

Technology and the Archive: Framing Identity in American Literature, 1880-1914

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ABSTRACT

Cynthia A. Current: Technology and the Archive: Framing Identity in American Literature,
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(Under the direction of John McGowan)

Through the works of William Wells Brown, Mark Twain, and Pauline E. Hopkins, this dissertation explores how the ways that the self is understood and lived changes in relation to the reception of Darwinian thought, to the introduction of new technologies for determining identity and for organizing information, and to new modes of categorization in the United States in the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. From genre development to fingerprinting to genetic engineering, it is the ability to control information concerning identity over time that comes to matter to the authors I work with in this project.

Because these issues have an obvious relevance to today's information age and to current-day genomics, I consider those connections in my final chapter through an analysis of Octavia Butler's 1987 novel *Dawn*. In this final chapter, I further explore how individuals and groups are positioned relative to the acquisition, control, ownership, and reproduction of knowledge, and how such organizations of knowledge become emergently instrumentalized and affect race, gender, and identity. The term I use to describe these associations, in relation to the work of Butler and how it reflects back upon the other works discussed in this project, is technicity.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The topic this dissertation explores is how the ways that the self is understood and lived changes in relation to the reception of Darwinian thought, to the introduction of new technologies for determining identity and for organizing information, and to new modes of categorization in the United States in the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. Because these issues have an obvious relevance to today's information age and to current-day genomics, I consider those connections in my final chapter.

Evolution Theory and Darwinian Thought

As Cuddy and Roche remark in the introduction to *Evolution and Eugenics in American Literature and Culture, 1880-1940*, Charles Darwin, with the publication of *Origin of the Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) “applied some of his most daring and challenging concepts to human life, and these ideas became an integral part of education, the emerging social sciences, and popular culture such as newspapers and magazines.”¹ Their research describes how scientific and cultural understandings of evolutionary theory in the nineteenth century come to increasingly affect definitions and applications of terms such as classification, competition, progress, reproduction, and survival of the fittest especially in the formation and role of the pseudo-science of eugenics in American culture and literature.

While Darwin could be interpreted as having introduced a deterministic view of nature, natural and sexual selection instead invoke the indeterminacy and randomness of chance, along with a complex rendering of necessity. The concept of determinism rests upon the notion of a well-defined world fixed by natural laws. The past, then, takes on especial temporal importance since the past is a completed state that *necessarily* induces a set of conditions that determine present and future events. When the randomness and chance of variation, natural selection, and sexual selection are introduced, however, the past itself comes to rest upon what seem to be indeterminate values, and such indeterminacy, to complicate matters more, is inheritable. Thus, chance induces order—a variation becomes used and selected—while disrupting determinable notions about both the past and the future. Additionally, since descent is only “seen” retrospectively, it is the later states, the present and the future that come to fix the past, rather than the past being the concept that fixes the future: the manner in which the authors in my project structure inheritance and temporality often rely upon the uptake of such ideas from evolutionary theory.

As important as many consider Darwinian thought to be for American authors in this period, no one theory of cultural or biological evolution dominates the texts in my dissertation. In fact, Herbert Spencer, who was well known in the United States in the nineteenth century, published widely read accounts of evolutionary theory that differed significantly from what Darwin would come to formulate. Spencer developed a theory of evolution and the unification of natural law across all social and scientific disciplines, prior to the publication of *Origin of the Species*, that incorporated Lamarckian use-inheritance, and only later with reluctance, included natural selection as Darwin’s theories became increasingly popular.² Though Spencer is credited with introducing the phrase “survival of

the fittest,”³ he does not endorse evolution through competition and individuation. Instead, as Mark Francis notes, Spencer promotes “the living promise of a benign future” where negative social attributes would, over time, give way to a harmonious, nonviolent society.⁴ By the 1880s, however, Spencer’s work reflects a growing lack of confidence in the idea of progress. In the revisions to *First Principles* in the 1880s, Spencer adds the notion of dissolution to evolution since the progress he thought he would witness was not coming to pass.⁵

Information and Technicity

While much of the literary criticism that attempts to engage with the resonance between literature and the technological and scientific developments of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has done so through Darwinian interpretations of texts, Phillip Thurtle’s work on “genetic rationality” is notable for its analysis of the multiple forms of information management that come to affect a broad range of scientific and cultural development in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Inventions and innovations as mundane as file cabinets, the organization of labor and time through middle managers, and the use of abstract notation allow for larger tracts and fields of information to be catalogued and engaged with.⁶ As Thurtle notes, the “informational complexity of our stories about our bodies depends on the amount of informational complexity we are able to organize outside of our bodies.”⁷

Of note is Thurtle’s focus on “informational” rather than biological complexity. This distinction is initially surprising in light of how Darwinism and other forms of evolutionary theory introduce the problem in the nineteenth century of labile human essence, a problem

generally analyzed through its effects on biology, inheritance, speciation, and temporality. If evolutionary theory breaks through lines such as that between humans and other animals, and trait development over time, the informational and technological shifts that accompany evolutionary and genetic research breaks down the line between humans and things as human knowledge takes on new material and technological forms. In fact, the ability to technologically organize increasingly vast amounts of information constitutes much of how we have come to relate to the changing status of what counts as human essence.

Where Thurtle's project falls short, however, is his failure to engage with the range and diversity of literary texts that could be analyzed within the rubric of "genetic rationality." One of the concerns of my project, then, is to broaden the diversity of texts and genres associated with informational, scientific, and technological innovation. The most startling absence in this field in the nineteenth century is the lack of analysis concerning African American narrative. My work with authors such as William Wells Brown and Pauline E. Hopkins demonstrates, however, the complex relationship such authors have with shifts in informational practices and scientific discourse, theories of regional and biological milieu, and how such shifts not only come to affect the content of their work but also the construction of genres themselves. From genre development to fingerprinting to genetic engineering, it is the ability to control information concerning identity over time that comes to matter to the authors I work with in this project. Everyone's relationship to information changes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; these changes are expressed through a variety of genres and not just through American literary naturalism, the primary focus of Thurtle's analysis.⁸

Engaging with an alternate range of texts and genres is not only an opportunity to

more deeply engage with Thurtle's theorization of genetic rationality; it is also an opportunity to analyze the implications of rationality itself. The organization of knowledge and archives implies order, logic, and control, but the authors I study suggest that we should ask whether the pursuit of such organization, in and of itself, is rational. If information is collected just for the sake of collecting, what concerns arise when such information becomes newly instrumentalized, becomes more than just the fingerprinting hobby of Twain's David Wilson and much much more than even the alien ooloi understand in Butler's novel *Dawn*?⁹ Though the fingerprints of 1894 and the genes of 1987 reflect instances of the acquisition and archiving of biological materials, the relationship developed within the novels to these materials is informational. I say informational rather than biological, because how we understand ourselves as biological, technical, racial, ethnic, or gendered individuals, emerges from our position relative to the acquisition, control, and ownership of knowledge. In turn, the accumulation and dispersal of knowledge, especially within the period that my dissertation covers, is increasingly, and more self-consciously, technological.

The coda of this dissertation, the final chapter in which I analyze Octavia Butler's novel *Dawn*, explores how I intend to broaden the account of what this dissertation initially took on—an analysis of William Wells Brown, Mark Twain, and Pauline E. Hopkins engagement with how individuals and groups are positioned relative to the acquisition, control, ownership, and reproduction of knowledge, and how such organizations of knowledge become emergently instrumentalized and affect race, gender, and identity. The term I use to describe these relationships, in relation to the work of Butler and how it reflects back upon the other works discussed in this project, is technicity.

Technicity has been used to describe the instrumentality of the things we use along

with defining paradigms that attach importance to rationality and objectivity.¹⁰ Bradley and Armand suggest that technicity “names something which can no longer be seen as just a series of prostheses or technical artefacts (sic);” instead, it is “the basic and enabling condition of our life-world.”¹¹ I argue that technicity suggests both a human state and a relationship to technology or the technological; it concerns the continuing emergence and co-constitutionality of human identity in relation to technology and information. Technicity’s relationship to the dispersal and accumulation of knowledge circles round to reflect upon the assembled practices of cultural and biological adaptation over time. Technology is organized information. How we organize (especially, in terms of my project, how we organize through technologies of storing from genres to fingerprinting to DNA) is as important as what we know, and is also the “enabling condition” of who we are.

Technologies, Milieus, Genres

While Phillip Thurtle’s work on “genetic rationality” has served as an important touchstone in this project, Elizabeth Wilson’s work on affect and technology and Georges Canguilhem’s survey of the historicity of milieu are helpful in framing an analysis of how narrative both resonates with and critiques some of the informational practices of the late nineteenth century.¹² Wilson’s work relies on Silvan Tomkins’s affect theory. As Wilson notes, “For Tomkins, what is calculated and what is felt are mutually entangled; what is built by hand and what is built by evolution may be coassembled, disassembled, reassembled....what makes [Tomkins’s work] relevant beyond these disciplinary constraints is Tomkins’ notion that there is no essential difference between the affect theory of an individual and theory building in the sciences....logic, affect and empiricism are not

strangers to one another: they are homologues. We are (all of us) feeling scientists.”¹³

But what does this mean to say we are all “feeling scientists”? Or that technology has been “from the beginning” concerned with affect?¹⁴ Certainly, the theoretical and affectual investment of a nineteenth century novel or autobiography is different from that of the work of a nineteenth century evolutionary theorist, or (as Phillip Thurtle might note) that of a new class of nineteenth century middle managers. What I take from Wilson’s premise is that the connections between human biology and technological practice often hold a similar affectual content not limited by objects of study or practice.

An example of such content that I argue comes to deeply impact the work of William Wells Brown in *My Southern Home: Or, the South and Its People* is the effects of the theorization and use of the word milieu across the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.¹⁵ The term milieu migrates across the fields of physics, biology, geography, literature, and the behavioral sciences in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and suggests what theorists think of living humans themselves and how configurations of identity emerge from systems of thought that relentlessly attempt to catalogue and contain, contrive and control narratives of human development. Theorizations of milieu drive the vitalism of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and inform the struggle for existence of Charles Darwin; they transform the field of geography in the form of the environmental inclusiveness of Alexander Von Humboldt and rigidly structure the views of early behaviorists who viewed milieu as completely controlling human behavior.¹⁶ Conceptions of milieu matter in the work of Brown because milieu informs the structure of the genre of autobiography itself.

The classification of a text as a member of a genre gestures toward the other texts included in such groupings and this in turn comments upon the construction and control of

information and of knowledge itself. The genre of autobiography may be a tool for incorporating raw experience into identity formation, but it is a tool already honed to account for which identities matter and how those identities should be managed. The slave narrative is a specific instance of such management that the work of authors such as Brown arise from—the information of the lives of fugitive slaves was often specifically controlled and formatted in a manner to support white authentication, a near annotation of experience even as the experience charts a dark course from enslavement to freedom.¹⁷ Following his first narrative, Frederick Douglass defies such constraints without essentially changing how autobiographical texts function: while he stresses self-authentication—a movement away from black authored texts relying on the framing essays of white authors to establish authenticity—the autobiographies that follow Douglass’s initial slave narrative make use of the genre in a manner that a reader would expect: they are chronological explorations that generally add material from the period of time not covered in previous narratives.¹⁸

Brown, however, follows a different track which culminates in *My Southern Home*, a self-referential archive that points back to the texts of his choosing (mostly his previous narratives which are themselves often taken from other works). But *My Southern Home* does not simply point back: the text simultaneously refers both back and forward, disassembling and reassembling in a manner that theorizes on what counts materially as autobiography and what materially counts as both rational and affective in the present. Identity (along with everything else) is both accumulated and dispersed across time, but in *My Southern Home*, Brown accounts for the accumulation and dispersal within the particular developmental niche of the American South. Thus, like others in this period, Brown is concerned with the living human within its milieu.

Brown's use and construction of autobiographical texts, then, not only publically structures his life as a fugitive slave, abolitionist, and African American, but also accounts for a reordering and a new understanding of what counts as the essence of identity across time in particular spaces. In *My Southern Home*, Brown engages with the dynamics of the seriality of identity, but rather than using the frame of a direct technological innovation, such as Mark Twain will use with fingerprinting in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*,¹⁹ Brown shows how the lack of technological engagement, and geographical and cultural isolation, contribute to the degenerative condition of humans within the biological niche of the American South. For Brown, the effects of slavery in the United States continue to affect, well into post-Reconstruction, almost all understandings of human cohesion. Brown debunks notions of human progress that arise out of popular understandings of evolutionary theory. Instead, the American South is a devolutionary space where the simultaneity of classification and decay constructs a developmental niche where no body, either black or white, is able to hold on to a sense of individual identity. The most Brown claims for humans is a series of types, or a repetition of forms, both literary and biological. Brown himself within the text is the product of a sequence of previous autobiographical incarnations, a sequence that finally black autobiography is unable to define, categorize or contain. As both black buffoon and a rationally abstract narrator, the autobiography diffuses Brown's identity while centralizing the effects of region and repetition over most forms of individual and racial identity. Brown suggests that the genre that has arguably contributed most to stabilizing a black historiography, the specific tool that managed and organized identity both politically and materially, no longer works.

If Brown's work describes the effects of a devolutionary space where the simultaneity

of classification and decay constructs a developmental niche where no body, either black or white, is able to hold on to a sense of individual identity, Mark Twain, in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, describes the anxiety attached to the loss of such classification and the use of the technology of fingerprinting to try to reframe or recontain racial identity.

In the nineteenth century, Francis Galton (Charles Darwin's half cousin and the founder of eugenics) attempted to prove that the marks upon our fingers were inherited and through such inherited marks not only could the identity of individuals be assured but also the identity of groups associated with particular classes and races. The individual uniqueness of fingerprints, however, did not correlate with his hopes—to not only associate a visible biological mark with race, but to also suggest that certain “undesirables” such as savages and criminals were less evolved.²⁰ Others, however, were interested in the utility of fingerprinting for the purposes of identification which raised concerns on how to classify and categorize so much material. Fingerprinting was also in competition with other methods of classification such as anthropometry, a system developed by Alphonse Bertillon in France in the nineteenth century that came to be used internationally. Those interested in fingerprinting believed they had found an objective method of identification that countered the faults of other systems.²¹ In Mark Twain's novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, there is an uneasy investment in all of the aspects of fingerprinting noted above.

Pudd'nhead Wilson (1894) is recognized as the first novel to use fingerprinting forensically.²² The specification of a new technology, however, is not merely a moment of innovation. Rather than simply a “[fact] of literature,” fingerprinting becomes, as genre theorist Yury Tyanov notes, a “literary [fact],” an element of genre development that allows Twain to particularly frame biotechnological and representational practices and leads toward

a Bakhtinian sense of the “novelization” of biology and training in this text.²³ Twain’s speculative engagement with fingerprinting creates a system and medium to classify and secure particular forms of identity and memory; such forms, however, tend to reify the constructions of racial and gender values already inherent in science and technology, law, commerce, and reproduction. Fingerprinting, however, also represents the direction that technologies of identity would seek to employ: a movement away from direct visual observation of bodies, whose emergence and change over time make them difficult to categorize, to reliance on archives of information that become increasingly removed from the contexts of meaning and emergence those bodies inhabit. The archiving of identity, and the movement away from direct visualization, is Twain’s most prescient move. The development of fingerprinting parallels the development of “one drop” politics, as race becomes increasingly difficult to define visually. The archive itself becomes infected with the spectacular vitality of, and the speculation and risk within, nineteenth-century biological and cultural determinism.

Pauline E. Hopkins, writing 20 years after the publication of Brown’s *My Southern Home* and six years after Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, makes use of the materiality of genre and biological archives in a different manner. In *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South* (1900), she notes her interest in the “great value” of fiction as “a record of growth and development from generation to generation.”²⁴ Hopkins’s narrative of genre development includes an analysis of literature as archival, as a cumulative collection reflecting the social and cultural development of humans. Most importantly, Hopkins incorporates models of generational development within the novel itself, making use of what scholars such as Anne Balsamo refer to as “technological innovations” that alter concepts of

the “‘natural’ body.”²⁵ Hopkins’s exploration of miscegenation as the primary reproductive and developmental mode of humans arising out of slavery allows her to use concepts within evolutionary theory as progressive tools to understand biological and cultural formations of a new Negro identity. The manner in which miscegenation blurs and accentuates racial categorization across generations functions as a developmental technology that allows Hopkins to highlight identity as an effect of the transmissibility of biology and culture. This redefinition of descent is an important tool in how Hopkins constructs gender, especially the gender construction of mixed race women. No longer tragic mulattas, mixed race women in *Contending Forces* move out of what Hazel Carby refers to as the position of mediation between the races that such women have historically represented in literary criticism.²⁶ Instead, these women represent the movement of the New Negro into a newly naturalized American body.

Hopkins develops a model of the past that reflects evolutionary sensibilities: rather than defined through its completedness or determination, the past rests instead upon what seem to be indeterminate values. In other words, a variation may biologically arise but we cannot interpret the impact of that variation until we see how it is used and whether it is heritable. In *Origin of the Species*, Charles Darwin addresses this in a manner that Hopkins would find to be as important culturally as biologically:

differences blend into each other in an insensible series; and a series impresses the mind with the idea of an actual passage. Hence I look at individual differences, though of small interest to the systematist, as of high importance for us, as being the first step towards such slight varieties as are barely thought worth recording in works on natural history.²⁷

Hopkins combines this evolutionary sense of accumulation, passage, and indeterminacy within her work. Of additional importance, however, is how Hopkins structures memory within this network of accumulation and temporal indeterminacy. Memory, for Hopkins, becomes a historical and gendered object, a coproduction of the past and present that does not simply reside in individuals. Instead, memory is materially deployed across specific lines of genealogy and supported by a network of evolutionary tools.

By the late twentieth century, Octavia E. Butler, in her 1987 novel *Dawn*, has shifted such interests in identity and developmental technologies into the biotechnology associated with genomics. Butler's scale of interpretation—contextualized within late twentieth century developments in sociobiology, gene mapping, scanning, and database storage—transfers the power of the control of information and the archive into the body itself, deftly striking at the dynamic interweaving of essence and ownership, of the accumulation and dispersal of knowledge and identity, of technicity. While Twain, Brown, and Hopkins seat their critiques within slavery, Butler's work portends the genomics revolution of the 1990s through notions of DNA manipulation and gene trading. The key historical and cultural events that effect authors such as Butler come about through a continuing interest in biological determinism arising out of animal studies and their extrapolation onto human behavior across the twentieth century, the wave of technological developments in molecular biology, and the rising trade in genetic information through genomic research such as the Human Genome Project (HGP) and the development of human cell lines.²⁸

All of the authors in my project effectively conceptualize notions of human biologicals, genomic capital, biocolonialism, and the technologies necessary to support these paradigms. They all, within their different historical contexts, note that the sequencing of

patterns of difference affect definitions of individual and group dynamics. How such information is managed continues to form the backdrop of both nineteenth and twentieth century texts, and how such texts cohere or elide racial and gender difference. The selling of what Kaushik Rajan refers to as human biologicals, the growth of genomic capital through the development of human cell lines in the twentieth and twenty-first century, may seem distantly related to Twain's use of fingerprints; the distance, however, reflects when the sites of technological and biological access were developed and not the paradigm of categorization behind each effort.²⁹ In other words, the desires that organize biological and technological identification, classification, and marketability, from the era of slavery to the era of human genomics, often rely on similar notions of race and reproduction— notions that work against what Sarah Franklin refers to as the “unexpected liveliness of the [biological] objects themselves.”³⁰

¹ Charles Darwin. *The Origin of Species* (1859; New York: Gramercy Press, 1979). *The Descent of Man* (1871; New York: Prometheus Books, 1998) Lois A Cuddy and Claire M. Roche. *Evolution and Eugenics in American Literature and Culture, 1880-1940: Essays on Ideological Conflict and Complicity* (Lewisburg Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 2003) 10-11.

² *System of Synthetic Philosophy* which was serially published over a 20-year period. The first volume was published in 1862 and was called *The First Principles of a New System of Philosophy*. This series of books highlights Spencer's principle of evolution. In *The Principles of Psychology* (1855), Spencer suggests a relationship between biology and cognition again making the claim that not only is the human mind subject to natural laws but that these natural laws come to developmentally affect species and races. Other books written by Spencer that greatly contributed to his popularity include *Education* (1860), which was an international success, and *The Study of Sociology* (1873) that also sold well. In the United States, *The Study of Sociology* was serialized in *Popular Science Monthly*. Though these books were the most popular of Spencer's publications during his lifetime, the book most widely read today is *The Man versus the State* (1884). In this book, Spencer, frustrated with contemporary politics, takes a stand against socialism, which earlier in life he had supported. He also continued during this period to revise *First Principles*. Both the revision of *First Principles* and the publication of *The Man versus State* reflect Spencer's growing lack of confidence in the idea of progress and his continuing need to shore up the shaky parts of his theories that still endorsed more of a Lamarckian than Darwinian notion of evolution. See Mark Francis, *Herbert Spencer and the Invention of Modern Life* (Newcastle UK: Acumen Publishing, 2007). Michael W. Taylor, *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer* (London: Continuum, 2007).

³ Herbert Spencer first used the expression "survival of the fittest" in volume I of *Principles of Biology* October in 1864: "This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called 'natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life'." Herbert Spencer. *The Principles of Biology, Vol I* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1870). <<http://www.archive.org/details/principlesbiolo04spengoog>>. 444-5.

⁴ Francis, Mark, *Herbert Spencer and the Invention of Modern Life* (Newcastle UK: Acumen Publishing, 2007) 9-11.

⁵ See Francis and Taylor.

⁶ Phillip Thurtle. *The Emergence of Genetic Rationality*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

⁷ Thurtle 8.

⁸ Thurtle himself uses many of the texts that fall within the field of American Naturalism to explore how “certain codes of behavior arose from concrete but historically inflected experiences of space and time” (81). He explores such codes through, for example, the “structure and penetration of market economics” (81) and through patterns of “evolutionary agency” and their effects on “civil development” (218). That there is no analysis of any African American text from the period this book covers, which includes the era of Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction, is striking, particularly in reference to chapter 9, “Wandering and Narrative” (216-228). The authors whose literary texts Thurtle analyzes include Edith Wharton, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, and Jack London. Thurtle.

⁹ Butler, Octavia, *Dawn: Xenogenesis* (1987; New York: Time Warner, 1988).

¹⁰ Carol J. Steiner, “The Technicity Paradigm and Scientism in Qualitative Research.” *The Qualitative Report*, 13:2 Volume 7, 26 Mar. 2011 <<http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-2/steiner.html>>.

¹¹ Arthur Bradley, Louis Armand, Eds. *Technicity* (Prague, Czech Republic: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006) 3.

¹² Elizabeth Wilson, *Affect and Artificial Intelligence* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010). Georges Canguilhem, “The Living and Its Milieu,” trans. John Savage, *Grey Room*, 3 (2001), 6-31.

¹³ Elizabeth Wilson. “Affect and Artificial Intelligence.” *The History of Science and Literary Form*. Duke University. 1 December 2010. This presentation included a written supplement on affect management titled “Weak affect theories.” This quotation is from the supplemental text. 3-4.

¹⁴ Wilson “Weak affect theories.” 4, 2.

¹⁵ *My Southern Home: Or, the South and Its People* is published in 1880. The volume from which this project quotes is from William L. Andrews’s edited collection of Brown’s autobiographies. William Wells Brown, “My Southern Home: Or, the South and Its People.” 1880. *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man: The Autobiographies of William Wells Brown*, ed. William L. Andrews. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003.

¹⁶ Canguilhem.

¹⁷ See William L. Andrews, ed. *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man: The Autobiographies of William Wells Brown* (New York: Mentor Books, 1993).

¹⁸ A useful comparison to note the shifts in Douglass’s work is to compare his 1845 narrative with the autobiography written in 1855. Frederick Douglass. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself 1845*, and *My Bondage and My Freedom*. William L. Andrews, ed. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

¹⁹ Mark Twain. *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, ed. Sidney E. Berger (New York: W.W. Norton, 1980).

²⁰ In *Finger Prints*, Galton states, "I had great expectations, that have been falsified, namely, their use in indicating Race and Temperament. I thought that any hereditary peculiarities would almost of necessity vary in different races, and that so fundamental and enduring a feature as the fingermarkings must in some way be correlated with temperament....As a first and only an approximately correct description, the English, Welsh, Jews, Negroes, and Basques, may all be spoken of as identical in the character of their finger prints.... It is doubtful at present whether it is worthwhile to pursue the subject, except in the case of the Hill tribes of India....for the chance of discovering some characteristic and perhaps more monkey-like pattern. Considerable collections of prints of persons of different classes have been analyzed....but I do not, still as a first approximation, find any decided difference between their finger prints." Francis Galton. *Finger Prints*. London: Macmillan 1892. 17-19. Simon A. Cole. *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001. Such criticism, however, did not stop the progression of Galton's ideas concerning eugenics and their effect on eugenics programs in the United States. Galton defines eugenics as "the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage." "Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims" (*American Journal of Sociology*, 1904) 10.

²¹ "Bertillonage," as the system was called, measured different parts of the body and had been developed into a classification system principally to replace photography and the recording of distinctive physical marks such as scars and tattoos, both of which had been found to be ineffective methods for identification and classification. Cole, 32-59.

²² Cole.

²³ Yury Tynyanov. "The Literary Fact." trans. Ann Shukman. *Modern Genre Theory*. ed. David Duff (1925; Harlow, England: Longman, 2000), 33. Mikhail Bakhtin. "Epic and Novel: Toward a Methodology for the Study of the Novel." *Modern Genre Theory*. ed, David Duff (1975; Harlowe, England: Longman, 2000), 68-81.

²⁴ Pauline E. Hopkins. *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*. 1900. *The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). 13-14.

²⁵ Anne Balsamo. *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996). 1.

²⁶ Hazel V. Carby. *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

²⁷ Darwin, *The Origin of Species*. 7.

²⁸ For a history of the development of molecular biology and the Human Genome Project, see Robert Cook-Deegan, *The Gene Wars: Science, Politics, and the Human Genome* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995).

²⁹ Kaushik Sunder Rajan. *Biocapital: The Constitution of Postgenomic Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

³⁰ Sarah Franklin, “What We Know and Don’t Know About Cloning and Society.” *Reconfiguring Nature: Issues and Debates in the New Genetics*, ed. Peter Glasner, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), 256.

CHAPTER 2

Autobiography and Devolutionary Milieus

William Wells Brown, in *My Southern Home: or, The South and its People*, takes a literary form, autobiography, that has been expressive of the formation and stabilization of black identity in the United States of America and uses it to express the opposite, the devolution of personal, and even human, identity in connection with the American South.¹ The genre that has arguably contributed most in stabilizing a black historiography, autobiography, now signals for Brown a different kind of seriality of self and region. Unlike other African American authors whose work rises out of the tradition of the slave narrative and autobiography, such as Frederick Douglass who wrote a continuing series of autobiographies that updated his life into the present,² Brown continues to center his life and his interpretation of contemporary attitudes toward culture and biology in the past, returning, in *My Southern Home*, to the era of slavery. For Brown, the effects of slavery in the United States continue to affect almost all understandings of human cohesion. The American South is a devolutionary space where the simultaneity of classification and decay construct a developmental niche where no body, either black or white, is able to hold onto a sense of individual identity. The most Brown claims for identity, or for humans, concerns a series of types, and a repetition of forms, both literary and biological, that have much more to say about the transmission of biology and culture than about individuals. Brown casts this argument, which concerns the crisis of identity in the post-Reconstruction South, by

exploring the process of how individual identity, and even racial identity, moves toward a Southern ethnicity.³ Southern ethnicity then comes to depict a regional degradation. While this engagement with regional degradation is in conversation with some popular notions of evolution theory, Brown is more deeply engaged, like others in this era, with the definition and effect of milieu and the relationships between living beings within it.

Evolution, Genetic Rationality, and Milieu

Cuddy and Roche state that Charles Darwin “applied some of his most daring and challenging concepts to human life, and these ideas became an integral part of education, the emerging social sciences, and popular culture such as newspapers and magazines.”⁴ They describe how scientific and cultural understandings of evolutionary theory in the nineteenth century come to increasingly affect definitions and applications of terms such as classification, competition, progress, reproduction, and survival of the fittest especially in the formation and role of the pseudo-science of eugenics in American culture and literature.⁵ While Brown does not explicitly engage with theories of evolution in *My Southern Home*, his interest in the seriality of identity over time within specific environmental landscapes suggests an engagement with the developmental potential of the living within the constraints of region, biology, and culture.

While Darwin could be interpreted as having introduced a deterministic view of nature, natural and sexual selection instead invoke the indeterminacy and randomness of chance, along with a complex rendering of necessity. The concept of determinism rests upon the notion of a well-defined world fixed by natural laws. The past, then, takes on especial temporal importance since the past is a completed state that *necessarily* induces a set of

conditions that determine present and future events. When the randomness and chance of variation, natural selection, and sexual selection are introduced, however, the past itself comes to rest upon what seem to be indeterminate values, and such indeterminacy, to complicate matters more, is inheritable. Thus, chance induces order—a variation becomes used and selected—while disrupting determinable notions about both the past and future. Additionally, since descent is only “seen” retrospectively, it is the later states, the present and future that come to fix the past, rather than the past being the concept that fixes the future. For authors such as Brown who are engaging with contemporary cultural and scientific notions of temporality and development, the effects of the cultural uptake of evolutionary theory are an important element when analyzing his return to the subject and time period of American slavery. One, a return to the antebellum period allows Brown to discuss both the systematic and random nature of what necessarily comes to shape the future of not only African Americans but America itself within the particular niche of the American South. Two, Brown’s narrative suggests that an interest in the evolution of a particular niche need not lead to the narrative of progress that dominates American society. Biological and cultural repetition moves the self in the South not toward individual and racial progress but toward a Southern ethnicity and a regional degradation that creates a lazy, ignorant, and violent variant of American culture. Brown makes the tension between humans as specific identities versus humans as biological and cultural effects an emergent and developmental feature of the genre of African American autobiography. He also lets this tension serve as a commentary on the devolution of humans and culture in the American South.

As important as many consider Darwinian thought to be for American authors such as Brown, no one theory of cultural or biological evolution dominates *My Southern Home*. In

fact, rather than the evolutionary framework created by Charles Darwin, figures such as Herbert Spencer must be thought of as just as likely to influence American thought in the nineteenth century as any reaction to the theories of Darwin. Mark Francis notes that Spencer was “especially idolized” in the United States, and his social theories, especially in the earlier formations, did not rely on a Darwinian framework.⁶ Instead, he developed a theory of evolution and the unification of natural law across all social and scientific disciplines, prior to the publication of *Origin of the Species* in 1859, that incorporated Lamarckian use-inheritance, and only later with reluctance, included natural selection as Darwin’s theories became increasingly popular.⁷

In *Social Statics* (1850), Spencer’s “law of equal freedom” describes how humans within society would progressively adapt and enter a state of equilibrium where “every man may claim the fullest liberty to exercise his faculties compatible with the possession of like liberty by every other man.”⁸ Spencer’s first full theory of evolution was published in his essay “Progress: Its Law and Cause” (1857) in the *Westminster Review* and in the initial volume of *System of Synthetic Philosophy*. Taylor believes that the body of Spencer’s evolutionary thought asserts that everything--from solar systems to human morality--progressed from simpler to more complex forms causing increased homogeneity and individuation.⁹ I do not completely agree with the point of view, however. Though Spencer is credited with introducing the phrase “survival of the fittest,” Spencer does not endorse evolution through competition and individuation.¹⁰ Rather, his work, as Mark Francis notes, promotes “the living promise of a benign future” where negative social attributes would, over time, give way to a harmonious, nonviolent society.¹¹ The goal for individuals may be happiness, but happiness comes by way of social evolution and its effects on behavior. By

the 1880s, however, Spencer's work reflects a growing lack of confidence in the idea of progress. In the revision of *First Principles*, Spencer adds the notion of dissolution to evolution since the progress he thought he would witness was not coming to pass.¹²

What most interests me, however, about the effects that the many permutations of evolutionary theory could have on authors such as Brown has much less to do with commanding an evolutionary reading from the text than noting the weight of similar concerns across disciplines. Phillip Thurtle engages with the broad patterns of what he calls "genetic rationality" by noting that in the late nineteenth century and on into the twentieth century, new forms of "informational practices" come into being that make advancement in genetic research possible.¹³ His work is particularly notable for reminding us of the series of personal associations along with multiple forms of information management that come to affect all aspects of scientific and cultural development. From file cabinets to the development of abstract scientific notation to the organization of labor and time through middle managers, informational innovation allows for larger tracts and fields of data and biological materials to be catalogued and engaged with. Where Thurtle's project falls short, however, is his failure to engage with the range and diversity of literary texts that could be analyzed within his definition of "genetic rationality." The most startling absence in this field is the lack of analysis concerning African American narrative especially when much of the discourse concerning genetics and classification comes to most deeply affect racial formations across what I call the long genetic century. What is additionally missing, then, from Thurtle's argument, is an account of rationality itself or accounting for why exactly rationality should most matter.

Elizabeth Wilson's work on affect and technology, and Georges Canguilhem's survey

of the historicity of milieu is helpful in framing an analysis of how Brown's narrative both resonates with and critiques some of the informational practices of the late nineteenth century.¹⁴ Wilson's work relies on Silvan Tomkins's affect theory. As Wilson notes, "For Tomkins, what is calculated and what is felt are mutually entangled; what is built by hand and what is built by evolution may be coassembled, disassembled, reassembled....what makes [Tomkins's work] relevant beyond these disciplinary constraints is Tomkins' notion that there is no essential difference between the affect theory of an individual and theory building in the sciences....logic, affect and empiricism are not strangers to one another: they are homologues. We are (all of us) feeling scientists."¹⁵

The term milieu migrates across the fields of physics, biology, geography, literature, and the behavioral sciences in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—this migration signals the emergent and evolving theoretical heft of the word. Additionally, the term suggests what theorists think of living humans themselves and how configurations of identity emerge from systems of thought that relentlessly attempt to catalogue and contain, contrive and control narratives of human development. Theorizations of milieu drive the vitalism of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and inform the struggle for existence of Charles Darwin. Conceptualizations of milieu transform notions of environmental inclusiveness for geographers such as Alexander Von Humboldt, and rigidly structure how early behaviorists theorize what comes to control and effect human behavior.¹⁶ As Canguilhem states: "We can clearly see individuals, but they are objects; we see gestures, but they are displacements; centers, but they are environments; machine operators, but they are machines. The behavioral milieu coincides with the geographic milieu, the geographic milieu with the physical milieu."¹⁷

I argue, then, that the term milieu, and the conceptual territory that surrounds it, comes to nest within literature and is useful to literary criticism not as a helpful metaphor snagged from the sciences; instead, following the work of Elizabeth Wilson, the word functions within its historical context as an interdisciplinary, and affective, homologue, similar in position and structure but conceptually developing within literature and literary studies in a manner that adds as much theoretical weight to the term as any of the other disciplinary settings in which it was used. Conceptions of milieu matter in the work of Brown because it informs the structure of the genre of autobiography itself.

Black Autobiography

From the production of slave narratives to autobiographies, nineteenth-century black authors have used various modes of personal narrative in a manner that attempts to counter, one, the lack of identity imposed through enslavement in the United States, the notion that individuals of African descent are, at best, property rather than persons; and two, an overly determined identity based on race. Perhaps the best known of these authors, Frederick Douglass, forwarded a singular identity that seemed to subvert the violence and disruptiveness of slavery by firmly attaching a text, so to speak, to a particular version of a self. The imagery of Douglass's initial 1845 autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself*, remains the quintessential portrait of the heroic escape of a man from slavery, and Douglass's subsequent career as abolitionist, publisher, orator, and diplomat, have kept that portrait singularly intact.¹⁸

William Wells Brown, as a fugitive slave and as the writer of several autobiographical narratives, was well aware of the potential for the particularization and

stabilization of self available through autobiographical discourse. In addition to his best-selling *Narrative of William W. Brown, A Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself* (1847), he wrote *Three Years in Europe; or, Places I Have Seen and People I Have Met* (1852) and *My Southern Home* (1880). Additionally, Brown's novel, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853), is prefaced by a third person account of his life entitled "Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown" most probably written by Brown himself.¹⁹ In spite of Brown's repeated engagements with autobiographical writing, however, his notion of what counts as autobiographical comes to significantly differ over time from other prominent African American writers such as Frederick Douglass.

The classification of a text as a member of a genre gestures toward the other texts included in such groupings and this in turn comments upon the construction and control of information and of knowledge itself. The genre of autobiography may be a tool for incorporating raw experience into identity formation, but it is a tool already honed to account for which identities matter and how those identities should be managed. The slave narrative is a specific instance of such management that the work of authors such as Brown arise from—the information of the lives of fugitive slaves was often specifically controlled and formatted in a manner to support white authentication, a near annotation of experience even as the experience charts a dark course from enslavement to freedom.²⁰ Following his first narrative, Frederick Douglass defies such constraints without essentially changing how autobiographical texts function: while he stresses self-authentication—a movement away from black authored texts relying on the framing essays of white authors to establish authenticity—the autobiographies that follow Douglass's initial slave narrative make use of

the genre in a manner that a reader would expect: they are chronological explorations that generally add material from the period of time not covered in previous narratives.²¹

The autobiographical format of *My Southern Home*, however, significantly differs from that of authors such as Douglass. *My Southern Home* is a self-referential archive that gestures back to a number of previously published texts. Though most of the references are taken from his own works, even these references are scattered across more than one text. But *My Southern Home* does not simply point back: the text simultaneously refers both back and forward, disassembling and reassembling in a manner that theorizes on what counts materially as autobiography and what materially counts as both rational and affective in the present. Identity (along with everything else) is both accumulated and dispersed across time, but in *My Southern Home*, Brown assembles an account that comes to more significantly account for human development within the particular milieu and developmental niche of the American South.

Brown's use and construction of autobiographical texts, then, not only publically structures his life as a fugitive slave, abolitionist, and African American, but also accounts for a reordering and a new understanding of what counts as the essence of identity across time in particular spaces. One of the most compelling features of a good deal of the criticism concerning the work of Brown is the manner in which critical essays methodologically mimic what Brown himself does: in order to deeply engage with any work by Brown, critics are compelled to start with a previous work, or a series of works, in order to fully explicate the text that is central to the essay at hand. An example of this is Paul Gilmore's work on Brown's novel *Clotel*. Though Gilmore's primary point is to analyze the potential connections between minstrelsy and the blackface performative qualities of the male

characters in *Clotel*, the force of his argument comes from noting the use of particular characters and scenes in other works by Brown, and not because they simply shed light on *Clotel*; rather, the previous works are often literally, and always methodologically, embedded in *Clotel*. Though he does not directly refer to it as such, Gilmore is commenting upon both the dispersal and accumulation of Brown's autobiographical identity throughout a self-referential archive of materials, and how those materials are continually reseeded within different cultural and developmental concerns.²² William L. Andrews describes the genre of the slave narrative as "a discursive instead of a documentary mode...designed to establish the grounds on which one may decide what will count as fact in a narrative and what mode of interpretation is best suited to a full comprehension of that fact:" this discursiveness informs all of Brown's work even as he moves beyond the genre of the slave narrative into other modes of autobiographical expression.²³

The full text of *Clotel* marks an important moment for Brown's developmental and archival reorganization of the self that, further, leads Brown to a partial novelization of identity formation.²⁴ While the earlier narratives—such as the "Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself" (1847) and the introduction to his novel *Clotel* ("Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown")—are written within the general framework of the fugitive slave narrative, the narrative that precedes *Clotel* suggests an evolving understanding of the capacity of the genre of autobiography: the use of the third person in this narrative, rather than the use of the first person that Brown makes use of in his initial narrative, represents such a shift for Brown.

William L. Andrews states that early "Afro-American autobiography is...a mediative instrument not only between black narrator and white reader but also...between alternative

ways of encoding reality,” a discursive form engaged in elucidating new forms of factual comprehension.²⁵ In the personal narrative that forms the introduction to *Clotel*, Brown pushes the boundaries of Andrew’s description of factual comprehension of autobiographical identity by disengaging from a first person narrative to describe himself:

William Wells Brown, the subject of this narrative, was born a slave in Lexington, Kentucky, not far from the residence of the late Hon. Henry Clay. His mother was a slave of Doctor John Young. His father was a slaveholder, and, besides being a near relations of his master, was connected with the Wicklief family, one of the oldest, wealthiest, and most aristocratic of the Kentucky planters.²⁶

Disengaging from a first person textual representation of himself does more than expand upon forms of factual comprehension related to traditional accounts of slave narratives and African American autobiography. The disengagement with the first person gestures toward both the dispersal and abstraction of identity across the entire text of *Clotel*, for the account of Brown’s life now forms the preface of a fictional work that is itself a compendium of rumor and scandal concerning President Thomas Jefferson’s mixed race children along with the sprinkling of autobiographical references and scenes from the life of Brown himself. The text represents the beginning of a methodology that concerns the potent combination of what counts as both rational and affective in the present.

The accumulation and dispersal of identity, then, rather than lead to a self referential archive that becomes factually clearer concerning Brown’s life leads instead to a clarification of the effects of the present that reorganize the past, and not in a manner that engages with contemporary notions of human progress. M. Giulia Fabi calls Brown’s move from first to the third person in the preface of *Clotel* “a brilliant stroke of rhetorical skill” where Brown

“emerges as the third person ‘editor’ of his first-person deeds” (xi). While it may be true, as Fabi notes, that Brown’s use of the preface and autobiographical details serve to “[emphasize] how his novel is founded in truth,” she does not discuss how the figure of Brown devolves across the entire text of *Clotel* (nt 2, 257).

Brown himself allows readers a direct comparison in which to consider such devolution. In both the introductory narrative and within the novel itself, Brown makes use of the episodes in which he was hired out to work for Mr. Walker the slave trader. There is a major shift, however, in how Brown portrays himself from the narrative to the novel. In the narrative, he is “William,” an individual who with great pathos relates the horror of being hired out to Mr. Walker to prepare slaves for sale in the New Orleans market:

Nothing was more grievous to the sensitive feelings of William, than seeing he separation of families by the slave-trader: husbands taken from their wives, and mothers from their children, without the least appearance of feeling on the part of those who separated them....At the expiration of the period of his hiring with Walker, William returned to his master, rejoiced to have escaped an employment as much against his own feelings as it was repugnant to human nature. (11-12)

In the novel itself, however, “William” is now “Pomp” who is “of real Negro blood” with “lips thick, and hair short and woolly...who had seen so much of the buying and selling of slaves, that he appeared perfectly indifferent to the heartrending scenes” (53).²⁷

A similar use of an episode from his time with Mr. Walker occurs between the 1847 narrative and its use in *My Southern Home*. In his narrative from 1847, Brown states that while working for Walker, he accidentally spills wine upon some of Mr. Walker’s customers. Walker gives Brown a note with a dollar to take to the sheriff where he will be whipped.

Brown tricks a free black into going into the sheriff's office in his place by saying the dollar is to pick up a trunk. The man is whipped in his place. Of this incident, Brown says, "I know of no act committed by me while in slavery which I have regretted more than that; and I heartily desire that it may be at some time other in my power to make him amends for his vicarious sufferings in my behalf" (51). In *My Southern Home*, however, the enactment of this event is carried out by a slave named Pompey who shows no regret at tricking someone into taking a whipping for him: "Pompey often spoke of the appearance of 'my fren', as he called the colored brother, and would enjoy a hearty laugh, saying, 'He was a free man, an' could afford to go to bed, an' lay dar till he got well'" (198).

Such use of autobiographical characterization introduces a serial presentation of self not rooted in the repetition of a singular individualistic story. Fabi is right in noting that placing the third person narrative alongside the novel *Clotel* emphasizes some construction of truth, but it is a contextualized truth that relies on an archive of information Brown is developing concerning how facts and information reside within the affect of both the past and present, and how that reorganization of temporality and information reorganizes autobiography itself.

My Southern Home, however, engages more deeply with such concerns and moves discursiveness to a new level, to a new kind of factual disclosure of the seriality of identity, of how identity comes to be dispersed and accumulated across time. Autobiography, rather than a set of facts drawn from across a particularly lived life, becomes, for Brown, an exploration of what counts as real or rational in different contexts. Paul John Eakin's understanding of how narrative "makes selves" is that it functions as "not merely a literary form but a mode of phenomenological and cognitive self-experience." He speaks of

"[n]arrative and identity [as] performed simultaneously...in a single act of self-narration" adding that "this radical equation between narrative and identity is...not merely *about* the self but rather in some profound way a constituent part *of* self."²⁸

In *My Southern Home*, however, the "radical equation" evolves beyond Brown's earlier engagements with individual identity and race. Instead, *My Southern Home* further radicalizes his engagement with how to informationally structure identity and how identity comes to reflect the dispersal and accumulation of information over time. Brown moves from the particularization of individual identity to demonstrate the effects of a Southern ethnic sensibility on both blacks and whites, and also on the American South itself.

Region, Ethnicity, Devolution

What began as a shift in relation to both third person and the partial novelization of self in the full text of *Clotel* develops into an even more marked departure from the individualistic in *My Southern Home*. In *My Southern Home*, Brown's identity as an individual is now dispersed and variably rendered. He is both rational narrator and ignorant enslaved buffoon. He positions himself as something entirely new while reworking older episodes of his life that then differently inscribe and categorize. Simultaneously, however, as identity drifts away from constructing Brown and others in the text as singular individuals, it organizationally coheres around a singular group and regional identity, a Southern ethnicity that has a resonance for both blacks and whites. *My Southern Home*, then, coheres around a Southern ethnicity that documents and classifies, and secures particular forms of identity and memory while simultaneously calling into question the organization of information it has just secured.

An autobiography that secures a formation of identity while simultaneously calling it into question is not only revelatory of how the system of slavery functioned in the South for both blacks and whites—intense classification and depersonalization—but it also contextualizes the autobiography as reflective of the post-Reconstruction era from which Brown writes where blacks have gained freedom while simultaneously losing it within the Southern regional morass of peonage, Jim Crow laws, and increasing violence against blacks. In other words, Brown produces, in *My Southern Home*, a theory of the contingency of identity by newly engaging the temporality and development of humans within a particular milieu from an era predisposed to view these possibilities as evolutionarily progressive both socio-culturally and biologically. Brown makes the tension between humans as specific identities versus humans as biological and cultural effects an emergent and developmental feature of the genre of African American autobiography.

The reclassification of Brown's identity into a Southern ethnicity begins with the landscape itself. Similar to notions of the dispersal and accumulation of human identity, Brown has invested serially in the Southern landscape, too. Unlike his first narrative, which falls within the genre of the slave narrative, Brown does not mention his birthplace or the "man who stole me as soon as I was born."²⁹ Instead, the text begins with a description of the land. Of note, however, is that Brown has used this description before. Below is the section taken from a chapter called "The Quadroon's Home" in *Clotel*:

ABOUT three miles from Richmond is a pleasant plain, with here and there a beautiful cottage surrounded by trees so as scarcely to be seen. Among them was one far retired from the public roads, and almost hidden among the trees. It was a perfect model of rural beauty. The piazzas that surrounded it were covered with clematis and

passion flower. The pride of China mixed its oriental looking foliage with the majestic magnolia, and the air was redolent with the fragrance of flowers, peeping out of every nook and nodding upon you with a most unexpected welcome. The tasteful hand of art had not learned to imitate the lavish beauty and harmonious disorder of nature, but they lived together in loving amity, and spoke in accordant tones. The gateway rose in a gothic arch, with graceful tracery in iron work, surmounted by a cross, round which fluttered and played the mountain fringe, that lightest and most fragile of vines. This cottage was hired by Horatio Green for Clotel, and the quadroom girl soon found herself in her new home. (64)

The version of this paragraph in *Clotel*, however, is directly lifted, nearly word for word, from Maria Lydia Child's short story "The Quadroons" written in 1842.³⁰ While Brown, in the novel, is certainly mocking some of the conventions of Child's work—he empowers Clotel in a manner that Child does not—my analysis relies on the shift in tone and content from *Clotel* to *My Southern Home*, and the fact that Brown once again pulls from a known of archive of self-referentiality to recontextualize both past and present.

In *My Southern Home*, the section is rewritten as follows:

TEN miles north of the city of St. Louis, in the State of Missouri, forty years ago, on a pleasant plain, sloping off toward a murmuring stream, stood a large frame-house, two stories high; in front was a beautiful lake, and, in the rear, an old orchard filled with apple, peach, pear, and plum trees, with boughs untrimmed, all bearing indifferent fruit. The mansion was surrounded with piazzas, covered with grape-vines, clematis, and passion flowers; the Pride of China mixed its oriental-looking foliage with the majestic magnolia, and the air was redolent with the fragrance of

buds peeping out of every nook, and nodding upon you with a most unexpected welcome.

The tasteful hand of art, which shows itself in the grounds of European and New-England villas, was not seen there, but the lavish beauty and harmonious disorder of nature was permitted to take its own course, and exhibited a want of taste so commonly witnessed in the sunny South. (119)

The re-use of the segment in *My Southern Home* accentuates the importance of landscape not simply by noting it as an opening gesture. Instead, the section describes a kind of degraded, lapsarian Eden with “an old orchard filled with apple, peach, pear, and plum trees, with boughs untrimmed, all bearing indifferent fruit.” The “lavish beauty and harmonious disorder” that seemed perhaps a positive element of the landscape in previous uses of this piece now suggests both a lack of control over the landscape by the people residing there along with the notion that the people themselves are both culturally and biologically to blame for the degradation. This is further emphasized by the “killing effects of the tobacco plant upon the lands of ‘Poplar Farm,’ [which was] seen in the rank growth of the brier, the thistle, the burdock, and the jimpson weed, showing themselves wherever the strong arm of the bondman had not kept them down” (120).

The highlighting of landscape also matters in the serial sense of how Brown has always, in his works, accentuated place and the capacity for mobility. Stephen Lucasi refers to the post-slavery subjectivity that emerges from Brown’s very deliberate use of mobility “‘as a social resource’- an un(der)acknowledged material precondition for most literary production.”³¹ Lucasi notes that, even in his 1847 slave narrative, Brown takes an “unconventional first step”:

Brown notably omits from the *Narrative* any mention of his education in letters, a common element of the slave narrative genre that prominent 20th-century literary critics have touted as chief among the genre's concerns. Instead of depicting his literary education, and the links between that education and his desire for and success in flight from slavery, Brown reproduces the compulsory and fugitive travels of his youth and young adulthood. By foregoing the narration of literary acquisition in his first publication, Brown demonstrates the possibilities for freedom and agency outside of, or by routes other than, literacy.³²

The focus on human stasis and regional degradation in *My Southern Home*, then, is not a particularly new concern for Brown though the focus of inquiry has shifted. Instead of a narrative centered on mobility, Brown reflects upon the cost of immobility within a degraded landscape.

Brown fosters the sense of human stasis and regional degradation by first placing himself in the position of a rational narrator, an abstract figure who appears infinitely smarter and more objective than anyone else in the text. William L. Andrews notes that Brown, within his own text, is “deindividualize[d],” that as an ambiguous narrator, he seems to pass as a “white southerner.”³³ Andrews believes that this form of abstract passing empowers Brown, achieving a position of authority in the text that rhetorically surpasses Brown’s previous narratives. Such observations arise out of, one, Brown’s extremely judicious use of the word “I” in the text in reference to himself. Brown does not use “I” in reference to himself until page three, and then he uses “I” to comment, with great irony, on Dr. Gaines’s Christianity rather than report directly on himself:

For his Christian zeal, I had the greatest respect, for I always regarded him as a truly pious and conscientious man, willing at all times to give of his means the needful in spreading the Gospel. (3)

Secondly, though Brown makes use of episodes from his life during slavery, he never refers to himself as a slave:

While we had three or four trustworthy and faithful servants, it must be admitted that most of the negroes on 'Poplar Farm' were always glad to shirk labor, and thought that to deceive the whites was a religious duty...Both Dr. and Mrs. Gaines were easily deceived by their servants...Indeed, I often thought that Mrs. Gaines took peculiar pleasure in being misled by them..." (52-3)

Third, as the above quotation also exemplifies, Brown places himself in a position of intimacy in connection with his owners Dr. and Mrs. Gaines, venturing both judgment and opinion in a manner that seems, perhaps, beyond what a slave would venture toward whites. Take, for example, the following sentence that refers to Mrs. Gaines: "I tried to comfort her by suggesting that the servants might get one ready in time..." (8). This example exhibits all three of the above points. One, he is witness to an encounter that disturbs Mrs. Gaines. Two, by referring to the servants in a manner that does not include himself, he seems positioned as outside the system of the slavery. Three, he offers comfort to a white woman.

The ability to hold this position in the text, however, requires more than the rhetorical moves described above. The abstract and rational voice depends upon a counter narrative of his Southern self along with the devolution of everyone else, too. Everyone in the South devolves into types and objects, repetitive formations that do not attain the status of deeply individualized people. They, instead, cohere around a group identity that itself sinks into a

degraded landscape, allowing for the formation of a materiality that Brown can easily assert both a relation to and an observatory position above and outside of. This, in a sense, is Phillip Thurtle's point concerning the formation of "genetic rationality" in the nineteenth century—different approaches to information allow for new organizations of materiality and make certain kinds of engagements with rationality possible.³⁴ While a portion of this work (as in *Clotel*) revolves around Brown's reclassification of his own identity, it also depends upon his ability to very distinctly separate the components of everyone's identity. This deindividuation allows for a form of annotation, a reorganization of social, cultural, and biological information on a larger scale of both time and region, and as such, reveals a different set of patterns as the text moves from personal narrative to a plea for emigration, and an appendix.

One of the broadest ways in which Brown accomplishes this classification and separation is through the use of dialect. In his initial narrative, there is little to no use of dialect, and especially no use of dialect that represents Brown himself—like other authors of slave narratives, he clearly distinguishes himself as intelligent and literate. But the manner in which Brown resituates dialect in *My Southern Home* is important: while the use of dialect clearly separates his present construction of himself from his past, along with sometimes painting an excruciatingly ignorant betrayal of Southern blacks, he often positions the ignorance of blacks next to the ignorance of whites. Forms of speech, then, appear to reveal the ignorance of Southern blacks within the systematic and broader ignorance of whites, once again emphasizing a regional and systemic dysfunction. In fact, by placing the two groups repetitively side by side, rather than distinctly separate, the effects of actual speech and difference fade.

Chapter III is illustrative of this technique as Brown critiques the ignorance of the Gaines along with the resulting ignorance of their slave Cato. The chapter pays particular attention to the importance of location, in fact setting the scene and then emphasizing the repetitive quality of the interaction by moving from novelistic description to performative inscription. First, we hear dialogue from the Gaines, the owners of Poplar Farm:

[The Doctor exclaims] “Well, my dear, my practice is steadily increasing....and I hope that the fever and ague, which is now taking hold of the people, will give me more patients. I see by the New Orleans papers that the yellow fever is raging there to a fearful extent....Men of my profession are reaping a harvest in that section this year. I would that we could have a touch of the yellow fever here, for I think I could invent a medicine that would cure it. But the yellow fever is a luxury that we medical men in this climate can’t expect to enjoy; yet we hope for the cholera.”

“Yes,” replied Mrs. Gaines, “I would be glad to see it more sickly, so that your business might prosper. But we are always unfortunate....We must trust in the Lord. Providence may possibly send some disease amongst us for our benefit.” (138)

In this dialogue, what is of note is that, as with slavery, the Gaines rely upon the misery of others to support their greed and lifestyle. They hope that the Southern regional morass of yellow fever and cholera will come to them in order to “[reap] a harvest”—something that the Gaines, as mediocre farmers of a mismanaged, slave-labored, and ravaged landscape are literally unable to do—and that it will come to them through a blessing from God. Brown quickly establishes a setting that is markedly Southern—a degraded landscape, enslavement, and a perverse form of religion bound by a repetitive cycle of greed, incapacity, and

ignorance. The repetitiveness of the cycle is further emphasized when Brown moves from novelistic dialogue to a more inscriptive performative style, as if to indicate that this type of interaction is deeply representative and repetitive:

On going to the office the Doctor found the faithful servant hard at work, and saluting him in his usual kind and indulgent manner, asked, "Well, Cato, have made the batch of ointment that I ordered?"

Cato. "Yes, massa; I dun made de intment, an' now I is making the bread pills. De tater pills is up on the top shelf."

Dr. G. "I am going out to see some patients. If any gentlmen call, tell them I shall be in this afternoon. If any servants come, you attend to them. I expect two of Mr. Campbell's boys over. You see to them. Feel their pulse, look at their tongues, bleed them, and give them each a does of calomel. Tell them to drink no cold water, and to take nothing but water gruel."

Cato. "Yes massa; I'll tend to 'em."

The negro now said, "I allers knowed I was a doctor, an' now de ole boss has put me at it; I muss change my coat. Ef any niggers comes, I wants to look suspectable. Dis jacket don't suit a doctor; I'll change it."

Cato's vanity seemed at this point to be at its height, and having changed his coat, he walked up and down before the mirror, and viewed himself to his heart's content, and saying to himself, "Ah! Now I looks like a doctor. Now I can bleed, pull teef, or cut off a leg....[*Goes to the looking-glass and views himself.*] I 'em some punkins, ain't I? [Knock at the door.] Come in." *Enter Pete and Ned.*

Pete. "Whar is de Doctor?"

Cato. “Here I is; don’t you see me?”³⁵

What Brown reveals in this section is less the difference between Cato and Dr. Gaines and more of how regionally and institutionally alike they are. As Cato prepares the doctor’s “bread pills” and “tater pills,” and declares himself with a change of coat ready to “bleed, pull teef, or cut off a leg,” the only difference between him and the doctor is the stain of Southern white privilege. There is no account of where Dr. Gaines himself ever learned to become a doctor, and he certainly has no real skills. Thus, the two characters become less individuals and blend more into variants of each other, repetitive types made available by their setting.³⁶

Brown builds upon this notion of the devastating co-production of a Southern ethnicity between blacks and whites by first demonstrating the endemic ignorance and lack of culture by Southern whites. The principle forms of entertainment, which do not include shows “for want of sufficient patronage,” are ““Gander Snatching,”” gambling by the men, and “snuff-dipping” by the women. In other words, the torture of animals and various forms of addiction in which fortunes are lost, duels are fought, and slaves sold to settle gambling debts. (160-164)

Perhaps even worse, however, is the willful ignorance and apathy of whites where it not only seems that they exhibit a general lack of education and discernment but also, as Brown notes: “Dr. and Mrs. Gaines were easily deceived by their servants. Indeed, I often thought that Mrs. Gaines took peculiar pleasure in being misled by them; and even the Doctor, with his long experience and shrewdness, would allow himself to be carried off upon almost any pretext” (154). Brown gives the example of Ike who makes off with the Doctor’s

boots, clothes, watch, and horse in order to attend a negro ball. Ike is not punished at all. Instead, the Doctor seems to take a great deal of pleasure in the lies that Ike tells:

“Were any of the servants off the place last night?” inquired the Doctor, as Ike laid the clothes carefully on a chair, and was setting down the boots.

“No, I speck not,” answered Ike.

“Were you off anywhere last night?” asked the master.

“No sir,” replied the servant.

“What? Not off the place at all?” inquired the Doctor sharply. Ike looked confused and evidently began to “smell a mice.”

“Well, massa, I was not away only to step over to de prayer-meetin’ at de Corners, a little while, dats all,” said Ike.

“Where’s my watch?” asked the Doctor.

“I speck it’s on de mantle-shelf dar whar I put it lass night, sir” replied Ike, and at the same time reached to the time-piece, where he had laid it a moment before, and holding it up triumphantly, “Here it is, sir, right where I left it lass night.”

He was told to go which he was glad to do. (155)

Ike is never punished. Ike’s ““bad fix”” seems, instead, to hold value as entertainment for both blacks and whites, an alleviation of boredom in a region where “[p]rofitable and interesting entertainments were always needed” (160).

While the Gaines promote a sense of mischief and ignorance amongst their slaves, they also, simultaneously, expect them, against all odds, to be smarter, too. The Gaines return from a visit North where “traveling for pleasure and seeking information upon the mode of agriculture in the free States, [they] returned home filled with new ideas which they were

anxious to put into immediate execution, and, therefore, a radical change was at once commenced.” The irony is that they expect the radical change to be enacted by the very people they enslave and hold illiterate. Thus, the men who must use the new plow soon dub it the “Yankee Dodger” and it is soon broken. (150)

The trials concerning the new “washing-machine,” however, “threw the novelty of the plow entirely in the shade” (150). Since the Gaines have no idea how to work the machine themselves, the slave Dolly states with ironic amusement, “An’ so dat tub wit its wheels an’ fixin’ is to do de washin’ while we’s to set down an’ look at it” (150). Eventually, Dolly takes the initiative to work with the machine:

When [Mrs. Gaines] arose on Monday morning...instead of finding the washing out on the lines, she saw, to her great disappointment, the inside works of the “washer” taken out, and Dolly, the chief laundress, washing away with all of her power, in the old way, rubbing with her hands, the perspiration pouring down her black face.

“What have been doing, Dolly, with the ‘washer?’” exclaimed the mistress, as she threw up her hands in astonishment.

“Well, you see, missis,” said the servant, “dat merchine won’t work no way. I tried it one way, den I tried it an udder way, an’ still it would not work. So, you see, I got de screw-driver an’ I took it to pieces. Dat’s de reason I ain’t go along faster wid de work.”

Mrs. Gaines returned to the parlor, sat down, and had a good cry, declaring her belief that “negroes could not be made white folks, no matter what you should do with them.” (151)

The irony is, of course, that Southern whites cannot be “made white folks” either. Again, as with the association between Cato and the Doctor discussed earlier, Brown suggests the development of a Southern niche culture in which humans become increasingly simplistic and degraded. Mrs. Gaines and Dolly are less individuals and are instead mired in a Southern ethnicity arising out of the regional and institutional effects of living in the South within the system of slavery, a devolution into region and landscape, and into each other. There is no narrative of progress. There is actually more of a sense of the unmaking of humans in, as John Ernst has noted concerning the South in *My Southern Home*, “a sort of perfect storm of regional, racial, and class tensions, resulting in a destructive force that is all too predictable.”³⁷ With unsparing irony, Brown describes the relationship between blacks and whites in the following manner: “Slavery has had the effect of brightening the mental powers of the negro to a certain extent, especially those brought into close contact with whites” (137). The brightening effect is that, early in the text, most everyone devolves into comic ignorance, but as the book progresses, Brown comes to describe whites as a “shoddy, ignorant, superstitious, rebellious, and negro-hating population ” (291) that through “brute force” has completely subdued his race (233). Blacks, however, fair no better:

WHILE the “peculiar institution” was a great injury to both master and slaves, yet there was considerable truth in the oft-repeated saying that the slave “was happy.” It was indeed, a low kind of happiness, existing only where masters were disposed to treat their servants kindly, and where the proverbial light-heartedness of the latter prevailed. History shows that of all races, the African was best adapted to be the “hewers of wood, and drawers of water.”

John Ernest, one of the central critics of *My Southern Home*, believes that William Wells Brown, through the “push and pull” of Southern forces “*becomes* the southern home he seeks.”³⁸ I couldn’t disagree more. From the comic to the cynical portrayal of ignorance, from the taking on of all the factors of Southern posturing and prejudice, it seems more likely that Brown, in his final text, finally situates the South as a particular developmental niche, a site of biological and cultural repetition that counters most popular renditions of evolutionary theory and narratives of progress that dominate the American scene at this time often at the expense of African Americans. Biological and cultural repetition moves the self in the South not toward individual and racial progress but toward a Southern ethnicity and a regional degradation that creates a lazy, ignorant, and violent variant of American culture, a variant that, in fact, is equal to its milieu. Brown captures the cycle of devolution, the movement of individuals toward ethnicity and repetitive types. He also makes this tension between humans as specific identities versus humans as biological and cultural effects an emergent and developmental feature of the genre of African American autobiography, a methodology that allows him to comment upon the effects of the past and present simultaneously. By Chapter XVI, the autobiography markedly shifts in tone. Brown the cynic, the provocateur, pulls blacks out of the ashes of Southern nonidentity: work, education, professionalism. His rallying cry? “Black men, emigrate” (292).

In the chapter that follows, Mark Twain, like Brown, engages with the dynamics of the seriality of identity. Twain, however, looks to the technological innovation of fingerprinting to create a system and medium to classify and secure particular forms of identity and memory leading to the reassertion of racial values inherent in systems of science and technology, law, commerce, and reproduction.

¹*My Southern Home: Or, the South and Its People* is published as a separate book in 1880. The volume from which this project quotes is from William L. Andrews's edited collection of Brown's autobiographies. William Wells Brown, "My Southern Home: Or, the South and Its People." 1880. *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man: The Autobiographies of William Wells Brown*, ed. William L. Andrews (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003).

²Frederick Douglass wrote four personal narratives: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom*. (1855), *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time* (1881), and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself. His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage, and His Complete History to the Present Time* (1892). He also wrote one novella: *The Heroic Slave* (1852).

³The term ethnicity has a long history, as detailed by Werner Sollers in *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and *The Invention of Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991). The term is historically, and variably, associated with groupings of people according to place of birth, class, descent, cultural customs, personal choice, and often, to connote a sense of otherness. My use of the term relies on Brown's sense of descent, geography, and cultural cohesion, though I also believe that Brown means to portray a sense of otherness concerning Southerners.

⁴Lois A. Cuddy and Claire M. Roche. *Evolution and Eugenics in American Literature and Culture, 1880-1940: Essays on Ideological Conflict and Complicity* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003) 10-11.

⁵Cuddy and Roche.

⁶*System of Synthetic Philosophy* which was serially published over a 20 year period. The first volume was published in 1862 and was called *The First Principles of a New System of Philosophy*. This series of books highlights Spencer's principle of evolution. In *The Principles of Psychology* (1855), Spencer suggests a relationship between biology and cognition again making the claim that not only is the human mind subject to natural laws but that these natural laws come to developmentally affect species and races. Other books written by Spencer that greatly contributed to his popularity include *Education* (1860), which was an international success, and *The Study of Sociology* (1873) which also sold well. In the United States, *The Study of Sociology* was serialized in *Popular Science Monthly*. Though these books were the most popular of Spencer's publications during his lifetime, the book most widely read today is *The Man versus the State* (1884). In this book, Spencer, frustrated with contemporary politics, takes a stand against socialism, which earlier in life he had supported. He also continued during this period to revise *First Principles*. Both the revision of *First Principles* and the publication of *The Man versus State* reflect Spencer's growing lack of confidence in the idea of progress and his continuing need to shore up the shaky parts of his

theories that still endorsed more of a Lamarckian than Darwinian notion of evolution. See Mark Francis, *Herbert Spencer and the Invention of Modern Life* (Newcastle UK: Acumen Publishing, 2007) and Michael W. Taylor, *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer* (London: Continuum, 2007).

⁷Taylor 57

⁸qtd in Taylor, 14.

⁹Taylor 19-20.

¹⁰Herbert Spencer first used the expression “survival of the fittest” in volume I of *Principles of Biology* October in 1864: “This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr. Darwin has called ‘natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life’.” Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Biology, Vol I* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1870).

¹¹Francis 9-11.

¹²See Francis and Taylor.

¹³Phillip Thurtle, *The Emergence of Genetic Rationality: Space, Time, & Information in American Biological Science, 1870-1920. IN VIVO: The Mediation of Biomedical Science*. Phillip Thurtle and Robert Mitchell, Series Eds. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 4.

¹⁴Elizabeth A. Wilson. *Affect and Artificial Intelligence*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010. Georges Canguilhem. “The Living and Its Milieu.” John Savage, trans. *Grey Room*, No. 3 (Spring, 2001), 6-31.

¹⁵Elizabeth A. Wilson. “Affect and Artificial Intelligence.” The History of Science and Literary Form. Duke University. 1 December 2010. This presentation included a written supplement on affect management titled “Weak affect theories.” This quotation is from the supplemental text. pp. 3-4. See also *Affect and Artificial Intelligence*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010.

¹⁶Canguilhem.

¹⁷Canguilhem 16.

¹⁸Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself*. 1845. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/menu.html>.

¹⁹William Wells Brown, "Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself," *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man : The Autobiographies of William Wells Brown*, ed. William L. Andrews (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003). William Wells Brown, "Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown," *Clotel, or, the President's Daughter*, ed. M. Giulia Fabi (New York: Penguin Books, 2004). Both Fabi, in the introduction to *Clotel*, and William L. Andrews, in the introduction to *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man*, suggest that Brown wrote "Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown" himself. William Wells Brown, "My Southern Home: Or, the South and Its People," *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man : The Autobiographies of William Wells Brown*, ed. William L. Andrews (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003).

²⁰William L. Andrews. *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*. (1986; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

²¹A useful comparison to note the shifts in Douglass's work are to compare his 1845 narrative with the autobiography written in 1855. Frederick Douglass. *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, Written By Himself 1845*, and *My Bondage and My Freedom*. ed., William L. Andrews (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

²²William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*. ed. M. Giulia Fabi. (1853; New York: Penguin, 2004). Future page reference to *Clotel* will appear parenthetically. Paul Gilmore, "'De Genewine Artekil': William Wells Brown, Blackface Minstrelsy, and Abolitionism" (*American Literature*, 69:4,1997). <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2928342>>.

²³William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988). 18.

²⁴Bakhtin describes the novel as "the only developing genre and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding. Only that which is itself developing can comprehend development as a process." Bakhtin 72.

²⁵William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1760-1865*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988). 18.

²⁶William Wells Brown, "Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself," *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man : The Autobiographies of William Wells Brown*, ed. William L. Andrews (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003). 5. William Wells Brown, "Narrative of the Life and Escape of William Wells Brown," *Clotel, or, the President's Daughter*, ed. M. Giulia Fabi (New York: Penguin Books, 2004). Future references to these texts will appear parenthetically.

²⁷Gilmore sees this as using the tropes of minstrelsy to create buffoonish figures that entertain by becoming intensively black in ways familiar to audiences known to go to minstrel shows, one of the most popular forms of entertainment in the nation during this

period. I would agree with Gilmore's interpretation if my critique resided simply within the novel *Clotel*. But Gilmore does not compare the two versions of himself that Brown places before us in the third person narrative and then in the novel, which will be further discussed below.

²⁸Paul John Eakins, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 100-101.

²⁹William Wells Brown, "Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave, Written by Himself," *From Fugitive Slave to Free Man : The Autobiographies of William Wells Brown*, ed. William L. Andrews (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 27.

³⁰The original segment from Child's text reads as follows: "Not far from Augusta, Georgia, there is a pleasant place called Sand-Hills, appropriated almost exclusively to summer residences for the wealthy inhabitants of the neighboring city. Among the beautiful cottages that adorn it was one far retired from the public roads, and almost hidden among the trees. It was a perfect model of rural beauty. The piazzas that surrounded it were covered with Clematis and Passion Flower. The Pride of China mixed its oriental-looking foliage with the majestic magnolia, and the air was redolent with the fragrance of flowers, peeping out from every nook, and nodding upon you in bye places, with a most unexpected welcome. The tasteful hand of Art had not learned to *imitate* the lavish beauty and harmonious disorder of Nature, but they lived together in loving unity, and spoke in according tones. The gateway rose in a Gothic arch, with graceful tracery in iron-work, surmounted by a Cross, around which fluttered and played the Mountain Fringe, that lightest and most fragile of vines." Child, Lydia Maria "The Quadroons." 1842. *The Online Archive of Nineteenth-Century U.S. Women's Writings*. Ed. Glynis Carr, 1997. <<http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/gcarr/19cusww/lb/Q.html>>.

³¹Stephen Lucasi, "William Wells Brown's 'Narrative' & Traveling Subjectivity" (*African American Review*, 41: 3, 2007), 521. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40027411>

³²Lucasi 521.

³³Andrews, "Introduction." 9-10.

³⁴Thurtle.

³⁵There are other sections in the text where Brown uses a similar dramatic form to discuss the hypocrisy of Southern religion and its connections to violence, and the sale of slaves. See pages 133-135 and 143-144.

³⁶I would argue, especially in *My Southern Home*, that this is a repeated feature of the character Cato who Brown has suggested reflects some autobiographical moments from his own life. Reflecting upon the notion that Cato is often simply a variant of his white owners

would also give a different purchase to Gilmore's notion of the uptake of minstrelsy in Brown's work.

³⁷John Ernest, "William Wells Brown Maps the South in *My Southern Home: Or, The South and Its People*" (*Southern Quarterly: A Journal of the Arts in the South*, 45:3, 2008), 88-107. <http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&xri:pqil:res_ver=0.2&res_id=xri:lion-us&rft_id=xri:lion:ft:mla:R04076263:0>.

³⁸Ernest 103.

Chapter 3

Innovation and Stasis, Technology and Race in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*¹

“This is a familiar dilemma in [Twain's] work generally which frequently ends, as does *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, in a stalemate between radical criticism and an implicit conservatism expressed in the refusal or the inability, when it comes to it, to imagine significant change. The stalemate here seems particularly frustrating: change must be defeated, yet nothing of the established way of life appears worth preserving.”
Myra Jehlen, "The Ties that Bind: Race and Sex in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," (1990).²

Mark Twain's novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894)³ seems calculated to produce the effect, as Myra Jehlen notes above, of a “particularly frustrating” opaqueness. Although Jehlen accuses Twain of leaving readers at an impasse, other critics find *Pudd'nhead Wilson* emblematic of either “radical criticism” or “implicit conservatism”; seemingly a text for all seasons, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is sharply coherent or poorly written, innately racist or inherently racially progressive, essentially about nature or essentially about nurture.⁴ Such divergent readings, however, do cohere around Twain's known interest in representations of technology and identity. This essay argues that, by exploiting the “hypermediacy” between bodies and technologies,⁵ Twain's novel demonstrates how the proliferation of technologies of identification, such as fingerprinting, attempt to counter how bodies evolve beyond previous constraints, in particular the constraints of racial classification. Twain develops an account of subjectivity and racial classification that often seems highly constrained, yet the organization of subjects within the novel covers an extraordinary breadth of genealogy, biology, and law, while still invoking elements of randomness and chance.

The key to such combinations of the fixity and emergence of human identity in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is the specific material marker—the technology of fingerprinting—that comes to be the final marker of identity in this novel.⁶ The selling of what Kaushik S. Rajan refers to as “human biologicals,” the growth of genomic capital through the development of human cell lines, may seem distantly related to Twain’s use of the archiving of fingerprints; the distance, however, reflects when the different sites of biological access were developed and not the paradigm of categorization behind each effort.⁷ In other words, the desires that organize biological and technological identification, classification, and marketability, from the era of slavery to the era of human genomics, often rely on similar notions of race and reproduction that attempt to counter, or overcome, what Sarah Franklin refers to as the “unexpected liveliness of the [biological] objects themselves.”⁸

Additionally important is that an analysis of nineteenth-century fingerprinting in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* not only explores how technologies organize race and gender, but also how technologies organize each other. Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin suggest that “the fascination with media also has a history as a representational practice and a cultural logic.” It is worth noting, then, not only the position of “hypermediacy” that fingerprinting takes on in relation to organizations of race and reproduction in this novel, but also how such relations intermediate among other technologies such as calendars and, most importantly, technologies of narrative.⁹ Fingerprinting, then, is not simply a “[fact] of literature” within *Pudd'nhead Wilson*; instead, fingerprinting becomes, as genre theorist Yuri Tyanov notes, a “literary [fact],” an element of genre development that allows Twain to particularly frame biotechnological and representational practices, and leads toward a Bakhtinian sense of the “novelization” of biology and training in this text.¹⁰

Mikhail Bakhtin describes the novel as “the only developing genre and therefore it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and rapidly, reality itself in the process of its unfolding. Only that which is itself developing can comprehend development as a process.”¹¹ The notion of the comprehension of development as a process is, in and of itself, an important element to consider given Twain’s interest in the development, or lack of, in man.¹² The impact of the use of technologies such as fingerprinting within *Pudd’nhead Wilson* cannot be understood without a more fundamental analysis of Twain’s understanding of biology and training, and how it then follows that technology and bodies become so deeply enmeshed. Fingerprinting, for Twain, is a matter of fact, a system and a medium that objectifies identity. Additionally, however, fingerprinting is both speculative and a spectacle; it is, as Bruno Latour asserts, a “gathering” where fingerprinting is both “an object out there [and] an *issue* very much *in* there.”¹³ Twain’s speculative engagement with the technology of fingerprinting creates a system and medium to classify and secure particular forms of identity and memory leading to the reassertion of racial values inherent in systems of science and technology, law, commerce, and reproduction.

Pudd’nhead Wilson’s Calendar: A Reflection on Irony and Ethical Indeterminacy

The calendar, a term used interchangeably with the term almanac,¹⁴ was as The American Antiquarian Society states, the most widely available and universally owned book, and was counted as “indispensable” by both farmers and professionals:

The almanac had an essential place in homes where no other form of literature entered and where, often, not even the Bible and the newspaper were found. If the almanac had a comprehensive subject, it was: How to get through life. The otherwise

dissociated miscellany it contained was indeed rather like that forming the contents of a person's mind as he gets through life each day. Not only an anthology of daily life but a preview of its entire visible cosmic setting through the coming cycle of months was to be found in this stitched-up pamphlet of soft paper.¹⁵

The use of the calendar by Twain, then, frames the narrative in a particular manner. Twain qualifies the negative public reaction to Pudd'nhead Wilson's calendar entries by stating that "irony was not for those people; their mental vision was not focused for it. They read those playful trifles in the solidest earnest."¹⁶ Calendars, however, were "earnest" documents explicitly developed as techniques not only for "[getting] through life each day," but additionally as descriptions of life's "entire visible cosmic setting."

Such elements are enunciated in the first calendar entry where the tensions between the everyday accounting of time come into conflict with notions of character:

There is no character, howsoever good and fine, but it can be destroyed by ridicule, howsoever poor and witless. Observe the ass, for instance: his character is about perfect, he is the choicest spirit among all the humbler animals, yet see what ridicule has brought him to. Instead of feeling complimented when we are called an ass, we are left in doubt. (1)

Cathy Boeckmann notes that the word "character" referred, in the late nineteenth century, "to a quantifiable set of inherited behaviors and tendencies that were almost always racial," rather than our contemporary figurative usage that implies "the imagined structure of an individual's moral and ethical orientations."¹⁷ Twain, however, seems to play with the notion of character in both senses of our understanding of the term: the ass has attained perfection over the long course of time, yet ridicule, the emotional or affectual relation of the ass to

other creatures and things, has “destroyed” him. The entry serves as an initial comic volley toward the destabilization of multiple registers of character and individual identity, skirting along the edges of, and conflating, biology, affect, and race. The calendar, then, rather than simply adding ironic content to the beginning of each chapter, comments more broadly upon the thematic structure of the novel.

One of the most frequently cited calendar entries comments upon such structure by ambiguously referencing biology and training: “Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education” (23). Although this entry seems well-suited as an illustration of Twain’s emphasis on the social and cultural, rather than biological, aspects of human development, such an analysis of the entry only leads to further confusion about Twain’s understanding of the melding of culture and biology. I argue that the calendar entry uneasily points to a sense of all matter as inert mind, or mind simply as inert matter: such matter—fruits, vegetables, perhaps even man—are capable of being educated. Training, in this sense, invokes biology and variation—the processes of artificial selection reflect, at the very least, a multi-generational heft that would allow cabbage, by chance, to speciate into cauliflower. Yet, the bitter almond of the peach seed does not simply over time become fruit—it must be planted and nurtured in order to become anything at all: still, it can only become a peach. The entry takes on the full scope of Twain’s comic, and cosmic, irony—you can only become, through education, what you are—at the same time, you may become something entirely new!

Most important in this regard, however, is the calendar entry in the final chapter: “October 12, the Discovery. It was wonderful to find America, but it would have been more wonderful to miss it” (113). Susan Gillman notes the irony of this entry by stating that “[f]or

a murder mystery, in which the murderer's identity has been known from the very beginning, to close with a problematic discovery is to confirm the earlier hint that *how* we know has replaced *what* we know as the object of inquiry.¹⁸ Twain's ironical portraiture of "how we know" only becomes fully operational, however, when the "author" of the calendar, David Wilson, is considered as the underlying structure or device that exists in relation with the calendar. Not only does Wilson's use of the genre of the calendar itself emphasize a shift from (in Gillman's terms) what we know to how we know, but the affiliation between Wilson and the technologies he employs is important, as the relationship stresses the hypermediacy between bodies and technologies. Such hypermediacy is not only structured upon the character of Wilson; it is also enacted by Wilson. In other words, Wilson himself operates as a technology that initiates other levels of hypermediacy between bodies and technologies in the novel. The accompanying calendar entry of this chapter is important in this regard: "It is often the case that the man who can't tell a lie thinks he is the best judge of one" (113).

Wilson is the character who does not lie in the novel, yet he is bizarrely removed from the ethical consequences of the text. Although the calendar both structures and complicates everyday understandings of life, time, and the cosmos, it is Wilson as the author of the calendar, as the initiator of an archive of fingerprinting, and his subsequent use of that archive in relation to racial classification that reveals the deeper machinations of Twain's novelization of biology and training.

Action and Reaction, Technology and Ethics

To analyze Wilson as a technology is to address what characterization means within the novel as a whole. Authors differently stress the importance of character formation and

action. In the case of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Twain accentuates action through event—the switching of the babies, murder, the spectacle of the trial—which gives the initial impression that he is less interested in character development. The literary critic Richard Chase, for example, notes that “the moral truth [the novel] asserts is not adequately attached to the characters, or dramatized by them.”¹⁹ Twain’s comprehension of the relationships among technology, biology, and training, however, reveal that he instead understands the process of human development as action: for Twain, humans function as active and reactive entities—character development and event, then, are nearly equivalent. In other words, the model of character development in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* reflects Twain’s belief in people as they exist in the world.

Twain expresses the equivalency between action and personal development in his essay “What is Man?,” published in 1906 but worked on as early as 1880. In the essay, for example, Twain discusses how humans can change their behavior through the

value of TRAINING IN RIGHT DIRECTIONS OVER TRAINING IN WRONG ONES... He has only to change his habitat--his ASSOCIATIONS. But the impulse to do it must come from the OUTSIDE--he cannot originate it himself, with that purpose in view. Sometimes a very small and accidental thing can furnish him the initiatory impulse and start him on a new road, with a new idea. The chance remark of a sweetheart....The accident of a broken leg....The chance reading of a book or of a paragraph in a newspaper can start a man on a new track and make him renounce his old associations and seek new ones that are IN SYMPATHY WITH HIS NEW IDEAL: and the result, for that man, can be an entire change of his way of life.²⁰

Individual identity, then, is established through action and events concerning objects outside of the self along with technological constraints.

The notion of technology as constraining, given Twain's great interest in technological and scientific advancement, seems paradoxical. Fingerprinting, however, like the development of humans themselves, simply confirms the unique and the deterministic, the innovative and the static. Just as many theorists today express an interest in "code" as the basis of not only computerized technology but also human cognition,²¹ Twain uses fingerprinting as the spectacular revelation of something entirely new—still it can only reveal who we already are.

Most importantly, Twain views humans themselves as both spectacular revelation and statically determined: "Man the machine--man the impersonal engine. Whatsoever a man is, is due to his MAKE, and to the INFLUENCES brought to bear upon it by his heredities, his habitat, his associations."²² For Twain, then, a character such as Wilson exists as an effect, and though critics have resisted Twain's own account of Wilson as a "piece of machinery,"²³ such a description is crucially important, reflecting not only Twain's view of humans but also pointing toward what Derek Parker Royal refers to as the "ethical indeterminacy" of such characters.²⁴

Although Twain initially presents Wilson as having "an intelligent blue eye that had frankness and comradship [sic] in it" (5), he changes within a quarter page to someone the locals find visibly incomprehensible due to the following exchange that Wilson initiates when he hears a howling dog:

"I wish I owned half of that dog."

"Why?" someone asked.

“Because, I would kill my half.”

The group searched his face with curiosity, with anxiety even, but found no light there, no expression that they could read. They fell away from him as from something uncanny. (5)

What is surprising about this exchange is not so much Twain’s ridicule of the reasoning of the locals as they attempt to analyze Wilson’s comments, but the duplicity of Wilson himself. As a random member of the community, having “wandered to this remote region” (5), Wilson’s sudden move from frankness to opacity highlights Royal’s observation of Wilson’s “artful performance and ethical indeterminacy.”²⁵

Whiteness and Speculation

Although Wilson exemplifies the combination of questionable authority and performance, such qualities are present in many of the characters and set the conditions that particularly highlight how the technology of fingerprinting must rise to finally constrain racial and class identity when the technologies of whiteness fail. The most noticeable of such traits is how many of the characters engage with elements of risk and speculation. The significance of speculation in the text not only reinforces Twain’s understanding of training and character development as a product of action and reaction that comes from the “OUTSIDE” of man; the elements of risk and speculation also lead my textual analysis away from an overly hasty analysis of only the “black” characters in the novel. After all, such traits are first structured around the moral and reproductive incapacitation of the Driscolls. Although Twain’s novel may seem structured around conceptions of slavery or the organization of the black body, it is instead the descriptions of the dysfunctional bodies of the

most elite citizens in town, those who claim to trace their heritage back to the First Families of Virginia, or F.F.V.s, that follow the first calendar entry. At first glance, the description reveals the inability, or the disinclination, of the F.F.V.s to biologically reproduce. Judge Driscoll and his wife are, unhappily, childless. The judge's widowed sister is also childless. The attorney Pembroke Howard is a bachelor. Percy Driscoll and his wife, brother and sister-in-law to the judge, have children, but they are sickly, and one after another die. In other words, the F.F.V.s seem reproductively unfit and doomed to extinction.

Additionally, the F.F.V.s are morally reckless. Percy Driscoll contributes to the death of his children through his "antediluvian methods" of doctoring them (5), and by the time of his death, his absorption in speculation costs him his fortune leaving his only son a "pauper" (22). A "fairly humane man, toward slaves and other animals" (9), his (self-defined) high moment of morality comes when he sells three of his slaves locally for stealing a small sum of money rather than selling them "DOWN THE RIVER" (12). F.F.V. Colonel Cecil Burleigh Essex, "another F.F.V. of formidable calibre [sic]" (4), is the father of Tom, thus highlighting the sexual activity between F.F.V.s and slaves. Even Judge Driscoll, put forward as "fine, and just, and generous" (4) is, by the novel's conclusion, bribing voters and calling the Italian twins "dime-museum freaks" (17).

The loose analysis of Darwinian unfitness and extinction falls short, however, due to the presence of the slave Roxana whose phenotype reflects a long history of sexual relations and successful reproduction between F.F.V.s and their slaves. In fact, since Roxy is only "one-sixteenth" black, there is essentially no biological difference between her and the F.F.V.s. To even imagine a woman of supposedly pure African blood requires looking back to at least her great-great grandmother, and Roxy herself takes the claim back even further:

“My great-great-great-gran’ father... was ole Cap’n John Smith, de highes’ blood dat Ole Virginny ever turned out; en *his* great-great-gran’ mother or somers along back dah, was Pocahontas de Injun queen, en her husbun’ was a nigger king outen Africa.” (70) Twain may present Roxy’s history as humorous, but even within the humor there is an insistence on a genealogy that places Roxy’s ancestors within colonial America at the same moment as the paternally ordered origins of the Driscolls. Most importantly, however, Roxy’s narrative of descent, suggesting an amalgamation with families such as the Driscolls, implies that such families themselves are not “white,” that they already, at the very origin of America, and even generations before, are a random mix of European, Indian, and African blood.

Roxy, then, exhibits the overall instability of racial categorization where whiteness is a legal and commercial venture that exists in contrast to the mixed racial biology of all the characters in the novel. Of additional importance is how such a venture exists in contrast to (while becoming conflated with) the narrative burden of genealogy and racial taxonomy that Roxy bears for the majority of the novel. Roxy understands that her child is the biological equal of the Driscoll’s child. She simply needs to consider what will allow her child to be classified as white. As she discovers, it is initially simply a matter of changing clothes, placing her baby “in one of Thomas à Becket’s snowy long baby-gowns with its bright blue bows and dainty flummery of ruffles” (14). Roxy herself experiences “astonishment” when she initially witnesses the transformation affected by simply placing her son in the “dainty flummery” of whiteness while simultaneously dressing the white child in the “towlinen shirt” of blackness (14). She states, “Now who would b’lieve clo’es could do de like o’ dat? Dog my cats if it ain’t all *I* kin do to tell t’other fum which, let alone his pappy” (14). Later, through an additional regime of diet and discipline, Tom *becomes* white:

Tom got all the petting, Chambers got none. Tom got all the delicacies, Chambers got mush and milk, and clabber without sugar. In consequence, Tom was a sickly child and Chambers wasn't. Tom was 'fractious,' as Roxy called it, and overbearing, Chambers was meek and docile....Chambers was strong beyond his years, and a good fighter; strong because he was coarsely fed and hard worked about the house, and a good fighter because Tom furnished him plenty of practice—on white boys whom he hated and was afraid of....He fought himself into such a formidable reputation, by and by, that Tom could have changed clothes with him, and "ridden in peace," like Sir Kay in Launcelot's armor. (18-19)

The reference to the change of clothes at the end of the quotation is important: not only does the allusion stress the continued physical resemblance of the boys, but it also underscores the original site of the boys' training—the chance changing of their clothes as infants. Such references exemplify the movement of the biological into the cultural. Food and clothing are physical necessities, but Twain, significantly, presents food and clothing first as cultural accoutrements. Such trappings, however, become biologically ensnaring as Tom becomes physically, and morally, weak while Chambers becomes physically strong and morally docile. Roxy herself becomes physically transformed by "the fiction": "she forgot who she was and what [her son] had been" as the deception "concreted itself into habit...[becoming] automatic and unconscious" (19).

Most importantly, the biological and cultural entrapments described above reveal the hazards of racial division. Like the economic activities of Percy Driscoll, and the sexual activities of Cecil Burleigh Essex, the concept of whiteness is increasingly associated with speculation and risk. Rather than simply a story of white dominion, then, or a tragic tale of

passing, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* reveals that whiteness has become as technically complicated as blackness, requiring both techniques and technology not only to support and define it, but also as a corrective when individuals such as Roxy reveal their understanding of it. Indeed, though Roxy's exchange of the babies is important in that the action unveils the biological equality of the boys, of equal importance to consider is that the action also parallels the risky speculative environment of the family who owns her. Immediately after the exchange of babies, "one of [Mr. Percy's] speculations was in jeopardy.... Within a few days the fate of the speculation became so dubious that Mr. Percy went away with his brother the Judge to see what could be done about it" (16). There is a double irony within this quotation: while Percy Driscoll worries about a land deal gone awry, his speculation in human property at home is jeopardized by one of the investments itself. Roxy, as both investment and investor, demonstrates that the exchange of the babies isn't *simply* impulsive—the transaction partakes of the speculative environment of the slave trade and F.F.V. investment strategy. In fact, as the novel progresses, the element of speculative risk and violence engaged in by Roxy and Tom, who because of miscegenation, represent both F.F.V. *and* black subjectivity, escalates and comes to significantly mark not only how race is organized within the novel, but accentuates how the technology of fingerprinting emerges as a racial and fiscal constraint in the final chapters of the novel.

Roxy herself takes on an initial element of risk by speculating in the future of two children where her own son becomes white while the true heir is now at risk of being sold down the river. As Roxy says, "I's sorry for you, honey; I's sorry, Gods knows I is,—but what *kin* I do, what *could* I do? Yo' pappy would sell him to somebody some time, en den he'd go down de river, sho', en I couldn't, couldn't, *couldn't* stan' it" (15). Such

protestations invoking the love of a mother for her child, however, shift as she is forced, after a bank crashes and she loses her life savings, to increasingly regard her son's position as white as an economic investment that she must protect.²⁶ In fact, in order to safeguard such an investment in whiteness, Roxy must, paradoxically, ensure that Tom identifies himself as black.

This process, where Tom *becomes* black, illustrates the conflation of the economic venture of whiteness and Roxy's narrative burden of genealogy and racial taxonomy discussed earlier. For example, in two crucial moments of twist and counter-twist, Roxy first describes her son at the moment of racial revelation as the "Fine nice young white gen'lman kneelin' down to a nigger wench! I's wanted to see dat jes' once befor'b I's called" (38-40). Later, however, in a moment of scathing denunciation, she states, "It's de nigger in you, dat's what it is. Thirty-one parts o' you is white, en on'y one part nigger, en dat po' little one part is yo' *soul*" (70). Roxy declares, first, that her son remains white, in spite of what she will soon reveal to him about his true heritage. Later, she declares her son black in spite of a genealogy and training that should instead confirm his whiteness. In other words, Roxy's variable reactions to Tom lay bare the consequences of a *belief* in biological (and the resulting cultural) determinism: under such ideology, ethical development arises by chance, and, as I noted from Richard Chase above, "moral truth" is detached from characterization, residing within action and reaction (rather than in any strong sense of individuality), developing by chance and accident—which, crucially, are really the defining qualities of Twain's version of training. As such, systems of ethics require extraordinary and increasingly *innovative* techniques to maintain them. These techniques, such as fingerprinting, come to be the final markers of identity while inflicting fatal damage upon individuality.

Prints, the Archive, and “imitation white”

“Every human being carries with him from his cradle to his grave certain physical marks which do not change their character, and by which he can always be identified—and that without shade of doubt or question. These marks are his signature, his physiological autograph, so to speak, and this autograph cannot be counterfeited, nor can he disguise it or hide it away, nor can it become illegible by the wear and the mutations of time...this signature is each man’s very own—there is not duplicate of it among the swarming populations of the globe!”

David Wilson in Mark Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (108).

In a twenty-first century text, a quote such as the one above might refer to the human genome contained in every cell of our bodies and easily obtained from blood, saliva, or a swab of tissue taken from the inside cheek of the mouth. Instead, this quotation reveals Mark Twain’s deep pleasure in the nineteenth century archiving of fingerprints. Such pleasure is displayed in the centrality of David Wilson’s movement from print avocationist to courtroom expert, his twenty years worth of archival work coming to fruition in identifying Tom as the murderer of Judge York Driscoll. It is important to remember, however, that nowhere in the United States, or even internationally, had fingerprints been used as forensic evidence in a trial. In fact, there was much debate about the best use of fingerprints across the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.²⁷

Figures such as Francis Galton (Charles Darwin’s half cousin and the founder of eugenics) hoped to find hereditary markers within the patterned ridges, whorls, and arches of the fingers: he was repeatedly disappointed by the individual uniqueness of fingerprints and

his inability to find evidence suggesting that fingerprint patterns were heritable. He not only hoped to use fingerprinting to identify individuals but to identify groups by class and race. Galton additionally believed that such evidence would prove that certain groups were less evolved—for example, “undesirables” such as savages and criminals.²⁸ The failure of such research tended to put Galton and others like him on the defensive: their ideas seemed to smack of palmistry.²⁹

Those interested in the uniqueness of prints distanced themselves from the work of researchers such as Francis Galton. Convinced of the potential of fingerprinting as a technology and medium well-suited to the purposes of identification, they were instead concerned with how to classify such individuality, how to textualize tens of thousands of prints, and how to convince bureaucrats that fingerprinting was a more valuable technique and system of classification than anthropometry, a system developed by Alphonse Bertillon in France in the nineteenth century that came to be used internationally. Those interested in fingerprinting believed they had found an objective method of identification that countered the faults of other systems.³⁰

Yet, it is interesting to observe what is involved in marking such objectivity. Even before Wilson’s dramatic courtroom revelations, Roxy once refers in anger to Chambers as an “imitation nigger” (35). He then refers to both of them as “imitation *white*” stating that “we don’t amount to noth’n as imitation *niggers*” (35, author’s emphasis). This position is echoed pages later as Tom reflects upon his newly revealed status as a “nigger.” He finds that “the habit of a lifetime had in some mysterious way vanished....It was the ‘nigger’ in him asserting its humility...giving the road...shrinking and skulking here and there and yonder, and fancying it saw suspicion and maybe detection in all faces, tones, and gestures” (44-45).

In other words, Chambers *and* Tom have both become “imitation white”—Chambers as the white slave, Tom as the black heir. As Roxy states of her relationship with Tom when she reveals to him that he is her son, “She couldn’t love him, as yet, because there ‘warn’t nothing *to* him” (46). Later, after Wilson reveals the true identity of Tom and Chambers in the setting of the murder trial, they each become imitation heir and imitation slave, illustrating that, racially, there is nothing to anyone.

Tom particularly exemplifies this position: as the novel moves forward, there is less and less to Tom—he spirals down from heir to slave, from murderer to “erroneous inventory” (115)—and Wilson brings such matters into dramatic display within the courtroom. First, Wilson is able to accurately identify the fingerprints of several volunteers from the courtroom. As he has collected then studied the prints of most everyone in Dawson’s Landing for twenty years, he has no trouble associating each print with its maker: “This is the signature of Mr. Justice Robinson.” [Applause] “This, of Constable Blake.” [Applause] “This of the sheriff.” [Applause] “I cannot name the others, but I have them all at home, named and dated, and could identify them all by my finger-print records.” (110).

As Wilson then moves his analysis of fingerprints from the volunteers’ self-made marks to the “pantograph enlargements” (105) scrutinized by the jury and courtroom audience, he creates a lasting sensation that forever changes how the observers of the trial view a portion of their anatomy. The pantographs, even more than the original prints, presents a sampling of the self that displays how such archives exist as both continuous and discontinuous with the bodies from which they originate.³¹ The fingerprints of Tom and Chambers directly represent who Wilson claims they biologically are, even to the point that each print contains hair oil and skin cells from across the lives of the two men. Most

importantly, however, the prints also exist as a separate archive controlled by Wilson—as the only “expert,” Wilson monitors not only what goes into the archive but also how its contents come to be analyzed and used. Such speculative use of forensic evidence by Twain foretells of the particular methods and settings that came to be utilized around other technologies of identification and biological samples across the twentieth century.

Of additional importance is how courtroom forensics in *Pudd’nhead Wilson* undermine the visual aspects of racial identification: the visual becomes at once untrustworthy, newly defined, and evidentiary, while looping back to support the very details that undermined the visual in the first place. Most telling in this respect is the moment when Wilson directly accuses Tom:

“Valet de Chambre, negro and slave—falsely called Thomas á Becket Driscoll—make upon the window the finger-prints that will hang you!”

Tom turned his ashen face imploringly toward the speaker, made some impotent movements with his white lips, then slid limp and lifeless to the floor.

Wilson broke the awed silence with the words—

“There is no need. He has confessed.” (112-13)

Tom, whiter than ever at the moment he “confesses,” with his “ashen face” and “white lips,” crucially does not provide the final proof actually required in a court of law: Wilson’s performance, his use of the archive rather than the fingerprint he asks for, reduces Tom to that of the “lifeless”—he is once again black and enslaved.

The configuration of fingerprinting within a closed circle of interpretation guarantees such an outcome. Wilson not only shapes the collection of fingerprints but is also the sole interpreter of the data, which converts the murder of Judge Driscoll from a crime to a random

event, and fingerprinting, from a remediation of the technologies of human identity to a sort of bar code transactor for commerce. Such use highlights the development of what is (from Twain's time to the present day) the *necessary* relationship between economics and technologies of identity that Twain marks as the final absurdity of the text. Fingerprinting functions as the technology and medium through which specific human identities are confirmed and crimes solved, but such objectives easily conform to the stance of the creditors from the Percy Driscoll estate who come forward once they discover that Tom is actually a slave: "They rightly claimed that "Tom" was lawfully their property and had been so for eight years....if he had been delivered up to them in the first place, they would have sold him and he could not have murdered Judge Driscoll, therefore it was not he that had really committed the murder, the guilt lay with the erroneous inventory" (115). The technological identification of Tom as a specific human is the very event that leads to his devolution, to his reduction from that of a subject to a saleable piece of inventory.

Ironically, there is little to identify Chambers as a subject either once he is identified as white. Positioned at the end of the novel, Twain devotes a paragraph to "the real heir" stating that his "long story" cannot be followed (114). The long story of Chambers cannot be followed for reasons similar to the silence surrounding the inconsequential Colonel Cecil Burleigh Essex at the beginning of the novel. If an account of sexual relations between F.F.V.s and slaves is prohibited, the conversion of a white slave into F.F.V. aristocracy is equally prohibitive. Instead of illustrating the successful reinstatement of identity, the propelling of Chambers into a white identity only serves to illustrate the tenuousness of racial classification to begin with.

The story of a white “nigger” can be told by Twain if that person *becomes* black, as in the tale of Tom. The reorganization of Tom as black propels him into easy relations with his dead master’s estate, supporting the legal and commercial venture of whiteness. Additionally, he becomes impersonal: Tom, *suddenly*, was never a person. Twain’s use of the pardon from the governor affirms this as Tom is stripped of subjectivity: “Everybody saw that there was reason in this” and “the creditors sold him down the river” (115). The irony of situating the word “reason” against the absurdity of racial subject/object positions is comically emphasized by the word “everybody,” for clearly, everybody only refers to those categorized as white.

In contrast, the story of the culturally black Chambers inhabiting the role of the free white heir requires a description of a black object (a slave) abruptly processed into white subjectivity. In other words, Chambers does not, suddenly, become a person. Remarkably, Twain posits no human relations for Chambers once he becomes white. Instead, Twain refers to his relationship with other objects and spaces: “The poor fellow could not endure the terrors of the white man’s parlor, and felt at home and at peace nowhere but in the kitchen. The family pew was a misery to him, yet he could nevermore enter into the solacing refuge of the “nigger gallery”—that was closed to him for good and all” (114). Chambers is never fully individualized; he remains an effect and an especially dangerous one for Twain to dwell on: a man who is culturally black is now a leading citizen of Dawson’s Landing. Additionally, Chambers is the final production of the F.F.V.s. The return of the heir (a potent reference in light of F.F.V. obsession with aristocratic codes of honor), instead of augmenting the stability of white culture, calls into question the very deterministic attributes that visually, and culturally, define whiteness.

Fingerprinting, then, represents the direction that technologies of identity would seek to employ—a movement away from direct visual observation of bodies, whose emergence and change over time makes them difficult to categorize, to reliance on archives of information that become increasingly removed from the contexts of meaning and emergence those bodies inhabit. Yet, the final irony of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is that the archive itself is subsumed within the cultural: the move toward the archiving of identity, and away from direct visualization, parallels the development of “one drop” politics as race becomes increasingly difficult to define visually. Additionally, the uniqueness of the fingerprint, and its role as both the site and the development of a technology that specifically identifies particular humans, is also the medium by which a person is stripped of individuality and even personhood as seen when Tom moves from white heir to Valet de Chamber to “erroneous inventory” (115). Thus, the organization of technology in the novel takes on the traits of the social organization of race. The archive itself becomes infected with the spectacular vitality of, and the speculation and risk within, nineteenth century biological and cultural determinism.

In the next chapter of this project, Pauline E. Hopkins will confront the qualities that move Twain, in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, to anxiously, and impossibly, attempt to technologically reconsolidate whiteness. Hopkins, however, uses the products of miscegenation to illustrate the complex sets of “necessary conditions” (226) that allow her to not only explore a new Negro identity, but most importantly, a newly naturalized American body.

¹ A version of this chapter has been published. See Cynthia A. Current, "Innovation and Stasis: Technology and Race in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*" (*Configurations: A Journal of Literature, Science, and Technology*, 17:3, 2009).

²Myra Jehlen, "The Ties That Bind: Race and Sex in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Culture, Conflict*, eds. Susan Gillman and Forrest G. Robinson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 120.

³Mark Twain, "*Pudd'nhead Wilson*." *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*. 1894. ed. Sidney E. Berger (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1980. Further references to this text will appear parenthetically.

⁴Critics such as Barry Wood and Eberhard Alsen argue for what they view as the narrative coherence and structural consistency of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Hershel Parker famously refers to *Pudd'nhead Wilson* as "unreadable." He uses his extensive research on how Twain composed the novel to debunk most serious critical analyses of the text. John Scharr's essay follows a similar trajectory by scrutinizing the erratic composition of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* to build a case against analyses suggesting that Twain purposely wrote a novel that engages with questions of racial identity; instead, Scharr suggests that Twain removed material in order to avoid direct racial commentary. Scharr could be said to chart a middle course, one in which he declares, like Parker, that the book is too inconsistent to be of much value though it may contribute, with little success, to how we think and feel about social categorization. Shelley Fisher Fishkin states, however, that "understanding the order in which Twain put the pieces of his books together still doesn't explore the implications of the fact that both books [*Huckleberry Finn* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*] were 'taken over' by story lines that focused on black/white issues in the ante-bellum South. When Twain allowed his initial stories to be usurped by the new and troublesome theme, the result...was a certain amount of narrative chaos" (1). See Barry Wood, "Narrative Action and Structural Symmetry in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, ed. Sidney E. Berger (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1980). Eberhard Alsen, "Pudd'nhead Wilson's Fight for Popularity and Power," *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, ed. Sidney E. Berger (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980). Hershel Parker, *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons: Literary Authority in American Fiction* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1984). John H. Scharr, "Some of the Ways of Freedom in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," Susan Kay Gillman and Forrest G. Robinson, *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990). Robert Moss, "Tracing Mark Twain's Intentions: The Retreat from Issues of Race in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," *American Literary Realism* 30.2 (1998). Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Race and Culture at the Century's End: A Social Context for *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," *Essays in Arts and Sciences* 19.(1990): 1-27. Also of note is Fishkin's essay "False Starts, Fragments, and Fumbles: Mark Twain's Unpublished Writing on Race. *Essays in Arts and Sciences*. 20 (1991), 17-31. Critics also argue about the division of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* from *Those Extraordinary Twins*. It has been well documented that Twain performed the "cesarean section" of pulling *Pudd'nhead Wilson*

out of *Those Extraordinary Twins* when it became apparent that he had two separate threads of story developing. Twain initially published *Pudd'nhead Wilson* separately as a serialized novel in *Century Magazine*; later, however, he published the two separate stories together as *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson and The Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins*. Scholars, such as Derek Parker Royal think it “would be tragically abortive” not to read the stories together. The argument is that Twain’s near financial crisis would have made it wiser to publish the two pieces separately. Therefore, although he firmly declares the independence of each piece, critics wonder at the reason he then published them together. Although there are good reasons for comparing the two novels, I find it as compelling to allow *Pudd'nhead Wilson* to stand on its own, as it was originally published. Perhaps Twain felt that previous serialization would harm sales and he sought to make the work look new by publishing a second piece along with it. At any rate, my interest lies in the dynamics between David Wilson and Roxana. See, for example, Caroline Porter, “Roxana's Plot,” in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture*, eds. Susan Gillman and Forrest G. Robinson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), and Derek Parker Royal, “The Clinician as Enslaver: Pudd'nhead Wilson and the Rationalization of Identity,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44.4 (2002).

⁵J. David Bolter and Richard A. Grusin use the term “hypermediacy” to describe the “refashion[ing] of older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media”; see Bolter and Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

⁶My notion of materiality follows from the work of N. Katherine Hayles who defines materiality as “the constructions of matter that matter for human beings” (3); see Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). Materiality, from this point of view, is not simply equal to the physical. As Todd Gannon and Hayles observe: “Whereas the physical aspects of any object are potentially infinite and neutral in themselves, materiality is intimately bound up with the quest for meaning” (10); see Gannon and Hayles, “Mood Swings: The Aesthetics of Ambient Emergence.” Eds. Neil Brooks and Josh Toth. Series Eds. Theo D’Haen and Hans Bertans. *The Mourning After: Attending the Wake of Postmodernism* (*Postmodern Studies* 40). Los Angeles: University of California, 2006. 99-142.

⁷Kaushik Sundar Rajan, “Genomic Capital: Public Cultures and Market Logics of Corporate Biotechnology,” *Science as Culture* 12.1 (2003).

⁸Sarah Franklin, “What We Know and Don’t Know About Cloning and Society,” in *Reconfiguring Nature: Issues and Debates in the New Genetics*, ed. Peter Glasner (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004). 256.

⁹Bolter and Grusin.

¹⁰Yury Tynyanov, “The Literary Fact,” trans. Ann Shukman, in *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. David Duff (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2000); Mikhail Bakhtin, “Epic and Novel: Toward a

Methodology for the Study of the Novel," in *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. David Duff (Harlowe, England: Longman, 2000).

¹¹ Bakhtin, "Epic and Novel," 72.

¹²For example, Twain owned a copy of the two volume 1871 edition of *The Descent of Man* by Charles Darwin and carefully read the first four chapters. Twain's marginalia in *Descent* reveals his desire to closely grapple with the ideas of Darwin. Sherwood Cummings notes that Twain "underlined thirty-nine technical words and wrote their definitions in the margins" along with comments corroborating Darwin's claims (33). Twain was additionally interested in scientific and technological publications of the period. See Cummings, *Mark Twain and Science: Adventures of a Mind*, Southern Literary Studies (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988); see also Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

¹³Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30:2.Winter (2004), 233.

¹⁴Twain also uses the terms interchangeably: "For some years Wilson had been privately at work on a whimsical almanac, for his amusement—a calendar, with a little dab of ostensible philosophy, usually in ironical form, appended to each date." 25.

¹⁵American Antiquarian Society, *Calendars*, 2006. American Antiquarian Society, *Almanacs*, 2006. <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/almanacs.htm>.

¹⁶Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 25.

¹⁷Cathy Boeckmann. *A Question of Character: Scientific Racism and the Genres of American Fiction, 1892-1912* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 3.

¹⁸Susan Gillman, "'Sure Identifiers': Race, Science, and the Law in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture*. eds. Susan Gillman and Forrest G. Robinson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990),102 (emphasis added).

¹⁹Chase 246.

²⁰Mark Twain, *What Is Man?*, 1906. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/70/70.txt>>. Twain's dialogue between the Young Man and the Old Man was anonymously published in 1906, but he is known to have worked on the essay as early as 1880; see Alexander E. Jones, "Mark Twain and the Determinism of What Is Man?," *American Literature* 29:2 (1957). Cummings refers, more than once, to Twain's work as moving toward "the determinism of *What is Man?*"; see Cummings, *Mark Twain and Science* (above n. 10), pp. 165-166.

²¹See, for example Ian Bogost, *Unit Operations: An Approach to Videogame Criticism* (Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 2006). Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer* (above, n. 4);

Nigel Thrift, "From Born to Made: Technology, Biology and Space," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30:4 (2005).

²²See Twain, *What Is Man?*, Jones, and Cummings 165-6.

²³"I have never thought of Pudd'nhead as a *character*, but only as a piece of machinery—a button or a crank or a lever, with a useful function to perform in a machine, but with no dignity above that." From a letter of Twain's to his wife Livy dated January 12, 1894. quoted in Smith, 253-54.

²⁴Royal 418.

²⁵Royal 417.

²⁶Cheryl I. Harris develops this sense of whiteness as property, in "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106:8 (1993). <<http://ssrn.com/abstract=927850>>.

²⁷Simon A. Cole, *Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

²⁸In chapter 12 of Francis Galton's book on fingerprinting he states that "I had great expectations, that have been falsified, namely, their use in indicating Race and Temperament. I thought that any hereditary peculiarities would almost of necessity vary in different races, and that so fundamental and enduring a feature as the fingermarkings must in some way be correlated with temperament....As a first and only an approximately correct description, the English, Welsh, Jews, Negroes, and Basques, may all be spoken of as identical in the character of their finger prints.... It is doubtful at present whether it is worthwhile to pursue the subject, except in the case of the Hill tribes of India....for the chance of discovering some characteristic and perhaps more monkey-like pattern. Considerable collections of prints of persons of different classes have been analyzed....but I do not, still as a first approximation, find any decided difference between their finger prints. Francis Galton, *Finger Prints* (London: Macmillan 1892), 17-19. <<http://galton.org/books/finger-prints/index.htm>>. Galton defines eugenics as "the science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race; also with those that develop them to the utmost advantage" ("Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims," *American Journal of Sociology* 10 [1904]. <<http://www.galton.org/essays/1900-1911/galton-1904-am-journ-soc-eugenics-scope-aims.htm>>.

²⁹ Cole. Such criticism, however, did not stop the progression of Galton's ideas concerning eugenics and their effect on eugenics programs in the United States. Lois A. Cuddy and Claire M. Roche regard *Pudd'nhead Wilson* as a novel "in which the opposing forces of nature and nurture are played out. When the light-skinned mulatto baby is switched at birth with the 'white' infant, Twain presumably offers the biracial baby an opportunity to surpass his biology and the cultural definitions of race. The 'black' child is given a chance to become a noble and admirable man because his environment now treats him with all the dignity and

privilege accorded a rich, “white” child. Yet, the text supports the influence of eugenics—the principle of human breeding and inheritance as the determining factor in a man’s character and success.” Cuddy and Roche, 25-6. There are several problems with this analysis. First, “biracial” as a descriptor for Tom is a misnomer (as described in this article), and, although Twain does describe Tom’s upbringing as connected to a sense of “privilege,” I would argue that the privilege is not simultaneously connected to any sense of dignity. Tom is spoiled, his father neither recognizes him nor nurtures him and ultimately loses their entire fortune to real estate speculation, leaving his only son a “pauper” (22). And finally, Twain’s notions in regard to inheritance and training, discussed at length in this article, lead to no clear answer regarding the role of inheritance. Regarding palmistry, there is a scene in *Pudd’nhead Wilson* that shows a serious engagement with palmistry. Although David Wilson appears to consider fingerprints as a neutral form of identification, he also reads palms and invests palmistry with the ability to accurately “[map] out Luigi’s character and disposition, his tastes, aversions, proclivities, ambitions and eccentricities.” He then moves on to Luigi’s past and is able to find evidence of Luigi having killed a man, all of which Luigi confirms (50—51). Twain believed that man was born with an unmalleable disposition, but of note is his strong belief in the effects of training. Also of note is Wilson’s hesitation at predicting the future from palmistry. See Twain, “*Pudd’nhead Wilson*” and *What Is Man?*

³⁰“Bertillonage,” as the system was called, measured different parts of the body and had been developed into a classification system principally to replace photography and the recording of distinctive physical marks such as scars and tattoos, both of which had been found to be ineffective methods for identification and classification. Cole 32-59.

³¹Hannah Landecker explores legal and scientific understandings of continuity and discontinuity between biological materials and the bodies such materials were taken from. She analyzes how legal arguments that favor scientific researchers who claim human biologicals as their property, build upon a strategy that denies the continuity between the cell line and the body of origin. As Landecker states: “In fact, the technical and rhetorical work of making human cell lines into stable, patentable, knowledge- and money-producing things has relied, at different times in different settings, on *both* the connection and the separation of person and cell line. Both have served to underpin the different forms of value—economic, legal, scientific—embodied by cell lines” (“Between Beneficence and Chattel: The Human Biological in Law and Science,” *Science in Context* 12:1 [1999]: 204).

Chapter 4

Technologies of Development: Repetition and Difference, Genre and Transfiguration in Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces*

In Chapter 3, I argued that Mark Twain, in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, portrays white culture as using the new technology of fingerprinting to assert and reconsolidate the increasingly improvisational boundaries of whiteness. Fingerprinting comes to be the final marker of identity in the novel while ultimately stripping each man identified of his personhood. Additionally, the slave Roxana, who switched the infants so that her son would not be “sold down the river,” and who bears the narrative burden of genealogy and racial taxonomy for the majority of the novel, is personally destroyed at the story's completion. Though the “real heir” continues to support her, “her hurts were too deep for money to heal; the spirit in her was quenched, her martial bearing departed with it, and the voice of her laughter ceased in the land.”¹

Twain's elegiac tone in reference to Roxy is of note: she does not physically die—though she is psychically conquered—and though Twain significantly, and sympathetically, enlarges the role of a mixed race woman in white fiction beyond that of the “tragic mulatta,” Roxy is still tragic, mulatta, and divested of the narrative and genealogical power Twain initially invests in her construction.² Twain's use of fingerprinting exemplifies how the archiving of the biological is disconcertingly both continuous and discontinuous to the very

bodies being identified; the tragic collapse of Roxy radically exposes what makes such use possible: the physical and sexual violence against women of African descent.

This chapter argues that Pauline Hopkins's novel *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*³ expands upon the archival effects of work by authors such as Mark Twain. While Twain exploits the hypermediacy⁴ between bodies and technologies in order to counter how bodies evolve beyond previous constraints, especially in terms of race, Hopkins's work radically moves in another direction. Hopkins develops a model of the past that reflects evolutionary sensibilities: rather than defined through its completedness or determination, the past rests instead upon what seem to be indeterminate values. In other words, a variation may biologically arise but we cannot interpret the impact of that variation until we see how it is used and whether it is heritable. In *Origin of the Species*, Charles Darwin addresses this in a manner that Hopkins would find to be as important culturally as biologically:

differences blend into each other in an insensible series; and a series impresses the mind with the idea of an actual passage. Hence I look at individual differences, though of small interest to the systematist, as of high importance for us, as being the first step towards such slight varieties as are barely thought worth recording in works on natural history.⁵

Hopkins combines this evolutionary sense of accumulation, passage, and indeterminacy within her work. Of additional importance, however, is how Hopkins structures memory within this network of accumulation and temporal indeterminacy. Memory, for Hopkins, becomes a historical and gendered object, a coproduction of the past and present that does

not simply reside in individuals. Instead, memory is materially deployed across specific lines of genealogy and supported by a network of evolutionary tools.

The deployment of memory in such a manner allows Hopkins to move from a model of the tragic mulatta, the focusing of narrative upon the travails and liminalities of a single mixed race woman, to an exploration of the cumulative effects of miscegenation over a period of more than 100 years. For Hopkins, constructions of race, gender and memory come to include developmental tools that not only measure the biological and cultural inscriptions upon and within racialized bodies, but also chart the progress of these inscriptions across generations. Of equal importance, however, is the fact that descent is only “seen” retrospectively. The complex sets of “necessary conditions” (226) that come to fruition in nineteenth century Boston represent the present and future that come to fix the past, that come to finally deploy the past against the effects of slavery, miscegenation, and the contending forces of sexual and racial violence and prejudice.

In other words, embodiment, for Hopkins, is an active, cumulative, and collective process that expresses a complex rendering of chance and necessity. She explores developmental processes through the potentialities of what mixed race individuals in post-Reconstruction America might become, and the indeterminate states that such subjects emerge from. Such work requires that Hopkins do more than elucidate the physical and psychological characteristics of a single body or individual, and thus complicates what many view as her eugenic tendencies. Instead, Hopkins builds upon broad historical and biological effects to form a cumulative picture of social, racial, and national development. The products of miscegenation—the Montfort and Smith families, and Sappho Clark—operate as active and reactive terrains rather than deeply specified identities. Looking to characterization to

create a cumulative and emergent effect rather than producing specific identities allows Hopkins to profoundly dynamize time and memory. The past is drawn forward not simply as a genealogy but as a force that actively moves the subject into the future.

As important, however, is how Hopkins explores the acquisition and use of genre in a similar manner. Scholars have noted how Hopkins makes use of generic devices such as the marriage plot, the drama of seduction, and the generic conventions of the sentimental. Claudia Tate “[identifies] the idealized domesticity” present in the works of authors such as Pauline Hopkins and how the “aesthetic value of these novels initially resided in their ability to gratify a distinct audience of ambitious black Americans” while they also “offered the recently emancipated an occasion for exercising political self-definition.”⁶ Ann duCille notes that the “marriage convention” specifically allowed black women writers to explore the “complex questions of sexuality and female subjectivity.” The work of authors such as Hopkins is “characterized by sexual reticence, the literary purification of black womanhood, and the celebration of marriage as a seemingly sexless meeting of like minds and sociopolitical ambitions.”⁷ I argue, however, that Hopkins uses genre much like the biological development and accumulation of traits. Genres function, for Hopkins, as both the exhibiting of an archive and as groups of tools that write a new form of the American body. Additionally, by destabilizing how such genres are deployed in the first place, Hopkins is able to use the literary as she uses evolution and memory.

As chance effects of slavery, miscegenation, and the contending forces of sexual and racial violence and prejudice, Hopkins, then, theorizes a set of “necessary conditions” (226) that simultaneously inform past and future formations of an American body. The accumulation of biological and literary traits do not function separately for Hopkins.

Together, these techniques, the modeling of both the biological and the literary, not only assist Hopkins in exploring a new Negro identity, but most importantly, a newly naturalized American body, one that is naturalized through the process of narration.

A “different solution” to the Negro Problem

Contending Forces follows the multi-generational story of families such as the Montforts and the Smiths. Beginning in eighteenth-century Bermuda with the slave holding Montforts, the story narrates the Montfort’s transfer of their estate to Newbern (sic), N.C. in order to continue to legally hold slaves. In Newbern (sic), Grace Montfort is accused of being a mulatta, symbolically raped, and commits suicide. Her husband is murdered, and her two children are thrown into slavery. One child eventually ends up in England and is raised as white, while the other child escapes to the North, lives his life out as a Negro and becomes the patriarch of the Smith family in Boston. The progression of these two families is enough for Hopkins to inaugurate a discussion of the dispersal and accumulation of biological and racial traits, of the roles of both inheritance and culture. Most importantly, however, Hopkins introduces concepts drawn from evolutionary theory in order to follow the generational and cumulative effects of women such as Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark. By making a theoretical connection between biological and racial development between these two women, Hopkins is able to remodel the meaning of the past and to finally deploy the past against the effects of slavery, miscegenation, and the contending forces of sexual and racial violence and prejudice.

Hopkins’s explication of evolution theory often feels cobbled together out of mixed notions of heredity, breeding, natural and social law, religion, and chance. She mixes notions

of the “march of progress, which the most enlightened nations are unconsciously forced to make by the great law of advancement” (20) with hauntings by ghosts and fortune telling. She notes the “mighty unexpected results of the law of evolution” (87) while simultaneously invoking the “will of Providence” (65). Additionally, she appears to give conflicting views on how she values the Negro. Evolution “[seems] to point to a different solution of the Negro question than any worked out by the most fertile brain of the highly cultured Caucasian” (87). The potential effects of evolution, however, and the sarcasm directed toward Caucasians, seems lost when further down on the same page she refers to whites as a “superior race” (87). The elements of Hopkins’s racial theories that appear haphazard or conflicting resolve, however, if *Contending Forces* is analyzed through a model of biological and literary development that relies on three aspects of evolutionary theory—the normalization of change, innate characteristics, and the accumulation of traits.

The normalization of change is an important tenet of both the scientific and cultural elements of evolutionary theory. As Edward J. Larson notes in his history of evolution, many, even among naturalists, “instinctively opposed the idea that species evolve, at least in part because it normalized change. Largely for the same reason, social radicals...inevitably embraced it.”⁸ For Hopkins, biological and cultural change is central to the historical and contemporary circumstances of African Americans, and she uses the notions of “organic succession and development,” popularized by nineteenth century scientists, to make her case.⁹ The manner in which Hopkins must sort through the normalization of change through succession and development, however, is complex. The implications of this complexity are twofold: one, Hopkins most profoundly highlights this complexity through women, and two, Hopkins does not fear looking at both black and white lines of genealogy. As a mixed race

person, while she may abhor the circumstances arising out of slavery that created her biological heritage, she still explores both lines of genealogy, along with the racial and cultural variation brought to both the African and European lines, as developmental opportunities.

This point of view is contentious for whites and blacks as both groups, generally speaking, are interested in racial consolidation. For whites in the United States, the post-Reconstruction period is marked by efforts to reconsolidate whiteness, to deny, in effect, any political or social equality between whites and blacks. This requires that any individual with evidence of African descent, no matter their skin color, be recognized as black. Court cases such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* that came before the United States Supreme Court in 1896, confirmed a “one drop” mentality in the United States—no matter what skin color an individual may have, the Supreme Court decision not only upheld the notion of two distinct races even in the face of miscegenation, but the law also upheld the idea of separate but equal before the law. As Justice Henry Billings Brown stated for the majority:

The object of the [Fourteenth] Amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political, equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either.¹⁰

In *Contending Forces*, however, Hopkins highlights the “race of mulattoes” (151). Radically, she insinuates that, rather than a new human phenomenon of the post-Reconstruction era, this “race” has been in existence, and transnationally active, for quite some time. Walter Benn Michaels notes in his analysis of Hopkins’s 1902-3 serialized novel, *Of One Blood*,¹¹

Hopkins writes, “but who is clear enough in vision to decide who hath black blood and who hath it not?” (607). Put this way, the question is an epistemological one but, of course, the real question raised by the citation from Acts is *ontological*: If “all nations” are made “of one blood,” how can anyone have “black blood” and anyone else not have it? One possible answer is that no one can, that there is no such thing as black blood or white blood, or at least that, given the history of black and white “amalgamation” (535) in North America, there is no such thing as black or white blood anymore... On this account the mulatto marks the disappearance of racial identity, and the “white” skin of Hopkins’s central characters is an emblem of the disappearance of the color line...”¹²

Michael’s analysis is off the mark in reference to the disappearance of racial identity—Hopkins goes to great lengths to accentuate racial uplift through the marriages of Dora Smith and Sappho Clark to prominent race men; but even knowing that the color line remains an important condition for Hopkins does not mean, as Hazel Carby suggests, that the mulatta is simply a figure of mediation.¹³ Instead, Hopkins’s novel insists that the figure of the mulatta has been an active, and integrated, cultural and societal figure for some time.

The integration of the mulatta into an active transnational and multi-generational figure not only allows Hopkins to shift the mulatta out of the status of mediator into a state of active transfiguration in America; such claims also take the creation of the mulatta out of the hands of white female abolitionists. As Teresa C. Zackodnik has documented, the mulatta “functioned in post-Civil War American fiction as a sensationalized figure of ruined womanhood.”¹⁴ Hopkins, however, by suggesting, first, that Grace Montfort is of mixed blood, and second, by documenting her transformation from that of rich planter’s wife to

tragic mulatta *prior to* sexual abuse, shifts the sensationalism away from considerations of the plight of a singular woman to the hysteria of white Americans.¹⁵ Thus, the mixed race woman is revealed as a historically, and transnationally, integrated figure rather than the creation of white abuse and white abolitionist zeal.

Hopkins documents this active integration in *Contending Forces* by using some of the tenets of evolutionary theory to document, both biologically and culturally, a narrative of descent that connects the figure of the mulatta from the eighteenth century forward. An analysis of Hopkins's utopic presentation of race formation in Bermuda reveals her understanding of the effects this evolving racial formation has had on the evolution of Britain as a nation. Additionally, this analysis provides an alternative conception of Hopkins's use of eugenics and how the introduction of black blood, and not simply the accumulation of white traits, comes to set up not only what Hopkins refers to as the "necessary conditions" of biological and cultural evolution but also the narrative transfiguration of the American body (226).

Bermuda, Descent, and the "Necessary Conditions"

[Bermuda's] importance to the mother country as a military and naval stations has drawn the paternal bonds of interest closer as the years have flown by. Indeed, Great Britain has been kind to the colonist of this favored island...sheltering and shielding them so carefully that the iron hand of the master has never shown beneath the velvet glove. So Bermuda has always been intensely British—intensely loyal...a temperate climate, limpid rivers, the balmy fragrance and freshness of the air, no winter...Indeed, slavery never reached its lowest depths in this beautiful island; but a

desire for England's honor and greatness had become a passion with the inhabitants...

(21-2)

The quotation above portrays Bermuda as a particular developmental niche, a paradise “shelter[ed] and shield[ed]” in a manner that fostered not only intense political loyalty from the inhabitants but also fostered a certain type of biological development. In fact, though Hopkins refers to the national and transnational effects of race, she chooses to use products of particular niches to exemplify the possibilities of these effects.

It could be argued that the majority of authors take such approaches to the development of fictional characters—generally speaking, characterization is about the discreet particularization of an entity, and that particularization includes attention to place and action, the construction of a niche, or what narrative theorists such as Marie Laure Ryan and David Herman refer to as model or possible worlds.¹⁶ Hopkins, however, uses the notion of niche from a specific evolutionary point of view. One reference to such developmental concerns by Hopkins is voiced through the character of Mrs. Willis:

Let the world, by its need of us along certain lines, and our intrinsic fitness for these lines, push us into the niche which God has prepared for us. So shall our lives be beautified and our race raised in the civilization of the future as we grow away from all these prejudices which have been the instruments of our advancement. (152)

The setting of Bermuda serves as such a niche where “amalgamation with the higher race” (22-3) not only creates Hopkins's “race of mulattoes” but also positively modifies British democracy by serving as an exemplar of what a new racial configuration can bring to the nation—economic success and the moral completion of democratic ideals through the emancipation of slaves. Mulattoes themselves are “rich planters or business men” (23) and

the moral clime “never reached its lowest depth” (22) as it had in other slave holding nations, such as the United States. In spite of Hopkins contradictory language (the “higher race,” the “polluting” of white “vitality” with “African blood” (23)), it is clear that the infusion of black blood has been developmentally a positive element for the British nation along with the biological evolution of a culturally and economically successful and new racial configuration.

The Montfort family is exemplary of Hopkins’s exploration of niche development. Charles and Grace Montfort themselves possibly emerge from racially mixed lines of descent. Hopkins notes that

there might even have been a strain of African blood polluting the fair stream of Montfort’s vitality, or even his wife’s, which fact would not have caused him one instant’s uneasiness. (23)

The Montfort’s polluted bloodline has developed into a biological and cultural type that epitomizes the potentialities emerging from Bermuda. Charles is a successful planter who is “neither a cruel man, nor an avaricious one” in spite of his position as a slave owner (22). Grace Montfort is not only “perfectly molded... a most lovely type of Southern beauty” (40); she is also loving, generous, and well educated (45). Additionally, the two children are noted to be much like their mother, especially Jesse, whose line of descent establishes the African American Smith family of Boston. Hopkins’s rhetoric of pollution, again, is paradoxical, and while we cannot lose track of the many reasons why such paradoxes may exist—for example, Hopkins’s attempts at engaging both a black and white readership¹⁷—I argue that we are still left with the fact that African blood is a necessary component of biological and political advancement. After all, the completion of the novel insists not simply on a happy ending for

the mulatta Sappho Clark but on the conjoining of the destinies of the Montfort line of descent with that of Sappho Clark, as well as conjoining the Old World with the New World through the travels of Sappho and Will Smith from the United States to Britain. Thus, it is of great importance to note the attention Hopkins devotes to the Montfort's potentially polluted bloodline, and how, developmentally, the figures of Sappho Clark and Grace Montfort connect through a new understanding of biological descent along with cultural descent.

Hopkins follows these lines of descent that connect the two women to demonstrate that while the utopic niche of Bermuda has contributed to racial and national development, there is no final transfiguration of the Montforts themselves. The moral failings of Charles Montfort—that he will not give up slavery and transfers both family and estate out of Hopkins's utopic version of Bermuda—forecloses not only any final transfiguration of Montfort, but also of his entire family. Also of importance, however, is that Grace Montfort herself, in spite of the near angelic description of both her beauty and kindness, participates in the extension of the unequal relationships between owners and their slaves. Her relationship with Lucy, described as that of “inseparable friends rather than of mistress and slave,” is distinguished by the fact that Lucy still calls her “Miss Grace” and speaks in Hopkins's version of slave dialect (46). As Grace T. Randle has noted,

Lifelong exposure to a system based upon racial hegemony has blinded Grace to the inherent inequality embodied in her “friendship” with Lucy. She fails to note that a lack of reciprocity is involved—Lucy does ‘Miss Grace’s’ bidding, but Grace does not do Lucy’s.¹⁸

This point is most painfully accentuated after Grace is converted into a tragic mulatta: after the family settles in the United States, she is rumored to have a “black streak” within her

(41), and confronted by the “unlawful love” of the white Anson Pollock (45) who has murdered her husband, she chooses suicide over rape, and her children are thrown into slavery. While Grace dies in the fashion associated with the tragic mulatta, Lucy, rather than Grace, becomes the object of rape and sexual abuse by Anson Pollack.

Rather than personalities, then, Hopkins develops the Montforts as active and reactive terrains, as evolutionary and biological products, whose cumulative function will move from the biological to the cultural, from the evolutionary development of “certain lines...push[ed]...into the niche which God has prepared” (152) to the revolutionary setting of Boston where moral transfiguration will finally occur. Through the concept of transfiguration, Hopkins’s Christianity works in combination with her understanding of biology and evolution. The Montfort’s development in Bermuda, though replete with cultural and moral potential, represents a past most intensely defined biologically. As a basis for descent, as a pool of traits, the Montforts, most specifically Grace Montfort, are figures whose evolving potentials, whose use, is indeterminate.

Trait Accumulation and Eugenics

If biological development in the novel serves to highlight not personality but the necessary conditions for racial transfiguration, then Pauline Hopkins’s understanding of eugenics must be re-examined. When I argue for a reanalysis of Hopkins’s engagement with eugenics, I do not insist that Hopkins has freed herself from some of the troubling aspects of eugenic principles circulating during her era. Hopkins’s argument, however, cannot be reduced to what critics such as John Nickel, in “Eugenics and the Fiction of Pauline Hopkins,” state: that “Hopkins suggests that the black race needs white racial traits in order

to improve the race's position within society.”¹⁹ After all, figures such as W.E.B. DuBois, whom Hopkins is often politically associated with, engaged in eugenic thinking.²⁰ As Gregory Michael Dorr notes, DuBois, known most explicitly for his analyses of race as a historical object rather than a biological certainty had

a healthy respect for the notion of genetic ‘fitness’ and ‘unfitness’ in the late nineteenth century. And this provided part of the intellectual foundations for his famous formulation, the “Talented Tenth”—the best and most able representatives of African America whose fitness destined them to lead blacks to equality.²¹

In “The Conservation of Races,” Dubois states that ““there are differences—subtle, delicate and elusive, though they may be—which have silently but definitely separated men into groups.”²² He further states that the future of African Americans should not be “absorption by the white Americans.”²³

In *Contending Forces*, however, Hopkins, though dedicated to racial uplift, expresses no concern in reference to amalgamation. Instead, her concern rests with the use of what has come into being now, the new race of mulattoes, and how the now refigures the past. Thus, while Hopkins is interested in trait accumulation and the innate virtuosity of women of African descent, it is actually through the co-production of the past and present that such qualities come to bear any relation to the future of the new American race.

Repetition and Descent

Hopkins's emphasis on the coproduction of the past and present allows her to deal with the evolutionary, and eugenic, concepts of innate characteristics and trait accumulation in a different manner than other authors of this period, and she accomplishes this through the notion of repetition rather than simply accumulation or inheritability. As I argued earlier, Hopkins develops characters historically and biologically as active and reactive terrains rather than distinct personalities, as evolutionary and biological products, whose cumulative function will move across both the biological to the cultural; such movement involves both direct inheritance of traits and the repetition of events that come to form the moral evolution and transfiguration of characters.

Action and reaction between characters arises out of elements of heredity, whether through the "combination of the worst features of a dominant race with an enslaved race" (91), or through an accumulation of biological traits that create sets of conditions between characters. Thus, characters are often placed in historically repetitive situations. John P. Langley, for example, a direct descendant of Anson Pollack and the Montfort's slave Lucy, is described as

the natural product of such an institution as slavery. Natural instinct for good had been perverted by a mixture of "cracker" blood of the lowest type on his father's side with whatever God-saving quality that might have been loaned the Negro by pitying nature. This blood, while it gave him the pleasant features of the Caucasian race, vitiated his moral nature and left it stranded high and dry on the shore of blind ignorance, and there he seemed content to dwell, supinely self-satisfied with the narrow boundary of the horizon of his mental vision. (222)

Langley's great-great uncle, Anson Pollack, was prepared to rape Grace Montfort and did rape Lucy. Like Pollack, John Langley attempts to coerce Sappho Clark into an illicit sexual relationship against her will. As important, however, is that Langley's inherited "moral nature" creates the set of conditions that allow Hopkins to forward Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark as templates exhibiting not the specificity of individual mixed race women, but rather the accretionary effects of miscegenation, the action and reaction of race and biology in complex interaction with contending, and often repetitive social forces.

There are three episodes worth discussing from this point of view—the initial symbolic rape of Grace Montfort, the actual rape of Sappho Clark when she was fourteen years old, and Sappho's resistance to rape by John Langley. Each of these events is part of an evolving response to rape by women of African descent, while simultaneously making use of the resulting miscegenation. Each of these events also contributes to Hopkins's notion that the literary can, and should, through its own process of genre development, contribute to the naturalization of the new Negro and thus, a newly naturalized American body.

Grace Montfort and Literary Forms of Transfiguration

Alongside the title page of *Contending Forces*, readers are confronted with the vivid illustration exhibiting the character of Grace Montfort collapsed on the ground after being bound to a post and whipped by two white men after they have murdered her husband. Grace's dress is pulled down to her waist and what we see are the bloody marks of the whip upon her pale back along with a pool of blood upon the ground. The two men who stand above Grace Montfort are no doubt the men who have whipped her, but as Hazel Carby has

so poignantly written, the posture of the men, how they stand, how they hold the whips, is indicative of more than the physical violence of the whipping. Carby states that

Hopkins represented the brutal rape of Grace in the displaced form of a whipping by two of the vigilantes...Hopkins's metaphoric replacement of the "snaky, leather thong" for the phallus was a crude but effective device, and "the blood [which] stood in a pool about her feet" was the final evidence that the "outrage" that had been committed was rape.²⁴

And though Carby importantly emphasizes the link that Hopkins makes between "the violent act of rape and its specific political use as a device of terrorism,"²⁵ it is also worth noting the generic convention, that of the tragic mulatta, that Hopkins deploys in order to construct how such an incident and how such a character come to hold meaning in the late nineteenth century.

I previously argued against Hazel Carby's stance that, in *Contending Forces*, "the figure of the mulatto should be understood and analyzed as a narrative device of mediation."²⁶ While I agree with Carby that "historically the mulatto, as a narrative figure, has [had] two primary functions—"as a vehicle for an exploration of the relationship between the races and, at the same time, an expression of the relationship between the races"²⁷ —Pauline Hopkins intends that the figure of the mulatta move beyond mediation. Figures such as Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark clearly convey the histories of sexual and physical violence that women of African descent have endured from slavery into the post-Reconstruction era. Rather than explore the mulatta as simply a "narrative device of mediation," Hopkins deploys the tragic mulatta in the manner of an evolving literary form.

In the preface to *Contending Forces*, Hopkins defines the “great value” of fiction as “a record of growth and development from generation to generation” (14). Hopkins’s narrative of development includes an analysis of literature as archival, as a cumulative collection reflecting the social and cultural development of humans. The conceptual expansion of what the tragic mulatta comes to represent in *Contending Forces* moves the figure from narrative device to generic form. Exploring the mulatta as a genre supports not only how Hopkins deploys the bodies of characters such as Grace Montfort within the text through the accretionary effects of miscegenation, through the action and reaction of race and biology in complex interaction with contending, and often repetitive social forces; the designation additionally gestures toward the archival effects of literature. Hopkins engages with the genre of the tragic mulatta, then, through John Frow’s understanding of the use of genre, of how genre can be used to posit “questions of meaning and truth as questions of form.”²⁸

Most importantly, however, the genre of the tragic mulatta, as used by Hopkins, further emphasizes what the character of Grace Montfort expresses biologically and evolutionarily. The tragic mulatta as a generic form works to co-produce the past and present. Just as, biologically, Hopkins’s concern rests with the use of what has come into being now, the new race of mulattoes, and how this new racial formation refigures the past and comes to, finally, determine its meaning, so with the literary. By presenting Grace Montfort as simultaneously categorized as a white woman, as possibly a mixed race woman, *and* a tragic mulatta, *Contending Forces* not only uses the form to historically contextualize the genre and the narrative figures within the novel, but Hopkins’s use of the genre reveals the indeterminate status of the form in the first place. Thus, the physical and (figurative) sexual

violence committed against Grace Montfort, categorized as white, reworks the category of what counted as tragic and mulatta to begin with and reworks categorization itself, revealing not only the cumulative effects of the biological but also the cumulative effects of the literary. The modeling of the biological and the literary through the templates of Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark assist Hopkins in exploring a new Negro identity *and* a newly naturalized American body, one that is naturalized through the process of narration.

The narrative structure of the tragic mulatta originates in stories such as “The Quadroons” and “Slavery’s Pleasant Homes” by Lydia Maria Child in the 1840s.²⁹ Critics such as Teresa C. Zackodnik, Jean Fagin Yellen, and Karen Sánchez-Eppler note that stories such as those by Child refer as much to white women as to enslaved women.³⁰ Hopkins, however, counters even this observation by definitively categorizing Grace Montfort, the tragic mulatta, as white. Rather than the figure serving to speak “to the concerns of free white women,” as Yellen observes, the figure of Grace Montfort is about an entirely different configuration of race, one not identifiable through the categories of black or white, or even free or enslaved.³¹ The position of Grace Montfort, in fact, remains uninterpretable until later events in Boston that include the presence of Sappho Clark, come to finally declare the past’s meaning. In relation to form and narrative structure, then, the genre of the tragic mulatta is deployed as part of Hopkins’s narrative of development that includes an analysis of literature as archival, as a cumulative collection reflecting the social and cultural development of humans, a generic component of the already and the not yet, a form whose use has not been established, and exists, as Jacques Derrida suggests in “The Law of Genre,” as “a sort of participation without belonging—a taking part in without being part of, without having membership of a set.”³² Simultaneously, however, the effects of genre, as with the effects of

Hopkins's ideal of racial transformation, will come to transfigure literature through another set of biological and generic necessary conditions involving Sappho Clark.

Sappho Clark: Repetition and Difference

Grace Montfort, as both a biological and generic configuration, attains a status popularly known as that of the tragic mulatta; this status simultaneously forecloses any racial or moral transfiguration for Grace. However, the conditions of her existence form a paradox of indeterminacy. She is somehow white and black, biologically and morally "perfect" yet part of a slave owning family, and finally, confronted with physical and sexual violence, she is unable to overcome the contending forces of prejudice and violence finally conforming to a reactive type. The character of Grace Montfort operates as a reactive terrain, both as a biological and generic configuration, rather than as a specific individual. In other words, without the interpretive force of the present, the racial and moral transfiguration that operates through Sappho Clark, Grace Montfort would simply reflect history as static and determined, and Hopkins's use of eugenics would simply reflect the biological accumulation of traits.

Instead, Grace Montfort's line of descent reveals the biological and cultural complexities of emergent embodiment in the United States emphasizing Hopkins's view of embodiment as an active, cumulative, and collective process. Grace Montfort's line of descent is not a simple tracing of blood relations from generation to generation; the most important element of plot development is not the final revelation of kinship between Mrs. Smith of Boston and Charles Montfort-Withington of England (370-381). The tracing of blood kinship is important proof for how "such as distinguished woman" as Mrs. Smith "evolved from among the brutalized aftermath of slavery" and revelatory of the historical

significance of the “strangely tangled threads of many colored families” due to miscegenation. Of equal importance, however, is that Hopkins’s understanding of the cumulative and collective processes of evolution allow her to expand on just what “line of descent” comes to mean. A broader view of line of descent beyond bloodlines allows Hopkins to develop a definition of descent that comes to center most firmly upon gender development—with a specific focus on mixed race women—along with the influence of Christianity. The evolutionary concepts of repetition and difference, in combination with Hopkins’s belief in the cultural and biological development of moral traits, allow her to forge clear developmental connections between Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark. Through these connections, Hopkins classifies the two women as cumulative and emergent effects that coproduce the present and past rather than specific identities that simply have particular static histories.

The method that Hopkins first uses to link Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark is through biological descent. Hopkins complicates the notion of what counts as a biological linkage, however, by focusing not on connections through family and blood, but through the biological and social construction of mixed race women. As noted earlier, Hopkins accounts for Montfort’s development through the niche of environmental and biological perfection attained in Bermuda. Grace Montfort

was a dream of beauty even among beautiful women. Tall and slender; her form was willowy, although perfectly molded. Her complexion was creamy in its whiteness, of the tint of the camellia; her hair, a rich golden brown, fell in rippling masses far below the waist line; brown eyes, large and soft as those seen in the fawn; heavy

black eyebrows marking a high white forehead, and features as clearly cut as a cameo, completed a most lovely type of Southern beauty. (40)

Hopkins endows Sappho Clark with a similarly remarkable Southern beauty with that beauty arising out of a similarly remarkable biological niche:

Tall and fair, with hair of a golden cast, aquiline nose, rosebud mouth, soft brown eyes veiled by long, dark lashes which swept her cheek, just now covered with a delicate rose flush...a combination of “queen rose and lily in one.” (107).

When other tenants of Mrs. Smith’s house meet Clark they state

“Lord,” said Ophelia Davis to her friend Sarah Ann, “I haven’t see anything look like thet chile since I lef’ home.”

“That’s the truth, ‘Phelia,” replied Sarah Ann; “that’s something’ God made, honey; thar ain’t nothin’ like thet growed outside o’ Loosyannie.” (107)

New Orleans’s tolerance of people of mixed race is much like that of Bermuda rather than the United States at large. Malini Johar Schueller notes that mulattoes in New Orleans “constituted a distinct third category that cannot be fully understood through the blackwhite binary.”³³ Referencing the historian Joel Williamson, she suggests that “a black-white distinction based on versions of the one drop was not in force in New Orleans.”³⁴ Just as the possibility of mixed blood in the Montfort line did not prevent them from becoming wealthy planters, so it was in New Orleans with mulattoes.

Unlike Hopkins’s utopic Bermuda, however, New Orleans, after 1850, begins to change: Schueller states that after the passage of Fugitive Slave Law, “long-running intolerance toward miscegenation elsewhere began to exert pressure in the lower South [and] mulattoes began to quickly lose their special status.”³⁵ The Montforts react to shifts in the

political and racial economy of Bermuda by transferring their estate to North Carolina where Charles Montfort is murdered and Grace Montfort commits suicide. Sappho Clark, reflecting both her racial development and the changing politics of racial life in the city of New Orleans, is victimized in a similar manner. As Luke Sawyer, who knew Sappho Clark (under her real name, Mabelle Beaubean) describes it before The American Colored League in Boston, Clark was kidnapped and raped by her half-uncle then abandoned in a New Orleans brothel:

Crazed with grief, Monsieur Beaubean faced his brother and accused him of his crime. 'Well,' said he, 'whatever damage I have done I am willing to pay for. But your child is no better than her mother or her grandmother. What does a woman of mixed blood, or any Negress, for that matter, know of virtue? It is my belief that they were a direct creation by God to be the pleasant companions of men of my race... That night his house was mobbed... I seized Mabelle and wrapped her in a blanket. Watching my chance I stole from the house after the fire was well under way, and miraculously reached a place of safety. I took Mabelle to the colored convent at New Orleans, and left her there in the care of the sisters. There she died when her child was born!' (260-61)

Mabelle Beaubean, however, does not die; she bears the child, takes on the name of Sappho Clark and later moves to Boston, significantly contributing to her own social construction.

Through biological and cultural construction, rather than through blood descent, through her beauty, her white appearance, and a history of sexual and physical violence, Sappho Clark is a near replica of Grace Montfort. Such replication may seem to fit into a prominent trend of the use of twins or the doubling of characters often seen in American

fiction at this time.³⁶ Certainly, Hopkins sets up a number of parallels between characters, and between characters and figures of renown outside of the text: examples of this include the parallels of characterization between Will Smith and W.E.B. DuBois, and between Dr. Arthur Lewis and Booker T. Washington. The relationship between the characters of Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark, however, indicates that Hopkins has a different process in mind than the examples of parallel characterization noted above. First, the physical resemblance and similar biological construction does matter in association with eugenics. Charles Galton himself was interested in using twins to support his belief that heredity trumped environment in terms of trait development, and Galton's twin theories were used in the United States to depict blacks as inferior.³⁷ Most importantly, however, is that the near replication of Grace Montfort through Sappho Clark allows Hopkins to explore the transmissibility of biology and culture through the concept of reiteration, or what could be called repetition and difference.

The reiterative effects of Grace Montfort through Sappho Clark could be explicitly theorized through scholars such as Judith Butler. Certainly, Butler's description of the materialization of bodies through the "forcible reiteration" of norms, through the performativity that discourse produces, fits quite well with the social and sexual construction of the tragic mulatta, and could be used to track the relationship between Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark.³⁸ Of additional value is the work of Gilles Deleuze who specifically theorizes difference and repetition. For Deleuze, difference inhabits repetition in how the mind "contemplates" repetition. In reflection, repetition is a "contraction of instants" forming a "synthesis of time." Using this principle to analyze *Contending Forces* immediately brings to mind Hopkins's use of time and history, and how, as Deleuze states

It is in the present that time is deployed. To it belong both the past and the future: the past in so far as the preceding instants are retained in the contraction; the future because its expectation is anticipated in this same contraction.”³⁹

These two theorists, then, could provide a framework for understanding the materialization of the social and sexual subject categorized as the tragic mulatta while simultaneously understanding the movement and difference of the repetition of such materialization across time. Indeed, one of the values of this framework is to note, as Hopkins does through the transfiguration of Sappho Clark, that the figure of the tragic mulatta is not static or actual, but a kind of virtual terrain upon which many have tried to cement racial constructions.

What is most important, however, is to explore how Hopkins herself formulates and defines the materialization of bodies through an understanding of repetition and difference. While the underpinnings of her work take into account many of the concerns that define the work of theorists such as Butler and Deleuze, Hopkins defines and explores such principles through a combination of evolutionary theory and Christianity. Human emergence, as defined through Darwinism, occurs through an immense amount of repetition along with often “insensible” difference that may accumulate over time.⁴⁰ Christianity, generally speaking, posits not simply forgiveness of sins and life after death, but the “resurrection of the body.”⁴¹ For Hopkins, certain tenets of evolutionary theory match her theology. Thus, materialization and reiteration are informed through biology and morality, descent and transfiguration, and these elements come to inform each other through the transformation of time and history. In her profile of Touissant L’Ouverture in the *Colored American Magazine*, Hopkins states that “The voice of history is the voice of God.”⁴²

The material and reiterative connections of Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark coproduce the past and present through both the equivalency of and the difference between the two women. While Grace Montfort is figuratively raped and commits suicide, Mabelle Beaubean is literally raped and what follows is a form of figurative, not actual, death as she bears a child, changes her name, and moves to Boston. Clark's equivalency with Grace Montfort, along with the differences, suggests a rising arc of transfigurative action in the novel.

Hopkins suggests the possibilities of such transfigurative action through the combination of descent and Christianity earlier in the novel through the figure of Jesse Montfort at the moment he becomes a fugitive slave. As Jesse works on a dock in New York City, the following conversation occurs:

“Speak to the cap’n,” called a man standing near; “that’s nuthin’ but a nigger you’re talkin’ to.”

“Well,” said the one who had first addressed [Jesse], “you’re a likely boy, anyhow; who do you belong to?”

Jesse arose from his seat, white with passion, and said to the man: I am no man’s property; I belong to Jesus Christ!” (77)

After this exchange, Jesse escapes; he does not, however, attempt to regain his status as a white man. Instead, he later marries a woman of African descent and “was absorbed into that unfortunate race, of whom it is said that a man had better be born dead than to come into the world as part and parcel of it” (79). The completion of Jesse’s absorption into blackness is important in that, first, the transformation is the outcome of a testament of religious faith, and second, it is an affirmation of his identification as mixed race rather than white. As the novel

moves forward, moral transfiguration requires that characters such as Jesse Montfort fully confront themselves as mixed race individuals rather than make any claims of whiteness.

The final transfigurative moments in the text center on how Sappho Clark is not only grounded as a repetition of Grace Montfort biologically, but how Clark must renegotiate a repetition of the configuration that positioned Montfort as a tragic mulatta. Thus, a version of Anson Pollock (John Langley) and a version of Grace Montfort (Sappho Clark) meet again. However, in this repetition, the elements of seduction are materially organized within and between candidly mixed race individuals who represent both a unique “synthesis of time,” a “contraction of instants” between Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark.⁴³ Yet, as with Grace Montfort’s position within the genre of the tragic mulatta, Clark is generically “a sort of participation without belonging—a taking part in without being part of, without having membership of a set.”⁴⁴ In other words, she engages the form of tragedy and seduction, in fact embodies the form, yet she will come to not only redefine what the form of seduction materially consists of but also what was indeterminate about the form in the first place.

As Jennifer Rae Greerson observes, tales of seduction have always held a certain attraction for American readers:

in the early Republic, the seduction plot held special relevance for readers living through the upheavals of rapid modernization and social reorganization. By moving the marriage relation out of a broader familial-social context, and into a fraught transaction between two isolated characters, the seduction plot enacted the shift from a society organized around kin networks, community controls, and face-to-face interactions, to a society made up of a collection of atomized and anonymous individuals.⁴⁵

Hopkins takes these same notions of “the fraught transaction between two isolated characters,” but moves the effect to principally be the fraught transaction between two women across time, emphasizing, and again redefining, what counts as line of descent and contracting the elements of anonymity and atomization for those of mixed blood in the United States. If Greerson notes that it is an American dilemma to face the shift from “kin” and “community” to “atomized and anonymous individuals,” what then, Hopkins may ask, could be more American than being a person of mixed race in post-Reconstruction America? Hopkins takes a deeply American genre and social dynamic into the heart of the sexual trauma and gender construction of African American women. Thus, the plot of seduction becomes intensely materialized within Hopkins’s novel not only to account for the repetition of physical and sexual violence encountered by women both during and after slavery, but also for the racial and moral transfiguration of Americans in the post-Reconstruction era.

Clark’s first encounter with rape occurs when she is a fourteen-year-old child. Kidnapped by her white half-uncle, she is raped and abandoned in “a house of the vilest character in the lowest portion of the city of New Orleans” (260). Clark has a child from the encounter but does not raise the child or acknowledge that she is the boy’s mother. She moves to Boston but the past and future, in a sense, follows her to the new setting not only in the form of her child and the “grand aunt” Madame Francis who cares for him (329), but also in the form of Luke Sawyer, who, in the retelling of his own life story tells the story of the rape of Mabelle Beaubeau, Sappho Clark’s real name. Each of these characters—Luke Sawyer, her child Alphonse, and Madam Frances—represent the simultaneity of past/present/future: Sawyer in the retelling of the past and in disrupting Clark’s anonymity, and the child in the recollection of her responsibilities in the present as a mother and in an

explicit representation of a newly conceptualized racial future. Madame Frances, however, in her ability to read the future through the remnants of African psychic abilities, is perhaps the strongest character in associating Clark with the simultaneity of past/present/future.

Instead of looking to characters such as Madame Frances, critics often emphasize the role of figures such as Mrs. Willis through her explicit enactment of the black women's club movement in the United States and how she forwards virtue as a biologically innate characteristic in women of African descent. In the sense of the contraction of time along with descent, however, Madame Frances stands out as a character who contracts and transforms a reading of time in a more transfigurative sense. Hopkins seems deeply conflicted about the character of Mrs. Willis: Sappho Clark is initially drawn to her during a meeting and comes close to confessing her sins, but in the end is repulsed. Hopkins states

[Mrs. Willis] pressed the girl's hand in hers and drew her into a secluded corner. For a moment the flood-gates of suppressed feeling flew open in the girl's heart, and she longed to lean her head on that motherly breast and unburden her sorrows there.

"Mrs. Willis, I am troubled greatly," she said at length.

"I am so sorry; tell me, my love, what it is all about."

Just as the barriers of Sappho's reserve seemed about to be swept away, there followed, almost instantly, a wave of repulsion toward this woman and her effusiveness, so forced and insincere. Sappho was very impressionable, and yielded readily to the influence which fell like a cold shadow between them. She drew back as from an abyss suddenly beheld stretching before her. (155)

There are, however, no such conflicts with the character of Madame Frances. She is both fortune teller and caretaker, deeply African yet deeply connected to the next incarnation of

American embodiment through Clark and her son. Even figures such as John Langley consult her, looking for some sense of the future. Hopkins states that

Madam Frances was supposed to be skilled in the occult arts which were once the glory of the freshly imported African. Wonderful tales were told of her ability to foretell the future...as one gazed upon her he might be pardoned for thinking that within that dark house, moulded (sic) upon symmetrical lines, and appearing as though cut from purest ebony, albeit somewhat thin and spare, as became one past the meridian of life and now upon the road leading downward into the shadows of the last valley through which we must pass on our outward journey toward the spheres of celestial light, dwelt a rare mind. (199-200)

Though Madame Frances deals with a source of power not directly cited as religious, she is a mediative figure between the resurrective power of Christ and the psychic power of individual African Americans. She predicts the future death of John Langley, but also states "If you would let an old woman advise you, I should say choose the right path, no matter what the cost" (285). It is of note that when Madame Frances's prediction comes to pass, Langley is deeply repentant and he dies on Easter morning. This mediation between the resurrective power of Christianity, the resurrection of the body, and the inherent psychic strength of African descent is exactly what the final transfiguration of Sappho Clark embodies as she also, on the very same Easter Sunday, is reunited with Will Smith.

The final confrontation with the effects of the physical and sexual violence from the past, stressing the importance of repetition in this novel, is Clark's confrontation with John Langley when he attempts to seduce her. I have argued that Sappho Clark embodies and materializes seduction as both a product of it and a figure engaged in moral reconstitution

through it. Hopkins writes that “Sappho represented the necessary conditions” that activate a determined set of characteristics in John Langley, such as greed, perversity, and sensuality (91, 226). This set of necessary conditions, a kind of biological and affective landscape to which John reacts, however, mimics the relationship between his great-great uncle, the white “cracker” Anson Pollock (221), who attempted to enact “unlawful love” with Grace Montfort (45). John Langley, then, is also a direct product of seduction and rape. Thus, unlike a plot of seduction that would feature the formulaic confrontation between a woman who is innocence personified and a man who is a villain, Hopkins presents seduction as a deeply complex networking, both biologically and literarily, of past and present, of good and bad blood, a confrontation in which neither party is unmarked by the legacy of slavery and miscegenation, and the primary connection, rather than between Langley and Clark, is the connection between Grace Montfort and Sappho Clark.

Conclusion

Sharon P. Holland states that “the racialized body has to become form and therefore fiction to be comprehended, written about, written on.” Ironically, she calls this condition one of the “perpetual individual, neither-nor instead of either-or—your orbit restricted to your condition.”⁴⁶ Hopkins elucidates this very state—the tragic mulatta as form and fiction, perpetually individualized yet perpetually without character. The difference, however, is that Hopkins attempts to engage form, through both literary genre and racialized bodies, as emergent and transfigurative. Form itself is repetitive, but every repetition engages with both expectation and potential emergence and transfiguration. Hopkins shows that the active, cumulative, and collective process of embodiment—along with the active, cumulative, and

collective process of literary development—works in both an accretionary and transfigurative way to affect the evolution of mixed race individuals in post-Reconstruction America. The accumulations of biological and literary traits come to mark not a new configuration of race but a transfiguration of the racial. Together, these techniques, the modeling of both the biological and the literary, not only assist Hopkins in exploring a new Negro identity, but most importantly, a newly naturalized American body, one that is naturalized through literature.

In the final chapter of this project, Octavia Butler's novel *Dawn* also analyzes the emergent and transfigurative, but rather than such emergence being positively generative amongst humans, Butler presents an inter-species hybridization that comes to focus on competing senses of biological determinism that features a dim portrayal of human capacity.

¹Mark Twain, "Pudd'nhead Wilson " *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, ed. Sidney E. Berger (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1980), 114

²I use the word mulatta instead of mulatto reflecting the work of scholars such as Eve Allegra Raimon. Eve Allegra Raimon, *The "Tragic Mulatta" Revisited: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Antislavery Fiction* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004).

³Pauline E. Hopkins, *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South*, The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers, ed. Jr. Henry Louis Gates (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Further page references will appear parenthetically.

⁴Bolter and Grusin use the term "hypermediacy" to describe the "refashion[ing] of older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media." J. David Bolter and Richard A. Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999).

⁵Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (New York: Gramercy Press, 1979), 107.

⁶Claudia Tate, *Domestic Allegories of Political Desire: The Black Heroine's Text at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 6-7.

⁷Ann duCille, *The Coupling Convention: Sex, Text, and Tradition in Black Women's Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). 4, 11. See also Lois Lamphere Brown, "Defensive Posture in *Contending Forces*," *"To Allow No Tragic End": The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, ed. John Cullen Gruesser (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996). Kate McCullough, "Slavery, Sexuality, and Genre: Pauline Hopkins and the Representation of Female Desire," *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, ed. John Cullen Gruesser (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

⁸Edward J. Larson, *Evolution: The Remarkable History of a Scientific Theory*, Chronicles (New York: The Modern Library, 2006), 50.

⁹Larson 51.

¹⁰"Plessy V. Ferguson (1896)". *Landmark Cases: Supreme Court*. Street Law & the Supreme Court Historical Society. 27 March 2011. <<http://www.streetlaw.org/en/Case.4.aspx> >.

¹¹Pauline Hopkins, "Of One Blood, or, the Hidden Self," *The Magazine Novels of Pauline Hopkins*, ed. Henry Louis Gates, The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

¹²Michaels, Walter Benn. *Our America: Nativism, Modernism, and Pluralism*. Post-Contemporary Interventions (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 59.

¹³ Hazel Carby argues that “historically the mulatto, as a narrative figure, has two primary functions: as a vehicle for an exploration of the relationship between the races and, at the same time, an expression of the relationship between the races. The figure of the mulatto should be understood and analyzed as a narrative device of mediation.” Carby’s interpretation will be discussed at length below. Hazel Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹⁴Teresa C. Zackodnik, *The Mulatta and the Politics of Race* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), xi.

¹⁵Beth McCoy discusses these issues by focusing on the role of white masculinity. Beth McCoy, "Rumors of Grace: White Masculinity in Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces*," *African American Review* 37.4 (Winter 2003).

¹⁶David Herman, *Universal Grammar and Narrative Form*, Sound and Meaning. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995). Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

¹⁷Zackodnik. See chapter 3, “Little Romances and Mulatta Heroines: Passing for a ‘True Woman’ in Francis Harper’s *Iola Leroy* and Pauline Hopkins’s *Contending Forces*,” 75-114. As Zackodnik notes, authors such as Hopkins did not simply “[offer] ‘whitened’ African American characters for...approval or consumption.” Instead, such authors “were employing a double-voiced strategy of address that would have appealed rather differently to their white and black readerships” (86). Zackodnik believes that, just as it was possible for some their characters to pass, so also did their novels. Ironically, given what she refers to as “recurrent criticism,” the characters and novels may “have ‘passed’ too well” (86).

¹⁸Gloria T. Randle, "Mates, Marriage, and Motherhood: Feminist Visions in Pauline Hopkins's *Contending Forces*," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 18.2 (Autumn 1999).

¹⁹John Nickel, "Eugenics and the Fiction of Pauline Hopkins," *Evolution and Eugenics in American Literature and Culture, 1880-1940: Essays on Ideological Conflict and Complicity*, eds. Lois A. Cuddy and Claire M. Roche (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003).

²⁰ For the political and rhetorical connections between Pauline Hopkins and W.E.B. DuBois, see, for example, C.K. Doreski, "Inherited Rhetoric and Authentic History: Pauline Hopkins at the *Colored American Magazine*," *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, ed. John Cullen Gruesser (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), Jennie A. Kassanoff, "'Fate Has Linked Us Together': Blood, Gender, and the Politics of Representation in Pauline Hopkins's *One Blood*," *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering*

Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins, ed. John Cullen Gruesser (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), Nellie Y. McKay, "Introduction," *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, ed. John Cullen Gruesser (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), Cynthia D. Schrager, "Pauline Hopkins and William James: The New Psychology and the Politics of Race," *The Unruly Voice: Rediscovering Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, ed. John Cullen Gruesser (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), Ronald M. Johnson, "Away from Accommodation: Radical Editors and Protest Journalism," *Journal of Negro History* 62.4 (October 1977).

²¹Gregory Michael Dorr, *Fighting Fire with Fire: African Americans and Hereditarian Thinking, 1900-1942*. 5 Oct. 2008. <<http://www.wfu.edu/~caron/ssrs/Dorr.rtf>>. 4

²²W.E.B. DuBois, "Conservation of the Races." 16 Feb. 2007. <<http://www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/webdubois/DuBoisNegro-ConservationRaces6x9.pdf>>, 8.

²³DuBois 11.

²⁴Carby 132.

²⁵Carby 132.

²⁶Carby 89.

²⁷Carby 89.

²⁸John Frow, *Genre, The New Critical Idiom*, ed. John Drakakis (New York: Routledge, 2006), 12.

²⁹Lydia Maria Child, *The Quadroons*, ed. Glynis Carr (1997), 27 March 2011. <<http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/gcarr/19cUSWW/LB/Q.html>>. and Lydia Maria Child, *Slavery's Pleasant Homes: A Faithful Sketch*, ed. Glynis Carr (1997), March 9, 2008 <<http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/gcarr/19cUSWW/LB/SPH.html>>.

³⁰Zackodnik. See chapter 2 for the origins of the tragic mulatta figures. Jean Fagan Yellin and Karen Sánchez-Eppler quoted in Zackodnik, 42-3.

³¹Jean Fagan Yellin, *Women and Sisters: The Antislavery Feminists in American Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

³²Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *Modern Genre Theory*, ed. David Duff, Longman Critical Readers (Harlow: Longman, 2000), 224.

³³Malini Johar Schueller, "Performing Whiteness, Performing Blackness: Dorr's Cultural Capital and the Critique of Slavery," *Criticism: a Quarterly for Literature and the Arts* 41.2 (Spring 1999), 236-7.

³⁴Joel Williamson, *New People : Miscegenation and Mulattoes in the United States*, Louisiana paperback ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995). Schueller, "Performing Whiteness, Performing Blackness: Dorr's Cultural Capital and the Critique of Slavery."

³⁵Schueller 236-7.

³⁶For an exploration of Mark Twain's use of both literal and figurative twins, see Chapter 3. of this dissertation. Twain, "*Pudd'nhead Wilson* ." In African American fiction of the period, such concerns are often wrought through direct kinship, the pairing of individuals divided by race but connected by blood. Consider, for example, Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), where the white Olivia Carteret and her mixed race half sister Janet Miller share the same white father and in fact, look dramatically similar. Carteret attempts to suppress knowledge of the connection but becomes physically ill with any chance contact with her sister Janet. Acknowledgement of their kinship only comes at the novel's end and is used to highlight the racism of Carteret and the moral high ground of Miller. Charles Waddell Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York: Penguin Books, 1993).

³⁷Michael Rogin, "Francis Galton and Mark Twain: The Natal Autograph in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture*, eds. Susan Gillman and Forrest G. Robinson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990). Francis Galton, *Finger Prints*, (Macmillan and Co., 1892), February 10, 2007. See also Chapter 3 of this dissertation for the connections between twins, race, and fingerprinting in the Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*.

³⁸Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits Of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 2.

³⁹Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 70-1.

⁴⁰Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 107.

⁴¹Wikipedia Contributors, *Apostles' Creed*, 30 October 2008, Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, 31 October 2008, General Secretary/Chief Information Officer, *About Us--Our Beliefs*, African Methodist Episcopal Church, October 30 2008.

⁴²"In contemplating the positions held by different races in the world in point of intelligence, integrity, the capability of receiving culture and becoming useful members of society, the mind . . . passes from the altitude reached by the Anglo-Saxon to . . . the supposed inferiority

of the Negro, and groping blindly in the darkness that envelops all that pertains to him, seeks for the ray of light in history that reveals the God in man; the divine attribute that must exist in the Negro as well as in other races, or he sinks to the level of the brute creation. In the history of this island - the sole possession of the Negro race in America - we find what we seek: the point of interest for all Negroes, . . . for all students of the black race. The voice of history is the voice of God." Pauline E. Hopkins, "Toussaint L' Ouverture," *Daughter of the Revolution: The Major Nonfiction Works of Pauline E. Hopkins*, ed. Ira Dworkin (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2007). 12. See also James G. Thompson and *In God of the Oppressed* who states "Liberation as the fight for justice in this world has always been an important ingredient in black religion. Indeed black religion's existence as another reality, completely different from white religion, is partly related to its grounding of black faith in the historical struggle of freedom." Quoted in Martha H. Patterson, "'Kin' O' Rough Jestice Fer a Parson": Pauline Hopkins's Winona and the Politics of Reconstructing History," *African American Review* 32.3 (Autumn 1998).

⁴³Deleuze 70-1.

⁴⁴Hopkins, "Toussaint L' Ouverture." Derrida, 224.

⁴⁵Greeson also relies on the work of Leslie Fiedler in her account of the role of seduction in American fiction. She states that "Fiedler provides a classic account of the way that 'the sentimental tale of seduction ... adopted from European prototype ... [profoundly] influenced American fiction' (217): 'the archetypal act of seduction' 'in its mythological form' dramatizes a wide-scale process of social modernization as a struggle between two individuals, one of whom represents the 'aristocratic' past and the other of whom represents the 'bourgeois (national-industrial) future' (69). Jennifer Rae Greason, "'Ruse It Well': Reading, Power, and the Seduction Plot in the Curse of Caste" *African American Review* 40.4.Winter (2006). 770. Fiedler quoted in note 1, page 777. Leslie Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel* (Normal: Dalkey Archive Press, 1997).

⁴⁶Holland, Sharon P. "When Characters Lack Character: A Biomythography." *PMLA* 123.5 (2008), 1496-7.

Chapter 5

Fingerprinting to Genomics: Technicity and the Assembled Practices of Adaptation

In “Biocultures Manifesto,” the introductory essay in the 2007 special issue of *New Literary History*, Lennard J. Davis and David Morris state that the manifesto is “a proposal [that] culture and history must be rethought with an understanding of their inextricable, if highly variable, relation to biology.”¹ The term they choose to describe this relationship is “biocultures.” They argue that biology often serves as both a “metaphor for science” while also describing the intrinsic state of readers and writers, of ourselves as actors within a global understanding of biology, history, and culture. As they observe

To think of science without including an historical and cultural analysis would be like thinking of the literary text without the surrounding and embedding weave of discursive knowledges active or dormant at particular moments. It is similarly limited to think of literature—or to engage in debate concerning its properties or existence—without considering the network of meanings we might learn from a scientific perspective.²

Biocultures works for Davis and Morris not only as a call to include a scientific perspective (and actual science) in literary criticism but also as an organizing disciplinary metaphor. But missing from their analysis and their disciplinary desires is a questioning of what is really at stake for literary criticism. Is it true that biology is the most potent “metaphor for science”?

Donna Haraway, in *The Companion Species Manifesto*, approaches such issues through dog/human relationships that she describes as “a story of co-habitation, co-evolution, and embodied cross-species sociality;” her analysis, however, bears an analytical power that extends beyond what she refers to as “dogland” (46). For Haraway, dogs and humans are “training each other in acts of communication [they] barely understand” (2). Co-constitutionality is the key to this kind of training along with an understanding of “co-habiting an active history” (20).

Co-constitutionality and the notion of “co-habiting an active history” are important in analyzing the connections between technology, biology, and training. One way to explore these relations is through “cultural memory.” Marita Sturken, for example, uses the term to “define memory that is shared outside the avenues of formal historical discourse yet is entangled with cultural products and imbued with cultural meaning”(3). Marianne Hirsch, in her work on “testimonial objects,” refers to cultural memory through the work of Aleida Assman who divides memory into communicative memory (which includes the memories of individuals and families) and cultural memory (which includes national and political configurations along with, most importantly for this chapter, archival configurations of memory).³ I ask, however, what happens when the cultural becomes the communicative, when individual memory, along with processes of identification, emerges out of the archival? The historian Pierre Nora observes that “Modern memory is...archival...a gigantic and breathtaking effort to store the material vestiges of what we cannot possibly remember” (8). Such vestiges have come to include the immense scales of physiological and technological mapping, databases and gene scanning that store and encode information referring to

inheritance, biogeographical identity; and the vast scale of human origin and global migration.

The archival impact on cultural memory, however, is not a new theme in literary texts, and contemporary technological processes do not necessarily bear more analytic weight in assessing the co-constitutionality of identification and technology than during earlier eras. While I consider, in this chapter, the more contemporary relevance of my research through an analysis of the work of Octavia Butler's 1987 novel *Dawn*,⁴ it is in order to demonstrate the potential theoretical range of this project. While Mark Twain, in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* for instance, seats his critique within slavery, Butler's work portends the genomics revolution of the 1990s through notions of DNA manipulation and gene trading.⁵ Both works, however, effectively conceptualize notions of human biologicals, genomic capital, biocolonialism, and the technologies necessary to support these paradigms. Additionally, an analysis of *Dawn* is useful for reflecting upon the range of effects authors such as William Wells Brown and Pauline E. Hopkins initiated through their use of the materiality of genre itself, incorporating literature, region and repetition as a cumulative collection of information reflecting the social and cultural development of humans.

My project, then, moves toward a broader conceptual engagement with what I refer to as technicity. Though the term arises out of a philosophical history that stretches back to Plato and Aristotle, my project is less concerned with tracing the philosophical history and more interested in Arthur Bradley and Louis Armand's challenge to consider what work the term technicity allows us to do now.⁶ Technicity has been used to describe the instrumentality of the things we use, or alternately, as Carol J. Steiner suggests, the term describes "a 'technicity paradigm' which values objectivity, generalisability and rationality."⁷

Bradley and Armand suggest that “technicity names something which can no longer be seen as just a series of prostheses or technical artefacts (sic);” instead, it is “the basic and enabling condition of our life-world” (3).

But what do all of these definitions infer? How do ideas concerning the instrumentality of things, rational states, and enabling conditions contribute to the definition of a term that I argue suggests both a human state and a relationship to technology or the technological? I would first suggest that technicity neither describes a technological exterior nor does it necessarily imply a movement toward the post-human.⁸ Instead, technicity concerns the continuing emergence and co-constitutionality of human identity in relation to technology and information. I say informational rather than biological, because how we understand ourselves as biological, technical, racial, ethnic, or gendered individuals, emerges from our position relative to the acquisition, control, and ownership of knowledge. In turn, the accumulation and dispersal of knowledge, especially within the period that my dissertation covers, is increasingly, and more self-consciously, technological. And finally, how technicity is related to the dispersal and accumulation of knowledge circles round to reflect upon the assembled practices of cultural and biological adaptation over time. Technology is organized information. How we organize (especially, in terms of my project, how we organize through technologies of storing from genres to fingerprinting to DNA) is as important as what we know and is also (and now we can reflect back on what Bradley and Armand might mean) the “enabling condition” of who we are.

The range of concerns noted above are particularly important in light of how Darwinism and other forms of evolutionary theory introduce a problem in the nineteenth century that we are still working through—labile human essence and the resulting breakdown

of the line between humans and animals. Of note, however, is that along with new theories of evolution in the nineteenth century, come new forms of “informational practices” that contribute to what Phillip Thurtle refers to as “genetic rationality.”⁹ If evolutionary theory breaks down the line between humans and animals, the monumental informational and technological shifts that accompany evolutionary and genetic research breaks down the line between humans and things: such shifts come to affect notions of adaptation as knowledge takes on new material and technological forms especially in terms of technologies for storing information. Thurtle describes how inventions and innovations as mundane as file cabinets, the organization of labor and time through middle managers, and the use of abstract notation allow for larger tracts and fields of information to be catalogued and engaged with ushering in advancements in genetic research. Of further note, however, is that the ability to technologically organize increasingly vast amounts of information constitutes much of how we have come to relate to the changing status of what counts as human essence itself. From genre development to fingerprinting to genetic engineering and even DNA itself, it is really the ability to control information concerning identity over time that comes to matter to the authors I work with in this project. The authors, then, move through questions of individuality and race, gender and group, and finally from ethnicity to technicity, the manner in which the dynamic interweaving of human essence and scientific and technological innovation affects the control and ownership of knowledge, in fact becomes the form that knowledge takes. Bradley and Armand ask, whether it is “possible to articulate an ‘originary’ technicity that is both fundamentally material and yet inseparable from thought, being or language itself? To what extent is technicity *thinkable* at all?”¹⁰ As a final coda to my project, I argue that the work of Octavia Butler in *Dawn* engages with just such concerns: for

Butler, technicity becomes “*thinkable*” because the scale of interpretation—in spite of its contextualization within late twentieth-century developments in gene mapping, scanning, and database storage—transfers the power of the control of information and the archive into the body itself, deftly striking at the dynamic interweaving of essence and ownership, of the accumulation and dispersal of knowledge and identity, of technicity.

Human Genomics—Function and Structure, Traits and Technologies

In the 1987 novel *Dawn*, a large number of humans are rescued from Earth following a nuclear war. They are rescued by an alien race called the Oankali, which translates into English as “gene trader” (39). They are a three-gendered species (female, male, and neuter) who have been watching humans even before the nuclear event. They intend to interbreed with humans to create the next evolutionary formation of their species. The interbreeding, rather than occurring, as it might for humans, through external forms of technology such as genetic manipulation through in vitro fertilization, is a physiological process within the Oankali themselves, specifically within the third gender of the ooloi. Even more controversial is that the genetic mixing performed by the ooloi to create human/Oankali constructs, often occurs by using material such as sperm that the ooloi collect during sexual encounters between humans and Oankali. The ooloi stand in, in a sense, for what humans think of as scientists or genetic engineers, but the ooloi’s passion for humans (sexual and scientific) exceeds this: for the Oankali, technological development and acquisitional urges have evolved into biological urges through which all desire—personal, scientific, technological—centers upon the acquisition of life itself.

Since much of the novel concerns the notion of interbreeding through genetic engineering and the creation of hybrid creatures who will represent the next rendition of Oankali evolution, it might seem as if an explication of how DNA actually functions would be helpful in clarifying Octavia Butler's investment in the Oankali talent for genetic engineering. Instead, I argue that the key historical and cultural events that effect authors such as Octavia Butler come about through a continuing interest in biological determinism arising out of animal studies and their extrapolation onto human behavior, the wave of technological developments in molecular biology, and the rising trade in genetic information.

Robert Cook-Deegan, in his book *The Gene Wars: Science, Politics, and the Human Genome*, states that an analysis of the development of the Human Genome Project (HGP) requires an exploration of "two kinds of history: the technological advances that predated the project and the events that followed."¹¹ In other words, human genetic research, and the advent of the HGP, is as much a narrative about how technological innovation shapes culture and politics as it is about how genetic research is actually done. Cook-Deegan's text in many ways reflects the methodology of Phillip Thurtle and his formulation of "genetic rationality" from the late nineteenth century forward: it is not the intricacies of genetic research itself that necessarily form the foundation of how "genetic rationality" develops out of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century. Instead, Thurtle documents the broad shifts in the management of information as foundational to the development of a broad form of rationality and technological innovation that ushers in the age of genetics, in fact, ushers in a new relationship to rationality and information for everyone. Cook-Deegan notes a similar trajectory in the mid- to late-twentieth century through the manner in which the HGP comes into being. In addition to the cumulative effects that drive the "technological vision" (11) of

the HGP forward on a political, corporate, and cultural tide that comes, over the twentieth century, to dominate society's views on what "big science" makes possible, molecular biology's cascading effects dominate the discourse of population biology which comes to shape sociobiology. By the late 1980s, dramatic discoveries concerning the genetic source of diseases such as cystic fibrosis and Huntington's disease run parallel to the controversies surrounding the burgeoning field of sociobiology.¹²

Gregor Mendel's research on peas and other plants, which theorized that traits were inherited from each parent plant, was published in 1865 and chromosomes were first observed within cells in 1877, but it is not until the early twentieth century that these findings begin to coalesce into what becomes known as the field of genetics, and it is not until the 1920s and 1930s that the connection between inheritance and genetic mutation comes to inform how natural selection might work within theories of evolution. Though some forms of human gene mapping begin as early as 1911, most of the work concerning humans is in some ways a continuation of the search for traits that originated in nineteenth-century science and has had such a socio-cultural grip on the general public concerning inheritance and notions of socio-cultural progress.¹³

In the 1940s, however, molecular biology begins to transform not just genetics, but as Cook-Deegan notes, "[invades] field after field, applying increasingly powerful tools to questions of greater complexity" (32). He notes that molecular biology's "distinctive signature...was to understand function through molecular structure" (32). By the 1960s, population biologist Richard C. Lowentin states that the

Some of the most fundamental and interesting problems of biology have been solved or are very nearly solved by an analytic technique that is now loosely called

‘molecular biology.’ But it is not specifically the ‘molecular’ aspect of the biology of the last twenty years that has led to its success. It is, rather, the analytic aspect, the belief that by breaking systems down into their component parts, by simplifying them or using simpler organisms, one can learn about more complex systems. As it happens, the problems that were attacked and are being attacked by this method lead to answers in terms of molecules and cell organelles.¹⁴

Lowentin sees the methodology of reducing vast amounts of research to the level of “molecules and organelles” as particularly damaging to the reputation of his field:

“Unfortunately, both populations biologists and cellular and molecular biologist have become confused about the differences between their modes of thought. It is *not* the case that molecular biology is Cartesian and analytic while population biology is holistic.”¹⁵

This notion of researching complex systems by breaking them down into simpler components worked well in a number of ways. Since the 1940s and 1950s, the field of ethology has developed sets of research questions that have profoundly affected the study of animal behavior. Niko Tinbergen’s “why-questions” concerning what he calls the proximate mechanisms of causation and development and the ultimate mechanisms of evolution and function (adaptiveness), add a clearer depth of evolutionary analysis to the study of animals.¹⁶ Later in the twentieth century, however, such analyses become controversial when new disciplinary fields attempt to extrapolate such research onto human behavior through genetics. As Cook-Deegan notes, the profound technological effects arising out of molecular genetics “continued to shift conceptual foundations of biology and medicine toward the study of DNA.”¹⁷

An example of the effects of the extrapolation of genetically informed research onto other disciplines is the development of the field of sociobiology. Edward O. Wilson, who published *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* in 1975 and is one of the founding scholars of this controversial field, defines sociobiology as the “systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior,” or, as he states in *Human Nature*, sociobiology is the “extension of population biology and evolutionary theory to social organization.”¹⁸ Though Wilson and others claim to only be describing behavior, critics claim that the field is prescriptive as well descriptive.

George W. Barlow traces the roots of the controversies concerning sociobiology as far back as the critique of Darwin, after the publication of *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animal* (1871), “because of the inference that even the moral sensitivities of humans resulted from organic evolution.”¹⁹ Barlow states that there was a particular divide that developed between practitioners of the new field of ethology and North American experimental psychologists who were devoted to exploring the behavior of humans to the exclusion of all other animals. Barlow believes that much of the argumentation between these fields later comes to infect the controversies regarding biological determinism in the field of sociobiology.

My main point in delineating this history is that these debates were often fought out in mainstream publications in addition to the formation of groups such as the *Sociobiology Study Group* in the 1970s. Additionally, though Wilson seems to have taken an unfair amount of direct personal criticism that should have more broadly focused on a variety of works, rather than just *Sociobiology*, he did speculate on the connections between genes and complex social behavior and also suggested that sociobiology would come to replace many

of the social sciences.²⁰ Such speculative notions from a well-known scientist, along with the virulent public critique, did affect public discourse and many disciplines. As Anne Fausto-Sterling notes, the field of sociobiology “distinguished itself by a relatively unrelenting focus on questions relating to reproduction, including an abiding and very Darwinian concern with sexual dimorphism” and an assumption that “even complex behaviors probably respond to selection as if the traits in question resulted from the actions of a simple set of alleles.”²¹

The mapping of the human genome, the articulation of complex behaviors as arising from biological and genetic roots, and an “unrelenting focus on questions relating to reproduction” are all very much a part of the narrative within *Dawn*. There is an additional development during this period, however, that I argue is a concern within Butler’s novel and figures across the other works in my dissertation. The surge in biotechnology in the period following World War II affects all collected biological materials, old and new, as they become newly instrumentalized because of technological breakthroughs in gene mapping, scanning, and database development.²² Cases such as those involving the cervical cancer cells taken from Henrietta Lacks in the 1950s and the cells from John Moore’s spleen in the 1970s involve what Kaushik Rajan refers to as human biologicals, the growth of genomic capital through the development of human cell lines in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Biological materials taken from both Lacks and Moore were developed, without their consent, into the HeLa and Mo cell lines. Each cell line has been reproduced countless times and sold for use in untold numbers of international research projects.²³

The use of human biologicals and concerns over consent, capital, and identity are not new issues. For example, Mark Twain’s use of fingerprints in *Pudd’nhead Wilson* is an early instance of a biological archive. Moreover, the technological identification of Tom Driscoll

as a specific human is the very event that leads to his devolution, to his reduction from that of a subject to a saleable piece of inventory (115). Octavia Butler's novel *Dawn* exhibits similar concerns. The distance between the novels, then, is not a factor of time in the sense of a narrative of technological progress, the nineteenth versus the twentieth century. Instead, time serves, first, as a notation of when the different sites of biological access were developed. Secondly, the comparison of the novels reveals that from the era of slavery to the era of human genomics, the technicity that organizes biological and technological identification, classification, and marketability for individuals and groups of humans, relies on similar notions of gender, race, and reproduction. The technologies of fingerprinting in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and genetic engineering in *Dawn* do not simply mediate between bodies, biological archives, and the associated technologies; they importantly highlight that the technicity of narrative is inseparable from bodies, biological archives, and technologies. Just as technicity is not a paradigm lateral to biocultures, neither is narrative lateral to technicity. Technicity, as with other cultural and technological relationality, includes technologies of narrative, and technologies of narrative come to include the varieties of archival and print culture discussed in Chapter 2 of this project, concerning Mark Twain's novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, and the work of this present chapter on Octavia Butler's novel *Dawn*.

Biological Determinism and the Control of Information

Walter Benn Michaels suggests the following about the cultural and biological crux often posited in science fiction:

Perhaps we could say that in science fiction the choice between imagining aliens as physically different from humans and imagining them as culturally different from

humans should be understood as a choice between ways of imagining not the difference between humans and aliens but the difference between humans. To insist that the difference between humans and aliens is physical is to insist on the insignificance of differences between humans; to insist that the difference between humans and aliens is cultural is to insist on the importance of differences between humans.²⁴

Butler, however, challenges the basic divisions that Michaels suggests between physical and cultural differences in science fiction by insisting that culture too is physical, and that what exists between Oankalis and humans are two competing systems of biological determinism.

The form of determinism that most concerns the Oankali is what they believe to be the biological, and thus the genetic, capacity of humans to be morally or ethically responsible. The Oankali, as rigidly as any alarming model of a sociobiologist, repeatedly drive home the point that humans are “fatally flawed” (36). The Oankali ooloi (the third gender) have mapped and stored the entire human genome, and from this mapping, and the observation of humans over the two hundred and fifty years since the nuclear war, have, with complete confidence, come to a final judgment concerning humankind. Describing the connections between genes and complex social behavior, Jdahya, the Oankali male who will soon be one of Lilith’s mates, explains to her that humans

have a mismatched pair of genetic characteristics. Either alone would have been useful, would have aided the survival of your species. But the two together are lethal. It was only a matter of time before they destroyed you... You are potentially one of the most intelligent species we’ve found... [and you] are hierarchical... When human intelligence served it instead of guiding it, when human intelligence did not even

acknowledge it as a problem, but took pride in it or did not notice it at all...I think your people did not realize what a dangerous thing they were doing. (36-7)

The Oankali extend this interpretation of the “fatally flawed” condition of humans to include all human artifacts. The manipulation of human DNA for breeding, then, is not sufficient: the Oankali will return humans to an Earth stripped of all humanly constructed materiality. The Oankali coerce humans (though they do not consider it coercion) into accepting their form of culture, which consists of intense biological bonding that shapes the novel form of family, sexual pleasure, and reproduction between the two species. Humans, however, can only focus on the loss of themselves as a species and the loss of their culture. When Lilith, the African American woman that the Oankali choose to “awaken” and train the first group of survivors who will return to Earth, discovers that the Oankali purposely wiped out nearly all human artifacts from the Earth, she says ““You destroyed what wasn’t yours...You completed an insane act”” (32-3). In response to the destruction of human culture that Lilith finds so grossly insensitive that she compares it to the nuclear holocaust, Jdahya responds, “You’ll begin again...in areas that are clean of radioactivity and history” (32).

The pairing of the words “radioactivity” and “history” in this final sentence suggests the depth of Oankali conviction concerning the genetically compromised status of the human species. Humans themselves, however, find little in their own behavior, post-nuclear apocalypse, to counter what the Oankali forward as fact. The first adult human that Lilith is allowed to visit is Paul Titus. Titus is an adult now but was fourteen years old when rescued from Earth. Lilith’s first response to being left alone in a room with a man is caution that soon turns to fear. Her fear is justified when she resists his sexual advances and he attempts

to rape her and then violently beats her: “They said I could do it with you. They said you could stay here if you wanted to. And you had to go and mess it up! He kicked her hard. The last sound she heard before she lost consciousness was his ragged, shouting curse.” (82-94) When Lilith is left with the task of awakening and training the first group of humans who will return to Earth with the Oankali, she finds that she is “afraid of her own people and afraid for them” (118). Many of the humans live up to her deepest fears. Just as with Paul Titus, the awakened humans, especially the men, try to dominate and become violent.

The Oankali themselves, however, are a deeply biologically determined species. Though they initiate each of their evolutionary phases, the planning of the phases is rigidly controlled. There are three groups for each evolutionary shift—Toaht who stay with the ship; Dinso who interbreed with the newly selected species; and Akjai, the new Oankali constructs who will eventually leave on a new ship many generations into the future. Most interesting, however, is the fact that these levels of control, and acquisition of life itself, is a biological and genetic imperative. Jdahya states

We’re not hierarchical, you see. We never were. But we are powerfully acquisitive.

We acquire new life—seek it, investigate it, manipulate it, sort it, use it. We carry the drive to do this in a minuscule cell within a cell—a tiny organelle within every cell of our bodies...One of the meanings of Oankali is gene trader. Another is that organelle—the essence of ourselves, the origin of ourselves. (39)

In other words, the Oankali have a cellular organ with a function that specifically regulates their evolutionary drive and, thus, their behavior.

What counts as essence for the Oankali, then, is not the qualities of physical appearance and cultural accumulation that so consume humans. Essence is an actual

organelle that functions as archive and memory, as a technology that enhances and develops their skills as genetic engineers, and most importantly, strictly organizes information and controls access to knowledge. The emergence of the species no longer concerns co-constitutionality; instead, technicity is, constitutionally, who they are. There is no longer a position in which to act relative to the acquisition, control, ownership, and reproduction of knowledge—the Oankali are the organelle and their biological emergence is informed by that drive.

Becoming technicity is, I argue, at the heart of where the concerns of this novel lie. Butler writes *Dawn* during an era in which biological function and structure meet with the technology of molecular biology and deeply influence the extrapolation of evolutionary and animal studies onto human behavior; she writes as the Human Genome Project is in ascendance, and as, internationally, DNA sequencing machines run continuously at both private and public institutions. Kaushik Rajan suggests that this period changes our relationship to words such as “‘life,’ ‘capital,’ ‘fact,’ ‘exchange,’ and ‘value’” as the life sciences increasingly become information sciences.²⁵ Octavia Butler deftly brings these qualities to bear on the very structure of biological and social life through the Oankali figure of the ooloi.

The Gender of Science

In my earlier chapter on Mark Twain and his 1894 novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, David Wilson states that each human's fingerprint is “his physiological autograph” “by which he can always be identified—and that without shade of doubt or question” (108). But *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is not a novel that is simply concerned with the technological capacity

for identification; instead the novel is concerned with how that capacity emerges out of a crisis of visualization in terms of race and identity. As visualization fails (in terms of racial categorization), and technologies that capture notions of the internalization and the biologicalization of identification emerge, the lone person who controls the archive (the expert, the researcher, the collector, the scientist) becomes a more organized and coherent figure. David Wilson, purposely sketched out as the odd, ironic loner, the “pudd’nhead” who barely has work or friends, who stays in Dawson’s Landing for twenty years without marrying, is such a figure.

Though Wilson appears to collect “finger-marks” avocationally, asking the people of Dawson’s Landing to “pass their hands through their hair...and then make a thumb-mark on a glass strip,” he refers to the collection of “finger-marks” as his ““records”” (7). The collection seems to serve no purpose, the formation of an archive prior to any public instrumentality. For Wilson, however, there is a rational aesthetic pleasure in the acquisition of multiple samples, the growth of the archive, and careful study even prior to a kind of public instrumentality. He is compelled to collect. There is even a quality of sensuality and mystery as Wilson “often studied his records, examining and poring over them with absorbing interest until far into the night” (7). Of note is how the pleasure of the prints, the mystery of the lines of the thumb, are as potent for Wilson as any observation of actual human interaction.

As the archive of fingerprints is instrumentalized by Wilson in order to solve a murder, as the prints are not only brought into the courtroom but displayed as “pantograph enlargements” scrutinized by the jury and courtroom audience, he quite sensationally affects how the observers of the trial will thereafter view a portion of their anatomy (105). The

pantographs, even more than the original fingerprints themselves, demonstrate how such archives exist as both continuous and discontinuous with the bodies from which the materials originate.²⁶ The fingerprints do represent the men Wilson claims they belong to, and even contain hair oil and skin cells from across the lives of the two men. But what counts in the end is that the prints are collected, stored, analyzed, and controlled by just one person, David Wilson, who as the white, male lawyer and the steward of the archive of fingerprints, has the racial, rational, legal, and gendered power to shape the technology and narrative in a particular manner.

Wilson's role reflects Phillip Thurtle's understanding of how people in the late nineteenth century develop new associations to "informational practices" and the resulting paradigm of "genetic rationality" that arises from innovations in both the understanding and organization of more vast amounts of information.²⁷ I argue that Octavia Butler publishes *Dawn* in an era similarly involved with technological and informational shifts. In Butler's novel, it is the ooloi, the third gender of the Oankali, neither male nor female, that makes for an interesting comparison with figures such as Wilson. In a reflection of her era, the type of control exerted over information and reproduction moves from a single person to a single gender. Additionally, technology concerning information and reproduction becomes completely biological and is functionally enshrined within the ooloi.

The ooloi are described as particularly alien to humans. With the "sea-slug" appearance of their tentacles (24) along with the two larger "sensory arms" of "cool, hard flesh" (159), humans express disgust and terror when confronted with these beings. In spite of these alien qualities, however, I argue that the ooloi are as understandably human, if more invoking of fear, as David Wilson. Twain introduces Wilson as an outsider welcomed into

the community once the value of his collection and “records” are acknowledged (7). What is proven in the court case that Wilson wins through the forensics of fingerprinting is not, however, simply who committed murder. The uniqueness of the fingerprint, and its role as both the site and the development of a technology that specifically identifies particular humans, is also the medium by which a person is stripped of individuality and even personhood as seen when Tom Driscoll, the murderer, is demoted from white heir to slave to “erroneous inventory” (115). Thus, the technological organization of information in *Pudd’nhead Wilson* takes on the traits of the social organization of race.

The difference between a figure such as David Wilson and the ooloi in *Dawn* is, first, of course, the period of reference. The Oankali “trade” in organic human materials parallels what Kaushik Rajan refers to as human biologicals, the development of human cell lines in the twentieth and twenty-first century.²⁸ The development of human cell lines may seem distantly related to Twain’s use of fingerprints; the distance, however, reflects when the sites of technological and biological access were developed and not the paradigm of categorization behind each effort. In other words, the desires that organize biological and technological identification, classification, and marketability, from the era of slavery to the era of human genomics, often rely on similar notions of reproduction— notions that work against what Sarah Franklin refers to as the “unexpected liveliness of the [biological] objects themselves.”²⁹

As if to emphasize just such parallels, Butler introduces a system of prints constructed by the Oankali that are organized around a number of representational and technological practices that suggest a relationship to nineteenth to late twentieth-century technologies of

identification and memory. The prints, in a fashion reminiscent of Twain's work with fingerprinting, intermediate between memory and genealogy, biology and identity.³⁰

The Instrumentalization of Prints

When Lilith Iyapo prepares to awaken the first group of humans on the Oankali ship, she examines a series of pictures of them:

The pictures looked alive enough to speak. In each one, there was nothing except the head and shoulders of the subject against a gray background. None of them had that blank, wanted-poster look that snapshots could have produced. These pictures had a lot to say even to non-Oankali observers about who their subjects were—or who the Oankali thought they were. (125)

The subjects of these pictures do not know that such images were produced, and though Lilith states that each picture “looked like, even felt like photos,” they are instead defined as “paintings,” drawn by the Oankali with their own body fluids, and “contained print memories of their subjects” (125). The prints, then, are not simply a mimicry of biological reproduction now materialized archivally. The archive itself, even in the form of a print, is organic and a potential actor in this interspecies drama. The prints exist as the central acquisitory object and resource for the Oankali but also as a form of their obsession and sexual desire—a kind of metaphorical pornography of sex and reproduction that resides specifically in the ooloi and creates a deep sense of dread in the humans.

Lilith's violent interaction with Paul Titus, his paranoid interpretations of Oankali technology along with his attempted rape of Lilith, highlight how Oankali sex and reproduction come to be viewed by humans:

They took stuff from men and women who didn't even know each other and put it together and made babies...Or maybe they use one of their prints—and don't ask me what a print is. But if they've got one of you, they can use it to make another you even if you've been dead for a hundred years and they haven't got anything at all left of your body returned to it. (93)

Nikanj, Lilith's ooloi, confirms Paul's information saying that the "Toaht desperately need more of your kind to make a true trade...The Toaht have a print of you—of every human we brought on board" (97). When Lilith objects, Nikanj replies:

What we've preserved of you isn't living tissue. It's memory. A gene map, your people might call it—though they couldn't have made one like those we remember and use. It's more like what they would call a mental blueprint. A plan for the assembly of one specific human being: You. A tool for reconstruction." (97)

Crucially, however, the existence of the prints reconfigures exactly what memory comes to entail. Paul Titus, though violent and paranoid, is correct when he states "don't ask me what a print is" (92). The prints deepen the conflict of just what counts as human in the novel because the prints represent, similar to David Wilson's collection of "finger-marks," an actual person, but how that representation is instrumentalized in the future is distinct from individual identity or even speciation. For the humans in the novel, there is no satisfactory account of how the biological materials will be used, and the utilization of the prints, even at this point, lies completely outside of most human's conception of reproduction.³¹

Print technology is simply one of the methods of reproduction that the Oankali use that come to trouble Lilith as she attempts to understand the full ramifications of Oankali reproduction and what her effective position (along with other humans) to reproduction will

be. As I mentioned earlier, all Oankali contain in their cells an organelle that carries the acquisitive drive for life that defines the essence of the Oankali as a species. Additionally, the ooloi store and process genetic and biological material within themselves and can then make biological and genetic changes in others. Nikanj, for example, has “sampled” Lilith a number of times, and such “sampling” has allowed it to make a number of changes to her body such as memory enhancement, added strength, and the ability to heal more quickly (56). After making the first enhancement, which gives Lilith eidetic memory, she learns, however, that the changes made by Nikanj leave “a mark,” a chemical bond that, unbeknownst to Lilith, now makes Nikanj her future mate (109). The ooloi sequence and map genomes, store biological materials, act as both database and personal memory bank, and in a twist that is simultaneously as radical as it is conservative, Butler incorporates the ooloi—the geneticist, engineer, physician, and researcher—into the most intimate structures of family and kinship. The ooloi, the third gender of the Oankali species, participate fully in acts of sexual reproduction—and obsessive desire—but they also profess complete objectivity and complete genetic control of reproduction. As with Twain’s expert and archive, there are elements of desire and pleasure, containment, classification, and control. In the world that Butler has constructed, however, these elements are completely biologized.

The transfer of these elements that arise out of the late nineteenth century and develop across the twentieth century, even though based on an alien gender’s obsession with humans, remain entwined within the practices of obtaining information and the practices of sexual reproduction. As Jdahya tells Lilith, “Your bodies are fatally flawed. The ooloi perceived this at once. At first it was very hard for them to touch you. Then you became an obsession with them. Now it’s hard for them to let you alone” (36). Later in the novel Joseph, Lilith’s first

human sexual partner says, “You don’t need us!...You’ve created your own human beings, poor bastards. Make them your partners.” In reply, Nikanj says, “We...do need you...A partner must be biologically interesting, attractive to us, and you are fascinating. You are horror and beauty in rare combination. In a very real way, you’ve captured us, and we can’t escape” (154). Even as they admit immense attraction, the attraction seems grounded first in biology and information, in the mapping of humans and the consideration of how the evolutionary shift should move forward. Secondly, these informational practices seem to produce an inordinate sexual attraction through chemical bonding which provides for an easy accommodation of the human within Oankali family and kinship groupings.

But why does this expression of human/alien bonding in which the ooloi, advanced evolutionary and genetic engineers, seem to matter? What, finally, do I understand as one of the most important critical impressions this text forwards? I argue that there are two final points concerning the relevancy of Butler’s novel in the 1980s and 1990s: the first point concerns the overall primacy of the gene and its effect on family, sexual reproduction, and the evolutionary importance of pleasure in this novel. Secondly, how the techniques of reproduction finally come to reflect upon contemporary formations of reproduction and cloning.

Gene Primacy

In 1978, in the first edition of his book *The Selfish Gene*, Richard Dawkins states that the argument of [*The Selfish Gene*] is that we, and all other animals, are machines created by our genes...our genes have survived, in some cases for millions of years, in a

highly competitive world. This entitles us to expect certain qualities in our genes. I shall argue that a predominant quality to be expected in a successful gene is ruthless selfishness. This gene selfishness will usually give rise to selfishness in individual behavior. However, as we shall see, there are special circumstances in which a gene can achieve its own selfish goals best by fostering a limited form of altruism at the level of individual animals.”³²

In many ways, the idea of the selfish gene dominates Butler’s work, particularly in reference to “fatally flawed” humans (36). All that humans managed to accomplish on Earth was its utter destruction with all of their intelligence and technological innovation feeding into hierarchy in a manner that the Oankali believe could never have done anything but finally destroy them. And no matter what configuration of humans Lilith awakens and trains, or how she works to structure the dynamics of the group, humans continue to only live up to the deterministic set of behaviors that the Oankali say are genetically inscribed and these behaviors include racism, sexism, and violence against women. In other words, both consciously and genetically, humans fail Lilith, as they also failed her on Earth by engaging in nuclear warfare and self-annihilation.

But in arguing for the final primacy of the gene in this text, the Oankali, in many ways, fare no better as an example of genetic determinism than humans. With their dual obsessions involving human genomics and sexual desire, they offer a sense of biological egalitarianism stripped of most forms of cultural expression. Sexual activity is not directly physical; it is a form of “[n]eural stimulation” intermediated by the ooloi, and once humans are secured as mates in a family, they can no longer touch each other (169). While this

method of sex and reproduction is the standard method for the Oankali, the loss, for humans, of the ability to touch those with whom they are intimate is a huge loss. As Lilith states:

An ooloi needed a male and female pair to be able to play its part in reproduction, but it neither needed nor wanted two-way contact between that male and female. Oankali males and females never touched each other sexually. That worked fine for them. It could not possibly work for human beings.” (220)

Humans are even more disturbed by the notion that the Oankali know more (or believe they do) about what humans want sexually than humans know about themselves. Thus, when humans resist Oankali sexual advances, ooloi such as Nikanj consistently repeat a mantra that no really means yes:

[Joseph] pulled his arm free. “You said I could choose. I’ve made my choice.”

“You have, yes.” It opened his jacket with its many-fingered true hands and stripped the garment from him. When he would have backed away, it held him. It managed to lie down on the bed with him without seeming to force him down. “You see. Your body has made a different choice.”

He struggled violently for several seconds, then stopped. “Why are you doing this?” he demanded. (189).

The Oankali, at heart, do not care. Or rather, cannot care. Though they claim to “revere life” and human “cultures” (153-54), their interest in essence and origin remains confined to themselves. The concept of consent, most especially in regards to their evolutionary drive, is meaningless as their acquisitory drive and chemically-bound families are all that matter.

In Mark Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, fingerprinting, in the end, consolidates whiteness, even as the novel reveals the biological impossibility and cultural fragility of

categorizations of race. The Oankali interest in essence and origin is, likewise, confined to themselves. No matter how genetically mixed human and Oankali become, the next evolutionary configuration will still be Oankali. In a kind of reversal of the one-drop racial configuration of Twain's era, any construct of human and Oankali will include the organelle in each cell. Humanity itself will be primarily outside of the scope of Oankali concern. The Oankali utility of pleasure combined with genetic control becomes what Sarah Franklin might refer to as "the embodiment of a technique" where acquisition and trade replace (and the chemical bonding and genetic engineering of family and kinship breeds out) the affect of hierarchy, if not, essentially, hierarchy itself.

What *Dawn* explores are competing sets of biological determinism that define the technicity inherent in each species. Broadly speaking, it may appear as if the technological ordering of the Oankali body represents biology in control versus the relationship of the human to technology, which represents biology out of control.³³ Perhaps what the novel really asks us to consider is how our relationship to technology reflects upon the assembled practices of cultural and biological adaptation over time. Technology is organized information and how we organize comes to be not only as important as what we know but is also be the "enabling condition" of who we are.

¹Lennard J. Davis and David B. Morris, "Biocultures Manifesto" (*New Literary History* 38, 2007).

²Davis and Morris 411.

³Hirsch, Marianne. "Testimonial Objects." Public lecture. Hobart and William Smith Colleges. 10 March 2008.

⁴Octavia Butler, *Dawn: Xenogenesis* (1987; New York: Time Warner, 1988). Future references to this text will appear parenthetically. In 2005 *Dawn*, along with the other two novels in the *Xenogenesis Trilogy* (*Imago* and *Adulthood Rites*) were also published under the title *Lilith's Brood* (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2000).

⁵Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson. Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*. 1894. Sidney E. Berger, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1980). Future references to this text will appear parenthetically.

⁶Arthur Bradley and Louis Armand have written an excellent overview of the history of the origins of the term technicity from Aristotle's use of the word *technê* to what they call Marx's "materialist anthropology" to Heidegger's "ontologic-technical" essence. They additionally chart the critiques of such works from figures such as Jacques Derrida. They note, for example, that for Marx, there is not an opposition between subjects and technologies. Humans, through the "labor process" essentially "appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature." They also observe, however, that though Marx makes a claim for technology as "coterminous with our 'nature,'" he still implicitly assumes the Aristotelian concept of a pre-technological causality...Marx still remains beholden to the metaphysical philosophy of technology: something—a collective human subject or essence—still exists *outside* of technicity. (4-5) Jacques Derrida similarly critiques Heidegger for "[maintaining] the possibility of thought that questions, which is always thought of the essence, protected from any original and essential contamination by technology" (qtd in *Technicity*, 6). One of the tasks of Bradley and Armand's edited collection of essays seems to be whether or not "technicity is *thinkable* at all" (author's emphasis, 12) which I argue is part of what Butler herself is asking in *Dawn*. Arthur Bradley and Louis Armand, eds. "Introduction: Thinking Technicity." *Technicity* (Prague, Czech Republic: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006). 1-14.

⁷Steiner, Carol J., "The Technicity Paradigm and Scientism in Qualitative Research," *The Qualitative Report*, 7:2, June, 2002. www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR7-2/steiner.html.

⁸Donna Haraway, particularly known for "The Cyborg Manifesto," states in *The Companion Species Manifesto* that "By the end of the millennium, cyborgs could no longer do the work of a proper herding dog to gather up the threads needed for critical inquiry" (4). N.

Katherine Hayles, noted for her work in *How We Became Posthuman*, more recently observed that many versions of posthumanist theory have tended to reinscribe a “liberal humanist tradition” that created a “binary view that juxtaposes disembodied information with an embodied human lifeworld” (2). Though a posthuman analysis is certainly a credible line of critique in association with Butler’s work, what more deeply concerns me in my project is the relation of the human to technology and information. Though all of the authors in this dissertation forward notions of what it means to be human or what it means to be identified less as a particular human and more as a configuration of group or series of traits associated with emergent technologies and their associated archive, it still seems as the authors discussed in this project are interested in how the human is continually newly instrumentalized in relation to technology and information rather than what others might claim as a move toward the posthuman. Donna Jeanne Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, LCC, 2003). N. Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

⁹Phillip Thurtle. *The Emergence of Genetic Rationality: Space, Time, & Information in American Biological Science, 1870-1920*. IN *VIVO: The Mediation of Biomedical Science*. Phillip Thurtle and Robert Mitchell, Series Eds. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

¹⁰Bradley and Armand, author’s emphasis 13.

¹¹Robert Cook-Deegan, *The Gene Wars: Science, Politics, and the Human Genome* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 11.

¹²Cook-Deegan 44-45.

¹³Cook-Deegan ch 1-2.

¹⁴Richard C. Lowentin, ed. *Population Biology and Evolution: Proceedings of the International Symposium Sponsored by Syracuse University and the New York State Science and Technology Foundation* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968), 2.

¹⁵Lowentin 2.

¹⁶Tinbergen developed his “why-questions” in response to the work of the evolutionary biologist J.S. Huxley. The questions were his attempt at securing a methodology for ethology in order for it to be seen as a credible field. Niko Tinbergen *Social Behavior in Animals: With Special Reference to Vertebrates* (1953; New York: Chapman and Hall, 1990) See also Niko Tinbergen, *The Study of Instinct* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), and Hans Kruck, *Niko’s Nature: The Life of Niko Tinbergen and His Science of Animal Behavior* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁷Cook-Deegan 28.

¹⁸Wilson, Edward O. *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975). 4. *On Human Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1978), x.

¹⁹George W. Barlow, "Nature-Nurture and the Debates Surrounding Ethology and Sociobiology," *Integrative and Comparative Biology* (31:286-296,1991), 287.

²⁰Barlow also suggests the possibility that, given the nature of political discourse amongst Wilson's peers (he suggests that the Marxist politics of many of Wilson's critics such as Steven J. Gould, Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin) that the biological determinism read into Wilson's work seemed, for these critics, to suggest support for, or the exoneration of, the oppressive institutions of contemporary society. Barlow. See also Michael Ruse, *Sociobiology: Sense or Nonsense* (Boston: D. Riedel Publishing Company, 1979), and John Alcock, *The Triumph of Sociobiology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Another book of note published during the era is Richard Dawkins's popular book *The Selfish Gene* in which he states that humans are "survival machines—robot vehicles blindly programmed to preserve the selfish molecules known as genes" (xxi). Dawkins's book was an important form of expression concerning evolutionary theory itself and also popular with the general public in the late 1970s through to the present day. As Dawkins himself notes in the "Introduction to the 30th Anniversary Edition": "Over the years, as each of my seven subsequent books have appeared, publishers have sent me on tour to promote it. Audiences respond to the new book... Then they line up to buy and have me sign... *The Selfish Gene*" (vii). Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (1978; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

²¹ Anne Fausto-Sterling, "Feminism and Behavioral Evolution: A Taxonomy," *Feminism and Evolutionary Biology: Boundaries, Intersections, and Frontiers*, ed. Patricia Adair Gowaty (New York: Chapman & Hall, 1997), 46-7.

²²For a history of the scientific and technological developments of genomics research, see Cook-Deegan.

²³Rebecca Skloot's book primarily focuses on Henrietta Lacks, but she also devotes some time to a discussion of the Moore Case. Rebecca Skloot. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* (New York: Crown Publishing, Random House Books, 2010). For an overview of the Moore case and the subsequent ruling by the State of California, see *Moore v. Board of Regents*. <<http://www.kentlaw.edu/perritt/courses/property/moore-v-regents-excerpts2.htm>>. Hannah Landecker also discusses the Lacks's case in Hannah Landecker, "Between Beneficence and Chattel: The Human Biological in Law and Science." *Science in Context* (12.1,1999, 203-25).

²⁴Walter Benn Michaels, "Political Science Fictions," *New Literary History* 31 (2000), 650.

²⁵Kaushik Sundar Rajan. *Biocapital: The Constitution of Postgenomic Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

²⁶Hannah Landecker explores legal and scientific understandings of continuity and discontinuity between biological materials and the bodies such materials were taken from. She analyzes how legal arguments that favor scientific researchers who claim human biologicals as their property, build upon a strategy that denies the continuity between the cell line and the body of origin. Simultaneously, however, scientific researchers, in order to establish the value of these products, must often articulate the continuity of the cell line and the body of origin. She states, "In fact, the technical and rhetorical work of making human cell lines into stable, patentable, knowledge- and money-producing things has relied, at different times in different settings, on *both* the connection and the separation of person and cell line. Both have served to underpin the different forms of value—economic, legal, scientific—embodied by cell lines" (204). Hannah Landecker, "Between Beneficence and Chattel: The Human Biological in Law and Science," *Science in Context* 12.1 (1999).

²⁷Thurtle 4.

²⁸Rajan

²⁹Sarah Franklin, "What We Know and Don't Know About Cloning and Society," *Reconfiguring Nature: Issues and Debates in the New Genetics*, ed. Peter Glasner (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004). 256.

³⁰N. Katherine Hayles defines intermediation as "complex transactions between bodies and texts as well as between different forms of media" (7). N. Katherine Hayles, *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

³¹Just four years after the publication of *Dawn*, many indigenous groups around the globe refused to donate biological materials to the *Human Genome Diversity Project* because of fears of a new round of exploitation of individuals and resources in countries acutely aware of the abuses from earlier rounds of colonization and enslavement. Jennifer Reardon traces the history of the many failures of often well-meaning researchers in understanding the cultural nature of their work, what science means within particular contexts. Reardon notes that the absolute sense of objectiveness from the science side makes the cultural perspective appear relativistic, as if the indigenous groups are being unreasonable. But as activists such as Debra Harry have pointed out, there have been plenty of recent abuses concerning biological materials. In other words, just as with Wilson's collection of finger-marks, previously collected and biologically archived DNA, *becomes* instrumental, and Butler, just as speculatively as Twain, takes off on the notion of how such materials will become instrumentalized in the future. Jenny Reardon, *Race to the Finish: Identity and Governance in an Age of Genomics*. Information Series. Ed. Paul Rabinow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Harry, Debra. "The Human Genome Diversity Project: Implications for Indigenous Peoples." *Abya Yala News*. 8: 4, 1994). 27 March 2011. <<http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/41/024.html>>. See also *The Indigenous Peoples Council on Biocolonialism*. <<http://www.ipcb.org/>>.

³²Richard Dawkins. *The Selfish Gene*. 2.

³³I take the idea of biology in or out of control from Sarah Franklin's discussion of the cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996. Franklin states that her book "attempts to widen the debates about Dolly and cloning by asking what it means to contrast 'biological control' with its opposite—biology out of control—which is an equally important theme within agriculture, medicine, science, industry, and economics...while [Dolly] is very much a late-twentieth-century animal in terms of the precise molecular technologies necessary to her creation, the feat of producing her viability belongs to a long tradition of reshaping animal bodies, crisscrossing cell lines, and redesigning animal germplasm in the interest of both capital accumulation and nation or imperial expansion" (6). Sarah Franklin, *Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of Genealogy* (Durham: Duke UP, 2007).

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