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## **Thomas Dixon and Southern Identity in The Leopard's Spots**

Christopher Richard Castillo

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THOMAS DIXON AND SOUTHERN IDENTITY IN *THE LEOPARD'S SPOTS*

A Thesis

by

CHRISTOPHER RICHARD CASTILLO

Submitted to Texas A&M International University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

December 2018

Major Subject: English

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Approved as to style and content by:

Chair of Committee, Jonathan Murphy  
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## ABSTRACT

Thomas Dixon and Southern Identity in *The Leopard's Spots* (December 2018)

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Following the American Civil War, the United States witnessed a shift in its racial and social being. This shift, of course, was not without national anxieties. With the freeing of black slaves, came an attempt to integrate the former enslaved population into society. With this attempt at integration, came various political and social arguments on the shift of the American social and cultural bedrock. Writing during this period, Thomas Dixon Jr. became one of the nation's most energetic voices on the topic of race in America. While popular during his time, Dixon is still publicly remembered, if slightly, for his novel that influenced D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. Dixon's views and arguments on race and white supremacy, however, have continued to be discussed by critics and thinkers, with topics ranging from studies in whiteness, imperialism, and gender. Yet, there is a danger in dismissing Dixon entirely simply because he embraces white supremacy and racist ideology. Dixon's works allow us to understand the complexities and anxieties on race in postbellum America, particularly at the turn of the twentieth-century. The purpose of this paper, is to examine Thomas Dixon's novel, *The Leopard's Spots*, and argue that Dixon established his vision of Southern whiteness, by adopting three racial identities for American society. These racial identities can be categorized into three themes: black identity, white Northern identity, and a new Southern identity.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Thomas Dixon Jr. began his literary career with a trilogy of novels on Reconstruction, and he is perhaps best known for his novel *The Clansman* (1905), the blatantly racist novel that served as the foundation for D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*. Dixon is seldom read or studied today, save for the academics who offer literary and cultural criticisms of his works, or in the context of Griffith's film. Yet, there is a danger in ignoring the white-supremacist from North Carolina, as Dixon was among the most influential novelists at the turn of the twentieth-century, and his views, while not unique, were popular enough to permeate into American thought on the subject. As scholar Lawrence J. Oliver points out, Dixon's final novel, *The Flaming Sword* (1939), is an "authoritative record of the Conflict of Color in America from 1900 to 1938" (132). Unfortunately, Dixon's fiery arguments on white supremacy and racial identity remain prevalent in twenty-first century America. Again, as objectionable as one might find Dixon's works to be, his novels provide a useful lens in which we can better understand American anxieties on racial identity as the nation struggled with the social, political, and economic effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Equally important, reading Dixon allows us to comprehend the language and imagery used to create the construct of early twentieth-century white supremacy.

Thomas Dixon Jr. blends the notions of the Lost Cause and the New South ideals, as he concentrates on the South post-Civil War and the ramifications Reconstruction had on the South. Dixon's most prominent work is a Reconstruction trilogy that includes *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of White Man's Burden* (1902). The trilogy romanticizes including the actions of the

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This thesis follows the style of the *Journal of Modern Literature*.

Ku Klux Klan, against perceived Northern and black aggression. Through the examination of *The Leopard's Spots*, it will be argued that Dixon contributed to the mythologies of the Lost Cause and white supremacy by contributing his view of a new racial identities. While other scholars have studied the complexities of Dixon's thought, it will be established that these racial identities can be categorized into three themes: black identity, white Northern identity, and a new Southern identity. Black identity, as established in the novel *The Leopard's Spots*, is animalistic in terms of behavior, intelligence, and physical appearances, stripped of any form of historical agency, and is a threat to Southern womanhood. White, Northern identity is created by Dixon to showcase the moral and political hypocrisy of Northern politicians and the population in general. The new Southern identity established in *The Leopard's Spots* is one that contrasts to the previous identities because it is a call to arms for the younger generation. It seeks to supplant the Southerners of the antebellum period as these individuals were not radical enough in permanently dealing with the former slave, the scalawags, and the carpetbaggers. True whiteness for Dixon, is an ideological call to arms for the white male.

In *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon offers a white supremacist, belligerent account of Reconstruction, and seeks to establish the antebellum social order with the black population in a near state of slavery within the New South paradigm. The novel very much looks to a new South, but unlike other New South proponents, Dixon offers little more than white supremacist rhetoric, as he lambasts Northern industrialism. In his novel, Dixon offers the standard argument that the South was humiliated after the war in which the common experience amongst Southerners is rooted in defeat and the devastating effects of Reconstruction policies. This humiliation serves as the call to arms towards the end of the novel. Dixon additionally argues that in order to preserve the Anglo-Saxon race, of which the South is the epitome of, it must remain free of



miscegenation. Žižek's argument on the Nation-Thing is useful for this discussion, as it provides an understanding into the culture Southern writers and scholars were trying to create and why it was created.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LOST CAUSE MEMORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Literary authors and academic scholars have longed published works on Reconstruction, and these works have been not only acclaimed, but authoritative. The culture created following the Civil War, and Reconstruction as well, are known as the Lost Cause, and eventually, the idea of a “New South,” These two ideals harken back to the antebellum South to deal with the historical memory in the present and future. These works have convinced the public and other scholars that their vision is “correct,” and consequently, these works have played an important role in shaping the understanding of America and its race relations during the period (Taylor 16). This vision created the American experience during Reconstruction as one that was rooted in racial violence, political and economic corruption, and of course, despotism at the hands of the Yankees.

As Alan T. Nolan notes, the origins and development of the Lost Cause have been the focus of several prominent scholars such as Gaines M. Foster, Thomas L. Connelly, William Garrett Piston, among others (“The Anatomy of the Myth” 13). The purpose of this paper is not to provide a detailed origin of the movement, but rather to provide an overview of the Lost Cause and the New South ideologies, in order to show how Thomas Dixon adapted the movements. The literature review of the scholars on Dixon is equally an overview on the modern scholarship on Dixon, with several issues being analyzed, such as gender, character, class, and the issue of rape present in *The Leopard's Spots*. Each modern scholar concerned with Dixon intersect on the issue of race and the development of whiteness in Dixon's novels. Whiteness, is a strong theme in Dixon's novels, and is prominent in critics analyzing his novels, for it allows for the

understanding of Dixon's post-Reconstruction racial anxieties and his literary reactions to those anxieties.

As the issues of slavery and abolition were brought into American political debate, and especially as the Civil War and Reconstruction took their courses, Southerners argued on the need to protect their "way of life." Southerners were protective of, to borrow Slavoj Žižek's term, the National-Thing. Southern writers used literature to further romanticize the ideals that helped create a southern version of the Nation-Thing. Žižek's argument on the National-Thing uses more modern-day examples in his *Tarrying with the Negative* (1993), but it is still a useful lens to view Thomas Dixon's arguments, for it provides a brief explanation on national identification and racial identity. The Thing is to be understood in a Lacanian sense, as that is manner in which Žižek applies it. The Thing, for Žižek, is enjoyment incarcerated, structured by fantasies, and closely tied by Žižek, to a nation's "way of life." For Southern politicians in antebellum America, the abolition of slavery threatened the Southern way of life economically but using economic statistics to preserve slavery was a disguise for maintaining the racial hierarchy in the United States at the time.

Žižek argues that the Nation-Thing is linked to national identification and is determined by a set of contradictory values. The Nation-Thing is only accessible by those who define it, or "us," and is something the Other, or "they" cannot grasp. The Thing in the form of a nation, is based on a variety of definitions. For Žižek, the only consistent aspect of a Nation-Thing is the manner in which the consensus organizes its form of enjoyment, or "way of life" (201). For the United States, as Alexis De Tocqueville contends, the sovereignty of the people dominates American society, it is "recognized by mores, proclaimed by the laws; it spreads with freedom" (*Democracy in America* 53). The power of American democracy runs through the people, and

historically Anglo-Americans have held this power, this is the Nation-Thing. For Žižek, “the national Cause is ultimately nothing but the way subjects of a given ethnic community organize their enjoyment through national myths” (202). Therefore, what was at stake is the national Thing, and this is what white Southerners during Reconstruction were trying to fulfill.

Žižek further argues that “the basic paradox is that our Thing is conceived as something inaccessible to the other and at the same time threatened by him” (203) This Nation-Thing can only exist if people believe in it, from the birth of the United States up to the Civil War and Reconstruction, a consensus of Americans believed the black Other threatened the Nation-thing. Allowing the black population to participate in American democracy, threatens it, and along with it, the American Nation-Thing. The Nation-Thing then becomes a paradox: it is something inaccessible to the Other, yet it is still threatened by it (202-03). Through his novels, and more specifically through *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon conveys his fear of the black population participating in American democracy and society, in which he fears the white population is threatened. Dixon argues so in an interview with the *New York Times*, “the negro, if he remains in this country, will be either servant or master; there is no half-way place for him” (Clifford 486).

Žižek’s argument can be traced to those made by Alexis de Tocqueville in *Democracy in America*. Tocqueville argues, that the abolition of slavery does not amount to total freedom, for former slaves will face “the tyranny of the laws and the intolerance of mores...[former slaves] will have the remembrance of slavery working against them” (336). Tocqueville’s argument taps into the systematic effort to disfranchise the black population economically during Reconstruction. This argument is the focus of W.E.B. Du Bois’ comprehensive study: *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*. Du Bois that the post-Civil War lawlessness in the South

transformed into economic pressure, as former plantation owners attempted to force freedmen to work, and at the same time, poor white Southerners attempted to keep freedmen from working. The labor contracts offered by former plantation owners to freedmen returned the laborers into a state of enslavement, while poor whites disallowed freedmen from owning good land, rich land that might propel the black laborer past the poor white laborer economically and socially. Du Bois further contends that race was used by white property owners in an effort to gain the support of white laborers and systematically exploit black laborers (673, 680). In almost every possible manner, the black population was depicted as being inferior and the white population superior. Du Bois labels this a created psychological caste, and that “public inferiority must be publicly acknowledged and submitted to” (695). For white Americans, like Dixon, the ability to vote and independently find employment to better oneself is at the heart of the American Thing, and witnessing a portion of the population that was once restricted from this Thing, try to fulfill it, was a threat.

The Lost Cause was eventually adapted by a younger generation of Southerners to craft the New South argument. Both ideologies are attempts to craft a National-Thing, not absolute, and take different forms, but in a broad view, the Lost Cause is an attitude towards Civil War and Reconstruction memory. The Lost Cause represents a mythology, as it took hold on arguments, organizations, academic and literary works, and some Southerners linked their loss to Christian religion. The Lost Cause linked reconciliation with Southern partisanship to envision the Civil War as a noble fight in which the South was led by the chivalrous Robert E. Lee, who was crushed by the industrial might of the North (Blight 258-59).

On the Lost Cause, scholar Alan T. Nolan argues that the movement is “a caricature of the truth,” one that “wholly misrepresents and distorts the facts of the [Civil War and

Reconstruction]” (“The Myth of the Lost Cause” 29). Nolan further likens the Lost Cause as an “American Legend,” one that swept through the nation and became the national memory on the Civil War and Reconstruction. Nolan provides a useful, concise origin of the Lost Cause, pointing to Edward Pollard’s establishment of the term in his *The Lost Cause: The Standard Southern History of the War of the Confederate States* (1866). In short, proponents of the Lost Cause adopted the interpretation of the Civil War as follows: first, slavery was not the sectional issue, in fact, abolitionists created a negative image of slavery, and the South *did not* secede to protect slavery. Secession, the proponents argued, was a constitutional right, in which the states entered a constitutional pact that they had the right to withdraw from. Lost Cause advocates created two narratives of slaves to protect this claim, one was the “faithful slave” trope, the other was the “happy darky” stereotype. Lastly, the Lost Cause created idealized depictions of Confederate soldiers as “cavaliers” of the Southern home front, evoking Southern gentility (12-13, 15-16, 18). In *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (2001), historian David Blight argues three visions of Civil War memory were established following the war and Reconstruction that helped the Lost Cause permeate American memory on the war. They are: the reconciliationist vision, the white supremacist vision, and the emancipationist vision (2). Each vision laid out by Blight dealt with the aftermath of the war, and each vision offers its own paradigm in which the National-Thing and the Lost Cause was to develop. Each vision, however, did not, and does not, stand on its own, each vision collided with one another, and eventually, Blight argues, the reconciliationist and white supremacist visions trumped the emancipationist vision as the country sought to heal itself at the expense of the black population.

One literary example of the Lost Cause, is Edward A. Pollard, author of *The Lost Cause Regained* (1868). Pollard viewed the North and the South as two different societies. Pollard’s

career thesis focuses on distinguishing the two sections while upholding a supreme belief in Southern nationalism. In order to support this argument, Pollard argues that the South did not simply secede for the sake of slavery. Rather, the eleven states did so due to an existing conflict between southern nationalism rooted in slavery, the planter-based economy, and chivalry, and northern nationalism rooted in Unionism and the free labor system. Pollard further expresses this view of southern nationalism in *The Lost Cause*, written in 1866. Pollard argues, that the Civil War was fought due to Northern aggression against the chivalric society of the South. Slavery, he further contends, made the South a peculiar and noble society, and it is this differentness with which the North took issue with (Maddex, Jr. 595-97).

For Pollard, “the wounds of the [Civil War]” healed, however he blames the Radical Republicans in Congress for having a “*carte blanche* for legislation” during Reconstruction (*The Lost Cause Regained*, 67, 71). Pollard defines Reconstruction in *The Lost Cause Regained*, a definition that will be echoed by Dixon, as “military rule and Negro supremacy,” in which the Radicals attempted to “Africanize the South” (81). Pollard’s *The Lost Cause Regained* is nothing more than racist propaganda in which he defends slavery by arguing the supposed “permeant, natural inferiority of the Negro” allowed for slavery (115). Yet, it is not a return to slavery Pollard is arguing for, instead, he argues that the political influence of freedmen must be kept “as indifferent as when he was a slave” (14). Voting and holding political office, makes the black individual the equal of the white individual, this is the new war for Pollard. Pollard’s main argument, which will become a major argument for the Lost Cause, is not necessarily that black suffrage exists, but rather, it is viewed by Pollard as a “punishment of the South.” For Pollard, the moment a law “operates unequally, burdens one community and exempts the other, it becomes a hateful edict and a despotic oppression” (137). Pollard’s work is indeed radical, but

he was not alone in publishing work with such rhetoric, nor was said rhetoric contained in literary and fictional works, it permeated into historical scholarship. In the early years of the Lost Cause, champions of the ideology worked hard to outmatch Northern scholarship. J. William Jones, editor of the *Southern Historical Society Papers* of the Southern Historical Society, founded in 1869, wrote at vigorous pace, as if he were under a literary siege (Blight 262). But the most famous, and perhaps the originator of scholarly work done on the subject, school of thought, and the one with the most lasting impact, was the Dunning School of Reconstruction.

Historian Eric Foner attributes the scholarly interpretation of Reconstruction to William A. Dunning, from New Jersey, and his mentor John W. Burgess, from Tennessee. Both scholars accepted the Lost Cause view on Reconstruction, and allowed the argument to permeate into American academic studies on Reconstruction. In *Reconstruction and the Constitution, 1866-1876* (1902), Burgess argues on the constitutionality of Reconstruction, however, he constantly resorts to making racist arguments with his constitutional ones. Dunning is, perhaps, more recognized than Burgess. His students published scholarship on Reconstruction, and the interpretations and arguments on the subject offered in these works, including Dunning's, became known as the Dunning School. Dunning, and his students, were widely influenced by Burgess, as he viewed the granting of rights to former slaves as a mistake. This in turn led to corruption and misgovernment in the South. Dunning and his students differed on the levels of corruption of the Reconstruction governments, violence and class relations, but they all agreed on a scientific inferiority of blacks (Foner *Reconstruction America's Unfinished Revolution* xxii). Although Dunning may have believed his historical method was scientific, as did Burgess, the main flaw in the Dunning School was the blatant racism. For Dunning, Reconstruction taught Americans that while slavery was undesirable, it was both useful and natural (Novick 77). As



Foner argues in *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* (1984), this racism not only shaped their interpretation of Reconstruction, but it influenced their research and historical methods (*The Dunning School: Historian, Race, and the Meaning of Reconstruction* ix-xi, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution* xxii).

The white supremacy Thomas Dixon adopts is at the center of the Lost Cause and served as the basis of Jim Crow South. Lost Cause diehards and New South promoters differed on the issue of slavery, but the two groups agreed on white supremacy. In addition to the Lost Cause literature present in American culture, Lost Cause promoters unveiled statues that celebrated Confederate generals (Blight 267, 269). As the white supremacist vision of the Lost Cause took hold on American memory, the New South ideology developed after the Civil War and both visions looked to the antebellum South but sought to accomplish different ends. The New South ideology, is more ambiguous in meaning, as its proponents used the term to delimit a period of time in the South (since 1877 or since 1900) in order to argue on particular programs (Social Darwinism, tariffs, industrialism, or Southern communism) (Gaston 26-27). Paul Gaston argues that the one thing New South proponents agreed is that they simply focused on the South to argue how social, political, and economic issues affected the region post-Civil War. Ultimately, both movements are fixated on a perception of the past and how it affects the present and future. Defeat in the Civil War and a perceived humiliation during Reconstruction created an atmosphere that created two images of the South, a Lost Cause romantic view of the Old South, and a New South fixated on reconciliation, the restoration of power, and of course, race (Gaston 28).

Proponents of the New South movement attempted to restore lost confidence and prestige through newspapers, speeches, and magazines to express old errors, and set the South on a new

course following Reconstruction. But through focusing on industrializing the South, these men sought to eliminate intersectional hostility with the North, or as famed historian C. Vann Woodward argues, the Southern eagerness for a “national standard” was simply a “pathetic eagerness for Northern approval” (Woodward 150). The New South would eventually incorporate elements of the Lost Cause (Woodward 155). In attempting to harken to a romantic, agrarian Old South, Southerners like Dixon, display a divided mind on identity. Other New South proponents, like New Orleans writer J.D.B. DeBow, combined Southern nationalism with a strong call for industrialization in 1866. Likewise, South Carolinian Edwin DeLeon in April 1870 published the article “The New South: What It is Doing, and What It Wants,” in which he argues that a New South has risen out of Reconstruction. The New South, for DeLeon, is to advance through industrialism, diversified agriculture, and cooperation with the North. In 1886, Athens, Georgia native, Henry W. Grady, the most famous spokesperson of the New South, declared an end to slavery, secession, and sectionalism in the South. Instead, the New South welcomed national harmony, and in declaring sectionalism over, Grady was attempting to ease the Northern doubters. Erasing the doubts of the North could then lead to Southern self-determination and end Northern intervention in the region (Gaston 42, 52, 102).

Dixon, like other proponents of the New South movement, was too young to fight during the Civil War, and many did not reach adulthood until Reconstruction. While Dixon may have been too young to serve in the Confederate Army, having been born in 1864, he and other spokesmen of the New South nonetheless witnessed the drastic effects of Reconstruction. Ironically, these men welcomed economic desolation, for it created an environment in which the South could rise economically, socially, and eventually politically. Dixon grew up under the poverty nearly all of the landed white gentry North Carolinians suffered from. For Southerners

like a young Dixon, the Confederacy's defeat hastened the end of the antebellum way of life, and in its place, racial equality was to be the law of the land. For instance, Conservatives in North Carolina argued that the state's 1868 constitution argued that the constitution granted *too much* equality to free blacks and even white women. At the state Conservative convention, William a. Graham argued that black suffrage would upset republican government (Zipf 506). Yet, New South advocates did not blame the war for poverty and black enfranchisement as most Southerners did. Rather these societal changes were the consequences of the conditions of the old South. Certainly, the war was a casual factor for Reconstruction, New South advocates were willing to admit, but the likes of Edwin Godkin were more willing to blame Southern poverty post-Reconstruction on the South's unwillingness to look to industry as the North had done. Dixon slightly differs from the rest of this New South paradigm, as he is more willing to blame the Radical Republicans in Congress for ruining the South's economy, not the war. He blames the Radicals for emancipating the slaves, and this led to a "loss of four billion dollars in slaves," and the South can only flourish if the politicians let it alone (*The Leopard's Spots* 66). Dixon's solution in *The Leopard's Spots* to end the poverty in the South is not to look to the North (Gaston 63, 73-74, Fossett 108-09, Cook 98).

Southern identity then as established in *The Leopard's Spots* the first novel in his Ku Klux Klan trilogy, will always remain separate from the North based on the South's historical experiences and the complexities of race in American society. At the same time, Dixon establishes his white characters as being citizens of the "typical American Democracy," establishing them as agents in the preservation and regeneration of the national innocence based on Anglo-Saxon terms (Dixon 3). The theme of race and prejudice as a means to define a national identity is not unique to Dixon, nor is it unique to Southern writers. Scholar Joe Riggio

argues that by the 1880s, Southern writers began to elaborate upon the myth of the Old South in an effort to create new focal point, one that resulted from the experience of the Civil War and the Reconstruction years. Despite the many differences in the Reconstruction fiction of Joel Chandler Harris, Thomas Nelson Page, and Thomas Dixon, they maintained a common narrative that centered on the realities of postwar life in the South. This focal point was then an accessory in creating a narrative for a New South (Riggio 58).

### **Literature Review on Thomas Dixon**

Sheldon Van Auken's "The Southern Historical Novel in the Early Twentieth Century" (1948), provides an outlook on the distinctness amongst Southern writers, including Dixon. But, the critical review on the more modern scholarship on Dixon begins, for the purposes of this paper, with Garvin F. Davenport Jr.'s *The Myth of Southern History: Historical Consciousness in Twentieth-Century Literature* (1970). Davenport does not primarily focus on Dixon, but he nonetheless provides insight into the South's relationship with the rest of the nation and is particularly concerned with the South's contribution to the myths of American virtue and American national character. Davenport's study is not a comprehensive study of Southern literature, instead, Davenport provides five essays on Southern writers at the turn-of-the-twentieth-century. *The Myth of Southern History* traces what Davenport labels "the myth of Southern history." For Davenport, writers, such as Dixon, constructed an imaginative history of the South during and after Reconstruction, and related this history to the central American myths of the nineteenth-century. Davenport's definition of this myth is based on Henry Nash Smith's and Thomas Jefferson's descriptions of the American character. Smith argued in terms of a nature vs. civilization dichotomy, in that most Americans became defined on a uniqueness that separated them from Europe based on the United States representing a state of nature, and the

Old World representing a historical civilization. Jefferson, extended this argument as he believed Americans were yeoman farmers and free individuals, free from social conventions, and unlike the Europeans, lived in a state of innocence (8). Davenport uses these two definitions to argue that the yeoman myth was historically meant for white Americans, not former slaves (9).

The myth of Southern history, is an attempt to defend this concept of American national character, and Davenport begins his analysis of Southern literature with Thomas Dixon's novels. Davenport argues that Dixon's novels bring together three themes: Southern uniqueness, Southern burden, and Southern mission. While Davenport is quick to point out the prevalent racism in Dixon's novels, he does not connect the Lost Cause ideology to Dixon's novels. Still, Davenport believes Dixon's novels should not be ignored as they allow us to understand Southern response and action to societal changes (23). Davenport's analysis of Dixon and his novels is, at times, confusing. He primarily focuses on race and blackness. Davenport does not hesitate about implementing race into the discussion, but the author's novel provides an early examination of the use of race in Dixon's novels. In addition to race, Davenport connects Dixon's novels and class, as he argues Dixon's concern was a national crisis in which the agrarian values of America became threatened by alien forces. These alien forces, for Davenport, include racial degradation, and Northern concepts of materialism, capitalism, and industrialism. Davenport points out that Dixon's vision was a populist one, as the latter's novels contain burden and tragedy to uphold these alien forces (25-26).

Davenport evaluates Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* and *The Sins of the Fathers* (1912) to reveal Dixon's vision of Southern burden. This burden is the burden of blackness that hangs over the South. Davenport argues that the visual metaphors present in *The Leopard's Spots* conceptualize the threat of freed slaves. This particularly evident through the novel's constant

use of the terms “Beast” and “Black Death” (27). Davenport then analyzes a passage from the novel that reveals the white male’s fear of black sexuality. In *The Leopard’s Spots*, the character of Reverend John Durham is harassed by a freed slave. The experience with the former slave brings out a fear in Durham as he contemplates, “the towering figure of the freed Negro had been growing more and more ominous...throwing the blight of its shadow over future generations, a veritable Black Death for the land and its people” (*The Leopard’s Spots* 33). This passage, along with the constant use of the term “beast,” leads Davenport to believe Dixon has a fear of black sexuality and, as the towering image of a black male is phallic and threatening to future generations. Emancipation, then, will lead to bestial imagination and a corruption of the white race (27). A free black population, Davenport argues according to Dixon, is the burden of the South, and ultimately can lead to the destruction of the white race (29). To support this interpretation of Dixon’s argument, Davenport refers to a scene from the novel in which black Federal soldiers abduct the daughter of Tom Camp, a white, yeoman farmer, from her wedding ceremony. Tom orders his friends to shoot the soldiers, despite the chance his daughter might get hit. In response to this danger, Tom cries, “Shoot, men! My God, shoot! There are worse things than death! (*The Leopard’s Spots* 125). The girl is indeed hit, and later dies. Yet, Tom shakes the hands of the gentlemen who killed the soldiers and his daughter, insisting they saved her (ibid. 126). This self-destruction of whiteness, Davenport points out, is a burden to the South, and one only the South must face due to the region’s relationship with the past, and segregation is the only tool that can prevent the destruction of whiteness (29-30).

This sense of burden is intertwined with Dixon’s mission to exclude the black population from social, political, and economic equality, and most importantly to prevent miscegenation, Davenport argues. This is an acceptable argument, but Davenport confusingly suggests *The*

*Leopard's Spots* contains a reconciliatory tone towards the North, and that this tone can be found in Dixon's early novels, including *The Leopard's Spots* (27). Yet, Davenport equally implies that Dixon attempts to place the South in the national life and to carry the nation into a prosperous future, and this means using burden of the past to carry out the mission of removing blackness from the country (27). This is problematic, as Davenport ignores the North's war goal of emancipation, and later civil rights for the black population. So long as Northerners aid the black population, it is difficult to imagine reconciliation is possible for Dixon. At the same time, Davenport argues that the South's relationship with the past, distinguishes it from the North, and Dixon's treatment of the North in *The Leopard's Spots* is Davenport's reference for this argument. Davenport suggests that freed slaves traveling to the "corrupt urban-industrial environment" of the North is a fear of Dixon, as this can lead the black male to become corrupt and prostitute the white female (33). Again, this is a contradiction in Davenport's argument, for if Dixon has a fear of Northern industrialism corrupting and granting of equality to black men, which will then threaten white womanhood, how can Dixon support reconciliation? If anything, and as this paper will argue, Dixon does not want reconciliation for the reasons Davenport suggests. Nonetheless, Davenport offers an early framework on Dixon's use of blackness and of the black rapist trope.

Like Davenport, in *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (1998), historian Grace Hale does not focus specifically on Thomas Dixon. Rather, she assesses the modernity of whiteness and blackness within the culture of the American South in the decades following Reconstruction. Hale argues that American definitions of whiteness and blackness were the result of racial segregation as Americans attempted to reunite a fragmented society and hierarchy, with the result being a collective form of whiteness and its paramount

opposite, blackness. While Dixon does not address public racial segregation, Hale's arguments are useful, as she evaluates the themes found in Dixon's novels. This includes the roles of lynching, white masculinity, and the Lost Cause in establishing white and black identities in Jim Crow America. Hale further demonstrates conclusively that establishment of post-Civil War and Reconstruction racial identities were able to reach Americans due to the rise of consumer culture. New mediums, such as photography, advertising, the phonograph, moving pictures (*Birth of a Nation*), and literature, romanticized the Old South and spread throughout the country (7-8). This aspect of her argument is of concern to this paper, as Dixon promotes whiteness in his literature, and of course, through D.W. Griffith's motion picture, *Birth of a Nation*.

Hale initiates her cultural history of racial segregation and identity in the South by explaining how emancipation, war, and Reconstruction forced the nation to look backwards in order to establish, or re-establish, a new social hierarchy. In order to establish a broad identity, literary fiction was established as truth and was infused with white supremacy. White supremacy, Hale argues, was projected over other societal divisions such as class, gender, and locality. Hale points to the Lost Cause as the southern attempt to organize the past, present, and future. Tales of past white southern glory, the horrors of Reconstruction, Northern aggression, black "betrayal," and the celebration of antebellum life, Hale contends, represent the origins of the culture of segregation and racial identities in the United States. Southern whites used the Lost Cause to reimagine the past into a period of plantation life and racial harmony, with the Civil War being one of nobility and valor. While doing so, writers, like Dixon, reimagined Reconstruction as the fall that would make the future separation of white and black possible (47-48).



History, Hale explains, became not only a sense of distance between the past and the present, but a cultural space in which a new southern order could be crafted. Time became segregated – the whiteness of Civil War battlefields and the blackness of Reconstruction – and this segregation of the time was the foundation of the segregation of space in the United States (50). Segregation of public space is not the focus of this paper, but Hale’s argument nonetheless concerns the study of Thomas Dixon Jr., as the latter uses the past and present in his novels to craft a future hierarchy on Southern terms. Hale further argues that writers of the Lost Cause romanticized the South in order to provide an interpretation of the past that erased southern sectionalism to allow a rising white middle class to pursue urban and industrial development on a northern model (53). Dixon, touches on class in *The Leopard’s Spots*, as the middle-class protagonist, Charlie Gaston, must overcome the wealthy General Daniel Worth, politically and for the hand of Worth’s daughter, Sally. Yet, Dixon is not ready to fully embrace industrialism on the northern model, as the author uses the character of Simon Legree to critique Northern factories and greed. Nonetheless, Dixon does have a large role in creating the Old South-New South narrative. For Hale, the making of modern southern whiteness began with the creation of the innocent plantation pastorate narrative, where whites and blacks not only loved one another, but depended on each other. This “integrated” society was never intended to be destroyed by the individuals living under it, rather the blame for the destruction of this utopia was placed on external forces, namely the Yankees and emancipated slaves (54).

The professionalization of history did not keep the plantation romance from entering the academic studies of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Hale uses historian Ulrich B. Philips as an example, but the likes of William A. Dunning and his mentor, John W. Burgess, joined amateur historians, short story writers, Confederate memorialists, and novelists in creating a broad

historical narrative that romanticized plantation life. As Hale adds, writers of and participants of Confederate celebrations were able to cement southern whiteness by crafting a narrative of the Civil War that was less political and more conciliatory. Depicting the Civil War as a valiant one in which Confederate soldiers fought to protect their homes and not slavery, a quick national reunion narrative was crafted. Hale further argues that writers used the “valiant” war to link the antebellum plantation utopia narrative with the “dark days” of Reconstruction (69). By doing so, Reconstruction became the catalyst that led to sectional animosity, not the antebellum days or the horrors of the Civil War.

While Hale fails to offer a substantive argument as to why Northerners accepted the Lost Cause narrative, she does offer useful arguments on the culture of whiteness and identity. Considering Hale’s argument that Thomas Dixon transformed the complexities of class, gender, and race more than any other white writer, her discussion of the southern writer is rather limited. Hale references the transformative aspects of *Birth of a Nation* more than the author from whose work the film was adapted. Nonetheless, the historian’s arguments on Dixon are primarily focused on his use of the Ku Klux Klan to rescue white masculinity, and she suggests Dixon creates this narrative in response to white middle-class women establishing their own space within the Civil War and Reconstruction narratives. Hale refers to the women of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, women speakers at Confederate Memorial Days, and white women writers publishing their own wartime memories (78-79).

Like Hale, Sandra Gunning’s *Race, Rape, and Lynching* (1998) explores the public discourse that influenced racial violence and identity. Focusing on late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century white and black authors, Gunning discusses how their works reinforced and resisted the threat of black masculinity and the black rapist stereotype. Gunning is concerned

with how the trope of black rape functions as a complex metaphor to structure and communicate anxieties over citizenship, class, and gender roles. The analysis offered in *Race, Rape, and Lynching* is an important contribution, as Gunning explores more than the figure of blackness as the epitome of animalism. Instead, she narrows her study in the subject to a literary trope used extensively by Dixon: black as beast, as this is a stereotype that not only appeared extensively post-Reconstruction, but during a time in American history when lynching and white mob violence towards black individuals was prevalent (vii, 4-5). Gunning offers a more inclusive study on Thomas Dixon as she considers his in creating the black rapist stereotype, and shaping post-Reconstruction racist discourse. Gunning considers Dixon a transitional figure in terms of his ability to adapt his novels to theater and film. Gunning argues that Dixon's novels did more than depict racist images of black men and women. His primary concern became the issue of white self-management in a post-Reconstruction American society where black men and women were no longer held in bondage. As such, Dixon's use of lynching and rape, Gunning argues, articulate white class and gender conflicts, rather than the white population's triumph over the black population (28-29). Gunning's interpretation of Dixon's themes is useful, as she focuses on three of Dixon's novels (*The Leopard's Spots*, *The Clansmen*, and *Sins of the Father*), and focuses her readings on characterization and plot devices. More useful, is Gunning's ability to use plot device and character development to identify the contradictions in Dixon's novels.

In her study of Dixon, Gunning contends Dixon displays three forms of merged white anxiety in his novels: black demands for citizenship, miscegenation, and white femininity (vii). According to Gunning, the idea of the black rapist was useful for white Americans seeking to come to terms with post-Civil War societal anxieties. Americans faced new challenges over reconciliation, black emancipation, labor unrest, a shift in gender roles, and European

immigration. The use of the black rapist, Gunning argues, was simply one of many responses Americans enacted, yet it was used by white supremacists to represent the social chaos in which all whites, regardless of class, could rally against for the sake of national renewal. White Southerners were then forced to grapple with the reality that they were no longer masters, while white Northerners grappled with the evolution of Northern society becoming a multiethnic one. In order to achieve white unity, Gunning points out that American society became transfixed on the white female body as sexual and political agency became linked to the black individual. Black sexual and political agency, according to Gunning, became dependent on white manhood, as citizenship was tied to manhood itself. The rights and responsibilities of citizenship, in the minds of white Americans, took on connotations of black sexual agency and transgressions towards white women. Gunning characterizes the white male anxiety of black agency as social rape, as American civilization, transformed into the white female body that needed protection. White supremacists could then use this argument as justification for terrorism on black communities (6-7). The threat of the black rapist became present in white American responses to changing gender roles. A fear grew of uncontrollable white womanhood, or as E.D. Cope labeled, “the masculinization of women.” Turn-of-the-century white women were characterized as sexual figures and labeled both as race traitors and as diseased bodies. Gunning argues that New Woman discourse, along with birth control and female independence, proved the need for surveillance of white women (27).

The argument on the black rapist trope offered by Gunning is useful, as the stereotype is used by Dixon, and it allows us to view the stereotype beyond simple racism and the longing for the return of the antebellum social order on the part of Dixon. Rather, Gunning’s argument allows for the understanding that Dixon’s use of the black rapist metaphor represents an

obsession with the black male body that is rooted in his fear of the loss of white male power in American society. At the same time, Dixon is wary of female independence, particularly of Northern influence, as it equally represents a threat to white male power. Gunning argues that *The Leopard's Spots* appealed to two categories of Americans: those who believed that South were economic and political victims during Reconstruction, and to radical white supremacists who believed the South must be defended against the black savage post-Reconstruction. On the subject of lynching, Gunning points out that Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots* and *The Clansman* created an image of the South as the producer of lynching as a key to successful race control. Certainly, Dixon's message is staunchly anti-black, as Gunning accurately emphasizes Dixon's message broadly called for white Americans to guard against the social and political unity of not only the black population, but any population that is otherwise deemed inferior and could not be "Americanized" (30-31). *The Leopard's Spots*, particularly towards the end of the novel conveys a message that is firmly imperialistic, and this message capitalizes on hostilities Americans felt towards nonwhites even beyond the black population.

Adding to the discourse on Dixon and the topics of race and whiteness in literature, Chris Ruiz-Velasco credits Dixon as the most strident voice on the topic of race in post-Reconstruction America. Moving away from topics like lynching and rape to define Dixon's vision of whiteness, Ruiz-Velasco focuses on the visual markers and metaphors in Dixon's works. Ruiz-Velasco argues that Dixon's use of visual markers and metaphors of whiteness are devices meant to solidify a fragmented white identity. Yet the visuals used by Dixon ultimately undercut whiteness. This instability, Ruiz-Velasco argues, emerges due to race not being a fixed entity, which creates contradictions within white identity (148-49). Whiteness in Dixon's novels, particularly in *The Leopard's Spots*, is used as an action and as a verb. However, Ruiz-Velasco

demonstrates Dixon is able to show what whiteness looks like, not only through metaphors in his novels, but through the developing visual technology at the turn-of-the-century. *The Leopard's Spots* makes use of visual markers of race by including race identification in the form of stereotyped behavior, skin color, hair texture and color, and other physical characteristics Ruiz-Velasco further argues D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* follows suit, and when President Woodrow Wilson allowed for the film to become screened at the White House, those viewing were able to witness the visual metaphors of the novel as moving pictures (150).

Whiteness, carries no meaning, Ruiz-Velasco points out, it is not significant, and it needs a focal point to maintain its ideology. Ultimately whiteness is a lens in which white individuals view themselves, others, and society. Ruiz-Velasco further defines whiteness as a cultural manifestation in which the dominant culture measures everything else (150-51). This is an acceptable definition of whiteness, but if whiteness in and of itself carries no meaning, no privilege, it needs to be conceptualized in order to become legitimate as an identity, for Ruiz-Velasco, this rests in the visual. To achieve this legitimation, Dixon intentionally presents characters through physical descriptions that then visually determine the character's innate goodness or evilness (152). Ruiz-Velasco points to Dixon's use of Harriet Beecher Stowe's character, Simon Legree, to depict a morally deprived individual, but the most striking visual markers come from Dixon's descriptions of black men. The character Nelse is introduced as "burly." Doom is implied as a "black shadow" precedes a black Federal soldier entering a room, who is also described as "burly." Whiteness is described through the character of Sallie Worth, as she has "small hands and feet, [and] delicate wrists" (*The Leopard's Spots* 32, 124). Ruiz-Velasco points out that the use of "burly," "shadow," and "towering figure" as visual markers for blackness signifies impending doom, reinforcing the threat black men posed on white women,

such as Sallie Worth, who is “delicate.” The argument outlined by Ruiz-Velasco is unique in that it adds another definition to whiteness and displays visual markers as a method used by Dixon to reinforce the ideology (153, 162).

While the discussed critics have developed various topics on the career of Thomas Dixon, whiteness is the central subject for each scholar. As scholar Scott Romine argues, whiteness, for Dixon, is an action, a focal point in which Dixon uses his novels to describe what it looks like, and how it act (Ruiz-Velasco 149-50). The critics examined show that Dixon attempts to construct whiteness as purity and he creates visuals to create this purity. Yet, in doing so, Dixon creates a social construct similar to Žižek’s the Nation-Thing. *The Leopard’s Spots* is not a call for reunion between the North and South based on a singular racial identity. Dixon instead seeks to contrast his understanding of Southern identity with that of the North. Even if the North favors emancipation and civil rights for political purposes and not moral ones, as Dixon demonstrates, the fact that Northerners travelled to the South to aid former slaves and make Southern society more egalitarian, means for Dixon that the two sections cannot coexist. The North is a symbol of corrupt morals and the antithesis to Southern society. Dixon offers whiteness as an action, a call to arms, in which white identity evolves as progress through purification, but in order to fully progress and purify the country, it needs an antagonist that is a far greater threat to the New South than Republican carpetbaggers and scalawags. Freed slaves are the threat to the Anglo-Saxon race for Dixon.

## CHAPTER III

## THE BURDEN OF THE SOUTH AND BLACK IDENTITY

*The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon argued to the *New York Times*, is “the authentic record...from the point of view of the Southern white man” (“An Author’s Answer to His Critics: The New York Times Saturday Review of Books” 538). The novel is Dixon’s attempt to establish his view of a new Southern identity within the Lost Cause and New South narratives. Dixon’s vision is one that adds to the Southern understanding of the Civil War and the effects the War and Reconstruction had on the region. This new Southern identity for Dixon is rooted in his fear of miscegenation, as he constructs his white characters as the epitome of Southern masculinity and whiteness, with the women characters being obedient to this masculinity in order to be saved from the black population. Dixon expresses these ideals through his characters, with the main character of the novel, a young man by the name of Charlie Gaston. Charlie represents the younger generation Dixon is trying to represent in his novel, or his vision of the New South. Aspects of the novel read as a coming of age story for both Charlie and the American South. Charlie grows to adulthood during Reconstruction and eventually becomes the leader of a young group of Southern Democrats that radically and swiftly force the black population to submit to the white population, and his party seeks to do the same on the world stage with America as an imperial power at the start of the twentieth century. Reverend John Durham, also known as the Preacher, guides young Charlie throughout the novel, filling Charlie’s mind with radical ideas that the South is being conquered by the black population and its Republican allies. In the novel, Durham, represents Dixon himself. Prior to becoming a writer, Dixon was a Baptist minister, and like the preacher character, Dixon is attempting to use the novel to mentor the younger generation of Southerners to avoid making the mistakes of the previous generation during



Reconstruction. This older generation is represented in the character of Confederate General Daniel Worth, who opposes Charlie personally and politically.

Dixon creates a black identity that is stripped of any form of agency and is animalistic in terms of intelligence, behavior, and physical appearances, equating the black population with a subhuman identity, allows white male Southerners to demonstrate their chivalrous masculinity and save the South from being dominated by the black population. In contrast to this black identity, Dixon asserts that the South is the embodiment of the Anglo-Saxon race, and must save it from other races across the globe that are deemed inferior. This white identity represented by young Charlie Gaston embodies a “New South,” that must leave behind the antebellum South’s passivity with the black population (Dixon believes the antebellum South was too fixated on issues with Reconstruction), radically force the nation’s black population to submit, and move to lead the nation as an imperial world power. Moreover, Dixon’s belief in a strong family unit has a large presence in the novel, but this family unit must be white and have a white ancestral background. For this reason, interracial marriage cannot occur, as Dixon believes doing so will disgrace the white race. Erasing the color line in terms of marriage, Dixon argues, would only incite violence and revolution.

Dixon creates a black identity that consists of two categories: the faithful slave and the savage brute. Both forms of identity lack agency. The latter category is of special importance, for it is this form of black identity allows for the white characters to demonstrate higher intelligence and masculinity. For Gunning, this characterization by Dixon represents a fear of the black individual threatening the public and private spheres of white America (21). Yet, in order for this black identity to be a threat to whiteness, the cause of the Civil War needed to be reinterpreted, for white identity needs to originate out of suffering and trauma. For Dixon, the Civil War may

have brought humiliation and destruction across South, but emancipation was worse than surrender as the South did not fight for the right to keep the institution of slavery (*The Leopard's Spots* 4-5). This is affirmed in Colonel Charles Gaston's letter to his son, Charlie. In the letter, the elder Gaston reminds his son of their family history as soldiers, which dates back to the younger Gaston's grandfather fighting with Andrew Jackson at New Orleans during the War of 1812 and his great-grandfather fighting in the American Revolution.

Colonel Gaston reminds his son that each paternal figure fought for their rights, and he is doing the same on behalf of his "people" and their inalienable rights under the Constitution (14). Again, Dixon rejects slavery as a reason to fight the war, instead the South fought for their rights out of duty. The new South is one that harkens back to liberty, not slavery, but it is also one that was created for the white man only. Emancipation may be acceptable as it is the law and the North can use bayonets to enforce it, but the law cannot force white southerners to accept black southerners as equals. Enfranchisement then cannot be accepted, as it is an illegitimate spoil of war because the South did not fight for slavery. This argument is not unique to Dixon. Journalist and author Edward Pollard viewed the North and the South as two different, antagonistic societies. Pollard's career thesis focuses on distinguishing the two sections while upholding a supreme belief in Southern nationalism. In order to support this argument, Pollard argues that the South did not simply secede for the sake of slavery, rather the eleven states did so due to an existing conflict between southern nationalism rooted in slavery, the planter-based economy, and chivalry, and a northern nationalism that was embedded in Unionism and the free labor system. Pollard's *The Lost Cause* argues that the Civil War was fought due to Northern aggression against the chivalric society of the South. Slavery, he further contends, made the South a peculiar and noble society, and it is this difference that the North took issue with (Maddex, Jr. 595-97).

By tapping into this Lost Cause depiction of the start of the Civil War, Dixon erases accountability from the South, and creates the South as the victim of the war and the unwarranted abolition of slavery.

### **Preacher John Durham's Vision of White Supremacy**

The character of Reverend John Durham, or simply Preacher, is perhaps the most interesting one in the novel. In many regards the character mirrors Dixon and seeing as Durham acts as the novel's moral compass, the character could be Dixon interjecting himself into the novel. Overall, the character of John Durham represents the Lost Cause ideology and is the embodiment of white supremacy. Throughout the novel, Durham contains an immense fear of miscegenation, warns Charlie Gaston of granting the black population civil equality, and constantly reminds the reader of Southern trauma during Reconstruction at the hands of the Republican Party. Lastly, Preacher is used by Dixon to sharply critique the North and to suggest the two sections could never reconcile.

Preacher Durham is introduced at the start of the novel when the slave, Nelse, tells him of the death of his former college roommate, Confederate Colonel Charles Gaston. In the early portion of the novel, Preacher is constantly observing the actions of freedmen and Freedmen's Bureau agents as they pillage the South in the aftermath of the Civil War (*The Leopard's Spots* 7). In the opening chapters of the novel, Durham feels a sort of paternalism towards the newly emancipated slaves, but after he is accosted by a "burly" black Union soldier, who is drunk, Durham changes his mind and views emancipated slaves as a threat. He begins to view the emancipated slave as a "veritable Black Death for the [South] and its people" (*The Leopard's Spots* 33).

After adopting this view in the third chapter of the novel, the Preacher is used by Dixon to interject the author's own white supremacist views and to remind the readers of the South's suffering at the hands of the emancipated slave. This is evident in the character's aversion to politics, instead Durham is the "Messenger of Eternity. [Durham] spoke of God, of Truth, of Righteousness" (39). Prior to and after the war, Durham's church was filled with slaves that were mesmerized by the Preacher's words. Durham baptized five hundred slaves around the county during his ten-year tenure. Following the war, however, this is no longer the case, and the lack of black parishioners is deemed to be "suspicious" by Durham. The reason for the absence of black parishioners in Preacher's church, Nelse explains, is due to the freedmen attending a church of their own. But as Dixon must point out, the freedmen do not have the agency to build a church on their own. As Nelse further explains to Preacher, a Yankee woman is using a school building for freedmen as a church as well (40-41).

Durham, however, does not blame the former slaves for attending this all black church, Dixon does not give them the agency to make such a decision. The Preacher blames the Freedmen's Bureau for its agents have "absolute power over all questions between the Negro and the white man" (42). Here is an example of Yankees altering aspects of Southern society, as former slaves are no longer required to attend church services in a white church. Emancipation allows for former slaves to have the autonomy to operate their own churches, free of influence from former slave owners. This new autonomy personifies Durham's fear of former slaves obtaining full equality after emancipation. For example, Durham argues to the Yankee woman establishing a church and school for freedmen, Susan Walker, that as the war came to an end, "there were thousands of negro members of white Baptist churches in the state." Durham ridicules Walker's and the Freedmen's Bureau's mission, as it is not to spread the "gospel of

Jesus Christ,” rather it is to “teach crack-brained theories of social and political equality to four millions of ignorant negroes.” Simply put, Walker’s mission will ultimately “separate and alienate the negroes from their former masters who can be their only real friends and guardians” (46). Durham’s argument is supposed to be a religious one, as the statement to Walker suggests he is arguing on a religious morality, while the Yankees are simply using religion as a disguise to alienate the white and black races of the South. Yet, Dixon is ultimately politicizing as he is paternalizing religion. Religion becomes a social construct meant to maintain control of emancipated slaves. Proof of this is Durham’s use of the term “crack-brain theories” to describe social and political equality, as this suggests that these concepts cannot be applied to the black population and that doing so will incite conflict.

The full corruption of the southern church is realized decades following Reconstruction in the chapter, “Is God Omnipotent?,” when Preacher speaks to a black reverend, Ephraim Fox. Durham is asked to return to his church by Fox, but Durham denies the offer as he cannot preach in a church that is morally corrupt. Not only do black church members ignore Durham’s sermons, but they steal from him following mass, and allow a deacon who served in jail to contribute to the church (307). Durham then points out to Fox, that “in the old slavery days you were taught the religion of Christ. It didn’t mean crime, and lust, and lying, and drinking... Your religion has become a stench.” Fox pleads with Durham that the black church members have been baptized. Durham sharply responds, “You negroes need a racial baptism into truth, integrity, virtue, self-restraint, industry, courage, patience, and purity of manhood and womanhood.” Durham then proclaims that he is finished with the church he used to lead (308). Dixon is once again making the argument that slavery held society together, a society in which the slave fully cooperated with the master. Emancipation, has led to a loss of social morality amongst the black

population. Emancipation has not only altered the morality of the black population, it has changed the religious morality of Durham as well. The Preacher confesses he once believed “the grace of God was sufficient for all problem,” but he has now come to the realization that “[God] is not omnipotent” and cannot solve the South’s societal problems. With the church gone, Durham sets his sights on ensuring the black population does not achieve full equality.

In the novel, black men are allowed to vote, although they only do so under the auspices of the Republicans, and this right to vote has led to chaos in the novel’s setting of North Carolina. Allan McLeod’s scheme of uniting the farmers vote with the black vote in an effort to gain an election victory for the Republicans is far too much for the Preacher. Durham’s reaction towards the unifying vote of white men and black men represents Durham’s, and by extension Dixon’s, fear of full civil equality. McLeod’s scheme contrasts with Walker’s, as she is a representative of a federal department, not an elected official that can change and create law. Whereas McLeod, holds such power as a politician, and worse, in order to entice the black vote, concessions must be made. Durham fears this would eventually lead to full equality. He argues so to Charlie Gaston, “You can’t ask a man to vote for you and kick him down your front doorstep and tell him to come around the back way” (241). Young Charlie attempts to dismiss Preacher’s fears, but Durham fires back, “One drop of Negro blood makes a negro. It kinks the hair, flattens the nose, thickens the lip, puts out the light of intellect, and lights the fires of brutal passions” (242). The right to vote, for Dixon, is a right that has implications beyond having a fair say in the United States’ government; moreover, it has gender connotations. Durham’s argument makes it clear that voting will somehow lead to sexual relations between the white and black populations. Dixon fears that black men having consensual sexual relations with white women will not only “lights the fires of brutal passions,” but will oblige the black male to sit at

the table of a white family, and eventually, the black male will have “the right to ask your daughter’s hand in marriage.” To combat this vision, Durham asks Gaston to organize the young voters of the state and campaign as a Democrat against McLeod and the Republicans (242).

The novel’s final chapter, “Wedding Bells in the Governor’s Mansion,” sees Gaston and the new South victorious over McLeod and the Republicans, yet Durham offers another grim vision to Gaston as the new South enters the twentieth-century. Gaston is elected the Democratic governor of North Carolina and he enters a debate with Durham over his administration’s policy on education. Governor Gaston argues for agricultural and industrial training for the black population of the state, and Durham vehemently disagrees. Gaston makes an economic argument, insisting the state needs workers. Durham insists that “if the Negro is made master of the industries of the South he will become the master of the South” (459). Durham then argues this will lead to racial and class violence that the Northern factories witness. The Preacher continues, “Make the Negro a scientific and successful farmer, and let him plant his feet deep in your soul, and it will mean a race war” (ibid.). Education, for Durham, and Dixon, is associated with full equality and gender. Durham argues, “The Negro is the human donkey...Mate him with a horse, you lose the horse, and get a larger donkey called a mule, incapable of preserving his species” (460). This repulsive argument is problematic beyond the issue of race, as the argument has gender connotations. Dixon not only views women as vehicles for bearing children, but as objects that must be defended, yet again, from the black male. As is the case with the right to vote, Dixon views the right to an education, which in this context can lead to economic success, is another step to full equality and eventually intermarriage. The message Dixon is sending to his readers in the final passages of the novel, is that Southern whiteness must be defended by denying all aspects of equality and societal participation to the black population.

The character of the Preacher serves as the novel's morality on whiteness and white supremacy. The character suggests so as Durham argues on his views on the superiority of the white population, "What is called our race prejudice is simply God's first law of nature—the instinct of self-preservation" (460). For Durham, who represents Dixon, whiteness as a morality is rooted in the self-preservation of the white population. This inner-morality on the part of Durham is also used by Dixon to contrast the regions of the North and the South, and to counter argue against national reconciliation. Similar to the use of Susan Walker, the character of Deacon Crane of Boston is used to draw distinctions between the North and the South. The chapter entitled, "Why the Preacher Threw His Life Away," focuses on the Preacher and Deacon Crane, and it mirrors Dixon's own life in Boston prior to becoming a lecturer, and eventually a writer. In *Fire From the Flint* (1968), Dixon biographer Raymond Allen Cook points out that a young Dixon began his stint as a preacher in Raleigh, North Carolina in 1887, and after six months of serving the pastorate, was offered employment in the same position at Dudley Street Church in Boston. It was in Boston in the fall of 1887 where Dixon decided to begin his trilogy of novels, beginning with *The Leopard's Spots*, after becoming enraged with a lecture on "The Southern Problem" by Justin D. Fulton. After touring the South for six weeks, Fulton argued that the South remained a hotbed for revolution and warned his listeners of an impending crisis. After listening to the lecture, Dixon decided his novels were to be based on the Southern viewpoint. Dixon eventually decided to leave Boston to take charge of a church in Manhattan in 1889, and when the Boston Board of Deacons learned of his leaving, they offered to double Dixon's salary, but to no avail (68, 71).

Like Dixon, Durham receives an offer to preach in Boston with a starting salary of five-thousand dollars a year. In Hambricht, Durham earned a paltry nine-hundred dollars a year.



Unlike Dixon, however, Durham refuses the offer. In response, the church then sends Deacon Crane to persuade Durham. Upon arriving in Hambright, Crane is astonished at the poverty in which Durham lives in and proclaims that he is willing to make Durham the highest paid Baptist preacher in America. Durham refuses the offer as he wishes to remain in the South (*The Leopard's Spots* 328-30). Durham then begins to outline his reasoning to Crane by characterizing Yankees as materialistic. Crane suggests to Durham, that he is “throwing his life away” by refusing the offer, but Durham argues that he cannot leave his people who are still struggling with the “unresolved negro problem.” For Durham, and arguably for Dixon as well, two problems threaten the United States: “the conflict between Labor and Capital, and the conflict between the African and the Anglo-Saxon race,” of which the latter is the most dangerous. Therefore, Durham reasons, he must stay in the South to aid his people during such crisis (331). Crane suggests that the Civil War settled the issue over slavery and race, but Durham refuses to believe it. Through Durham, Dixon draws on the Lost Cause narrative and attempts to revise the secession movement of 1860, as Durham contends that the South did not fight to leave the Union in order to maintain slavery.

Durham continues, “Our Confederate government at Richmond offered to guarantee to Europe, the freedom of every slave for the recognition of our independence.” Durham heatedly places the blame on abolitionists by insisting they “forced Secession on the South, [slave-owners] would have freed the slaves before this without a war.” Slave-owners would have done so due to the “necessities of the progress of the material world” and “moral progress.” Finally, Durham ends his rant by asserting that the South “fought for the rights [Southerners] held under the old constitution, made by a slave-holding aristocracy” (332). This argument made by Durham is extremely problematic, for not only is Dixon revising history, but he is doing so while

claiming to use “authentic records” in the novel’s Historical Note. Secession and Confederate politics, historian George C. Rable, argues, was composed of competing political visions, and was not as simple as Dixon wishes to represent. The issue of slavery complicated secession as it was believed secessionists planned to establish a slaveholder aristocracy if secession from the Union was achieved. In North Carolina, politicians believed secessionist leaders would not agree to the raising of taxes on their slaves, rather the poll taxes would be raised instead. It was feared that the yeoman farmer who could not afford such levies would then have to sell their land to wealthy land speculators. In an effort to unify Southern nationalism, Rable argues, secessionists stressed the hazards of the Yankees, these hazards included the Northern exclusion of slavery from the western territories and the Northern attempts to incite slave insurrections (*The Confederate Republic* 25, 27). As historian James McPherson argues, the secession movement was divided into competing factions, but the emergence of Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party served to be the final push for secession. Southern interests were at stake if Lincoln were to be elected, as secessionists believed “Black Republican” rule threatened Southern rights to own slaves and the right to take this property into the western territories (*Battle Cry of Freedom* 241-43).

On the subject of European recognition, Dixon is broad, but the main European countries involved in the American Civil War were Russia, Great Britain and France. Great Britain relied heavily on Southern cotton, and following the establishment of the Union naval blockade, Southerners embargoed cotton to Britain until France and Great Britain diplomatically recognized the Confederate government and aided the Confederacy. But Britain recognized that any attempts to aid the Confederacy in running the blockade might lead to war with the United States. Lincoln’s proclamation of the Confederates as insurrectionists further complicated this

issue. Ultimately, Lincoln's issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation September 22, 1862 following the Battle of Antietam ensured Britain and France would not intervene in war over slavery (McPherson 383-84, 557).<sup>1</sup>

It is partially understandable why Dixon simplifies these two arguments. For he is writing fiction, after all. But he presents is a distorted argument while proclaiming to use authentic records, and of course, his personal memory. Durham does not end his argument with Deacon Crane and the subject of secession and slavery, as Dixon uses this conversation to remind the reader of the central thesis of the novel. Durham tells Crane that the United States, "can never get solidarity in a nation of equal rights out of two hostile races that do not intermarry." Durham continues the miscegenation narrative, "*In a Democracy you can not build a nation inside of a nation of two antagonistic races, and therefore the future American must be either an Anglo Saxon or a Mulatto*" (*The Leopard's Spots* 333). For Durham, the right to choose one's marital partner is the "foundation of racial life and of civilisation," that the South must defend (ibid.). This is the view of society the character of Preacher Durham develops from the start of Reconstruction and fully embraces as the novel heads towards the twentieth-century, and it is used by Dixon to symbolize his own white supremacy views. This particular form of the argument makes two points for Dixon.

First, Southern whiteness must be defended, undoubtedly by the white male population, and is in constant danger by the emancipated slave. Second, Southern whiteness is masculine and cannot be trusted with the white female, for she is capable of giving birth to a mixed-race child, whether by force or by choice. Societal equality in America, for Dixon at least, is once again,

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the role of slavery in the secession crisis, see Rable's comprehensive study on the subject in *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution Against Politics*. James McPherson's arguments on the slavery and secession, as well as European intervention in the war can be found in *The Battle Cry of Freedom*.

taking on a gender connotation, as it is a white male virtue and the emancipated slave cannot be trusted with it, lest he (Dixon is explicit to never use the female “she”) want to marry a white Southern woman. Lastly, national reconciliation is impossible, as the North supported abolition, and as the characters of Deacon Crane and Susan Walker show, support black civil rights. Following Durham’s own argument, therefore, the South cannot reconcile with the North for at least a portion of its people will aid the former slave. In Dixon’s view, the Northerner does not understand the race situation in the South, for the Northerner is either materialistic, an abolitionist demagogue, or does not have a set of morals to follow. The character of the Preacher is a contrast to the Northerner and is the novel’s morality regarding intermarriage, civil rights, and Southern whiteness.

### **Nelse and the Faithful Slave Trope**

In order to prove that abolition was unnecessary, Dixon constructs the figure of Nelse as the faithful slave. Col. Gaston’s former slave, Nelse evades emancipation from Yankee soldiers as he loyally rushes home to deliver his fallen master’s letters home. Upon delivering his former the letters to Mrs. Gaston, Nelse remains loyal to young Charlie and Mrs. Gaston, steadfastly confirming that he will remain working for the family (Dixon 11-12). While retaining the identity of the faithful slave, Nelse is also stripped of manhood, removing his character as a threat to Charlie and other white characters. This is demonstrated in “An Experiment of Matrimony,” when an Agent of the Freedman’s Bureau summons Nelse and orders him to pay a fee of one dollar to renew his marriage license, for his marriage to his wife, Eve, was not legal. Nelse quickly hatches a scheme in which he informs Eve that he is considering marrying other girls as Eve treats him horribly. When Nelse returned to his cabin with the new marriage licenses, Nelse was met with rejection from getting remarried by Eve. In an act of supremacy,

Eve forces her suitor to court her an hour every day, sleep in the barn for three weeks, and bring her red stick candy and a bouquet of flowers. Only after three weeks of following the wishes of Eve was Nelse able to remarry his wife (58-62).

Despite being a free man under constant watch of the Freedmen's Bureau, Nelse resists demonstrating his new autonomy, maintaining unwavering loyalty to the Gastons. Nelse's resistance against the Bureau is Dixon's effort to demonstrate that slavery was a paternalistic bond between the slave and the master. At the same time, Dixon seeks to establish the Bureau as a tool of coercion, meant to trick former slaves into voting for the Republicans illegally. In "The Old and the New Church," Preacher warns Nelse he must end his defiance against the Bureau, for the Bureau has "absolute power over all questions between the Negro and the white man." Preacher continues his lecture by insisting the Freedmen's Bureau "can prohibit [freedmen] from working for a white person without their consent, and they can fix your wages and make your contracts." Lastly, Preacher advises Nelse to come find him if the officer representing the Bureau confronts Nelse again (42). Dixon may insist the Freedmen's Bureau is a tool used by Republican's to gain superiority in the South, but the Bureau was created as a temporary measure by Congress in March 1865 to distribute clothing, fuel, food, and handle all matters concerning newly emancipated slaves in the South. As the Bureau grew, however, Congress tasked it to aid white refugees as well. Dixon's complaints about the Bureau are not unique, most Southern whites resented the Bureau's attempts to encourage former slaves to sign labor contracts. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the Freedmen's Bureau became a symbol of Confederate defeat and stood as a barrier between the racial hierarchy of master and slave. But, towards the very end of Reconstruction, freedmen assisted by the Bureau praised the government agency as symbol of the nation's responsibility to former slaves (Foner 69, 169).

Nelse, nonetheless, does not praise the Bureau, instead he remains loyal to the Gastons and looks to the Preacher for protection. This is Dixon's attempt to prove that the Bureau was a harmful institution that threatened the existing racial hierarchy. Nelse mocks the former slaves that are aided by the Freedman's Bureau, until he is forced to join the Union League and register to vote for the upcoming election. Registering to vote and to join the Union League, however, made Nelse "a marked man among his race" (104-05). While attempting to vote against the Republican candidate, Ezra Perkins, Nelse is attacked and threatened not to vote by other freedmen. Charlie Gaston finds Nelse nearly beat to death. Nelse was beat by black Union Leaguers for refusing to join the group and for voting against Perkins. Bedridden from his wounds, Nelse remains loyal. He then sides with the Ku Klux Klan's bid to remove the newly elected Republican government and their black electorate. Ultimately, Dixon has no use for the faithful slave, as Nelse dies in "The Old and the New Negro" (107, 120, 163). Nelse as the faithful slave figure, was the recipient of paternalistic regard, Romine argues, and has no place in a civilization without a racial hierarchy ("Thomas Dixon and the Literary Production of Whiteness" 136). Dixon lowers the intelligence of the faithful slaves, so that the figure cannot demonstrate agency as well. The faithful slave is forced by the Bureau to act, and even if resistance is demonstrated, the figure looks to the white, former master for protection instinctively. Ultimately, for Dixon, if the South and the white race are to progress to a new South, it must abandon the antebellum ways of the old South. This includes the faithful slave. While not a threat to white manhood, Nelse still represented a link to the past. Moreover, his death serves as a traumatic experience for Charlie, as the latter claims Nelse as his best friend (164).

The faithful slave may not be useful in the new social order, but the figure is not a threat to the Southern white identity. The threat, instead, comes in the second form of black identity: the black savage. For Dixon, this figure is the true consequence of emancipation. In “Deepening Shadows,” Dixon argues that emancipation simply degraded former slaves, rather than aided them. The chapter serves as an omen for the rest of the novel as it is filled with descriptions, such as “shadows,” “ominous,” and the “Black Death.” These descriptions paint the freed slave as a threat to the South. Likewise, Durham is witness to, and eventually threatened, by black camp followers of the local garrison firing rifles into the air. Durham surmises that the culprit is the Union League, as he suspects the league’s leaders of passing out guns and ammunition. This is Durham’s first experience with freed persons, and the experience leads him to conclude that the freed slave threatens the South, as emancipation casts a shadow over the South. Dixon labels this shadow as Black Death, ready to sweep across the South and its people (32-33). Emancipation and the war were curses on the South, as it freed “four million negroes,” and destroyed “five billions of dollars’ worth of property” (35). Dixon further exaggerates by arguing that the War and the freeing of slaves led to the destruction of property, as the Union Army marched across the South, pillaging to defend the measure.

Dixon laments that the Radical Republican push to enfranchise the slave was an event that was far worse than the war itself, as the Radicals in Congress led a new revolution that paralyzed every form of industry in the South, anarchy soon spread. In the chapter “Simon Legree,” full anarchy takes place in the South. In this chapter, the character of Simon Legree is introduced, with a plan approved by Thaddeus Stevens, to give black men the right to vote as a means to remove the white population from power (83, 88). Dixon’s main argument in the novel, is that the black population primarily consists of former slaves that are unintelligent, barbaric,

and in no shape to exercise freedom, and that giving former slaves inalienable rights and freedom, will eventually lead to the erasure of the Anglo-Saxon race and its culture and norms. This viewpoint is symbolized in the Preacher's sermon to his congregation at Hambright in the midst of anarchy. Early in the novel, the Preacher is calm, urges against violence, but with Legree carrying out the plans of Stevens, he begins to urge his flock to "fight with the powers of hell for [white] civilisation," for "the attempt is to be made to deliberately blot out Anglo-Saxon society and substitute African barbarism" (95).

Dixon uses the results of the fixed election of Republican Amos Hogg, Governor, and Simon Legree, Speaker of the House, to create psychological trauma for white identity at the hands of black characters. For this trauma, Dixon uses the character of Tom Camp, who is a poor white man. In "The Second Reign of Terror," Tom's sixteen-year-old daughter, Annie, was married to Hose Norman, also a poor white. As the Preacher finalized wedding the two, a black soldier, eyes bloodshot from whiskey, entered the room with orders to search the house, Dixon describes the soldier's entrance as a "black shadow" falling across the doorway (124). Suddenly, a scuffle takes place. The groom is knocked senseless, and Annie, still in her white wedding dress, is carried off by the black soldiers. The soldiers try to run off with Annie Camp into the woods, as shots ring out, leaving two of them dead and two wounded. Shooting at Federal soldiers is Tom's idea, for he argues, "There are things worse than death" (125). But as the people attend to Annie Camp, the Preacher entered the room, with a bandage over his eye (apparently nobody noticed his eye as he wed Annie and Hose). The night prior, the Preacher was ambushed, bound, gagged, and placed on dry fence rails, which were then set on fire. All of this was done by a group of black men led by one white man.



The chapter makes clear to the reader, that letting loose the black population is a threat to the white population. Annie Camp, a young, innocent white girl, was nearly taken by a group of black men, and was potentially raped by a group of black individuals. This is significant for several reasons. First, white, female innocence is nearly taken by a group of black men. If Annie were to be raped by these men, then any potential children that would not be white, and her white womanhood would be exploited. Gunning suggests that Dixon exploits the Southern fear of miscegenation as a response to his anxiety over white identity (*Race, Rape, and Lynching* 28). Next, the soldiers nearly disrupted a religious wedding ceremony, and a separate group attacked a religious figure. This represents freedmen having no regard for a central piece of any society, but specifically white society for the purposes of this novel, and this central piece is religion. Religion not only offers a form of societal control through its moral structure, but serves to protect the family unit as well. Disrespecting religion in the novel, is a threat to a society that is largely maintained by said religion.

Dixon's message in the novel is that in order to ensure that white identity will not be lost, Southern whites must act, and this action against the black population is progress to Dixon. The Old South allowed itself to be trampled by the North and freedmen, and in the initial years of Reconstruction. The Old South did not act; it only relied on racial prejudices to restore and maintain the social order. Dixon uses Tom Camp to represent the old South, relying on prejudices, and not taking action. This is suggested by having Tom, a poor white man, nearly lose his daughter. It is the poor whites, and by extension, middle-class whites, who have the most to lose, due to emancipation and civil rights, and they must act as well. Throughout the novel, Tom admits he is prejudiced, despite the social changes that have come about since the war ended. Tom, reasons that the "nigger's been on my back since I first toddled in to this world, and

I reckon he'll ride me into the grave" (203). Yet, he remained helpless when his daughter was taken. This is not to suggest, however, that Dixon has forgotten about the heritage of the Old South. On the contrary, Sallie Worth, the daughter of General Worth and Charlie's love interest, argues that the old South's heritage must not be forgotten, as the old South suffered but endured for the future (213).

But before a new South can emerge, the South must feel pain, and Dixon, once again uses Tom Camp to make this point. In "The Unspoken Terror," Tom catches his daughter, Flora, speaking to a black man, and snaps at her "don't you dare go [near a] nigger, or let one get [near] you no more [then] you would a rattlesnake!" (366). To protect his children, Tom built a fence around his house to keep his children shut in while he worked. Two days later, a child is lost. It is Tom Camp's Flora. Dixon uses the scenario of a missing child, as a final warning to the white population: "In a moment the white race had fused into homogenous mass of love, sympathy, hate, and revenge... The sorrow of that one-legged soldier [Tom] was the sorrow of all... and his child their child" (368). The town of Hambright, including Charlie, began to search frantically, while Tom, helplessly prayed that his daughter might show up. Finally, the mob was able to find her, bludgeoned with a jagged rock, clothes torn to shreds, and unconscious. The perpetrator is unknown, but that did not stop the "thousand-legged beast" from seeking revenge upon him (372).

"A Thousand-Legged Beast" is the description given by Dixon to the mob that searched for Flora's attacker (372). The label serves as a warning to the black population, and the black savage identity group. Ironically, the search party, consisting of white men only and their blood hounds, is the savage in this scenario, as the party seized a black man named Dick, and began flooding the court house under an oak tree for an impromptu trial. Fearing what the white mob

might do to Dick, Charlie protests his capture, reasoning with the mob that law must act if Dick indeed raped Flora. But Charlie, who studies law, is brushed aside, as “the lawyers has things their own way in a court house” (377-78). Despite Charlie’s pleas, Dick is eventually lynched and his body burned. The brutal lynching serves warning to any black male, and is a reassertion of white masculinity. The mob, portrayed as a “great crawling, swaying creature, half reptile half beast, half dragon half man...with no heart to pity,” only came about due to the raping of a white young girl (380). It is indeed ironic that the black savage must be eliminated, yet the white mob can savagely carryout vigilantism, ignoring the law and ignoring the right to a fair trial. But as Dixon reasons, the penalty Dick paid for his “crime,” would never have occurred under slavery, or under President Andrew Johnson’s tenure as president during Reconstruction. According to Dixon, Dick’s crime, and its penalty, are the result of the Radicals coming to power, and the black population attempting to use their freedoms. The narrator informs the reader, that lynching quickly became the “habit” for all crimes committed by blacks. At the same time, mob rule threatens the morality of the New South, and could possibly lead to white-self destruction. Nonetheless, Dixon does not offer a clear solution to handling the black peril, leaving this contradiction unanswered.

Black identity, then, takes two forms in *The Leopard’s Spots*. One, being the loyal companion, the other, the savage who is a threat to the white race. Like Nelse, the character of Dick, as Romine points out, has a commitment to the white companion. Both still end up dead; the former was lynched, the latter killed by the black savage. Romine correctly argues that the lynching was deemed necessary to maintain white manhood as the defender of the fragile, white womanhood, and this logic can be applied to the black companion identity as well as its termination justifies the unification of white male identity (Romine 136-37). Nelse is killed by a

black mob, or the black identity. Nelse represents the antebellum loyal slave form of black identity, and his death by free, savage blacks, signifies the end of one aspect of antebellum life. This new black, savage identity is now a threat to the South, the incidents with the Camp daughters represent this, and the black savage is met with hostility by the chivalric white man. Both identities, must come to an end, and they do as the novel takes its course, but the black savage succeeds the loyal slave and serves to stimulate the rise of lynching. Black men and women, for Dixon, simply serve one purpose: to give white supremacy and white Southern identity a cause: progress through purification. However, the black savage identity brings out the worst in the white population, and this equally brings fear to Dixon.

## CHAPTER IV

## RADICALS, CARPETBAGGERS, SCALAWAGS, AND THE NEW SOUTH

As with black identity, Dixon creates two forms of white identity in *The Leopard's Spots*. Both forms of white identity are aligned with Dixon's fear of intermarriage and the loss of white purity, and with his main goal of progression from the old South to a new South. Dixon needs a causal factor for the rise of white supremacy, and he created one with the black identity. But for Dixon, the freedman could not possibly have terrorized the South on his own, he required assistance. In the novel, the summer of 1867 is established to be the most terrible year in Southern history, as oath bound secret societies began to dominate Southern society, letting loose "marauding bands of negroes armed to the teeth terrorizing the country, stealing, burning, and murdering" (100). The year 1867, of course, coincides with the Republicans in Congress taking control over Reconstruction policies following the elections of 1866. But in his depiction of Congress in the novel, Dixon falls into presenting Republicans and Northerners through the lens of the Lost Cause mythology, which calls into question his claim of using historical evidence in the Historical Note.

Like William Dunning and other proponents of the Lost Cause, Dixon blames Northerners, Republicans, carpetbaggers, and especially scalawags. Northerners and Southerners who supported the Republicans during Reconstruction (derogatorily called scalawags by fellow Southerners) are one form of white identity Dixon represents in the novel.<sup>2</sup> The Northerner and his/her supporters are the true villains of both the novel and Reconstruction for they emancipated the slave and attempted to change Southern society and its racial hierarchy by enfranchising the freedman. Additionally, Dixon seeks to display the differences in Northern and Southern society,

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<sup>2</sup> For more on the use of the terms "carpetbagger" and "scalawag," refer to Ted Tunnell's "The Propaganda of History": Southern Editors and the Origins of "Carpetbagger and Scalawag"

as doing so establishes to his readers the corrupt, immoral, hypocritical, and effeminate nature of Northern society. These factors are yet again casual factors that argue for the need of a white identity, only on Southern terms. Dixon, then, does not call for reconciliation between the two sections, as the Northerner will either champion civil rights for the black population, or at least do so for political purposes. Again, Dixon holds a strong belief in the family unit based on whiteness. Northern ideals of egalitarianism, industry, and capitalism threaten these ideologies, for Northerners seek to grant the black population the inalienable rights guaranteed to all Americans, including freedom of marriage.

Because Dixon needs to establish white supremacy as historical fact and not myth, he needs to establish white supremacy as having been under constant siege, even after the terrible summer of 1867. As Romine argues, progress for Dixon is purification, never negotiation, therefore Dixon establishes his white antagonists as being a separate white identity from Southern whites (Romine 139). This white identity represents the North, including its citizens, politicians, and supporters. Dixon immediately sets out to contrast the two sections in the opening pages of the novel. In the first chapter, Dixon creates the setting of the South as being in ruin. By contrast, in the “rich Northern cities could be heard the boom of guns, the scream of steam whistles, the shouts of surging hosts greeting returning regiments crowned with victory” (*The Leopard’s Spots* 6). Dixon’s Northern characters are at the extreme of politics and morality, they are misguided, completely depraved, and opportunistic. Dixon needs to contrast the North with the South in order to legitimize the Lost Cause notion of “Southern burden” and the rise of a new South out of poverty. Dixon does this by creating characters that fit the previous descriptive, and by using actual historical figures, such as Abraham Lincoln, and presenting one side of that person, the hypocritical and immoral side.

The misguided aspect of Dixon's Yankee characters, is applicable to the female character from the North. Yankee women, like their male counterparts in the Freedman's Bureau, are helping to destroy Southern society, due to their ignorance about Southern life, which includes their mission to build schools in the South. In "The Old and the New Church," Preacher wanders about town, wondering where his black congregation has gone, as they stopped appearing for Sunday church services. When he asks Nelse, Preacher discovers a Yankee woman has built a church for the black population in town and encouraged the freed people to attend church services at the new school as they were not wanted by the whites at Preacher's church (41). The individual who built the school for the freed people is Susan Walker of Boston, whose "fortune was devoted to the education and elevation of the Negro race" (44). Preacher pays a visit to Walker. In this scene, Dixon tries to distinguish the manners of a Southern gentleman, and a Northern woman from New England. Preacher greets Walker with "the deference the typical Southern man instinctively pays a woman," whereas Walker warns she will not be flattered by the Southerner, and immediately sets out to begin talking business (44).

In a forthright manner, Walker asks Durham for his assistance regarding her work amongst the freedmen, but Durham is taken aback by Walker's so-called rudeness and forwardness. It is difficult to categorize Walker's behavior as being rude, for she simply has little regard for Southern male chivalry. Walker states, "I believe you Southern men are all alike, woman flatterers. You have a way of making every woman believe you think her a queen." While Walker admits to being pleased by Durham's behavior, she emphatically asserts that she will not give Durham "an opportunity to feed [her] vanity this morning" (ibid.). Walker even goes as far as proclaiming herself to be an "idea," rather than a man or a woman (45). Here Dixon is using gender roles as a means to distinguish the Northerner from the Southerner.

Walker is a strong Northern woman, who does not care for Durham's male chivalry. Her mission is to establish a high school in the town but cannot do it alone, and in a manner representing national reconciliation, the Northerner requests the aid of the Southerner. Rather than Walker, Durham refuses to lend support (46).

Preacher, at the request of Walker, sets aside his chivalry, and speaks to the Northerner in a crude manner, insisting that Walker's "presence [at Hambright] as a missionary to the heathen is an insult to [Southern] intelligence and Christian manhood." He adds, "[Walker's] is not to teach the gospel of Jesus Christ," instead, Durham insists that Walker's, "work is to teach crack-brained theories of social and political equality to four millions of ignorant negroes, some of whom are but fifty years removed from the savagery of African jungles" (46). The Preacher ends his tirade by arguing that Walker's mission is nothing more than impossible and is only meant to "separate and alienate negroes from their former masters who can only be their real friends and guardians" (46). Durham concedes that he cannot stop Walker, for she is backed by a "million bayonets and back of these bayonets are banked fires of passion in the North ready to burst into flame in a moment" (47). This represents the only moment in the novel a Southern man speaks to a woman with such contempt. The point of this conversation is to contrast the Northerner with the Southerner. Walker is rude, crass, and unpleasant. This contrasts with every Southern woman described by Dixon in the novel. Sallie Worth, for instance, is described as "beautiful" with "fluted red lips parted as if in half wonder, half joy," and with "great blue eyes," whereas Walker has the "expression of a feminine bulldog" (45, 211).

Walker's perceived crassness then, forces Durham to speak out of character, because she does not understand Southern manners and show deference to Durham as a male. Here, Walker is the ignorant Northerner that is misguided about the ways of Southern life. Durham blasts



Walker for attempting to ignite a race war, and he brands her “an insolent interloper... a wilful spoiled child of rich and powerful parents playing with matches in a powder mill” (47). This is Dixon’s view of Northerners, interlopers who cannot understand the horrors the South endured. This view of the North certainly dates back to Dixon’s outburst towards Justin D. Fulton’s “The Southern Problem.” Dixon lived in Boston, he interacted with the fiery New Englander, and that lecture was the catalyst that helped him begin his literary career (Cook 71). The misguided identity is another causal factor for Southern behavior. Durham only reacts as he does due to Walker speaking with rudeness and out of turn. This scenario does not occur between two Southerners. To Dixon, the Northerner is ignorant, but the Northerner is equally opportunistic and immoral, and their ignorance is one reason that explains why the two sections cannot coexist. Moreover, the misguided Northerner will always want to aid the freedman.

Aiding the black population (those free prior to the abolition of slavery and those freed with the amendment) may be a dutiful and morally acceptable act by Northern standards, but Dixon does not want his readers to finish his novel with the assumption that the North was humane and truly accepting of all, regardless of race, while the South was stuck in its antebellum ways of slavery and brutality. Since his time in Boston, Dixon pledged to share the South’s view of Reconstruction, and establishing a second form of white identity is the author’s approach to reaching this goal. The hypocritical form of white, Northern identity is Dixon’s further attempt to discredit the Union victory after the war. Ultimately, Dixon’s characters prove that he believes all Northerners are hypocrites. He purposefully selects politicians that the people trust and believe in to discredit the North. For the two politicians, Dixon uses President Abraham Lincoln, and he creates the character of Everett Lowell, a Congressman from Massachusetts.

Of the three presidents that served the country during Reconstruction, Dixon provides a full discussion only of Lincoln. Dixon embraces Abraham Lincoln, not as president of the United States, but the Lincoln that ran against Senator Stephen A. Douglas for the Illinois senate seat in 1858. Dixon's use of Lincoln during his senatorial campaign is of particular interest, as the author uses selective historical evidence. He shows his readers Lincoln prior to the latter's rise to the presidency and his eventual shift from free-soil politics to embracing emancipation. Dixon uses Lincoln's words during his debates with Douglas in order to deny the concept of free labor to former slaves. By doing this, Dixon is delegitimizing the Republican Party and Abraham Lincoln as champions of the black population.

As a free-soiler, Lincoln believed that the Missouri Compromise created a sacred barrier for freedom, as it excluded slavery from the northern section of the old Louisiana Purchase territory. But Democrat Stephen A. Douglas' bill, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, erased the line marked by the Missouri Compromise and allowed for the people of the Kansas and Nebraska territories to decide on the question of slavery. By applying the sacred American concept of self-government to the slavery issue, Douglas, with the help of powerful Southern politicians and President Franklin Pierce, tapped into the idea of popular sovereignty in an effort to get his bill passed. With the violent political episode known as Bleeding Kansas gripping the country in 1854, Lincoln believed that Douglas and his Southern allies instigated a revolt against the ideals of the Founding Fathers regarding slavery. Lincoln further believed that slavery would ultimately perish and the country would cease to be divided, with the Founders' liberating visions being realized. But because Douglas' bill erased the barrier placed on the spread of slavery, Lincoln feared slave owners would spread slavery to the frontier, making forced labor more powerful in America (Oates 111, 113). With this argument, Lincoln was in the thick of the anti-Nebraska

fight during the summer of 1854, refusing to join the ranks of the new Republican Party as he believed the Whig Party still had life in it. The Whig Party faded out, however, as the Know-Nothing Party drew in anti-Nebraska men and abolitionists. Detesting the anti-Catholic and nativist rhetoric of the Know-Nothings, Lincoln abandoned his old party label, joined the Republican Party, and challenged Stephen A. Douglas for the Illinois Senate seat in 1858 (Oates 121, 130).

During the Illinois senatorial campaign, Lincoln engaged Douglas in a series of debates known as the Lincoln-Douglas Debates, and it is from the debate held at Charleston, Illinois that Dixon draws from when he has General Worth lecture to his listeners in *The Leopard's Spots*. Lincoln was fervently against the spread of slavery, believing the institution was to eventually end. However, during the debates, Douglas constantly kept Lincoln on the defensive with accusations about Lincoln's racial views. At the Ottawa, Illinois debate, for instance, Douglas accused Lincoln of conspiring to destroy the Whig Party in an effort to establish the abolitionist Republican party, whose goal was to incite civil war, emancipate slaves, and make them equal to the white population (Oates 151),

At Charleston, Douglas charged Lincoln with believing "that the Declaration of Independence asserts that the negro is equal to the white man" (Douglas 673). Lincoln, labeled as a "Black Republican" by Douglass, despised this race-baiting rhetoric, but he could not ignore it, for not defending himself put him at risk of being misunderstood. Historian and Lincoln biographer Stephen Oates argues, Lincoln indeed admitted that differences between the black and white races in America existed. (Oates 153-54). In his opening remarks at Charleston, Lincoln established where he stood on the issue of race. Lincoln maintained to the attendees, that he was "not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political

equality of the white and black races.” On the differences amongst the races, Lincoln argued: “there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together in terms of social and political equality.” Yet, Lincoln argued, “I say upon this occasion I do not perceive that because the white man is to have the superior position the negro should be denied everything” (Lincoln 636). For Lincoln, so long as a difference must exist between the two races, the black population will be inferior. Slaves and free black persons, however, were still equal in their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, which is denied by slavery and will forever be denied if the institution is allowed to spread. Despite his loss, the campaign against Douglas placed Lincoln in the national spotlight that eventually propelled him to the presidency, and his views and actions regarding emancipation and equality have long been debated, but for Lincoln during the debates, the central issue was the morality of slavery in a country with the Declaration of Independence (Oates 154). Unsurprisingly, Dixon does not use the rest of Lincoln’s words during that debate, because they reveal that Lincoln believed the black population is endowed by the Declaration of Independence with unalienable rights. Dixon pushes the Lost Cause argument on the Civil War and Reconstruction: if Lincoln did not want social and political equality, then the Northern war effort was blinded by passion and the South was the victim, not the instigator.

### **Congressman Everett Lowell’s “Equality with a Reservation”**

Unlike Lincoln, Congressman Everett Lowell is presented by Dixon as a Radical Republican and one of the finest men Boston could offer. Lowell’s name, no doubt, is a play on famous Bostonian businessman, Frances Cabot Lowell. Everett Lowell’s pedigree is certainly at a high standard, as the gentleman is a graduate from Harvard, and lives in an old-fashioned Colonial house that was built during the American Revolution. Lowell is also champion of the

freedman, and an ardent proposer of military force in the South. The Congressman is not a man of vast wealth, rather he was a well-to-do, successful worker. Dixon ends the accolades here. The author then describes Lowell's family history (310-11). Lowell's "family was one of the proudest in America. [Lowell] had a family tree five hundred years old—an unbroken line of unconquerable men who held liberty dearer than life" (310). In one sentence, the reader can conclude that Lowell's family fought during the American Revolution and transitioned their fight for abolitionism. But, the portrait of being champion of liberty is a façade, as Lowell "believed in the heritage of good honest blood as he believed in blooded horse" (ibid). Lowell may believe in the political rights of freed blacks, but as Dixon swiftly writes, Lowell "never confused his political theories about the abstract rights of the African with his personal choice of associates or his pride in his Anglo-Saxon blood. With [Lowell] politics was one thing, society another" (310). Here, Dixon is setting up the Bostonian to be not only a hypocrite, but similar to the prejudiced Southerner, as the Congressman believes in the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race. But as Dixon will attempt to argue, the false politics of the North is worse for the former slave than the institution of slavery ever was.

One of Lowell's pet hobbies, as Dixon labels, is his philanthropic patronage of George Harris. George Harris is a young, bright man, who is the mulatto son of George and Eliza Harris. Here the intertextuality with Stowe comes into play as the latter characters hail from Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). The heroic significance is not ignored by Dixon, as the narrator of *The Leopard's Spots* briefly mentions the Harris' escape from slavery—but only to the effect that the famous escape allowed their son to enter Harvard. Young George Harris is the recipient of Lowell's political patronage. He has full access to the Lowell family library, and accompanies the Congressman on speaking tours, even making speeches for Lowell. Dixon

builds up Harris to be a smart, dignified young man, and the reader can almost forget his race. It is then that Dixon dehumanizes Harris in an effort to prove the hypocrisy of the Northern politician (311). The issue arises when Lowell's daughter, Helen, who is home from visiting Sallie Worth in North Carolina, and described as a "blonde beauty," asks her father to keep George out of the house as Helen will be having her new Southern friends visit the Lowell home. Helen dismisses her father's fondness for George, calling the patronage a "fad" (311, 313). Helen then admits she has never particularly cared for George, or any black person, as she cannot look past the "little kink in [George's] hair, his big nostrils and full lips" (314). Dixon makes clear that no matter how gentlemanly or scholarly a black person may be, the white population cannot look past its racial prejudices. Ironically, this is detrimental to the country, as actual individuals such as George could be fine contributions to society, but Dixon cannot allow this, as it means black people would be on the same level as the white population.

The aptly titled chapter, "Equality with a Reservation," is, admittedly, where Dixon successfully maligns the reputation of the Northerners, specifically the New Englanders. Dixon further demonstrates to his audience that the white people of the North have longed perceived the former slave in a manner similar to the Southerner. Of course, this proves to be a sweeping generalization, and ignores historical evidence of abolitionists compassionately aiding slaves. However, Dixon is not only seeking to smear abolitionists as simply being political opportunists. Dixon is specifically taking aim at Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the character Eliza Harris is aided by a Northern politician named Senator Bird in her attempt to leave her life of enslavement in Kentucky. During her escape, Eliza demonstrate heroic qualities, crossing the frozen Ohio River with her son (named Harry in the novel), in one of the most dramatic scenes in the novel (Stowe 51, 79). Dixon, then, is attempting to reverse this by creating

a character that is their son, and demonstrating Lowell viewed young George as nothing more than political capital.

In the chapter, Lowell gives a magnanimous speech, one that launches his career to higher levels, at Cooper Union, New York City (Lincoln gave a speech here that launched him to national prominence in 1860). George accompanied Lowell, inspired by the Congressman's words, even as he faced prejudices from Northerners on a daily basis. George then develops a love for Lowell's daughter, Helen, the young man became so inspired by Lowell's words, that he believed his love for Helen should transcend race (*Leopard's Spot* 386-87). "A great hope" filled George's world, Lowell's appeals for "human brotherhood" and "his scathing ridicule of pride and prejudice," left George with the feeling that he was a free man that can accomplish anything (387). With these feelings in mind, George confesses to Lowell that he is in love with Helen. Lowell immediately rejects this confession, urging George to end the conversation so that the two can remain friends (390). George pushes the issue, and Lowell admits he is rejecting George out of "taste." Lowell does not desire "the infusion of [George's] blood in [his] family," Although George is of white lineage, he is considered to be a mulatto, the very thing Dixon fears, and as such Lowell is even more compelled to reject George.

Lowell, like Lincoln once believed, believed in political equality and society and politics must exist in two separate spheres. Social rights are one thing, political rights are another, Lowell argues (391-92). George argues that a man who believes in science like Lowell could not possibly be close minded, but Lowell closes the argument by insisting to George that "one drop of your blood in my family could push it backward three thousand years in history." Lastly, Lowell, would rather kill Helen than "see her sink in [George's] arms into the black waters of a Negroid life" (394). Whiteness, then, is fragile, and can self-destruct if intermarriage is allowed.

George's journey does not end with his rejection of the Lowell family, as Dixon uses the character to mock Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and to further indicate to the average Northerner's prejudice. Following his falling out with the Lowells, George Harris resigns his position at a custom house, and begins to search for work. Despite being an educated man, the only forms of employment open to George are domestic positions. When he decides to work in a factory, labor unions shun him, reminiscent of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952). Interestingly, George's quest for employment leads him to New York, where his light skin allows him to pass as a Jew (395). For Dixon, Boston is not an egalitarian city that offered opportunity to free blacks, as George was denied employment. George is only able to gain employment after passing as a Jew, very much evocative of Philip Roth's *The Human Stain* (2000), suggesting that Dixon is warning the black population: economic opportunity is present in the North to those individuals not perceived as black.

Naturally, Dixon does not allow the character of George to enjoy success, as within an hour of George's employment, his race is discovered. When George begs to the Brick Layer's Union to be allowed to join, the employees refused to work and threatened to riot (396). An employee then makes a speech, arguing "No negro shall ever enter the door of this Union except over my dead body...Let him stay in the South. We have no room for him here, and we will kill him if he tries to take our bread from us" (ibid.).

Dixon here exposes the difficulties of black men finding employment in the North, for not only do black workers face racial prejudice, but they face economic competition from whites. Dixon's capitalization of the word Union is interesting. On the surface, the employee making the statement is simply referring to the Brick Layer's Union as he refuses George entry into the labor union. But when one takes into consideration that the terms North, the Union, and the United



States are used interchangeably to refer to the states that did not secede, then one can conclude Dixon uses the term Union in the worker's statement to refer to the North and the United States. George, then, and the black population as a whole, is denied access to Northern life and its promise of economic opportunity.

The employee in the factory is further used by Dixon to critique Northern life and to justify slavery, by suggesting the wage system is cheaper than slave labor. Slavery, the employee argues, "was a mild form of servitude, in which the Negro had plenty to eat and wear..." While babies born into slavery were separated from their parents, the employee admits, children were valuable "assets," and taken care of. This in contrast to the North, where the speaker suggests women in the North are forced to terminate pregnancies due to economic circumstance: "we have baby farms which we fertilise with their bones. [The speaker knows] of one old hag in this city who has killed over two thousand babes" (397). A riot then breaks out as a socialist and an anarchist fight one another, leaving George wounded. Dixon begins "The New Simon Legree," focusing on George, and suddenly targets economic life in the North. The chapter exposes not only the racial prejudice in the North, but the class issues tied to emancipation. The readers of the novel gain the impression that industrialism is simply exploitative, creates an environment in which socialism and anarchism flourish, and forces northern families to separate, like slavery does, but at the cost of terminating a pregnancy.

Slavery, for Dixon, at the very least clothed and fed laborers, whereas in the North, men fight for employment and take on radical ideals that lead to economic unrest. George's final journal in the novel begins with him turning to a life of crime and gambling, due to the lack of employment in the North. With his new earnings, he then travels to the states of Colorado, Kansas, Ohio, and Indiana. The purpose of this journey for George is to visit the scenes where

black individuals were burned alive. On the remaining ash heaps, George despondently places a wreath of flowers. This is meant to be an emotional scene in the novel, as George Harris, son of two slaves who escaped slavery, is seemingly memorializing those who died of racial violence. However, the states and scenes of the killings are explicitly not in the South, as the killings and burnings occur on sites with links to the abolitionist movement. One ash heap, for instance, is found on a monument to Thaddeus Steven. Another pile is found in a village square that was a center for the Underground Railroad, and another on the banks of the Ohio River, where George's mother in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* crossed to escape slavery (403). Dixon is making the argument with George's somber journey, not to feel sadness for the status of blacks in America, but to show that since emancipation, the condition of the black individual has worsened. This is especially true in the North, where abolitionists promised freedom. George, and the rest of the black population, is displaced in America.

The purpose of creating a Northern form of white identity is to demonstrate to the readers of the novel, that white Northerners contributed to the chaos of Reconstruction that subjugated the South. For Dixon, Southern white identity can only progress through transcending trauma. The Northerner caused this by aiding slaves and former slaves, as characters like Susan Walker and Congressman Everett Lowell foolishly attempt to change Southern society. Therefore, it is impossible for the nation to reconcile, for elements of the white population (the North) will always want enfranchisement for the black population. Worse, Northerners hide their prejudices, and only use civil rights as a political bargaining chip. Dixon likens Congressman Lowell to Abraham Lincoln to demonstrate this. Southern whiteness requires a call to arms, *to do something*, and Durham's confrontation with Walker is a form of action that contrasts the South and the North. Characters such as Lowell and Walker are used by Dixon to incite outrage within

his readers, as Northerners are characterized as being interlopers, or hypocrites. In both characterizations, Dixon uses the Northerner to show the region's interference in Southern affairs, especially in race issues.

### **The Reign of Simon Legree**

If, for Dixon, Abraham Lincoln was the protector of the white race and of the South following the Civil War, then the radical faction of the Republican Party and its southern allies was the cause for the South's despair. At the start of the eleventh chapter of Book I, "Simon Legree," Dixon likens the Radicals to wolves, arguing that "Mr. Lincoln had held these wolves at bay during his life by the power of his great personality." But with the "Lion" dead, the "Wolf, who had snarled and snapped at [Lincoln] in life, put on [Lincoln's] skin and claimed the heritage of his power" (83). While Dixon express a supreme distaste for Radicals, he accuses carpetbaggers of the North and scalawags of the South for bringing a second revolution to the Union at a time when the southern states were enjoying peace and were struggling to survive. Carpetbagger and scalawags touted political success to the Radicals in the South, if only the plans for the disfranchisement for whites and the enfranchisement of blacks were carried out. Like scholars and writers before him, Dixon warns that plans of arming former slaves, politically, socially, and militarily, once done, cannot be undone, and will forever pitch the two races in the country into a state of battle (83-84).

The most extreme of the carpetbaggers, is the character of Simon Legree. Dixon does not divulge into Legree's origin, as he relies on his readers for having read Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In Stowe's novel, the character of Simon Legree is a morally depraved slaveholder who represents the most extreme of the slave-owners. Legree originally hailed from a pious New England home, but abandoned his mother, and eventually becomes a brutal slave-

owner on a cotton plantation on the Red River (*Uncle Tom's Cabin* 284, 315). In *The Leopard's Spot's*, Dixon retains the character's origins, adding "In [Legree's] face, were the features of the distinguished ruffian whose cruelty to his slaves had made him unique in infamy in the annals of the South." Dixon ensures the readers remember Legree killed the protagonist of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Uncle Tom (85). Legree still lacks morality as he avoids fighting for the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War by dressing as a German female immigrant. Following the war, Legree migrated to the state of North Carolina for the purpose of gaining black votes for the Republican Party. The plan for Legree, was to give black men the vote and disenfranchise enough white voters, in order to "kick" President Andrew Johnson out of the White House in the upcoming election. With Johnson gone, the Supreme Court would then have a Radical Republican majority, so that Congress could then pass legislation confiscating the property of Southern men and former Confederates. In 1867, the plan came to fruition, as Thaddeus Stevens passed legislation that crippled the authority of the Supreme Court, destroyed state governments in the South, and confiscated property. Naturally, and with the aid the Army, black laborers refused to work and the South began to experience crime and chaos (84-85, 88, 90).

In "Legree Speaker of the House," witnesses the peak of the transformation of Southern society at the hands of Northern carpetbagger, as Dixon's fear of intermarriage is fully visualized. After an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, Ezra Perkins, gathers all of the newly eligible black voters to cast their ballots in North Carolina's state elections, Amos Hogg became Governor, and Simon Legree becomes Speaker of the House (104, 109). Hogg, represents an extreme archetype of the scalawags as he was a traitor to the Confederacy, and worse, a traitor to the state of North Carolina. Prior to the Civil War, Hogg was a strong secessionist and an ardent supporter of slavery. But like Legree, Hogg lacks both honor and conviction. As the war came to

a close in favor of the Union, Hogg became a professed loyalty to the Union and “wormed” his way into the state’s Reconstruction government where he led a campaign to have secessionists and war Governor Zebulon Vance hanged (36).

Along with Hogg and Legree gaining power in the state of North Carolina, Ezra Perkins, arrived in Raleigh with his carpetbag as a new member of the state senate. Upon assuming power, Congressman Tim Shelby, leader of the majority in the state House legislature, brought up a measure that was to make the state of North Carolina “loyal” again. The fictitious bill is titled, “A Bill to be Entitled an Act to Relieve Married Women from the Bonds of Matrimony when United to Felons, and to Define Felony.” Surely, the title of the bill is satire on the part of Dixon, but the measures displayed a transformation of Southern society. In the bill, all citizens of the state who fought against the United States and for the Confederacy, were felons and forever barred from voting or holding office. This primarily targets all white males in the state. Secondly, Legree declared that all married relations to former Confederates were dissolved and barred said men from ever remarrying their wives. Legree is a master financier, as he establishes corrupt rings that gut the economy of North Carolina and raised property taxes on the citizens of the state (113-16). With this chapter, Dixon is playing on fears that Northern and Southern Republicans want to transform Southern society. Republicans are nothing more than corrupt individuals whose only morality is gaining as much profit as possible. Marriage, is a sacred bond, both socially and religiously, and to remove marriage from society through unfair laws, provides the opportunity for Dixon to further establish Reconstruction as a source of trauma for white Southerners.

After the Ku Klux Klan intimidated black voters from casting their ballots during the next round of elections, Legree and the rest of the carpetbaggers are voted out of office and forced to

leave the state. Legree is reintroduced twenty-five years after Reconstruction in “The New Simon Legree,” as the owner of the mill George Harris seeks employment. Whereas in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* Legree was a brutal slaveowner, in *The Leopard’s Spots* the character is a brutal mill owner (161, 398). Dixon transforms Legree into a character that is driven purely by money and power. His power is so immense that Legree can “commit any and every crime from theft to murder and impunity.” Legree’s power is “greater than a monarch’s,” and “has neither faith in God, nor fear of the devil” (399). Unsurprisingly, Legree lives a lavish lifestyle, while his workers are forced to fight for food and shelter (ibid.). Dixon does not explicitly demonstrate Legree’s effects on the individual workers, rather his power is demonstrated by using references that apply to the mass of workers under him (Riggio 66).

The use of Legree is quite interesting, because the character serves two purposes for Dixon and his message of a unified Southern identity. Dixon acknowledges the character’s history from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Legree’s purpose in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* is to foil Uncle Tom and break his religious spirit. Dixon keeps the monstrous slave-owner qualities from Stowe’s character, but does make changes as previously discussed. Legree in *The Leopard’s Spots* becomes a corrupt politician after the Civil War, demonstrating that white Republicans were opportunistic, corrupt, and most of all, immoral. But as scholar Thomas P. Riggio discusses in his article, “Uncle Tom Reconstructed: A Neglected Chapter in the History of a Book,” the character of Simon Legree has been used by Dixon in a manner similar to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s use of the character, that of a home violator (63). Legree succeeds in organizing free blacks into a strong state government. As Speaker of the House, Legree introduces a bill which ends the marital bonds of all citizens who fought against the Union and forbids husbands from attempting to remarry or live with their former wives (*The Leopard’s Spots* 113). This attack,

then, on the Southern family unit provides Dixon with a historical justification for the rise of the Klan. Because white, Southern identity relies on cause and effect, the Klan heroically saves the Old South, and forces all of the carpetbaggers, including Legree, out of the state (Riggio 63). Legree, then, is absolved by Dixon from his slave-owner qualities demonstrated in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

As Riggio argues, when Dixon took over the character, he put Legree's Yankee traits to use in an effort to further expose Northern hypocrisy. Dixon's own experience as a minister in Boston and New York exposed him to a type of industrial slavery that was both comparable to Southern slavery, only the novel is less forgiving of Northern industrialism. In creating the course of Legree's career in the North, Dixon reestablished him as the national villain, as Stowe had done. Dixon depicts him as an industrial lord who profited from transporting blacks to the North, using their labor, as slave owners had done, and exposing them to Northern factories that are hotbeds for racial prejudice (Riggio 65). Legree is used to represent the absolute worst of the carpetbaggers. As Charlie Gaston observes, “[Legree] represents everything that the soul of the South loathes...Negro supremacy in politics, and Negro equality in society” (194). Dixon closes Reconstruction in the novel with Legree ousted from power, but his regime is a source of trauma from which whiteness can rise from.

### **Allan McLeod: The Scalawag**

The character of Allan McLeod represents the most extreme of the scalawags and is perhaps the novel's main and most ambitious antagonist. McLeod is described as selfish, in politics he is “cunning, plausible, careful, brilliant and daring” (256). McLeod wishes to rise to the top politically, no matter the cost, as in his mind the end would justify the means. Like Legree, McLeod prefers the white man, but has no aversion to using black voters to reach his

goals, as he views the black population as “the sentimental pet of the Nation (257). McLeod is the adversary of both Preacher Durham and Charlie Gaston, and seeks to foil the plans of both men throughout the novel. McLeod attempts to smear the Preacher’s name in the village of Hambright by openly courting the Preacher’s wife, a testament to his lack of Southern virtue. McLeod and Charlie become political opponents, battling for the South’s future in the opening years of the twentieth-century, and rivals over the hand of Sallie Worth (258-59).

After the Ku Klux Klan drives away the carpetbag government, a young Allan McLeod reorganizes the disbanded Klan, and as a scalawag, becomes a local Republican leader (169, 173). Throughout the novel Dixon has animosity towards carpetbaggers, but for Dixon, the scalawag is much worse. McLeod, a scalawag, is branded a traitor during a fiery conversation with the Preacher. McLeod masqueraded as a Klansman and attempted to kill an elderly and respected black man. He is arrested and sent to jail, following his release he swears to have changed and becomes a Republican (166). But for the Preacher, McLeod cannot be trusted, for he betrayed his fellow white men by not only abusing the Klan to kill wantonly, but he became a Republican (175). As for his role in Gaston’s life, McLeod attempts to persuade Gaston into joining the Republican Party, even though Charlie is a Democrat and loathes the Republican Party. Not only will Charlie be paid for aiding the Republicans, but he will be elected governor of North Carolina by McLeod if the Republicans lose. Charlie is tempted by the idea as he has become frustrated with the old Democrats of the state. Charlie, however, must give up his prejudices against the black population in order to mobilize its voters. Charlie’s principles are in line with the Republican Party, except for the issue of black equality, but as tempting as the offer might be, he rejects it (196-97). Charlie recalls Preacher’s words to him: “This Republic can have no future if racial lines are broken, and its proud citizenships sinks to the level of a mongrel



breed of Mulattoes. The South must fight this battle to finish” (198). In short the South can never give up the race issue.

McLeod seeks to establish Republican dominance on the South by mobilizing southern farmers and black voters. Preacher Durham warns Charlie that such a move is dangerous for the South, for “When the white race begin to hobnob with the Negro and seek his favour, they must grant him absolute equality” (241). This, of course, means social and political equality. Yet, scalawags such as McLeod do not simply represent black suffrage, scalawags seek social equality, which for Dixon really means intermarriage. The Preacher reasons, “The beginning of Negro equality as a vital fact is the beginning of the end of the nation’s life. There is enough negro blood here to make mulatto the whole Republic.” Voting, then, is transformed into a white, male virtue. Preacher continues, “You cannot seek the Negro vote without asking him to your house,” for if black men are allowed to break bread with white families, then black men have “the right to ask your daughter’s hand in marriage” (242). This is McLeod’s plan in totality, and his support for the Republicans despite his Southern heritage, makes him the principle antagonist in the novel. When it appeared that McLeod was to become United States Senator for North Carolina after breaking the Democratic Party of the state, he suddenly pulled out of the race. In a sudden twist, Preacher Durham discovered that McLeod kept a still and used his mother as an illegal distiller. In order to prevent the information from being released to the public, McLeod pulled his hat out of the Republican caucus race for the senate seat (320). After failing to smear the Preacher’s name, and his wife’s, and failing to gain the favor Sallie Worth, McLeod is sent to jail for breaking election laws. Soon after he is released, he becomes a United States Ambassador to a South American country. In another strange twist, McLeod marries Susan Walker of Boston, who is a “matured spinster now approaching sixty years of age, and worth \$5,000,000” (455).

Ultimately, the character of Allan McLeod is not as compelling as Simon Legree, and this could perhaps be due to Dixon having to create an original villain in McLeod, as opposed to modifying one in Legree. Nonetheless, McLeod is *supposed* to represent the worst of the scalawags. He is a vile, heartless monster, and a corrupt Republican politician. But, this never comes to fruition as McLeod is used to thwart the romantic plots of Charlie Gaston and Sallie Worth and Preacher John Durham and his wife. Certainly, McLeod is a home invader in the same manner as Legree. Yet, he is not the greater threat Legree is. McLeod does not fully impress as a Northern threat. Perhaps the greatest strength in the character is McLeod's ability to change Southern society on the Republican model, but even so, Legree tried to do the same, only more interestingly.

### **General Daniel Worth and New South Industry**

The character of General Daniel Worth is supposed to be the epitome of the white race, or as Dixon describes him: "An expert in anthropology would have selected his face from among a thousand as the typical man of the Caucasian race" (63). Prior to the war, Worth confesses that he was a Whig, who despised Democrats, and was a Unionist that equally despised secession. But like many Southerners during the secession crisis, Worth acknowledged that he could not draw his sword against his state upon secession and decided to fight for the Confederacy (*The Leopard Spot's* 65). The General is a medium between the Northern and Southern labor systems. Worth proclaims that he has "always been a businessman, a cotton manufacturer as well as a farmer, in touch with the free labour of the North as well as the slave labour of the South." The General even admits, "free labour was the most economic and efficient" (66). While General Worth embraces free labor, his home fits the Old South plantation stereotype. The mansion sits on a rising hill, with big Greek columns, and was built of brick, painted in two shades of old

ivory. The mansion is so impressive, that upon witnessing it, Charlie Gaston proclaims to Sallie that the “Old South built beautiful homes” (215). Davenport argues that the Worth mansion, by virtue of being away from city life, represents the Southern home that must be defended from the black population and industrialism. If industrialism must come to the South, Davenport argues, it cannot violate this image (Davenport 34-35). However, it is Worth’s wealth that enabled him to purchase and maintain his estate. Worth is a businessman who embraces capitalism and industry. The General operates cotton-seed oil mills, and like northern mills, Worth’s mills are located near a river. The General is quite successful, as he boasts to Charlie that two-thousand hands are employed and hundreds of cotton bales are consumed each day. General Worth is capitalistic character is revealed as he envisions his mills will one day clothe the entire South (279). Worth is not only successful, but highly opportunistic. While Worth’s home and mills are outside the city, they still embrace industrialism and do not appear to be ruined, as Davenport suggests. Worth is successful, not because his mills are devoid of industry, but because he does not employ any black workers (280).

Because Worth is a Unionist, he did not fight for the defense of slavery. Dixon not only once again tries to rewrite the cause for secession, but he embraces the New South view towards slavery. For General Worth, slavery’s eradication was necessary, as now the South can become the garden of the world, “as God meant her to be” (66). On the surface, Worth represents a Southerner wishing to advance the South with the principals of free labor and without slavery, but this progression can only happen for the white population, as Lincoln argued for in the late 1850s. In a speech to his former soldiers and to the former slaves in the court house, Worth states that the North did not fight for emancipation, freedom for slaves came out of divine intervention. Former slaves are guaranteed economic autonomy, Worth argues, but it will not come as a result

of Federal intervention (66). Worth further lectures the former slaves in the room on receiving the vote, insisting “The man who tells you that you are going to be given the ballot indiscriminately with which you can rule your old masters is a criminal or a fool, or both.” He adds, “It is insanity to talk about the enfranchisement of a million slaves who cannot read their ballots” (67). Worth is essentially arguing that freed persons are allowed to work on the lands of their former masters because it does not demonstrate full autonomy as whites maintain control. The only form of autonomy the black population can fully achieve is through the ballot, but by insisting the freed persons are not ready to vote, Worth is attempting to dissuade the black people listening to him from even trying.

The character of General Daniel Worth represents a reconciliatory tone, but Dixon uses Worth as one of the antagonists of the novel, as he initially disapproves of Charlie Gaston’s courtship of Sallie (288). Worth’s rejection of Gaston is on the basis that the young Gaston’s family is “poor white trash” (357). Here, Dixon is including class into the novel. For General Worth, a wealthy businessman who favors Northern free labor, and rejects Gaston because he is of “white trash” lineage. Here Dixon depicts class lines within the New South paradigm. Gaston rebukes Worth by asserting, “No dollar mark has yet been placed on the doors of Southern society. Manhood, character and achievement are the keys that unlock it” (358). Southern notions of chivalry, manhood, and duty are the core belief of Gaston, and triumph capitalism. Dixon, here, is suggesting that industrialism is not beneficial, for it simply divides the South along class lines, while white notions manhood and character can keep the South united. Later in the novel, Charlie Gaston and General Worth will become involved in a political battle, but at this moment in the novel, the young protagonist embraces Old South values, and through this, Dixon is suggesting the New South retains these values and reject Northern industrialism.

## CHAPTER V

### CHARLIE GASTON AND THE RISE OF THE NEW SOUTH

On its surface, *The Leopard's Spots* reads as both a romance, and as a novel that features a tribulation for the main character, Charlie Gaston. The romance between Charlie Gaston and Sallie Worth, and the ordeal Gaston suffers through to marry Ms. Worth, represents the trials the new South endured in order to survive. The character of Charlie, and young Southern readers like him, represent the new South. These individuals will help the new Democratic Party lead the South as it progresses into the twentieth-century as a society of pure Anglo-Saxons. The chaos of the old South cannot survive for Dixon. This is the new white identity for Dixon. Dixon's new white identity transcends class, and focuses on maintaining racial purity by subjugating the black population through order, and not through night rides of the Ku Klux Klan. Charlie's trial throughout the novel is primarily centered on self-discovery of his New South political ideals and his quest to defeat his political opponents, General Worth and Republican Amos Hogg, both of whom are emblematic of the issues facing Dixon's view of Southern whiteness entering the twentieth-century.

#### **Classism in the New South**

The romance between Charlie and Sallie is threatened when General Daniel Worth, Sallie's father, suddenly writes a letter of rejection to Charlie, ordering Sallie to cease her visits with Charlie. Sallie herself writes Charlie, informing him that the relationship is over at the request of her parents for reasons unknown to her. When Charlie demands of Sallie an answer for the termination, she informs Charlie that slanders have been made against him. When Charlie finally confronts the General in the chapter, "Face to Face with Fate," Charlie informs Worth that his manhood has been insulted. Worth tells Charlie that it has been discovered that the

young Gaston is an immoral individual, a gambler, a hard drinker, and a spendthrift. But most importantly, Charlie's family history is considered to be deplorable to Worth, as Gaston is from a poor, white trash family. Worth cannot have his daughter marry into such a family (288, 291, 296, 357). Dixon's use of economic class in the novel is certainly an interesting twist to the novel, but it reveals that he is aware of the divisiveness prevalent in post-Reconstruction society. Prior to the war, Worth, who is meant to resemble Lincoln, was a Whig who believed in free labor, albeit for the white man only. This is a Northern virtue, and one that can divide white identity. But, Gaston remains firm in his belief in success through merit, arguing that "no dollar mark has yet been placed on the doors of Southern society. Manhood, character, and achievement are the keys that unlock it" (358). Again, Northern sentiments simply divide white identity, it is only Southern virtues that can keep it together.

Winning the hand of Sallie, whose only purpose is to become Charlie's wife, was not the sole undertaking for Charlie in *The Leopard's Spots*. In fact, he only does so at the end of the novel. The last fifty pages of the novel are meant to close the journey for Charlie, and Dixon does so in a rushed manner. Nonetheless, the chapter "The New America," sees time pass, and Charlie is now a full-fledged politician and is a member of a new Democratic Party that consists of young, energetic men (404). This, then, is the new white identity for Dixon, composed of young men who are ready to act against the Republicans and the black population, and are more energetic than the antebellum generations of Southerners who allowed the black population and Northerners to devastate the South. These young men, for Dixon, rose from the trials of Reconstruction, lived under poverty, and suffered from the shame of defeat. Now, Dixon is issuing whiteness as a call of arms to all young white men reading his novel. Again, Charlie Gaston is emblematic of this trial. The novel opens with a young Charlie learning his father was

killed in action during the war and being terrified as newly emancipated black men stormed into his mother's house and threatened to burn it down. Ironically, Charlie's perception of black individuals is nearly a humanizing one, for he befriends the comic figure of Dick as a young child. Charlie attempts to reason with the lynch mob that accuses Dick of raping and murdering Tom Camp's daughter, but to no avail as Dick is burned alive (6, 32, 98).

Whiteness, again, is fragile, and susceptible to the very violent behavior Dixon warns of on the part of the black population. The murder of Dick is the event that fully allows Gaston to accept Preacher's views on race in America. Dixon accuses the Republicans under Legree of allowing the black rapist into Southern communities, and for the eventual lynchings of the rapists. According to the narrator of the novel, both rape and lynching were "unknown absolutely under slavery and were unknown for two years after the war." As the country entered the twentieth-century, however, rape and lynching were a common spectacle (380). In placing the blame on Republicans for violence in the South, Dixon accepts that whiteness can be both fragile and violent, but the kind of violence that results in lynching is not what Dixon advocates for. The character of Charlie represents this as he finally accepts the Preacher's view that the two races cannot live in the United States.

### **American Imperialism and the Unification of Southern Whiteness**

In order to galvanize his readers to accept Charlie's transformation, Dixon uses one more historical event, one that is closer to the time period he is writing in, to prove that the black and white populations cannot co-exist. In the chapter, "The New America," General Worth is still fighting Charlie, only now he is doing so politically, hoping to end the young upstart's political ambitions and thwart his continual efforts to marry Sallie. In a sudden manner, Dixon incorporates the sinking of the *USS Maine* at Havana, Cuba in 1898, which led to war with

Spain, into his narrative (405). Yet, Dixon only uses the American war with Spain as imperialistic propaganda, which is how many American viewed the short war at the time, and he uses the war to fully restore Anglo-Saxon superiority in the United States. But as Sandra Gunning argues, this Anglo-Saxon superiority is to be both defined on Southern terms and a vision of Southern redemption to the rest of country. As Gunning argues, the American war with Spain places the Southern race problem on the national spot light, for the racial question at home became tied to America's racial mission abroad. Thus, the South was no longer tied to the past, as it held insight into the future (*Race, Rape, and Lynching*, 31).

The narrator of the novel boasts that nation was united, as 800,000 men answered the President's call for 125,000 volunteers. The war even united the Catholic and Protestants of the nation, suggesting a divide existed between the two denominations. Economic class was erased, as the children of millionaires marched alongside the children of the poor (*Leopard's Spots* 405-06). Sectionalism was suddenly erased, as "there was no North, no South, —but from the James [River] to the Rio Grande the children of the Confederacy rushed with eager flushed faces to defend the flag their fathers once fought" (406). The town of Hambright, the novel's setting, mustered volunteers for the conflict, and the Preacher called the roll from an old Confederate roster, as each man from Hambright was a child of the county's Confederate soldiers (407). While the chapter offers a strange twist to the novel, it is simply nationalistic propaganda that suddenly unites the Anglo-Saxon race, and thus white identity. The narrator is quick to proclaim, that nearly "every problem of national life had been illuminated and made more hopeful by the searchlight of war" (409). This proclamation, however, contradicts Dixon's own arguments on the differences between the North and the South. In essence, Dixon broadly uses the war with Spain to erase sectional hostilities. In doing this, Dixon erases the tension that was present



throughout the novel, for how can Southern soldiers fight with Northerners, when Dixon spent the entire novel contrasting the differences between the two regions?

But, of course, Dixon cannot help himself, and just as quickly as he argues for national unity, he quickly reminds his readers that black soldiers are not acceptable. A black regiment in the novel incites a race riot at Camp Independence, North Carolina, leading to violence. Black soldiers only “behaved” during battle, but this was only possible as black regiments were led by white officers (409). “Negro insolence” reached its boiling point, as black soldiers roamed the streets at night, looting, and making it impossible for white women and children to walk on the sidewalk. The country might be “united” now, but Dixon reminds his readers that it is still not a nation for the black individual. When black men gain some type of power, in this instance joining the Army, Dixon argues that they will abuse it and race riots will ensue. Following the riot, Charlie delivers a welcome home address to the Army camp, as the regimental company from his hometown was present. As Charlie spoke, a black soldier refused to give the sidewalk to a white woman, and the woman’s white male escort beat the soldier to death. Present is Allan McLeod, and his sole purpose in the chapter is to lead a race riot in Independence following the death of the black soldier (409-10). Robberies are a daily occurrence, and the city was unsafe, as “Negro insolence reached a height that made it impossible for ladies to walk the streets without an armed escort” (410). The violence comes to an end when Charlie chairs a committee of twenty-five to enforce resolutions that threaten the editor of a black newspaper that represents the “virulent spirit of race hatred” (411). Despite the violence that occurs in the city, Charlie’s response differs from the Ku Klux Klan and the lynch mob, as he uses the government to end the violence, rather than to promote violence. Here is Dixon’s solution, white violence threatens whiteness itself, only governmental control of the black population can keep whiteness together.

To enforce the resolution, Charlie and his committee threaten the black editor with armed force, but it is in the form of an organized militia and Charlie is victorious (413). This, of course, is contradictory, as only white men can resort to armed rebellion. The attack on Fort Sumter in 1861 and the Klan's terrorizing of blacks exercising their rights suggests that white Southerners of the novel are only in favor of armed rebellion when it favors their agenda. But even so, Dixon makes it clear that armed resistance is only useful if it is organized, whereas the Ku Klux Klan failed because it grew to be unorganized.

### **Charlie Gaston and Dixon's New South**

In one of the final chapters of the novel, "A Speech That Made History," the reader witnesses Charlie's full acceptance of the Preacher's views on race in America. At the North Carolina Democratic convention for the gubernatorial office, Charlie gives a final speech that seals the election, and present is General Worth and his political machine. Charlie opens his speech to the delegates by asserting, "it is impossible to build a state inside a state of two antagonistic races" (433). Charlie then outlines his arguments on the Old South and the New South, by describing the Old South as fighting for "local supremacy." The New South, wishes to join its forefathers in protecting the "manhood" of the South, only the young, New South, seeks "conquest of the globe" (435). Charlie Gaston draws upon the black brute trope, by claiming "[The Negro's] insolence threatens our womanhood, and our children are beaten by negro toughs...while we pay his taxes." Gaston then channels Edward Pollard's Lost Cause narrative, by asking, "Shall [the South] longer tolerate the arrest of white women by negro officers and their trial before negro magistrates?" The answer to these problems, Gaston insists, is "the manhood of the Aryan race with its four thousand years of authentic history" (436). Dixon then uses Charlie's speech to argue along pseudo-scientific racist lines, as Gaston maintains, "The

African...has never taken one step in progress or rescued one jungle from the ape and the adder, except as the slave of the superior race” (437).

This, however, is not a cry for total national unity, for Charlie then attacks scalawags and carpetbaggers and labels Reconstruction as a “saturnalia of infamy” (437). Yet, even as Charlie issues warning after warning to his listeners, he does not argue for violence, as it is not the answer. Instead, Gaston reasons that the black population must leave the continent, for once again, the two races cannot coexist (439). Confusingly, Dixon crafts the later part of the speech to make an appeal to the entire white population in the United States. Charlie asks his audience, “Would a county in Massachusetts submit to [black governments]?” After answering with a decisive no, Gaston continues, “There is not a county in the North from Maine to California that would submit to it in twenty-four hours” (440). This is a confusing and broad argument to make, especially as Dixon not only lived in Boston and New York, but he was fully aware of the negative reviews this novel received by Northern papers, which lambasted his white supremacy. Still, Gaston closes his speech by proclaiming the American government is “a white man’s government, conceived by white men, and maintained by white.” Unapologetically, Charlie declares “If this be treason, let them that hear it make the most of it” (442).

Charlie is triumphant in both the state’s gubernatorial election and in winning the hand of Sallie Worth, despite General Worth’s disapproval. Again, it is in the final chapter of the novel that Preacher argues that “if the Negro is made master of the industries of the South he will become the master of the South,” as Gaston ponders whether to allow black North Carolinians to learn a series of economic skills (459). Dixon views that economic success is another step to full equality and eventually intermarriage, and the message is that Southern whiteness can only be protected through denying all aspects of societal participation to the black population. Durham’s

message is also a message to Gaston that the South cannot forget about Reconstruction. Durham metaphorically argues to Charlie, who is still “labouring under the delusions of ‘Reconstruction,’” that the “Ethiopian can not change his skin, or the leopard his spots” (459). Southern whiteness, then, is not only fragile and always on the defensive, but can never move forward, it is always looking back. By Dixon’s own admission, and perhaps this was unintentional, whiteness suffers from a delusion that will never come to fruition, and in doing so, will be divisive in American society so long as followers accept this message.

## CONCLUSION

History for Dixon, is ridden with conflict and turmoil, as scholar Brook Thomas notes, but it is also forward moving (325). For Dixon, whiteness is the measure for progress in America, and his attempt to rewrite Reconstruction demonstrates his belief. But in order for America to progress through whiteness, Dixon adapts the Lost Cause mythology as the threat and conflict to the white identity. This vision of history includes factions within a nation state constantly doing battle, for a perceived ownership of a Nation-Thing. In *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon establishes three separate American identities: the black savage, the white Northerner, and his image of a New South, with the former identities being the source of conflict towards Southern whites. Dixon's Nation-Thing is his form of the New South. By the 1960s, Eric Foner argues, The Dunning School's interpretation of Reconstruction had been largely reversed ("Reconstruction Revisited" 83). Still, elements of this narrative still thrive, as the white supremacist narrative of Dixon's novels has been accepted, or so easily dismissed due to either our discomfort, or as a means to reach the moral and political high ground.

Yet, dismissing Dixon is dangerous. *The Leopard's Spots*, as are the rest of Dixon's literary novels, is a complex novel that grapples with economic, racial, social, and political issues that Americans faced as the nation moved forward from Reconstruction and into the twentieth-century. Dixon's *The Leopard's Spots*, while containing racist ideology, represents how one author at this time in American history responded to the issues of the time. Of course, this paper is by no means sympathizing with Dixon, or his language, but in the same manner *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is read as speaking to the issue of slavery, *The Leopard's Spots* should be read as a means of understanding the racism that has prevailed into modern America. Unless authors like Dixon are acknowledged, we will never be able to understand the constitutional and historical dilemmas

that resulted from the Civil War and Reconstruction. Furthermore, if Dixon is ignored, we will not be able to understand the mass appeal his works had and still have, particularly as the Lost Cause narrative continues to live on in modern America. Beyond the Lost Cause, many of the issues Dixon touches upon persist today, and it was Dixon's inability to live in the societal complexities of his time that led him to adopt the simplistic racist agenda he employs in his work. Racism, W.E.B. Du Bois argues in *The Souls of Black Folk*, cannot always "be successfully stormed at, nor easily abolished by act of legislature. And yet [racism] must not be encouraged by being let alone... [racism] can be met in but one way, ---by the breadth and broadening of human reason" (81). Du Bois asserts that all art is propaganda, serving the agenda of the author in whatever form that might be. For Du Bois the danger is not in labeling any form of art as propaganda, the danger lies in the art being confined to one side, while the other side is "stripped and silent" ("Criteria of Negro Art" 367). As might be expected, Du Bois understood the dangers of Dixon's work, arguing, the "professional southerner" (Du Bois' emphasis) was only to gain prominence through his ability to "capitalize burning race antagonisms" ("The Clansman" 33). Dixon cannot be ignored for this reason. The white supremacist ideology found in the North Carolinian's works have already permeated American because it has long been accepted as "truth."

Throughout his career, Dixon attempts to take the complex issue of race in post-Reconstruction America, and reduces it to create simple oppositions for the sake of racial purity. *The Leopard's Spots* represents a mythical narrative of the Civil War and Reconstruction in American cultural and historical memory. The ideology present in the novel is dangerous when it is accepted as truth. Yet, the novel is equally dangerous when it is ignored due some modern, 21<sup>st</sup>-century moral superiority. Ultimately, Dixon's vision of whiteness is

impossible in a multicultural America. Nonetheless, studying literary and historical works that promote the Lost Cause and the New South paradigms reveal the ways American culture implements racialized imagery to achieve ideological means. Reading and comprehending literary histories allows for public and scholarly self-reflection on the constructs of race, gender, and class. Accepting that authors like Dixon exist can hopefully further permit us to restructure, and hopefully eliminate, long standing beliefs and prejudices. By ignoring Dixon, we miss on crucial insight into the late-nineteenth and twentieth-century formation of race. Studying Dixon, will allows us to understand the complexities of American life at the start of the twentieth-century, and provides awareness on how race appears in the modern American imagination.

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