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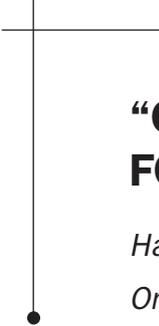
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“CITIZEN SURE THING” OR “JUS’ FOREIGNER”?

*Half-Caste Citizenship and the Family Romance in
Onoto Watanna’s Orientalist Fiction*

jolie a. **sheffer**

IN “A CONTRACT” (1902), ONE OF Winnifred Eaton’s popular orientalist romances published under the pen name Onoto Watanna, O-Kiku-san, a young Japanese woman, explains to her suitor, the Japanese-born but racially white businessman Masters, the difference between citizenship and belonging. She tells him, “You Japanese citizen sure thing . . . all the same you jus’ foreigner, all the same.”¹ Masters protests, insisting, “You are trying to rob me of my birthright. Am I or am I not Japanese?” (56). Kiku’s answer is unwavering: “Japanese citizen, yes. . . . Japanese man? No, naever” (56). Speaking as a full-blooded Japanese woman in Japan, Kiku articulates the vast gap between legal rights and social recognition, between being a “sure” citizen under the law while nevertheless (“all the same”) being perceived as “jus’ foreigner,” one who is virtually indistinguishable from all other foreigners (as indicated by the repetition of “all the same”). In this scene, Masters wants to be recognized as Japanese, and the most effective means by which he imagines achieving recognition is to marry a Japanese woman, with the hope that “the next of our line possibly may be partly Japanese, and the next” (56). In this story, as throughout Eaton’s body of work, those who look different on account of race—whether as a white man in Japan or a biracial woman in the United States—are perpetually seen as “jus” foreigners. The white man’s status as perpetual foreigner in Japan neatly reverses the far more common experience of Asians in early-twentieth-century America, particularly since Kiku’s judgment of

Masters's foreignness is also based on his apparent failure to assimilate: he was educated in the West and lives in the English colony within Japan. Here, as throughout Eaton's fiction, mixed blood is the primary measure of and means to cultural acceptance, more powerful than the legal rights granted by citizenship and more persuasive than residency.

Eaton's formulation of the "citizen sure thing" who is nonetheless a perpetual foreigner complicates Lisa Lowe's now-paradigmatic account of the ways that "the American *citizen* has been defined over against the Asian *immigrant*, legally, economically, and culturally."² Again and again in Eaton's fiction, the route to recognition is imagined through romance, breeding, and familial ties, embodied by the figure of the "half-caste," the offspring of a white man and a Japanese woman. With her focus on the plight of the biracial figure born of the West's previous encounters with the East, Eaton's stories should be read as aggressive dramas of national belonging in which white men desire mixed-race women, and mixed-race children demand recognition in the U.S. family. In the story "A Half Caste" (1899) in particular, Eaton merges the interracial love story with a familial reunification plot in order to make the controversial claim that the threat of incest may be productive, serving as the means by which the half-caste can secure her rights as daughter and citizen. In Eaton's fiction, the moment of incestuous desire and its disclosure occasions recognition of the half-caste's rights as a member of the family and, by extension, as a citizen of the American "fatherland."

The term "half-caste," which was invented to define the mixed-race children of European fathers and Indian mothers on the subcontinent, relies upon the entrenched gendering of raced bodies and the racialization of women.³ In America as in Europe, masculinity and fatherhood have long been associated with the West, while femininity and motherhood have been aligned with racial and cultural Otherness. In the United States, ever since Commodore Matthew Perry "opened" Japan to American trade in 1853, American audiences have responded enthusiastically to the image of an American captain penetrating the mystical, oriental East via military and economic might—symbolized by the cannons extending from Commodore Perry's ships when he entered Tokyo Bay. This "scenario" of Western political-sexual conquest, to use Diana Taylor's term for the "predictable, formulaic, hence repeatable" forms that tropes of encoun-

ter take, was particularly compelling, reiterating as it did long-standing Western belief in Western masculinity and Eastern feminization, while also providing a powerful image of the United States as a global power.⁴ Popular literature and theatrical entertainments from the late nineteenth century replayed this scenario. From Lafcadio Hearn's nonfiction books about Japan to John Luther Long's short story "Madame Butterfly" (1898) to Giacomo Puccini's operatic version (1904), American audiences were fascinated by tales of a mysterious Japan and titillated by depictions of the pleasures and perils of interracial romance.⁵

Capitalizing on the public's interest in such dramas, Onoto Watanna made the romance between white American men and exotic Asian women her stock-in-trade.⁶ Onoto Watanna was the pen-name of Winnifred Eaton, the daughter of an English-educated Chinese woman and a British father. Born and raised in Canada, Eaton lived in and traveled across the United States for most of her adult life, but found fame and fortune writing popular romances set in Japan, a country she never visited.⁷ Eaton chose a Japanese-sounding pen name, posed for publicity photographs in full Japanese dress, and created a fanciful new biography that matched her literary plots.⁸ Eaton's half-caste romances similarly rely on clichéd orientalist tropes to tell fabulous tales of love affairs in foreign lands, charmingly populated by geisha girls and samurai and decorated with rickshaws, samisen, tatami mats, and shoji screens. The feminization of an orientalized Asia was reinforced in the marketing of Eaton's novels, which were beautifully illustrated and embossed, and given such florid (and floral) titles as *The Wooing of Wystaria* (1902), *The Heart of Hyacinth* (1903), *The Love of Azalea* (1904), and *A Japanese Blossom* (1906); the "flowers" of the titles refer to the novels' plucky heroines, whose sexual appeal lies in their femininity and oriental exoticism.⁹

Due to her exoticization and reliance on generic romance plots, critics have tended to dismiss Eaton's Japanese settings as unreal and insignificant. Dominika Ferens argues that Eaton simply "removed her characters from the field of U.S. racial politics."¹⁰ In another vein, Jean Lee Cole argues that Eaton's heroines remain exceptional cases; although she "was able to establish her readers' sympathy for [her half-caste heroine], she never asked or expected them to transfer that sympathy to Eurasians (or Asians) as a whole."¹¹ I argue, to the contrary, that Eaton used the

East-West script in provocative and political ways to address concerns with citizenship, national identity, and cultural recognition. Susan Koshy contrasts the prohibition surrounding miscegenation at “home” in the United States with the widely sanctioned practice of interracial romance abroad; as she explains, “the extraterritorial represents the space identified with the forms of sexuality that had to be excluded from the moral order of the nation.”¹² Like Koshy, I want to highlight the relationship between these two geographic spaces in the social imaginary when miscegenation and racial identity are at stake. Eaton’s depictions of Japan are entirely dependent upon U.S. racial politics, if often illustrated through tactics of disguise, indirection, and reversal. Like Eaton’s reinvention of herself by donning a kimono in publicity photos, her “Japanese” stories should be read less as about trying to “pass” than as a kind of drag performance, under which cover she could highlight the ambiguity of racial and cultural markers and demand inclusion of racialized citizens. Indeed, the “Japan” of her fiction should be understood as a screen for U.S. racial politics and economic practices on which she projected the nation’s anxieties about and fantasies of racial mixing, as well as offered imaginative resolutions in which the nation’s mixed-race offspring find their legitimate place.

By setting her novels and stories in a Japan made familiar (and feminine) by Western orientalism and imperialism generally, and by American racial and sexual codes in particular, Eaton exposes the gendered practices of American racism as well as the inequalities of global capitalism. The gendering of race, particularly the feminization of Asian men through Western orientalism, has been amply documented by critics such as Edward Said, Gary Okihiro, Frank Chin, and David Eng.¹³ More recently, Leslie Bow has shown how Asian and Asian American women have served as “symbolic boundary markers for ethnic and national affiliations” through their sexuality, which is typically figured through the logic of loyalty and betrayal.¹⁴ In light of Bow’s formulation, Eaton’s fiction highlights the ways that women’s national identity and loyalty are secured through heterosexual romance or paternity, rather than by women’s status as citizens. By paying attention to the role of the half-caste and romantic plots in Eaton’s stories and novels, we can discern a critique of white American male hegemony and its treatment of Asian women through a field imaginary defined by race, recognition, and sexual appetite.

In their focus on the in-between space occupied by half-caste women, Eaton's stories and novels call attention to the gap between civic rights and social equality, the distance between one's self-perception vis-à-vis national identity (that is, as citizen) and the far more limited ways that the racialized and gendered body is read by the dominant culture in the United States (foreigner). Eaton's fictions show us an early moment in the construction of a multiethnic American identity, when the rights of citizenship are occluded due to narrow expectations of what constitutes the visible markers of U.S. cultural identity, especially by white men who see in the half-caste only a new form of feminine exoticism. The half-caste is a perpetual *foreigner-citizen*, a position marked by both presence and absence, hypervisibility and invisibility, possibility and lack. In Eaton's fictional universe, the full array of rights and privileges signified by citizenship can only be realized when white men acknowledge their abuse of racialized women by recognizing their mixed-race daughters. This recognition is occasioned by what I call the "incest scenario," in which a second generation of interracial romance is thwarted by the revelation of consanguinity. The interracial incest plot is a trope to which Eaton returns again and again, most vividly in the short story "A Half Caste," in which incest threatens to occur as a result of political and economic inequalities between men and women, whites and Asians, America and Japan. In this story, Eaton defines social belonging in the irrefutable language of shared blood, placing maternity, paternity, and interracial romance at the center of national identification.¹⁵

THE ROMANCE OF RECOGNITION

Eaton's white male characters are radically mobile missionaries, businessmen, and sailors—paradigms of Western freedom, privilege, and conquest. They are captivated by the exotic women of Japan, especially the half-caste girls and women whose bodies and faces are ambiguously marked. In contrast to the cosmopolitanism of her male characters, these women lack mobility, financial security, and familial or communal bonds, rendering them vulnerable to exploitation. Without clear ties to a single racial or national—and perhaps most important, familial—community, Eaton's stories imply, they are at greater risk of being treated as aesthetic and

sexual objects by the white men who pursue them. The question “A Half Caste” asks is, if a father doesn’t acknowledge his own daughter, what is to stop him from seducing her as he did her mother? Importantly, though, while incest threatens, it also *beckons*, for the revelation of the blood tie occasions the father’s belated recognition of his outcast child.

Variations of this incest-recognition plot abound in Eaton’s oeuvre, functioning to condemn the white father whose abandonment of his Japanese family renders the half-caste alienated and vulnerable, while also illustrating the links between blood, culture, and belonging. In the short story “A Half Caste” (1899), on which this essay focuses, a father unwittingly attempts to seduce his long-lost Amerasian daughter. In “A Father” (1900), a young white man and the half-caste young woman he hopes to wed are dismayed to discover that they share the same father. In other stories, sibling eroticism is endorsed to mark a common love of the Japanese mother and motherland. Thus, in *The Heart of Hyacinth* (1903), a male half-caste falls in love with and marries his adopted white sister, while in “Miss Lily and Miss Chrysanthemum: The Love Story of Two Japanese Girls in Chicago” (1903) the most compelling romance is the homoerotic relationship between half-caste sisters (one raised in Japan by their mother and another raised in the United States by their father) who are reunited in adulthood.¹⁶ Even in works where there is no incestuous desire, Eaton nonetheless offers a fantasy of familiarity and familial closeness through substitution, where a brother’s best friend stands in for the brother himself: in *A Japanese Nightingale* (1901) the half-caste Yuki marries an American whose best friend turns out to be Yuki’s brother. Like a musical motif with infinite variations, incest and incestuous eroticism recur to highlight the plight of the half-caste and her longing for a place within the nuclear national family.

While the revelation of the risk of incest halts the progress of the traditional romantic plot—in itself no insignificant detail for a writer of popular romances—it links half-caste children with their families across the divides of race and place, reuniting lost relatives from two continents. Notably, Eaton’s stories typically begin with the aftermath of interracial seduction and abandonment, not with the initial interracial encounter, which often does end tragically, with a dead mother à la *Madame Butterfly*. Her tales gain force and political weight from this modification

of the familiar interracial romance plot. The Japan of Eaton's fiction is populated with half-caste daughters who have been orphaned by their mothers' deaths and abandoned by their fathers. In the context of incest, the bond of shared blood occasions the white father's belated recognition of his civic and familial responsibilities.

The most explicit and cynical of Eaton's incestuous interracial stories is "A Half Caste." The story begins in typical Eatonian fashion, with a white man headed for an adventure in Japan, but takes a sharp turn toward the incest scenario. Norman Hilton is Eaton's emblematic white male who, years earlier, "had married a Japanese girl—in Japanese fashion" but had "left her in American fashion" (3). The Japanese wife had a child, and the story opens with Hilton's return to Japan to find the child he abandoned fifteen years earlier; this sense of purpose falters, however, when he falls in love with a young geisha girl named Kiku (that is, *Chrysanthemum*, yet another flower girl). Hilton's desire for Kiku is first excited by her difference from the other young women at the teahouse; he admires her "red cheeks, large eyes and white skin" (4), physical attributes at odds with orientalist expectations of "narrow" eyes and "yellow" skin. And yet white skin and red cheeks may be cultivated through elaborate makeup, particularly the exaggerated whiteness of powder and the rosiness of rouge.¹⁷ Eaton thus plays with visual markers of racial difference and the contradictory ways those features can be interpreted.

Kiku's speech similarly indicates both her connection to the West and her distance from it. To Hilton, "her broken English was prettier than anything he had ever heard" (6). Kiku's lack of fluency is charming insofar as it marks her fragility, femininity, and exoticism. Like Commodore Perry before him, Hilton clearly hopes to penetrate what he perceives to be an oriental mystery. Hilton's emphasis on Kiku's "broken English" also reveals a desire for likeness-in-difference: she speaks English he understands, but with an accent that renders it delightfully defamiliarized. Just as her body can be read as both familiar and foreign, so can her speech. Here as elsewhere in Eaton's work, the half-caste's body and speech are marked simultaneously by whiteness and Asianness. Eaton thus subtly stresses that Hilton chooses to hear her accent rather than emphasize her fluency.

Although Hilton tries to fit her into a familiar orientalist script, Kiku is neither a "modern" American girl, nor a typically demure Japa-

nese maiden. Instead, the narration informs us, “She said things that no American girl would say, and that few Japanese girls would understand, and in spite of this she was a charming individual. . . . She was unlike any Japanese woman he had ever known—unlike any woman he had met” (7). As Hilton here seems to acknowledge, Kiku lives in a marginal state between two recognizable national and racial identities. Kiku’s difference from every other woman serves the reader as evidence of her biraciality and, therefore, her structural relation to Hilton, the self-proclaimed father of an Amerasian child. However, Hilton’s sexual desire for Kiku in the present blinds him to the consequences and evidence of his past conquests. The revelation of biological relation finally occurs when Kiku speaks back, refusing to be passively read as an exotic and sexual text any longer. She demands of him:

“You thing I loog lig Japanese girl?”

She suddenly loosened her hair, and it fell down around her in thick, shining brown curls.

“Thad lig Japanese girl?—thad?—thad?—thad? Thad?”

She pushed back the sleeves and showed him the white purity of her arms. (10)

Here, Eaton emphasizes the physical markers of Kiku’s racial identity: hair that is brown and curly, skin that is “white” and “pure.” The use of “purity” is complicated here. In eugenicist terms, half-castes were “half-breeds” whose racial traits were corrupted and weakened by intermarriage. Eaton clearly relies on the ideology of white superiority to privilege Kiku’s pale skin. However, in her insistence that Kiku is “pure”—that is, virtuous—in her rejection of Hilton’s sexual advances, Eaton provides an ironic gloss on Kiku’s racial “impurity,” as well as decouples racial superiority from its association with moral superiority.

At the level of plot, the exotic geisha girl is revealed to be the long-lost daughter through a fortuitous coincidence that simultaneously highlights Hilton’s pathological compulsion to return to the site/sight of his crimes. Such a seemingly unrealistic moment of melodramatic recognition highlights literature as a means to resolve a larger social crisis. As Werner Sollors argues, the surprise ending in racial and ethnic fiction may not be “‘realistically’ convincing, but is the result of a certain aesthetic strategy” that imagines an ideal response; such an idealized response features a character

claiming a previously disavowed ethnic-racial identity, whereas a naturalistic ending would have the character continue to deny identification with the denigrated group.¹⁸ The story of incest averted is therefore both a cautionary tale and an almost-happy ending. With her direct speech and attention to her physical body—to the signs of whiteness in her brown hair and fair skin on her arms—Kiku demands that her flesh be properly read and interpreted as a text inscribed by the sins of a callow white father. The coincidence that brings father and daughter together is thus an “idealized” conclusion, wherein the interracial tie is finally acknowledged. And in its links to very real historical patterns of white male conquest in the East, the moment of recognition is also a “realistic” conclusion.

Kiku’s hysterical repetition of “that?—that?—that?—? That?” rendered in a pidgin accent can be read as an example of what Evelyn Ch’ien describes as “a conscious appropriation of hybridity” in which “appeals for community are embedded in the writing.”¹⁹ Kiku’s speech highlights the fact that her hybridity should have been evident all along.²⁰ Moreover, her hysterical insistence on the legibility of her body is a form of self-objectification by means of which she calls attention to Hilton’s objectification of her and his denial of her subjectivity. The white father’s refusal to recognize his daughter in the sexualized body before him is a kind of psychological injury that demands a response, and an embodied one at that. As Diana Fuss explains, “The hysteric speaks through her symptom, transforming the body into a textual utterance.”²¹ In “A Half Caste,” Kiku’s hysterical response to Hilton’s seduction is quite literally a demand that Hilton read her body in order to recognize her as biracial and, consequently, his own child.

Importantly, while virtually every Eaton story and novel features a half-caste heroine, these women rarely encounter other women like themselves; in “A Half-Caste,” this makes Hilton’s failure to recognize Kiku all the more striking. In this way, Eaton’s choice of an indefinite article in the title (“A Half Caste”) indicates that though Kiku is unique, she is not unusual or exceptional in her biraciality. Hilton’s ignorance regarding his mixed-race daughter is thus more accurately described as a sustained act of denial. Kiku’s brown curls and pale skin render her whiteness legible to anyone willing to see, but Hilton has seen only what he wishes to see: an exotic young woman available to his sexual advances.²² Because so much

energy is oriented toward establishing the legitimacy of and demanding social recognition for the half-caste, it makes perfect sense that *sight*—the viewing of physically embodied evidence—is what forces Hilton to acknowledge the truth before him.

Eaton's emphasis on skin color is clearly problematic. Eaton seems to want to transform the rhetoric of race as bodily contaminant—the “one drop” epistemology of race in America—into a positive identity. But this new visual schema depends upon the recognition of her heroine's inherent whiteness.²³ Seeing is believing in ideologies of racial and sexual difference. As such, the moment in which Hilton recognizes his daughter can be read as the moment when the half-caste effectively “becomes white.” Racial Otherness occasions the recognition of familiarity, which, in turn, grants the recognition of shared whiteness. Eaton's emphasis on the legibility of whiteness benefits those who are part-white and look it, but its applicability to less visible forms of hybridity is uncertain. However, it would be a mistake to simply dismiss Eaton's work on account of racial preferences. Kiku's performance calls attention to the subjective nature of such phenotypologies. Kiku points to her own body to prove her whiteness, but Norman Hilton has heretofore stared at this same body and seen only difference. In truth, she is equally white and Japanese, and Eaton refuses to have Kiku relinquish one racial/national tie for another. Both sets of racial characteristics are always present, but the (white male) viewer has seen only what he wants to see: Otherness. In this way, Eaton's work serves as an example of the essentialist belief that race is legible on the body and simultaneously offers a critique of that assumption. Hilton learns to recognize Kiku's relationship to himself only when he is offered a different vantage point from which to look. As readers, we are likewise demanded to acknowledge our racial blindness and recognize mixed-race members of the national family and, by extension, our own cultural miscegenation.

APPETITE AND OBJECT RELATIONS

Hilton's belated recognition of his daughter occasions an entirely new kind of vision than the gaze of romantic desire. The “new eyes” with which Hilton is forced to perceive Kiku differ greatly from his previous glances (and

speech), which have been endlessly devouring. As the narration informs us, Kiku-san "was the prettiest thing he had ever seen, far prettier than all the other geisha girls. If she would not dance for him he would not insist. In fact, he was content simply to look at her" (5). Hilton may not "insist" that she obey his will, but his gaze is clearly acquisitive and voyeuristic. Hilton's language reveals Kiku's status as object to him—she is a "thing" to be admired and observed. Indeed, his desire for the geisha girl is best expressed as rapacious sexual desire: "By evening he was seized with a fit of unconquerable restlessness and blues. He was awake the entire night, tossing restlessly from side to side. . . . [He goes to see her.] The man was intoxicated with his hunger for her, and caught her in his arms with all his pent-up love and passion" (8). Here, the language of conquest is explicitly tied to his sexual desire for the young woman through the language of appetite. His "intoxicating hunger" points to the compulsive desire to possess, incorporate, and even ingest the exotic, sexualized Other.

Further revealing to the voraciousness of his gaze, Hilton compliments her by telling her she "looks like a Japanese sunbeam" when she smiles. This orientalized image of beauty is abstract and insubstantial: a sunbeam has no corporeality to repel his advances, while the racial specificity (the perceived "Japaneseness") of her body is what makes her the object of his penetrative gaze. Hilton's compliment relies on a gendered and racialized portrait of femininity that assumes Kiku's availability in relation to her apparent exoticism.²⁴ Moreover, Eaton emphasizes the repulsive acquisitiveness of this orientalist appreciation: "'Now you look like a Japanese sunbeam,' he told her, softly, looking *unutterable things* at her out of his deep gray eyes" (6, emphasis added). The synaesthetic relationship between "unutterable" things that are communicated through the eyes is noteworthy, foreshadowing the revelation that his desire is in fact unspeakable, taboo.²⁵

Despite Hilton's self-proclaimed desire to rectify past sins, he even speaks of reconciliation in the language of conquest, possession, and obsession. He declares at the beginning of the story, "There was a child. I want it" (4). Lest readers assume this pronoun choice is a result of not knowing the sex of his child, a sentence later Hilton explains that "it" was a girl. From the beginning of the story, then, Eaton highlights the object status that children, the Japanese, and perhaps all women hold

for privileged white men like Hilton. This object status is reinforced with the third-person limited narration describing Hilton's motivation to find his daughter: "At the age of forty, Hilton found himself altogether alone in the world, with a strange weariness of his own companionship and an *unconquerable* longing to have someone with him who actually *belonged* to him. . . . He was suddenly keenly alive to the fact that he was a father; that he owed his first duty in life to the one being in the world who *belonged* to him—his little Japanese daughter, whom he had never seen" (4, emphasis added). Through Hilton's speech and Eaton's narrative description, we see that the cosmopolitan man speaks of love and duty in the rhetoric of domination and ownership. The language of possession is common to both sexual conquest and parental longing, creating a troubling correspondence between these desires. In short, Hilton's paternal longing sounds suspiciously like perverse sexual desire. Kiku's extreme youth highlights white Western assumptions about Asian female sexual precocity and availability: she is only fifteen. When Hilton asks her age, she first claims that she is twenty-two. His response is, "You look like a child" (7). That this does not minimize his desire for her is, I believe, intended to disturb and disgust the reader. Incest in this story serves to exaggerate Hilton's greed—for women, power, mobility, and the oriental Other. This appetite for exotic women is sanctioned by common practice within the world of Eaton's romances: Hilton is only too "normal" in his casual wooing and abandonment of Japanese and half-caste women. But these appetites are finally exposed as monstrous when he attempts to seduce his own daughter. The revelation that the sexual exotic actually *is* the lost daughter-object highlights the pathological psychology of the white man's appetite.

Melanie Klein's theory of object relations is relevant here, for Hilton's greedy glances can be read as an expression of his immature development. As Klein explains, "As a child (or an adult) identifies himself more fully with a good object [such as the breast], the libidinal urges increase; he develops a greedy love and desire to devour this object and the mechanism of introjection is reinforced."²⁶ Like an infant, Hilton's idea of love is expressed through the language of hunger, appetite, and orality. He cannot see Kiku as a whole-object, a woman with a history and desires

of her own. His solipsism and ethnocentrism cause him to treat her as an aesthetic and sexual partial-object. Paradoxically, only by recognizing her as his daughter (as a person related to himself, sharing his blood) can he see her as a distinct person. Psychoanalysis usefully illuminates the primitive drives underlying Eaton's fiction, but it also provides a model for the connection between object relations and race.

Incest has long served as a plot device marking miscegenation as a peculiarly American condition, usually based in the "peculiar institution" of slavery.²⁷ Antebellum antislavery novels depict the vulnerability of black women to their white male masters who are, all too often, also their fathers or brothers. Critics have argued that even white racist literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which frequently features a black male rapist attacking an innocent white woman, links miscegenation to incest and the familial romance. For example, Leslie Fiedler explains that "the man who screams in panic that some black buck is about to rape his sister is speaking of one who is, indeed, his brother, and whom secretly he loves."²⁸ From a slightly different angle, Walter Benn Michaels argues that incest has functioned in nativist and modernist literature as an alternative to miscegenation, as a means of maintaining racial purity in response to immigration and the rise of cultural pluralism. From nineteenth-century novels of slavery to William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), the dysfunctional family unit has served as a microcosm for the nation, with the probability of incest intertwined with the history of miscegenation and white male privilege.²⁹

As Hortense Spillers explains, the "unsayable" act of incest actually *gains* force from its unspeakability. As a result, according to Spillers, "fictions about incest provide an enclosure, a sort of confessional space . . . and in a very real sense it is only in fiction . . . that incest as dramatic enactment and sexual economy can take place at all."³⁰ Incest functions as the literary test limit for white male privilege and racialized female abjection, since what could more graphically illustrate the dangers of male conquest and female victimization than the horror of father-daughter incest? In African American fiction, the act of incest marks the utter destruction of human, familial, and legal ties under slavery. In the context of Asian American identity as seen through Eaton's half-caste tales, the *possibility*

of incest marks the West's dangerous denial of its responsibilities, while offering a last-chance opportunity to make good on its earlier promises. Hilton's recognition of the blood tie averts the family-destroying act of incest. Hilton's recognition of the blood tie is an acknowledgment of the structural relationship between white and Asian identities, and of the white, patriarchal privilege that allowed him to see all women as sex objects. The white father's sexual desire for the foreign girl-woman promises to be rewritten as a *familial* desire for his own half-Japanese blood relative. "A Half Caste" thus warns readers that the nation's failure to acknowledge its interracial history (and the inequalities that underlie it) threatens the basic unit of society: the nuclear family.

In her focus on the half-caste, Eaton moves the miscegenation plot beyond the black-white divide. Moreover, in her fiction, incest simultaneously serves as an indictment of white male privilege and its objectification of raced female bodies *and* functions as a positive step toward the acknowledgment and recognition of America's (via its white male citizens') miscegenated children. Redefining the "problem" of racial admixture as the denial of familial and social bonds, not the fact of its occurrence, Eaton's fiction posits miscegenation as the precondition for a multiracial national identity. The threat of incest paradoxically facilitates the Amerasian half-caste's social recognition as a member of that family. The half-caste's desire for recognition as American is accomplished only through recognition by her white father of their biological tie. The father's failure to act on his incestuous desire marks the first recognition that the half-caste is a member of the family, for the taboo against incest only exists if consanguinity is acknowledged. To be belatedly recognized as a daughter is to have (finally) a social place, a validated identity. In this way, incest remains repulsive, a taboo not to be broken, but its threat exposes the fact that East and West, America and Asia, are already mixed.

As in the more widely recognized black-white context, the incest plot functions in Eaton's fiction as a kind of shock tactic that forces the reader to recognize an overlooked threat to social order (white male power in its domination of nonwhite Others) and redefine the racialized woman as victim, rather than vixen. In Eaton's fictions, consent is coerced, rather than resulting from brute force, in accordance with the social relations that structure East/West contact. Eaton's plots are consistently propelled

by privileged white males' attempts to seduce, woo, and/or marry exotic women.³¹ For all Norman Hilton's salacious glances, what he wants above all is for Kiku to desire him back. Like the 1909 "Gentleman's Agreement" between the United States and Japan, which curtailed Japanese immigration under the pretext of equality and consent, romantic relationships between white American men and Asian women in Eaton's works are determined by American economic, cultural, and political dominance at the turn of the twentieth century. Incest in these stories and novels is not an act of physical violence with the knowledge of probable blood affinity; it is a result of the coercive nature of American imperial power at home and abroad.

To return to the relationship between psychology and race, just as object relations are founded in the individual psyche, race and racism are expressions of similar power structures at the level of culture and society. Hilton's desire to possess Kiku reveals the role of race in both social relations and object relations, with Hilton a melancholic subject searching for a beloved lost-object, his half-caste daughter. Anne Cheng insightfully draws out the racial melancholia that constitutes all American identities—white or racialized—but which is particularly inflected for Asian American subjects who fall outside the American chiaroscuro of black and white. Racial melancholia functions as a kind of double-consciousness, whereby race is the unacknowledged heart of national identity. As Cheng explains, "Racialization in America may be said to operate through the institutional process of producing a dominant, standard, white national ideal, which is sustained by the exclusion-yet-retention of racialized others."³² Karen Shimikawa presents a similar formulation of Asian American identity as "abject" in relation to mainstream American identity; Asian American identity is characterized by "its constantly shifting relation to Americanness, a movement between visibility and invisibility, foreignness and domestication/assimilation."³³ In the context of abjection and the melancholic desire for recognition, the incest scenario is an expression of the psychoanalytic roots of racial formation.³⁴

Racial melancholia and object relations take on added resonance in the context of half-caste identity. It has been a commonplace in American literature since William Wells Brown's novel *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853) that "mulattoes," "quadroons," and "octoroons" bear

a social stigma accompanied by a psychological scar. Popular literature linked the half-caste with the mulatto, depicting both as afflicted with melancholia, hysteria, and other mental and physical disorders as a consequence of their divided (and doubled) racial identities.³⁵ Eaton reinforces the association of biraciality with weakness and melancholia in her “non-fiction” essay entitled “The Half Caste,” which was published a year before the fictional story with the nearly identical name (but for the indefinite article).³⁶ In her quasi-sociological account, Eaton describes the peculiar psychological characteristics of all half-castes: “The Japanese half breeds are wonderfully precocious,” “extremely erratic and moody,” “nervous, highly strung, jealous, conceited, yet humble and self-deprecating and overly modest at times, sarcastic, skeptical, generous and impulsive. It is hard to analyze their natures, because they are so changeable” (149–150, 152). Importantly, Eaton’s depiction of the collective precocity and melancholia of the half-caste is tempered by an emphasis on the social factors contributing to those psychological characteristics. Their sensitivity, Eaton implies, is a result of the fact that “from their earliest childhood, whether *in this country, Europe, or Japan*, they are made to feel that they are different from those about them. . . . From constantly being called names and shunned, they become morose, bitter and harsh in their judgments” (149–152, emphasis added). The half-caste suffers for not fitting into existing racial and national boundaries, although Eaton also indicates the anger of those denied their birthright as part white: “In this country or in England they are accused of being ‘niggers,’ ‘Chinese,’ etc.” (149–150). Through this repetition of the gap between geography, nationality, and race, Eaton depicts her half-caste desiring the privileges of whiteness, in part, I argue, because whiteness confers national identity.

As in the story of Kiku and Norman Hilton, here too Eaton articulates the importance of racial-cum-familial recognition. Further psychoanalyzing the half-caste personality in terms of family ties, she explains: “The Japanese half breeds seldom make good sons or daughters, nor do they have that great reverence and love for the parents which is common among children of ordinary parentages. I do not know why this is so, unless it lies in the fact that the same love and care that are given by most good parents to their children are withheld from them. . . . Usually the Japanese half breed does not know the counsel, and the dearly-to-be-desired strict guidance

of a father, or the watchful, tender loving care of a mother" (151). Again yoking desire and discipline, fathers are "dearly-to-be-desired" figures of authority. However, in the short story "A Half Caste," the longed-for father figure is not only absent but also lacks the very moral fiber upon which the paternal role is ideally based. Norman Hilton is deficient as a father and a man; even his recognition of his daughter cannot grant him moral authority. Indeed, Kiku performs her moral authority in her rejection of Hilton as father. Reading Eaton's "nonfiction" piece "The Half Caste" alongside her story "A Half Caste" emphasizes the link between nationality, race, and familial recognition in both works.

To return to her avowedly fictional world of the half-caste romance, in "A Half Caste" incest is the mechanism that reveals the danger of unacknowledged miscegenation as well as the fantasy of familial and psychological wholeness. In virtually all of Eaton's stories, the half-caste heroine is melancholic in her desire for recognition, for reconciliation, and, more problematically, for whiteness. And yet that's only half the story, for the hegemonic white man is melancholic, too. His orientalism turns out to be a form of egotism: the desire for the exotic is actually a desire for likeness—not merely of whiteness, but of familial blood and, by extension, of the Otherness that constitutes his own identity and against (and through) which his whiteness is defined. The melancholic nature that is the burden of the half-caste is suspiciously similar to the restless, capricious, and acquisitive nature of the absent white father. In her "nonfiction" piece, Eaton tells us that typical half-castes are "very pretty" and "generally enjoy fine physical constitutions, through they are nervous, highly strung, jealous"; in the story "A Half Caste," Norman Hilton is described in nearly identical terms—he is "extremely handsome" with "a keen, clever face" and "fine athletic figure," although he is lost in "a moody dream" and answers questions "nervously" in the story's opening scene (3–4). In her fiction, Eaton thus shows the white man sharing the half-caste's fantasy of recognition, reconciliation, and wholeness, perhaps being even more obsessed with the racialized Other than the half-caste is with him.³⁷ Racial melancholia is a shared condition arising from the dialectical relationship between whiteness and racial difference. In the context of the half-caste, that bond is psychic, social, and biological—and thus undeniable.

The “unconquerable” aspect of Hilton’s desires takes on new meaning in the context of the infinite deferral of melancholia. His desires are unfulfillable because they are within himself, and therefore, self-consuming. In “A Contract,” the story with which I opened my discussion, Masters wants to produce a mixed-race lineage to ensure his place as a white minority in Japan; Hilton’s return to the site of that earlier romance occasions the reunion with the half-caste child, thus assuring *her* recognition in the American cultural context. In both stories, the half-caste is the ultimate melancholic lost-object (as well as being the fantasized good partial-object). The insatiability of racial melancholia finds its ultimate expression in incestuous desire, which can never be fulfilled, because to do so would be to pervert the very tie that makes it desirable. Moreover, the incest plot shows us that Hilton’s orientalist sexual fantasy is predicated on his refusal to recognize Kiku’s own subjectivity and desires.

Eaton seems aware of the role of fantasy and its unfulfillability in the relationship between the privileged white man and his half-caste daughter, for she forecloses the happy ending of the family reunion. In the moment of mutual recognition, Kiku rebuffs Hilton: “She pushed back the sleeves and showed him the white purity of her arms. Then she turned and left him with the same still look of despair on his face and the pitiless sun beating on the golden fields” (10). Kiku, formerly Hilton’s insubstantial fantasy of a “Japanese sunbeam,” has become a “pitiless sun” powerful enough to scorch her father with her disdain. Kiku effectively abandons the father who abandoned her mother and herself fifteen years earlier, becoming an independent entity in her own right. Moreover, as a “pitiless sun,” she homonymically becomes a “pitiless son” who Oedipally desires to kill the father (representative of fatherland and the Law of the Father) to better love the mother (and, by extension, motherland and mother tongue.)³⁸ The gendering of this substitution is telling, for as a daughter, her power to castrate her father is achieved only on the linguistic level; she remains physically vulnerable to his predations. Moreover, by ending with Kiku’s rejection of her father, Eaton refuses to transform Hilton’s deviant sexual desire into parental solicitude. Hilton’s sexual *and* paternal desires are left unsatisfied, with the result that the desire for recognition and the work of achieving that recognition is transferred to the white father.

Eaton's use of the trope of the half-caste can be read as a reflection of her identification with whiteness and a desire to claim its cultural authority. Yet her stories and novels exceed such reductive readings. The figure of the half-caste serves as a reminder of the long-standing interrelationship between East and West. Eaton's fictions criticize the unequal power dynamic that grants white men cultural, economic, and political authority over their consorts, a state of affairs that places racialized women at risk of double exploitation—first as wives/lovers and again as daughters. Yet Eaton's heroines are never passive victims. They are spunky, independent young women who successfully navigate the treacherous waters of both courtship and paternity by confronting their errant fathers-cum-lovers and demanding acknowledgment, often in explicitly visual terms. They speak the unspeakable and, in so doing, legitimate their own status as representative of a miscegenated nation. In this way, the half-caste stands in as a paradigmatic representative of a potentially multiethnic America, whose eventual recognition would signal the achievement of U.S. rhetoric of freedom and equality. Accordingly, Winnifred Eaton should be understood as an important early figure who attempted to redefine American citizenship at the turn of the twentieth century through the provocative language of incest.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the unhappy ending, "A Half Caste" offers a kind of imaginative resolution by implicitly demanding the restructuring of social and sexual relations. The revelation of paternity is a radical recognition of racial abjection. The definition of the national family has expanded, with the desire and demand for recognition occurring in both directions. Incest is averted, and Hilton's sexual desire is exposed as socially unacceptable. In the context of racial identity, the nightmare of near-incest is transformed into a fantasy of future reunion. Incest may "ruin" the romance plot, but it becomes the means to imagine a representational solution to the problems of gender and race that are impediments to a sense of belonging for "half-castes" in America. The problem of being a "citizen sure-thing" who is nonetheless considered a "foreigner" is negotiated through the revelation of shared blood and mutual melancholia. In its focus on the interracial family as model of American imperialism in Asia, Eaton's fiction expands the notion of

American citizenship and national identification beyond the boundaries of the exceptional body, and places the burdens of recognition squarely in the laps of its wayward white fathers. Yet while the bilateral revelation of likeness turns a family reunion into a national drama of recognition, the ending remains uncertain. We do not know what happens next. Will Kiku eventually reconcile with her father? Will she stay in Japan or go to America? Will she find a social place by creating a family of her own? The future remains outside the story's horizon, and Eaton leaves it to her readers to determine the resolution—both in her fictional world and in the real world it reflects.

Notes

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers at JAAS for their helpful comments on this essay.

1. Linda Trinh Moser and Elizabeth Rooney, *A Half Caste and Other Writings* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 55. References to "A Half Caste" and to Eaton's other short fiction refer to this edition (unless otherwise noted) and will appear in the text. "A Contract" was originally published in *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* in 1902.
2. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996), 4.
3. According to the OED, a "half caste" is "One of a mixed race, a half-breed; esp., in India, one born or descended from a European father and native mother." As I show throughout this essay, Eaton relied on popular attitudes toward the "exotic" East, even as she complicated assumptions about Asian American subjectivity.
4. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003), 13. Through her focus on the differences between narratives in written history (the archive) and as performed (the repertoire), Taylor highlights the primal plots of discovery and conquest that continue to shape history in and of the Americas.
5. Audiences in England and America had first loved Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* (1885), which used the exotic setting of Japan to satirize English class politics. Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème*, first published in French in 1887, was a major influence on John Luther Long's stage play of *Madame Butterfly*. For more on the American mania for all things Japanese, see Julia Meech and Gabriel P. Weisberg, eds., *Japonisme Comes to America: The Japanese Impact on the Graphic Arts, 1876–1925* (New York: H. N. Abrams in association with the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 1990). For a more recent treatment of the cultural work of *Japonisme*, see Cathryn Halverson, "'Typical Tokio Smile':

Bad American Books and Bewitching Japanese Girls,” *Arizona Quarterly* 63:1 (Spring 2007): 49–80.

6. Some stories and novels feature British men. The bulk of Eaton’s works, however, feature American men, and her stories, when not set in Japan, were predominantly set in cities in the United States.
7. Yuko Matsukawa suggestively argues that while “Onoto Watanna” is not a real Japanese name, the pen name “foreshadows Winnifred Easton’s career as a tricksterlike figure who assumes multiple identities”: “Watanna” consists of the two “Chinese ideograms (Japanese pronunciation) for ‘to cross’: *wata[ru]*, and ‘name’: *na*” (107). Yuko Matsukawa, “Cross-Dressing and Cross-Naming: Decoding Onoto Watanna,” in *Tricksterism in Turn-of-the-Century American Literature: A Multicultural Perspective*, ed. Elizabeth Ammons and Annette White-Parks (Hanover: Tufts University/University Press of New England, 1994), 106–125. For the complete Eaton/Watanna biography, see Diana Birchall, *Onoto Watanna: The Story of Winnifred Eaton* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001). Watanna’s peripatetic existence makes her easily both the first Asian Canadian and the first Asian American novelist.
8. “Onoto Watanna” claimed to be the daughter of a Japanese noblewoman and an English silk merchant. Cole describes Watanna’s publicity photos as contributing to her own commodification. Jean Lee Cole, *The Literary Voices of Winnifred Eaton: Redefining Ethnicity and Authenticity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002). Moreover, Eaton’s exchange of her mother’s Chinese ancestry for a fictional Japanese lineage followed the current of popular sentiment, which found (at least for a brief period) Japanese heritage to be more exotically appealing and less threatening than Chinese ancestry. Anxieties about “coolie” labor and “Yellow Peril” led to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. In contrast, in the wake of Japanese military success in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), American politicians and white citizens expressed widespread respect and admiration for the formerly closed nation. This tide would turn again after Japanese military victory in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) brought out American anxieties about Japanese military expansion, resulting in the “Gentleman’s Agreement” of 1909.
9. Onoto Watanna, *The Wooing of Wystaria* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1902); Onoto Watanna, *The Heart of Hyacinth* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1903); Onoto Watanna, *The Love of Azalea* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1904); Onoto Watanna, *A Japanese Blossom* (New York: Harper, 1906).
10. Dominika Ferens, *Edith and Winnifred Eaton: Chinatown Missions and Japanese Romances* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 155.
11. Cole, *Literary Voices of Winnifred Eaton*, 33. Sharing this critical viewpoint, Annette White-Parks contrasts Eaton’s use of a Japanese persona to her sister Edith Maude Eaton’s (pen-name Sui Sin Far) “loyalty to her Chinese descent.” Annette White Parks, *Sui Sin Far/Edith Maude Eaton: A Literary Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 33.

12. Susan Koshy, *Sexual Naturalization: Asian Americans and Miscegenation* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 13.
13. Gary Okihiro, "When and Where I Enter," in *Asian American Studies: A Reader*, ed. Jean Yu-Wen Shen Wu and Min Song (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000); Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); David Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001). Frank Chin's concern with Asian masculinity is well discussed in David Li, *Imagining the Nation: Asian American Literature and Cultural Consent* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 21–62, and King-kok Cheung, "The Woman Warrior versus the Chinaman Pacific: Must a Chinese American Critic Choose between Feminism and Heroism?" in *Conflicts in Feminism*, ed. Marianne Hirsch and Evelyn Fox Keller (New York: Routledge, 1990), 234–254.
14. Leslie Bow, *Betrayal and Other Acts of Subversion: Feminism, Sexual Politics, Asian American Women's Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3. Bow usefully illustrates the ways that Asian and Asian American women's sexual and romantic attachments signal their ethnic and/or national allegiance(s), revealing the male homosociality assumed for citizenship and community.
15. Watanna's first novel, *Miss Numè of Japan* (Chicago: Rand, McNally, 1898), ends with the white woman Cleo marrying her cousin Tom (who is more like a brother), after her Japanese lover has committed suicide and her American fiancé left her for a Japanese woman. Noreen Groover Lape argues that Cleo and Tom's marriage, "given their relationship throughout the novel, borders on incest" (131–132). Lape reads this union "as an alternative to miscegenation." Noreen Groover Lape, *West of the Border* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), 132. However, given the rest of Eaton's oeuvre, Lape's analysis is inadequate. *Miss Numè* prominently features another interracial couple, a white man and a Japanese woman; this relationship survives, beginning a pattern of white masculinity and Asian femininity that Eaton repeated throughout her career.
16. In *The Heart of Hyacinth*, Eaton de-emphasizes shared blood in favor of shared culture. The quasi-incestuous marriage of two adopted siblings signifies the common bonds of culture, while avoiding the problem of biological incest. Similarly, while "Miss Lily and Miss Chrysanthemum" begins with the reunion of blood sisters, the two women are parted due to their cultural differences; the American-bred sister chooses heterosexual romance with a fellow Yank, sending her "Japanese" sister back to Japan to marry a co-national. Eaton's first novel, *Miss Numè of Japan*, originates her obsessions with quasi-sibling incest and a coupling between a white man and a racialized woman. In this novel, interracial romance and cousin-marriage are opposing romantic options, echoing Walter Benn Michaels's claim that literary marriages are a choice between endogamy and exogamy. Walter Benn Michaels, *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press,

- 1995). In *A Japanese Blossom* (1906), Eaton attempted a romance between a Japanese man and his white wife. The novel was a flop, revealing popular discomfort or disinterest in romances between Japanese men and white women.
17. In *The Heart of Hyacinth* Eaton mocks the artificiality of Japanese makeup. Watanna, *Heart of Hyacinth*, 95–96.
 18. Sollors is referring to Charles Chesnutt's story "The Wife of His Youth," which similarly turns on bodily inscriptions of race and the revelation of affiliation. Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 161–162.
 19. Evelyn Nien-Ming Ch'ien, *Weird English* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 5, 25.
 20. In contrast to Ch'ien's celebration of nonstandard English, Cole describes dialect fiction as an attempt to control representations of the Other, even as it opened up space for contradictory meanings. For more on dialect, see Gavin Jones, *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Martin J. Favor, *Authentic Blackness: The Folk in the New Negro Renaissance* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999); Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993).
 21. Diana Fuss, *Identification Papers* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 116.
 22. In "A Father," a cherished photograph of the long-absent father precipitates the daughter's recognition of her American father. In that story, the daughter reads her father's body for signs of likeness. Onoto Watanna, "A Father" (1900), in *The Winnifred Eaton Digital Archive*, ed. Jean Lee Cole, Electronic Text Center, University of Virginia Library, <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/users/cole/>.
 23. Robyn Wiegman usefully warns that the perceptions (and perceptibility) of race are inextricable from historically situated power relations. Robyn Wiegman, *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995), 4.
 24. For more on the interdeterminations of race, class, and gender, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).
 25. Even the color of his gray eyes indicates his hazy morality and emphasizes the theme of racial ambiguity.
 26. Melanie Klein, "A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States" (1935), in *Love, Guilt and Reparation and Other Works, 1921–1945: The Writings of Melanie Klein* (New York: Free Press, 1975), 1:264.
 27. For more on African American fictions of race and family as they relate to slavery, see Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003), 203–229; Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century*

- America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Sidonie Smith, *Where I'm Bound: Patterns of Slavery and Freedom in Black American Autobiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
28. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960; repr., New York: Anchor Books, 1992), 413. Likewise focusing on Faulkner, John T. Irwin, in *Doubling and Incest/Repetition and Revenge: A Speculative Reading of Faulkner* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1975), reads Faulkner's recurring theme of incest and miscegenation as evidence that narrative itself is a compulsion to retell stories (9). Eric Sundquist's *Faulkner: The House Divided* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983) makes similar claims about Faulkner's doubling of incest and miscegenation in *Absalom, Absalom!* See also Werner Sollors, *Neither Black Nor White Yet Both: Thematic Explorations of Interracial Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 334.
 29. John Sayles's film *Lone Star* (1996) updates this trope by substituting (illegal) Mexican immigration for slavery.
 30. Hortense Spillers, "'The Permanent Obliquity of an In(pha)llibly Straight': In the Time of the Daughters and the Fathers," in *Changing Our Own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory, and Writing by Black Women*, ed. Cheryl A. Wall (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 128.
 31. Seduction is also present in African American slavery narratives, as in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861; repr., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), when "Dr. Flint" seeks "Linda Brent's" sexual consent. Thanks to Susan Fraiman for calling my attention to this important moment. The connection between incest, miscegenation, and coercion is far more common in tragic mulatta narratives, in which the light-skinned heroine's relative class privilege, yet tenuous position within racial taxonomies, exerts more powerful pressure than brute force; the half-caste romance shares this convention.
 32. Anne Anlin Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race: Psychoanalysis, Assimilation, and Hidden Grief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 10.
 33. Karen Shimikawa, *National Abjection* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 3.
 34. Michael Omi and Howard Winant coined the term "racial formation" to highlight how ideas about race change through history and in relation to contemporary political and social developments. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986).
 35. See, for example, Pauline Hopkins, *Of One Blood* (1902–1903), which highlights physical markers and psychological illness (melancholia, madness, hysteria) in mixed-race characters.
 36. "The Half Caste" was published in *Conkey's Home Journal* in November 1898 and reprinted in Moser and Rooney, *"A Half Caste" and Other Writings*. All subsequent page numbers refer to this latter edition and are indicated in the text.

37. This is a version of what Eric Lott refers to as the twin practices of “love and theft” upon which racial mimicry, as in the minstrel show, is based. Eric Lott, *Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).
38. Many thanks to Jill Rappoport for urging me to think through the significance of the story’s ending lines.