

Looking Backward Toward Progress: Re-evaluating Whiteness through Puritan Texts

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....ii

I. INTRODUCTION TO WHITENESS THEORY.....1

II. PURITANS.....29

III. THE PURITAN LEGACY IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA: THE OUTSIDER-
WITHIN PERSPECTIVE AND MARYSE CONDÉ'S *I TITUBA, BLACK WITCH OF
SALEM*.....52

IV. THE PURITAN LEGACY IN *A MERCY*.....74

V. CONCLUSION OF MY PROJECT.....87

BIBLIOGRAPHY.....89

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO WHITENESS THEORY

This thesis takes a historical approach to understand how Puritans used their whiteness to legitimize their rule in America. I link the Puritans' ideological construction of whiteness to contemporary theoretical ideas about whiteness through critical works such as Richard Dyer's *White* (1997) and Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* (1992). These theoretical frames provide a lens to view how Puritans' ideas of racialized legitimation still exist in modern American society and ideology. My project's ambitious goal is to expose the inconsistencies of American ideology, and to show how within American history, racialized legitimation formed the mechanics of our national economy. By doing so, I hope to uncover the racial and social injustices that American society has conveniently ignored. If Americans continue to ignore the habits that privilege whiteness, then these habits will continue to replicate themselves in the social, political, and economic spheres.

Even I, an African American woman living in the 21st century, have experienced the malicious effects of white privilege. I've worked for a veterinarian in Eldorado, Arkansas during the summer after my high school graduation who disbelieved I was a Valedictorian of my class because "most black girls don't aspire to that." (I even had that employer call my high school to confirm if I indeed was the Valedictorian.) After he found out that I went to a mostly black high school, he told me that it makes more sense that I would be the Valedictorian. In his eyes, that prestigious title's value was lessened because of the demographic make-up of my high school. On another day, he even asked me why there is a Black Entertainment Television program. He then ventured to say, that

white people should have a White Entertainment Television. If this hasn't caused people to cringe, just wait. That same veterinarian told me that he believed black athletes had an unfair advantage due to "something in their legs" that caused them to run faster than white athletes. All I could think about was how this man unthinkably affirmed his social and racial privilege. I was young and naïve about many of the racial remarks he made towards me, but now that I'm older, I have a chance to reflect on them. I think about the external influences that encouraged that veterinarian to perceive people as racialized beings rather than as humans. It often struck me how odd it seemed that he would think himself "normal" and anyone or thing outside of that narrow vision "othered." Why did he illogically think that everything he said or did was the correct way? What gave him the privilege to denounce me because of my race? And, if he believed this, how many other veterinarians, doctors, or people in power believed this? How has this legacy of privilege and racialized perception dominated American thought and ideology?

Since then, I've experienced more recent racial comments working at a grocery store. During the summer of 2013, I worked at an upscale grocery store named Market Street. This store is located in the wealthier part of Lubbock, TX on the south side of the city. I was the only black cashier and dealt with issues that many of my white counterparts did not experience. For instance, I would get customers who would walk through my line and ask me if my hair was actually mine. I would have my managers ask me if my hair was mine and even place their hands in my hair without my permission. In a way, this thesis is an attempt to expose these subconscious acts of white privilege, so that people can understand how their comments or actions connect to to a long history of racial injustice in America. I honestly don't believe that my co-workers at Market Street

thought they were being offensive when they described the natural texture of my hair as “wild” and “going against the dress-code” because they have been blinded to their own ways of normalizing themselves. My managers don’t see how groping my hair without my permission comes from a long tradition of black women never owning their own bodies, but instead, their bodies being at the disposal of white people. Richard Dyer and Toni Morrison express how one of the ways to illuminate issues of racial oppression is to open a discourse about conscious and subconscious racial discrimination and that is what this thesis attempts to do.

Before going further, I’d like to introduce the goal of Whiteness Studies. The study of whiteness according to Dr. Gregory Jay, “attempts to trace the economic and political history behind the invention of ‘whiteness,’ to challenge the privileges given to so-called ‘whites,’ and to analyze the cultural practices (in art, music, literature, and popular media) that create and perpetuate the fiction of ‘whiteness’” (“Introduction to Whiteness Studies”). However, David Goldberg, director of the School of Justice at Arizona State University, traces its origins to the 1980s when race studies were on the rise. (Rodriguez). Much debate arises about its actual origins, yet Dyer’s analysis of whiteness and media sheds new light on how white people have had the power to construct images of themselves in Western culture to maintain power for people who are white. Dyer also points out how white people have had power to define others. He argues that sight is a privileged sense in Western culture and media which “[has] become central and authoritative means of knowledge, thought, and feeling” (xiii). Dyer explicitly states in his introduction of *White* that the focus of his book is on representation, not on interviews, how others perceive white people, or how white people feel about themselves

(xiii). These representations of white people have survived and can be traced as far back as the Seventeenth Century when Puritans constructed their own images in order to distinguish their “superior” cultural characteristics from non-white’s cultural characteristics.

Dyer proclaims in his first chapter that it is imperative for readers to analyze white racial imagery because there is something at stake in continuing to ignore it (1). Dyer’s sentiment about racial representation in media echoes my own sentiment about the perpetuation of habits that privilege whiteness. Dyer warns readers that “as long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm” (1). Theodore (Ted) W. Allen, concurs in his work *The Invention of the White Race*. Though Allen uses a Marxist lens to describe how Puritans used whiteness in the social and economic spheres of the colonies in the Seventeenth Century, his thoughts about the beginnings of white privilege complement Dyer’s. Both scholars believe that the identity of whiteness is as racialized as is non-white, yet because of imperialism and the perpetuation of “white habits” as the norm, people who claim to be white deem themselves the human norm. Being deemed as the human norm requires a detachment from the “other.” In a sense, whiteness receives its self-definition from comparing itself against the “other.” In the following paragraph, Dyer talks about whiteness as absence and shows that through absence, whiteness gains power.

The matter of whiteness as absence is an issue that both Dyer and Morrison take up in their works; however, Dyer focuses his conversation about absence on its portrayal through media. Dyer gives an example of a comedian who “races” a black man in his

joke, but never once races the other characters. This is an example of how whiteness functions as absence. The two characters who do not receive a race attached to their personas are seen as the norm. Reducing the black character's identity to his race raises subconscious beliefs about his race. Why is it significant that the audience knows that one of the characters is African American, Native American or Chinese? It is because "racial otherness" has always had certain stigmas attached to it, whereas whiteness has enjoyed the privilege of not being raced or stigmatized. Dyer explains that "this assumption that white people are just people, which is not far off saying that whites are people whereas other colours are something else, is endemic to white culture" (2). Having this worldview shapes the way white people think, and leads to their thinking that their worldviews are the best for the human race. When a non-white challenges this worldview and exposes people's whiteness, then white people become offended because looking at difference "subverts the liberal belief in a universal subjectivity (we are all just people) that they think will make racism disappear" (Dyer 2).

Toni Morrison argues that the Africanist character in literary works has always served as surrogate and enabler for white writers, and in effect has become the object to which white writers define their identity. For instance, Morrison argues that the "major characteristics of our national literature such as individualism, masculinity, social engagement versus historical isolation are responses to a dark, abiding Africanist presence" (5). She explains that much of American Literature has been the preserve of white male views, genius, and power, but they are not without relationship to the overwhelming presence of black people in the United States (5). Morrison focuses on American writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain, Herman Melville, and Nathaniel

Hawthorne as examples of writers who use black characters as vehicles “for regulating love and imagination as defenses against the psychic costs of guilt and despair” (52). For example, in her chapter “Romancing the Shadow,” she explains how Jim’s retaining the “nigger” nomenclature in *Huckleberry Finn* is necessary because the identity helps Huck know who and what he himself is—he is free and privileged, even as a non-middle class boy. Morrison probes deeper in her analysis and shows that Huck cannot morally mature at the end of the novel because of the novel’s confines (56). For Jim to be free at the end of the book would be to abandon Twain’s whole premise because neither Huck nor Twain can imagine Jim freed. If Jim were free, then Huck would not know what it meant to be free. A free Africanist character presence would be meaningless without the specter of enslavement (Morrison 56). Morrison also argues that if Jim were a white man, the humiliation that Huck and Tom subject him to would be unheard of because it “would not have been possible for two children to play so painfully with the life of a white man (57). Through this example, Morrison reiterates the “parasitical nature of white freedom” or the implicit meaning, that without blackness, whiteness could not exist.

Morrison’s definition of American Africanism provides new outlooks on the constructions of blackness, whose origins can be traced to seventeenth-century America. In “Black Matters,” Morrison explains that she explores ways in which America constructed an Africanist presence and how writers use this fabricated presence in their imaginations (6). African people “have come to signify an entire range of views, assumptions, readings and misreading that accompany Eurocentric learning” (Morrison 7). In the Seventeenth Century, Puritans distinguish themselves from the “other” by labeling non-whites with titles such as “slave,” “devil worshiper,” and “heathen.” More

specifically, Puritans associated people of African descent with the devil because of their dark skin. The idea that blacks were descendents of the devil dates as far back as Johan Boemus in 1521 (Dyer 22). He proposed that all civilized humans were descended from Ham, Shem, and Japeth, who were the sons of Noah, but those who were from Ham degenerated into blackness (Dyer 22). Blackness acquired a connotation which is perpetuated today. This connects to Morrison's idea of the imagined Africanist presence, because whites imposed their labels onto people who were not like them—namely non-whites— so that they could identify themselves against what they were not. Morrison further explains that in matters concerning race, race remains silenced and therefore ignored and is understood to be a graceful and even liberal gesture (9-10). Dismissing race from public discourse creates a façade that race isn't a problem in current day America. By the same token, enforcing an invisibility through silence on race makes the black body seem as if it is contributing to “shadowless particip[ant] in the dominant cultural body” (10). While Morrison explains that silencing blackness creates a shield of invisibility on matters concerning race, Dyer explains that whiteness gains power from its invisibility.

The absence or invisibility of whiteness as a race is key to understanding how white people remain in power. Dyer shows this when he explains that white people talk about white people all the time, but they substitute white in terms of “people” in general. Looking at the American literary canon is one example. For centuries, American Literature has acclaimed the works of white authors, claiming them to be great American authors. With the title of “American” describing the white authors, it is easy to see how children, scholars, and students conflate the two. However, there is not enough room for

African American, Asian American, or Latino/a, authors to share the title of great American authors, so they become raced and share a small portion of the canon. Many whiteness studies scholars such as Timothy Barnett, Shannon Sullivan, and Theodore Allen argue that whiteness gains its power by hiding from discourses of race. As white cultural codes become entrenched in the order of society, they become normalized, objective, and untouchable (Barnett 12). This, Allen argues, has taken place since slavery was racialized in the latter half of the Seventeenth Century after Bacon's Rebellion (Allen).

Allen's *The Invention of the White Race* explains how Bacon's Rebellion created the moment in history when subjectivity became raced. Bacon's Rebellion in 1676 and 1677 in Virginia started out as an Indian war, but became a revolt of the bond laborers¹ (Straightupstellao). Fifteen years before the revolt, the small elites who ruled in Virginia had a difficult time in creating social discipline among the freemen who didn't own much property (Allen 240). Allen explains, "Fewer than four hundred men...owners of an average of 4,200 acres of land each" comprised the small elite who ruled Virginia (163). However, "as the ranks of propertyless former bond-laborers increased, in 1670, the General Assembly deliberately excluded these latter from the right to vote" (Allen 163). This environment fostered a rebellious climate where free middle rank tobacco farmers felt as though they were entitled to as much land as their elite counterparts. This

¹ Theodore Allen explains that many unfair advantages were granted to land owning elites which disadvantaged the middle rank tobacco farmers and some bond laborers. "Bacon's rebellion began in 1676 not as a new bond-labor plot for flight or rebellion, nor as a mutiny of poor disfranchised freemen sinking hopelessly into debt and the regressive system of taxes by the poll, but as a dispute within the ranks of the colony elite over 'Indian policy'" (206). Nathaniel Bacon, who was appointed by Governor William Berkeley in March 1675 was chosen by the "'frontier' country planters the following April to lead their aggressive anti-Indian cause" (206).

environment, coupled with masses of kidnapped Africans added to the ranks of the tobacco farmers, who were already at the bottom of the social ladder, created dissonance which the elite lacked the “capacity to command” (Allen 172).

During the mid to late Seventeenth Century, there was unstable social control in Virginia and Bacon’s rebellion ushered a new social system for control. Half the population in Virginia was comprised of bond laborers who were disgruntled about the lack of land they owned (“Summary”). Because most of the European bond laborers did not have much hope of social mobility, the elites had to come up with a plan to maintain social order while maintaining their elite statuses. The poor bond laborers’ resentment towards their hopeless social mobility was “manipulated in such a way as to ‘set them at distance’ from the bond-laborers who had no hope of freedom” (“Summary” 106). Allen continues:

A new social status was to be contrived that would be a birthright of not only Anglos, but of every Euro-American, a "white" identity designed not only to set them "at a distance" from the African-American bond-laborers, but at the same time to enlist European-Americans of every class as active, or at least passive, supporters of capitalist agriculture based on chattel bond-labor. (“Summary” 107)

This social engineering contributed to many long established common law rights being transformed into laws that entailed white privileges to whites (“Summary” 107). These rights included the right to marry, own guns, and the presumption of liberty. The elites wanted to feed into the minds of white bond laborers that they too could gain social mobility if they advocated for “white labor free from black competition” (Rosental 71).

Nathaniel Bacon led this revolt, but it included European Americans and African Americans from different social backgrounds². Some of the rebels were poor farmers without land who were revolting against the elite and demanding more land from Governor Berkely. Allen argues that this particular incident is significant in history because it featured African Americans and European Americans joining together to rebel against their oppressors. Allen then argues that the white race has to be monolithic in order to survive. If it is split, like it was during Bacon's Rebellion, then there can be no power within one group of people. Therefore, Allen contends that the elites of the Virginia Bay colony were faced with a mass of dissatisfied, armed poor people who were demanding freedom and more land. The elites decided to appease the white poor farmers by enlisting all white Europeans in control and this created a system of racial oppression³. Because of the need for capital accumulation, Anglo America switched from class oppression to racial oppression as a system for social control. Allen explains, "'race' consciousness superseded class-consciousness that the continental plantation bourgeoisie was able to achieve and maintain the degree of social control necessary for proceeding with capital accumulation on the basis of chattel bond labor" (240). Bacon's Rebellion posed the question of who should rule and created a critical moment of social struggle. The answer to the question, Allen explains, "would be contrived over the next several decades and would not only determine the status of African-Americans but would install

² Allen maintains that the majority of the fifteen thousand rebels were bond-laborers. Six thousand were European Americans and two thousand were African Americans (211).

³ The plantation bourgeoisie favored perpetual bondage labor because it was a savvy capitalistic business move that kept down the labor costs in order to promote economic growth and stability to make Anglo-America competitive (Allen 241). In order to maintain social control, the elite had to appease the laboring class by excluding Africans from the ruling class.

the monorail of Anglo-American historical development, white supremacy”⁴(178). Thus, the white race was a therefore a political creation because the “plantation bourgeoisie favored the imposition of perpetual bondage on the plantation” because it kept “down inflationary labor costs in order to promote economic growth and to make Anglo-America competitive” (Allen 241). The need to sustain the economy and attain capital resulted in a system of social order that privileged whites in Virginia and disenfranchised people of color.

When European settlers came to America, they weren't white— they were Dutch, Scottish, and English. Given more historical evidence, Cheryl Harris explains the racialization of subjectivity:

By the 1660s, the especially degraded status of Blacks as chattel slaves was recognized by law.⁵ Between 1680 and 1682, the first slave codes appeared, codifying the extreme deprivations of liberty already existing in social practice. Many laws parceled out differential treatment based on racial categories: Blacks were not permitted to travel without permits, to own property, to assemble publicly, or to own weapons; nor were they to be educated. Racial identity was further merged with stratified social and legal status: "Black" racial identity marked who was subject to enslavement; "white" racial identity marked who was "free" or, at minimum, not a slave. The ideological and rhetorical move from "slave" and "free" to "Black" and "white" as polar constructs marked an important step in the social construction of race. (1718)

Harris cites legislative bills from 1690 to develop this narrative. Also, her research shows the gradual progression of people identifying by their race instead of their ethnicity. Clearly, Allen and Harris's discussions about the institutionalism of racialized

⁴ In May 1723, an act entitled “An Act directing the trial of Slaves, committing capital crimes; and for the more effectual punishing conspiracies and insurrections of them; and for the better government of Negroes, Mulattos, and Indians, bond or free” declared that “no free negro, mulatto, or Indian whatsoever, shall have any vote at the election of burgesses, or any other election whatsoever” (Allen 241).

⁵ Harris's note indicates “in 1661, the Maryland legislature enacted a bill providing that ‘All Negroes and other slaves shall serve Durante Vita [for life]’” (1718).

bondage labor shows that this labor proceeded from an era of social instability. I surmise that it was the climate fifteen years prior to Bacon's rebellion that set the stage for a small revolution that escalated into racial oppression. In the midst of Virginia's developing its legal system, the elites governed the laborers but did not have a complete hold on social control in the 1660's. After common law rights became ingrained into the political system as white privileges, whites had ways of inheriting power and control over non-whites. Also, the normality of these laws for whites was inevitable. Barnett explains, "Whiteness maintains power by presenting itself as unraced individuality as opposed to a racialized subjectivity that is communally and politically interested" (10). This normalcy creates problems for social situations amongst Americans.

Part of the danger of not recognizing one's privilege, according to Dyer, is that a white person can't see that he has anything that "accounts for his position of privilege and power" (9). Scholars examining historical representations of individuality show that White Americans have manipulated the concept of individuality to the point that they believe that anything they do or will achieve is to be accounted for in terms of their individuality. For instance, people today hold true to this ideal of individualism in which one can explore self and reflect on self-identity. This usually involves psychological isolation. But how did this concept originate?

Ellwood Johnson asserts that individualism "may be taken as the cultural results of theological and philosophical conceptions that have had a continuing effect on the development of American society and art" (232). Johnson believes that individualism did not begin in justification for the entrepreneur to exploit his workers for profit, or was it "expressed as the innocent self in the garden of the New World," but it was

[t]he turning away from tradition and organization to the human heart as a source of truth and power; and its effect has been to make the American writer "heart-conscious": he looks to the inner consciousness of man for understanding of the outer, objective world. (233)

American Puritanism's character developed from anti-Calvanist heresy (Johnson 232); it sought to dismantle tradition and the resulting effect was the belief in Protestantism, which focuses more on an individual's inner salvation and connection to God. Not only is Johnson articulating the definition of individualism, he's also showing that individualism was perceived as a turning away from tradition, which informs our thinking about the connection of the body to the inner soul. Puritans believed that their preparation for God involved a self-analysis of the heart and the "belief in the divinity of man and conjectures about the infinite powers of the self" (Johnson 232). When American Puritans accepted that the conscious soul could be prepared by the divine grace from God, then a sense of pride erupted, according to Johnson. This sense of pride came from the belief in the divinity of man and the limitless powers of the self (Johnson 232). Johnson articulates well the Puritans' obsession with the purification of the human heart/soul and how that obsession with the preparation of the individual self "became in the tradition of American individualism a preoccupation with the powers and morality of the inner self" (232). Johnson further states, "Once man has realized his full potentialities, he will live from the self, inner-directed, to use a current term, and government will become vestigial" (237). Therefore, I argue that because Puritans placed more emphasis on the self and its relation to God rather than on the community, the idea of individualism explains the evolution of Puritan elitism and a sense of entitlement in American ideology.

Though originally this concept did not intend for a cultural group to exploit other cultures based on justification of the Protestantism and divine souls, Puritans justified their positioning by using individualism and their “divine souls” to prove that they were the inheritors of God’s grace. “God’s grace” justified Puritans to legally enslave Africans in the late Seventeenth Century, to create a racial hierarchy to control non-Christians, to extinguish Native Americans and pilfer their lands, and to create a male-dominated society where dogmatic doctrines were the laws of the land. Cheryl I. Harris explains “The law provided not only a defense of conquest and colonization, but also a naturalized regime of rights and disabilities, power and disadvantage that flowed from it, so that no further justifications or rationalizations were required” (1723).

The effects of this power and disadvantage have trickled through centuries and have led to current socioeconomic crisis in African American communities; but on the other hand, people who share legacies with the European settlers who were in power during the Seventeenth Century have shared immense privilege in modern America. For example, celebrity pastor Richard (Rick) Warren who dated his ancestry back to his tenth great grandfather (Deluca). Robert Park, who was a friend of John Winthrop, was among the wealthy Englishmen who travelled to New England with Governor Winthrop. Geni.com explains “This [the voyage to Massachusetts) was the famous Winthrop party which was comprised of the best Puritan families of England and was by far the most important expedition that had left England for the new world, the Mayflower excepted. The emigrants included many persons of high character, wealth, and learning, among whom were four non-Conformist ministers” (“Robert Parke II”). The wealth has stayed within the family line and we see Warren reaping the fruits of such wealth.

Richard Dyer explains that white people don't see their privilege; therefore, it is hard for a white privileged American to realize that his nice house, job, or schooling is due to his white skin, and not his unique individualism (9). The idea of individualism justifies and secures the positioning of those in power who honestly lack the content and means to actually be in power. Neglecting that their high statuses are due to their skin colors is exactly how power remains in the favors of White Americans. For instance, well known American authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson illustrate their ideas of individuality, but fail to realize that individuality and self-reliance are concepts that are meant only for the privileged. For instance, if we think about how society views recipients of welfare from the government, we see how America believes these recipients are dependent and lacking individualism. The Huffington Post reports that in his 2012 campaign, Rick Santorum stated in Sioux City, Iowa that "I don't want to make black people's lives better by giving them somebody else's money; I want to give them the opportunity to go out and earn the money" ("Rick Santorum Talks"). He singles out black people, even though "only 9 percent of food stamp recipients in Iowa are black"⁶ ("Rick Santorum Talks"). The rhetoric that Santorum and many conservatives use often points out how black entitlement spending increases the nation's debt. It's clear that these stereotypes, though often proven statistically inaccurate, further contribute to the way white people view and stereotype African Americans and other people of color.

⁶ Huffington Post states that "Santorum has claimed that he was not speaking about African Americans and never said the word 'black.' Instead, Santorum said he switched words midway, which made it sound as though the word "black" came out, when it actually did not" ("Anderson Cooper"). However, one plainly hears "black" in Santorum's statement.

Dyer explains how the white race developed its identity in the Nineteenth Century. The characteristics that nineteenth-century thought attributed to the white race were in response to the Aryan and Caucasian myth. The white race ascended from these cultures, according to nineteenth-century scientists. Because these cultures lived in mountains, nineteenth-century science claimed that they were pure because of the “clarity and cleanliness of the air; the vigor demanded by the cold, the enterprise required by the harshness of the terrain and climate, the sublime, soul-elevating beauty of mountain vistas, even the greater nearness to God above and the presence of the whitest thing on earth, snow” were virtues of the white character (Dyer 21). “Energy, enterprise, discipline and spiritual battle with the elements, and often unfavorably compared with the slack bodies of non-whites, its affinity with snowy whiteness” Dyer explains, could be seen to have formed the white character (21). These characteristics have often been portrayed in several representations of the white character. Even though these are nineteenth-century constructs, they emerged from earlier Puritan ideology, even though Puritans identified themselves as “Christian,” “English,” or “free” (Keating 912). I will discuss these earlier constructs in chapter one of my thesis. Monica McDermott and Frank L. Samson assert:

Many whites themselves fail to see the connection between their opportunities in life and their racial identity, much as their race is generally invisible to them. In some cases, this failure to recognize the connection is due to non obvious legacies of structural advantage. (248)

Dyer, McDermott, and Samson examine the issues of individuality closely, but Dyer’s account of Christianity and the embodiment of whiteness offers a different lens for the discussion of the identity of the white character.

Essential to my discussion of Puritan thought is Dyer's extensive research on Christianity and the dualistic nature of the embodiment of whiteness (14). Dyer explains further that Christianity gives an "intellectual foundation for thinking and feeling about the white body," and it also forms and structures the cultural codes of whiteness (14). Since "European feeling for self and the world has been shaped by Christianity," the close attention that Christianity pays toward the body and mind shapes much of the mindset of white identity. Christianity begets an idea that one is a being of the human body, but harbors an essence inside that is not of the flesh. Since Whiteness is exempt from being raced because of its perceived normality, it takes on the position of being the essence inside the body that is not of the flesh. Virtually, whiteness becomes a spirit that cannot be reduced to race. Dyer explains that "the white spirit organizes white flesh and in turn non-white flesh and other material matters: it has *enterprise*" (15). In other words, because of whiteness's enterprise, it has the God-given right to impose imperialism onto non-whites. However, due to the conflict of Christians striving to be like Jesus (that is, of the mind and not the flesh) they suffer from an internal struggle to be more spiritual than physical. Therefore, suffering is characteristic of the "supreme expression of spiritual and physical striving" (Dyer 17). This is evident in many Puritan works where their tests of their faith show God's favor among his elite. Since Christians aspire to be like Jesus, but can never be Him, this sets up a "dynamic of aspiration of striving in the face of the impossibility of transcendence" (Dyer 17). The effects of these strivings are self-denial, self-control, and material achievement (Dyer 17). These effects characterize the white ideal.

Dyer carefully explains that Christianity is not in essence white, but for centuries white people have used it (17) in ways to conquer, manipulate, and control non-whites and to assimilate them to their worldviews. For instance, Puritans controlled the labor of Africans by denying them citizenship because they believed Africans were the descendents of Ham and did not possess souls; therefore, Africans did not have a voice in their political system because only white male Christians possessed that power. Puritans' worldviews were shaped by theology and helped them cope with the difficulties of surviving in the wilderness of America (Carlo). Conversely, white people have always scrutinized black bodies and blackness by associating blackness with flesh and not with intellect. Blackness doesn't possess the ability to have that inner essence that is not of the body. We can see examples of this in Early America where Africans could not become Christianized because they did not possess souls (which in reality was a way for colonists to socially control their property), and we see this culminating with the fascination of exotic bodies, such as Sarah Baartman's in the early nineteenth century.

John Strausbaugh details Baartman's humiliating journey from South Africa to Paris. He explains that Europeans became fascinated with Baartman's symptoms of steatopygia—"an extreme enlargement of the buttocks" (47). Baartman not only became a sideshow, but to Europeans, she also represented her entire race (Strausbaugh 47). She was a freak by their terms and travelled with her master, showcasing her body. Viewers could even touch her buttocks (Strausbaugh 47), which made Baartman more than a spectacle; she was an object with which Europeans could interact and probe. Even after her death, Baartman remained on showcase at Paris' Musee de l'Homme, which showcased her skeleton, brain, and genitals (Strausbaugh 47). The black body's

exoticism has fascinated Europeans for generations. As I mentioned earlier, my co-workers' fascination with my hair is an extension of the black body as spectacle. I was exotic to them and became an object for them to probe and touch. Nevertheless, the white ideal has always been associated with Christianity, which emphasizes the split between the flesh and the inner self/spirit. While white people associated whiteness with the inner self, they associated blackness with the body. A long history of discrimination and oppression can be traced through this thread. White domination's focus on bodies creates the argument that groups of people—namely African Americans, are subhuman and need the domination of humans (whites). Because the body can be labeled, tortured, and subjected, white supremacy can manipulate the black body how it pleases.

Richard A. Bailey's *Race and Redemption in Puritan New England* launches an inquiry into how Puritans constructed a political and economic system that barred participation from non-whites and legitimized the rule of whites. Both Perry Miller and Bailey explain that Puritans used their theological convictions to make religious sense of their social realities, but Bailey goes further and states that, in doing so, they structured their society by separating whites from people "who differed from them physically and culturally" (Bailey 7). For instance, Bailey's "The Meaning of Color" describes ways that New Englanders described each other by attaching meaning to the physical differences between them and Africans and Indians. Bailey explains, "The color of one's skin could often be used to belittle, to emphasize, or to denigrate a person's abilities and accomplishments" (44). Puritans transferred already held negative assumptions of blackness to non-whites with darker skin. For instance, during the Salem witch trials Sarah Osborne is on record describing the devil as "a thing like an Indian all black"

(Bailey 45). As we see here, oftentimes Puritans asserted that Indians and Africans were the devil because of their associated blackness. In ordering their societies, Puritans attached labels onto non-whites for ways of controlling the labor force and justifying their positions as superiors.

Scholars such as Sanford Kessler argue that Puritans founded America by establishing principles as the basis of America's political life (779). Kessler's essay examines Toqueville's analysis of America's founding in *Democracy in America* as the key to understanding democracy in modern America. In doing so, Kessler explores how Toqueville's analysis dates to the Puritans' religious views and their effects on democracy, American's modern regime, and the distinctive American nature of capitalism. Kessler explains because many scholars have focused on Thomas Jefferson's ideals of democracy in *The Declaration of Independence*, little attention is given to the two hundred years of experience in shaping the attitudes, minds, and principles of the people to secure those principles that the Declaration asserts (Kessler 778).

Kessler explains that in assessing the Declaration's principles, it is better to understand the healthy mores that foster these principles of freedom. Without the character that upholds these principles, according to Toqueville, the Declaration's principles are meaningless (Kessler 777). Therefore, Kessler explains that Toqueville "believed Puritans were America's founders because they first brought equal freedom to America and shaped our national character in ways that sustained this principle throughout our history" (778). Kessler's analysis is helpful because it forges the forgotten and often overlooked links of historical Puritan ideals to modern American ideals.

While much scholarship focuses on American identity as founded upon philosophical origins, such as John Locke's ideas, Kessler explains that Tocqueville argued that Christianity is the primary source of American principles (778). Tocqueville cites Martin Luther's pivotal *95 Theses* as being a strong influence on American character. He contends that from these strong biblical principles, Puritans influenced America and even today their influences remain the basis of political life. Kessler explains that many scholars cite different Puritan ideals as the basis of American constitutionalism. For instance, Andrew C. McLaughlin "first asserted in 1932 that Puritan covenants, or communal agreements sanctioned by God, were the major theoretical sources for American constitutionalism" (779). Edmund S. Morgan, who recently passed in 2013, notably traced the fictions that sustained government and liberty from what he believes came from the Anglo-American world where divine right was given to the king (15). Morgan argues that these fictions give us insight into how our newly created fictions of the sovereignty of the people "both sustain government by the few and restrain the few for the benefit of the many" (15). Morgan and McLaughlin show that Christianity sustains Americans' beliefs about freedom, exclusion, and their thoughts on who holds the power in the United States. Kessler explains that "Robert N. Bellah believes that the covenant tradition [from Puritans] was a basis for the moral and religious understandings which traditionally legitimated American society and provided a standard for critically judging it" (779). These scholars surmise that American values and traditions are based from a long legacy of Puritan ideals.

One example of a Puritan contribution to American politics is the historical Mayflower Compact which granted citizens popular sovereignty and arguably led to the

decline in religious fervor in America. This covenant “established the right of free and equal individuals under God to form a ‘civil body politic’ and made consent the de facto basis for political authority (Kessler 784). Similar to the spirit of individuality mentioned earlier, Puritans were practicing a democratic rule within their religion because they had the freedom to choose their leaders and their churches were independent and self-ruling (Kessler 784). Just as Puritanism allowed people to foster a connection between their self and their God, the Mayflower Compact represented this same ideal of freedom; unlike their English counterparts, Puritans were able to practice their religion unhinged by the orthodoxy of Catholicism. Again, the argument that Puritan ideas of the self lead to self-centered doctrines of individualism is an argument I and Tocqueville take up. Kessler states:

Tocqueville's Americans were self-centered rather than community- oriented and considered their fate to rest entirely in their own hands. This belief, an offshoot of the philosophical method, gave rise to individualism, a "calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends" (506). If unchecked, Tocqueville warned, individualism could lead to a "passionate and exaggerated love of self" which threatens all forms of public and private virtue. (788)

A gradual shift from religious ideas to secular ideas happened because of Puritan’s focus on the self. By the 1830’s, Kessler shows that “self-interest properly understood,” a doctrine declaring that all men should be good in nature, had replaced Christian love as the accepted basis of American virtue. What began to take root from these doctrines was an interest in what individual’s political rights could do for them and how they could benefit from them, instead of an interest in the religious significance of the political rights (788). Thus, I see in Kessler’s account, Tocqueville taking a leap and suggesting that New Englanders fostered the idea that they were only accountable to God and used their

freedom to discern and do God's will and pursued power, fame, and wealth (789). In addition, the Puritans believed that they were God's elect and that dark-skinned people did not possess souls because they were the descendents of Ham.

Kessler examines some of the failings of Tocqueville's argument. Kessler explains that Tocqueville did not explain properly how traditional forms of Christianity were converted to the more reasonable versions of Christianity that we practice today (790). Despite these shortcomings, I believe with Kessler that Tocqueville's analysis of how Puritanism provides a backdrop for much of the political climate today is useful in understanding the way in which government and politics are conceived as well as how the idea of individualism helps foster this ideal of self-centeredness.

A modern day example of how self-centeredness seeps its way into politicians' rhetoric is Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum's outcry over President Obama's so-called "reverse racist" remark. On March 23, 2012 President Obama spoke about the Trayvon Martin shooting while announcing the new head of the World Bank (Maraniss). According to the *Washington Post*, Obama remarked "If I had a son, he'd look like Trayvon" (Maraniss). Obama's comment shows an awareness of the history of violence toward black males in America and also shows how this legacy still exists. President Obama was simply appealing to a universal sense of lament, while showing how close this issue is to him as he identifies with the African American community. While many black leaders such as Al Sharpton celebrated the President's willingness to foreground the racial issue in the shooting, Newt Gingrich and Rick Santorum felt Obama's comments were "disgraceful." Gingrich retorted,

Any young American of any ethnic background should be safe, period. We should all be horrified, no matter what the ethnic background. Is the president suggesting that, if it had been a white who'd been shot, that would be OK, because it wouldn't look like him? That's just nonsense. (Maraniss)

Gingrich appeals to the concept of colorblindness in his statement. He forces President Obama to not acknowledge his own blackness. *USA Today* reports that Rick Santorum agrees: "What the president of the United States should do is try to bring people together, not use these types of horrible tragic individual cases to try to drive a wedge in America" (Jackson). Gingrich and Santorum fail to realize that the playing field for people of color in America has never been level; evidence of this dates back to the Seventeenth Century when Puritans denigrated people of color. Theodore Allen asserts in his research that racism configured the structural elements of the economy after Bacon's Rebellion.

When Santorum and Gingrich play the "white male as minority" card, they are appealing to their political constituents in order to gain leverage. This self-centered act actually reveals how these Republican politicians are doing the same thing that they claim Obama is doing—that is, they are promoting a division between Americans by promoting their own interests. Gingrich and Santorum cater to their own self-interests (gaining more voters and support) by using the political system to make it work for them. Their realities are misconstrued by the idea of individualism and its benefits. Of course, these men don't realize that their appeal to colorblindness imply their lack of concern for improving the way people react to differences because they continue to believe that the America they know and love does not produce and reproduce discrimination. However, Ben Cohen explains, "According to Gingrich and Santorum, expressing sympathy for minorities is akin to racism – a mind boggling leap of logic only possible in today's

Republican party” (“Newt Gingrich”). The next question to ask would be why this logic still exists. A closer look into Santorum and Gingrich’s rhetoric reveals their implicit notion of colorblindness. The use of this tactic dodges the racial issues and tries to relate to people by showing how equal everyone is and how far America has come in terms of equality. When the rich and powerful have authority to make race invisible, white people begin to adopt this worldview and also think racism is not an issue anymore. This is how that leap of logic that Cohen mentioned still exists.

When White Americans fail to see their power and ignore their influence, they show what W.E.B. Du Bois initially called “white privileged ignorance” (Sullivan 18). Though he later revisits this term and refines it, his analysis of white privileged ignorance does provide insight into a way of understanding white privilege. Initially, Du Bois thought that in order for non-whites to gain a non-oppressed status, white people needed to recognize their privilege and actively challenge racism. Non-whites’ efforts to thwart racism cannot be successful unless the people in power challenge racism as well (Sullivan 22). This is so because there needs to be a conjoined effort from people whom the system privileges to dismantle a system that caters to them. The social order cannot control those who do not believe in it and who have the power to dismantle it. Du Bois believed that eradication of white privileged ignorance meant simply informing white people about non-whites in order familiarize them to the lives and situations of non-whites (Sullivan 20). However, Du Bois came to realize that the ignorance manifested by white people was much more complex and sinister than he imagined because he understood the lie that white people needed to tell about themselves as honest and trustworthy (Sullivan 20). He realized these beliefs needed to be articulated for the

“world’s ‘salvation’” and how they were constructed, maintained, and protected in a system that privileged whiteness (Sullivan 20). Sullivan continues, “What had initially seemed to him like an innocent lack of knowledge on white people’s part revealed itself to be a malicious production that masked the ugly terrible of white exploitative ownership of non-white people and cultures” (20). Ultimately, Du Bois concluded that to successfully combat racism, one must address “the founding stones of race antagonisms” (283). Turning to unconscious habits as a way to explain the racist behaviors people harbor, Du Bois developed his approach from what Sullivan claims a combination of “Freudian psychoanalysis with a pragmatist understanding of habit” (21).

By focusing on unconscious habits, Shannon Sullivan argues that people will have a deeper understanding of discrimination. Approaching racism and discrimination in the way Du Bois initially did may not eliminate any kind of prejudice when people of different ethnicities are integrated. It also doesn’t garner effective understandings of people’s responses to racism (Sullivan 41). Sullivan explains that “habits are that which constitute the self” and humans enact them “without thinking” (23). Therefore people engage in the world with their habits. Habits also are limiting and enabling because they “provide a means by which one is able to act in the world, and in so doing they also exclude other possible styles of acting” (24). If one combines the definition of habit with a raced and racist world, then automatically, people become racially and racistly constituted (24). Sullivan explains “Because raced predispositions subvert efforts to understand or change them, race often functions unconsciously” (25). Habits enforce internalized perceptions of the way individuals act and respond to the world around them. When one internalizes the way race functions, then one uses race as a means to react to

others. This occurs when white people assume an authoritative position over others because racial habit perpetuates this characteristic. Ultimately, Sullivan believes that white racial habits will die out when white people begin to use their privilege in ways that undermine their whiteness. She further explains that people will need to understand the ontological history of discrimination in order to understand the systemic racism inherent in the American economy.

Ultimately, my investigation of whiteness and privilege in early America culminates in a revelation of its legacy in America today. Where Dyer and Morrison are discussing Whiteness in a more contemporary setting, I use this to examine history and claim that Puritans were using their whiteness and were blinded by their own legitimizing tactics. In doing so, I reveal the antagonisms of racial oppression and come to a better rounded discussion about the history and complexity of racism. I draw connections from John Cotton, Cotton Mather, John Winthrop, and Robert Cushman's self-legitimizing texts to Dyer and Morrison's ideas of whiteness in Chapter One of my thesis. Chapter Two consists of an analysis of Maryse Condé's contemporary work, *I, Tituba the Black Witch*. Though Condé published her novel in 1994, it remains relevant to my discussion of the legacy of Puritan culture. In this chapter, I map the legacy that Condé taps into for her interpretation of Seventeenth-Century America to racial issues that plague black women today. A Black Feminist Perspective aids in my interpretation of Condé's novel. Chapter Three of my thesis analyzes Morrison's *A Mercy* using Black Feminist Thought, as well. This novel also reveals the Puritan legacy of oppression and handles its characterization of the New World in a different approach. Morrison envisions an America before racialized oppression existed. What I reveal in this chapter are the

implications of a racialized thinking that led to America's foundational oppressive climate. The analysis of each text in this thesis is useful for revisiting the past and understanding Puritans in ways we have not thought about before.

CHAPTER II

PURITANS

In most of their sermons and religious texts dated from early Seventeenth Century to Eighteenth Century, Cotton Mather, John Winthrop, John Cotton, and Robert Cushman vilify “savages” and justify their own self-serving religious ideology. These Puritan patriarchs helped settle, and contributed to the framework of, New England colonies and exemplify Puritan thought in their sermons. In their texts, these men embody the racial hegemony that I am arguing is central to Puritan thought, and their rhetoric helps to facilitate the dissemination of whiteness as a unifying concept for Puritans. They raise and exalt their positions as God’s chosen people and create imperialistic rhetoric to coax Puritans to agree to settle in New England. The Puritan patriarchs imagine Indians and Africans based on their bodies and assign to them spiritual qualities or rather, a lack of spiritual qualities, that enable Puritans to control them. The idea of whiteness and the implicit belief in a shared white consciousness, as evidenced in these texts, prove useful in uniting the identity of a people and serve as crucial evidence in understanding “a motif of national-regional inclusion within an imperial project” (Dyer 19). Dyer presents:

All concepts of *race*, emerging of eighteenth-century materialism, are concepts of bodies, but all along they have had to be reconciled with notions of embodiment and incarnation. The latter become what distinguish white people, giving them a special relation to race. Black people can be reduced (in white culture) to their bodies and thus to race, but white people are something else that is realized in and yet is not reducible to the corporeal or racial. (15)

Richard Dyer explains “At some point, the embodied something else of whiteness took on a dynamic relation to the physical world, something caught by the ambiguous word ‘spirit.’ The white spirit organizes white flesh and in turn non-white flesh and other

material matters: it has *enterprise*. Imperialism is the key historical form in which that process has been realized” (15). Therefore, the following Puritan texts provide a window for viewing the ethnic chauvinism of the Puritan mind and open a nuanced discussion concerning how the Puritans develop their own racial consciousness in the service of the subjugation of the “other” by emphasizing the superiority of white identity.

Cotton Mather, John Cotton’s grandson, presents in *The Negro Christianized An Essay to Excite and Assist that Good Work, The Instruction of Negro-Servants in Christianity* (1706) the white Puritan attitude about blacks that blinds Puritans to their elitist position, and constitutes the mechanics that they employed to place themselves in a higher key. In this work, Mather tries to explain black people’s religious practices through his own theological lens and in effect, shows more of an ethnocentric approach:

A roaring Lion who goes about seeking whom he may devour, hath made a seizure of them [Black slaves]. Very many of them do with Devillish Rites actually worship Devils, or maintain a magical conversation with Devils. And all of them are more slaves to Satan than they are to You, until a Faith in the Son of God has made them free indeed. Will you do nothing to pluck them out of the Jaws of Satan the Devoure. (14-15)

These lines indicate a couple of ways Mather imagines what Morrison deems an Africanist presence in New England, a conceit that helps him identify himself as a white Christian male and brings to light rhetoric that helps control non-whites. First, Mather tells Puritans that blacks are Satan’s slaves and implies that it is through Satan’s rites that they carry out functions to harm Puritans. Imagining others as harmful and soul-less, while identifying Puritans as the chosen among God immediately sets up a dichotomy between the good and the bad. Since Christianity has contributed to the dualistic way people think, Puritans’ earlier imaginings of others through this concept have constructed

a perspective that identifies all things black as bad. Also, Puritans believed that the New World was a wilderness that tested their faith in God. Helping the “heathens” was a challenge that showed the “wilderness” as a place of struggle because there were many forces that were “acting against” the Puritans’ faith in God. Timothy McMillan’s article teases out these ideas of other demonic forces challenging Puritans’ faith:

The belief that Blacks were inherently connected to the worship of satanic forces no doubt greatly influenced many Whites automatically to suspect them of witchcraft. The belief also caused Whites to fear the efficacy of the Blacks’ control of the familiar demonic forces. Not only were Blacks consorting with Satan in Africa and in New England, according to the fears and misconceptions of many Europeans, but Africans also mirrored Satan’s image as well. (107)

Puritans’ involvement in constructing an otherly identity for those who weren’t Puritan was partly due to their closely knitted communities. Due to the “visible saints” covenant, only those who had a conversion experience belonged to the Puritan community. All others suffered chastisement and needed the oppressive religion that Puritans enforced.

Though Mather is trying to defend his stance that the color of blacks’ skin doesn’t mean they’re damned, he still provides reasoning for whites’ continuing to oppress them. Mather earnestly believed that some Africans might be among the elect and if they were, then it was his and all Puritans’ Godly duty to provide them the means to accept grace and realize their election (Sweet). However, baptizing blacks could help Puritans economically control them more easily. For instance, Mather explains

Your *Servants* will be the *Better Servants*, for being made *Christian Servants*. To *Christianize* them aright, will be to *fill them with all Goodness*...Were your *Servants* well tinged with the Spirit of *Christianity*, it would render them exceeding *Dutiful* unto their *Masters*, exceeding *Patient* under their *Masters*, exceeding faithful in their *Business*, and afraid of speaking or doing any thing that may justly displease you. (553)

The obedience that Mather details has more to do with controlling them than helping them in society. Just from this early example, one can surmise that the Puritan goal in New England was to colonize and build a society created from the interests of Puritan white males. Puritans wanted blacks to be patient, obedient, and dutiful in order to control and subjugate their bodies and minds. Mather isn't aware of the maliciousness of what he's proposing simply because of his own elaborate acts of repression. There are interesting paradoxes in what Mather discusses in these two divergent readings because there are internal contradictions in what he's saying. He is repressing because his rhetoric develops from his own blindness of the humanity of Africans. He cannot work past the idea that different means inferior. He finds theological ways to justify his ideas of other populations.

Secondly, Mather constructs divergent readings of the Bible which keep blacks at a lower status than white Puritans. Not only is Mather speaking of their economical statuses in New England, he's commenting on their supposed inferiority. He labels blacks' religious practices as Satanic in nature. Mather reveals his ethnocentricity even more as he rejects blacks' religion, but argues that his religion is more superior. Mather counters the argument that blacks are beyond redemption because of their skin color: "The God who looks on the Heart, is not moved by the colour of the Skin; is not more propitious to one Colour than another" (554), and he later calls blacks stupid. He states "But the greater their *Stupidity*, the greater must be our *Application*. If we can't learn them so much as we *Would*, let us learn them as much as we *Can*" (554). Mather reduces the intelligence level of blacks in his writing simply because they are different from Puritans. He exalts Puritans' intelligence levels because they are the seekers of truth and

knowledge and know more than blacks. Several Puritans mirror and use this attitude to justify Puritans assimilating others to their ideology and cultural ways.

Soon after Mather explains that God doesn't judge the color of one's skin, he gives reasons as to why baptized blacks should remain slaves and obedient to their masters. If Mather truly believed that God saw all beings as equal as he purports in the previous lines, he would believe that baptizing slaves would make them equal amongst the Puritans. Instead, Mather fights against the manumission of slaves because his self-serving religious ideology prevents him from seeing blacks as equal to him. Mather purports "What *Law* is it, that Sets the *Baptized Slave at Liberty*? Not the *Law of Christianity*: that allows of *Slavery*; Only it wonderfully *Dulcifies*, and *Mollifies*, and *Moderates the Circumstances of it*" (554). Mather claims that there is no law, neither civil nor the Law of Christianity, that manumits slaves after baptism. He asserts, "Christianity directs a Slave, upon his embracing the Law of the Redeemer, to satisfy himself, That he is the Lords Free-man, tho' he continues a Slave" (554). Mather thinks it is perfectly logical for Puritans to own slaves, so long as they baptize and provide them the means to be saved. Bernard Rosenthal explains that Cotton Mather "is not to be presented as an abolitionist. He owned his own slaves and seemed to show no signs of remorse" (62).

People could make the assumption that Mather was an abolitionist because he argued against Roger Williams' long established claim that Africans were the cursed descendents of Ham and had no souls (Rosenthal 64). However, Mather did not fight against slavery but against "the heresy that one could close his eyes to the unregenerate" (Rosenthal 65). In other words, Mather wanted to secure the grace for those who were among the elect. Mather saw the demise of the "city upon a hill" and felt a sense of

nostalgia for the original plan for New England's conception. He wanted to follow in John Cotton, his grandfather's, footsteps and construct New England as a beacon for the world to emulate (Rosenthal 65). The original plan was to set New England up as a theocracy. Mather feels as though his own moral goodness shows a genuine generosity toward others, but in reality he is unaware of what he projects onto difference. His ideas of baptizing slaves blind him and instead, place his interests at the center of the universe.

Throughout Mather's work, he argues that blacks should be converted, yet he earnestly believes that blacks were made to accept their lower statuses because of the natural laws of slavery in the Bible. This logic is similar to how Dyer explains that white privilege stems from the faith that one can think and act for everyone. According to Dyer, the equation of being white with being human secures a position of power (9). He goes on to explain that "white people construct the world in their own image and set standards for humanity by which they are bound to succeed and others bound to fail" (9). Just the same, Mather constructs a world that is made for people like him to succeed and others to fail. Also, just as Mather wants to educate others of his culture's ways, people who hold the power in a society do the same.

Whites wanted to control blacks socially and economically during the Seventeenth Century because they wanted people to believe that blacks did not possess souls and therefore could not become manumitted for their Christian statuses. Mather consistently failed at attempts at a law that allowed the baptism of slaves because during 1694, there was not a law that manumitted Christian slaves (Rosenthal 64). Mather met opposition mainly from slave holders. Though Mather tried to console them by explaining how they would not lose money: "Man, If this were true; that a Slave

bought with thy Money, were by thy means brought unto the Things that accompany Salvation, and thou shouldest from this time have no more Service from him, yet thy Money were not thrown away” (554), slave holders still resisted because “the Christian world, accepted in theory the principle that bondage was for non-Christians alone” (Rosenthal 64). The peoples’ nature of this time period met Mather with many conflicting views about non-Christians. The Puritans had to find ways to make sense of a world where they believed Christians should not be slaves, yet, baptized slaves could not be manumitted simply for the labor and capital they provided.

John Winthrop’s “record of the dialogue between those who promoted and those who resisted the idea of Puritan migration” (Heimert and Delbanco 70-1) presents the manipulation of religious rhetoric that both justifies Puritans, but indicts “savages.” In 1629, the Massachusetts Bay Company began “to envision and organize an expansive enterprise to provide refuge and opportunity for disaffected English nonconformists” (Heimert and Delbanco 70). John Winthrop, the first governor of the Bay Colony, member of the landed gentry, and a trained lawyer, was a central figure in the venture to New England (Heimert and Delbanco 70). Winthrop’s *Reasons to Be Considered for Justifying the Undertakers of the Intended Plantation in New England and for Encouraging Such Whose Hearts God Shall Move to Join with Them in It* capitalizes on his desire to persuade other Puritans to migrate to New England. In this text, Winthrop expresses his sentiment concerning the Indians in the New World:

First, it will be a service to the church of great consequence to carry the gospel into those parts of the world, to help on the coming in of fullness of the Gentiles and to raise a bulwark against the kingdom of Antichrist, which the Jesuits labor to rear up in those parts. (71)

Winthrop does address the problem that the English are having with French missionaries because their work is contrary to England's colonial expansion. Winthrop shares what most other Puritans proclaimed whenever they were spreading the gospel—that is, as G.E. Thomas explains, “their main reason for coming to New England was to convert Indians to Christianity” (5). Their “Charter of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay in New England, 1628-29” stated that “the most important purpose of their colonization was ‘to incite the natives . . . to the knowledge and obedience of the onlie true God and Sav- iour of mankinde....’ (Thomas 5). Indicated in Winthrop’s text is the idea that Christian charity will spread throughout the world so that all will become familiar with God’s Holy Word. However, Thomas explains that more than a decade past after their arrival to Massachusetts before Puritans made efforts to convert Indians (5). This sounds suspicious considering Puritans made Charters proclaiming their missionary duties. A closer look into Winthrop’s text reveals the true intentions of the English settling in the New World. The major theological difference between Jesuits and Puritans was that the pope granted the Jesuits power to rule in parts of the New World and their goal was to stamp out Protestantism (Willcock). It shows the malleable quality that whiteness and European identity have.

John Winthrop uses his religion to claim civil rights to New England territory and masks his ambitious goals using religious rhetoric; by doing so, he creates a space in his text where he marks non-Christians as devil worshippers and Puritans as Christians.

Winthrop relates:

It appears to be a work of God for the good of his church in that he hath disposed the hearts of so many of his wise and faithful servants . . . not only to approve of the enterprise but to interest themselves in it, some in their prisons and estates, others

by their serious advice and help otherwise: and all by their prayers for their welfare of it... (72)

It is within these lines that Winthrop appeals to religion to justify his migration as “a work of God.” These lines imply that it pleases God that His faithful servants [Puritans] approve the enterprise that is taking place. Alan Heimert and Andrew Delbanco argue that Winthrop’s work shows psychological duress because he’s persuading Puritans that God identifies his church with place or nation. He’s doing this in order to clear his conscience of the supposed enterprise he describes (71). Later in his text, Winthrop explains why Puritans have affirmation to possess Indians’ lands in the New World: “That which lies common and hath never been replenished or subdued is free to any that will posses and improve it, for God hath given to the sons of men a double right to the earth: there is a natural right and a civil right” (73). The words “natural” and “civil” are key words in Winthrop’s rhetoric. For him, it is only natural for Puritans to take possession of Indians’ land because “God hath given” that right to them. Thomas concurs:

The Puritans’ approach to land acquisition demonstrates even more clearly the degree of their ethnocentric bias and their failure to treat Indians on an equal basis even when the Indians were willing to deal on the Puritans’ own terms. The New Englanders had proclaimed their ‘right’ to take up Indian lands even before leaving old England. (10)

Also, Winthrop’s rhetoric implies that Indians aren’t the “sons of men,” indicating that they are not even considered human.

Thomas speaks on the indifference that Puritans demonstrated toward their Indian counterparts even after Winthrop’s voyage to the New World. He explains that the Praying Indians who were Puritan converts, struggled to fit in the Puritan community

because they felt the Puritans failed in accepting them as either fellow Puritans or as fully human beings. When the Puritans distinguished themselves from the “savages,” they were able to justify their rights as “heirs” of New England. They also began a system that normalized their own characteristics, but attributed connotations to people with characteristics unlike their own. What spawned from this bias was a system that “raced” the “other” and privileged the white male Puritan. Readers understand the perpetuation of this disdainful attitude toward the “other” when they read John Winthrop’s text. History reveals the ravages of Indian life in New England post-Puritan voyage. In Winthrop’s text, Puritans are spiritual beings whereas Indians are defined by their physicality. Nowhere in the text is Winthrop’s mentioning of white bodies. This goes hand in hand with how whiteness defines itself. By paying attention to others’ physical forms and ignoring white people’s bodies, whiteness gains power and authority by automatically being something that cannot be defined by physical attributes.

Puritans’ attitudes toward Indians increased in severity, especially starting in 1694 during King William’s War when the Massachusetts General Court offered bounties for the killing of hostile Indians and their scalps (Thomas 21). King William’s War began in the colonies when King William of England “rejected an offer of colonial neutrality” (“King William’s War”). Much religious intolerance between French Catholics and English Protestants ensued in the colonies during this war and Frontenac, the governor of Canada, instigated Indian Massacres in New England that spurred war between the Indians and the colonists. Though much blood was shed in places like Dover, New Hampshire, Groton, Massachusetts and Pemaquid, Maine (“King William’s War”), animosity stemmed more toward the Indians than the French who accompanied the

Indians in their massacres. Thomas explains that whites never scalped the French who accompanied the Indians in New England. Skinning was reserved for animals and Indians (Thomas 22). For centuries, whites have depicted non-whites as animalistic, sub-human, and savage. Richard Dyer explains “this assumption that white people are just people, which is not far off saying that whites are people whereas other colours are something else, is endemic to white culture” (2). Creating this distinction allows them to justify their actions in oppressing other groups of people who, in their minds, are inferior, soul-less devil worshippers.

Kristina Bross contends that since Indians were stigmatized as brutes who desired to spill the blood of English men and rape English women, Puritans desired their deaths.

Bross continues:

Puritan observers are meant to cash in on the symbolic value of their deaths. By interpreting Indian deaths as providential, Puritan observers assert God's blessing on their invasion and the colonists construct themselves as the rightful (and righteous) possessors of "New England." (326)

Even Winthrop speaks on this issue when he justifies his reasoning for taking land from Indians: “God hath consumed the natives with a great plague in those parts so as there be few inhabitants left” (73). Delbanco and Heimert explain that “before the establishment of 1620, the New England Indians had been ravaged by a series of epidemics brought on by contact with Europeans” (73). Epidemics, to Puritans, served as signs to God’s people letting them know that they were righteous in His sight. Bross states, “The many [Indians] who died from disease, they [Puritans] believed, had been occupants of the devil's territories, and therefore merited death” (325). Again, the trope of the other who worships the devil appears because it helps Puritans justify their conquering other

peoples. If the Indians' souls are lost, evidenced by God's plague on them, then the Puritans have every right to conquer and rule over them. Whiteness secures its position of power when it is normalized and "white people have power and believe that they think, feel and act like and for all people" (Dyer 9). Winthrop's enterprise secures its power by normalizing Puritans and acting for all people.

In his text, Winthrop examines the reasons why bringing Christianity to the New World would benefit his Indian neighbors; couched in his rhetoric are his intentions to secure power for white Puritans. Winthrop explains that "we shall come in with the good leave of the natives, who find benefit already by our neighborhood and learn of us to improve part to more use than before they could do the whole, and by this means we come in by valuable purchase" (73). The attitude that Winthrop presents has an imperialistic tone. He believes that Indians would automatically benefit from the English presence. He assumes that Puritans' ways are superior to Indians' ways. Even his attitude about spreading the gospel is imperialistic. He says "since Christ's time the church is to be considered as universal, without distinction of countries, so as he who doeth good in any one place, serves the church in all places in regard of the unity" (73-74). In these lines, Winthrop sees his religious beliefs as universal and applicable to every human being. Not only does he feel his beliefs should be universal, but his intentions of ruling over others are, as well. This spiritual elevation to all others contributes even more to an imperialistic mindset. He relates that since the natives have not civilized their society, then he and other Puritans have a natural right to "lawfully take the rest" of their land (73). He then uses a biblical reference to justify such thinking. He explains that in the same way Abraham inhabited parts of Ephron the Hittite's land, so should the Puritans

have that right to common land since it is not enclosed. The logic is since “they inclose no land neither have any settled habitation nor any tame cattle to improve the land by,” then Puritans have a natural right to inhabit “those countries” (73). Since Puritans equate their abilities as human, civilized, and superior, they feel that they can better their Indian neighbors by “civilizing” them with their religion and land-stealing. It is obvious the malicious intentions of Puritans once their rhetoric is analyzed. They achieved much of their positions of power by converting Indians into Christians and unarming them.

Observing the effects of Winthrop and other Puritans’ carrying “the gospel into those parts of the world” over the span of a few years reveals their ulterior motives of dominating the natives and justifying conquest. Symbols of the dying Indian or the noble savage appeared in Puritan writing to gain support for missionary efforts to convert them and gain conquest in New England. While Winthrop justifies conquest because of the Indian epidemic, others justified unarming Indians and making them prove themselves visible saints in the Puritan community. Bross provides helpful depictions of the significance of the Dying Indian figure in Puritans’ texts. When Puritans wrote about the dying Christian Indian, the report served as proof of God’s blessings for their efforts (Bross 327). Also, the “descriptions of ‘Praying Indians’ ma[d]e the continued occupation of native lands palatable to English invaders and their supporters in Europe...” (Bross 327). Neal Salisbury goes on to explain that conquest and conversion overlapped in Puritans’ goals of converting the Indians:

Conversion, as defined by the Puritans, presupposed their domination of the prospective converts and the latter's isolation from outside influences. These preconditions in turn, required that the colonists establish complete control over their claimed territory and that they eliminate any powerful "savage" contenders. Missionization officially began only after the Puritan colonies had carried out a

war of extermination against the Pequots in 1637, and began a war of attrition ... against the Narragansetts. (30)

Earlier in my introduction, I mentioned how the Africanist presence serves as surrogate and enabler for white identity. In a similar manner, the Dying Indian figure serves as a means for subverting Indians, while Puritans also defined themselves by distinguishing their sainthood from the noble savage. The “noble savage” figure was docile and obedient, which allowed Puritans to control them.

Thomas explains in his work that Puritans made it almost impossible for the converted Indians to adhere to strict and complicated requirements for baptism, or entry into the church; they even had to go through extensive training (7). With the Indians’ conversion came a break from their culture and people. Thomas explains that converted Indians met hostility from their own people as they were indoctrinated in Puritan ways, culture, and religion. Puritans were an exclusive community and their intention was to remain God’s elect (Thomas 7). Thomas explains,

The Puritans had emphasized their exclusiveness to protect them from the sinfulness of others. Once in control in New England, they established even more stringent requirements for membership which made their church increasingly an exclusive society for saints and their children instead of an agency for bringing Christ to the fallen. Their efforts lay with those already converted and were only incidentally directed at outside. (7)

Puritans disarmed the converted Indians in order to dominate them. Thomas explains that the greatest error that Praying Indians made was to give up their guns and trust Puritan justice (23). The Puritan attitude toward the Indian became more intense and even became engrained in governmental affairs. For instance, in August 1675 “Captain Samuel Mosely, one of the most violent of the Indian haters, on the basis of later disproved allegations against the Indians of Marlborough, fastened ropes around the

necks of fifteen Christian Indian men” and threatened them with a lynch mob as they marched to Boston (Thomas 19). Within the same year and month, several Christian Indian women and children were murdered by a Puritan military party (Thomas 19).

Though Christian Indians proved their alliance to Puritans by being loyal, obedient, and submissive, Puritans enacted orders from council meetings that stated “it shall be lawful for any person, whether English or Indian, that shall find any Indian travelling in any of our towns or woods...to command them under guard and examination, and to kill or destroy them” (Thomas 20). This order gave white people unfettered authority to kill every Indian even if it included the Christian Indians. This order may seem eerily similar to the Stand Your Ground law which grants people jurisdiction to use deadly force to defend themselves. Examining this law under a more critical historical lens helps us to understand the historical significance of policing and the systemic racism that was involved with self-policing. Considering the damning effects that the Massachusetts Bay group aboard the *Arbella* brought to Indians when they carried the gospel to the world, one realizes the true spirit surrounding the migration to the New World. Winthrop’s vision of America as “the city upon a hill” remains alive today, but has far deeper consequences than what people would like to imagine. For instance, Ronald Reagan believed that America would be a “shining city on a hill” (Reagan), yet he supported many right wing military movements that committed human rights violations. In fact, even John Cotton’s sermon to Winthrop’s group in 1630 serves as another constant reminder of the true aims of “Christian Charity” super headed by imperialistic Europeans.

John Cotton's Southampton sermon to the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1630 provides strikingly similar ideas about conquest and white supremacy, masked by religious rhetoric. In order to placate the Puritan consciousness of the migration, Cotton blesses the journey by reassuring them of God's promise to His people, and reminds the Company not to forget their brethren in England (Heimert and Delbanco 76). In the beginning of his sermon, Cotton quotes II Samuel, chapter seven, verse 10. This verse serves as the backdrop for the entire sermon because much of Cotton's rhetoric stems from God's promising a permanent place for the Israelites to reside. Cotton equates the Company's situation to that of the Israelites gaining Caanan. He explains that God blesses His people with a place where they live and own their land outright (76). Then Cotton ventures to say that

Now God makes room for a people three ways:
First, when he casts out the enemies of a people before them by lawful war with the inhabitants, which God calls them unto, as in Psalms 44:2, *Thou didst drive out the heathen before them.* (77)

Cotton emphasizes the relationship that Puritans share with the Israelites in matters relating to land acquisition. Sacvan Bercovitch explains:

The Puritan clergy had set out to blur traditional distinctions between the world and the kingdom. Their rhetoric issued in a unique mode of ambiguity that precluded the conflict of heaven's time and man's. "Canaan" was a spiritual state for them, as it was for other Christians; but it was also (in another, but not conflicting sense) their country. (136)

Cotton makes several references to Caanan the plight that Israelites had against the Egyptians. Similarly, the Puritans viewed the Old World (England) as the oppressor (just as Israel viewed Egypt) and their migration to the New World similar to the exodus of the Israelites to Canaan. Their self-chosen depiction as the new elect people meant that they

had a special calling and trials to face. Their migration to the New World only entailed God's promise to them as well as His duty unto them. Many of their accounts are steeped in this logic. Furthermore, Cotton strongly encourages a "lawful war with the inhabitants" because God deems it necessary. Cotton and other Puritans privilege their own ideology by making it justify their own interests. Doing this allows justification for conquest and also allows them to think of Indians as heathen and bad.

With his labeling the Indians as heathens, Cotton demonstrates the Puritan attitude of superiority. His ethnocentric beliefs appear more frequently throughout the text. He believes that the Company's migration to New England is justified because "it is a principle in nature, that in a vacant soil he that taketh possession of it, and bestoweth culture and husbandry upon it, his right it is" (77). Because the Indians aren't "civilized," they do not possess ownership of the land. Here, Cotton creates a distinction between the Puritans and Indians by calling attention to the Indians' lowly ways of living. Showing them in a negative light helps Puritans define their own identity and justify their own pilfering. Indians appear sub-human in Cotton's sermon; they need the help of God's people to gain favor in their God's sight. Cotton continues to answer how "God makes room for a people: "Secondly, when he gives a foreign people favor in the eyes of any native people to come and sit down with them either by way of purchase, as Abraham did obtain the field of Machpelah" (77). Again, the concept of the Puritans rightfully owning the land that they reside appears in Winthrop's and Cotton's texts. More self-claiming appears later when he explains that God's people take the land because of God's promise, but others (such as the Indians) are not entitled to His promise (77). Cotton clearly shows the self-centeredness of Puritan thinking when he states Puritans have a "more special

appointment, because God tells them of his own mouth” their right to His promised land (77). Puritans felt that epidemics of Indians were God’s signs of his blessings and promises. With these racialized conceptions of Indians functioning in the minds and ideologies of Puritans, it is no wonder that Cotton proclaims to others to continue this legacy in order to keep the Puritans in power as they enter the New World.

John Cotton instructs the Massachusetts Bay Company to “teach your children to serve him, that hath appointed you and them the place of your habitation” (79). These lines follow a concept that Louis Althusser’s *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* demonstrates. That is, in order for the system of privilege to continue, Puritans must teach younger generations to view themselves as superior and others as inferior. Though not explicitly, these Puritan texts are rich in ethnocentric logic. One source states that “The education of the next generation was important to further ‘purify’ the church and perfect social living,” which further illustrates Louis Althusser’s concept of educating the children at school (Kizer). Althusser mentions that children of the system learn to read, write, and add along with other elements which are useful in the different jobs in production (1337). Conspicuously hidden is the agenda of a ruling class’s power. Ultimately, Puritanism used the church as a tool of education to “ensure subjection to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its ‘practice’” (Althusser 1337). To “purify” meant that Puritans wanted to secure their power by teaching the “know-how” to future proletariats and someday administer different jobs of production (Althusser 1337). In 1635, the Roxbury Latin School was formed and was one of the first formal and free schools offered (Kizer). The Puritans lectured to their pupils extensively about the dangers of the world and also taught that the devil was behind every evil deed (Kizer). In these schools

students and teachers referenced the Bible which arguably helped stimulate students' "corporate intellect by promoting discussions of literature" (Kizer). Students were encouraged to create their own poetry, always religious in content (Kizer). Breitwieser relates that "Puritan writing was for the most part practical and militant rather than theoretical and multisided" (21). Reading was taught more often than "ciphering" (math) and writing (Kizer). This idea of the shaping of young minds goes hand in hand with Althusser's theory of the "techniques and knowledges" of social formations (1337). Indeed, John Cotton warns "have a tender care that you look well to the plants that spring from you, that is, to your children, that they do not degenerate as the Israelites did" (80). In order to keep power internalized, as Althusser's theory reiterates, Puritans must instruct and keep younger generations blind to the horrible acts of conquest.

In the end of John Cotton's sermon, he instructs the Company to take several actions in order to fulfill God's prophecy of their promised land; one of those happens to be to bring faith to the Indians. The idea that their mission is to convert Indians is deeply embedded within the rhetoric of their texts, but interestingly enough, Cotton ends his sermon on this note. The majority of his sermon focuses more on enterprise and land and justifying their occupation of said land, than actually converting Christians. Nonetheless, Cotton details:

Offend not the poor natives, but as you partake in their land, so make them partakers of your precious faith: as you reap their temporal, so feed them with your spirituals: win them to the love of Christ, for whom Christ died... Who knoweth whether God have reared this whole plantation for such an end. (80)

Even as Cotton explains preaching the gospel to Indians, his focus remains on land. It's obvious to see where Puritans' goals lie, yet Puritans couched their intentions with

religious rhetoric. Other Puritans such as Robert Cushman remain blind to their own ideologies and continue to other those with darker skin and assign connotations to their races.

Robert Cushman, deacon of the Leyden congregation and business agent of the proposed colony, details in his *Reasons and Considerations Touching the Lawfulness of Removing out of England into the Parts of America* (1622) the extent to which Puritans should leave Old England for New England (Heimert and Delbanco 41). Cushman's account compares Indians' "natural abilities" to Puritans in order to distinguish themselves from Indians as well as provide a means to justify their own intrusion among the Indians. Cushman explains that the reason why Puritans should go to New England is because

[Indians] are not industrious, neither have art, science, skill or faculty to use either the land or the commodities of it, but all spoils, rots, and is marred for want of manuring, gathering, ordering, etc....so it is lawful now to take a land which none useth, and make use of it. (44)

Cushman attributes the traits of laziness and incompetency to Indians to make his culture appear superior to the Indians. Puritans associated these "natural abilities" with being Indian and feared becoming Indianized if they too partook in Indian idleness. William S. Simmons explains, "Puritans considered the Indians to be vengeful, cowardly, and addicted to idleness, lying, and stealing" (62). These cultural labels allowed Cushman to surmise "...we ought also to endeavor and use the means to convert them, and the means cannot be used unless we go to them or they come to us; to us they cannot come, our land is full; to them we may go, their land is empty" (43). For all Puritans believed that it was God's providence that He would preserve North America for the English (Jones 156).

Cushman also labels Indians as heathens in his account, already attaching negative connotations to the images of Indians.

To better explain how Puritans imagined their worldview, William S. Simmons offers a descriptive perspective:

They saw the world as an arena where forces of light and holiness, represented by Protestant saints, fought against armies of sin and darkness, represented by devils who motivated aristocracies and priesthoods, and infiltrated the Christian community through immoral and undisciplined persons. This mental framework for comprehending evil both within and outside themselves provided Puritan colonists with a theory for interpreting cultural differences between them-selves and the native people whom they encountered in the New World. (56)

In addition, Puritans who settled in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island believed that Indians worshipped Satan (Simmons 56). Therefore, whenever plagues or illnesses befell the Indians, Puritans interpreted these as God's punishment for the Indians' inherent qualities. Simmons even evaluates Cotton Mather's history of King Philip's War and concludes "the Puritan belief that Indians served the devil provided a rationale for the destruction or enslavement of entire populations in war" (67). Much of the ideology for seizing Indian territory in New England came from Puritans who interpreted their world through biblical references, spiritual revelations, and strict Protestant dogma. In effect, this structure and worldview

provided a moral basis for distancing, depersonalizing, and eventually displacing the native inhabitants, and when this process was completed, it provided the plot for historical interpretations of these events. The Puritans' world-view shaped their understanding of Indians in several ways. (Simmons 71)

When Puritans feel it is their rightful and just reward to take the land of Indians simply because of their theological framework, they construct a world based on their own interpretations and expect others to adapt to those Biblical interpretations. Richard Dyer

believes that white people encouraged the power to construct the world in their own image. Robert Cushman's reasons for migrating to New England show just how ethnocentric and superior he believes his culture to be. Within his text, readers see how he distinguishes his culture as superior than Indians and even builds rhetoric that justifies Puritans moving in on and cultivating what isn't theirs to begin with. Morrison outlines the way whites have identified themselves is through contrast. In this case, Puritans use the Africanist and in Cushman's text, the Indian presence to form an identity superior than the others'.

Throughout all of the Puritan texts in this chapter, many points of comparison between their ideology and rhetoric appear. From Cotton Mather's aims to baptize the blacks but justify the enslavement of them to Cushman's push to lawfully take the land of the Indians, each Puritan's unique detailing of their aims to rehearse the Gospel to the world reveals the attempts of white Puritan males to conquer and control the world. The so-called knowledge that they believe to be the redeeming factor of the world instead is used to control groups of people for their own advantage. Identifying as white, Puritan, and male helped them in achieving these aims. If it were not for this collective identity, much of the Puritans' constructs of themselves would not suffice during the voyages and migrations to New England. While fighting Indian wars, Puritans felt a deep collective sense of restoring the New World to what they believed God wanted. They saw New England as the New Canaan and earnestly felt that it was their right and duty to conquer others to fulfill God's word. Much of that ideology still persists today and has remained a defining factor for American identity. What we can garner from these Puritans is a past that is rife with turmoil and a self-serving religious ideology that will help us understand

how the history of the misuse of Christianity to control others has affected each of our social issues in today's world.

CHAPTER III

THE PURITAN LEGACY IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA: THE OUTSIDER-WITHIN PERSPECTIVE AND MARYSE CONDÉ'S *I TITUBA*, *BLACK WITCH OF SALEM*

Maryse Condé's novel *I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*, published in 1992, proves to be one of the most telling stories of early American ideology and its links with modern day ideas of racial legitimization. Explaining why she wrote *I, Tituba, the Black Witch*, Condé once said that the novel "was an opportunity to express my feelings about present-day America. I wanted to imply that in terms of narrow-mindedness, hypocrisy, and racism little has changed since the days of the Puritans" (414). Historically, little is known about Tituba, but records from the 1693 Salem Witch Trials indicate that Tituba was indeed tried for bewitching young girls in the village. By allowing Tituba to have agency in her novel, Condé compares the white male dominance in Puritan society to its dominance in modern day society. That enduring legacy can be seen prior to World War II, when New England black women performed domestic (and in some cases emotional) labor for their white employers and yet, paradoxically, according to Patricia Hill Collins and others⁷, though they were able to form bonds with white families, they could never "belong" to these families (11). Black women acquire a perspective that Collins calls the 'outsider-within' stance in which black women are able to "have a distinct view of the contradictions between the dominant group's actions and ideologies" (11). Therefore, Condé creatively grants Tituba this outsider-within perspective when she frames her novel in the first person autobiographical mode. The narrative is told from Tituba's

⁷ Nancy White, Geneva Smitherman, Mechal Sobel, Niara Sudarkasa, and Molefi Kete Asante.

perspective and readers become aware of the contradictions of the Puritans' beliefs and ideologies which mirror contemporary white-male interests. Mara L. Dukats explains that Condé gives voice to a silenced Tituba who has been written out of history by white males (53). This helps readers understand how Puritans constructed the past in a way that marginalized blacks and Indians. In the novel, Tituba represents a black woman's dichotomized self: she is Afro-Caribbean, but has to relinquish her black identity and dignity as a free black woman in order to marry John Indian. Scholars who have studied Condé's fictional rendition of Tituba's life focus more on viewing the novel not as a historical novel, but one that gives voice to historically marginalized women and allows those marginalized voices to be present in the literary canon. Critics have said that historically, Tituba is not proven to be black⁸, so scholars such as Zubeda Jalazai and Mara L. Dukats argue that Condé's novel is not historically accurate and their focus remains on contemporary society.

However, in this chapter, I argue that since no one has applied a black feminist perspective to Condé's novel, doing so would allow one to map out the ways Condé's novel uses early American Puritan ideology as a vehicle to critique of modern American society through an 'outsider-within' perspective. I read the novel as a critique of the

⁸ In regards to Tituba's ethnicity, Bernard Rosenthal explains, "the legal documents of her day do define her as 'Indian.' Whether that means an 'Indian' from Barbados or from elsewhere remains unproven and unknown. However, the persistence of that identification can assure us that she was not 'African' by the cultural definitions of her time. Tituba is consistently defined as an 'Indian' and never as a 'Negro.' That distinction, however, does not tell us much of anything about the place of her origin, nor does it rule out the possibility that she had some African or some Caucasian connection. We only know that if we believe that race is culturally constructed, then we have a 100 percent certainty that she was 'Indian.' This does not mean, however, that Tituba could not have been biologically connected to someone from Africa. Such an analysis is beyond the reach of normal scholarship. To settle this kind of matter would require the discovery of her bones and DNA testing. Short of that, we know that the culture made the distinction between her as an Indian and others as 'Negroes'" (49).

continuity of racial ideology from the past to the present.⁹ Collins gives an understanding of how racing and gendering bodies over centuries has worked. Collins represents for the reader the othered, racialized woman. Tituba's ethnicity is historically ambiguous, but indicates the messiness of preserving categories. This perspective is useful in showing how such categories preserve whiteness

Providing a brief overview of white male interests in Puritan ideology helps in identifying the racialized and gendered interests that Condé presents throughout her novel. According to Perry Miller, Puritans were always confronted with the difficulty of understanding their God. The Puritan declared that "the Puritan God is entirely incomprehensible to man" (Miller 10). Though they believed that God was absolute, just, and omniscient, Puritans could not pretend to understand His reasoning. Therefore, the Puritan system of order was entirely organized around an idealistic vision to 'explain' a being that was omniscient and had incalculable powers (Miller 10). What resulted from this system is what Althusser describes as a "[representation of] their real conditions of existence to themselves in an imaginary form" (1351). In other words, this system of order and the imagined God from whom order is distilled serves the interests of the people who dominate this system and justifies their attempts to legitimize their rule through a self-serving religious ideology.

Cotton Mather absorbs this idea when he claims that the divinity was a being like him (Miller 10). Mather, like his counterparts, asserted a description of God that tried to "unfold God's nature" by using human reason to provide a representation of what God's

⁹ While Condé certainly critiques gender oppression from earlier times and connects it to the present, the aim of this essay is to focus on the racial oppression that has persisted in contemporary society.

will would be (Miller 10). For instance, in *God's Promise to His Plantation*, (1630) John Cotton explains that one of the ways that God creates a place for his people to dwell is by permitting His people to “cast out the enemies of a people before them by lawful war with inhabitants, which God calls them unto” (77). He then proceeds to call Native Americans “heathen” and references Psalms 44:2¹⁰. Since Puritans could not say what God was, they attributed to him characteristics that mimicked their own—their God, their rules. As Miller eloquently states: “Religion is what man believes about God, not necessarily what God in Himself is” (11). Since Puritans endeavored to present their reasoning and conceptions of God as truth, they were able to justify their rule by arguing that God legitimated this reign.

Marilyn J. Westerkamp explains that English custom, the common law, and a Calvinist theology “constructed and upheld a patriarchal order” (571). In fact, the system perpetuates this idea of rule that uses the interests of the dominant culture, in this case Puritans, to manage others who do not inherently have the predestined grace of their God. Collins’s work explains the hegemonic power structure in modern society that oppresses and limits women of color. From a black feminist perspective, she sheds light on the workings of such an ideology:

Taken together, the seamless web of economy, polity, and ideology function as a highly effective system of social control designated to keep African- American women in an assigned, subordinate place. This larger system of oppression works

¹⁰ John Cotton cites from the King James Version of the Bible: “How though didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out” (KJV 887). The context of this chapter in Psalms expresses the sorrows of the Israelites who are suffering. This verse in particular explains God’s acts of allowing the Israelites to acquire Canaan. Cotton equates the Puritans gaining land from Indians to God’s favor on the Israelites gaining land from Canaanites.

to suppress the ideas of Black women intellectuals and to protect elite white male interests and worldviews. (7)

From this quote, I draw correlations between how seventeenth-century ideology oppressed women of color and how, as Collins argues, the web of economy, polity, and ideology in modern society still suppresses black women intellectuals, just through different forms. Even though it is illegal to enslave people today, it is not illegal for people to learn history written by white males whose interests and perspectives directly align with their social views about race, gender, and sexuality. This, I argue is at the essence of Collins's argument. She's showing us how oppression takes shape in different venues of modern American society. I am connecting those forms to historical forms of privilege to show that there still remains a long legacy of oppression, even though America claims to have moved on from racial oppression. Condé reveals forms of oppression through Tituba's experiences. Thus, Tituba's experience with Puritan ideology in America foregrounds many questions of white male dominance, women's roles in marriage, and the subjugated knowledge of the "Other."

As early as the seventeenth century, Puritans shaped the American political system to foster white male interests and marginalize Africans, Indians, and non-Christians who held different worldviews. For example,

Between 1680 and 1682, the first slave codes appeared, codifying the extreme deprivations of liberty already existing in social practice. Many laws parceled out differential treatment based on racial categories: Blacks were not permitted to travel without permits, to own property, to assemble publicly, or to own weapons; nor were they to be educated. (Harris 1720)

Puritans controlled the labor of Africans by denying them citizenship and justified this under the belief that Africans were the descendents of Ham and did not possess souls;

therefore, Africans did not have a voice in their political system because only white male Christians possessed that power.

Even in modern society, the legacy of white male interests is inherent in the American political system. For example, in June of 2013, the Supreme Court gave states like Texas, Alabama, and North Carolina unfettered authority to impose new, voter identification requirements that potentially disenfranchise minority voters by redistricting areas to sway the voter outcome. Proposition 5 of the Voting Rights Act was enacted in 1965 to protect the voting rights of Southern African Americans; however, Chief Justice John Roberts and others argue that this law is not relevant since “we are now a very different Nation” (District Number One). However, since minority voters are overwhelmingly Democratic, it seems that the goal of these states is to try and disenfranchise as many people as possible and redistrict them to reduce their population effect on the voting majority.

Even the 2000 election between George W. Bush and Al Gore exemplifies how politics repress certain interests that conflict with white male interests. Michael Parenti explains

Independent investigations in that state revealed serious irregularities directed mostly against ethnic minorities and low-income residents who usually voted heavily Democratic. Some 36,000 newly registered voters were turned away because their names had never been added to the voter rolls by Florida’s secretary of state Kathleen Harris. (“The Stolen Elections”)

Governor Jeb Bush, George W. Bush’s brother, ordered state troopers to search voters’ cars and in effect, delayed their votes in Florida (“The Stolen Elections”). Taken altogether, George W. Bush’s conservative activists on the Supreme Court played a dominant role in securing the presidency for him (“The Stolen Elections”). The legacy of

oppression continues when the system in place systemically marginalizes groups, beginning as early as the seventeenth century. Politics become an occasion for repressing interests that are not at the center of a white male identity. From these examples, I deduce that the metamorphosis of racial oppression does not indicate its extinction, but rather shows that there is still residue of oppression that dates back as early as the seventeenth century.

Essential to my discussion of Puritan thought is Richard Dyer's extensive research on Christianity and the dualistic nature of the embodiment of whiteness (14). Dyer explains further that Christianity gives an "intellectual foundation for thinking and feeling about the white body," and it also forms and structures the cultural codes of whiteness (14). Since "European feeling for self and the world has been shaped by Christianity (14)," the close attention that Christianity pays to the body and mind shapes much of the mindset of white identity. Christianity engenders an idea that one is a being of the human body, but harbors an essence inside that is not of the flesh. Since Whiteness is exempt from being raced because of its perceived normality, it takes on the position of being the essence inside the body that is not of the flesh. Virtually, whiteness becomes a spirit that cannot be reduced to race.

Because of whiteness's enterprise, it has the God given right to impose its beliefs onto non-whites. Hortense J. Spillers explains that when the male and female black body becomes a territory of cultural and political maneuver:

- 1)the captive body becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality;
- 2)at the same time—in stunning contradiction—the captive body reduces to a thing, becoming *being for* the captor;
- 3)in this absence *from* a subject position, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of "otherness";
- 4)as a category of "otherness," the captive body translates into a potential for

pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more “general powerlessness,” resonating through various centers of human and social meaning. (457)

Spillers shows that there is always this external fixation on the black body where racing it defines a set of ideas about it.

Conversely, white people have always scrutinized black bodies and blackness by associating blackness with flesh and not with intellect. Blackness doesn't possess the ability to have that inner essence that is not of the body. We can see examples of this in Early America where Africans could not become Christianized because they did not “possess souls” (which in reality was a way for colonists to socially control their property), and we see this culminating with the fascination of exotic bodies, such as Sarah Baartman's in the early nineteenth century. Nevertheless, white people associate the white ideal with Christianity, which emphasizes the split between the flesh and the inner self/spirit. While white people associated whiteness with the inner self, they associated blackness with the body. Understanding the ways whiteness and blackness are perceived through a Christian lens shows how Tituba's oppression descends from a long history of discrimination and oppression.

Condé critiques Christianity in America by exposing the contradictions in the way Puritans conceived its beginnings in early America. Tituba begins her story by revealing the rape of her mother by an English sailor making his way to Barbados, which led to her birth. Ironically, the Englishman rapes Abena, Tituba's mother, on the ship *Christ the King*. This small detail clues the reader into the religious ideology behind the institution of slavery. The fact that an act of violence occurs on this ship shows the contradictions inherent in the ideology of peace and charity signaled by the name of the ship and the

violence and brutality that takes place aboard this vessel. Not only does Condé's revealing the name of the ship during the rape scene expose English hypocrisy but it also implicitly compares the act of rape to Christians coming to the New World to force their religion on non-Christians. In fact, Puritans believed that their duty was to spread their belief to less-fortunate souls and that doing so would fulfill their mission as God's people. This idea extended to justification for slavery because Africans were viewed as naturally depraved beings descended from the biblical Ham. Claudia Durst Johnson states "Cotton Mather believed that slavery brought black Africans out of darkness into the godly company of the chosen people" (149) much like the English believe the ship *Christ, the King* is carrying Africans from darkness to light.

However, Christian doctrine proclaimed that all of God's children were equal. This posed a problem for the Puritans who used this doctrine to justify the slave's place. For economic reasons, Puritans rejected converting slaves because "Christianity gave black slaves a false sense of equality, which made them less malleable and therefore less marketable" (Johnson 155). In order to justify the slaves' positions in Puritan society, they tried to convince slaves that they were perpetually doomed and cursed because of their barbaric ancestry. Timothy J. McMillan explains that blacks were believed to be the cursed sons of Ham, who was the son of Noah. Cannon, Ham's son, and his descendants were condemned by God to be servants. Puritans believed that the "cursed children of Canaan moved to Africa and were burned black as a mark of their servile status" (115). Katie Geneva Cannon reiterates, "Resting upon irrational antipathies, white Christians—prominent and common-bred alike—clearly distinguished their personhood from that of Africans...they believed that the color of white skin proved sufficient justification to rob

Africans by force and fraud of their liberty” (416). A more modern example of this incident will link this historical stereotype to modern stereotypes of blacks.

The aforementioned historical-racialized view of black people informs modern views of African Americans today. For instance, many conservatives have questioned Obama’s belief in Christianity and have labeled him Muslim. In this century, being deemed anything different than Christian, especially Muslim, is in itself a type of othering, which is analogous to how Puritans represented “heathens” as others in America. According to CBS news, the Pew Research Center reported that “nearly half, 49 percent, of registered voters surveyed correctly identified Mr. Obama as Christian, while 17 percent thought he was Muslim” (“Conservatives”). These views represent conservative Republicans which statistically increased from 12 percent in 2008 (“Conservatives”). These subconscious racial views date back to how Puritans believed anything associated with Blackness was ungodly. In the novel, Samuel Parris condemns Tituba and John Indian: “I know that the color of your skin is the sign of your damnation, but as long as you are under my roof you will behave as Christians. Come and say your prayers!” (Condé 41). The Puritan Christianity in Condé’s novel becomes the object of Tituba’s examination in her re-telling of her life. Tituba’s foresight challenges what Puritans deem holy and correct and questions the system that aims to treat her as a lesser being.

Tituba learns that the ideals of marriage that Puritans created are reserved for the privileged. Before Tituba moves to America, readers learn that she is set free because of her mother’s persecution and her stepfather’s suicide. She finds a home with Mama Yaya who is labeled as a witch. Mama Yaya teaches her craft and soon departs to the invisible

world. By this time, Tituba is a young adult and lives contently secluded from society in her self-built shack near the place she grew up. Tituba seems content with her independence; however, she often explains that her love for men is her weakness.

Tituba conjures her spell to ask for advice from Mama Yaya, Abena, and her stepfather, Yao from the invisible world. Mama Yaya warns Tituba not to “return to the white man’s world,” yet Tituba’s yearning for John Indian and his “object that gives pleasure” makes her relinquish her freedom (Condé 19, 25). John Indian is as an ambiguous character because he seems simple to Tituba. Yet, he constantly tells her to play along with the Puritans and to try and stay alive. His advice to Tituba shows his understanding of the operations of Puritan ideology. This includes saying the Lord’s Prayer during supper when the Parris family does, confessing sins, and acting jovial around them. Tituba’s ancestors from the invisible world despise John Indian because he complies with the Puritan worldview. In a way, John Indian becomes the enemy because he protects the white male interests of Puritan society. When Tituba first meets John Indian, he calls her a witch and constantly suggests taming her (Condé 18). John Indian’s desire to tame Tituba demonstrates a patriarchal notion that her freedom is unacceptable to him.

Tituba’s love and desire for John Indian enslaves her because love is reserved for the privileged in her society. Tituba meets John Indian in the woods one day as he’s doing an errand for his mistress, Susanna Endicott. She admires his bravado for speaking to her because, as she explains, it’s been a while since she’s talked to a man. At this time, Tituba lives alone in her self-built shack away from civilization. John Indian invites her to a dance near his home and Tituba nods in agreement. Later that day,

Tituba's experience with John Indian changes her perspective on life. Tituba explains, "I saw the place I called home with new eyes and it looked sinister. The planks, roughly squared off with an axe, were blackened by wind and rain" (Condé 14). Her feelings for John Indian inhibit her mind to the point that she calls on her deceased spirits for advice.

The conversation is as follows:

"Mama Yaya," I said, panting, "I want this man to love me."
She shook her head. "Men do not love. They posses. They subjugate."

Mama Yaya's reply to Tituba's desires is the overarching theme of the book. Mama Yaya's foreshadowing statement not only reveals her ability to see Tituba's future as it unfolds, but it also provides insight for the reader.

Mama Yaya invites the reader to compare John Indian, who is half black and Indian, to the Puritan men. John Indian, compared to white men, is a subjugated figure, but compared to Tituba, he's the subjugating figure. Race and gender intersect paradoxically when the axis of gender supersedes their raced identity. John Indian embodies the role of a man who has been subjected by the dominant culture and performs his expected roles in order to survive. Should the reader judge his character solely on his "maleness" since John Indian is a product of colonial oppression and violence? This question remains central to the novel, as readers grapple with understanding the roles of women throughout it. Tituba grapples with it as well, when she explains,

My mother had been raped by a white man. She had been hanged because of a white man. I had seen his tongue quiver out of his mouth, his penis turgid and violent. My adoptive father had committed suicide because of a white man. Despite all that, I was considering living among white men again, in their midst, under their domination. And all because of an uncontrollable desire for a mortal man. (19)

Tituba wonders to herself if her desire was madness and betrayal. She eventually marries John Indian and moves in with him and his mistress. John Indian betrays Tituba when the Puritans imprison her, and she experiences insurmountable violence and grief while enslaved to the Parris family. The system that cultivated John Indian plays a large role in his character. Though he never abuses Tituba, he does ask her to become tame in order to survive. Tituba's unwillingness to submit to any system becomes her downfall in the novel. Her thirst for love and pleasure gets her into trouble and readers realize that love is a reserved privilege for the people in power, not slaves. However, Condé celebrates female sexuality in the sense that Tituba can enjoy her relations with her husband, and the fact that she objectifies his "object that gives pleasure" shows an independent and controlled sexuality. She asserts her own independence by giving herself the opportunity to express her love.

Tituba is introduced to Puritan ideas of the "Other" when Puritans project their notions of a witch unto her. Of course, this is the first time Tituba hears the label "witch" and questions its connotation. She uses her powers for healing and goodness, yet she is perceived differently by the Puritans, and even by slaves such as John Indian. This idea of denigrative labeling is one Collins explains and further shows how its usage implies further subjugation by the dominant culture. Collins explains: "These controlling images are designed to make racism, sexism, and poverty appear to be natural, normal, and an inevitable part of everyday life" (68). After she marries John Indian and is forced to move to New England with her new master, Samuel Parris, rumors begin to spread of her witchcraft. Puritans impose their notions of witchcraft onto Tituba's powers and even the village women ask her how to bake a witchcake out of urine in order to see who was

accusing Tituba of witchcraft. Tituba denies the truth of this rumor by telling the village woman to “go and tell [her] old wives’ tales to someone else!” (Condé 78).

This process of projection is what Collins deems the objectification of black women as the other. She asserts, “Maintaining images of Black women as the Other provides ideological justification for race, gender, and class oppression” (68). This is borne out in Tituba’s life because she is constantly being defined by Puritan notions of what a witch is. Though she uses her powers to heal the village’s sick, and often the village women thank her for her goodness, they accuse her when the Salem village girls pretend Tituba bewitches them. Because Tituba exists in a society where her identity is defined by a dominant set of ideas, she is constantly restricted to that identity. Objectifying Tituba is one way Puritans can control her. She is ‘wild’ and a black woman—both suggest to Puritans that she is a ‘heathen’ and needs God’s grace to redeem her.

The modern equivalent of this is the “angry black woman” and other stereotypes that are exploited and perpetuated by society and Hollywood. For instance, reality shows like *Married to Medicine* portray black women who cannot subdue their “inherent” heathen and wild characteristics. These women fight, slander, and hurl egregious insults toward one another even though they are either doctors or married to doctors. Society legitimizes these claims and further produce images of African American women that are neither accurate nor representative. Dominant groups who control images of others have always held the power to identify the “other.”

Another example is Tasha Smith’s portrayal of a loud black woman who emasculates her husband in Tyler Perry’s *Why Did I get Married* (2007). Smith plays

Angela, the oftentimes inebriated wife of Marcus (Michael Jai White). Perry portrays Angela in a negative and humorous light; Angela is oftentimes depicted with an alcoholic beverage in her hand, chastising and humiliating her husband in public. Angela is the essence of a mad black woman who always distrusts her husband. Though Perry identifies as African American, viewers see him perpetuating the stereotype of mad, black women. Tituba's labeling proves that this ideology persists even today. Black women's self-definition is important to Black Feminist Thought. Collins explains, "Self-definition involves challenging the political knowledge-validation process that has resulted in externally-defined, stereotypical images of Afro-American womanhood" (S16). The dehumanizing stereotypical images of black womanhood remain central to oppressing black women.

Tituba remains assertive throughout most of the novel, and it is this assertiveness that allows her to define her own identity. She becomes a threat to the "status quo" and her resistance proves troublesome for the Puritans. However, because Tituba has her own standards and doesn't want to comply with the system, she is able to navigate within the system. Because she sees the contradictions within Puritan ideology, she uses that knowledge to manipulate Puritans.

In the novel, Puritans use theology to legitimate the social order in the Seventeenth Century, yet Tituba challenges this social order. In chapter ten, Tituba explains that she "had not realized the full extent of the ravages that Samuel Parris's religion was causing nor even understood its real nature before coming to live in Salem" (65). After rumors were spread about bewitchment, the town was in an uproar and "Neighbor wanted to exterminate neighbor, a brother, his sister" (Condé 65). The

villagers always thought of Tituba and the three black servants in the village as the devil's worshippers. Tituba's perspective on this incident shows that it is the villagers who seem like the messengers of Satan instead of the three black servants in the community. Also, when Tituba first sees Samuel Parris, she thinks he is Satan. Tituba explains Parris was

Tall, very tall, dressed in black from head to foot, with a chalky white skin. As he was about to go up the stairs, his eyes fell on me, standing in the half-light with my bucket and broom, and I almost fell over. I have already said much about the eyes of Susanna Endicott, but these! Imagine greenish, cold eyes, scheming and wily, creating evil because they saw it everywhere. It was as if I had come face-to-face with a snake or some other evil, wicked reptile. I was immediately convinced that this Satan we heard so much about must stare in the same way at people he wishes to lead astray. (Conde 34)

During supper, Samuel Parris forces his family, including Tituba and John Indian to confess their sins. John Indian confesses to "all sorts of tom foolery," but when it's Tituba's turn to confess, she angrily says, "Why should I confess? What goes on in my head and my heart is my business" (Condé 41). Instantly, Samuel Parris strikes her and makes her mouth bleed. Elizabeth Parris, his wife who has become close to Tituba, stands up for her and tells Samuel Parris that he has no right to strike her. Samuel Parris strikes Elizabeth and she, too, bleeds. Tituba reinforces a commonality between herself and Elizabeth when she says, "This blood sealed our alliance" (41). Tituba overturns the idea of Blacks being Satanic and shows how the Puritans perform acts of violence. Condé creates a sisterhood by showing how both women are oppressed, but in different ways.

Elizabeth's white skin allows her more privilege than Tituba, though they are still oppressed as women. Tituba realizes this when she compares her marriage to Elizabeth's marriage to Samuel Parris. She claims "there is no happiness in motherhood for a slave.

It is little more than the expulsion of an innocent baby, who will have no chance to change its fate, into a world of slavery and abjection” (Condé 50). She also explains that many slave mothers have killed their unborn children because of this. She details their gruesome fates: “I had seen slaves kill their babies by sticking a long thorn into the still viscous-like egg of their heads, but cutting the umbilical cord with a poison blade, or else by abandoning them at night in a place frequented by angry spirits” (50). Tituba chooses to abort her and John Indian’s child by using a potion.

On a more optimistic note, Tituba rejoices in her secular freedom and the fact that she can express her sensuality more than Elizabeth. Elizabeth claims that Samuel Parris takes her without taking off his clothes, implying that the act of sex is a sinful, detestable, and violent act much like the rape described at the beginning of the novel. Tituba is glad that she and her husband have a consensual intimate relationship. She illustrates: “Spattered with mud, shivering with cold, and worn out, my man made love to me every night...we had to be careful not to utter any sighs or moans” because they slept in a cubby hole next to the Parris’s bedroom (50). However, Tituba examines these restraints: “Paradoxically, this merely heightened the passion of our lovemaking” (50). This is one way Tituba becomes an outsider looking within; she understands how Puritan culture restricts intimacy, but also how she can never be a mother in the traditional sense. Motherhood is not afforded to slaves because of their race and class status. Tituba has access to the dominant culture’s ideology because she performs menial jobs inside the home. Tituba listens to her Mistress’s conversations with her daughters and is able to become close to women. She’s able to gain the sympathy from her Mistress and sees how

her Mistress doesn't like her husband's way of loving her. Tituba is free to love John Indian in ways that please her. She realizes that her Mistress doesn't share that freedom.

In Condé's novel, Tituba and Elizabeth's relationship forms after they realize that Samuel Parris's treatment of them joins them as sisters of oppression. Tituba is confined to her race and gender and Elizabeth is confined to her gender. However, Elizabeth's spiritual ties bind her to her culture and ideology. Though not indicated in the book, a typical Puritan woman's spirituality such as Elizabeth's spirituality is based on her pristineness and difference to black women who Puritans saw as immoral and tainted. Tituba realizes this when she explains that "We did not belong to the same universe, Goodwife Parris, Betsey, and I, and all the affection in the world could not change that" (Condé 63).

Tituba also realizes that she and Elizabeth yearned for different things because of their lifestyles. Tituba's nostalgia for home is different than Goodwife Parris's yearning for a "gentler life" (Condé 63). Indeed, Tituba sums up the differences between a slave's life and white women's lives when she says "What they yearned for was the sweetness of a gentler life, the life of white women were served and waited on by attentive slaves" (63). Tituba then explains even if the family was to lose all their wealth in Salem, the life that they had in Salem was composed of luxury and voluptuousness. She, as a slave, had nothing luxurious to call her own. Her yearnings were from a standpoint of a slave who yearned for the crumbs from the bread of life (Condé 63). Though Goodwife Parris shows interest in Tituba's freedom to dance the way she wants or to have pleasurable intimacy with her husband, she is still positioned on a higher social scale and thereby can have more privilege than her slave, though they are both oppressed. This instance is

significant in thinking about the social privileges that some people share in society because of their skin color. What Tituba deems natural, the Puritans see as unnatural and unholy. Not only is her sexual non-procreation by choice, she also possesses non-Christian knowledge which is threatening to the social order. She then becomes a threat to the social order and Samuel Parris with other Puritans find ways to assault her to make her comply.

Collins argues that white male dominance finds ways to subordinate and suppress black women's interests; this happens particularly with Tituba when Parris forces her to condemn certain women in the community as witches. Samuel Parris along with three other Puritan men jab a sharp stick in between Tituba's legs to make her confess who the witches were in Salem to the court (Condé 91). This violent act shows the character of Samuel Parris and other Puritans who proclaimed to be God's chosen people.

The men beat Tituba, causing blood to spill from her mouth, and force her to denounce herself and other innocent women in the village as witches. As mentioned before, Tituba explains early in her story that her mother was raped by an Englishman on the ship *Christ the King*. Often, colonials justified their sexual contacts with slaves by creating laws that made slaves the sexual objects of European men (Kempadoo 32). Thereby, slaves were re-classified based upon a new institution of racialized sexuality. In the colonial imagination, black women were characterized as loose, "fickle as a wife," and promiscuous (Kempadoo 31). Colonials deemed black women as the opposites of white womanhood, and therefore, animalistic in their sexuality. This gave an impetus for sexual abuse through rape and other acts of violence. Rape and mutilation of sexual organs of enslaved people were commonplace and were means for controlling the

captured populations (Kempadoo 33). This explains why the three Puritan men thrust a sharp stick in between Tituba's thighs in order to make her confess the names of the other accused witches in Salem. They rationalize that because Tituba is a black woman, she is not entitled to the same human rights as Elizabeth Parris, for instance. After the stick is inside Tituba, one of the Puritan men exclaims, "Go on, take it, it's John Indian's prick" (Condé 91). This statement represents one of the ideas of the colonial imagination: that is, she is a hypersexual black woman who is justifiably violated because of her racialized sexuality.

Tituba confesses her innocence, but it proves fruitless. The Puritan men call John Indian in to talk her into denouncing innocent women's names to the court, and John Indian tells Tituba to agree to their demands to stay alive (92). Tituba is in disbelief at her husband's shallowness, yet she begins to understand that this is one way to survive in a system that marginalizes black women. She thinks, "I was going to strike hard. And at the top. And now that I was totally destitute, the feeling of power went to my head! Yes, my John Indian was right. This revenge, of which I had often dreamed, would now be mine and through the very doing of my enemies" (Condé 93). In order to seek revenge, purposefully concedes to the Puritans' demands by claiming the devil "bid [her] to serve him" during her trial (104). Her goal is to give the names of Sarah Osborne and Sarah Good, two women who constantly accused her of witchcraft.

Tituba is fully aware of what Puritans want to hear, so she gives them what they've been wanting: a reason to persecute their own people. After her trial, the town persecutes these women, a child, and even a man. Elizabeth visits Tituba in jail and apologizes for believing she was a witch. She claims how ravaged the town has become.

Tituba skillfully uses the belief systems about witches and proves her cleverness. She could only achieve this through her outsider-within perspective. Ultimately, the fact that Tituba cannot function within the dominant culture is evidenced in her persecution as a witch. The slave masters use mob mentality to kill her when she returns to Barbados. Her reputation as a witch carried over to her home country and it shows how inescapable these labels can be. If one looks at the way people label black women today, one can trace the obvious connections that Condé forges between Puritan's stereotypes and contemporary America's stereotypes of black women.

The important idea I'd like to highlight from this essay is that it is vital to trace hegemonic practices connected to slave ideology and white Christian life. I'm citing modern day examples to show continuity between the past and present. These examples are not isolated but they reflect implicitly a culture that still holds onto all of these ideas and hierarchies. For instance, I cite the voting rights examples because it shows how taking away the political power of a group helps white male interests remain central in U.S. politics. The idea that Puritans employed is there, just in more subtle forms. Condé reveals the contradictions inherent in Puritan ideology, while also implying the legacy of those ideas today. Cannon believes it is important to trace hegemonic practices because the "same general schemes of oppression and patterns of enslavement remain prevalent today and because the biblical hermeneutics of oppressive praxis is far from being dead among contemporary exegetes" (419). Approaching hegemonic practices in a historical context reveals their origins as well as the progress of America since the Puritan times. Interestingly, as Condé explains, little has indeed changed since Puritan times.

Tituba's subjugated knowledge brings to the forefront the systems that are created to keep her interests subordinate to the dominant culture's interests. Tituba worries that once she passes over into the "invisible world" there won't be anyone who remembers her story; therefore she teaches a "young girl" her craft so that her legacy lives on. Her constant wish that her story be remembered mirrors Collins's idea about how early black women evolved strategies to preserve their ideas. She is pleased when she hears a young boy humming a song about her indicating that her memory lives on. The system that tries to subjugate black feminist thought allows gaps for it to be heard "from one end of the island to the other, from North Point to Silver Sands, from Bridgetown, to Bottom Bay" (Condé 175). The issues of racial identity and memory are important to the tradition of black feminist thought. Thus, Tituba uses her knowledge of her identity and her outsider-within perspective she gains in Salem to expose the contradictions within Puritan society. While most critics agree that Tituba's story has been recreated by Condé who doesn't rely on actual historical evidence, I argue that applying a Black Feminist Perspective to Condé's novel helps us understand how white male dominance has had a lasting legacy that still exists today. As Condé's novel helps us understand the legacy of white male dominance, Morrison's *A Mercy* provides an outlook on servitude before it was racialized. The outsider within perspective garners much insight from voices that still remain silent in the telling of American history.

CHAPTER IV

THE PURITAN LEGACY IN *A MERCY*

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*, published in 2008, begins in *medias res* with a first-person narration by Florens, who is Jacob Vaark's young slave, then moves to the third person narratives of the other characters in the novel. Morrison's gripping story of abandonment in 1680s America foregrounds several issues of belonging and early servitude before the advent of racial slavery as we've come to understand it. Morrison depicts Virginia in the late Seventeenth Century as a budding frontier, where settlers are beginning to acquire land and gain from the fur and tobacco trades, which are fueling capitalistic goals for New England. Jacob Vaark, the man who stabilizes the lives of the women in the novel, sees Virginia in 1682 as "a mess" (Morrison 11). Each character's unique perspectives on his or her life in colonial New England provides a unique perspective towards a complete picture of America pre-racial enslavement. Yet, Morrison only gives Florens the opportunity to speak through her own voice because she represents an amalgamation of different cultural experiences. She is a black Portuguese slave who learns how to speak English. Her experience with both cultures' languages exemplifies how different ethnic groups are migrating to America and their experiences are becoming a part of the American experience. The fact that Florens can relate her perspective using these languages and their accompanying cultural experiences helps Morrison provide another point of view on American history. Throughout the novel, readers learn the background stories of each person's life and how they all connect to each other. Morrison's ability to capture this snippet of fictional history, and show how the characters' orphan statuses informs readers' views of colonial America, adds to the

conversation of the outsider-within stance which can be gleaned from each characters' perspectives of 1680s Virginia.

Coincidentally, each character possesses an orphan status, whether it is through neglect, or through the slave system. The orphan figure is that of an outsider. This means that characters' own social groups shun each member in the Vaark clan. Thereby, each character is able to stand on the periphery of mainstream society and look within. This helps explain the charitable nature of Jacob Vaark, who himself is an orphan and relates to each female character who is abandoned. For instance, the first time Vaark is introduced, he is revealed as a "ratty orphan become landowner" (12). Vaark is a Dutch trader by profession who seeks to elevate himself by building a large house. Vaark longs to be among the landed gentry and this is even more evident in the scenes where he acquires Florens from D'Ortega. D'Ortega owes Vaark money and is too proud to admit he's in debt. Vaark observes the following from D'Ortega and his family while at dinner:

They seemed well suited to each other: vain, voluptuous prouder of their pewter and porcelain than of their sons. It was abundantly clear why D'Ortega was in serious debt. Turning profit into useless baubles, unembarrassed by sumptuary, silk stockings and an overdressed wife, wasting candles in midday, he would always be unable to ride out any setback, whether it be lost ship or ruined crop. (19)

Vaark's observations show the muddiness of white privilege because D'Ortega isn't wealthy, yet he has access to capital, slaves, and "the house, the gate, and the fence" that Vaark envies (Morrison 27). Vaark does not represent this type of "whiteness" in the same way that D'Ortega represents it. Vaark is much more "exotic" in so far as he represents an alternative to white maleness (Babb 157). Though Vaark can gain access to these riches if he himself consents to a system that profits from human bodies, his choice

not to allow him the insight to understand how selling blacks is immoral. Vaark “sneered at wealth dependent on a captured workforce that required more force to maintain...He was determined to prove that his own industry could amass the fortune, the station, D’Ortega claimed without trading his conscience for coin” (28).

Virginia had “lawless laws encouraging cruelty in exchange for common cause, if not common virtue” (10-11). Vaark’s view of Virginia as “a mess” that could not “keep up with the pitched battles for God, king and land” shows his perceptions of his society.

This is why he is able to form bonds with the servants who work for him. Even he feels that he is not in the business of selling human flesh, but his one act of acquiring Lorens from D’Ortega shows how Vaark’s little glint of religion is more humane than that of the people around him. Vaark also makes interesting observations about the beginnings of systemic racism.

As Vaark makes his way to D’Ortega’s house, he thinks about the unjustness and messiness of 1680s Virginia; this sheds light on the actual status in place to restrict others from economic gain in the Puritan community. One sees Morrison agreeing with Theodore Allen when she explains that “‘the people’s war’ [Bacon’s Rebellion] spawned a thicket of new laws authorizing chaos in defense of order” (10). Vaark observes the following about the Virginia laws:

By eliminating manumission, gatherings, travel and bearing arms for black people only; by granting license to any white to kill any black for any reason; by compensating owners for slave’s maiming or death, they separated and protected all whites from all others forever. (10)

Vaark views these laws as “lawless laws” (10-11) because he sees their inhumanity and apparent contradictory nature. Vaark helps readers explore the paradoxical nature of

laws that privilege whites over others; he claims these laws “were encouraging cruelty in exchange for common cause if not common virtue” (11). Morrison, in the above lines, alludes to the 1680 Virginia statute that stated:

Whereas the frequent meeting of considerable numbers of negro slaves under pretence of feasts and burialls is judged of dangerous consequence; for prevention whereof for the future...it shall not be lawfull for any negroe or other slave to carry or arme himselfe with any club, staffe, gunn, sowerd or any other weapon of defence or offence, nor to goe or depart from of his masters ground without certificate from his master, mistris or overseer, and such permission not to be granted but upon pertiucler and necessary occasions...And it is further enacted by the authority aforesaid that if any negroe or other slave shall presume to lift up his hand in opposition against any Christian, shall for every such offence, upon due prooffe made thereof by the oath of the party before a magistrate, have and receive thirty lashes onhis bare back well laid on. And it is hereby further enacted by the authority that if any negroe or other slave . . . shall resist any person or persons that shalby any lawfull authority be employed to apprehend and take the said negroe . . . it shalbe lawfull for such person or persons to kill the said negroe or slave soe lying out and resisting. (Hening 481-2)

These laws evidence a privileging of “Christians” (the laws create a synonymous relationship between whites and Christians) over blacks and Indians. What Vaark shows readers is his awareness of these privileges. He plays the role of a white male who is different from the rest, but at the same time, still tries to function within the landed gentry circle.

Though Vaark is able to empathize with orphans, he still becomes a product of his generation by viewing helpless women in a certain patriarchal light, as well as trying to perfect his own privileged station as a white male. Vaark’s father, we learn, abandoned him after his mother dies of childbirth. Vaark spends his childhood in a poorhouse and is eventually taken on as “a runner for a law firm” (Morrison 33). Morrison explains that this is due to “luck,” and this detail seems very important in relation to his orphan status and elevation and the servants of color’s statuses. When contrasted against each other,

it's clear that Vaark rises to a livable station in life because of his skin color. Yes, Morrison does explain that Vaark's skill in literacy helps him acquire his job, but if one were to make that argument, then one would have to acknowledge how Lina's skills in cultivating land should allow her to own land and farm. The lack of opportunity for the servants of color is apparent when contrasted against Vaark. Morrison uses Vaark to show that the only difference between his status and D'Ortega's status is that "only things, not bloodlines or character, separated them" (27). Morrison reinforces the idea that materiality and its value are what people use to distinguish themselves from others. The idea that everyone has no greater value than the other is a constant theme in the text. Everyone's perspectives have equal value in this novel.

Nevertheless, Vaark's misguided individualism disconnects him and the women characters from a broader community. Readers find out that Vaark is granted a farm of one hundred and twenty acres of land that was founded by Separatists. Morrison includes these details because they show how easy it is for Vaark, a white orphan, to acquire economic means simply because of his identity as a white male. Vaark also continues to want more and to beat his competitors. He explains "he relished the thought of becoming a landowning, independent farmer. He didn't change his mind about that. He did what was necessary: secured a wife, someone to help her, planted, built, fathered" (34). To Vaark, these elements are only necessary for him to become the landowning, independent farmer he so desires to be. His characterization of his farm indicates a sense of white male privilege reliant on black labor more than ambition:

...his own land belonged to a traveling man [himself] who knew very well that it was not wise to have male labor all over the place during his long absences. His preference for steady female labor over dodgy males was based on his own

experience as a youth. A frequently absent master was invitation and temptation—to escape, rape or rob. The two men he used as occasional help presented no threat at all. In the right environment, women were naturally reliable. (33)

Vaark's desire to become more than what he is often neglects the humanity of the people around him. He doesn't mistreat them, but he sees them as consolation prizes to what he needs to have in order to better himself. Later, we learn that Vaark never finishes his "grand house of many rooms rising on a hill above the fog" because he dies from small pox. His home serves as an allusion to John Winthrop's "city upon a hill" because it strives to be a beacon for all to emulate. Yet, like John Winthrop's failed dream, Vaark's dream to outdo his counterparts falls short because he tried to maintain a life not connected to a larger sense of community. He is ostentatious with his dream of a grand house. Valerie Babb explains that "in *A Mercy* Morrison enlists such marginalized voices to rewrite the origins narrative as a cautionary tale warning of the dangers of selfish individualism to any form of community" (148). Morrison stresses the importance of having some form of connection to a broader sense of community because as history has shown, "the development of a culture based on marketplace values corrupts and undermines the human value of races, classes, genders and sexualities" (Babb 148). As we progress through the novel, we find out about other characters shunned by society and the points of view they provide in the narrative.

Before Vaark's death, he acquires Lina, a Native American woman who is orphaned because her people were killed from the plague. She is bought by Presbyterians, but after they realize that a "savage" cannot be converted, they give her to Vaark. After Lina, Vaark pays the costs for his bride Rebekka, to come from London to Virginia. Her

father doesn't want to pay for her any longer. Vaark then, accepts Sorrow, a "mongrel" orphan from a ship that was shipwrecked. And of course, lastly, Vaark accepts Florens as retribution from D'Ortega who doesn't have money to pay his debt to Vaark. At the time, Florens was only eight and at the persistence of "minha mae," Florens's mother, Vaark accepts her. Each woman in the novel is either bought or bought by Vaark before the present timeline of the novel (Jennings 646). Though each character in *A Mercy* is orphaned, it is Lina, Sorrow, and Florens who provide nuanced outsider-within perspectives on the Puritan society they serve.

Lina, Florens, and Sorrow possess an outsider-within perspective because they are not a part of the Vaark family, though they do belong to it. Even though Vaark accepts eight year-old Florens with the intentions of filling the void of his deceased child, Florens is still limited to her slave status. She does chores with Lina and Sorrow and sleeps in the servant quarters. Lina awakens to the reality of the Vaark "family" and her role once Vaark dies. The text explains,

Lina had relished her place in this small, tight family, but now saw its folly. Sir and Mistress [Vaark and Rebekka] believed they could have honest free-thinking lives, yet without heirs, all their work meant less than a swallow's nest. Their drift away from others produced a selfish privacy and they had lost the refuge and the consolation of a clan...As long as Sir was alive it was easy to veil the truth: that they were not a family—not even a like-minded group. They were orphans, each and all. (59)

Without the outsider-within perspective, Lina would not have been able to perceive the differences within the family. Lina is Native American, but her ethnicity does not mean her perspective cannot be a part of the outsider-within perspective. Like Florens and Sorrow, Lina struggles within a system that oppresses and exploits her labor based upon her gender and race. Lina shares commonalities with Florens and Sorrow because they

do not possess the same human rights that the Puritan characters possess. Therefore, the outsider within stance does not favor race as a biological criteria for contributing to it. Because Lina possesses a certain political understanding of the order of her society, she is able to contribute to the outsider within perspective. She even refers to whites as “Europeans” which solidifies an absolute cultural difference between herself and Puritans. She’s ever aware of the difference.

Florens’s perspective shows how she cannot abide by the same religion as the Puritans. During her journey to the “smithy,” she explains that she cannot pray to the Virgin “when all I am asking for is not to her liking” (68). Florens rationalizes her sexual desire for the smithy as something sinful and therefore, outside of religious confines. Because the Reverend Father teaches Florens about salvation earlier in her life, she is able to peer into the religious doctrines and show how they conflict with her own personal human desires. For instance, Florens relates her love for the smithy: “No holy spirits are my need. No communion or prayer. You are my protection. Only you. You can be it because you say you are a free man from New Amsterdam and always are that” (69). Florens’s lack of devotion to the same religion that her Mistress believes in adds to her outsider within perspective. Also, Florens notices how Mistress’s stare at Sorrow is similar to those of the other women Baptists who stare at her and Lina. Florens explains that “Neither look scares, but it is a hurting thing” (69). Clearly, Florens analyzes how the three slave women’s status as outsiders configures in with their relationships toward their mistress. Even though she’s kind, Mistress is still socially above them and has to treat them as such in the public eye. Lenz explains, “Despite mutual affection, and often because of the discomfort with which the invited intimacy of the servant’s involvement

with the family is received by the master, the master-servant dynamic invariably reaffirms, and even solidifies, the outsider position of the servant” (103). Rebekka’s “stare” solidifies the mistress/servant dynamic in this scene.

Sorrow, the outcast in the Vaark clan, possesses a double outsider within perspective because the Mistress and Lina dislike her and consider her outside of the family. Sorrow’s narrator reveals the psychological unrest that Sorrow endures, yet Sorrow is sane enough to recognize the change that Vaark’s death has had on Mistress. When Rebekka kneels in prayer during the time she is inflicted with small pox, Sorrow observes how “she seemed completely alone in the world” and how the servants’ “care and devotion did not matter to her [Rebekka]” (130). Before Rebekka’s illness, her religious ideas were different from the other Puritans’. At times, she related to Lina and talked with her on an equal level. Now that she was on her deathbed, she developed a religious fervor for “the One she was whispering to.” Sorrow’s keen observation skills develop out of her outsider within perspective and the readers begin to see how Rebekka’s self-serving religion mirrors Cotton Mather’s. On her way to church after the smithy cures her, she makes Lina accompany her and stand outside in all sorts of weather and even makes Sorrow and her baby sleep in the stables in the freezing rain.

Sorrow provides a unique perspective to the novel and proves that she is just as reliable at providing a black woman’s standpoint about her society as Florens and Lina. Indeed, all three women find ways to survive through their orphan statuses. While relating a story to Florens about a traveler who commits the fall of a serene mother eagle by claiming her nest as his and wounding her wing, Lina explains that the eagle “falls and falls” while “screaming, screaming she [eagle] is carried away by wind instead of wing”

(Morrison 62). Florens asks Lina about the eagle's whereabouts. Lina replies that she is still falling forever. Florens asks about the eggs. Lina replies with "They hatch alone," which Florens replies with "Do they live?" Lina then answers with "We have." The metaphorical images of abandoned children and a ravished mother prove to be the linchpin to Florens, Lina, and Sorrow's backgrounds. Lina's wit proves true when she reveals how each orphan has found a way to live. Though they have been taken from their motherlands and their mothers ravished, they "hatch alone" and live in the Puritan society. This "'outsider within' status has provided a special standpoint on self, family, and society for Afro-American women" (Collins S14). Though Collins focus is on black female identity I want to adapt her lens here to provide a broader analysis of women of color as they function within the novel. Collins creates a space for women of color but she's interested in how her identity fits in with this perspective.

Florens's narration of her status as an abandoned child allows a view of her identity, but at the same time, restricts her sense of self. Florens seeks her beloved "smithy" as she reveals parts of her history in the beginning of the novel. Rebekka, Florens's mistress, has sent Florens to get the smithy so that he can heal Rebekka who has gotten smallpox from Jacob Vaark, who we later learn is deceased. Florens's displacement from her mother makes her want to be wanted. She seeks this through the blacksmith's love. However, when the blacksmith tells Florens that she is a slave because "[her] head is empty and [her] body is wild" she then loses all sense of herself and becomes someone who cannot be tamed (Morrison 141). She desires the smithy so much so that she willingly breaks the arm of the young child the smithy is raising. She wants the smithy to desire her, and not love the child.

Vaark becomes the only tie to the outside Puritan community that the women in the novel have; his death severs that tie, leaving the women disconnected from society as well as from each other. Jennings explains that “all women share a common severance from family, but neither their orphan status nor their status as figurative and literal slaves forges a common identity among them that they privilege once the patriarchal tie that binds them ends” (647). Vaark’s presence outside and within the family binds the women; without the bond, they retreat to their own exclusive worlds where Florens’s love for the smithy enslaves her, Sorrow’s baby enslaves her, and Rebekka’s new found religion enslaves others (Jennings 647).

In an interview, Morrison explains that this family needs to be connected to something “bigger than they are, whether it is community, structure, or religion. There’s no outside thing that holds them together. You are vulnerable when you don’t have this outside thing” (National Public Radio). Morrison wanted them to be an earlier version of American individuality, but exemplify it in a way that shows its vulnerability. Lina observes that without Rebekka and Vaark, she, Lina, and Sorrow are “female and illegal, they would be interlopers, squatters, if they stayed on after Mistress died, subjects to purchase, hire, assault, abduction, exile” (58). The fears and the turmoil that is taking place at this particular place in the novel are exemplary of a patriarchal system that makes women vulnerable without a man. The women are at a loss and without Vaark, the male patriarch, they are “unmastered women”(Morrison 58). Not only are the women of color at the mercy of a man, but so is Rebekkah.

In the very last two chapters of the book, Morrison allows the voices of mother and daughter to dialogue with one another which is reminiscent of the idea of

“rememory.” Ashraf H. A. Rushdy explains that rememory is a primal scene that is “an opportunity and affective agency for self-discovery through memory” (303). In other words, Morrison creates a scene where a minha mãe and Florens reflect back to the time when she gave Florens to Vaark. This scene is a narrative tool that helps Morrison recreate past memories in order to forge the impact of its meaning to the story and characters. A minha mãe, Florens’s mother, reveals a desperate warning and explanation to Florens as to why she gave Florens to “the tall man with yellow hair” (161). A minha mãe explains “I said you. Take you, my daughter. Because I saw the tall man see you as a human child, not pieces of eight. I knelt before him. Hoping for a miracle. He said yes” (166). A minha mãe desperately attempts to reach back to Florens to help her see this act of mercy that she gives to her daughter. The unfortunate fact that Florens does not see this causes all of the grief and desperation for love that Florens experiences. Florens explains her frustration: “I will keep one sadness. That all this time I cannot know what my mother is telling me. Nor can she know what I am wanting to tell her. Mãe, you can have pleasure now because the soles of my feet are hard as cypress” (161). This interesting dialogue that happens in the book hinges onto what Babb explains are “these call-and-response rememories [which] are the only bonds available to a mother and daughter caught in the reality of slavery—the one a plea, the other an answer” (156). It’s important that Morrison incorporate this dialogue between a former slave and her mother because it opens a discourse around the sacrificial instances that black mothers had to employ in order to save their children from the system that sought to exploit them. Similarly, Morrison’s *Beloved*, creates a situation where Sethe murders her children so that they will not have to suffer the same miseries of slavery that she herself suffered.

With perspectives from “a Native American woman, a white-lower class English woman, white indentured servants, an abandoned white girl, and a black female slave,” (Babb 149) Morrison creates a narrative for traditionally ignored voices in history. When describing Florens’s unique narration styles, Valerie Babb mentions “that she can write makes her unique among a slave population forbidden literacy, and in this fictional world she is able to join prenational authors such as Bradford, Winthrop, Ralph Hamor, and John Smith” (149). These perspectives work together to help us arrive at a better understanding of the origins of the United States. Morrison reworks the historical framework by allowing each character to have a “say” in the framing of the “canonized narrative” (Babb 149).

In effect, the perspectives present a different history, one that listens to all voices, rather than the dominant voices that excluded the other. Morrison shows how each character presents an outsider within perspective that calls attention to the grand narrative of the United States. Each character is allowed a voice that would have traditionally been written out of “history.” Morrison’s work is useful in situating students in the historical past to come up with a better understanding of how the society and its economy would have been presented if it included narratives that came from not only white males, but Native Americans, or poor white immigrants. Morrison does a great job of showing the homogeneity of history and its attempts to write marginalized voices from the dominant narrative. In a way, Morrison shows the impossibility of such an act when she grants Florens the ability to write her story in the room of Sir’s house.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION OF MY PROJECT

My project began with a descriptive introduction, detailing whiteness studies and the major conversations surrounding this theory, then moves to a dissection and reevaluation of whiteness through Puritan and contemporary works. Richard Dyer and Toni Morrison provide for my project a theoretical framework to maneuver different ideas relating to white privilege and Puritan ideology. I also detail modern instances where we still see the conscious and subconscious acts of privileging which Puritans used to sustain their economy in the Seventeenth Century. While Richard Dyer helps outline these egregious acts of systemic racism, Morrison sheds light on the Africanist presence which she argues white authors use to help define the other against whites. These theories support my argument that scholars should focus on earlier aspects of systemic racism to come to better understandings of how its subtle reoccurrences appear in social, political, and even academic life today.

While my project seeks to identify white privilege formations in early Puritan writing, it doesn't take into account that Puritan clergy did not form the overall consensus of Puritan ideology; there are in fact other Puritans who felt differently about the beginnings of slavery. Puritans such as Samuel Sewall advocated for abolition in his text *The Selling of Joseph*. Sewall's opinions differed from those of Cotton Mather's; yet, I do acknowledge the majoritarian thinking in Puritan New England that contributed to the laws that established a racial boundary between Puritans and non-Puritans.

Possible research avenues that may arise out of this thesis are research into the marginalized figures presented in Puritan texts. For instance, I'd like to examine the

Praying Indian figures that Kristina Bross details extensively in her article “Dying Saints, Vanishing Savages: ‘Dying Indian Speeches’ in Colonial New England Literature.” In addition, examining the history of the indentured servants of color and finding out more about their social standing in a Puritan community would advance my understanding of race relations then, and how we can use those to understand race relations today. Some of the questions that I’d like to answer in the future are: Why did Puritans find racial slavery the easiest economic means to build capital in New England? How did poor white indentured servants react to the racialization of labor in the late Seventeenth Century? How have working class struggles evolved from the racialization of labor and how are there still echoes from the Puritan past? Overall my project aims to delve into the history and legacy of Puritanism in America.

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