policy, but instead must be addressed through a change of societal mindset.

The sociological elements of race theory are critical, but anthropological developments, the tying of fascism and eugenics, and then the introduction of communist theory also played a critical role in propelling the black movement and subsequently race theory. Developments in these scientific areas and new modes of thought helped extinguish the “scientific” support of racist beliefs. The goal of CRT is largely tied with the political and the legal system; it aims to dismantle

\(^5\) Winant, Howard. 176.  
\(^6\) Ibid.
and renegotiate the relationships between race, racism, and power, and while utilizing the ideals of the civil rights movement and ethnic studies it also encompasses a broader context, like history, group- and self-interest, feelings, the unconscious, and economics. It focuses less on the steps that lead to racism, but on the foundation of liberal order, equality, legality, rationalism (especially enlightenment-based reason), and principles of constitutional law. Here lies another focal point in Critical Race Theory—a push to shift the social, racial mentality.

CRT works on disavowing multiple levels of racism: micro-aggression, macro-effects, symbolic-dimensions, and legal repercussions, causes, foundations, etc. CRT is partially founded in the thesis that race is a social construct, based in social thought and relations, and is therefore not inherent or fixed. A major method used in CRT is storytelling, which urges black and brown writers to recount their experiences with racism and the legal system, apply their own unique perspectives, and assess the law’s master narratives to deconstruct the preconceived notions of historical progress and the “forgotten past.” Cornell West writes that the mission of CRT is to examine “the entire edifice of contemporary legal thought and doctrine from the viewpoint of law’s role in the construction and maintenance of social domination and subordination.” It must utilize the story telling element to claim a “critical” intellectual domain in American jurisprudence. Cornell West, Langston Hughes, Frederick Douglass, James Baldwin, and Zora Neale Hurston are all major scholars who contributed to the method of storytelling to recount stories and experiences of slavery and post-antebellum life for freedmen and women who still had not experienced freedom or acceptance. These stories outline both the large-scale struggles, such as unemployment and inability to find housing, as well as the underlying current of racism which lead to threats and mistreatment and exacerbated to violence and even death. Many studies have shown that the effects of the micro and symbolic dimensions of racism have caused the macro effects, such as class
divide, xeno-racism, divisions within groups of ethnically categorized people, and disconnect in the movement. Education is a major current focus of CRT, where debates exists as to whether it is race or class that causes underachievement in the classroom, and how this can be combatted. This paper will answer this heavily debated topic through the concept of the race-class-intellect agreement.

Postcolonial theory has made a major impact on CRT through connecting it with transnationalism, criticizing “nation-based ethnicity” and incorporating a modern lens for historical study. Overall, in the current moment, education and transnationalism are huge focal points in CRT, however not necessarily in conjunction with one another. While the contributions of Critical Race Theorists have been invaluable, I hope to add an important perspective to the work they have accomplished. I have relied heavily on WEB Du Bois’ understanding of the Color Line as well as studies of micro-aggressions and symbolic dimensions of the racial divide. I have also relied on the method of storytelling in understanding the best way to outline racial issues and recount real-life struggles. The approach I would most like to expand upon is W.E.B. Du Bois’ “color line,” perhaps the most foundational element of racial theory. Instead of viewing a stark color line, I propose to view it as a color gradient. There is no doubt that during the time that Du Bois conceptualized his famous “color line,” there was a tremendous and instantaneous difference between the treatment of those who fell on the white side of the “color line” and those who fell on the black side. Those who were perceived to be black were thus invisible as human beings, and simply fell into the vast category of “blackness,” with no personal difference or unique needs, desires or traits, but simply a collection of stereotypes disguised as scientific truth. However, it is indeed the perception of the individual that determined his or her treatment. What then of those who were perceived to be white, but came from parents who would be perceived as black? Those
who “pass” had a unique advantage, which unfortunately was indeed an advantage, because they could bypass the treatment that would otherwise be fully enforced if his or her racial identity was easily visible. However, despite this avoidance, the “passing” man or woman still had struggles and limitations of his or her own which were linked directly to race. Being faced with a decision to “deny” or “admit” one’s identity, to witness the treatment of loved ones who are not given that choice, to participate in a society where one is bombarded with hatred towards others based something that neither (s)he nor anyone else can control, and all of that leading to the constant fear of the truth being revealed, is a unique yet also debilitating struggle. It is this perspective that I want to include within the framework of the “color line,” and hopefully expose the importance of shifting the mentality from “color line” to color gradient. Due to the extensive work of CRT, “blackness” no longer equates invisibility. However, racial ambiguity leading to an unstable, alternate class state, referred to as the “unclassed,” still goes largely unseen.

While I believe there is not an intentional gap in this theoretical approach, those who have the ability to “pass” or “choose” a racial identity have a unique struggle of their own, one that does not quite fall under the categories laid out by Critical Race Theory’s most famous scholars. I have found that within the framework of these discussions, there has not been enough focus on the element of mixed-race individuals. When reading the scholarly work of Critical Race Theorists, I have stumbled upon a paradoxical question: If classification and category is the culprit of racial development, divide and injustice, then can we separate racial struggles into categories or limit them to those who fall within a specific racial context? Of course, this segregation is not the goal of Critical Race Theory, and had the dominant, heteronormative, white culture not conceptualized race in the first place there would not exist this seemingly divisive theoretical framework. But it
still leaves the question of what happens to those who are perhaps unclassifiable in racial terms? How do we approach the mixed-raced and the racially ambiguous?

Besides contributing a unique perspective to these major theoretical fields, I hope to also introduce a new framework for understanding race- and class-based education inaccessibility. When it comes to social mobility and professional and academic access, there exists an expectation for race and subsequent class status, especially within nineteenth century, westernized culture. The social class reliance within British and American societies leads to an assumption that within each caste level there is a certain level of intellect as well. I refer to this belief as “race-class-intellect agreement.” As the class-status raises, so does the expectation for intelligence and the same is true for the reverse—the lower class you are, the lower the expectation for intelligence. Where this expectation becomes problematic, is when one’s race does not “allow” one to move to a higher class, despite having the intelligence to do so. The connection between race and class is widely understood, particularly in these specific societies, but the introduction of intelligence into this now triangle of social mobility indicates an underlying fear of those in higher classes during this time. If a member of the lower class, particularly one who is of African or mixed descent, has a higher intelligence and aspiration to pursue higher education this poses a threat to the entire class-based system that was in place and especially the white, heteronormative culture that founded these societies. If these three facets do not agree—race, class and intelligence—then an individual’s access to upward mobility is severely stunted. For Reuel Briggs and Jude Fawley, the protagonists of Of One Blood and Jude the Obscure respectively, this agreement was not met, and thus, despite their high aptitude and ambition, neither one could achieve the professional or educational access they required to achieve upward mobility.
In addition to the function of the race-class-intellect agreement, I also will prove how the production and function of the “White Default” is detrimental to literary and societal progress. This term is coined by Nancy Larrick and refers to children’s books where the default racial identity of any character is always, at least assumed to be, white. Although Larrick presented this idea in the postbellum United States, it extends beyond both this time frame and well beyond the realm of children’s literature. This default has been produced and progressed as a result of societal assumptions and more extensively systemic, hierarchical mentality. I will show how this mindset has infiltrated all levels of literature, the development and understanding of characters, assumptions of authorial intent, and attributed to the construction of a literary racial hierarchy. I will also argue the importance of considering the Barthian disregard for “authorial intent,” particularly when engaging in politicized texts. While there are benefits to considering an author’s goal it is crucial to strike a balance between assuming an author’s desires and interpreting a text within its historical and political context, while also recognizing one’s own bias as a reader and scholar.

In Chapter One, I will discuss Jude the Obscure, by Thomas Hardy to reveal a major oversight from critics and Victorian scholars over the years. By dissecting the character of Jude Fawley, I will expose his status as a racially mixed man, and how that identity stints his social mobility. I will also uncover politicized and exceptionally progressive criticism made by Hardy and his famous text which argue against the class-based need of westernized society. Thirdly, I will reveal the striking similarities between Jude the Obscure, Victorian England, and nineteenth century societies across the Atlantic, in particular, postbellum United States, which shows that the powerful threads that connect Atlantic nations are the same foundational elements that forged the

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7 This a reference to famous theorist Roland Barthes, who writes in “The Death of the Author” of the movement away from authorial intent and figurative death of the author once a piece of writing in published.
British nation—namely, class-consciousness. In Chapter Two, I will consider Pauline Hopkins’ *Of One Blood*, and through the development of the novel’s protagonist Reuel Briggs as well as the genre used by Hopkins, I will assert the importance of using fiction and supernatural elements in blurring the lines of truth, exposing reality, and commenting on societal and political travesties. I will rely on her protagonist’s journey to highlight the plight of racially ambiguous individuals and the truth behind racially charged pseudo-science in a class-based society. In Chapter Three I will tie together these two novels, their protagonists, their authors and the societies in which all three were produced. I will expose the major issue of dependence on classification and categories, which is the production of the “unclassed.” I will prove that there is an extreme tragedy in being a member of the “unclassed,” and expose the fallacy of racial identity proving that it is indeed a construct. In my final Chapter, I will also discuss the role of the novelist and show how across cultures and from varying perspectives, authors all have the same responsibility—to write the words and the truth that others have otherwise been unwilling or incapable of articulating. The power of the written word has existed for generations, and its influence does not decrease over time or across oceans.
Chapter I: “Jude, the Obscure and Ambiguous Race”

Thomas Hardy wrote, “everybody is so talented nowadays that the only people I care to honour as deserving real distinction are those who remain in obscurity.” Hardy’s interest in obscure and unrecognized people has been acknowledged by critics throughout a number of his novels, with this fascination being one of Hardy’s token themes. *Jude the Obscure* is no exception, having been long understood as a commentary on marginalized people. In her article “Becoming a Man in *Jude the Obscure*,” Elizabeth Langland discusses Jude’s reluctance to exit childhood innocence, due to his excessive sensitivity and his fears of the “constraints of manhood.” The novel then takes on a whole new meaning when introduced as a coming-of-age novel, met with the fierce existence of the “patriarchy.” Langland presents Hardy’s novel as a revelation of the consequences of resisting the patriarchy and how its implications affect one’s entrance into manhood. This however, is only one reading of this vastly interpreted text. In the same book, James R. Kincaid poses an argument for reading voyeurism and sadism into Hardy’s novel in the article “Girl-watching, Child-beating, and Other Exercises for Readers of *Jude the Obscure*.” Kincaid discusses the scenes and comments that incorporate children, as a way to shed light on the unjust treatment of society’s youngest members and then ultimately women as well. More famously, John Plotz suggests that Hardy’s authorial motive is revealing the immobility of the individual. Unlike the “portable nature” of objects, Plotz states that Hardy reveals the undeniable “localization of human sensation” through his narratives which present an alternative yet realistic fictional world. This argument aligns more closely with readings of social mobility and classism in *Jude the Obscure*, as have been discussed by Richard Nemasvari, who connects it with a

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8 Hardy, Thomas. *The Hand of Ethelberta*.
9 Langland, Elizabeth. 34.
“melodramatic manliness” and Jane L. Bownas, who associates this immobility with an imperial, “internal colonization” which took place right in the heart of the British Empire. All of these academic readings, amongst the many other scholarly perspectives, illuminate both the fluidity of Hardy’s text and its inherent interpretative ability, but also circulate around the theme of a minority group in contention against another power. However, of all of these critical interpretations, none have addressed the heavily marginalized mulatto or mixed-race people in England and within Hardy’s own text. This critical connection to the racial components of Jude the Obscure and its contribution to critical race theory has yet to be discussed, and while this theme is not overt, it is nonetheless an essential component to recognize and analyze.

Hardy’s novel follows the life of Jude Fawley, a man with high hopes and dreams of joining the league of academic men in nineteenth-century England. He is consistently met with limitation not only in his pursuit of knowledge and academic achievement, but in social mobility, personal happiness and romantic success. This “limitation” is keenly linked to societal constraints of caste systems, familial connections and social access, as critics have already revealed, but it appears that his inability to bypass these boundaries is also connected to an issue which has thus far been largely overlooked – his ambiguous, likely mixed racial background. As I will argue, Jude’s inability to attain success, even in the mildest sense, is keenly linked to his racial and ethnic identity. Hardy uses Jude Fawley to explore the academic, professional, romantic and social access granted to people of color in the fin-de-siècle, and how one’s failure to succeed can be directly tied to a resistance against black and mixed individuals in a white-dominated society.

While most of the characters in Hardy’s novel are not granted a detailed physical description, two of his protagonists are presented with comparatively great aesthetic detail. Jude

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11 Bownas, Jane L. Thomas Hardy and Empire: The Representation of Imperial Themes in the Work of Thomas Hardy.
Fawley and Arabella Donn are both defined with characteristically racially mixed traits, and as the only two characters to be physically described, the significance of this racial ambiguity is considerably heightened. Although Jude is introduced first in the novel, Arabella receives her physical description before him right when the two first meet. As Jude walks along a stream thinking, as he often does, about Christminster, Arabella throws “the characteristic part of a barrow-pig”\(^{12}\) across the stream and hits him directly in the ear. Hardy describes Arabella as a “fine dark-eyed girl, not exactly handsome, but capable of passing as such...despite some coarseness of skin and fibre. She has a round and prominent bosom, full lips, perfect teeth, and rich complexion of a Cochin hen’s egg.”\(^{13}\) The imagery of the “Cochin hen’s egg” which is a “light-brown speckled egg,” alongside her characterization as “the brown girl,”\(^{14}\) signifies that Arabella is certainly not classified as white, but instead, has a racially mixed background. While this description is not overtly explicit, it is far more detailed than any physical description given of Jude up to this point in the text, and certainly more explicit then any descriptions of other women in the novel. The only other female characters in the novel who are granted a substantial role are Sue Bridehead, Aunt Drusilla and Mrs. Edlin. Sue is only described through Jude’s physical attraction, referring to her as a “spirit” and “tantalizing phantom” or through their Aunt’s scornful rhetoric, calling her “not quite a tomboy” but frequently “do[ing] things that only boys could do.” Drusilla Fawley and Mrs. Edlin do not receive any real physical description at all, short of their presumed old age, due to Drusilla being his great-aunt and Mrs. Edlin being referred to as the “old widow.” Jude ends up marrying Arabella in the end, so the fact that she is described in the most detail with the potential of being racially mixed raises the question of whether Jude is destined not

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\(^{12}\) Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. 74.

\(^{13}\) Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. 75.

\(^{14}\) Ibid 76.
only to stay within the confines of his caste socially, but that his ethnic and racial status confines him romantically as well.

Jude is then described at the start of Part Two with great ambiguity; “a young man with a forcible, meditative, and earnest rather than handsome cast of countenance. He was of dark complexion, with dark harmonizing eyes, and he wore a closely trimmed black beard of more advanced growth that is usual at his age; this with his great mass of black curly hair.”¹⁵ There exists a focus on Jude’s “dark” features—his complexion, his eyes, his black beard and black hair—and although it is not an explicit connection, one must consider the stereotype of black men being more virile when Jude is described as physically more “advanced” than those of his age. With a parentage that is unknown, a history of working physically laborious jobs, and an affinity for being brushed aside academically and socially, this description strikes as exceptionally significant. Hardy ascribes Jude with traits and complexion that is stereotypical of dark-skinned men, not white. It may not be a blatant description, but Hardy certainly did not want Jude to be read as a white man, or even leave it to the readers to formulate their own vision of who Jude was or how he looked, as he did with most of the other characters. When coupled with the description of his first wife Arabella, the subtle description of Jude becomes more explicit and frames the way in which his life and experiences are viewed overall.

His aesthetic description is not overt, but perhaps this is an intentional uncertainty, playing off of the fear of many who were concerned about the blending of races. By introducing an unclear description of Jude, Hardy could have been acknowledging the fear of the unknown in a time when the “roots of mankind, with taxonomies of ‘difference’ classifying individuals, nations and ‘races’”¹⁶ was so tremendously important. By incorporating a character that likely has mixed black

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¹⁵ Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. 111.
and white heritage, Hardy’s novel could have been commenting on the absurdity of the fear of mixed blood, and the detrimental effects of classifying individuals based on skin color and an assumed countenance-related ability. If this was his intention however, its subtly may have been too much, for there is currently little to no writings about Jude Fawley’s race, let alone his potentiality of being part-black. The lack of scholarly work could perhaps be due to a phenomenon called the “white default.” Because Hardy offers no clues about Jude’s countenance until the second part of the novel, the readers have likely already relied upon their own racial defaults to construct an image of Jude. In other words, the audience has likely been operating under the assumption that Jude was white, so when this racialized description appears it does not have an impact on this preconceived persona.

Nancy Larrick was one of the first scholars to discuss the idea of the “white default,” in her article “The All-White World of Children’s Books.” Larrick discusses “the almost complete omission of Negroes from books for children” commenting that while “integration may be the law of the land,” its incorporation into the world of children’s literature was not a priority. This omission of non-white individuals in literature was mirroring a sentiment that existed in American culture; the white individual is the “default” citizen. Although she writes of children’s books exclusively, this phenomenon is not limited to works for children and unfortunately, is not contained in the 1960s when her article was published. The “white default” has grown from a process by which literary characters are exclusively written as white, into a practice where any character who is not strictly defined, is assumed to be white—white is the default “race.” This tendency is likely the reason why a description of Jude Fawley, which is laden with traditionally non-white features, has gone largely ignored, for it did not fit the preconceived image in the readers

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17 Larrick, Nancy. 63.
mind of a white man living in England. Had he been explicitly defined as black or mixed, or had this description even come earlier in the text, then perhaps readers would not have applied this default. But it was not, and as a result, the idea that Jude’s “misfortunes” could be the result of racially-charged class confinement has not been considered by critics until now.

Although there is no clear determination of whether Jude is indeed a product of two different “races,” the lack of certainty and likelihood of having “mixed blood” sheds a new light on Jude’s experiences and the novel as a whole. We are not granted the knowledge of this identity during the first part, but when looking back on his childhood with the lens of racial ambiguity, the struggles and events of Jude’s childhood can be read very differently.

Jude’s childhood is immediately introduced as complex, difficult and overall quite sad and lonely. His social stagnation appears to start at this very young age and is seemingly a result of a personal history over which he had no control. Although he has an uncertain parentage, it is undoubtedly condemned by those who are aware of it, adding to the ambiguity of his past and his ethnic and racial background. The only aspects of Jude’s life that are revealed are told by his great aunt, who is overt about her disdain for the child; “He come from Mellstock, down in South Wessex...where his father was living, and was took wi’ the shaking for death and dies in two days...It would ha’ been a blessing if Goddy-might has took thee too, wi’ thy mother and father, poor useless boy!”

This quick glimpse into Jude’s family history is almost all that is offered, and leaves the reader again responsible for constructing an explanation for the boys’ misfortune and earliest childhood. It is not until the final pages of Part I that Hardy reveals more of the boy’s parentage, when his aunt states that his parents parted and his mother drowned herself, stating that

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18 Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. 49.
the Fawley’s “blood” is to blame for their failed marriage and lives.19 This intriguing explanation is perhaps indicative of Jude’s “mixed blood.”

The short time of his youth that we do get to see is filled with physical labor, disregard from adults, and consistent reminders of his “place” in the world signifying Jude’s predetermined life as a member of the lowest class. In the start of the novel, we are introduced to his ill-treatment by his Great Aunt Drusilla, who, although we do not know it is her at the time, forces Jude back into reality during a seemingly innocent child’s daydream; “His thoughts were interrupted by a sudden outcry: ‘bring on that water, will ye, you idle young harlican!’”20 The footnote attached to this moment clarifies that a “harlican” is a “wild-looking urchin,” so Jude is not only figuratively positioned below those around him through his manual labor and receiving harsh orders, but physically placed as an outsider, and perhaps even uncivilized, through his “wild” look. His aunt’s comment disrupts Jude while he thinks of his schoolmaster who has just departed for a better life in Christminster. The loss of his school teacher, with whom he had formed a personal, mentor-like bond signifies the first indication that Jude will not prosper academically. His aunt’s disruption while the boy laments his loss is also significant, for it mirrors the world’s lack of concern or care for Jude’s dreams, disappointments, or feelings. Both of these moments, although subtle, set the scene for the life Jude is destined for; “This weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again.”21 The narrative voice here reduces what could be seen as sensitivity to instead a “weakness of character,” and simultaneously referring to his existence as “unnecessary.” This sentiment is more than the

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19 Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. 106.
20 Ibid. 48.
21 Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. 53.
feeling of his aunt or merely an onlooker of the scene; being the words of the narrator, this perspective of Jude’s weakness and “unnecessary life” echo the assessment of the outside world on the novel’s protagonist, which follows him throughout his life, acts as prophecy, ensuring he does indeed “ache a good deal” before his death.

His “weakness of character” is a clear point of contention for his Aunt Drusilla, who believes the “poor useless boy” could not be of any benefit to her or really anyone else. To keep him “out of mischt,” his great aunt gets him work on a plantation after he moves in with her, maintaining his place in the lower, manual-labor ridden class. While working on this plantation, there is one particular interaction that aligns Jude not with fellow children or even manual labor workers, but more closely with slave-workers, beaten by the farmer himself for what is considered inadequate work:

“All at once he became conscious of a smart blow upon his buttock, followed by a loud clack…[he] beheld the farmer in person, the great Troutham himself, his red face glaring upon Jude’s cowering frame, the clacker swinging in his hand…Whilst saluting Jude’s ears with this impassioned rhetoric, Troutham had seized his left hand with his own left, swinging his slim frame round him at arm’s-length, again struck Jude on the hind parts with the flat side of Jude’s own rattle…the whirling child, as helpless under the centrifugal tendency of his person as a hooked fish swinging on land, and beholding the hill, the rick, the plantation, the path, and the rooks going round and round him in an amazing circular race.”

Here Jude is not only beaten by the farmer, but compared to “a hooked fish” who is completely helpless and, as insinuated by the analogy, punished by no real fault of his own. The child’s

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22 Ibid. 52.
“cowering frame” reflects the dominating nature of his employer, and the reception of “impassioned rhetoric” illuminates the duality of the chastisement as both physical and emotional.

This moment is reflective of the types of “punishments” that are found in many slavery memoirs, where a slave is abused physically and emotionally at the discretion of the property owner, and in many cases the individual’s, owner. Of course, there are key differences, for Jude is paid for his work and is being punished here for a reason (his job is to scare the birds, and yet is found feeding and being kind to them.) However, this interaction still acts as a bridge between Jude the child and Jude the minority-raced worker. It is not uncommon for children to be “struck…on the hind parts” for misdeeds, but to have this punishment take place on a plantation, by the hands of the farmer and not the child’s guardian suggests a connection between Jude Fawley and slaves as well as newly freed men and women in England. Both Jude and this particular marginalized group (newly freed slaves), receive minimal payment (Jude receives a “sixpence”) for hard labor, because that is the only trade in which they are capable of working, and furthermore, they receive both physical and emotional reprimand when the land-owner is no longer pleased with their work. With the many jobs that the child could have been introduced, especially considering his aunt’s work as a baker, Hardy’s decision to situate him on a plantation, participating in physical labor produces an entirely new, and I argue intentional image of Jude as a member of the marginalized class of people of color. This powerful image not only places Jude within this particular caste, by at the very bottom, with those who receive the least regard by society and whose lives are considered to be “unnecessary” unless accomplishing a specific need for another more powerful individual like “the great Troutham.”

Jude’s beating is not the only diminishing interaction he receives as a child, although the other moments tend to reduce the boy mentally and emotionally rather than physically. Jude is
consistently reminded of his inability to enter the academic realm, stifling his mental and educational growth beginning with the very first pages of the novel. When his local teacher and academic mentor leaves the town for Christminster, this moment acts as the first “limitation” on his educational pursuit, with a physical distance being laid between Jude and his only current connection to the academic world. As if the literal space between North Wessex, (his current residence), and Christminster was not enough discouragement, he is repeatedly informed that there is a much larger personal gap between himself and the city that embodies the collegiate and professional prowess that he so desires. When asking his Aunt Drusilla if he could visit his beloved teacher, she replies “Lord, no! You didn’t grow up herabout, or you wouldn’t ask such as that. We’ve never had anything to do with folk in Christminster, nor folk in Christminster with we.”

She discloses the even more difficult barrier between the two places, a societal distance that separates the class of North Wessex inhabitants, Jude included, and those destined for a life of prestige that vehemently disregards Jude.

This “distance” is exposed later on when Jude comes upon a traveler, whom he believes could be headed from Christminster. The traveler enquires about the boy’s interest in the city; “‘Ah, young man,’ he observed, ‘You’d have to get your head screwed on t’other way before you could read what they read there…they never look at anything that folks like we can understand.’” Jude is immediately positioned as significantly beneath the members of that city and grouped with “folks” like the traveler and those in North Wessex. For the second time, Jude is informed that he is not of the same aptitude or social circle of the Christminster inhabitants, however unlike his aunt, this traveler has only Jude’s appearance to determine his potential. It could be the result of his dress or the way he spoke, or perhaps the traveler deduced Jude’s inaccessibility to higher

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23 Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. 52.
24 Ibid. 60.
education based on his physical appearance, including the color of his skin and sought to remind the child of his proper place.

Where this limitation stands out most clearly is in Jude’s pursuit of formal education at Christminster. Against all odds, Jude does in fact make his way to Christminster and is immediately in awe of the “sentiment” of the city and the colleges it encompasses. Although amazed, he becomes keenly aware of the distance between himself and those he had so long aspired to become, looking over the campus noting, “Only a wall divided him…but what a wall!”25 This recognition leads him to seek out Mr. Phillotson, the schoolmaster he bonded with as a child, whom he believes will be an invaluable resource and tool in his entrance to a university. However, the endeavor proves fruitless as Phillotson not only does not “remember [him] in the least,”26 but he himself has not accomplished his dreams. Before leaving for Christminster, Phillotson had told Jude of his “scheme [to] be a University man and enter the church—that a degree was the necessary hall-mark of one who wanted to do anything as a theologian or teacher.”27 By his own admittance, Jude relied on this bit of advice throughout his life, using it as a driving force leading him to Christminster, and yet the very man who uttered it had failed. Learning of Phillotson’s shortcomings, remaining “only a schoolmaster still,”28 Jude’s distance from Christminster becomes even greater; “for how could he succeed in an enterprise wherein the great Phillotson had failed?”29

Jude could simply view Phillotson as a man who is far greater than himself—and considering the way he spoke and thought of him as a child, it is clear he does. However, when

25 Hardy, Thomas. Jude the Obscure. 121
26 Ibid. 137.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid. 136.
29 Ibid. 136-7.
coupling this with Jude’s countenance, the feeling that he could not achieve success if Phillotson could not takes on a new meaning. The White Default is a practice that is reflective of a misguided societal ideology, but it is also a tool that is heavily utilized when writing. If the default “race” is white, then by not specifying the characteristics and appearance of Phillotson, or any character other than Jude and Arabella, it is likely that Hardy wanted his audience to read Phillotson as a white man. Considering this scene between Jude and Phillotson with that in mind, it suggests a much more racially-charged indifference towards the young boy and recognition of the accessibility differences between a white man and man of mixed blood; “for how could [a mixed man] succeed in an enterprise wherein [a white man] had failed?”

Phillotson is not the only authoritative figure to remind Jude of his inaccessibility. After reaching out to distinguished members of the universities, Jude receives a letter from T. Tetuphenay which informs him he “will have a much better chance of success in life by remaining in [his] own sphere.” Phillotson, indirectly, and Tetuphenay both remind Jude of the improbability of success when going against the status quo and advise him to remain within his own class. It is interesting that after these two rejections, Hardy writes that the information encompasses “terribly sensible advice” which Jude “had known all” before and recognized as “true.” Jude is not ignorant to the limitations of his class and likely his race yet cannot accept failure based on attributes which he cannot control. Jude walks to Tetuphenay’s college where he is met by closed gates, both a physical and figurative blockade between him and the world he so desperately wants to enter. Along the wall, he writes “I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?” This quote from Job reflects

30 Hardy, Thomas. Jude the Obscure. 152-153.
31 Ibid. 153.
32 Ibid. 154.
Jude’s vast literary knowledge, but more importantly, his understanding of the injustice in nineteenth century society. The use of this quote echoes the canonical anti-slavery slogan, “Am I not a man and a brother?” This saying was a critical element in the abolitionist fight and was even engraved on the famous seal of the kneeling man, which was commissioned in London in the late 1700s. As a token of anti-slavery sympathizers, it transcended the original intention “to focus public opinion on the evils of the African slave trade” and instead shed light on “the perception of black inferiority,”33 not unlike Jude’s mission with his chalked engraving on the wall of the college. He realizes the implied “inferiority” associated with his class and countenance and yet it does not match with intelligence Jude encompasses, marking a very real and extraordinarily unjust subordination.

Jude is frequently dismissed as “inferior” and presumably incapable, as can be seen when he meets a group of students at a local bar. He is challenged by a group of undergraduates to recite “the Creed in Latin,” after he drunkenly boasts of his ability and scholarship. After reciting the first part of the Nicene Creed, one student remarks, “Good! Excellent Latin!” although he “had not the slightest conception of a single word.”34 Then Jude recites the Apostles Creed, where afterwards it is written, “Well done!” said several, enjoying the last word, [Amen,] as being the first and only one they had recognized.”35 Hardy explicitly mentions that the undergraduates are inferior in knowledge and understanding, which should elevate Jude, but instead adds to the injustice he feels.

This scene echoes a moment found in another famous work, “Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole in Many Lands,” a non-fiction travel narrative by a mixed-race Jamaican woman

34 Ibid. 156.
who documents her encounters with white Americans and Englishmen in the 1850s. After her years of dedicated work and her medicinal genius, a group of American men decide it is worthwhile to give a speech to recognize her abilities and efforts. The speech itself is laden with the general theme that despite the fact that “she’s not wholly white,” she is still useful, and therefore must be “so many shades removed from being entirely black.” The speech concludes with a forlorn desire to “bleach” her and make her “as acceptable in any company as she deserves to be.” While the undergraduates in Hardy’s text do not explicitly mention his race, the condescension coupled with the ignorance in their congratulatory responses mirrors the tone and sentiment found in the speech given to “Aunty Seacole” by the Americans. While these very individuals, notably white men, cannot accomplish the same tasks as these two, Mrs. Seacole and Jude, they still feel empowered enough to congratulate them on a job well done. Similarly, Jude’s acceptance into academia is dependent on the recognition of wealthy, white men. Not only do these individuals deny him his right to education, but ultimately his right to romantic success as well.

Realizing he will likely never gain acceptance into university, Jude decides he must at least secure romantic happiness, and pursues his cousin Sue Bridehead. Many have read Sue as “the new woman”, such as Elizabeth Langland who asserts that Sue’s inconsistencies throughout the novel are what align her to a “modern narrative sensibility.” Yet others view her as the culmination of “gloom” and an adult psychological pessimism. And still other critics view Sue as the necessary double for Jude, acting a mirror to him and his failures, a necessary relationship to reveal his underlying, inward disdain. This view of her as a mirror-image is only strengthened

36 Seacole 38.
37 Ibid.
38 Langland, Elizabeth. 12.
39 Berman, Jeffery. 176-198.
by the repeated “similarity” between the two characters by Aunt Drusilla and Phillotson, and even Sue and Jude themselves. This similarity is evident in both of their initial marriages, Jude to Arabella and Sue to Phillotson, where Jude married Arabella out of duty (believing that she was pregnant) and Sue to Phillotson out of duty, (despite falling in love with Jude, she kept her promise to her betrothed.) But after two very unhappy marriages, the two decide to disregard their moral obligation and live together.

Despite being socially ostracized, the couple is initially quite content with their decision; “I feel that we have returned to Greek joyousness, and have blinded ourselves to sickness and sorrow, and have forgotten what twenty-five centuries have taught the race since their time.” Sue does not clarify which “race” she is referring to, but considering Hardy’s lack of specification, it can be assumed that Sue’s character follows the same white default as the others, and is a white woman. If this is the case, then her and Jude have entered into a mixed relationship making the topic of “race” an understandable concern for Sue. She does not refer to the race as theirs but instead “the race,” Jude’s race, which has been taught that “joyousness” and being blind “to sickness and sorrow” was not supposed to be achieved. This “Greek joyousness” that Sue refers to connotes a white and Western culture, a fantasy circulating around the racially-dependent happiness that otherwise should not be accessible to either of them in mixed-marriage. This Greek allusion also harkens the Western education that Jude desires, but is tied in with this fantasy that the two are engaged in, one that cannot last.

This fantasy ends, and the struggle of their relationship only grows as the two are burdened with “Little Father Time,” the son of Arabella and Jude, who embodies a pessimistic reminder that the couple are destined for an unhappy life. Although Sue and Jude have two children of their

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40 Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. 327.
own, Father Time’s depressive mental state ultimately leads him to murder his half-siblings and himself, leaving Sue and Jude to dissect the meaning behind their seemingly unattainable happiness. The death of their children is the beginning of the end for the couple’s relationship, when Sue tells Jude it is a result of their immorality that their life has been so utterly miserable; “Arabella’s child killing mine was a judgement—the right slaying the wrong…I am such a vile creature—too worthless to mix with ordinary human beings!” Sue views her and Jude’s decision to be together as immoral, “loving each other too much—indulging [them]selves to utter selfishness.” It would appear, their deviation from moral rightness is what lead the two into a spiral of misery, heartache, and loss. Sue declares, “There is something external to us which says, ‘You shan’t!’ First it said, ‘You shan’t learn!’ Then it said, ‘You shan’t labour!’ Now it says, ‘You shan’t love!’” However, this “external” force is present regardless of the main characters moral alignment and seems to haunt them, and particularly Jude, throughout the novel. As a non-white man in a mixed-race relationship, it is no wonder these “external” forces are ever-present, but unlike the fantastical karma that Sue seems to blame, these forces are more closely related to a societal constraint and resistance to the success and happiness of the minority, having little to do with any idea of morality or sympathy.

Although the struggles found in Sue and Jude’s relationship could be the consequence of their personal decisions as Sue stated, it is not the first instance of Jude being denied his right to success. His ability to learn, labor, and love have all been stilted by an “external force,” which is present regardless of his moral alignment. It would appear this force has much more to do with Jude’s status as a minority figure, trying to move beyond the realm of what is readily available to

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41 Hardy, Thomas. Jude the Obscure. 378-9.
42 Ibid. 367.
43 Ibid. 366.
his particular social class. Had he achieved success in one of these three aspects—education, career, or romance—then the fault could fall with poor decision making or bad luck. Instead, his inability to attain his goals are the result of the denial of society, and more specifically, white wealthy men. Alas, Jude not only loses the only true love of his life, but he loses her to Richard Phillotson.

The turn of events in this novel, and subsequently Jude’s life, mirror stories of immense tragedy and misfortune which were characteristic of mixed men and women during this time. Although accounts of mulatto presence in nineteenth century England are sparse, what is documented reveals a very similar lack of mobility to Jude Fawley. Peter Fryer writes of “English racism” during this century, stating that “virtually every scientist and intellectual in nineteenth-century Britain took it for granted that only people with white skin were capable of thinking and governing.” The idea of white superiority was recognized as “common sense” during this time, perpetuated by “pseudo-scientific racism” and those in positions of authority. “[Those in] the ‘inferior race’…were undoubtedly outsiders—a kind of racial proletariat. They were forever barred both individually and collectively from high office in church and state[…]and] racially unfitted for ‘advanced’ British institutions such as representative democracy,” with University certainly not an exception. Jude Fawley is also presented as a “racial proletariat” as a member of the “inferior race,” barred from Collegiate institutions, social and romantic success. Fryer writes of the connotation of mixed marriages during the nineteenth century, revealing the excessive disdain particularly for white women with black or mixed men. Many black men married white women during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain, sparking an intense feeling of betrayal for the mixing of white and black blood. “The children of the ‘English mulattoes’ that

45 Ibid.
Cobbett wrote of so scornfully\textsuperscript{46} no longer thought of themselves as constituting a distinct black community. They were part of the British poor. The records of their lives are obscure and scattered, and they have for the most part been forgotten.\textsuperscript{47} The Cobbett reference in particular reveals the social contempt for mixed marriages, which exposes exactly why Jude and Sue became social pariahs and why their relationship was destined for tragedy. It also notes why the familial history of a character like Jude would be so sparse, and how his life could result is such obscurity and seemingly forgotten.

However, what is even more interesting about Fryer’s argument is the mulatto children who, like Jude, were outsiders from every racial group. Allison Blakely discusses this exclusionary attitude when she explores the likelihood for success for black and mixed individuals. “Those few of African descent who have achieved high status have done so by following the accepted conventions and by avoiding drawing attention to either [sic] their African heritage or to African characteristics in their societies.” So, what would happen then to those who could not hide or avoid revealing their “African heritage” or “characteristics?” According to Blakely, those who were unmistakably of African descent were used “as symbols [that] tended to reinforce their dehumanization...seem[ing] to reflect an association of blacks with the primitive and often with the ‘sensuous.’” In the case of Arabella Donn, this “sensuous” stereotype was one she used for her own benefit, as we will discuss later on, but for Jude, it was the belief in the “primitive,” and associated inability to govern and think that prevented him from achieving any sort of acceptance.

\textsuperscript{46} Fryer speaks of William Cobbett’s “Weekly Political Register,” which was a series of articles, similar to columnist in today’s newspapers. This particular reference can be found in Volume V. No. 24, from June 16, 1804, where he writes “if [a black man] be not a downright cripple, he will, if he be so disposed, always find a woman, not merely to yield to his filthy embraces...but to accompany him to the alter, to become his wife, to breed English mulattoes, to stamp the mark of Cain upon her family and her country! Amongst white women, this disregard of decency, this defiance of the dictates of nature, this foul beastly propensity, is, I say it with sorrow and with shame, peculiar to the English.”

\textsuperscript{47} Fryer, Peter. \textit{Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain}. 235.
His “blackness” was too visible for him to be successful. There were instances of African men who were able to become leaders despite their blackness, and in fact, because of it. In their joint novel, Leon Litwack and August Meier write of black leaders from the nineteenth century, in particular, of Alexander Cummell. His success in creating an elite group of African and mulatto scholars was unique but propelled an integration of black academics in society. This would seem to be the type of organization that would have been best suited for Jude, but even here, he would have been considered an outsider. “Cummell excluded from the academy blacks who were devoid of “race loyalty,” particularly those mulattoes who, in his opinion, flaunted their whiteness as a sign of social superiority or who identified with the race only when it benefited them.”

In what can only be a cruel irony, Jude found himself “too white” to be part of the successful black community, and “too black” for the much larger, yet even more exclusive, white community. As a mixed-man in nineteenth century England, Jude Fawley was entirely unclassed.

Despite the racial and social elements that can be found in this novel, some critics believe it more closely relates to themes of morality and agency. Caroline Sumpter writes that Hardy’s novel focalizes on the triangulation between “pessimism, progressivism, and determinism” which reflect “Hardy’s understanding of sympathy.”

She focuses heavily on Hardy’s connection with evolution and Darwinian theories, as well as his promotion of “animal ethics.” While this theme was a major element in pseudo-science that influenced English racism, Sumpter instead utilizes this connection to explore Hardy’s use of morality in the text, a morality which is centrally located around Jude. While this view of the novel as “a radical extension of moral sympathy” is definitely a fair perspective, it also relies on the assertion that Jude’s “sensitivity to the ‘sadness of the

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48 Litwack, Leon and August Mieir. *Black Leaders of the Nineteeth Century.* 247
world”’

Sumpter aligns herself with the idea that *Jude the Obscure* was meant to bring about a “universal sympathy,” one that society was too “morally ‘barbarous’ to appreciate” but this only delineates part of the events in the novel. Jude’s morality and sensitivity to the world and “fellow-mortal[s]” is a major theme in the beginning of the text, when he is famously forced to slaughter a pig and is presented with the potential pregnancy of Arabella Donn. In both of these instances, Jude decides to uphold his moral duty and maintains compassion for the animal and marries Arabella. However, there is a significant shift in his morality later in the novel which raises the question, is there a moral *agency* for those in lower-class Victorian society? Is there really any agency at all? Or instead, are individuals left with “choiceless choices,” disguised as an ability to decide? This lack of agency can be found in any marginalized group in any society, including the poor and lower-class, but also people of color in Britain’s fin-de-siècle.

As his life is met with repeated barriers, he is fooled by Arabella’s lies and dismissed by collegiate and theological authorities, Jude resigns himself to immoral and selfish behavior, aiming to solidify his own happiness regardless of the implications or reputation. While he is happy for a while, it is clear that a societal predetermination makes it impossible for Jude to achieve any of his dreams. In fact, if we are to read Phillotson as Jude does, as a great yet unaccomplished man, then his ability to secure a job as a schoolmaster and his marriage to Sue prove that Jude cannot even attain the life of an underachieving, white man—perhaps, because he would at least need to be white to do so.

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51 Ibid.
52 Langer, Lawrence. “Art from the Ashes: A Holocaust Anthology.”
Arabella, as the other explicitly described non-white character, also must turn to immorality in order to maintain a semblance of success. Although her life is not quite as tragic as Jude’s, it is surely not conventionally successful either. Arabella does not entirely remove herself from the social ranks but instead seeks ways to cheat the system and move throughout different classes despite the limitations of her inherent position, as a non-white woman. Through her lack of empathy Arabella is able to manipulate most situations in order to best suit her needs and desires, and it would seem that Hardy uses her to show that going against societal expectations is the only way to achieve happiness as a non-white individual.

Emma Liggins discusses both of Hardy’s female protagonists, Arabella Donn and Sue Bridehead, proposing that Hardy used these characters to present one of the greatest fears of this time—the unconventional woman. Liggins argues that while both women are part of the “urban space” they also represent a “disruption of boundaries and categories” of the time and the "prevailant fears about sexual objectification and loss of respectability.” Although both women partake in sexually objectifying behavior and go against the societal conventions by being with men outside of their legal marriages, only Arabella is able to successfully secure her own happiness. Her character is completely removed from the empathetic nature engrained in many women of this time, including Sue, and as a result, she is able to manipulate others to fit her needs with very little remorse. Sue is a much more religious character and therefore has a significantly harder time reasoning and forgiving herself for going against the expectations of her sex and class. She tells Jude that she “ought not to love [him] anymore” for she “sacramentally joined herself to [Phillotson] for life. Nothing can alter it!” Where Jude attempts to convince her that their marriage is more legitimate because of “nature” and true love, Sue cannot look passed the religious, societally developed ties she is bound to. Contrastingly, Arabella recognized that going
against the societal constraints was the only way to ensure her happiness. After Jude falls ill at the end of the novel and Arabella realizes she will have to secure a future for herself without him, she decides to charm Jude’s doctor. Where most women would have seen this as disloyal or unfaithful, Arabella excuses her behavior because “weak women must provide for a rainy day.” If her “poor fellow upstairs” were to die, which she “supposed [he] would soon,” then Arabella thought it “well to keep chances open.” As unorthodox as this action was she was simply securing her future, something that all women, but predominantly non-white women had to be concerned with.

With the manipulation of Arabella, failure to achieve educational or professional pursuits, and his failed relationships with Sue, many readers believed that there was an exaggerated and overly pessimistic cloud hanging over Jude Fawley, making the outcomes of his life unrealistic and dramatic. For instance, Aaron Matz believes that Hardy’s novel was not representative of real-life, since the treatment of Jude, his poor luck and his failures are so pronounced and almost ironic. He considers Jude the Obscure to be more of an overt satire, than a drama or depiction of real-life. Relying on the notion that “all comedy is tragedy,” Matz asserts that the arc of Hardy’s novel must reveal the reverse. Matz believes that the novels “refusal to end” reflects a dramatized, satirical prolonging, which leaves the reader with nothing left to do “but laugh.” If Jude was indeed a manifestation of poor luck and bad fortune, the novel would appear to be extreme and overtly negative. However, if it is indicative of the life and near-impossible success of a mixed-raced man in Victorian society, the occurrences in Jude’s life seem much less tied to bad luck and

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53 Matz, Aaron 543.
54 As will be explained later, the traditional form of the novel is not utilized in Hardy’s text; Instead of the climax preceding the positive ending, what is perceived as the climactic moment with the death of the children occurs nine chapters before the novel concludes, giving the impression that the text, and Jude’s life, “drags on” unnecessarily.
instead a realistic depiction of societal barriers and resistance for mulatto men and women in the late 1800s.

As Matz recognizes, the final chapters of the novel seem to transcend beyond the boundaries of a typical novel’s conclusion, by extending for nine chapters after the climactic tragedy of “infanticide” and concluding without any “promise of marriage [or] suggestion of any kind of regeneration.” But when looking through the lens of racial struggle the final chapters, including Jude’s death seem to accurately represent the theme of minority inaccessibility and how one’s race affects every element of life. In his final moments, Jude is forced to face the failed attempts of his life and is reminded of those who were able to achieve success in the ways he so longed for. The Remembrance Week games are being celebrated as he suffers, calling out “Throat-water—Sue—darling—drop of water—please—O please!” His last remaining breaths, longing for two things that would have come to him easily had he been another man, a white man like Phillotson—Sue and water. His cries are accompanied by chants from men who know nothing of his struggles, both in this very moment and throughout his life; young academic men to whom education and success were a given due to their social status. And even in these moments, Jude’s intelligence and skill outshines those who have surpassed him. As the gentlemen cheer “Hurrah!” for those successful scholars, worthy of being remembered, Jude sits alone, dying and reciting the words of Job; “Let the day perish wherein I was born…Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it…I should have slept: then had I been at rest!…There the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor….The small and the great are there; and the servant is free from his master. Wherefore is light given to him that is

55 Matz, 544.
56 Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. 431.
in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul.”\textsuperscript{57} The juxtaposition of exceptional men being regarded for their intellect by students who have no real understanding, and Jude, who too has intelligence and could have achieved the same excellence, who longed to be regarded at the very same event, now wishing to be forgotten by all, including God, is an exceptionally powerful conclusion. This terrific sadness is compounded by the awareness of racialized injustice and inaccessibility to even the simplest form of success and happiness, and the recognition of the white, patriarchal oppression in England’s fin-de-siècle. Jude not only dies alone but having nothing positive to look back on and mindful that his arrival to this very moment was not the result of his flaws or inability, but his \textit{perceived} flaw of being non-white.

Despite his many attempts at happiness, Jude dies alone, married to the woman who started his diversion from his goal, taunted by the voices and names of those who achieved what he could not, white men who signify the destruction of Jude’s dream. Whether that dream was acceptance into Christminster or simply a life of happiness with Sue, both are stinted by the limitation of societal constraints placed upon Jude due to his caste status and, in particular, his mixed race in a white world.

\textsuperscript{57} Hardy, Thomas. \textit{Jude the Obscure}. 431.
Chapter II: “Is Racial Reality a Fiction? How the Real Limitations of Mulatto Individuals are Expressed through Fantasy in Pauline Hopkins, Of One Blood”

Pauline Hopkins used her literary prowess as both a writer and editor to vocalize the issues of black history, racial discrimination and both racial and gendered injustice. Hopkins produced four novels, numerous short stories and plays, and even worked as an orator to assist in the antebellum movements towards racial equality. Her novels serve as both an outlet for Hopkins and a driving force in the conversations of racial struggle and inequality. The theme of her novels and other writing circulated around issues of men and women of color and Hopkins quickly became well known as a race writer and frequented as an honorary speaker during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Hopkins’s writing was regarded so highly that she contributed to The Voice of the Negro and was propelled into the circle of Boston’s social and intellectual elite.58 While the issues she spoke of were certainly not a fiction, many of her works fell under this genre, raising the question of why an author who was widely renowned as a race writer would choose not to document “real” experiences.

Her novel Of One Blood, reveals why Hopkins use of fantasy and supernatural fiction actually aids in her arguments against racial discrimination. Although this novel has garnered some critical recognition, more focus and analysis are necessary to understand the extent of her argument, the powerful message this text conveys and the complicated nature of writing fiction to comment on non-fiction, far-reaching issues. By exploring her use of genre and her protagonist Reuel Briggs, I will prove why Hopkins’ decision to write a fiction novel more effectively exposed the injustices of black and mixed individuals.

58 Wallinger, Hanna.
As a mixed-race man living in nineteenth century America, Reuel Briggs cannot achieve upward mobility in his professional or romantic pursuits due to societal presuppositions about race and pseudo-scientific beliefs in an ethnicity-based hierarchy. Stephen Jay Gould writes about many of these pseudo-scientific “discoveries” in race and the “inferiority among lower races” during the nineteenth century. He outlines the construction of polygenesis, a belief that the human species actually stems from multiple creators and each of these creators lead to separate, and thus hierarchized, racial lineages. In the United States, Louis Agassiz was the biggest proponent of polygenism, who immigrated to America in the 1840s and became a Harvard professor. Lewis R. Gordon writes that Agassiz “converted to the doctrine of human races as separate species after his first experiences with American blacks.” 59 After his interactions with “[black] servants at his Philadelphia hotel in 1846” Agassiz wrote to his mother, “I experienced pity as the sight of this degraded and degenerate race…In seeing their black faces with their thick lips and grimacing teeth…I could not take my eyes off their face in order to tell them to stay far away…What unhappiness for the white race—to have tied their existence so closely with that of negroes in certain countries!” 60 Agassiz then went on to present his argument of polygenesis: “Men are bound by a common structure and sympathy, even though races were created as separate species…men must have originated in nations, as the bees have originated in swarms.” 61 This ideology became the forefront of “lower race inferiority”, alongside the religious pro-slavery ideals, until 1859 with the introduction of Charles Darwin’s Origin of Species. At this point, with the Civil War coinciding, arguments for inferiority laid heavily in spectrum of evolution; instead of polygenesis, a shift in scientific discoveries produced a belief in monogenesis, the idea that all human beings

59 Gould, Stephen Jay. 75.
60 Ibid. 77.
61 Ibid. 77-78.
came from one origin. Although this had potential to discredit the racial hierarchy, monogenesis was instead used to perpetuate this idea with its argument being that some were further along in their evolutionary development, (ie. the “white” race) while others were significantly further behind, (ie. non-white races.) As all of these theories were based in “science”—evolution, “craniometry” (the study of the cranium), and geographical “disbursement of races” (or cultures)—these theories remained unquestioned and legitimized prejudiced belief and action for generations.

Lewis R. Gordon discusses the effects of ethnic and racial identifications in *Existence in Black*. “Race is oppressively attached to human biology but race itself is not biological…Race is not ‘in the body’ but ‘in the minds’ of those who perform racial identifications. However, if one is the object of one of these identifications that have been attached to one’s biological body, one cannot in good faith deny that social reality.”62 These prejudices extend beyond social interaction however, as “racially designated nonwhites have traditionally been excluded from the ‘high’ [Western] culture” such as “university education, professional training, [and] academic canons.”63 These prejudices, both social and professional, are almost revealed hyperbolically in Hopkins’ text through Reuel’s journey, and the shift that takes place when his “racial identity” is exposed.

Reuel’s character is introduced as disadvantaged at the start of the novel, foreshadowing his inevitable struggles; “He has no money, for he was unsocial and shabby to the point of seediness, and apparently no relatives…he lived and paid his way in third-rate lodging-housing.”64 Accompanying his troubling past filled with impoverishment, no known familial ties or support, and hidden racial background, Reuel also exists in a world dominated by the white and wealthy, not only in one of the nation’s most prestigious universities, but in the medical field where

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62 Ibid. 107.
63 Ibid.
64 Hopkins 4.
progressive, racially accepting ideologies have not yet paved the way. Reuel’s successes up to this point, where we meet him in the novel, have only been allotted through his own perseverance and fierce protection of “mulatto” identity. Knowing all too well of his disadvantage from his peers, Reuel state, “If I will conquer, it will be by strength of brain and will-power.” As Reuel’s journey unfolds he has minor successes and moments of happiness, but all of these are derailed by obstacles that he cannot seem to avoid. He relies on his previously discredited use of “mysticism” to bring a woman back to life, which, despite defying modern medical limitations, still did not grant him professional success. Immediately following his medical miracle, Reuel’s identity as a racially mixed man is revealed, barring him from all reputable professional positions. During this professional turmoil, Reuel marries Dianthe, the woman who he saved, and at least has momentary happiness. However, this again does not last as he is forced to take a precarious position in Africa, since it’s the only employment he can secure, and must leave his home and newlywed wife. While oversees, he hears that his wife and friends back home are killed in an accident, adding to his anguish at being so far from home. In the first climax of the novel, it is revealed that his wife was not killed, but forced to marry Reuel’s best friend who orchestrated the lie and is the reason Reuel’s racial identity was discovered. When Reuel returns home to confront his “friend” Aubrey about the deceit and betrayal he finds out, in the novel’s second twist, that Reuel, Dianthe and Aubrey, are all half-siblings. Reuel then returns to Africa, where he finds a hidden, ancient city of Telassar and he is regarded as the cities long-lost rule. In this wild and hyperbolic tale, Hopkins’ protagonist exemplifies how detrimental one’s identity can be when it is perceived by society as negative or subordinate.

65 Hopkins 4.
As can be seen through his physical description, which I will analyze later in the chapter, Reuel has many features that grant him the ability, which unfortunately was indeed an “ability” considering the limited tools at his disposal, to “pass” as white for much of his life. Elaine Ginsberg writes of “Politics of Passing” in the introduction to her book, *Passing and the Fictions of Identity*.

“[P]assing is about identities: their creation or imposition, their adoption or rejection, their accompanying rewards or penalties. Passing is also about the boundaries established between identity categories and about the individual and cultural anxieties induced by boundary crossing. Finally, passing is about specularity: the visible and the invisible, the seen and the unseen.”

For Ginsberg, “passing” is created because of the assumed existence of racial identity and subsequent metaphorical racial lines. Passing these lines was not only a “transgression of legal boundaries” but of “cultural boundaries” as well. WEB Du Bois famously discusses the color line as a multidimensional intersection of both race and class, that informs the development of a racial hierarchy. He uses this invisible divide as a mode of resistance for black men and women, but can also be used by those of mixed race. Michele Elam discusses Du Bois’ view on mixed race, asserting that “[t]he study of mixed race…is key to understanding how race itself is intimately connected to global and interlocking racialized systems of oppression…A true study of race and race mixture…does not have patience with the specious argument that ‘there are no races’ because ‘we are all so horribly mixed.’” The construction of race may be new in the scheme of history, but the power behind this fiction is far reaching and exceptionally difficult to dismantle.

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66 Ginsberg. 2.
67 Elam 17.
Ginsberg suggests that although there are other more complex or ambiguous reasons, the “cultural logic of passing suggests that passing is usually motivated by a desire to shed the identity of an oppressed group to gain access to social and economic opportunities.” It is this “shedding” of identity that we see in Hopkins’ text through Reuel Briggs. He does possess some stereotypically non-white attributes, but they are not read as black: “None of the students…knew aught of Reuel Briggs’s origin. It was rumored at first that he was of Italian birth, then they ‘guessed’ he was a Japanese.” Hopkins positions Reuel somewhere outside of the “white world” but he is still a safe distance from being considered black. His academic success and respect amongst students, therefore, is made possible by the assumption that Reuel is “Japanese” or “Italian” and not black or “mulatto.” As the novel eventually shows, once that “blackness” is revealed Reuel’s opportunities and respect quickly dissipate. Although Reuel Briggs is a fictional character, his plight echoes the lives of many living in nineteenth century United States, where a promise of equality lingers and yet its growth and progress lies stunted and shrouded by loud, powerful anti-equality voices.

Although Reuel’s blackness was a secret to his peers, it was of course not a secret to him. He had never dreamed of headlining “scientific journals” or being admired by some of the most successful doctors and scientists in his field. Reuel had known the limits of his race, which is why he aimed to keep them secret from everyone, including his closest friend Aubrey Livingston. Aubrey had asked Reuel earlier in the novel, “What do you think of the Negro problem? Come to think of it…I believe it is the only burning question in the whole category of live issues and ologies about which you are silent.” Aubrey’s rhetoric, (ie. “the Negro problem”) certainly suggests that

68 Ginsberg. 3.
69 Hopkins, Pauline. 4.
70 Hopkins 9.
he is not sensitive to the plight of black or mixed men and women, and thus did not invite Reuel to confess his deepest secret. He replied, “I have a horror of discussing the woes of unfortunates, tramps, stray dogs and cats and Negroes—probably because I am an unfortunate myself.” Reuel does not explicitly admit how he is “an unfortunate,” but he recognizes that in the current social climate, to be a Negro was the equivalent of being a tramp and stray animal—completely unwanted, disregarded, and uncared for. Reuel’s only saving grace was the secret of his “black blood.”

The limitations of being mixed-race are then revealed once Reuel finds that his success from reanimating Dianthe has disappeared. He goes to Aubrey for advice, who suggests that Reuel’s recent rejections are a result of his “origin” being discovered—a truth that Aubrey admits later on he has known since the two men met—and then states: ‘This infernal prejudice is something horrible. It closes the door of hope and opportunity in many a good man’s face. I am a Southerner, but I am ashamed of my section.’ While Aubrey is correct about the loss of opportunity and hope, the sentiment is disingenuous, as it is revealed Aubrey was the one who shared the truth of Reuel’s ancestry.

At a time when such tremendous focus was put on illuminating the truths of racial inequality, telling Reuel’s story through layers of fiction and supernaturalism would appear counteractive, since Hopkins is not focused on exposing autobiographical truths but instead creating fictitious stories that could discredit the whole movement by suggesting there is not enough “real” data. However, as I will argue in this chapter, revealing the reality of black and mixed-race struggles through supernatural fiction actually magnifies the authenticity of these claims, by reminding the audience of what is truly fiction versus the historical truth.

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71 Hopkins 9.
72 Hopkins 58.
Race and Fiction

Hopkins emphasizes the mixed race and subsequent social immobility of Reuel from the start of the novel with a detailed physical description of her protagonist—

“Mother nature has blessed Reuel Briggs with superior physical endowments…the vast breadth of his shoulder, the strong throat that upheld a plain face, the long limbs, the sinewy hands. His head was that of an athlete, with close-set ears, and covered with an abundance of black hair, straight and closely cut, thick and smooth; the nose was the aristocratic feature, although nearly spoiled by broad nostrils, of this remarkable young man; his skin was white, but of a tint suggesting olive, an almost sallow color which is a mark of strong, melancholic temperaments. His large mouth concealed powerful long white teeth which gleamed through lips even and narrow, parting generally in a smile at once grave, genial and singularly sweet…True there were lines about the mouth which betrayed a passionate, nervous temperament…[but complimented] his strong personality. His eyes were a very bright and piercing gray, courageous, keen, and shrewd.”

Immediately the readers are granted an image of a strong, well-built young man, whose “superior physical endowments” make him “superior” in physical capabilities, which is confirmed with the description of his athletic attributes as well. Although “his skin was white,” there is an emphasis on the “olive” and “sallow” color and his “black hair,” and an almost animalistic depiction of his mouth—“large…conceal[ing] powerful long white teeth.” Referring to some features as “aristocratic” foreshadows the novel’s conclusion when it is revealed that while Reuel is mixed, his “white blood” is in fact from a wealthy family. However, this feature being minimized mirrors

73 Hopkins, Pauline. 3-4.
the unfortunate reality that any amount of “black blood” makes an individual black, inferior and outcast during this time. This description, and Reuel’s ability to hide his “blackness” for so long, also echoes the fears of black men and women “passing” as white and infiltrating, poisoning the white American bloodlines.

The traits Hopkins attributes to Reuel act as almost contradictions as well, perhaps commenting on the inability to fix mixed-race people with particular stereotypes. He is defined as “melancholic,” “grave,” “nervous,” “keen,” and “shrewd,” while also being noted as “courageous,” “genial,” “sweet,” and “passionate.” Coupling these positive traits with those that have a general negative connotation shows Reuel’s complexity, but also perhaps Hopkins’s desire to show how Reuel’s mixed race evokes a paradoxical blend of racialized personality stereotypes, much like his physicality does. It is interesting though that Hopkins does illuminate his resiliency through his considerably showcased “strength”—his “strong throat,” “strong… temperament,” and “strong personality,” foretelling the struggles that Reuel will face but also the necessity for strength amongst all non-white individuals.

Pascha A. Stevenson suggests Hopkins’s tactic of blurring racial lines is a response to contemporary scientific debates such as the introduction of the theory of evolution—

“No more could racist ideology predicate its claim upon the idea that the only real human was the white race, thereby authorized by nature to subordinate the darker races as overseers of animals…However, white supremacists…had little difficulty fitting evolution into a familiar racist matrix…Whether or not the black man or woman should be classified as human was no longer the dominant question… [but
instead] that nature itself had apparently ‘selected’ the darker races to be subordinated.”

The racial narrative shifted, creating a “hierarchy of organisms” which became the new “natural law,” and as Stevenson explains, this rhetoric is exactly what Hopkins, and so many others sought to disavow. Hopkins “joins in the scientific debate upon the origin of life because of its particular relevance to issues surrounding race. In asserting the theory of monogenesis, Hopkins joined ranks with those considered to be the most enlightened thinkers of her day, and nowhere is this argument more clearly articulated than in *Of One Blood.*” Stevenson argues that Hopkins not only believed in a single human origin, but that she also renounced false racial hierarchies by foretelling a future of dissolved racial categories. “[Hopkins] completes her claim that we are all descended from one blood with the assertion that we are all headed for the total annihilation of artificially constructed racial boundaries, that of one blood we are derived and of one blood we have literally become, or at least shall soon do.” According to Stevenson, Hopkins’ focus on mixed and “white-passing” individuals, and then ultimately the reveal that three individuals of seemingly different races are actually siblings, not only supports monogenesis but suggests that we will one day have no racial boundaries or categories at all.

Additionally, I would add that Hopkins’ use of characters that “pass” and have “hidden” identities, as is suggested in the novel’s alternate title “The Hidden Self,” reveals yet another fear—not only do we not know the origin of others, but we do not truly know our own origin. Alongside Reuel Briggs, the novel follows Aubrey Livingston, Reuel’s

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74 Stevenson, Pascha A. 424.
75 Stevenson, Pascha A. 425.
76 Ibid. 427.
Harvard classmate and supposed good friend, and Dianthe Lusk, a former slave who travels with the famous Jubilee Singers, and wins the hearts, or rather the infatuation, of both Reuel and Aubrey. As is outlined in the novel, the racial categories of Dianthe and Aubrey are seemingly unquestioned. Although “not in any way the preconceived idea of a Negro,”77 as a newly freed slave, Dianthe’s status as a black woman went unquestioned. Aubrey Livingston, on the other hand, was unquestionably white, coming from a wealthy and successful white family. He is introduced as “a tall man with the beautiful face of a Greek God; but the sculptured features did not inspire confidence. There was in the countenance of Aubrey Livingston that engender doubt.”78 This “doubt” however, was never assumed to be a doubt of race, heritage or bloodlines. As he proudly boasted, “Shades of [his] fathers, forbid that [he] should ever have to work!”79 He receives all of the benefits of being white.

While Reuel’s racially mixed heritage is hidden from the characters, the readers are included in this secret from the start of the novel. What is revealed to the audience at the end of the story, however, is the familial connection between Reuel, Dianthe and Aubrey; they are all half-siblings, born of the same white father. The exposure of their lineage adds an exciting climax for the novel, but more importantly acts as a blatant commentary on the current “bloodlines” within the United States. If all three of these siblings, who have “black blood” look so different from one another that they are perceived to be different races altogether, then this reveals that race itself is a construct. If individuals are able to “pass” then race is clearly not an inherent, defensible truth that exists outside of perception and

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77 Hopkins. 14.
78 Hopkins 6.
79 Hopkins 7.
assumption. This “passability” discredits race and the pseudo-scientific “proof” of racial hierarchy.

Although shocking, the existence of siblings whose skin-tones traverse a racial spectrum is not altogether unrealistic. It is no secret that the abuses of slave owners existed from the foundation of slavery in America up through, and even after, the Civil War. These abuses consisted of physical, mental and sexual abuse, with the latter often leading to the birth of mixed or “mulatto” children. While the “popular emphasis on the mixed-race person [is typically] as nouveau, as sui generis in history, [this belief] usually necessitates the strategic erasure of a past that might suggest otherwise.” As Michele Elam claims, mixed persons did not appear as a result of postbellum interracial relationships but existed long before the fight for freedom and civil rights. Hopkins emphasizes this unpopular truth through the story of her three main characters; a plantation owner sleeps with enslaved black women, keeps the “whitest” baby for himself, and leaves the seemingly “unpassable” behind. Hopkins’s commentary here is expressed by Samira Kawash, writing about this genre of “‘passing’ narrative.”

“[T]he passing narrative is not about the representation of blackness or whiteness; rather, it is about the failure of blackness or whiteness to provide the grounds for a stable, coherent identity…Passing insists on the fallacy of identity as a content of social, psychological, national, or cultural attributes.”

All three characters are “passing” in Hopkins novel, which not only plays on “shifting identities” but on “shifting perceptions” as well. Aubrey was a white man, until he learned of his mother’s racial identity. There was no physical change in who he was, but a major,

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80 Elam. 15.
81 Kawash. 63.
and evidently life-changing, shift in who he *perceived* himself to be. After realizing he has “black blood,” Aubrey kills himself. Although this act may seem to be counter to Hopkins’s claim, suggesting a deep shame in black blood, I would argue it is a comment on the strength of racial prejudice. His knowledge of his heritage is so negative that is changes the way he feels about his own ability to live.

Although hyperbolic, Hopkins’s use of fiction here still borders realism, which helps show how quickly fictitious information can transform into “truths” that we accept, even if upon closer examination it does not seem very likely. This balance between fiction and non-fiction is disturbed through Hopkins’s use of the supernatural, which accomplishes a similar goal of exposing the poor foundation of pseudo-scientific “truth,” but through very different means.

**Use of the Supernatural as a Political Critique**

Reuel, Aubrey and Dianthe’s stories may fall under the genre of realistic fiction, but throughout the text Hopkins also incorporates elements of the supernatural in Reuel’s academic and professional practices, through the appearances of phantoms and the world of Telassar. Melissa Asher Daniels considers Hopkins’ use of genre and its impact on race, but she focuses on the use of language as a means of reworking racial hierarchy. Daniels examines Hopkins’ use of a post-racial, part-fantasy/part-romance genre to assert her claim that the work of racial revision is often a project of language, best addressed by form. Far from abandoning racial thinking, Daniels argues that the novel’s hybrid genre revises the racial fictions, such as the one-drop rule, polygenesis, and myths of innate savagery, that relegated blacks to a sub-human status.82

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82 Daniels, Melissa Asher. 159.
However, I would add that Hopkins use of literary realism calls into question the very idea of reality. She surrounds these contemporary pseudo-scientific theories with supernatural elements that would have been clearly understood as unreal (e.g. phantoms, supernatural “medicine,” and the fantasy world of Telassar), thereby raising the idea that it is all a fiction, from the supernatural aspects of the story to the pseudo-scientific discourses of racial hegemony, the one-drop rule, and polygenesis. The use of the supernatural throughout the novel, therefore, suggests that racism and racial hierarchy are themselves fiction; by writing a novel that incorporates real issues and presenting it as supernatural fiction, Hopkins is able to critique the racist ideologies and narratives during this time.

The first supernatural element in the text is Reuel’s medical mysticism. After the body of Dianthe is found and pronounced dead, Reuel proceeds to “re-animate” her while the other doctors mock his pointless endeavors. “‘Your theory smacks of the supernatural, Dr. Briggs, charlatanism, or dreams of lunacy,’ said the surgeon. ‘We leave such assertions to quacks, generally, for the time of miracles is past.’” However, despite the ridicule and disbelief, Reuel is successful; “The body remained inanimate. A cold smile of triumph began to dawn on the faces of the older members of the profession, but it vanished in its incipiency, for a tremor plainly passed over the rigid form before them. Another second—another convulsive movement of the chest!” This vindicating moment propels Reuel into the elite ranks of the medicinal and professional world, granting him respect and access which had previously never been available to him. “The scientific journals of the best month now celebrated the case, --re-animation after seeming death. Reuel’s lucky star was in the ascendant; fame and fortune awaited him; he had but to grasp them.” Hopkins uses

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83 Hopkins 33.
84 Ibid. 34.
85 Ibid. 37.
removal of the entity adds nothing new to the plot. It is a means for the protagonist to resolve the conflict without actually addressing its root cause. The character’s journey is thus superficial, as any meaningful change or growth is absent. However, the story may still offer some value in its exploration of themes such as identity, choice, and the consequences of one’s actions. The lack of depth in the character development, however, diminishes the overall impact of the narrative. (350, 400)

The other supernatural element that Hopkins utilizes is the presence of and interaction with phantoms. While there are a few moments in the text where phantoms are seen, the most poignant scene is when Dianthe meets her great aunt, as a ghost. The figure tells the tale of Dianthe’s parentage, reveals her “true identity”; not only does Dianthe have both black and white blood, but her father was a plantation owner and the father of Aubrey and Reuel as well. The revelation of “wealthy white blood” and the incestuous relationships that occurred are of course shocking, but in this society, the discovery of racial identity are more shocking than the existence of and interaction with ghosts. While this climactic moment that exposes heritage and familial ties is
powerful, and in itself acts a commentary on the bloodlines in the United States, the source of the information is also noteworthy. Hopkins chose to have a phantom reveal the truth of their family’s bloodline, which implies that the only way for someone to truly know one’s long history and the “racial components” of one’s blood, is if that person has supernatural abilities and origin. This idea is harkened in Hopkins’ own words: “For who is clear enough in vision to decide who hath black blood and who hath is not?” The phantoms reveal that it is only through an impossible fantasy that we could know the familial and thus “racial” history of every individual. The supernatural shows, then, that racial difference is just a fiction based on our lack of knowledge, and that that knowledge is itself out of reach.

Although he does not rely on the supernatural, James Weldon Johnson takes on a similar literary tactic in his book *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man.* Despite the title, Johnson’s story is indeed a fiction, that tells the story of racially mixed man who traverses the boundaries of the color line “passing” as both black and white. Not unlike the question I posed for Hopkins novel, Samira Kawash suggests that “[i]n a climate of increasing racial tensions, a confession of ‘true’ passing produces a sensation in a way that a fictional account could not.” To achieve the same “sensation,” Johnson deliberately, or so it seems, left the “trueness” of the text ambiguous, publishing it without an author or specified genre. As Kawash states, the anonymity leaves the reader to draw his or her own conclusions, suggesting that distinguishing “between true history and fictional narrative is not in the text but in the reader.” While transforming the idea of fiction, *The Autobiography* also transfigures the genre of the autobiography, which I assert Hopkins does as well with the supernatural. Carl Van Vechten writes of Johnson’s book, “It would be truer,

86 Hopkins, Pauline. Of One Blood. 178.
87 Kawash 59.
88 Ibid. 60.
perhaps, to say that it reads like a composite autobiography of the Negro race in the United States.”\textsuperscript{89} Similarly, Jessie Fauset categorizes the book as “fiction based on hard fact”\textsuperscript{90} and Kawash asserts that it is an autobiography of the author’s “views of the subjects discussed.”\textsuperscript{91} Although all rotating around the gene of fiction, there is an undoubted non-fictional element to Johnson’s book, and I argue most works of fiction that trace the historical impact of racialized ideology on the lives of black and mixed American men and women.

Both Johnson’s and Hopkin’s novels posit a double “passing”; a protagonist “passing” as white, and one genre “passing” as another. In the case of The Autobiography, Johnson poses a fictional narrative as the personal history of its author, meanwhile Hopkin’s work, which encompasses the non-fictional accounts of racially mixed lives as exclusively fiction. In both instances, the questions are raised: How are “truths” constructed? And what is fiction truly? Kawash writes of The Autobiography, “like the novel’s protagonist, who passes between black and white, the text itself passes back and forth between the poles of truth and fiction.”\textsuperscript{92} I would argue that this applies even more strongly to Hopkins text, which conjoins historical fact, like the existence of The Jubilee Singers and the setting of Boston and Harvard University, with the existence of ghosts and an ancient, yet thriving hidden city. Hopkins also uses the collaboration of these two seemingly opposite genres, to posit that the very idea of race is itself fictional and unfounded. “In the case of race in the United States, difference is named and produced on the ‘color line.’ Passing plays on this line, exposing racial difference as a conditionally emerging distinction empty of any essential content.”\textsuperscript{93} Through her novel, Hopkins reveals that however

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. 59.
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid. 60.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid. 59.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid. 60.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid. 63.
unfounded, the result of this racial boundary and distinction leads to very real struggles, boundaries and limitations.

The ending of the novel shows that as it currently stands, it is only through an impossible fantasy that a mixed man could achieve success in this time. Reuel’s move to Telassar, an utopian world where there is no racial hierarchy or social caste system exemplifies the impossibility of success in the United States but acts a design for a potential future. Hopkins paints a beautiful image of what the world could look like if only the presumptions about race and subsequent constraints for those who are non-white did not exist. Mandy Reid argues that Hopkins uses the genre of utopia to refute claims on racial science and envision a (re)vision of science through understanding black blood. However, Hopkins novel is doing more than simply “envisioning a (re)vision,”—it is exposing the extent to which scientific and societal thought processes and accepted “truths” in the United States would have to change in order to produce equality. The reason Telassar accepts Reuel is because its own history aligns with the prioritizing of black blood, just as Western cultures elevate white, Anglo-Saxon individuals and cultures. By contrasting the world of Boston and thus American and Western nations with Africa and Telassar, Hopkins shows that the only way for mixed and black people to be elevated in a society is for the epistemological foundation of that society to be entirely inverted. Frantz Fanon, who famously spoke of the duality of being neither, yet at the same time both, black and white in Western society, wrote “[w]e shall see that another solution is possible. It implies restructuring the world.”94 It is not simply a change of policy or science, but an uprooting of fundamental ideas, beliefs and desires. By rendering this as utopia, Hopkins shows how far away Western thinking really was from such restructuring.

94 Fanon, Frantz. 63.
Chapter III: “Obscurity in Jude Fawley and Reuel Briggs”

There is a very clear overlap between the themes and tropes used in both Hardy’s and Hopkins’s novels, which I will illuminate in this chapter. The similarities between these texts are so extensive though that is raises the question of how a bridge between them has not yet been constructed. The “White Default” that I spoke of in the context of *Jude the Obscure* likely is factor in how the connection was never made; if scholars and readers of Hardy’s text never recognized Jude as a mixed-race man, then they would likely not consider comparing it to a novel centered around racial injustice. Additionally, we should consider the transatlantic element, where both texts were written in separate countries with seemingly different social issues and goals that could make a link between these novels less obvious. However, there is an undeniable union in theme, message, and method in Hardy and Hopkin’s respective novels that I have alluded to in the previous chapters but will now outline specifically.

The major similarity is the racial ambiguity in both protagonists. Although *Jude the Obscure* is written as more “realistic fiction,” not including the fantastic and mystical elements that Hopkins’ novel incorporates, it does reveal the same commentary on the dominant, oppressive culture, which is seen through the physique and complexion of both Jude and Reuel. Hopkins writes that Reuel had a “strong throat that upheld a plain face…abundance of black hair, straight and closely cut, thick and smooth…his skin was white, but of a tint suggesting olive, an almost sallow color which is a mark of strong, melancholic temperaments,” concluding with his eyes that “were a very bright and piercing gray, courageous, keen and shrewd.” Thomas Hardy describes his protagonist with very similar physical attributes: “a young man with a forcible, meditative, and earnest rather than handsome cast of countenance. He was of dark complexion, with dark harmonizing eyes, and he wore a closely trimmed black beard of more advanced growth than is
usual at his age; this with a great mass of black curly hair.” Although there are some discernible differences, “dark” eyes instead of “bright” and “curly hair” instead of “straight,” both men are given relatively “plain” faces, “strong,” “forcible,” “meditative,” and “shrewd” appearances, and both have an unspecified, questionable complexion which begs the question, “are they white?” The description of each character’s physicality is remarkably similar, marking not only the connection between Jude and Reuel but also the authors themselves, who were portraying very similar characters, ideas of race and racial physical representations.

Moreover, by highlighting both an outward and internal strength, the authors lay the groundwork for the journey of these two men, alluding to the roadblocks they will face, failures they are destined for, opportunities that will be denied, and the “forcible,” focused determination they will need throughout their lives. Joseph Black writes of the social divide in Victorian England that of course, it was not a karmic retaliation but a result of the “deadening exclusions of class-conscious English society of the nineteenth century” that these two protagonists existed in perpetual misery. Although he writes exclusively of England, the “deadening exclusions” were present in nineteenth-century American society as well, where class-consciousness influenced social and romantic interactions, academic and professional decisions and everything in between. As a student at Harvard, Reuel has the academic advantage that Jude himself never achieves. However, both men were plagued with poverty and a caste placement at birth which made the road to academia exceptionally difficult. By framing this exclusivity through academic pursuits, the authors suggested the one-sidedness of knowledge that spreads through society and is accepted as “truth.” If only some members are allowed to participate in academia, then there is a limit to the perspectives that shape the knowledge that academic institutions produce. By showing the

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difficulties that Reuel and Jude faced in their attempts to join the league of scholars in their countries, the authors also showed how white wealthy men have been shaping the narratives of academia, science, knowledge and truth for generations.

In addition to the risks he faces if his racial identity is discovered, Reuel recognizes his disadvantage as a member of the lower, impoverished class saying, “[s]hake hands with Poverty once, Aubrey, and you will solve the secret of many a student’s success in life.” Briggs utilizes the word “success” to reflect a student’s “ability” to “grind day and night,” but of course it’s not an “ability” as much as a necessity; if an impoverished student did not “grind day and night” then they would have no chance at attaining success, a fear that Aubrey knew not. Jude’s situation mirrors Reuel’s quote directly in his constant reading and studying to obtain the knowledge he would need to be a success in Christminster. Once in Christminster, Jude shows his intelligence by quoting aloud the works of Sir Robert Peel, Robert Browning, Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Newman’s *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, John Keble, Joseph Addison and more, revealing his extensive knowledge. After his rejection from the university, Jude demonstrates not only his intellect but the injustice of his denial by writing on the wall of the college, “‘I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?’—Job xii.3.” Although it speaks of Jude and his class in England, it too speaks of African Americans in the United States, who were dismissed because of an assumption of inferiority. Reuel is “voted…a genius in his scientific studies” by his fellow classmates and praised after his medical (or supernatural) achievement and Jude’s superior intellect is exposed when he recites Latin to the university students at the bar, while the students themselves hadn’t “the slightest conception of a single word.” Yet despite their hard work, knowledge and motivation, neither man can dismantle
the boundaries of the “deadening exclusions of [their] class-conscious” societies, which are both further exacerbated by racial prejudice.

Another unique link between the protagonists is their unavoidable reliance on wealthy white men to be allowed to even attempt success. At the start of the novel when we are introduced to Aubrey Livingston, we learn that “[b]y an act of generosity [Aubrey] has helped the forlorn youth, then in his freshman year, over obstacles which bade fair to end his college days. Although the pecuniary obligation was long since paid, the affection and worship Reuel has conceived for his deliverer was dog-like in it devotion.”96 As if the fiscal disparity between the two did not elevate Aubrey enough, Hopkins then makes Reuel’s inferiority even more extreme by referring to him as having a “dog-like” loyalty. This reliance on Aubrey is exclusively due to his status—white, wealthy and male—and thus the connections and opportunities he can bring to Reuel. Although Reuel is aware of this dependence, what he does not realize at first is that he is also relying on Aubrey to keep his secret, and it becomes evident that Reuel is thriving in his field largely because Aubrey “allows” him to. When Aubrey decides to reveal Reuel’s race, he feigns remorse for his friend’s misfortune stating: “This infernal prejudice is something horrible. It closes the door of hope and opportunity in many a good man’s face.” This moment reflects Reuel’s race-class-intellect disagreement; despite his intelligence, “valuable services,” and success in the medical and scientific field, his class and more specifically race were used to exclude him once he became a threat to the white supremacist ideology, and he was disregarded and prevented from any further upward mobility.

This turn of events however, reflects the lower class’s dependence on the acceptance and cooperation of white, wealthy men for success. It is also evident in the character of Dianthe.

96 Hopkins, Pauline.
Although she in love with Reuel and fully dependent upon him emotionally, she is unable to be with him due to Aubrey’s desires. After Aubrey informs her of Reuel’s “death,” she is forced to marry him and live in his world of prosperity and wealth, which does not come close to compensating for her heartbreak and misery as his wife. Once Aubrey no longer desires her, Dianthe is killed; she is only “allowed” to live as long as she is of use to the white, wealthy man.

Jude finds himself in the same situation, although more indirectly. The systemic preference for white men in academia refused access for Jude in Christminster, which was confirmed by the letter of T. Tetuphenay, an esteemed professor, whose racial status is unknown, but who makes clear the distinction between his class and that of Jude’s. He suggests that Jude “remain in [his] own sphere” and refers to him as “Jude Fawley, Stone-cutter” makes clear the social distance between Jude’s world and that of university elites. This social preference for white men extends beyond the academic and professional and bleeds into Jude’s romantic life as well. Although it was not a white man directly who prevented Jude from being with Sue Bridehead, it was the system that favored wealthy white men that ultimately lead to the destruction of his relationship and life as a whole. Sue and Jude were constantly met with obstacles that prevented them from being happy and building a life together. Their relationship was considered “taboo” from the start because the two are cousins, which although it was not viewed then as it is in modern day, was still a “questionable” pairing. The incestuous relationship between Jude and Sue is reflective of Reuel and Dianthe, since, unbeknownst to them, they were indeed brother and sister. Although it was not truly Jude’s fault, he and Sue were convinced that their misfortune was a result of “something external” to us that prevented their happiness as payment for their misdeeds. Of course, it was not a karmic retaliation but a result of the “deadening exclusions of class-conscious English society of the nineteenth century” that two existed in perpetual misery. This “something
“external” is the system of Victorian England, under which only the dominant culture—white, wealthy men—can achieve and/or dictate happiness and success. In the end, both Jude and Reuel are forced to watch their true loves be taken away by men who simply can, due to their status in the social order. The idea of tragedy extending into the love lives of these two ill-fated men proves that the system does not just affect the politics or financial aspects, but every aspect of the unclassed life.

The endings of each novel also reflect the seemingly inevitable conclusion for any unclassed individual in these class-conscious nineteenth-century societies with the deaths, literal and figurative, of Jude and Reuel. Jude’s exceptionally tragic final moments appear hyperbolic at first, with him alone, married to a woman he hates, crying out for water, and surrounded by the audible cheers for men who achieved the one academic success Jude always longed for. However, this moment highlights all of the ways in which unclassed life is stinted and destroyed. Jude then dies with every hope from his life completely unfulfilled. Although Reuel Briggs does not physically die, his move to Telassar at the conclusion of the novel requires a figurative death. In Telassar, Reuel is believed to be a reincarnation of an ancient ruler who is sent to rule over the people who have waited for him in this hidden city. This moment reflects the similar climax in Haggard’s She: A History of Adventure, where it is believed the white male protagonist resembles “Kallikrates” and is asked to stay to rule his people alongside the African queen Ayesha. She was written about fifteen years before Hopkins’s text, making its influence on Hopkins likely and furthering the ties between her novel and the agenda of novelists in nineteenth-century England. Unlike the protagonists of Haggard’s text, Reuel decides to stay and rule the people of Telassar alongside his queen, who looks identical to Dianthe, and thus he must “kill” his identity as Reuel Briggs and take up life as the Ethiopian King of Telassar. Although this death is only figurative, it
still represents the exclusions of caste-reliant America, for Reuel can only achieve respect and success if he flees that society and lives amongst those who share, or at least do not care about, his “racial identity.”

Although there is a tremendous overlap between themes in these two novels, there is a major difference between Jude and Reuel’s lives that should be addressed—their ability to cultivate their own identities. While it is explicitly stated that Reuel is half-black, Jude’s status as white or black is never clarified beyond his “dark complexion.” So, while he is dismissed from the upper-class, it cannot be stated that his presence in the lower class and subsequent poverty is due exclusively to his race as Reuel is. Which is why the definitive element of the “unclassed” and “obscure” is the “race-class-intellect disagreement” which forces both characters to remain oppressed despite having the supposed attributes for success—work ethic, intelligence, ability, etc.—proving that the real attributes are unquestionable whiteness, wealth and status.

What is important to note is that while Jude does not have any say in his status Reuel does, at least for a while, get to “choose” his identity. To be clear, he does not have actual agency, since race is not something one has control over and is instead imposed, but it is important to consider why Hopkins allowed Reuel to “pass” as white and therefore give him the “choice” to admit his blackness. In a society that is dominated by whiteness, Reuel was presented with a very difficult choice; to embrace his true identity and risk prejudice and oppression or hide it and have a chance at success. It is not until he is exposed to a world where blackness does not equate limitation that Reuel truly embraces his identity and is free to become his “hidden self.” This is a powerful message, for it suggests that this systematic oppression does not just inhibit the options of marginalized groups, but even forces some to hide and perhaps be ashamed of their true identity—a horrendous burden and reality to face.
This distinction is important to note, but even this difference links the novels through showing the effects of having an identity placed upon you versus having the ability to decide who you are and present yourself to others as you want them to see you. The many similarities between these novels reveal an important commentary on the transatlantic issues of accessibility, categorization, the responsibility of novelists and the power of the written word. These conclusions will be the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter IV: “Transatlantic Issues: What Jude the Obscure and Of One Blood Reveal About Issues that Transcend the Atlantic”

Both the connection between the protagonists of *Jude the Obscure* and *Of One Blood* and the overlapping ideas that are presented through similar plotlines lead to an important message about Western societal pitfalls and the consequences of class-based societies. Pauline Hopkins and Thomas Hardy are both novelists in the nineteenth-century, but it is there where their similarities end. Hopkins is an African American woman, writing in a postbellum United States context alongside a fierce group of theorists, activists, and authors who all sought to uncover the truth behind the racial divide, the “color-line,” and expose the lie that was, perhaps still is, integration. Thomas Hardy on the other hand was a white man writing in Victorian England, a period known for inequality, political and economic oppression, and an underlying mix of both hope and fear for the changes to come in the next century. In many ways these authors are opposite—writing in entirely different contexts with experiences that are incomparable and so logically, their work should also differ greatly, and yet, there is an undeniable parallel between these two works. This link has already been shown, but next I will answer the questions: Why does it matter? What does this do for the field of writing, the novel, and the fields of Transatlanticism and Critical Race Theory?

Before delving into these questions, I want to discuss how the multiple, overlapping ideas in each novel were somehow missed. The main aspect that went unrecognized was Jude Fawley’s mixed-racial heritage, which has thus far been ignored assuming that Jude Fawley was simply a white man. With such a descriptive although questionable aesthetic, it seems strange that Jude’s ethnicity would be simply ignored. Of course, it was not just ignored but *defaulted*, which I discussed at length in chapter one, likely because Hardy himself was a white man. If there is nothing explicitly stating otherwise, then Hardy’s main character must be white as well, so Hardy
can write based on what is familiar to him. This logical fallacy is likely the reason Jude’s mixed-racial likeness was not recognized, and if this internal connection was not made in *Jude the Obscure*, then a connection between Hardy’s novel and a recognized commentary on racial issues and life (ie. *Of One Blood*) would certainly not be made.

However, Hardy is not the only author whose real-life characteristics interfered with the reception and understanding of his novel. Hopkins novel was also misunderstood as a result of her own racial identity. As an African American woman during a time where rights of African Americans were being fiercely debated and most activists and novelists were outspoken about the real issues facing the African American community, her decision to write a fiction novel was not very popular or understood. Instead of delving into what fiction could offer to this movement, her novel was seen as “patently escapist”97 and as an advocate for African American emigration. Instead of empowering her peers, it was suggested that Hopkins instead insinuated that moving to Africa, as Reuel does at the end of the text, would be the best option. Instead of revealing the truths about non-white life in post-antebellum U.S., it appeared that she simply made up another story and muddled the truth with fantasy and the supernatural. The depth behind her decisions and the unique perspective and abilities her novel offered were simply overlooked.

Similarly, Hardy’s novel was widely disregarded after its publication. His “blunt, aggressive, overt style of writing” lead readers to regard it as “Jude the Obscene”, and the novel was met with incredible condemnation and hostility. The Bishop of Wakefield is quoted, that he “‘was so disgusted with its insolence and indecency’ that he ‘threw it into the fire.’”98 These unfavorable responses lead Hardy to give up fiction writing, but begs the question: was the reaction of the public due to Hardy’s poor writing and obscenity, or rather the public’s inability to

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97 McDermott. Xi.
98 Black, Joseph. 641.
face the truth of what was really happening at that time? Hardy’s narration may have followed the fictional life of Jude Fawley, but it exposed the production of the “unchassed” by class-conscious society. Although tragic and depressing, the story of Jude Fawley is anything but unrealistic, and it is the realism and tragedy of this novel that made it so unpopular amongst many of Hardy’s critics. It seems as though both Hopkins and Hardy may have been utilizing tactics that the public was simply unprepared for. By exposing the reality of a racially ambiguous man’s life in Victorian England, which shows the brief moments of happiness but the overarching negativity and failure, Hardy let the public know that success is often stinted by social standards, expectation and policy. This was perhaps a blatant truth and criticism of the society and government that his readers were not ready to tackle. Although Hopkins book was seemingly the opposite—not harsh or blatant enough—her readers too failed to see what her message was and what her strategies truly offered. By writing the novel as a fiction and including fantastic elements, Hopkins revealed the fragility of “truth.” Her use of genre critiqued the construction of racial discourse showing how false narratives can be produced and perpetuated as long as the legitimacy is not questioned. Her reliance on fiction, fantasy and supernatural elements revealed that pseudo-scientific “truths” of race and stereotyped attributes and hierarchies are as unfounded as stories of ghosts and hidden ancient cities. By incorporating fiction and non-fiction into the novel and mixing the two together, Hopkins revealed how easily reality can be manipulated and the importance of considering where truth ends and pseudo-science and opinions begin. Both Hardy’s and Hopkins’ novels were taken at face-value, and by doing so, readers placed a limit on what these texts and what these authors could do for the society around them.

Seeing how these novels were received, with one being considered too obscene and the other seeming too innocent, puts in perspective how readers and the public in general expects
novelists, writers, activists, etc. to approach issues of societal injustice. There is a limited scope, or at least was during the nineteenth century, on what novels are allowed to do and the methods that can be used to criticize the current culture. However, what Hopkins and Hardy offered us were unique approaches to these issues—overtly honest and subtle truths—both commenting on the same problem: what happens to those who are forgotten? While their novels highlight the issues of race, what is even more significant in the specific sector of race that they are addressing—mixed-raced individuals. Both the United States and Britain follow the Western method of categorization and a rigid system of identifying and classifying every individual, group, plants, animal, etc. This intense reliance on categories and “knowing” that everything you encounter is familiar not only places an extreme pressure on individuals to fit into a category, but also raises the question of what happens to those who do not “fit” into a singular box. Referencing George Gissing’s famous texts, *The Unclassed* and *The Odd Women*, Martin H. Ryle and Jenny Bourne have written an article about these unclassifiable people, simply calling them “the unclassed.” They have determined the “unclassed” individuals through Gissing’s own definition: those who “have been detached, or detached themselves” from those in their surrounding class, “by virtue of their intelligence or education” and yet cannot align themselves with those in traditionally educated classes because of their “situation or simply their poverty.”

These individuals then violate what I call the “race-class-intellect agreement,” where individuals of a certain racial identity are placed into a specific class and expected to have a certain level intellect before becoming a “threat” to those in a class above them. By violating this agreement, these individuals then become “unclassed” and thus cannot move up in the societal caste system, but also do not fit within the caste in which they were born. So, what do they do? According to Hardy, they simply suffer.

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99 Ryle, Martin H., Jenny Bourne.
According to Hopkins, they have to find a society that will allow them to succeed. Both of these though lead to the same conclusion, they are forgotten. This dismissal of human beings is exactly what these two authors challenged in their novels and raised the question of why we are so desperate as a society to fit into pre-made categories determining who we are and what we expect from others. The fact that the same challenge was being pursued by two authors from countries separated by the Atlantic shows that the issues of rigid categories, presuppositions of who we are supposed to be, and what we allow others to become is a long-standing problem stretching across oceans and transcending years of perceived “progress.”

So, what do these two particular texts offer us that other nineteenth century novels or novels that criticize race or social injustice could not? Firstly, they bridge an important gap between Victorian England and postbellum United States. The nineteenth century was tumultuous in both of these societies, and yet somehow the severity of the issues is often lost. Postbellum implies that the United States was beyond its antebellum problems and injustice, which of course, is not the case, just as Victorian England which is often romanticized as a time of progress, peace, economic success and prosperity, was actually a time of turmoil and injustice. By viewing this novels side-by-side, we see how easily societies collectively forget the negative parts of their history, and that it is not unique to one culture or place.

*Of One Blood* and *Jude the Obscure* also give us the insight into how similar these societies were, and what those who perhaps did not always have a voice were facing during this century. In his novel “The Second Sin,” psychiatrist and critic Thomas Szasz wrote, “In the animal kingdom, the rule is, eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined.” There is no place for the undefined or the “other” in a society where status and reputation mean more than value and skill. Reuel Briggs and Jude Fawley, although two fictional characters, are manifestations of what
this reliance on definitions and categorization do to an entire group of people. This group, the obscure or unclassed, are removed from the standard social hierarchy due “class-intellect disagreement.” While both men pass as white, neither are capable of ascending the social sphere limiting not only their careers and educational paths, but their personal and love lives as well. The race and pre-determined social statuses of these two characters propel them into an obscure and undefinable class, revealing that in any white-dominated society, whether it be nineteenth century England or the United States, recognition of intellect and opportunity for success is contingent upon whiteness and wealth. Despite the strong work-ethic, aptitude, and determination of both Jude and Reuel, the limitations placed upon them by their respective societies make it impossible to achieve success and/or happiness, pushing Jude to a literal death and Reuel to a figurative one. The white-dominated, class-conscious worlds we have created have subsequently created a whole class of individuals who are not welcome to participate. Together, these novels force us to consider how many are being condemned to societal deaths, whether we have truly made progress, and whose voices we really need to hear.
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