Book Proposal materials by Jolie Sheffer
Field of Study: American Studies, literary and cultural studies, Ethnic Studies

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Book Description:

In the United States, miscegenation is not merely a subject of literature and popular culture; it is the foundation of our contemporary imaginary community. The Romance of Race argues that a crucial feature of modern multiculturalism emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, when the interracial family developed as a mainstream symbol of American identity in literature and popular culture. The United States underwent tremendous transformations during the tumultuous period between 1880 and 1930: mass immigration, imperial expansion, the end of Reconstruction and the emergence of Jim Crow, World War I, and the suffrage movement. A generation of women writers and reformers—particularly women of color—entered into public debates about these issues by imagining a new national narrative based on the model of the nuclear family. In their works, interracial encounters are depicted in familial terms, usually as sexual liaisons between white men and racialized women that result in a mongrel nation replete with mulattos, half-castes, mestizos, and half-breeds. No metaphor more powerfully illustrates the bonds between white and black Americans (or “brown,” “yellow,” and “red” members of the nation) than the interracial family. In contrast to Walter Benn Michaels’ claim in Our America that modernist and nativist writers of the 1920s represent miscegenation and incest as mutually exclusive choices—integrationist exogamy or xenophobic endogamy—an earlier cohort of writers depict incest and miscegenation as inseparable conditions resulting from the long history of sexual exploitation of racialized women by white men. In the politically charged popular culture of the period, the U.S. is represented as being always already racially and culturally mixed, bound by common blood and the transgression of the cultural prohibitions of incest and miscegenation. By confronting (and conflating) these two sexual taboos, turn-of-the-century women writers created political allegories of kinship and eroticism. In their narratives, America’s racialized citizens—typically figured as feisty mixed-blood heroines or heroes—reveal their incestuous family ties in order to receive acknowledgement of their membership in the interracial family. The mixed-blood figure demands recognition as natural-born Americans, reconciliation with their white relatives, and redress for past discrimination. The Romance of Race demonstrates how the “melting pot myth” of a multicultural America took new shape in popular but peculiar national fantasies that emerged in this period.

Thus, in the era between the more familiar (and canonical) bookends of Mark Twain and William Faulkner, a generation of popular women writers/activists employed the trope of the interracial and incestuous family to highlight the institutional inequalities and ideological hypocrisies of American citizenship, and to gesture toward a more diverse and inclusive nation. Public figures such as Jane Addams, Winnifred Eaton (a.k.a. Onoto Watanna), Pauline Hopkins, María Cristina Mena, and Mourning Dove placed groups previously excluded from civic participation at the center of their fantasies of a new social order. They mythologized America as a place made productive and potent by the incorporation of these diverse peoples, while criticizing U.S. imperialist projects at home and abroad. Insisting that racial and ethnic diversity was inextricable from American identity, these extravagant and sometimes overwrought new
American origin stories gained mainstream appeal. Each chapter of The Romance of Race analyzes a different myth of multiracial familiality, building a composite portrait of the United States as a nation built on the blood and sweat (and not a few tears) of a multiracial citizenry. In their wide-ranging texts, these writers show the fantasies and familial structures that made immigrants and racial outsiders intimate members of American life and U.S. national identity.

Throughout the nineteenth century, women writers including Lydia Maria Child and Frances E. W. Harper aligned civic and domestic discourses by politicizing family formation. These political romances narratively “solved” the problems of a multiethnic citizenry with the interracial marriage of hero and heroine (see Doris Sommer’s Foundational Fictions [1991]). However, the texts that The Romance of Race considers transform this earlier approach. The miscegenation plots between 1880 and 1930 function to highlight the racial and familial ties that already bind the nation’s mixed race members. Rather than simply looking forward to a multiracial future through marriage, the texts I study highlight America’s multiracial past through the revelation of incest. The result is an affirmation of ethnic and racial minorities’ rightful place at the national family table, without demanding the mixed-race figure choose between either a) normative whiteness or b) politicized blackness (or another form of racial monism). As a result of these imaginative and affective strategies, the authors I study effectively moved the convention of the national family beyond the black-white binary to address a wider range of minority identities. Moreover, women writers of the era created radically new forms of political agency and minority representations. By showing how the interracial family emerged as a crucial trope, this book reveals deep structural continuities among works too often examined only within a single racial or ethnic literary tradition. Furthermore, by showing how the trope of the interracial family relied on the transgression of two social taboos (incest and miscegenation), I underscore the deep psychological level at which our national fantasies work. The trope of the national family highlights the dualistic nature of race in this nation. At once forbidden and (as a result) deeply erotic, the racial Other provokes both desire and fear, longing and loathing. Our ongoing obsession with (and particular fantasies about) race reveal a nation in a state of arrested development, unable as yet to reconcile the mixed-up, mixed-race world as it is with the binary order we’ve accepted since the Enlightenment. Shifting national discourse in significant ways, this familial imaginary is not only the basis of modern multiculturalism; it is the repressed heart of our culture’s racial reality.

Accordingly, the fictions I analyze are not set solely within the U.S., but also in Africa, Japan, and Mexico, revealing the global nature of racial identification as it has been worked out via economic, cultural, and political imperialism. Women writers of the period emphasized that the U.S. has not only transformed other nations and cultures, but it has been transformed by its engagements across North America and around the world. The result is an increasingly diverse, hybrid, and global model of American identity. Emphasizing continuities between slavery and Reconstruction, imperial expansion, and mass immigration and urbanization, I show how various minority constituencies in the U.S. had stakes in an emerging multicultural political mythology based in familial and fantasmatic structures. The Romance of Race thus addresses the racial and gendered, political and psychological dimensions of national identity. By showing the applicability and mobility of the trope of the national family, The Romance of Race provides an historical and theoretical account of the power and durability of the multicultural myth. Our ongoing obsession with race, blood, and family is nowhere more powerfully illustrated than in the figure of Barack Hussein Obama, the 44th President of the United States. Contrary to claims
that his election marked a new “post-racial” era in U.S. politics, Obama’s biography was a powerful political tool precisely because of its debt to a century-old model of the nation as an interracial and culturally hybrid family.

Current Scholarship:

This book extends the work of American Studies critics such as Lauren Berlant, Amy Kaplan, and Laura Wexler, who have shown how women’s literature and art reflected, but also contributed to, national policies and imperial expansion. By tracing the development of a counterdiscourse of deviant interracial domesticity from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, The Romance of Race provides a crucial link between studies of race and nation in the antebellum and Civil War eras, and those focused on the 1920s and modernism by critics like Michael Rogin and Walter Benn Michaels. The Romance of Race articulates the shifting discourse of race and ethnicity at an important, but frequently overlooked, historical moment, in order to offer a genealogy of twentieth-century U.S. multiculturalism.

While the United States’ demographic changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries created a multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural citizenry, most literary criticism of these eras has emphasized separate racial histories and literary traditions. Accordingly, scholars such as Susan Gillman, Elise Lemire, Sidonie Smith, and Claudia Tate have developed a rich body of scholarship on domesticity, miscegenation, and incest in nineteenth-century African American literature. Likewise, in Asian American Studies, critics such as Leslie Bow, Susan Koshy, and Lisa Lowe have focused on the intersection of race, sexuality, and citizenship in literary and popular culture. Such approaches tend to isolate each racial group, obscuring the common ideological and imaginative ground between them. Citizenship (in both its legal and social dimensions) has always been a privilege granted to and denied by a complex matrix of interethnic relations, rivalries, and anxieties. The Romance of Race’s comparative focus highlights common patterns among diverse works; this approach places it in line with foundational studies such as Werner Sollors’s Beyond Ethnicity (1986) and Elizabeth Ammons’ Conflicting Stories (1992), while providing a new account of a particularly powerful narrative of multicultural America.

Finally, with its emphasis on the familial and libidinal shape of turn-of-the-century texts, The Romance of Race uncovers the psychological structures that are essential to understanding American conceptions of race, ethnicity, and gender. In this way, my book carries forward the work of Diana Fuss, David Eng, and Anne Cheng, who reveal that racial identity is formed through traumatic loss and the denial of minority subjectivity. Yet my book also highlights the historic and political dimensions of the familial imaginary by arguing that contemporary psychoanalytic concepts of identification, misrecognition, and mourning were being “worked out” in fantasies of the nation as a mixed-race family. I argue that the writers I study redraw the family romance in racialized terms for profoundly political purposes.

Audience:
The book should have wide scholarly appeal, as it contributes to American Studies, literary and cultural studies, ethnic studies, gender and sexuality studies, psychoanalysis, and critical race theory. Offering fresh insights and provocative readings of a range of literary texts and material culture, the book illuminates the historical context and political content of American literature and popular culture. The book is written in an accessible and engaging style that is appropriate for graduate students and advanced undergraduates. With its focus on the turn-of-the-century period, *The Romance of Race* could easily function as a capstone to an upper-division nineteenth-century American literature course or an introduction to multiculturalism in the twentieth century.

Chapter Descriptions:

*The Romance of Race* analyzes the racial, gendered, and ethnic constitution of the nation through narratives obsessed with taboos of miscegenation and incest. The close readings at the center of each chapter highlight the centrality and complexity of the interracial encounter in popular culture, arguing that the origins of contemporary multiculturalism lie in this fertile imaginative period. The book is organized thematically, tracing several identity-based strains in the national imaginary of race and reproduction.

As the nation’s racial demographics changed to include immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, contract laborers from China, Mexicans, and mixed-race Filipinos, the U.S. experienced a profound identity crisis over who was, or could be, a representative American. Chapter one outlines the historical context and theoretical stakes of the project. I begin by showing how the idea of the interracial love story as an allegory of national identity moved beyond the black/white divide to address the transformations occasioned by immigration and territorial acquisitions. In popular cultural productions, women writers of color, in particular, responded to popular anxieties about miscegenation with new, more inclusive, models for national identity predicated on the assumption that America is always already miscegenated. The familial imaginary in literature and popular culture represents the cultural transgression of miscegenation as inextricably linked to the taboo of incest, for the latter occurs as a result of generations of denial of the former. Miscegenation and incest are mutually constitutive, for both are transgressions of cultural expectations regarding exogamy and endogamy in the creation of community. By analyzing state anti-miscegenation laws and citizenship legislation in conjunction with the taboo against incest as it functions in psychoanalysis (the Oedipus Complex) and anthropological theories of culture, I link the racial/familial content of the social imaginary to its structural basis in ideas of kinship and taboo. In short, this chapter shows how fictions of the nation as family express the fantasmatic nature of sexual-cum-racial prohibition.

Chapter two, “The Multiethnic Family of (Wo)Man,” looks at the Hull-House Labor Museum (1900-1938) created by the leading Progressive-era social reformer Jane Addams. The Labor Museum marks the shift when “ethnic” becomes synonymous with assimilable, while race, by contrast, becomes the designation for those deemed too different—culturally, phenotypically, even religiously—to be recognized as part of the national family. The museum featured handmade textiles and a live display of immigrant women at work. In this context, women’s domestic labor symbolized cultural citizenship and the indispensability of the immigrant to contemporary urban life. I argue that by putting these women at the center of American labor, the
museum created an alternative national family tree that redefined longstanding Family of Man hierarchies in more ethnically diverse and feminine terms. This chapter further argues that the museum’s exclusion of African American, Asian American, Hispanic, and Native American women functioned to consolidate racial divisions and to further distinguish ethnicity from race. Subsequent chapters of *The Romance of Race* focus on authors who address these identities, which posed the most profound challenges to Addams’ model of the national family.

The next chapter, “Mulattos, Mysticism, and Marriage: African American Identity and Psychic Integration” focuses on a new figuration of the mulatto as model of miscegenated America in Pauline Hopkins’ serialized novel *Of One Blood* (1902-3). Hopkins, a highly influential African American writer, editor, and activist in the period, imagines the possibility of a new national identity founded on racial and psychic integration. Hopkins psychologizes U.S. history and politics, representing the mutual dependence of white and black at two levels: the family and the psyche. Just as incest indicates the expression of repressed (and inappropriately directed) desire, psychological illness (melancholia) and parapsychological phenomena (mesmerism, animal magnetism, ESP, and automatic writing) erupt in the novel as expressions of the nation’s racial schizophrenia. Hopkins’ novel asserts that these expressions of the collective unconscious will continue until the dominant race recognizes its inviolable blood ties to its black brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters. Drawing on familiar slavery narratives as well as contemporary psychoanalytic concepts, Hopkins’ mulatto is a future-oriented figure embodying the unification of black and white, Africa and America, mysticism and empiricism, the id and the ego. I argue that in *Of One Blood*, the revelation of generations of miscegenation and incest thus signifies the possibility of a binary world order coming together to form both a healthier nation and a kind of cosmic consciousness.

The fourth chapter, “Half-Caste Family Romances: Divergent Paths of Asian American Identity,” contrasts father-daughter and brother-sister romance in the wildly popular Orientalist fiction of the Anglo-Chinese-Canadian-American writer Onoto Watanna (the faux-Japanese pen name of Winnifred Eaton). In several short stories and novels published between 1899 and 1904, Eaton depicts lecherous (white) American fathers lusting after their mixed-blood offspring, thereby revealing the white man’s longing for reconciliation with (and recognition of) his racialized offspring. Whereas father-daughter incest indicates inequitable power relations, sibling eroticism in Eaton’s fiction represents an egalitarian solution offering social recognition for shared blood and culture. In addition to its revision of familial dynamics, this chapter reveals the global relevance of the American national family, as Eaton’s heroines are “half-castes”—daughters of American businessmen and Japanese women—whose racial ambiguity marginalizes them in both Japan and America. I argue that Eaton deploys incest in these popular romances in order to highlight the economic and social inequalities occasioned by American economic imperialism, as well as to offer an alternative model of race relations. Through the revelation and recognition of mixed blood and culture, Eaton imagines new, and surprising, formations of inclusion.

Chapter five, “Mestizos in Our ‘Sister Republic’: Familial Dramas in Mexican America,” highlights the communicability and intertextuality of the discourses of miscegenation, cross-class romance, and revolutionary politics as they traverse national borders. In Maria Cristina Mena’s short stories, written in English and published in the U.S. throughout 1914 in the popular magazine *Century*, the melting pot imaginary of turn-of-the-century U.S. culture finds its double
in the mestizo, symbol of a new multiracial Mexican nationalism in the wake of the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Mena’s stories depict the U.S. and Mexico as multiethnic mirrors for each other; her mestizo, like Onoto Watanna’s half-caste and Pauline Hopkins tragic mulatto, is a member of an increasingly multiracial and multicultural national family. In Mena’s fiction, Mexico has been freed from Spanish colonialism but is being transformed anew by U.S. imperialism and capitalism. I argue that Mena personifies (and domesticates) the political sphere in her stories featuring domineering Mexican Catholic mothers, invalid sons, and the sons’ forbidden objects of desire: women of other races, classes, and/or nationalities. In her short stories, the modern Mexican(-American) man regains his virility, potency, and political authority by mixing blood with the mestiza and by symbolically killing his castrating Catholic mother, whose incestuous love threatens his (and his nation’s) health. In Mena’s fiction, national debates are transformed into familial and psychological dramas of sex and death.

Chapter six looks at the case of the half-breed in Mourning Dove’s novel *Cogewea* (1927). Like the mulatto, the half-caste, and the mestizo, the half-breed is caught between two worlds, and interracial romance represents both historical inequalities and the possibilities for future harmony. Yet *Cogewea*’s literary formula is complicated by the overwhelming presence of images of the Vanishing Indian. Such cultural representations, combined with assimilationist and genocidal governmental practices such as the Dawes Act (1887), imagined Native American identity as permanently historical and atavistic, of having no future in modern America. This chapter investigates Mourning Dove’s unique adaptation (even reinvention) of the multicultural trope of the nation-as-family in order to address the particular problems surrounding Native American representation in the transitional era of the Indian Citizenship Act and the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act (both 1924).

The Romance of Race concludes by showing how these familial models of miscegenated identity remain central to the national imaginary in the United States at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries. In works as wide-ranging as Ruth Ozeki’s comic novel *My Year of Meats* (1999) to Toni Morrison’s spare *A Mercy* (2008), contemporary American artists continue to explore the origins and transformations of the nation through depictions of the nation as a multiracial family. John Sayles’ *Lone Star* (1996) goes further, returning to the traditions of early twentieth-century romance. He depicts a multiracial America, shaped by generations of cultural and reproductive exchanges among Anglo-American, Mexican, African American, and Native American peoples. The incestuous romance between half-siblings Sam Deeds and Pilar Cruz marks a belated recognition of the long history of conquest, inequality, and mutual dependency in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands of Texas. More than a hundred years after Addams, Hopkins, Eaton, Mena, and Mourning Dove, Sayles reveals the continuing relevance and resonance of the trope of the nation as family. Once again, future reproduction is less important than the revelation of shared blood and culture, signifying a new order of equality and belonging. I then turn to Barack Obama’s “race speech” in Pennsylvania to highlight the ongoing political potency of the interracial family and its model of cultural hybridity, while also problematizing the continuing emphasis on the familial model of national identity, particularly as it functions within the neoliberal state.
Blood and the Body Politic: America’s Family Romance, 1880-1920

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Book Description:

Blood and the Body Politic argues that a crucial feature of modern multiculturalism emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, when the interracial family developed as a mainstream cultural symbol for national identity. American self-conception reached a crisis during the tumultuous period between 1880 and 1920. Mass immigration, imperial expansion, the end of Reconstruction, and the beginning of the suffrage movement transformed the body politic. Progressive-Era writers and reformers responded with a new national imaginary based on the family and its libidinal structures. These writer-activists put race, ethnicity, and immigration at the center of American identity by representing the nation as a mixed-raced family, and making that mixed-race family the precondition of modern American life and labor. Their diverse and daring works confronted miscegenation and incest taboos to create political allegories of familial desire in which racialized citizens demand recognition, reconciliation, and redress. Blood and the Body Politic argues that the “immigration myth” took new shape in the popular but peculiar national fantasies that emerged at the turn of the century. In the United States, the interracial family is not merely a subject of literature and popular culture; it is the foundation on which an imagined community is built.

A new generation of writers placed groups previously excluded from civic participation at the center of a fantasied social order. They mythologized America as a place made productive and potent by the incorporation of these diverse peoples. In novels and short stories, the interracial encounter was mythologized as a sexual liaison between an Anglo-American man and a racialized woman, resulting in a mongrel nation replete with mulattos, half-castes, mestizos, and half-breeds. Positing racial and ethnic difference as essential to and inextricable from American life and identity, these extravagant and sometimes overwrought new American origin stories gained mainstream appeal. Each chapter of Blood and the Body Politic analyzes one of these multiracial myths. Writers as diverse as Jane Addams, Winnifred Eaton (Onoto Watanna), Pauline Hopkins, and María Cristina Mena imagined the United States as a nation built on the blood and sweat (and not a few tears) of an multiracial citizenry. In their wide-ranging texts, they show the fantasies and familial structures that make immigrants and racial outsiders intimate members of American life and U.S. national identity.

Incorporation, assimilation, and reproduction were key concerns in national discourse at the turn-of-the-century, hotly debated from Atlantic to Pacific, and in relation to Hawai‘i, the Philippines, and the Caribbean. Women writers in particular were invested in using the trope of the family to shape their political agendas, creating a powerful alignment of civic and domestic discourses. Nineteenth-century abolitionists and twentieth-century eugenicists used domestic models to stress reproductive pollution and purity, showing families’ suffering as a result of miscegenation. While such literature enforced racial boundaries within the nation’s families, a new breed of ethnic and reformist writer-activists shifted the trope by depicting the nation itself as a vital, racially hybrid family. The domestic fiction of women writers thus took on new scope in these interracial fantasies. In order to highlight the broad sweep and shared logic of various creative
responses to the political landscape, I place settlement house reform literature alongside texts written by and about Asian American, African American, and Mexican American women. By showing the interracial family as a crucial trope in the national discourse, this book reveals deep structural continuities among works too often examined only within a single racial or ethnic literary tradition. This comparative approach makes evident the familial and fantasmatic structures on which these new multicultural models are based, highlighting their correspondence to psychoanalytic concepts of identification, the Oedipus complex, castration anxiety, and melancholia. This project thus brings psychoanalytic theory to bear on the racial and gendered dimensions of national identity in order to mark a profound shift in the cultural imaginary of the United States.

Current Scholarship:

In its focus on national narratives of race, gender, and citizenship, this book extends the work of American Studies critics such as Lauren Berlant, Amy Kaplan, and Laura Wexler, who have addressed the role of domesticity and women’s literature in shaping and reflecting national policies. However, the majority of scholarship in this field continues to focus overwhelmingly on the culture of sentiment in the nineteenth century, emphasizing slavery, Reconstruction, and imperial expansion in American culture, over mass immigration and urbanization. Moreover, existing work tends to neglect the dramatic ways that minority writers themselves responded in popular media. Critical work which does focus on minority experience tends to center on a single racial or ethnic group, rather than addressing the political imaginary shared by these various constituencies.

Thus, a rich body of scholarship has devoted itself to domesticity, miscegenation, and incest in nineteenth-century African American literature (Susan Gillman, Elise Lemire, Sidonie Smith, Claudia Tate), while in Asian American Studies, critics have focused on the intersection of race, sexuality, and citizenship (Leslie Bow, David Eng, Susan Koshy, Lisa Lowe). While important, such approaches tend to isolate each group, obscuring their common ground within national discourses on American identity. Citizenship has always been a privilege granted to and denied by a complex matrix of interethnic relations, rivalries, and anxieties. Blood and the Body Politic’s comparative focus highlights the common patterns among diverse works, placing it in line with foundational work on multiethnic literature by Werner Sollors and Elizabeth Ammons. By emphasizing the familial and libidinal shape of these texts, my book carries forward the groundbreaking work of Diana Fuss and Anne Cheng, who reveal that racial identity is formed through traumatic loss and the denial of minority subjectivity. My book asks how identification, misrecognition, and mourning work for ethnic subjects whose relationship to the color line varied dramatically. In each chapter, I focus on the libidinal structures that are essential to understanding the dynamic interplay of race and psychology. The writers I study redraw the relational lines of the family romance in racialized terms.

National identity was codified in citizenship laws and court cases but also negotiated and debated in popular literary representations. My book argues that in response to institutionalized differences in treatment between racial and ethnic groups, progressive writers and reformers employed the rhetoric of the family to highlight the inequalities and hypocrisies of American citizenship, while also conjuring visions of a more welcoming and inclusive America.
Audience:

The book should have wide scholarly appeal, as it contributes to American Studies, ethnic studies, gender and sexuality studies, and critical theory. Offering fresh insights and provocative readings of a range of literary and popular texts, the book uses theory in a clear and engaging way. The book is written in an accessible style that is also appropriate for graduate and advanced undergraduates.

Chapter Descriptions:

Blood and the Body Politic analyzes the racial, gendered, and ethnic constitution of the nation through narratives obsessed with taboos of miscegenation and incest. The close readings at the center of each chapter highlight the complexity of the interracial encounter. These texts take on messy social problems, attempting to “solve them” through fantasies of the nation as an inseparable interracial family. The book is organized thematically, tracing several identity-based strains in the national imaginary about race and reproduction.

Chapter one, “Ethnic America on Display: Rewriting the National Family Tree” looks at the Hull-House Labor Museum (1900-1938), created by Jane Addams. The museum featured handmade textiles and a live display of ethnic women at work. In this context, women’s manual labor symbolized cultural citizenship and the indispensability of the immigrant to contemporary urban life. By putting these women at the center of American life and labor, the museum created an alternative national family tree that redefined Family of Man hierarchies in more ethnically diverse terms. This chapter further argues that the museum’s exclusion of African American, Asian American, Mexican American, and Native American women functioned to consolidate existing racial divisions and to further distinguish ethnicity from race. The Labor Museum marks the shift when “ethnic” becomes synonymous with assimilable, while race, by contrast, becomes the designation for those deemed too different—culturally, phenotypically, even religiously—to be recognized as part of the national family. The remaining chapters take up those identities that posed profound challenges to the American national family for Addams and other reformers. Through the themes of miscegenation and incest, these chapters highlight the proto-multiculturalism created by trope of the interracial American family.

Chapter two, “Melancholic Mulattoes and Mystical Marriages” focuses on the oedipal conflicts and melancholic relations between white and black in Pauline Hopkins’ novel Of One Blood (1902-3). Hopkins expands and redefines the tragic mulatto trope in Of One Blood, depicting miscegenation and incest as inevitable, intertwined consequences of generations of African American subjugation. Of One Blood represents the mutual dependence of white and black in terms of the human psyche. Hopkins’ novel imagines that supernatural phenomena (mesmerism, animal magnetism, ESP, and automatic writing) will continually erupt until the dominant race recognizes its inviolable blood ties to its black brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters. The mulatto is a figure for a new national identity, a marriage of black and white, Africa and America, mysticism and empiricism, the id and the ego. Miscegenation reflects a binary world order coming together to form a kind of cosmic consciousness.
Chapter three, “The Half-Caste and the Family Romance,” addresses the role of U.S. economic imperialism in Japan, through the plight of the melancholic, “half-caste” daughters of American businessmen and Japanese women. This chapter deals with the Orientalist fiction of Onoto Watanna (Winnifred Eaton), which highlights the marginal status of the half-caste children of those liaisons, in both Japan and America. In her popular romances, she employs Oedipal dramas of incestuous desire to highlight the economic and social inequalities resulting from American commercial expansion. In contrast to her negative depictions of lecherous American fathers, sibling eroticism emerges as an egalitarian solution offering social recognition for shared blood and culture. Eaton imagines new formations of inclusion through the revelation and recognition of mixed, shared blood, while also expanding the role of a common national culture to shape individual, as well as national, identity.

Chapter four, “The Mestizo/a and the Castrating Mother in Mexico” focuses on shifting forms of family, maternity, and mixed-race identity in the wake of U.S. expansion and the Mexican Revolution. María Cristina Mena’s stories, written in English and published in Century magazine in 1914, depict a Mexico increasingly influenced by U.S. imperialism, and in need of liberation from the hierarchies of feudalism and Catholicism. Mena’s fiction set in Revolutionary-Era Mexico features domineering Mexican Catholic mothers whose aristocratic and religious power threaten to render their sons hysterical, emasculated invalids. The cure for is miscegenation, cross-class romance, and revolutionary politics. Mena’s stories depict mestizo identity as a political allegory of democratization in Mexico. Only by mixing blood and by the death of the castrating Catholic mother will the Mexican man regain his virility, authority and revolutionary potential.

I conclude by showing how these familial models of miscegenated identity remain central to the national imaginary in the United States. John Sayles’ Lone Star features incest as a consequence of the history of conquest in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands of Texas. The film shows a multiracial America, shaped by Anglo-American, Mexican, African American, and Native American cultures. The incestuous romance between Sam Deeds and Pilar Cruz marks a belated recognition of the racial and ethnic complexity of the American family tree.

State of Completion/Length of Manuscript

I have completed chapters ____________....