

RACE, REGION, AND REALISM IN THE POSTBELLUM FICTION OF
ALBION TOURGÉE, CHARLES CHESNUTT, GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE, AND
MARK TWAIN

by

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(Under the Direction of James Nagel)

ABSTRACT

In the literary movements of Regionalism and Realism that emerged in the wake of the Civil War, Albion Tourgée (1838-1905), Mark Twain (1835-1910), George Washington Cable (1844-1925), and Charles Chesnutt (1858-1932) contributed to the growing field of Southern fiction within these traditions. With varying degrees of verisimilitude, romance, and satire, all four of these authors placed issues of race and nationhood at the thematic center of their most influential novels. In many of their postbellum works of fiction, such as *The Grandissimes*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins*, *A Fool's Errand*, *Bricks without Straw*, *Mandy Oxendine*, *The Conjure Woman*, *The House Behind the Cedars*, and *The Marrow of Tradition*, they explored the persisting racial problems of American life in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century and developed themes that suggested that the nation was still mired in the problems of its past. Perhaps the most significant aspect their postwar novels share is the manner in which they present African American protagonists who

actively pursue a better life for themselves by challenging the white patriarchal order. Through various methods of empowerment, such as verbal trickery, escaping slavery, passing into white life, educational and economic advancement, as well as the subversive acts of protest, violence, and revenge, these characters refuse to submit to the social hierarchy to which they are bound by either custom or law.

INDEX WORDS: Albion W. Tourgée, Charles W. Chesnutt, George Washington Cable, Mark Twain, Realism, Regionalism, Local-Color, African American Fiction, Southern Fiction, Postbellum Fiction, American Civil War, Federal Reconstruction, *The Grandissimes*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins*, *A Fool's Errand*, *Bricks without Straw*, *Mandy Oxendine*, *The Conjure Woman*, *The House Behind the Cedars*, *The Marrow of Tradition*, *The Quarry*, *Paul Marchand*, *F. M. C.*

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A. B., University of Georgia, 2001

M. A., University of Georgia, 2005

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2013

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May 2013

DEDICATION

For my husband, Charlie

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to James Nagel, for his support and guidance. His example of professionalism, his love of American literature, and his unending enthusiasm for the pursuits of his graduate students have made an enormous impact upon my graduate studies at The University of Georgia and a lasting impression upon my understanding of what it means to be an exemplary scholar and mentor in our field.

I have worked with many wonderful professors at The University of Georgia, and it is with much admiration and gratitude that I thank Hubert McAlexander, Jr., whose legendary Southern literature seminar I had the privilege of attending, and Hugh Ruppensburg, for his participation on my graduate committee.

My family and close friends have been a constant source of encouragement during my doctoral work. Thank you to my parents, Marie and Milburn Brown, for their enduring love; my sister, Mary Ashby, for being a second-mother to her nephew, Charlie, who was less than one-year-old when I was writing in the Spring of 2012; and to my wonderful Savannah family, for all of their love, laughter, and support. I would especially like to thank my aunt Rachel Sanborn, who was there for me, in countless ways, every step of the way. A special note of thanks is also owed to Joseph Whitehorne, for introducing me to the works of Albion W. Tourg  e at a Thanksgiving table in Madison County, Virginia.

The writing of this dissertation would not have been possible without the patience and devotion of my husband, Charlie. For his support, and for the incredible delight we share in our little boy, I am filled with boundless love and gratitude.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the literary movements of Regionalism and Realism that emerged in the wake of the Civil War, Albion Tourgée (1838-1905), Mark Twain (1835-1910), George Washington Cable (1844-1925), and Charles Chesnutt (1858-1932) contributed to the growing field of Southern fiction within these traditions. With varying degrees of verisimilitude, romance, and satire, all four of these authors placed issues of race and nationhood at the thematic center of their most influential novels. During the same period that they were achieving literary success, black Americans were experiencing the incremental loss of their newly won civil liberties. The historical movement towards disfranchisement that followed the end of Federal Reconstruction in 1877, for instance, would be extended in the Civil Rights Cases of 1883, which limited the protection of the 14th Amendment and overturned the Civil Rights Bill of 1875. With *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, the post-slavery practice of legal discrimination already in place in the Jim Crow South was legitimized by federal law. Using antebellum legal precedent, the U. S. Supreme Court upheld Act 111 of the Louisiana state-law under which Homer Plessy, a man one-eighth black and seven-eighths white, was arrested for boarding a "white only" railway car four years prior. The ruling against Plessy resulted in the "separate but equal" doctrine of citizenship for black Americans that existed until *Brown v. The Board of Education* in 1954. By holding that Homer Plessy was "colored" on account of the imperceptible fraction of his bloodlines that were of African descent, America's highest court legalized the cultural tradition

of “one drop” determinism. It is from this paradox of American life that emerge the representational worlds of Tourgée’s *A Fool’s Errand* (1879) and *Bricks without Straw* (1879); Cable’s *The Grandissimes* (1880); Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1894); and Chesnutt’s *Mandy Oxendine* (1897), *The House Behind the Cedars* (1901), *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* (1921), and *The Quarry* (1928).

Though they are seldom studied together, these works are united thematically within the postwar period of American literary history by the reformist manner in which the authors engaged the persisting issues of racial inequality in the Deep South. Except for Tourgée, who was a Northerner and a Union veteran, all of the writers were Southerners born before the Civil War who published their most enduring fiction in the post-emancipatory period. Despite the fact that Cable and Twain were born into slave-holding families and very much devoted to the Confederate cause at different points of their youth, they both came to see slavery as a grave injustice and a national travesty, a reality that Chesnutt, as an African American and descendent of slaves, understood all-too-well throughout his early life. Tourgée, for his part, came to understand the deep-seated racial problems in the South when he moved to North Carolina after the Civil War, witnessing first-hand the rise of Ku Klux Klan and its program of terrorizing not only the freed slaves but also those individuals, such as himself, who challenged the status quo. All of the authors, despite the various ways in which they were exposed to the racial hostility and sectional resentments that in large part defined their contemporary Southern culture, integrated these themes into their fiction with a power and prescience anomalous to the larger currents of mainstream fiction in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Albion Winegar Tourgée was the defense attorney who represented Homer Plessy in 1896, and he was also the first American author to fictionalize the Reconstruction South in

popular literature. Born on May 2, 1838 in Williamsfield, Ohio, Tourgée grew up in a rural farming community located in the Northeast region of the state, which was commonly referred to as the Western Reserve after it was incorporated into the Ohio Territory in 1800.¹ Like most settlers of the region, Tourgée's parents were New England transplants who migrated west to homestead inexpensive frontier land.² The influx of small, independent farmers from Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and Pennsylvania earned the Reserve the reputation of being "the last footprint of Puritanism" in the West, inheriting New England's model of local self-government as well as its spirit of social democracy, characteristics that transformed Northeastern Ohio into a "veritable cauldron of radicalism" during the abolitionist movement that preceded the Civil War during Tourgée's adolescence.³ One of the qualities of New England life that migrants such as the author's parents, Louisa Emma Winegar and Valentine Tourgée, Jr., did not transplant upon the Ohio frontier was the nearly institutional conception of social hierarchy that defined eastern manners. The preeminence given to the Brahmin blood of the old families on the east coast was abandoned on the frontier, and Tourgée reflected proudly that "the Reserve never knew an Aristocracy," as the hardships of frontier life "often reversed the relations of various families" and effectively "nipped in the bud" the intergenerational privileges of New England's class structure.⁴

The egalitarian social democracy that turned the eastern caste system on its head during the frontier period of Ohio's Western Reserve seems to have informed Tourgée's vision of how Southern life could be reconstructed after the fall of the Confederacy. In October of 1865, only seven months after Lee surrendered at the Appomattox Court House, Tourgée, a former lieutenant in the Union Army, and his young wife, another native of the Western Reserve named Emma Lodoiska Kilbourne, relocated to Greensboro, North Carolina, where he would spend the

next fourteen years working to overthrow the old social order dominated by the planter aristocracy to the political exclusion of the poor and the oppressed. During his time in North Carolina, Tourgée founded the interracial Loyal Reconstruction League in reaction to the State Assembly's 1865 Black Codes, served as an influential delegate to both the 1868 and the 1874 state Constitutional Conventions, and edited a Radical newspaper called the *Union Register*. During the short-lived period of Radical Republican political ascendancy in the state of North Carolina, Tourgée was also elected by a majority of over 25,000 black and white voters to serve as a Superior Court judge for a six-year term. In addition to his steadfast work beside black political leaders, Tourgée founded one of the state's first freedmen's schools on his property, legally adopted a child who was born a slave, and, most notoriously, delivered scathing attacks on Southern race relations in speeches, essays, and eventually novels, for which he received multiple death threats by the Ku Klux Klan.⁵ Before he had been in Greensboro one full year, Tourgée was widely derided in the Democratic press and called a liar of “most detestable character” by the governor of the state.⁶ All of these experiences would inform the cultural, political, and regional milieu of his two most successful novels of the Reconstruction Period, *A Fool's Errand* (1879) and *Bricks without Straw* (1880).

Growing up on the Western Reserve, Tourgée was not exposed to African Americans as a matter of course. Of the 28,767 inhabitants in the county of Ashtabula, where he and his family lived, only forty-three people comprised the “free colored” population.⁷ Like the majority of his neighbors, Tourgée was opposed to slavery in principle, but his immaturity with regard to racial equality in practice was evidenced in his teenage years. At that time Tourgée was the popular and often irreverent president of the debating society at Kingsville Academy, and in July of 1854, at the age of sixteen, he traveled to Western Reserve College to hear Frederick Douglass

give a lecture entitled “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered.” It was the first time that Douglass publically condemned notions of biologically-determined racism in an extended speech, and it was also the first instance in American history that a black man served as the keynote speaker at a college commencement program.⁸ When a heckling audience member threw an egg that “splashed” upon Douglass’s “long wavy hair” and “left yellow streaks on his black beard and mustache,” the shocked silence of the crowd was broken by the sound of laughter, and to Tourgée’s lifelong embarrassment, it was his own. The spectators as well as the speaker assumed that it was he who had thrown the egg, and with an “overwhelming tide of denunciatory eloquence,” Douglass “hushed” the unruly crowd to “breathless silence” as he continued his impassioned diatribe.⁹

Nearly half a century later, on December 20, 1895, Tourgée delivered the eulogy at the public memorial service held by the city of Boston to commemorate Douglass. In his two-hour tribute, Tourgée spoke of the great leader’s life as “among the most remarkable the world has ever known” and drew historical parallels between the injustice of the antebellum period and the enduring separation of caste and color that black Americans continued to suffer in the era of Jim Crow. He also described the events surrounding Douglass’s speech on the Western Reserve during the summer of 1854 and recalled his attempt to apologize for his outburst of laughter. Tourgée claimed that his visit “was not a pleasant call” and that Douglass gave the brash teenager a tongue-lashing as he recounted the “furious tale of insults he had suffered because he was a colored man pleading for justice to his people.”¹⁰ This ill-fated meeting between an Ohio farm boy and a fugitive slave marked the first time that Tourgée was exposed directly to a black American who displayed his autonomy as well as his emotions of pride and anger. These realistic dimensions of personal character were often lacking in the childlike drawings of

Southern blacks featured in the abolitionist tracts and broadsides that were circulating on the Reserve in the 1850s as well as in the caricatured depictions of slaves in popular anti-slavery novels such as Harriett Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was published one year prior to Tourgée's meeting with Douglass.

A strong-willed farmer's son with artistic yearnings for romantic literature and poetry, Tourgée entered the University of Rochester in 1859. Tourgée often clashed with his college administrators and superiors, and his tendency towards impetuous declarations of protest would become increasingly pronounced with the advent of secession and war. During his first year in Rochester, however, he remained ensconced in his studies and somewhat removed from the national debate over slavery. Ironically, it was Emma, with whom he had become engaged in 1858, who showed a more fervent concern over the nation's slavery conflict, leading her fiancé to tease that she had become "quite a rabid little petticoated Black Republican of late."¹¹ However, as the race conflict grew, so too did Tourgée's involvement in the issues of the day. On his twenty-first birthday in 1860, shortly after two Ohioans were tried for assisting the escape of a runaway slave in what would become known as the Oberlin Rescue, Tourgée composed a poem that reveals an ironic meditation upon the nation's crisis of race and region. With obvious sarcasm, he declared "How sweet and glorious 'tis to be— / A man and *white*—(by courtesy) / In this great nation of the free."¹² As the rumblings of war reached a frenzied tenor on campus, Tourgée was elected captain of the "Rochester Wide Awake Club," a group of student Republicans who organized political rallies to the dismay of the president of the college who attempted, unsuccessfully, to disband their organization. Tourgée also composed an essay expressing his outrage over the burning of 150 copies of Hinton Rowan Helper's diatribe against

slavery, *The Impending Crisis of the South*, by an angry mob in Guilford County, North Carolina, where several citizens were arrested for illegally owning a copy.¹³

In April 1861, shortly after Lincoln's first call for troops, Tourgée enlisted in the 27th New York Infantry and suffered a back injury at the First Battle of Bull Run only two months later. For one year he convalesced in Kingsville at his father's home, and it was during this time that he thought seriously about pursuing a career as a writer, though he also studied the law. His major literary focus while recuperating was devoted to the writing of an epic poem about the war that he paid to have published in book form, only to burn all of the copies when he saw his unrefined verse in print.¹⁴ After his recovery Tourgée was appointed a first lieutenant of the 105th Ohio Volunteer Infantry in July of 1862, and his new company was comprised of many of his former classmates from Kingsville Academy, forty of whom he had enlisted personally. Thirty years later, he would immortalize his company's wartime experiences in *The Story of a Thousand* (1895), a 350-page regimental history inspired by the numerous letters, memoirs, and records that the highly literate company left behind.¹⁵

During his second tour of duty with the 105th, several events occurred that suggest the young lieutenant's growing empathy for the plight of Southern blacks. In an impassioned letter to Emma, for instance, he described the horror of witnessing slavery first-hand in Kentucky and claimed that "if it ever become necessary for you to enter a Slave State I shall wish you to come blindfolded and with shut ears." Though he would not reveal what he had seen specifically, he claimed that the "awfulness" of a particular sight was so disturbing it would make "a cynic heart-sore." In another incident that became legendary in the wartime reputation of Tourgée's hometown regiment, the 105th refused to surrender black fugitives seeking protection in the Union Army and were derisively called "abolition nigger-stealers" by one of their commanding

generals, an epithet they would repeat with pride in that it suggested the “higher notion of freedom” for which they fought.¹⁶ Toward the end of his service, Tourgée attended a meeting of escaped slaves and requested a transfer to lead a black regiment, claiming that it was “certainly the place for men who would serve the country best,” a statement no doubt intended as a slight towards the white superiors with whom he frequently clashed on issues of promotion and discipline. For better and for worse, impassioned displays of defiance would come to mark the trajectory of Tourgée’s life, and during the war these episodes included organizing a protest over food rations, calling a major “a damn fool,” and “pricking” another soldier with his sword, an act for which he was eventually court-marshaled.¹⁷

Recurrent injury and inter-regimental conflict continued to mar Tourgée’s second tour of duty through the end of 1863. During the Battle of Perryville, he sustained a minor injury when a piece of shell entered his hip, and shortly thereafter he was captured by Confederate cavalry and spent four months in the prisons at Atlanta, Salisbury, and Libby. By December of 1863, he had reinjured his back and the debilitating pain forced him to tender his resignation from the Union Army.¹⁸ The emerging Radicalism in his political leanings as well as his commitment to the “absolute value of individual rights” during this period is evidenced in a letter he wrote to his former fraternity brothers one month after leaving the Army.¹⁹ On January 19, 1864, Tourgée claimed that

I think the oft repeated maxim of the Administration—“We are fighting but for the Union as it was”—A most sublime hoax. For one, I don’t care a rag for “*the Union as it was*.” I want & fight for *the Union better* than “it was.” Before this is accomplished we must have a fundamental thorough and complete revolution &

renovation. This I expect & hope. For this I am willing to die—for this I expect to *die*.²⁰

This desire to see the Union better than “it was” was set in motion one year later in the summer of 1865 when Tourgée contacted William W. Holden, the Provisional Governor of North Carolina, to inquire about employment or investment opportunities in the former Confederacy for Yankees such as himself.²¹ Though he suggested that his move South would be an economic venture to a semi-tropical climate more suitable for convalescence, it was less than a matter of weeks after his arrival to North Carolina that Tourgée dived headfirst into the political issues surrounding the newly enfranchised black communities, beginning what would become a lifelong commitment to the protection of their civil liberties.

By October of 1865, the Tourgée family had settled into a home located in the outskirts of Greensboro, a city that was anomalous to much of the South in that it had strenuously opposed the doctrine of disunion and secession before the Civil War. Though the majority of its citizens supported the Confederacy, there was a substantial population of Quaker pacifists and Southern Unionists, derisively called “scalawags,” who refused to join the Confederate cause. When deciding where to move, Tourgée had toured Georgia and North Carolina, as well as their coastal regions, and claimed that there was “more good will toward the government” in the central Piedmont than in the rest of the South.”²² Likely by no coincidence, Greensboro was also the seat of Guilford County where Helper’s *The Impending Crisis of the South* was burned in an act of mob protest five years prior, much to Tourgée’s outrage as a college student. Along with several members of Emma’s family, who helped to finance the trip, Tourgée recruited two college friends, Seneca Kuhn and R. L. Pettingill, to journey into the former Confederacy less than a year after the war had ended. The three Yankee “carpetbaggers” organized a partnership

called A. W. Tourgée & Co. through which they leased a 750-acre fruit farm called West Green Nurseries, a short-lived investment venture that would result in the demise of their friendship as well as thousands of dollars of debt.²³

The primary tension in the partnership was centered upon the ideological differences with which the three men viewed the goals of their enterprise in relation to the inequities of Southern race relations. For the Tourgées, the nursery was both a social-aid project and a business venture. Not only did they hire black laborers at fair-wage and establish Greensboro's first colored school on their West Green property, but they also formed close relationships with the employees and students on their land. They also had frequent contact with the poor white Unionists of Guilford County who sought Tourgée's legal aid in recouping damages from the federal government for the destruction of their property during the war. These relationships with freedmen and Unionists laid the groundwork for important alliances for Tourgée once he entered the realm of Republican politics. Kuhn and Pettingill, however, eventually abandoned the firm when it became clear that Tourgée's positions on racial equality, which were becoming increasingly radical, could compromise the economic success of their investments and even threaten their personal safety in a land where they were already viewed with suspicion as Yankee outsiders.²⁴

The major breaking point between the partners occurred in September of 1866, when Tourgée attended the Southern Loyalist Convention in Philadelphia that was organized to protest President Johnson's policies towards the South, which the Radical factions of the Republican Party felt were too conciliatory towards the ex-Confederates and their efforts to regain political power.²⁵ In a damning speech about Southern life that was circulated by the *New York Tribune*, Tourgée insisted upon "the disenfranchisement of all traitors" and "the enfranchisement of *all*

loyal men.” Notoriously, he would also claim that an unnamed North Carolina Quaker told him that “he had seen the bodies of fifteen murdered negroes taken from a pond.”²⁶ When Governor Worth, the Conservative leader of the state, read the *Tribune*’s coverage of the speech, he sent off a series of letters to the state’s political and religious leaders denouncing Tourgée as “contemptible” and a “vile wretch” whose “pretended facts” were part of an effort to make “the North hate the South.”²⁷ Threatening letters began to arrive at the Tourgée home in Greensboro, with one anonymous writer warning that “if you ever show your face in Guilford Country again I will take care with some of my friends that you find the bottom of that *niger* [sic] *pond* you have been talking so much about.”²⁸ Despite the hostility directed toward him, Tourgée remained an outspoken participant in North Carolina politics for fourteen years.

A sympathetic letter written to Governor Worth during this period illustrates how even the more moderate citizens of the state could not understand the goals of “the *Tourgeesites*” who were gaining political power. Regarding the issues of racial equality supported by Tourgée and his followers, the writer claimed that

I can understand how and why it is that an African sympathizes with his race and color and I think I have some idea of Christian philanthropy which takes in all created human beings. But this new fangled idea of worshipping the negro, and denouncing and prosecuting native born straight haired citizens, I cannot exactly understand.²⁹

Rather than heeding the warnings that were aimed against him, Tourgée began editing a Radical Republican newspaper called the *Union Register* through which he could dispute the attacks of the local Conservative press. Much of the content published in the *Register* maintained that the act of national rebellion should effectively disfranchise all Southern whites who participated in it

voluntarily, a premise that was eventually put into action when the Reconstruction Acts of 1867 were passed. This legislation would mark the beginning of a two-year period of Republican ascension in the state of North Carolina, which introduced a short-lived legal system that enfranchised all blacks, disenfranchised many planters, and drew poor white voters to the polls, thereby creating a new electorate of 106, 721 whites and 72, 932 blacks.³⁰

A large part of Tourgée's ability to both inspire and agitate his new neighbors was owed to the powerful and acerbic rhetorical style with which he wrote the many editorials, essays, letters, and sketches that he would publish in the *Register* and other Southern newspapers during his stay in North Carolina. In terms of regional settings, Southern characters, and political themes, his outpouring of journalistic prose between 1865 and 1878 would prefigure many of the literary tropes in his best-selling Southern fiction in the 1880s. Between 1866 and 1867 in the *Register*, for instance, Tourgée published his first fictional portrait of the Reconstruction South in a series of dialect poems narrated by "Jehu Lagby Unioner," a poor white farmer who resents the power system of the planter class whom he sarcastically refers to as "Godsaninted Phue." A typical Lagby poem, such as the one published on January 10, 1867, engages issues of class and political exclusion with an ironic tone and vernacular style:

Now thar's my niggest nabor, Godsaninted Phue,
 Who thinks the world was made for his espeshil crew,
 An' that a thousan' pawpers died that he might live.
 An' rule an' guidance to his needy fellers give.
 He's one uv them at lucky ones that's born to rule
 Jes, as it seems I wuz, to be their thing an' tool;
 Thet thinks pore men an' niggers haint no vested right,

In ennything, unless it be tu help them fite.³¹

The majority of Lagby's complaints center upon the economic and political exclusion of the poor white farmers who did not own the land they worked and thus did not meet the requirements of property ownership needed to vote. As this class comprised the majority of Tourgée's white Southern supporters in the Greensboro area, Lagby was a strategic political caricature who was both humorous and caustic in his refusal to be played for a fool. Furthermore, in his reference to the shared hardships of "pore men an' niggers," Lagby suggests that racial difference should not preclude the ability of all disenfranchised citizens of the county to unite politically over a common enemy in the planter aristocracy.

Tourgée's ability to unify a black and white electorate within the Republican Party was a major factor in his being elected as a delegate to attend the state's 1868 Constitutional Convention in Raleigh, where he would be instrumental in rewriting many of the state's legal and educational codes, which would endure long after Reconstruction. In a broadside that he circulated to secure his nomination, he stressed the importance of a system of self-government, much like the New England model with which he was reared, that would allow all citizens to vote regardless of property qualifications.³² Perhaps in an effort not to evoke the racial antagonism of the poor white constituency whose votes he depended upon, Tourgée did not emphasize the protection of civil liberties for black North Carolinians in the broadside, though their suffrage rights would be the emphasis of his speech once he arrived at the Convention. Focusing upon caste rather than color, he put forth a "battle cry" for economic equality that called for "Manhood, Equal Rights, Free Schools, Free Juries, Free Offices, Free Press, Free Speech, Free Men!" He also warned of the dangers of perpetuating a political system that created what he believed was a rich man's war resulting in "six hundred thousand dead." Much

as he would in the Lagby poems, Tourgée condemned the political dominance of the landed gentry, asking the voters of Guilford if

the new State have an Oligarchy or a Republic? An Aristocracy or a Democracy?
Shall its fundamental law respect the rights of the hundred thousand voters who
do not own land enough to give to each a burial place, or consider only the
interests of the fifteen hundred men who own two-thirds of the lands of the
state? . . . The aristocracy of slavery is dead. Shall we now build up an
aristocracy of land? . . . Laborers of Guilford are you not as capable of self-
government as those men who with the motto rule or ruin, did both rule and ruin
all this glorious Southern land?"³³

Tourgée's appeal to the voters of Guilford was successful, and in September of 1868 he arrived in Raleigh as a member of the Constitutional Convention delegation that included 107 Republicans, of whom 16 were Northerners like himself, 13 Conservatives, and 13 blacks.³⁴

During the state's first interracial political summit, which was derided by the press as the "Gorilla" or "Bones and Banjo" Convention,³⁵ Tourgée spoke fervently upon the wartime sacrifice of black soldiers. In his attack upon the ruling class and their political manipulation of Southern voters, Tourgée maintained that "the basic principle of the Rebellion was not Slavery. That institution was a mere concomitant, a companion piece of the greater, fouler, and more damnable principle—a few are born to rule, the rest of mankind to obey—a few should govern, the many serve."³⁶ Describing his own conversion from "unmanly prejudice" to colorblind nationalism, Tourgée evoked themes of Christian sacrifice and epiphany, explaining that his racist worldview was changed forever after seeing the slaughtered corpse of a "dusky martyr" at the Fort Pillow Massacre that occurred when General Nathan Bedford Forrest ordered an attack

upon a surrendering infantry of African American soldiers.³⁷ Calling Forrest “a fiend who walks today unhung,” Tourgée would suggest that the General’s insistence upon “a white man’s government” obtained by the violence and intimidation tactics of the Ku Klux Klan was little more than an extension of the crimes he infamously committed during his military service.³⁸

While in North Carolina, Tourgée was subjected to multiple death threats and assassination plots by local chapters of the Ku Klux Klan, many of which he would receive after he was elected to serve as a judge of the Superior Court in 1868, a position he held for a six-year term ending in 1874.³⁹ During his time on the bench, a white Unionist named John Walters Stephens who was Tourgée’s close friend and political ally was murdered by a group of Klansmen in the basement of the Caswell County Courthouse.⁴⁰ Shortly thereafter, a coffin was placed in the Judge’s front yard with a death threat that warned “this is to inform you to hold no more courts in Carolina. . . . If you ever hold another or attempt it you will share the fate of Jno W. Stephens [sic] it is ordered you leave the state.”⁴¹ In the same year, a respected black leader named Wyatt Outlaw was lynched by the Klan from a tree standing before the Alamance County Court House where Tourgée presided. The murder of John Stephens and Wyatt Outlaw would be incorporated into the fictional events surrounding the characters John Walters and Uncle Jerry in *A Fool’s Errand*, and the Klan’s intimidation of the white Northern protagonist, Comfort Servosse, in many ways resembles Tourgée’s own experiences as a harassed outcast. Tourgée also used the sworn statements of victims of the Klan who testified in his Greensboro courthouse in *The Invisible Empire*, which was published in 1880 as a way to offer supplementary documentary material for the scenes of race violence in *A Fool’s Errand*.⁴²

Horried by the escalation of racial violence in Greensboro in 1870, Tourgée worried about the safety of his wife and newborn daughter and wondered whether “it may be mere

common prudence to get away from the K. K. K. cords and daggers for a year or two.” He began to research plans to leave the state and even pursued a consulate position in South America, claiming that he would endure “yellow fever, cholera, fleas, earthquakes, vertigo, smallpox, cannibalism, icebergs, sharks, or any other name or shape of horror—provided always there are no K. K. K.”⁴³ In a private letter to Senator Joseph B. Abbott that was eventually published in the *New York Tribune* on August 3, 1870, Tourgée described the violence he had witnessed in North Carolina and claimed that any member of Congress who did not attempt to put an end to the Southern outrages deserved “to be damned.”⁴⁴ Shortly after sending his letter, the first Federal Enforcement Act, known as the anti-KKK Act, empowered the federal government with the right to intervene in state affairs to protect citizen’s rights, a measure that would slow but not stop the Southern race crimes such as the ones that Tourgée observed in Guilford County.⁴⁵

After his judgeship ended in 1874, Tourgée attended the state’s second Constitutional Convention, served as Pension Agent in Raleigh in an appointment by President Grant, campaigned for Rutherford B. Hayes in his 1876 presidential campaign, and ran unsuccessfully for Congress in 1878. Perhaps most significantly, during his last five years in the state, he became increasingly focused on writing fiction. Although he coauthored an impressive legal resource entitled *The Code of Civil Procedure in North Carolina with Notes and Decisions* that was published in 1876, his two major accomplishments from this period are the publication of his first novel, *Toinette*, a melodrama about Southern racism and thwarted love between a master and slave, and an anonymous series of letters attacking Democratic candidates for the state’s Supreme Court in what became known as the “C” letters. Shortly after the publication of *Toinette*, which was attributed to his pseudonym “Henry Churton,” Tourgée was revealed to be the author. The identity behind the author of the “C” letters that ran in the *Greensboro North*

State from March to May of 1878, however, remained unknown during months of their publication, as a review from the *Wilmington Star* attests: “No one can for a moment believe that Tourgée wrote them, after reading his literary abortion, *Toinette* [sic], one of the most vicious of books without a spark of genius. . . . The author of the “C” letters has genius, learning, and a rare combination of gifts. His style is infinitely superior to the productions of the carpet-bagger ex-judge that we have seen.”⁴⁶ When Tourgée was revealed to be the author of the scathing political letters, public opinion had turned so far against him that he felt it inevitable that he leave the state for good.

During his last years in North Carolina, Tourgée was deeply disillusioned over the collapse of Reconstruction, a political project he came to view as a “failure,” and he was also overcome with grief for his family who left for the North when they could no longer endure what they felt to be his dangerous and unattainable fixation upon improving Southern race politics. Regarding the end of Reconstruction in the South, which came to an official close with the Hayes-Tilden Compromise of 1877, Tourgée claimed that “it [Reconstruction] has not only been a failure, but one of so utter and ignominious a character that people are even disinclined to go back and inquire its causes.” It was during a period of depression in late 1878 that Tourgée isolated himself in his Greensboro study and worked feverishly on a literary project that would expose the faults of Reconstruction as he saw them in the racially divided South, a region where he had learned the hard way that “the social conditions of three hundred years are not to be overthrown in a moment.”⁴⁷ Neither Tourgée nor his publishers could have anticipated the intense critical and commercial success with which *A Fool’s Errand* was met, a marketplace achievement that earned him fame as well as a literary platform upon which further he explored themes of racial and regional antagonism in novels such as *Figs and Thistles* (1879), *Bricks*

without Straw (1880), *A Royal Gentleman* (1881), *An Appeal to Caesar* (1884), and *Pactolus Prime* (1890).

Tourgée's fictional exposé on the failures of Reconstruction in *A Fool's Errand* (1879) made a considerable impact on a young black North Carolinian named Charles Waddell Chesnutt, who was a twenty-two-year-old schoolteacher in Fayetteville when he read the novel. He was inspired by the conviction of the Northern author and the power of his work, but he was left to wonder if he could write an even better novel about Southern life as he knew it to be. In a journal entry dated March 16, 1880, Chesnutt questioned if Tourgée

with his necessarily limited intercourse with colored people, and with his limited stay in the South, can write such interesting descriptions, such vivid pictures of Southern life and character as to make himself rich and famous, why could not a colored man, who has lived among colored people all his life; who is familiar with their habits, their ruling passions, their prejudices; their whole moral and social condition; their public and private ambitions; their religious tendencies and habits;—why could not a colored man who knew all this, and who, besides, had possessed such opportunities for observation and conversation with the better class of white men in the South as to understand their modes of thinking; who was familiar with the political history of the country, and especially with all the phases of the slavery question;—why could not such a man, if he possessed the same ability, write a far better book about the South.⁴⁸

Claiming that his work would not merely be filled with “stale negro minstrel jokes” or clichés regarding “man and brother,” he expressed a desire to “leave the realm of fiction, where more of this stuff is manufactured, and come down to hard facts.”⁴⁹ Much like Tourgée, Chesnutt would

eventually devote his life to writing novels and essays devoted to issues of racial identity and injustice, though he too had to leave the South to gain the distance and perspective to see its perversions of justice most clearly.

The eldest of Andrew Jackson Chesnutt and Ann Maria Sampson Chesnutt's five surviving children, Chesnutt was born on June 20, 1858 in Cleveland, Ohio, over six hundred miles from the town of Fayetteville, North Carolina, where both of his parents were born and where he would spend the majority of his early life from 1865 to 1883.⁵⁰ In his first published novel, *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), the narrator describes the "old issue free negroes" of North Carolina, the social group with which Chesnutt's parents would have identified, as carrying strains of Native American, African, and European ancestry that were intermingled "with great freedom and little formality" during the colonial period.⁵¹ Though they were not considered legal citizens of the state, Chesnutt's ancestors would have experienced considerable latitude until 1835 when the state passed the first of several codes that restricted the compass of their social and civic opportunities, including the suffrage rights that they had exercised since 1776.⁵² In 1790, the year of the first census, there were 5,041 African Americans who were not enslaved in North Carolina, a statistic that would grow by 604 percent in the decades preceding the Civil War.⁵³ With the exception of the decade of the 1850s,⁵⁴ the number of free black residents in North Carolina increased more rapidly than the slave or white populations, a growth that can be attributed to familial expansion, the absorption of runaways from Virginia and South Carolina, as well as the practices of manumission and miscegenation, as would be the case in the maternal and paternal lines from which Chesnutt descended.⁵⁵

A large part of Chesnutt's literary production deals with racial intermixture, a theme that appears in the novels *Mandy Oxendine* (1897), *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), *The*

Marrow of Tradition (1901), *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* (1921), and *The Quarry* (1928); the short stories “The Wife of His Youth” (1898), “Her Virginia Mammy” (1899), “The Sheriff’s Children” (1899), “Lonesome Ben” (1900), “The Sway-Backed House” (1900), “A Matter of Principal” (1900), “Concerning Father” (1930), and “White Weeds”⁵⁶; as well as the essays “What is a White Man?” (1889), “The Future American” (1900), “Obliterating the Color Line” (1901), “The White and the Black” (1901), “Race Prejudice: Its Causes and Its Cure” (1905), and “Race Ideals and Examples” (1913). In 1860, an estimated 70 percent of the 30,324 free blacks in North Carolina were the descendants of white men and black women.⁵⁷ The complexities of racial identification and legal classification that would grow from the practice of miscegenation were issues with which Chesnutt was familiar by family lineage as well as environment. Both his paternal grandfather, Waddell Cade, and his maternal grandfather, Henry E. Sampson, were white farmers of Fayetteville’s wealthiest social class. Chesnutt’s maternal grandmother, Anna M. Chesnutt, was a slave woman owned by Cade, and his paternal grandmother, Chloe Sampson, was a slave owned by Sampson. Each grandmother was also the daughter of a white landowner and an African slave woman. Thus, in the signifying terms of racial distinction used in the antebellum South, Andrew Jackson Chesnutt and Ann Maria Sampson Chesnutt, the author’s parents, would both have been considered quadroons, as only one-quarter of their ancestral bloodlines was of African descent. In effect, the five nearly-white children of Andrew and Ann would have been considered “octoroons,” or as Chesnutt described himself, “seven-eighths white,” a racial fraction that would change neither his legal status as a black man nor guarantee him the civil liberties afforded to white men. It was these two central concerns, the mutability of racial distinction and the arbitrary lines of power it creates, that would consume Chesnutt’s life and letters until his death in 1932.

Growing up in the era of federal occupation provided young Chesnutt with substantial advantages in terms of his formal education. From the age of nine to fifteen, he attended The Howard School, which was erected by the Freedman's Bureau in 1867 on a piece of land that was purchased by seven local black men, including Jack Chesnutt, who each paid one hundred-thirty-six dollars in a climate of economic depression to ensure that their children would receive the academic opportunities for social advancement that they had been denied. Chesnutt would graduate with distinction from the school in 1873, and seven years later, at the age of twenty-two, he replaced his academic mentor, Robert Harris, as the principal of the institution, which was renamed the Colored Normal School after Reconstruction. Education alone, however, could not shield young Chesnutt from the realities of racial injustice. Similar to Twain, who was a nine-year-old boy when he saw a slave killed on the streets of Hannibal, Missouri, Chesnutt was also nine when he saw the dead body of a black man, believed to be a rapist, who had been gunned down on the steps of the Old Market House by a mob of white men in 1867. Although the ensuing trial resulted in death convictions of three white men, their sentences were soon commuted to life imprisonment. Shortly thereafter, President Andrew Johnson, a native of North Carolina, gave the accused men an executive pardon.⁵⁸ Two years later, when the Democrats won the state elections of 1870, Jack Chesnutt would lose his seat as justice of the peace and county commissioner, positions he had held in Cumberland County since the period of Republican ascendancy in 1868. These instances of political back-stepping with regard to legal protection and racial opportunity were among the first of many disappointments that Chesnutt would witness as the federally-mandated policies of Republican intervention gave way to the return of Democratic rule in the New South and the long-standing period of segregation and disenfranchisement that would follow.

A serious-minded prodigy at fifteen-years-old, Chesnutt left Fayetteville for a period of three years in 1873 to work as an Assistant Principal at the Peabody School in Charlotte, North Carolina, which was run by Cicero Harris, the younger brother of Robert Harris. During the summer months, Chesnutt taught in rural schoolhouses outside of Charlotte and in the countryside of South Carolina. The attention given to the young schoolteacher's light skin tone during these years seems to have been a source of irritation, perhaps prompting his short-lived decision to pass as white. In his 1875 journal entry, he complained that "twice to-day, or oftener I have been taken for 'white.' At the pond this morning one fellow said 'he'd be damned' if there was any nigger blood in me. . . . I believe I'll leave here and pass anyhow, for I am as white as any of them." While teaching in the rural Carolinas, Chesnutt became increasingly frustrated with the uneducated populace whom he called "the most bigoted, superstitious, hardest headed people in the world." It is with some irony that the folk belief in "ghosts, luck, horse shoes, cloud signs and all other kinds of nonsense" that irritated him in the summer of 1875 would become the cultural topos through which he would explore race and region twenty years later in *The Conjure Woman* (1899), the collection of short-fiction that solidified his reputation as a professional author.⁵⁹

In addition to an immersion in the black vernacular traditions that would serve him well throughout his literary career, Chesnutt's time away from Fayetteville was a period he devoted to self-improvement and independent study, acts of betterment that supported his belief that education "lessens and dissipates the effects of ignorance" and was essential for transcending racial oppression. He diligently practiced his German translations, copied the six major historical epochs listed in Joel Dorman Steele's *A Brief History of the United States for the Schools* (1874), while also studying Algebra, Pedagogical Theory, Composition and Rhetoric,

Phonology, and Latin. From the personal hygiene section of a self-improvement book entitled *A Handbook for Home Improvement* (1857), he copied passages regarding “The Daily Bath,” “The Feet,” “Spitting,” and “Change of Linen,” lessons that he would pass onto his students in a speech entitled “Etiquette” in 1881. Transcribing his favorite stanzas of poetry and composing several sentimental sonnets of his own, he immersed himself in the works of Lord Byron and Robert Burns, and he read Charles Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* and *Barnaby Rudge* to great delight. Chesnutt also “reread” Harriet Beech Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, claiming that the antebellum bestseller was “in no ways old to me.” Likely inspired by the novels he was reading, he tried his hand at what he called his “first real attempt at literature,” a short, uneventful sketch entitled “Lost in the Swamp” that takes place in the Sandhill region of eastern North Carolina, along the hinterlands of the Cape Fear River where he spent his youth and where he would set the majority of his Southern fiction in the years to come.⁶⁰

While reading widely and studying voraciously, seventeen-year-old Chesnutt showed a concerted interest in the race legislation of the new Congress and enthusiastically recorded the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which outlawed racial discrimination in public lodging facilities such as inns, hotels, and railways. He claimed the news to be “Glorious! Hurrah for the 43rd Congress! They were a long time about it, but it has passed at last!”⁶¹ In 1877, the year in which Reconstruction was officially put to rest by the Hayes-Tilden Compromise, Chesnutt returned to Fayetteville as the Assistant Principal of his *alma mater*. Shortly thereafter, on June 6, 1878, he married Susan Perry, a young teacher at the Colored Normal School who was daughter of a successful black barber in Fayetteville. His marriage to Perry, who carried more obvious strains of African ancestry than her husband, is a telling indication that Chesnutt’s racial worldview had evolved since his declaration three years prior that he would soon leave North

Carolina to pass as a white man.⁶² The five years that would pass between his return to Fayetteville in 1877 and his departure in 1883 mark a considerable turning point in Chesnutt's professional and personal life as it brought the birth of his daughters Ethel and Helen Maria as well as his promotion to Principal of the State Normal School following the death of Robert Harris. It was also during this period that he recorded with growing certainty that the "dream" of his life was to become an author. The expression of this literary goal was accompanied by his realization that if he were to achieve any great measure professional success, beyond the realm of the colored schoolhouse, he must leave the South forever.⁶³

Three months after reading *A Fool's Errand* in the fall of 1880, Chesnutt attended two speeches given by Frederick Douglass at the Second Fair of Colored Persons of North Carolina, an experience that did little to dissuade his belief that opportunities for advancement were born in the North rather than the South where, despite one's potential for greatness, "a nigger is a nigger, and nothing in the world can make him anything else but a nigger," as he lamented in his journal.⁶⁴ In what must have been motivational words to a young man pondering his own future, Douglass told the audience of black North Carolinians that "we must advance or recede. Each generation must improve or degenerate. . . . To keep up, we must move on. To stand still is to retrograde" (171). Expressing his indecision over abandoning his work in the South to move North, Chesnutt wrote that

I sometimes hesitate about deciding to go, because I am engaged in a good work, and have been doing, I fondly hope, some little good. But many reasons urge me the other way; and I think I could serve my race better in some more congenial occupation. And I shudder to think of exposing my children to the social and intellectual proscription to which I have been a victim. Is not my duty to them

paramount? And can I not find hundreds who will do gladly, and as well, the work which I am doing?

The question of whether his greatest contribution to the black community would be made by guiding a future generation in the colored classrooms of the South or challenging white prejudice in the race literature of the North was an issue upon which Chesnutt dwelled as he claimed to grow “more and more tired” of life in Greensboro.⁶⁵

After attending a local Republican convention in Fayetteville in the early 1880s, Chesnutt accepted a political nomination for town commissioner, a position that his father, Jack, had lost to the Democrats a decade prior. When word of his candidacy spread in Cumberland County, Chesnutt was pressured by the white trustees of the Colored Normal School to decline the nomination, an indication that his superiors felt the realm of black leadership was best confined to the segregated schoolhouse rather than the community politics at large. Chesnutt declared himself a “fool” to have accepted the nomination and withdrew his candidacy “as gracefully as possible.”⁶⁶ Perhaps nothing more trenchantly captures the embittered mood of Chesnutt towards the end of his stay in the South than the satirical poem entitled “A Perplexed Nigger” that he composed in February of 1882 at the age of twenty-four:

I’m “quite an intelligent nigger,”
 As *the phrase* in our section go,
 And I live in the land where the rice,
 And the corn and the cotton grow.
 I’m quite an ambitious nigger,
 But the Democrats now being in,
 I’m afraid I can’t get elected

To the Legislature again.

As I have no remarkable fondness,
 For handling the plow or the hoe,
 Boot-blackening or driving a carriage,
 Which I had to do not long ago;

And having no great predilection,
 For living on bacon and greens,
 I'll adopt a respectable calling,

And write for the magazines. . . .

Down here, if a crime is committed,
 And the criminal cannot be found,
 Suspicion will rest on a nigger,
 If there's no one in a mile around.

And ~~then~~ if when the nigger's accused is imprisoned [sic],

If guilty they don't wait to see;
 They take him away from the jailer
 And swing him right up to a tree.

A white man is tried by jury,
 And with plenty of friends and red tape,
 And the best friend of—ready money—
 Has at least a fair chance to escape.

But a nigger, perforce, must be guilty
 Because—any nigger in fact,

Under similar circumstances,
Would be capable of the act.
And it matters not whether he's guilty
Or not, it is nothing but right,
If he's likely to do any mischief,
To hang him for fear that he might.
And when white folks see anything clearly
In this particular light,
They don't hesitate for a moment,
To do what they think to be right.

I'm quite an intelligent nigger,
But such things I cannot understand,
When all men are free and equal,
By the highest law in the land.
I'm quite an intelligent nigger,
But I cannot exactly see,
Why there's one set of laws for the white folks,
And a different set for me.
Perhaps some wise white man or other
The riddle will kindly explain,
Why justice and Christian charity
Are different for different men,

Why they set us aside in the churches
 And in the common schools,
 And in the insane asylums
 They separate even the fools
 And some intellects philosophic,
 Have thought that even in Heaven,
 A sort of kitchen department
 To colored folks will be given.
 There's but one place ~~they don't separate us~~ [sic]
 we're not separated,
 The reasons I'm sure I can't tell,
 But no one has yet thought proper,
 To separate us in Hell!⁶⁷

In 1883, the same year that Congress overturned the Civil Rights Bill of 1875 that Chesnutt had celebrated enthusiastically eight years prior, he, along with Susie and their three small children, left the South forever. Similar to his parents who saw their freedom in antebellum Fayetteville compromised before the Civil War, Chesnutt witnessed the same process thirty-years later during the systematic disenfranchisement of the post-Reconstruction period. Taking the same journey North that Jack and Ann Maria had traveled with a small group of free blacks in 1856, Chesnutt relocated his family over six-hundred miles to Cleveland in 1883. Though not without its own share of racial politics and social setbacks, life in Ohio afforded considerably more opportunities for stability and success, and the two decades following Chesnutt's arrival would mark the most prolific and successful period of his literary career, culminating at the end of the century with the

publication of *The Conjure Woman* (1899), *The Wife of His Youth* (1899), *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), and *The Colonel's Dream* (1905).

As he was working towards the completion of *The House Behind the Cedars* in the 1890s, Chesnutt corresponded regularly with a literary celebrity of his day, George Washington Cable, whose most successful works *Old Creole Days* (1879), *The Grandissimes* (1880), and *Madame Delphine* (1881) had already been published when the two men struck up a literary friendship based on mutual admiration as well as a shared interest in the social and political prejudices facing African American citizens in the post-Reconstruction Period.⁶⁸ Despite their similar worldviews, however, the two authors had vastly different backgrounds, as Cable was an ex-Confederate born into a slave-holding family in the affluent New Orleans suburb of Faubourg de l'Annunciation.⁶⁹ Born on October 12, 1844, Cable was the fifth of six children of George Washington Cable, Sr., a descendent of Virginia planters, and Rebecca Boardman, a descendent of New England Puritans, who married in Lawrenceville, Indiana in 1834 and moved to New Orleans shortly after the financial crash of 1837. Taking full advantage of the economic opportunities in the bustling port city, George Sr. became partner in a wholesale grocer that furnished supplies to steamboats, of which he owned several on Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River, and he also ran a lumber and brick production business on the Tchefuncta River.⁷⁰ By 1840, he had accumulated "what was counted in those days as a fortune," as his son would later describe his financial success.⁷¹ For the first five years of Cable's childhood, his family lived in a spacious, low-country style home that had once been the "Big House" on a colonial plantation surrounded by orange groves, fig trees, live oaks, magnolias, and semitropical shrubs and flowers in a section of New Orleans that would later become known as the Garden District. At the height of their prosperity during this period, the Cable family owned as many as

eight slaves.⁷² Although George Sr. and Rebecca were not members of the elite social caste of French-speaking Creoles, they socialized with the growing numbers of *Américain* merchants, doctors, and lawyers who would come to dominate the political and economic interests of the city.⁷³

George Sr.'s prosperity in New Orleans was short-lived, however, and in 1849 he was forced to sell the family home on Annunciation Square after a series of financial losses that were exacerbated by a flood of historical proportions and two outbreaks of cholera and yellow fever.⁷⁴ For the next five years, Rebecca and the children lived primarily in Columbus, Indiana with relatives. The family reunited in 1854 and soon thereafter moved into a house on Seventh Street where Cable spent the remaining years of his childhood until the war.⁷⁵ Though he wrote to his father about being "very unhappy" without him during their long periods of separation, the majority of Cable's reflections of his early life are overwhelmingly positive of both New Orleans and the adventures, cultures, and natural wonders the it could offer young children⁷⁶ For example, in his 1893 article "New Orleans," which was published in the young reader's magazine *St. Nicholas*, Cable describes a city in which little boys embarked on day-long adventures watching churning steamboats on the Mississippi, fishing in Lake Pontchartrain, catching song birds, buying sugarcane blow guns from the Choctaw Indians, throwing lassos, tossing peach pits in a game of "Noyas," and making home-made water guns called "squirts" that could "throw a stream of water upon a cat or a dog, or a playmate's trousers, as much as forty feet away."⁷⁷ Writing of his early morning trips to the marketplace in the multicultural city, Cable would recall the sounds of "a bewildering chatter of all the world talking at once, mostly in German and French . . . a pounding of cleavers . . . a rattling of tins, a whetting of knives, a sawing of bones, a whistling of opera airs, a singing of folk-songs of Gascony and Italia, a

flutter of fowls, prattling and guffawing of negroes, mules braying, carts rumbling” as the smells of “raw meat, of parsley and potatoes, of fish, onions, pineapples, garlic, oranges, shrimps, and crabs, of hot loaves, coffee milk, sausages, and curds” wafted through the air.⁷⁸ The vernacular rhythms and sensory impressions of his childhood would resurface in his best literature, lending works such as *Old Creole Days* and *The Granddissimes* an atmosphere of exoticism and intrigue that could be evoked through setting as well as character.

Despite his fond memories of New Orleans, Cable’s childhood was not without hardships, the most central being the death of George Sr. in February of 1859. Along with one of his older sisters, Cable became responsible for providing for his family, and at age fourteen he quit school and took over his father’s job stamping boxes at the custom house, a position he held for two years until the outbreak of the war at which point the warehouse was used to manufacture swords and bayonets for the Confederate troops.⁷⁹ He soon found employment as a cashier at the wholesale grocer where his father was once partner, and this is where he was working on April 29, 1862 when New Orleans surrendered to Union troops who had arrived by boat to occupy the city. In his essay “New Orleans Before the Capture,” Cable describes the frenzy of women, children, and boys not of conscription age when they saw the “long-banished Stars and Stripes” enter the port and compared the chaotic energy to a “family fleeing a burning house” if you were to “multiply it by thousands upon thousands.”⁸⁰ Up and down the streets of New Orleans, Cable marched with a mob chanting “Hurrah for Jeff Davis! Hurrah for Jeff Davis! Shoot them! Kill them! Hang them!” as they followed two unarmed officers of the United States Navy proceeding towards City Hall where they would demand the surrender of the city. In his reflections of that day, published in *Century Magazine* in 1885, Cable claimed that the two Union officers who walked unarmed to City Hall completed “one of the bravest deeds I

ever saw done.”⁸¹ In Chapter L of *Dr. Sevier* (1884) and Chapters LIII and LIV *Kincaid’s Battery* (1908) Cable would also offer memorable descriptions of the pandemonium and excitement in New Orleans before its surrender.⁸²

After the fall of New Orleans in the spring of 1862, federal troops under the command of General Benjamin F. Butler occupied the city and enforced multiple orders that outraged loyal Confederates such as Cable and his family.⁸³ One such decree, called General Order No. 62, was issued by Butler on September 24, 1862 and required all residents over the age of eighteen to take an oath of allegiance to the United States or formally register as enemies of the state.⁸⁴ Within one month of the order, over 28,000 citizens of New Orleans took the oath, though Cable’s mother, Rebecca, and his two older sisters, Mary Louise and Antoinette, refused. Recalling his politics during this time, Cable described himself as “reeking with patriotism of the strongest pro-slavery type” and offering unwavering support for “Union, Slavery, and a White Man’s Government.”⁸⁵ When Order No. 62 was announced, Cable was two weeks away from the conscription age of eighteen and his younger brother, Jimmie, was only sixteen. “Banished into the starving Confederacy, almost penniless,”⁸⁶ as Cable would later describe their forced departure from New Orleans, the family relocated to Pike County, Mississippi, near the town of Summit, and moved into a plantation house called Oak Grove that was taking in Southern refugees such as themselves.⁸⁷ On October 9, 1863, three days before his nineteenth birthday, Cable left Oak Grove and joined Company J of the Fourth Mississippi Cavalry.⁸⁸ Though he received no enduring injuries from the war, he was wounded shortly after his enlistment and shot in the left armpit in February of 1864 during Sherman’s march to Meridian, Mississippi.⁸⁹

Other than an article devoted to his beloved cavalry-horse Sandy and another sketch describing his clerkship for General Nathan Bedford Forrest, Cable did not leave a detailed

record of his experiences riding with the Confederate Cavalry across Northern Mississippi, though decades after the war he would be described as a soldier who was “scrupulously observant of discipline, always at his post, and always courageous and daring.”⁹⁰ In his 1889 essay “My Politics,” however, Cable offers much insight into how his political views evolved during the war and how he came to regard slavery as a “deplorable error which in all its aspects we can now so plainly see our crime and curse.”⁹¹ Cable recalls his first break with popular opinion as occurring when he approached his twentieth birthday and began to have “thoughts and convictions” of his own that were illuminated by his reading of both Southern and Northern newspapers. Before this point, he had encountered only one man known to be an abolitionist, and the only Northern publication he had ever read was Harriett Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), which made little impression on him as a nine-year-old other than a “tearful longing to marry any girl who resembled Eva and would promise not to die.” Eventually becoming convinced of the “unwisdom” of secession, as he called it, Cable felt certain that he was “fighting to establish a scheme of government” that would “go to pieces” if the Confederacy won. When asked by a fellow soldier as to why he continued to fight, Cable explained that he viewed himself as a citizen and soldier of the Confederate government who was ordered “not to think, but to fight.” Though he openly questioned the wisdom of the South’s decision to separate from the Union, he saw “no unrighteousness in fighting for slavery” during this period and even recalled the “zest” with which he had aided in the recapture of two black prisoners-of-war who attempted to escape.⁹²

By the summer of 1865, Cable was a twenty-one-year-old veteran who had returned home to New Orleans “without one spark of loyalty to the United States Government” (4). After the war, his mother and sisters still depended upon him financially, leading him to take various

jobs as an errand boy in a tobacco house, a store clerk, an engineer's apprentice on a river surveying expedition, an accountant in the counting-room of a large cotton firm, and a columnist and reporter for the *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, the job that would forever change the trajectory of his professional life.⁹³ His instinct that secession was a mistake was strengthened in the late 1860s when he embarked upon a period of independent historical study that led to his "second dissent from popular opinion" when he learned that the doctrine of disunion that "thousands" of young Southerners such as himself had believed to be their "right" was in fact "renounced as a principle" in the Constitution.⁹⁴ "Angered" by this realization, Cable wondered what other facets of Southern life he had too readily accepted. He began to study the Bible and read passages such as the epistle of Philemon, which "many a sermon" from his childhood had used to defend slavery as the "divine right" of his people, and he found it to be misconstrued and unconvincing.⁹⁵ With his confidence in biblical justifications of slavery diminishing, Cable also began to feel a "revolutionary disloyalty" to the founding fathers as he gave more thought to the political subjugation of Southern blacks, particularly when local papers began to use the phrase "black peasantry" in a manner he found to be both "un-American" and "un-Democratic." Though during the late 1860s Cable claimed he was "fast growing heartily ashamed" of his former political views, he knew that a white man who attempted to aid the freedmen would face "a complete and ferocious ostracism" from Southern society, a fate that would ultimately be his own by the end of the next decade.⁹⁶

Similar to Tourg e's entrance into Southern novel-writing through contributions to small Southern newspapers, Cable honed his literary craft during the years he wrote for the *Picayune* between 1870 and 1872. After two years struggling to recover from a debilitating bout of malarial fever that he contracted while working as a rodman on the Atchafalaya River, Cable

married a childhood neighbor named Louise Stewart Bartlett in December of 1869, and it was during this time that he joined a literary club and began contributing poems to local papers. His hobby evolved into a job when he was hired by C. Harrison Parker to write a column on a weekly basis for the *Picayune*. The popular series that he signed “Drop Shot” began on February 27, 1870. In nearly ninety installments that were printed mostly in the Sunday paper, he covered wide-ranging topics in local affairs, current literature, and popular culture. There is a whimsical tone to many of Cable’s contributions, and he published nearly sixty of his own poems in the column. He also developed humorous anecdotes featuring a local-color character named Felix Lazarus who spoke in the vernacular.⁹⁷ Though he officially signed off on the “Drop Shot” series on July 9, 1871, he twice revived the column for two brief periods at the *Picayune*, where he had also begun to work as a full-time reporter.

Cable, however, felt that he was ill-suited for journalistic reporting and claimed to dislike “throwing down heterogeneous armloads of daily news” without the time to consider more thoroughly the issues upon which he reported for the historically Democratic newspaper. During his time with the *Picayune*, which coincided with the most tumultuous years of Federal Reconstruction in Louisiana, Cable twice earned the disapproval of his editors. The first instance of conflict occurred when he ceased publishing columns that berated a federally-appointed “carpetbagger” superintendent who forced white and black teachers to sit together for meetings on the public schools. His second dissent from the opinions of his editors occurred when he was assigned to report on an annual examination in the public schools in New Orleans. While visiting the segregated schoolhouses, he saw the dignity and rigor of the black schools and came upon the realization that the “day must come when the Negro must share and enjoy in common with the white race the whole scale of *public* rights and advantages provided under the American

government” and that “*public* society must be reconstructed on this basis.”⁹⁸ By observing the federally-appointed Reconstruction projects first-hand as a reporter he also realized that the policies of the imposed government were not for “black rule and white subjugation,” as popularly believed, but against “the rule of any race over any other, simply and arbitrarily race by race, or even class by class.” It was during his time reporting for the *Picayune* that Cable claimed also to see “more plainly than ever before that the so-called Democratic party of the South was really bent upon preserving the old order—minus slavery only—the old rule by race and class.” Ultimately, his foray into what he remembered as an “intensely partisan” era of political journalism during “the fiercest days of Reconstruction” laid the groundwork for his writings on Southern race relations in “The Freedmen’s Case in Equity” (1885) and “The Silent South” (1885).⁹⁹

After leaving the *Picayune* as a disillusioned reporter in 1871, Cable returned to work as a counting-room accountant and soon thereafter became the private secretary for his employer, a position that earned him promotion to the Treasurer’s Clerk and Secretary of the Finance Committee of the New Orleans Cotton Exchange. He worked in this professional capacity until 1879, and it was during these years that Cable began to write short stories as well as political nonfiction that would earn him the resentment of his hometown community. His first venture into popular literature began when the *Picayune*, which had become increasingly conservative since his departure, hired their former journalist to contribute historical sketches of the city.¹⁰⁰ In order to prepare the essays that were eventually published as “Churches and Charities of New Orleans” in February and March of 1872, Cable spent many hours in the city archive where he “read hundreds of old newspapers.” Finding himself “deeply interested” in the colonial records, particularly those regarding the restrictive race laws under the Code Noir, he was “moved at last

to write some short stories of old New Orleans.” One such work entitled “Bibi” was composed in what he called “sheer indignation” of the archaic Black Code and told the story of an enslaved African prince who was brutally murdered after escaping to the swamps.¹⁰¹ Though his editors felt the work was too contentious to be published in the early 1870s, it eventually became the foundation for the development of the slave Bras-Coupé in *The Grandissimes* (1880).¹⁰²

Between 1873 and 1876, Cable published “‘Sieur George,” “Belles Demoiselles Plantation,” “‘Tite Poulette,” “Jean-Ah Poquelin,” “Madame Délicieuse,” “Don Joaquin,” “Café des Exilés,” and “Posson Jone” in leading literary magazines.¹⁰³ The seven stories from this period that were published as *Old Creole Days* in 1879 are not overtly political in theme, and the debut of a native son’s literary success was celebrated in nearly all of the papers in New Orleans.¹⁰⁴ Cable’s personal politics, however, had radicalized significantly since the early part of the decade in which he composed the majority of the works that were included in the collection. In 1875, for instance, several local incidents occurred that prompted Cable to publish his first political argument against the old order. Among the many acts of racial antagonism that were taking place throughout the city, there was a mass protest over the hiring a mulatto teacher at a public school, an attempt to overtake the appointed state-government by force, and the eviction of the black female students from the city’s grammar and high schools. Under the alias of “A Southern White Man,” Cable wrote a letter to the *New Orleans Bulletin* fervently condemning these acts that were being applauded in local papers.¹⁰⁵ He not only argued in favor of the integration of public schools but also pointed out the cultural hypocrisy of a white society that trusted black women to nurse their infants but would not allow them to educate their children, despite their individual merits as school teachers.

In 1878, one year before *Old Creole Days* appeared, Cable was contracted by *Scribner's Monthly* to contribute a serial novel to the magazine. For the next two years he was immersed at work on *The Grandissimes*, a Creole saga that he intended to make “as truly a political work as it ever has been called.” When asked by friends and family why he would desire to insult thousands of his “own people,” Cable contended he was motivated not by malice but by the desire to write “as near to truth and justice” as he could. After witnessing the failures of Reconstruction, he felt the injustices he sought to reform would have to be settled by white Southerners in their “own conscience” before the North and South could successfully intervene and “settle it between them.”¹⁰⁶ Cable’s pursuit of exposing and reforming racial intolerance through literature is illustrated to varying degrees in *The Grandissimes* (1880), *Madame Delphine* (1881), and *John March, Southerner* (1894), but it is his works of nonfiction that give a more direct and damning view of Southern life. Whereas *The Grandissimes* fueled resentment towards Cable, especially from the Creole class, it was ultimately the political essays collected in *The Silent South* (1885) and *The Negro Question* (1890) that forever transformed the native son of New Orleans into an outcast in the eyes of his neighbors. Similar to Chesnut and Tourg e’s expatriation from the South, Cable’s inability to identify with the majority consensus towards black subjugation forced him to leave for the North, which he eventually did in 1885 when he relocated his family to Northampton, Massachusetts.

One year before Cable and his family left New Orleans permanently, he embarked upon a wildly successful promotional reading tour in the North with Mark Twain, an author he admired greatly. Although the two men were opposites in temperament, they had similar backgrounds and shared a deep respect for one another’s art, each having called the other a “genius” at different points in his literary career.¹⁰⁷ Both were Southerners with ambitious and risk-taking

fathers who died during the authors' early adolescence, and both writers grew up in families that identified with the mores of upper-class gentility despite recurrent episodes of financial instability. Like Cable, Twain supported the Confederacy and descended from a slave-holding family with Virginia planter roots on his paternal line. Twain's father, John Marshall Clemens, was proud of telling his children that he came from a long line of Virginia slaveholders, and his mother, Jane Lampton Clemens, was a Kentuckian by birth who could also trace her ancestry back to pre-Revolutionary Virginia. When Jane married John Marshall Clemens in Lexington, Kentucky in 1823 she brought with her no property or money other than "two or three negroes."¹⁰⁸ The sixth of her seven children, Samuel Langhorne, or "Sammy" as he was known to his family, was born in the backwoods village of Florida, Missouri in 1835. Four years later the family moved forty miles east to Hannibal, the river port town that would inspire the fictional worlds of St. Petersburg in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Dawson's Landing in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, two of the most powerful works of literature devoted to the problems of racial injustice in postbellum America.

Similar to Cable's youth in New Orleans, Twain was reared in a Southern society where the local papers "said nothing against" slavery and all of the white churches taught that "it was a holy thing, and that the doubter need only look in the Bible if he wish to settle his mind." Slavery was in many ways normalized by his parents' acceptance of the institution and he would recall having "no aversion" to the practice in his schoolboy days.¹⁰⁹ In 1841, when he was five, his father earned the pride of the community when he served as the foreman on a jury that convicted three abolitionists with breaking the law for aiding in the escape of five runaways by taking them across the river to Illinois.¹¹⁰ Describing his mother's acceptance of slavery before the Civil War, Twain wrote that she had heard it "defended and sanctified" her entire life by "the

wise and the good and the holy” members of society who were “unanimous in the conviction that slavery was right, righteous, sacred, and the peculiar pet of the Deity.” Reflecting upon why his mother was unable to see slavery as the “bald, grotesque, and unwarrantable usurpation” that he later felt it to be, Twain concluded that “training and association can accomplish strange miracles,” a theme echoed in the swapping of black and white infants who trade fates for twenty years in *Pudd’nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins* (1894).¹¹¹

In periods of financial stability the Clemens family owned or rented slaves, a social custom that distinguished them as members of Hannibal’s upper-class in a town that was comprised of 2,000 whites and 300 slaves in 1850.¹¹² Twain was also exposed to slaves on the farm of his uncle John Quarles, who was his mother’s brother-in-law and lived in the town of Florida where he was born. Throughout his childhood, Twain spent several months of the year on the 230-acre Quarles Farm where he recalled there being “fifteen or twenty negroes.” Two slaves on the farm in particular, Aunt Hannah and Uncle Daniel, made a lasting impression upon him. From a slave girl named Mary who was his closest playmate, Twain recalled learning that Aunt Hannah was “a thousand years old” and had known Moses. He also remembered her praying often and warning the children about the dangers of witches. In his autobiography, Twain would recall Uncle Daniel and write that

he has served me well, these many, many years. I have not seen him for more than half a century, and yet spiritually I have had his welcome company a good part of that time, and have staged him in books under his own name and as “Jim,” and carted him all around. . . . It was on the farm that I got my strong liking for his race and my appreciation of certain of its finest qualities.¹¹³

Twain would also credit Uncle Daniel's evocative and powerful style of storytelling as one of the greatest delights of his childhood and the source from which his own enchantment with the rhythms of the Southern vernacular evolved.¹¹⁴ Reflecting on the influential friendships with slaves from his childhood, Twain would point out that "we were comrades and yet not comrades; color and condition interposed a subtle line which both parties were conscious of and which rendered complete fusion impossible," an observation that in many ways evokes the bond between Huck and Jim on the Mississippi River.¹¹⁵

In his autobiography Twain claims to have never seen a slave abused on his uncle's farm. He also describes the slavery in Hannibal as "mild" and "domestic" in nature, noting that "cruelties were very rare and exceedingly and wholesomely unpopular."¹¹⁶ At other points in his career, however, he would contradict these claims. To his biographer, for instance, he would describe lying in his bed as a four year-old child and hearing a runaway slave being tied and beaten outside.¹¹⁷ He also wrote of having the knowledge at a very young age that being sold downriver to the plantations of the Deep South was a fate equivalent to being sent to "hell." Having observed one such scene, he would recall "a dozen black men and women" chained together on the ground "awaiting shipment" with the "saddest" faces he had ever seen.¹¹⁸ The knowledge that being sent downriver was a virtual death sentence likely impacted Twain a great deal in 1842, when his father sold their slave girl Jennie to a notorious slave trader in Hannibal named William Bebee whom all considered the devil himself.¹¹⁹ Described as being "one of the family" since the early days of Marshall and Jane's marriage, Jennie helped nurse Sammy back to health when he was born two-months premature in late November of 1835, and she also saved him from drowning in a local creek when he was a small boy. Twain once described Jennie as "tall, well formed, nearly black" and twice alluded to the fact that she had been tricked into being

sold down the river. Years later she was spotted with family members while working as a chambermaid on a Mississippi steamer, biographical facts that very much resemble the fate of the slave Roxana in *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson*.¹²⁰

Twain would also describe the family's "little slave boy" named Sandy who spent his days "singing, whistling, yelling, whooping, laughing" in a manner that was "maddening" to the young author who begged his mother to "shut him up." According to Twain, his mother tearfully explained that Sandy's singing showed her that "he is not remembering" that he will never see his own mother again. When Sandy was quiet, on the other hand, she feared that he was "thinking" about their estrangement, a reality that Jane Clemens told her son she could not "bear" to watch him contemplate.¹²¹ Later in his life, Twain would note that Sandy was the inspiration for the young black child named Jim in the opening chapters of *Tom Sawyer*, whom Tom attempts to trick into whitewashing a fence.¹²²

Throughout his early life, Twain was exposed to multiple scenes of violence and death in the black and white communities of Hannibal. In 1839, when Twain was four, his older sister Margaret died of "bilious fever." Three years later, in 1842, his nine-year-old brother Benjamin died of the same condition. Frenzied with grief and terror, Jane Clemens had each child walk into Benjamin's room and place a hand on his corpse. In 1845, when Twain was ten-years-old, the father of one of his playmates shot and killed a local farmer less than a block from the Clemens family's home. While his father took depositions, Sammy watched the victim being taken into the local drug store and laid on his back where it took him half an hour to die.¹²³ A matter of months later, he saw a slave killed on the streets of Hannibal when his master threw "a lump of iron ore" at his head "for doing something awkwardly—as if that were a crime." Much later in his life, Twain recalled the incident and concluded that "I knew the man had a right to

kill his slave if he wanted to, and yet it seemed a pitiful thing and somehow wrong, though why wrong I was not deep enough to explain if I had been asked to do it. Nobody in the village approved of that murder, but of course no one said much about it.¹²⁴ In the same year that he witnessed two murders on the streets of Hannibal there was an epidemic of measles that he described as causing “a most alarming slaughter among the little people,” creating “a funeral almost daily” and leaving the mothers “nearly demented with fright.”¹²⁵ Two years later John Marshall Clemens died in his home on March 24, 1847. In several different autobiographical entries, Twain suggests that he witnessed his father’s autopsy by peaking through a keyhole at age twelve.¹²⁶ Only months after his father’s death in the summer of 1847 young Sammy and his playmates came across the mutilated corpse of a runaway slave named Neriam Todd floating in the Mississippi River near Sny Island, an incident that likely influenced the fictional world of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, a novel as much about childhood as it is about death and violence on every turn of the river.¹²⁷

Much like Cable’s early entrance into the world of adult responsibilities, when John Marshall Clemens died in 1847, Twain dropped out of school to help support his family financially. Among his many jobs he worked at a grocery store, a bookstore, an apothecary shop, and a blacksmith’s shop. He also delivered newspapers and was employed as a “printer’s devil” for the *Hannibal Gazette*. In June 1848, he was apprenticed by his mother to Joseph P. Ament, the publisher of the new *Hannibal Courier*. It was here that Twain learned how to set type and found a direct line to local news, town gossip, and national politics. In 1849, at the age of fourteen, he set a grisly article describing the rape and murder of a twelve-year-old girl by a young slave in a neighboring town, a crime that led to the county’s first legal execution and electrified Hannibal with terror and an increased atmosphere of racial tension.¹²⁸ While at the

Courier Twain also observed the bad behavior of a seventeen-year-old employee named Wales McCormick whom he remembered as making teasing sexual advances to a “refined” and “very handsome” slave woman in the presence of her elderly mother, who was the publisher’s cook. Twain writes that his coworker “constantly and persistently and loudly and elaborately made love” to the slave woman, worrying little that he was “distressing the life out of her” and “worrying her old mother to death.” Though Twain claimed to find his friend’s antics “killingly funny,” he also knew that the slave mother “quite well understood that by the customs of slaveholding communities it was Wales’s right to make love to that girl if he wanted to,” as her daughter, whom Twain describes as a “mulatto girl,” was likely the product of such a predicament.¹²⁹

Between 1851 and 1853 Twain worked for *The Hannibal Journal*, which his older brother Orion had recently purchased.¹³⁰ Similar to Tourgée and Cable’s experiences working for small Southern papers, Twain’s years at the *Journal* were a time of literary experimentation. He wrote satiric columns, invented literary personas, and gave commentary on life in Hannibal that earned him both fans and enemies.¹³¹ His career at the *Journal*, however, was short-lived and in May of 1853 Twain left Hannibal to find work as a typesetter in the Northern cities of St. Louis, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. On August 24, 1853 at the age of eighteen, he wrote to his mother from Syracuse, New York. In his letter he spoke of seeing the city courthouse that two years prior had been surrounded by armed soldiers to block the “infernal abolitionists” who were trying “to prevent the rescue of McReynolds’ nigger,” a runaway slave from Hannibal who was required to be returned to Missouri in accordance with the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. These reflections suggest the pro-slavery sentiments he held at this juncture of his life, as does his wise-cracking assertion that “I reckon I had better black my face, for in

these Eastern States niggers are considerably better than white people.”¹³² Much later in his life, Twain described himself during this period as being filled with “ignorance, intolerance, egotism, self-assertion, opaque perception, dense & pitiful chuckle-headedness.” Writing in 1876, he sarcastically compared himself at “19-20” years of age as to “what the average Southerner is at 60 to-day,” implying how much he had evolved since the war.¹³³

In the late 1850s Twain pursued his dream of becoming a riverboat pilot, but in the summer of 1858 his life on the Mississippi was met with intense tragedy when his brother Henry was killed in an engine explosion on the riverboat *Pennsylvania*. Twain had encouraged his younger brother to come work with him, and he was devastated with his death.¹³⁴ Twain continued his piloting career on the river, and he was still there on December 20, 1861 when South Carolina seceded from the Union. In an interesting biographical coincidence with George Washington Cable, Twain was also in New Orleans on January 26, 1861 when Louisiana left the Union. Unlike Cable, however, Twain’s involvement with the Confederate cause was extremely short-lived. After returning to Hannibal in the summer of 1861, he and fifteen acquaintances from childhood formed the Ralls County Rangers, though approximately half of the unit would abandon the cause in a matter of months.¹³⁵

In his loosely autobiographical sketch published in 1885 entitled “The History of a Campaign that Failed,” Twain recalls the misadventures of a disorganized group of naïve and immature Confederates seeking the adventure of war but having no understanding of the bravery, suffering, and death it would require. Though the Ralls County Rangers did not kill an unarmed Union soldier while Twain was associated with them, his description participating in such an act in “The Private History of a Campaign that Failed” remains a poignant description of death in war:

The thought shot straight through me that I was a murderer, that I had killed a man, a man who had never done me any harm. That was the coldest sensation that ever went through my marrow. I was down by him in a moment, helplessly stroking his forehead, and I would have given anything then, my own life freely, to make him again what he had been five minutes before. . . . It seemed the epitome of war, that all war must just be the killing of strangers you would help if you found them in trouble, and who would help you if you needed it. My campaign was spoiled. It seemed to me that I was not equipped for this awful business.¹³⁶

Shortly after deserting the Confederate Army, Twain followed Orion to Virginia City, Nevada, where his older brother had been appointed by Abraham Lincoln to serve as the Republican Secretary of the new territory.

It was during this period out West that Twain first publically expressed his ideological break from the Confederate cause. In an early 1862 letter written shortly after his arrival in the territory, he lamented that “our Missourians” had been “thrashed” in a recent battle against General Samuel Curtis’s Union troops.¹³⁷ Six months later, however, as Arthur G. Pettit has pointed out, Twain was referring to the Northern armies as “we” in his correspondence and writing impassioned articles and editorials in support of the Union as a reporter for the *Virginia City Title*. In his 1863 article “True Son of the Union,” for example, he would defend his political position as a former-Confederate turned Unionist.¹³⁸ Despite his changing loyalties on account of preserving the Union, Twain was still very much a Southerner at heart, as he would make abundantly clear in a practical joke that he published in the *Territorial Enterprise* in May of 1864 when he claimed the wartime fundraising profits of a local group of Republican society

ladies were in fact being sent to aid a “Miscegenation Society somewhere in the East,” a prank that foreshadows the burlesque of class and bloodlines that would become the central plot device of *Pudd’nhead Wilson* three decades later.¹³⁹

Though Twain earned substantial popularity writing comic sketches, freelance letters, and satirical political columns for the *Territorial Enterprise*, after the miscegenation hoax he left Nevada for good. The scandal not only compromised the political reputation of Orion Clemens in a solidly Republican territory, but it also escalated tensions between Twain and a rival newspaperman for the *Virginia Daily Union* who had challenged him to a duel.¹⁴⁰ Part of the indignation in Virginia City was owed to the political climate back East. Five months prior in December of 1863, the term “miscegenation” entered the American vernacular for the first time when a group of Democrats published a fake propagandist pamphlet supposedly on behalf of the Republican Party entitled *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro* in an effort to thwart the chances of Lincoln’s reelection in the 1864 Presidential campaign.¹⁴¹ Ironically, the pamphlet would suggest that Lincoln supported the same concepts of racial amalgamation that Charles Chesnutt predicted in “The Future American” at the turn of the next century. Whereas Chesnutt was sincere in his vision of a new racial type formed through the intermarriage of whites and blacks until they were indistinguishable, the pamphlet was meant to appall supporters of the President, especially those who had opposed slavery.¹⁴² *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races* was not revealed to be a hoax until November of 1864. Thus the outrage of the society ladies of Virginia City created a scandal of enormous proportions for Twain, who left Nevada for San Francisco only weeks after the fall-out on May 29, 1864.¹⁴³

While in California Twain contributed sketches to a weekly called *Golden Era*, reported local events for the *Morning Call*, and sold essays and sketches to the *Californian*.¹⁴⁴ It was during this period that he wrote to Orion that becoming an author of humorous fiction was his calling and that

I never had but two **powerful** ambitions in my life. One was to be a pilot, & the other a preacher of the gospel. I accomplished the one & failed in the other, **because** I could not supply myself with the necessary stock in trade—*i. e.*, religion. . . . But I *have* had a “call” to literature, of a low order—*i. e.* humorous. It is nothing to be proud of, but it is my strongest suit, & if I were to listen to that maxim of stern *duty* which says that to do right you **must** multiply . . . the talents which the Almighty entrusts to your keeping, I would long ago have ceased to meddle with things for which I was by nature unfitted & turned my attention to seriously scribbling to excite the laughter of God’s creatures. Poor, pitiful business!¹⁴⁵

Twain soon found national recognition with the publication of “Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog,” which appeared in the *Saturday Press* in New York on November 18, 1865.¹⁴⁶ In 1866, he left on a voyage as a newspaper correspondent for the Sandwich Islands in Hawaii and shortly thereafter he would embark again as a reporter on the luxury cruise ship *Quaker City* to Europe and the Middle East. The letters he contributed to the San Francisco *Daily Alta California* during the *Quaker City* journey would eventually become the foundation of his first major commercial success, *The Innocents Abroad*, which was published in 1869.¹⁴⁷ In the next four years, he would publish *Roughing It* (1872) and *The Gilded Age* (1873), each work earning him increased fame and wealth.

After his voyage to the Holy Land in 1868, Twain moved to New York and began courting Olivia Langdon, the daughter of a wealthy New England family who had deep ties to the abolitionist movement before the war.¹⁴⁸ Whether it was the influence of the Langdons or his travels away from Hannibal and around the world, Twain's writings became more socially progressive during this period, especially with regard to practices of racial injustice. On March 4, 1869, for instance, he wrote a scathing piece of satire entitled "The White House Funeral" that derided President Johnson and the Democratic Party's failure to protect the emancipated slaves in the Deep South. In the article, which was never published, Twain depicts President Johnson giving a self-congratulatory farewell speech at the end of his term:

My great deeds speak for themselves. I vetoed the Reconstruction acts; I vetoed the Freedmen's Bureau; I vetoed civil liberty; I vetoed Stanton; I vetoed everything & everybody that the malignant Northern hordes approved; I hugged traitors to my bosom; I pardoned them by regiments & brigades; I was the friend & protector of assassins & perjurers; I smiled upon the Ku-Klux; I delivered the Union men of the South & their belongings over to murder, robbery, & arson; I filled the Government offices all over this whole land with the vilest scum that could be scraped from the political gutters & the ranks of Union-haters. . . .
Born & reared "poor white trash," I have clung to my native instincts, & done every small, mean thing my eager hands could find to do.¹⁴⁹

Twain again satirized the nation's refusal to acknowledge Southern violence in "Only a Nigger," a short sketch that was published in *Buffalo Express* on August 26, 1869. Reporting on a recent lynching of a black man in Memphis who was subsequently found to be innocent of the rape of a white woman, Twain wrote that "mistakes will happen. . . . There is no good reason why

Southern gentlemen should worry themselves with useless regrets, so long as only an innocent ‘nigger’ is hanged, or toasted or knoted [sic] to death, now and then.”¹⁵⁰ The ironic downplaying of the death of a black man in the article would be echoed a decade later in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* when Aunt Sally asks if anyone was hurt on a supposed steamboat explosion. To her concerned inquiry, Huck replies: “No’m. Killed a nigger.” With relief Aunt Sally responds that “well, it’s luck; because sometimes people do get hurt.”¹⁵¹ The manner in which Huck answers Aunt Sally illustrates his understanding that she does not include a “nigger” in the category of “people” in matters of life and death, a lack of humanistic empathy that Twain suggests is far too common in the American people in “Only a Nigger.”

Twain continued to explore the ways in which white society could not relate with the black American experience in “A True Story, Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It” in 1874, which centers upon the life story of a former slave. In the sketch, Twain claims he was sitting with his house servants on a summer evening when he asked his cook “Aunt Rachel how is it that you’ve lived sixty years and never had any trouble?”¹⁵² Within the frame structure, Aunt Rachel responds to her employer’s light-hearted inquiry with a horrific tale of her life as a slave before the Civil War. In an act of defiance not unlike Roxy’s hitting her captor over the head with a piece of wood in *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, Aunt Rachel recalls beating slave traders with the chains on her hands when they took away her children. Her closing remark that “On, no, Misto C—, *I hain’t had no trouble. An’ no joy!*” thus resonates as an ironic condemnation of Twain’s blithe assumption that she had endured neither hardship nor “trouble” as a black American who had lived through slavery.¹⁵³ In the decade following the publication of “A True Story,” Twain wrote three more best-selling accounts of life in the racially-divided South: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1874), *Life on the Mississippi* (1881), and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885).

Whereas slavery is secondary to the plot of *Tom Sawyer*, it is central to the theme of *Huckleberry Finn*, and several letters from the early 1880s suggest Twain's increased commitment to the improvement of African American lives. In 1881, for instance, he wrote a letter to President James Garfield on behalf of a federal appointment for Frederick Douglass whom he described as a personal friend. Twain opened his letter to the President with the assertion that

I am writing this as a simple citizen—I am not drawing on my fund of influence at all. . . . I beg permission to hope that you will retain Mr. Douglas in his present office of Marshal of Washington, if such a course will not clash with your own preferences, or with the expediencies & interests of your administration. I offer this petition with peculiar pleasure & strong desire, because I so honor this man's high & blemishless character & so admire his brave long crusade for the liberties & elevation of his race. He is a personal friend of mine, but that is nothing to the point—his history would move me to say these things, without that. And to feel them, too.¹⁵⁴

While on the "Twins of Genius" tour with Cable four years later, Twain met a young African American student named Warner T. McGuinn during a campus visit to Yale University. On December 24, 1885, Twain wrote to the Dean of Yale Law School and offered to pay Wayland's tuition and remaining expenses. In his letter, he declared that "I do not believe I would very cheerfully help a white student who would ask a benevolence of a stranger, but I do not feel so badly about the other color. We have ground the manhood out of them, & the shame is ours, not theirs, & we should pay for it."¹⁵⁵ The suggestion that the white community should in some respect "pay" for the nation's sins against black Americans would become the central theme of

Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins, which was published one decade later in 1894. The issues of slavery, mixed bloodlines, false chivalry, and black revenge that Twain explored to different extents in works such as "Only a Nigger," "A True Story," *Tom Sawyer*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and *Huckleberry Finn* resurface with astounding satire and pessimism in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the novel that stands as his most comprehensive and damning representation of Southern race relations.

What unites all of the major pieces of Southern fiction written by Tourgée, Chesnutt, and Twain in the postwar period is the manner in which the authors presented socially reformist themes that were relevant to the contemporary black American experience in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Whereas Cable depicts the cultural practices of miscegenation, white elitism, and racial violence through romantic plotlines and redemptive character transformations in *The Grandissimes*, Twain explores the same issues with devastating irony and cynicism throughout *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, a novel that offers no optimistic vision of reconciliation between the races. While Cable and Twain focus on slaveholding societies before the Civil War, both Tourgée and Chesnutt use postbellum settings in North Carolina during Federal Reconstruction in *A Fool's Errand*, *Bricks without Straw*, *Mandy Oxendine* and *The House Behind the Cedars*, works that also engage issues of bloodlines, identity, and citizenship for Americans of color in the racially-divided South. Chesnutt would return to these themes much later in his career in *Paul Marchand*, *F. M. C.* and *The Quarry*, works that underscore the persisting complexities of race and citizenship in America in the twentieth-century.

Within a postbellum era in which nearly two-thirds of the short fiction syndicated to newspapers and magazines was Southern in setting, nostalgic literary portraits of plantation life,

slavery, and intersectional romances dominated the popular marketplace. At different points in their careers, all of the authors voiced their resistance to these types of sentimental contributions to Southern literature. Tourgée, for instance, complained that the Confederate soldier was becoming the “popular hero” in American fiction and suggested that the nation’s literature “has become not only Southern in type but distinctly Confederate in sympathy.”¹⁵⁶ Likewise, Cable complained that there could be no “element of advancement” in a culture that was not “widowed from the past” and concluded that “a new literature” was impossible to develop under these conditions.¹⁵⁷ Twain also complained that Southern authors “write for the past, not the present; they use obsolete forms, and a dead language.”¹⁵⁸ Chesnutt, the only African American of the group, voiced a more specific grievance with regard to representations of black protagonists whose “chief virtues have been their dog-like fidelity to their old master, for whom they have been willing to sacrifice almost life itself.”¹⁵⁹ By creating more authentic and psychologically complex portraits of Southern life in works such as *A Fool’s Errand*, *Bricks without Straw*, *The Grandissimes*, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, *Mandy Oxendine*, and *The House Behind the Cedars*, all of the writers broke with the literary traditions of the past and wrote for an uncertain future in a period of unprecedented change in American life and letters.

Notes

¹The Western Reserve consisted of twelve counties on a fertile stretch of farming land along the Southern shore of Lake Erie. See Mark Emory Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice: Albion Tourgée and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 47-49.

²In February of 1843, Tourgée's mother, Louise Emma Winegar, died of tuberculosis. Valentine Tourgée, Jr. eventually remarried and moved the family to the township of Kingsville, where Albion Tourgée spent the majority of his youth, except for a period of adolescent rebellion in the 1850s when he left home to live with maternal relatives in Lee, Massachusetts. See Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 51-52.

³Elliott explains that the Western Reserve was known as "the last footprint of Puritanism" in the West because it marked "the terminal point of a solid line of New England migration that stretched from Massachusetts, through Connecticut, across upstate New York, and through western Pennsylvania, to Northeastern Ohio." For this reason, its townships and villages resemble those of New England in terms of their political, religious, and cultural tendencies. See Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 47-48, 49.

⁴Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 49.

⁵Elliott outlines the political accomplishments and personal setbacks that took place during the fourteen years that Tourgée lived in Greensboro, North Carolina in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of *Color-Blind Justice*, 102-61.

⁶North Carolina Governor Jonathan Worth wrote to E. A. Jones on January 7, 1868 and depicted Tourgée as a Yankee outcast of "most detestable character." See *Correspondence of*

Jonathan Worth, Vol. II, ed. J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton (Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton Printing Company, 1909), 1120.

⁷Historical Census Browser. Accessed through the University of Virginia, Geospatial and Statistical Data Center: <http://mapserver.lib.virginia.edu>

⁸Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 45.

⁹Albion W. Tourgée, “A Memorial of Frederick Douglass from the City of Boston,” in *Undaunted Radical: The Selected Writings and Speeches of Albion W. Tourgée*, ed. Mark Elliott and John David Smith (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 215.

¹⁰Tourgée, *Undaunted Radical*, 212, 215.

¹¹Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 10-12.

¹²Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 12.

¹³Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 71-72, 104.

¹⁴Roy F. Dibble, *Albion W. Tourgée* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1968), 24.

¹⁵Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 85.

¹⁶Quoted in Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 88, 87, 96.

¹⁷Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 22-23.

¹⁸Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 19-20, 23.

¹⁹Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 47.

²⁰Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 24-25.

²¹Though Tourgée would claim that the move to the South was largely because of his need for a milder climate that would be beneficial to his wounds, it is likely that his desire to serve his country by assisting the former slaves was part of the impetus of his relocation. With this in mind, it seems no coincidence that he chose to move with Emma to Guilford County,

North Carolina, the same town that he focused on when composed an essay expressing his outrage towards the mob burning of Hinton Rowan Helper's book *The Impending Crisis of the South* and the breach of civil liberties there that led to the arrest of several citizens for illegally owning a copy. See Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 28-29.

²²Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 105.

²³Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 105-06.

²⁴Tourgée's relationship with Seneca Kuhn and R. L. Pettingill is described in Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 105, 111-13.

²⁵At the Southern Loyalist Convention, Frederick Douglass and Theodore Tilton marched in together with arms linked as representation of Northern and Southern Republicans working together to protest the Reconstruction policies of President Andrew Johnson. See Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 52.

²⁶Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 108-09.

²⁷Jonathan Worth to the editor of the *Greensboro Patriot*, Sept. 10, 1866; Jonathan Worth to John A. Gilmer, Sept. 11, 1866; Jonathan Worth to A. M. Tominson, Sept. 13, 1866, in *Correspondence of Jonathan Worth*, Vol. II, 776, 777, 780.

²⁸Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 110.

²⁹A. V. Sullivan to Jonathan Worth, Sept. 19, 1866, in *Correspondence of Jonathan Worth*, Vol. II, 787-88.

³⁰Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 114, 115.

³¹Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 64-66, 65.

³²Albion W. Tourgée, "To the Voters of Guilford," in *Undaunted Radical*, 25-27.

³³Tourgée, "To the Voters of Guilford," 26, 26-27.

³⁴Dibble, *Albion W. Tourgée*, 40.

³⁵Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 95.

³⁶Albion W. Tourgée, "Speech on Elective Franchise," in Mark Emory Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice: Albion Tourgée and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 39.

³⁷Tourgée, "Speech on Elective Franchise," 36. Tourgée did not actually witness the Battle of Fort Pillow, as he claims in his speech. His allusion to the battle was a rhetorical tactic to sway the sympathy of his listeners towards the sacrifice of black soldiers for the Union. See Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 125-26.

³⁸Tourgée, "Speech on Elective Franchise," 36.

³⁹Dibble, *Albion W. Tourgée*, 43-44.

⁴⁰Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 163-165.

⁴¹Facsimile copy of undated letter from "42 Brigade Red Men of Carolina" to Albion W. Tourgée appears in Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 176.

⁴²Dibble, *Albion W. Tourgée*, 51.

⁴³Quoted in Dibble, *Albion W. Tourgée*, 45.

⁴⁴Albion W. Tourgée to Senator Joseph C. Abbott, May 24, 1870, in Mark Emory Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice: Albion Tourgée and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 51.

⁴⁵Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 158.

⁴⁶Olsen, *Carpetbagger's Crusade*, 212. Also see Albion W. Tourgée, *The "C" Letters. As Published in "The North State"* (Greensboro: "The North State" Book and Job Printing Offer, 1878).

⁴⁷Albion W. Tourg  e, *A Fool's Errand: A Novel of the South During Reconstruction* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005), 24-25.

⁴⁸Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Richard H. Brodhead (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 125.

⁴⁹*The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 126.

⁵⁰William L. Andrews, *The Literary Career of Charles W. Chesnutt* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1980), 1-16.

⁵¹Charles W. Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars*, ed. Judith Jackson Fossett (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 109.

⁵²In "The Free Colored People of North Carolina," Chesnutt notes that the free colored population's right to vote until 1835 can be compared to the Jewish population, who did not earn the right to vote in North Carolina until 1860. He also notes that people of color and white people were not forbidden to marry until 1830, "though social prejudice had always discouraged it." See Charles Chesnutt, "The Free Colored People of North Carolina," *Southern Workman* 31 (1902): 137.

⁵³In 1850, the state with the greatest number of free people of color was Maryland, with 87, 189 slaves, 83, 942 free people of color, and a white population of 515, 918. Georgia, by comparison, had the smallest free black population of all the slave states with 462, 198 slaves and only 351 free people of color. Chesnutt claims that "next to Maryland came Virginia, with 58, 042 free colored people, North Carolina with 30,463, Louisiana with 18,647 (of whom 10, 939 were in the parish of New Orleans alone), and South Carolina with 9, 914. In the year 1850, according to the same authority, there were in the state of North Carolina 553, 028 white people, 288,548 slaves, and 27, 463 free colored people. In 1860, the white population of the

state was 631, 100, slaves 331, 059, free colored people, 30, 463.” See Chesnutt, “The Free Colored People of North Carolina,” 136.

⁵⁴Chesnutt suggested that the stationary growth ratio of free blacks in the 1850s was owed to decreased rates of manumission in the turbulent political decade that preceded secession and war, as well as new legislative restrictions that curtailed their rights and liberties, driving them to seek new homes in the North and the West where their legal status would not be in jeopardy. See Chesnutt, “The Free Colored People of North Carolina,” 136-41. Jack Chesnutt and Ann Maria Sampson, the author’s parents, were among these Southern expatriates who sought protection in other states. In 1856, they traveled hundreds of miles by wagon car to Cleveland. On June 20, 1858, their son Charles Waddell Chesnutt was born in Ohio, where the family would remain until the fall of the Confederacy in 1865. While in Ohio, Jack Chesnutt was involved in the freeing of a fugitive slave named John Price in what would become known as the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue, and he also served as a teamster for the Union Army. For a thorough history of the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue, see Nat Brandt, *The Town That Started the Civil War* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990).

⁵⁵Most of the free blacks in North Carolina lived along the eastern portion of the state, in rural farming communities such as Cumberland County, from which Chesnutt’s ancestors descended. Although the rural environs in which most of the free blacks lived limited their social opportunities, it afforded them a measure of protection as they were seldom seen in large groups, perhaps making their presence less threatening to the poor whites with whom they competed economically. See John Hope Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina 1790-1860* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 223.

⁵⁶The date in which Chesnutt composed “White Weeds” is unknown. It first appeared in

The Short Fiction of Charles W. Chesnutt, ed. Sylvia Lyons Render (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1974), 391-404.

⁵⁷See Franklin, *The Free Negro in North Carolina 1790-1860*, 35.

⁵⁸Andrews, *The Literary Career of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 2-3.

⁵⁹*The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 78, 81.

⁶⁰*The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 82, 40-41, 50, 46-47. Also see Charles W. Chesnutt, "Etiquette (Good Manners)," in *Charles W. Chesnutt: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., Robert C. Leitz, III, and Jesse S. Crisler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 3-12. Chesnutt gave this speech before his students in the Normal Literary Society in Fayetteville, North Carolina in 1881.

⁶¹*The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 57.

⁶²Further evidence of his maturation with regard to his racial identity can be heard in the spirited pronouncement he made four months after his wedding, declaring that "I will live down prejudice, I will crush it out. I will show to the world that a man may spring from a race of slaves, and yet far excel many of the boasted ruling race." See *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 93.

⁶³On March 17, 1881, Chesnutt claimed that the "Negro is yet to become known who can write a good book." A week later, on March 26, 1881, he remarked that "every time I read a good novel, I want to write one. It is the dream of my life—to be an author!" See *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 164, 154.

⁶⁴Chesnutt is quoting a white man's views of equality that he overheard in conversation. He sums up his response as embodying the "the opinion of the South on the 'Negro Question'." See *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 161.

⁶⁵*The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 172.

⁶⁶*The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 135-36.

⁶⁷See "A Perplexed Nigger," in *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 175-78.

⁶⁸George Washington Cable and Charles W. Chesnutt corresponded throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Many of Chesnutt's surviving letters have been to Cable have been reprinted in Charles W. Chesnutt, "*To Be an Author*": *Letters of George W. Chesnutt, 1889-1905*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., and Robert C. Leitz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁶⁹Lucy Leffingwell Cable Bilke, *George W. Cable: His Life and Letters* (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1928), 1.

⁷⁰Arlin Turner, *George W. Cable: A Biography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1956), 6, 7.

⁷¹Bilke, *George W. Cable: His Life and Letters*, 2-3.

⁷²Turner, *George W. Cable*, 3, 12. Also see Bilke, *George W. Cable: His Life and Letters*, 1.

⁷³Bilke, *George W. Cable: His Life and Letters*, 1. Also see Turner, *George W. Cable*, 7, 12.

⁷⁴Turner, *George W. Cable*, 10.

⁷⁵Turner, *George W. Cable*, 16, 18-19, 21. For more information on the epidemic and flood of 1848 and 1849, see George Washington Cable "Flood and Plague in New Orleans," *Century* 26 (1883): 419-31.

⁷⁶Bilke, *George W. Cable: His Life and Letters*, 9.

⁷⁷See George Washington Cable, "New Orleans," *St. Nicholas* 21 (1893): 150-54.

⁷⁸Cable, "New Orleans," 153.

⁷⁹Turner, *George W. Cable*, 21, 22.

⁸⁰George Washington Cable, "New Orleans before the Capture," *Century* 29 (1885): 922.

⁸¹Cable, "New Orleans before the Capture," 922.

⁸²The "pomp" and "giddy" energy before the surrender of New Orleans is presented in Chapter 50 of *Dr. Sevier*. The narrator also describes the young men's "brave young hearts" that were "already lifted up with the triumph of battles to come" as parades and celebrations prepared their departure for war. See George Washington Cable, *Dr. Sevier* (Upper Saddle River: Gregg Press, 1970), 366, 367.

⁸³Turner, *George W. Cable*, 24.

⁸⁴By October 21, nearly 68,000 New Orleans residents had taken the oath. Among this statistic, nearly 28,000 of them had taken the oath since Order No. 62 was issued in September. Cable's mother and two sisters were among those who refused. Turner, *George W. Cable*, 24.

⁸⁵George Washington Cable, "My Politics," in *The Negro Question: A Selection of Writings on Civil Rights in the South by George Washington Cable*, ed. Arlin Turner (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), 2, 3.

⁸⁶Cable, "My Politics," in *The Negro Question*, 3.

⁸⁷On September 30, 1861, Cable's mother, Rebecca, and as his older sisters Mary Louise and Antoinette declared themselves enemies of the state. Cable was twelve days short of his eighteenth birthday, and his brother Jimmie was only sixteen. See Turner, *George W. Cable*, 25. In "War Diary of a Union Woman in the South," Dora Richards describes the plantation home in

Mississippi that sheltered refugees such as the Cable family. See George Washington Cable, "The War Diary of a Union Woman in the South," in *Strange True Stories of Louisiana* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), 308-319.

⁸⁸Turner, *George W. Cable*, 25.

⁸⁹Bilke, *George W. Cable: His Life and Letters*, 19-20.

⁹⁰See George Washington Cable, "George W. Cable's Recollections of General Forrest," *Journal of Southern History* 21 (1955): 224-28. Cable describes his cavalry horse Sandy in "Some of My Pets," *Youth's Companion* 75 (1901): 427. Also see Col. George E. Waring, "George W. Cable," *Century* 23 (1882): 603.

⁹¹George Washington Cable, "Literature in the Southern States," in *The Negro Question: A Selection of Writings on Civil Rights in the South by George Washington Cable*, ed. Arlin Turner (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), 39.

⁹²Cable, "My Politics," in *The Negro Question*, 6, 4.

⁹³Turner, *George W. Cable*, 34-39.

⁹⁴Cable, "My Politics," in *The Negro Question*, 4.

⁹⁵Cable claims that he heard "many a sermon" during his youth on the epistle of Philemon, which deals with the slave Onesimus and purportedly justifies slavery. See Cable, "My Politics," in *The Negro Question*, 6

⁹⁶Cable, "My Politics," in *The Negro Question*, 7.

⁹⁷The first column of "Drop Shot" was printed on Sunday, February 27, 1870. Cable signed off on the column on July 9, 1871, though he revived it several times until February 1872. In total, Cable appeared as "Drop Shot" a total of eighty-eight times in the *Picayune*. See Arlin

Turner, "George Washington Cable's Literary Apprenticeship," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly* 24 (Jan. 1941): 168-86.

⁹⁸Cable, "My Politics," in *The Negro Question*, 9, 8-9. Regarding the public schools and segregation, Cable would expand his views in an anonymous letter to *New Orleans Bulletin* on September 26, 1875 signed "A Southern White Man." In his letter, Cable argued that there was no harm for white and black children to be educated under one roof and claimed that "the schoolroom neither requires nor induces social equality." He also discussed the public distaste for "colored teachers" and maintained that "I can say in passing that hundreds of demurring parents among our people have had their children nourished at the breast of Negro nurses—for these parents to object to their children being taught by an educated and polite mulatto is rather illogical." See George Washington Cable, "Segregation in Public Schools," in *The Negro Question: A Selection of Writings on Civil Rights in the South by George Washington Cable*, ed. Arlin Turner (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), 27, 28.

⁹⁹Cable, "My Politics," in *The Negro Question*, 9, 10.

¹⁰⁰Bilke, *George W. Cable: His Life and Letters*, 41, 43.

¹⁰¹Cable, "My Politics," in *The Negro Question*, 11.

¹⁰²George Parsons Lathrop of the *Atlantic Monthly* refused to publish "Bibi" because of what he referred to as the "distressful" effect of the story. See Bilke, *George W. Cable: His Life and Letters*, 48. Bibi was also rejected by the editors of *Scribner's* and *Appleton's*. See Bryan Wagner, "Disarmed and Dangerous: The Strange Career of Bras-Coupé," in *Representations* 92 (2005): 127.

¹⁰³The Northern journalist Edward King met Cable in New Orleans in early 1873 and became his literary advocate with Northern editors and publishers. King denied the suggestion

that he discovered Cable, claiming instead that “Cable discovered himself.” See Bilke, *George W. Cable: His Life and Letters*, 51. King, nonetheless, was a huge advocate for Cable in the Northern publishing houses in the 1870s and in many ways acted as a supportive and experienced literary agent for a lesser known writer. See Turner, *George W. Cable*, 55.

¹⁰⁴The French-language newspaper *L’Abeille* deemed *Old Creole Days* “disdainful” in its portrayal of the Creole class. See Turner, *George W. Cable*, 85.

¹⁰⁵Cable, “My Politics,” in *The Negro Question*, 12.

¹⁰⁶Cable, “My Politics,” in *The Negro Question*, 14.

¹⁰⁷In his “Drop Shot” column for the New Orleans *Daily Picayune* that was published on July 17, 1870, Cable wrote of the “true genius” of Mark Twain. In *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain called Cable “the South’s finest literary genius.” See Turner, “George Washington Cable’s Literary Apprenticeship,” 172. Also see Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, in *Mark Twain: Mississippi Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1982), 485.

¹⁰⁸Mark Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, ed. Charles Neider (New York: Perennial Classics, 2000), 23.

¹⁰⁹Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 8.

¹¹⁰Arthur G. Pettit, *Mark Twain & the South* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 18.

¹¹¹Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 39.

¹¹²Pettit, *Mark Twain & the South*, 14.

¹¹³Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 96, 101, 7. Also See Ron Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 12.

¹¹⁴Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 12.

¹¹⁵Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 7.

¹¹⁶Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 101, 39.

¹¹⁷Pettit, *Mark Twain & the South*, 15.

¹¹⁸Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 39, 40.

¹¹⁹Pettit, *Mark Twain & the South*, 16-17. Also see Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 38-39.

¹²⁰Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 38-39.

¹²¹Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 8, 9.

¹²²Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, ed. Guy Cardwell (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 13, 19-20.

¹²³Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 20, 28-29, 37.

¹²⁴Mark Twain, *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World* (Hartford: The American Publishing Company, 1898), 351.

¹²⁵Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 101.

¹²⁶Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 42, 43-44.

¹²⁷Pettit, *Mark Twain & the South*, 15-16. See Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 37.

¹²⁸Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 45-46, 51.

¹²⁹Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 115, 116.

¹³⁰Regarding his older brother's racial views, Twain wrote that although Orion was "born and reared among slaves and slaveholders, he was yet an abolitionist from his boyhood to his death." See Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 112.

¹³¹The various sketches, personas, and pranks that Twain published while working for Orion Clemens's newspaper the *Hannibal Journal* are outlined with detail in Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 52-61.

¹³²Samuel Langhorne Clemens to Jane Lampton Clemens, Aug. 24, 1853 (UCCL 02711).
<<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL02711.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp#an7>>

¹³³Samuel Langhorne Clemens to Jacob H. Burrough, Nov. 1, 1876 (UCCL 01384).
<<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL01384.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp>>

¹³⁴Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 131-33.

¹³⁵Most slaveholding Missourians did not support secession, and the state sent nearly three times as many men to fight for the Union than the Confederacy. See Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 97.

¹³⁶Mark Twain, "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed," *Century* 2 (1885): 203.

¹³⁷Samuel Langhorne Clemens to William H. Clagett, Feb. 28, 1862 (UCCL 00037).
<<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00037.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp>>

¹³⁸Pettit, *Mark Twain & the South*, 27, 29, 30

¹³⁹Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 137-39. Also see Samuel Langhorne Clemens to Mary E. Clemens, May 20, 1864 (UCCL 00078).

<<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00078.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp>>

¹⁴⁰Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 139-42.

¹⁴¹Sidney Kaplan, "The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864," in *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 221-65.

¹⁴²See Charles W. Chesnutt, "The Future American: A Complete Race-Amalgamation Likely to Occur," in *Charles W. Chesnutt; Essays and Speeches*, ed. Jesse S. Crisler, Robert C. Leitz, III, and Joseph R. McElrath, Jr. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 135. Three installments of "The Future American Series" were originally published in the *Boston Evening*

Transcript: "The Future American: What the Race Is Likely to Become in the Process of Time," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Aug. 18, 1900): 20; "The Future American: A Stream of Dark Blood in the Veins of Southern Whites," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Aug. 25, 1900): 15; "The Future American: A Complete Race-Amalgamation Likely to Occur," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Sept. 1, 1900): 24.

¹⁴³Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 137

¹⁴⁴Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 144.

¹⁴⁵Samuel Langhorne Clemens to Orion and Mary E. Clemens, Oct. 19 and 20, 1865 (UCCL 00092).

<<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00092.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp>>

¹⁴⁶The title of the sketch was eventually changed to "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." See Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 154.

¹⁴⁷Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 160-62; 197-216.

¹⁴⁸Powers, *Mark Twain: A Life*, 242.

¹⁴⁹Samuel Langhorne Clemens to John Russell Young, March 8-10, 1869 (UCCL 00270).
<<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00270.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp>>

¹⁵⁰Mark Twain, "Only a Nigger," in *Mark Twain at the Buffalo Express*, ed. Joseph B. McCullough and Janice McIntire-Strasburg (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999), 22.

¹⁵¹Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, in *Mark Twain: Mississippi Writings* (New York: Library of America, 1982), 841.

¹⁵²Mark Twain, "A True Story, Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It," *Atlantic Monthly* 34 (1874): 591.

¹⁵³Twain, "A True Story," 594, 591.

¹⁵⁴Samuel Langhorne Clemens to James A. Garfield, Jan. 12, 1881 (UCCL 01891).
<<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL01891.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp>>

¹⁵⁵Samuel Langhorne Clemens to Francis Wayland, Dec. 24, 1885, UCCL 11278. In Mark Twain Project Online. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. 2007. Also see Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Lighting Out for the Territory* (New York Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 101.

¹⁵⁶Tourgée, "The South as a Field for Fiction," *Forum* 6 (1888): 407, 405-07.

¹⁵⁷George Washington Cable, "Literature in the Southern States," in *The Negro Questions: A Selection of Writings on Civil Rights in the South*, ed. Arlin Turner (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), 41.

¹⁵⁸Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 501-02.

¹⁵⁹Helen M. Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt, Pioneer of the Color Line* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 57.

CHAPTER 2

ALBION TOURGÉE AND THE FICTION OF SOUTHERN RECONSTRUCTION

When Albion Tourgée moved to North Carolina in the summer of 1865, he was a convalescing, twenty-eight year-old veteran of the Union Army still recovering from war injuries, as well as the nearly four months he spent in Confederate prisons.¹ As a Radical Republican and a cultural outsider, living in what he would later call “the very vortex of the Reconstruction Era,” he was enraged by the racial violence and political intimidation that he witnessed during his fourteen years of residence in Greensboro, North Carolina.² Convinced that “slavery still lives and dominates” in the hearts and minds of Southerners, that the federal government was not taking the proper positions in its Reconstruction policies, and that Northerners were beginning to fade in their devotion to civil reform, he immersed himself in local politics and eventually began to write fiction that was set in the region where he was living.³ His two most important novels of the Reconstruction period, *A Fool’s Errand* (1879) and *Bricks without Straw* (1880), are among the first works of American fiction that portray the problems of racial integration, regional reconciliation, and political dysfunction in the postwar South. Tourgée was one of the few Northern writers who lived in the former Confederacy during Reconstruction. His novels are not only valuable historical documents, written from an outsider’s vantage in a region of unprecedented transition, but they also illustrate the evolving style and subject matter of mainstream American fiction in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Southern travel writing was becoming increasingly popular in the postbellum literary marketplace, a trend that was put in motion as early as 1866 with the publication of works such as Sidney Andrew's *The South Since the War* and Whitelaw Reid's *After the War: A Southern Tour*.⁴ Northern literary magazines also began to commission journalists to tour the postwar South and publish installments of their travels, the most famous of these accounts being Edward King's *The Great South*, which appeared in fourteen installments in *Century Magazine* between 1873 and 1874.⁵ The growing interest in Southern life was also reflected in the popular fiction of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the pathos and grandeur of the former Confederacy providing a wealth of romantic plotlines that featured impoverished aristocrats and loyal freedpeople tragically exiled from the plantation system. In the 1880s, Thomas Nelson Page dominated this movement of nostalgic Southern literature with bestselling works of fiction, including *Marse Chan'* (1884), *In Ole Virginia* (1887), *Two Little Confederates* (1888), and *Befo' de War* (1888).⁶ Other regional authors such as Joel Chandler Harris, Sherwood Bonner, Grace King, Mary Noailles Murfree, Maurice Thompson, Ruth McEnery Stuart, Mollie Moore Davis, and Irwin Russell, also wrote accounts of Southern life in the Local-Color tradition, representations that helped shape the cultural landscape of the postwar era in the popular imagination.

Northern writers of fiction also participated in the mythologization of the fallen Confederacy in the decades after the war, as illustrated in works such as Constance Fenimore Woolson's "In the Cotton Country" (1876), Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Palmetto-leaves* (1873), Sarah Orne Jewett's "The Mistress of Sydenham Plantation" (1888), and Henry James's *The American Scene* (1907).⁷ While it seems obvious why white Southerners would engage in a nostalgic reminiscence of life before the war, it is less clear why a generation of Northerners,

especially those who had been opposed to slavery, were drawn to the romantic fiction of the Old South. Nina Silber has explored the appeal of Southern fiction in the postbellum marketplace and has suggested that when "confronted with the haunting specters of class conflict, ethnic strife, and alienation that their own industrialized society had produced, many Northerners remained unconvinced about the benefits of industrial progress and about obliterating whatever remained of the old Southern legacy."⁸ In addition to the socioeconomic anxieties of life in an era of immigration and industrial progress, the national population was five percent less than it had been in 1861, and with nearly half a million Americans lost in the war, it seems that Northerners and Southerners alike were ready to rejoice in the ties of a united country once more, even if the reality of this reunion was bound to the realm of fiction rather than everyday life.⁹ The mythology of the Old South thus evolved as a cathartic emblem of a lost civilization through which American people could defer their anxieties for the future in a nation that had changed drastically. Part of what makes Tourg  e's work remarkable is that in a period in which it was unpopular to do so, he remained devoted to the issues of racial equality that had been exhausted by the antebellum abolitionist press.¹⁰

Much of the fiction published during this period reflected this culture of conciliation by depicting intersectional romances between heroic Union veterans and impoverished Southern belles. Thomas Nelson Page humorously described the stock components of this literary trend to his fellow regionalist, Grace King, when she asked the secret to his literary success. He replied that she should "get a pretty girl and name her Jeanne! . . . Make her fall in love with a Federal officer and your story will be printed at once! The publishers are right; the public wants love stories. Nothing easier than to write them."¹¹ With regard to representations of patriotic reunion in late nineteenth century popular culture, David Blight has pointed out that the "intersectional

wedding that became such a staple of mainstream popular culture, especially in the plantation school of literature, had no interracial counterpart in the popular imagination."¹² Unlike many of his contemporaries, Tourgée criticized these reunionist love stories that exhibited what he saw as a “determination to make no reference or allusion to the causes of former difference” between the North and the South, a problem that he likened to “willful blindness” in the *The Invisible Empire* (1880), a work in which he records the racial injustices he witnessed as a federally appointed judge in North Carolina.¹³

With regard to popular literature, Tourgée claimed that writers from above and below the Mason Dixon Line perpetuated the “dreamy idealism” of Southern race relations by portraying African Americans as either “the devoted slave who serves and sacrifices for his master or mistress” or as one to whom “liberty has brought only misfortune.” He also noted that “about the Negro as a man with hopes, fears, and aspirations like other men, our literature is very nearly silent.” In his 1888 essay, “The South as a Field for Fiction,” Tourgée reflected upon the stereotypical, overtly nostalgic portraits of life in the former slave states, and maintained that

not only is the epoch of the war the favorite field of American fiction to-day, but the Confederate soldier is the popular hero. Our literature has become not only Southern in type but distinctly Confederate in sympathy. . . . A foreigner studying our current literature, without knowledge of our history, and judging our civilization by our fiction, would undoubtedly conclude that the South was the seat of intellectual empire in America, and the African the chief romantic element of our population.¹⁴

After frustrated efforts in editorial journalism and national politics, Tourgée continued to act upon his claim that “a nation can never bury its past” and turned to the field of Southern fiction, which was undergoing a profitable and wide-reaching renaissance in the postwar marketplace.¹⁵

In his 1883 essay “Americanism in Literature,” Tourgée commented upon the role of fiction in modern society and maintained that “a novel without a purpose is the counterpart of a man without a purpose. One written for mere amusement may be either good or bad, but at the very best, is only the lowest form of art.”¹⁶ He also warned American writers against “taking the plunge, which seems inevitable, into the pettiness, insincerity, cynicism and domestic vice . . . eternal analysis of the most trivial and insignificant motives . . . and a belief that life had nothing good or noble in it worth the novelist’s while to seek out and portray.”¹⁷ In terms of aesthetic style, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) is the most obvious antecedent to Tourgée’s fiction, especially *A Fool’s Errand* and *Bricks without Straw*. Both authors foregrounded issues of race through intricate plotlines, courageous heroes and heroines, strained romances, familial reunions, haphazard coincidences, and extended authorial interjections. Tourgée acknowledged that these sentimental tropes were considered out of vogue by the elite literary circles of the late nineteenth century when he remarked upon the transition from American Romanticism to postwar Realism:

One of the most curious phases of our modern literature is the claim put forth in behalf of a so-called “school” of fiction, that theirs is the only literary art worthy the name, because they alone depict “real” life. For this reason they have arrogantly dubbed themselves the “realists,” while all those whose methods they disapprove are denounced as “idealists.” . . . Nearly thirty years after the eclipse of war, our imaginative literature shows little evidence of the strength,

variety, and nobility, and grandeur that characterized the epoch preceding the outbreak of the rebellion. . . . Its fiction is cramped and petty.¹⁸

Part of the disapproval that Tourgée expressed towards this movement in “realistic” fiction is perhaps owed to its implicit suggestion that people are subjected to forces beyond their control. This Darwinian, deterministic ethos was the clear antithesis of his attitude towards social activism, personal and political accountability, and the great hope that with time and enlightenment, people could change.

Tourgée’s faith in “romantic fiction” and its power to bring to life “the past of which History only furnishes the record” is articulated in the tribute that he wrote for Harriet Beecher Stowe upon her death in 1896.¹⁹ Referring to the ongoing debate regarding the literary quality of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, he suggested that “the popularity, and consequent influence of ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin,’ was dependent on its non-realistic character” and claimed that if the novel “had been absolutely ‘realistic’ in its delineation of the master and the slave, it would have been to a degree incomprehensible to those who did not, and do not yet, comprehend the moral and legal character of the ‘peculiar institution’.”²⁰ In the preface to his 1883 novel *Hot Plowshares*, Tourgée reiterated his belief that all meaningful fiction should be infused with “the imagination,” a force that he called “the forerunner to fact.”²¹ In their respective studies of literary Realism in the nineteenth century, both Kenneth Warren and Nancy Glazener have explored the manner in which issues of racial conflict were often given their fullest expression in what would be considered unrealistically sentimental texts,²² and their scholarship offers insight into Tourgée’s claim that “the ‘realists’ profess to be truth-tellers, but are in fact the worst of falsifiers, since they tell only the weakest and meanest part of the grand truth.”²³ Despite the fact that Tourgée’s Southern novels largely conform to mid-century Romantic aesthetics rather than the emerging

trends in literary Realism, he became a bestselling author during the 1880s, a decade in which he published numerous journalistic pieces, nine full novels, and three shorter novellas, a remarkable output within a ten-year period.²⁴

His most successful work of this period, *A Fool's Errand: Written by One of the Fools* (1879), sold a reported 150,000 copies within its first year of publication. Not since *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared a quarter-century earlier had an American novel reached this level of success.²⁵ The plot of *A Fool's Errand* centers upon Comfort Servosse, a Union veteran who moves to Verdenton, North Carolina with his wife, Metta, and young daughter, Lily, in search of mild weather, new business opportunities, and the chance to start anew after the Civil War. When Servosse joins an interracial Union League and delivers rousing political speeches in favor of securing suffrage rights for Verdenton's black community, he quickly becomes a cultural outcast and a target of the Ku Klux Klan. His idealism about the "New South" and its ability to change is fueled by what the sardonically understated narrative voice calls the forgetfulness of "the fact that the social conditions of three hundred years are not to be overthrown in a moment" (24). As the appointed "Fool" of the lesson, Servosse learns that moral idealism is often met with bitter disillusionment, a theme that pervades the novel and the life of its tragic hero.

The motley assortment of characters in *A Fool's Errand* includes carpetbaggers, Northern politicians, former slaves, Unionists, ex-Confederates, scalawags, poor whites, and Klan members, all of whom offer various viewpoints on Southern life after the war. Stylistically, the sprawling novel exhibits dimensions of social satire, autobiographical fiction, and historical romance. With its focus on postwar racial violence, it is also one of the earliest works of American fiction to counter what Mark Elliott has described as "the Conservative mythology of Reconstruction that had gained credence in the Northern press in the mid 1870s."²⁶ Benjamin

Railton has aptly outlined this period of literary history and Tourgée's rebellious position within it with his suggestion that *A Fool's Errand* was the most "effective reply to the Southern version of voice and history," for it not only "responded to the conversion narratives and reinserted race back into the national discussion of the South question, but also represented a dialogic innovation in the form of the historical novel."²⁷ Though the period of federal Reconstruction came to an official end in the Compromise of 1877, Tourgée expressed his belief that "the Nation is not homogeneous; that the motive, spirit, and sentiment of one section are hostile and obnoxious to those of another, no man can deny" as he would put it in *The Invisible Empire*.²⁸ Along with the novels and other writings of a small group of late nineteenth-century writers of fiction that most notably included Mark Twain, Charles Chesnutt, Frances E. W. Harper, Rebecca Harding Davis, Pauline Hopkins, and George Washington Cable, Tourgée's most successful work foregrounded Southern affairs and issues of regional and racial reconciliation in a candidly reformist manner. The early Tourgée scholar George J. Becker eloquently stated that "the problems growing out of the existence of slavery were not interred with the bones of those who fought at Gettysburg," a reality that Tourgée engaged with remarkable insight in *A Fool's Errand* and *Bricks without Straw*.²⁹

With its racially confrontational themes and unlikely carpetbagger hero, *A Fool's Errand* was unlike much of the popular fiction being published in the late 1870s, and the public interest was immense. An advertisement in *The Dial* capitalized on the popularity of the novel claimed that

from Maine to Texas, the new mode of salutation has come to be: Have you read that book? . . . It is only about once in a generation that a book appears which is at once and universally accepted as a marked element in life and literature. About

thirty years ago, Mrs. Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" aroused the world with indignation over the wrongs of a race. Now "A Fool's Errand, by One of the Fool's" has seized upon the popular imagination, and for six solid months has been running through edition after edition as fast as it could be printed.³⁰

Positive reviews, high sales, and favorable comparisons to Stowe in large part accompanied the success of the novel. In the months after it went to press, Tourgée published *The Invisible Empire*, a follow-up text of authentication that provided factual accounts of the scenes of Southern life he depicted, particularly the history of the Ku Klux Klan.³¹ The attention surrounding *A Fool's Errand* was so widespread that President-elect James Garfield released a statement to the press in which he expressed his admiration for the book as well as his hope that "the day may come when our country will be a paradise for all such fools" as the author.³²

Not all readers, however, were pleased with the picture of the Reconstruction that Tourgée presented in *A Fool's Errand*. A critic for *Appleton's Journal*, for instance, wrote that it was a "partisan and bitter" attempt to "arouse once more in the North the passions and antipathies of the war period."³³ In another negative review, a critic writing for the *Southern Planter and Farmer* complained of

this so-called Judge "2-gee," whose name all good men will pillory in infamy and spit upon with the scorn and contempt he so justly merits. The time has come when these vile fomenters of strife, whether they hail from the North or the South, should be frowned down by all who would unite in the common ties of brotherhood and rejoice in the glorious inheritance of a common country.³⁴

Echoing the sentiments of the *Southern Planter and Farmer* review, several reactionary works, such as William L. Royall's *A Reply to 'A Fool's Errand, by One of the Fools'* (1880) and N. J.

Floyd's *Thorns in the Flesh: A Voice of Vindication from the South in Answer to 'A Fool's Errand' and Other Slanders* (1880), were published to dispel the image of the Southern life that Tourgée presented. The most notorious of these responses would be written by Thomas Dixon at the turn of the next century in his trilogy of Reconstruction: *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden* (1902); *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1905); *The Traitor: A Story of the Fall of the Invisible Empire* (1907).

In the decades following the Civil War, the South was often personified with distinctly female images associated with suffering and weakness. In *The American Scene* (1907), for instance, Henry James toured America after living in Europe for nearly a quarter of a century and claimed to be puzzled by what he called the "strange feminization of the South." Whereas he suggests that the "ancient order" of Southern life was "masculine, fierce and moustachioed," he compares life in "the present" to "a sort of sick lioness who has so visibly parted with her teeth and claws that we may patronizingly walk all around her."³⁵ Constance Fenimore Woolson was another Northern writer who spent extended time in the South after the war, and she too associated traits of passivity and weakness with the region. In her story "In Cotton Country" (1876), for example, a widow's face serves as a metonymic metaphor of the defeat when the narrator describes it as

old and at the same time young; it had deep lines, it was colorless . . . and still I felt that it was not old in years, but that it was like the peaches we find sometimes on the ground, old wrinkled, withered, yet showing here and there traces of that evanescent bloom which comes before the ripeness. The eyes haunted me; they haunt me now, the dry, still eyes of immovable, hopeless grief. I thought, "Oh, if I could only help her!"³⁶

James's lioness and Woolson's widow in many ways embody the image of the South that was perpetuated in popular culture after the war: she was prideful yet harmless, damaged but beautiful, and worthy of pity but no longer contempt.

Tourgée, however, who recorded “twelve murders, 9 rapes, 11 arsons, [and] 7 mutilations” in a period of ten months, saw a very different picture of the former Confederacy and his best works of Southern fiction challenge the stock feminization of the region.³⁷ In *A Fool's Errand*, for example, it is Comfort Servosse, the idealistic Northern reformer, who is victimized by an aggressive, masculine South, and though he escapes several attacks on his life, he does not survive the infectious Yellow Fever. Throughout the novel, the South is depicted as a region dominated by “born rulers” and “aggressives” who have been defeated only in name. Ironically, it is the victorious North that is portrayed as weak, feminized, and lacking “virility” throughout the narrative. In its management of Southern affairs, Servosse complains that the government “hesitates, palters, shirks” (171). Ultimately, the war is far from over in *A Fool's Errand*, a work that Eric Sundquist has aptly described as the “darkest satire on Southern life and American racial practice” that would appear in the postwar era until Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1885.³⁸

Similar to Twain's masterpiece, Tourgée explores the moral dilemma of racism through the actions and epiphanies of a white protagonist who is closely aligned with the black community. Ironically, upon his decision to move South, Servosse claims to see not a “particle of danger” in his venture. Echoing the reconciliationist ethos of the times, he declares with confidence that “the war is over, and we who have been fighting each other are now best friends.” (14). Articulating his vision for the “New South,” he asserts that “slavery has been broken up, and things must turn into new grooves; but I think the country will settle up rapidly,

now that slavery is out of the way. Manufacturers will spring up, immigration will pour in, and it will be just the pleasantest part of the country” (24). Attempting to bring this vision to life, Servosse buys an abandoned plantation called Warrington Place and transforms the property into a profitable fruit nursery. He hires black laborers to work the land and divides his acreage so that his employees can establish a small township community. Many plot details in *A Fool’s Errand* are established in the epistolary mode, and in one such letter, Metta describes her husband’s efforts:

Comfort has decided to sell all of Warrington but a hundred acres. The rest lies along the creek, and is very well fitted to cut up into little farms of ten and twenty acres for colored men, giving them upland to live on, with a little timber, and a piece of bottom to cultivate. He is going to put little log-houses on them, and sell them to colored people in six or ten years’ time. . . . We hope to do some good, and trust that the foolish prejudice of the people will wear away (55).

The public resentment directed towards Servosse builds steadily in Verdenton, particularly once the farmers at Warrington Place begin to reap the fruits of their labor. To the ruling class, these notions of equitable profit were dangerously representative of white citizenship, a privilege they are unwilling to grant to the former slaves.³⁹ Bob Martin, a local blacksmith, is one freedman who has become too successful in the eyes of his neighbors. In bitter retaliation, his house is raided, his family beaten, and he receives a whipping that he claims to be worse than any endured in his forty-three years of slavery. Along with the assault comes an ill-formed letter, warning that “you better git, er you’ll have a call from the ‘K. K. K.’” (186). Servosse is initially shocked by the attack on Martin but soon learns that he grossly underestimated the depth of the

desire for white redemption in his new hometown, a reality that he failed to consider when he promised Metta “not a particle of danger” in their Southern venture (24).

Ironically, the cabins, church, and Sabbath School that the former slaves build on Servosse’s land at Warrington Place are erected with timber that has been taken from old Confederate buildings. The new township thus emerges, however briefly, as an optimistic image of the integrated, postwar South that has been “reconstructed” from the ruins of the past. Shortly after it is established, however, the community that was a “visionary idea of the Yankee abolitionist” is attacked when members of the Klan “burst upon the little settlement of colored men, beat and cruelly outraged some, took the horses of two, and cut and mangled those belonging to others” (98). The brutal scenes of race violence in *A Fool’s Errand* are often accompanied by threatening, anonymous letters written in Southern vernacular in the local-color tradition, a convention that emphasizes the ignorance of the white redemptionists. After the attack on Warrington’s township one such letter is sent to Servosse that warns

you hev got to leeve this country, and the quicker you do it the better; fer you ain’t safe here, no enny other miserable Yankee! You come here to put niggers over white folks, sayin ez how they should vote and set on juries ans sware away white folkes rites as much as they damm please. You are backin up this notion by a sellen of em land and hosses and mules, till they are gitten so big in ther boots they can’t rest . . . no nigger shant be allowed to own no hoss nor run no crop . . . and no nigger-worshipin Yankee spy thet encourages them in their insolence shel live in the county. . . . Ef you don’t want to size a coffin jest yit you better get a ticket that will take you towards the North Star (98).

To expose the threat made unto him, Servosse pays to have the letter published in a local newspaper, *The Verdenton Gazette*. Expecting it to awaken the “liveliest indignation” of the townspeople, he is made a “Fool” once more, as few empathize with the carpetbagger or feel that he is “entitled to any support or sympathy” (99). By giving land to former slaves and mentoring them towards financial independence, Servosse is metaphorically “blackened” by his real and ideological associations. Like the members of the African American community who have dared to disrupt the established social order, the white Yankee who supports them has become a target of hostility.

The success of Warrington’s farmers threatens not only the poor whites with whom they compete economically but also the former aristocracy, whose notions of social order are stubbornly intact despite their great financial loss since the war. Ultimately, however, it is Servosse’s open expression of his political views that seals his fate as a dangerous outcast. In a speech to a group of Southern Democrats, for instance, he attempts to convince his listeners that black citizenship is a matter that has already been “settled” by Congress and that they need not waste their energy in protest. In an unpopular turn of logic, he refers to the former slaves who were “allowed to testify on the battle-field” and argues that they “will be allowed to testify in courts of justice” as well (65). Leaving the meeting on horseback, Servosse is forewarned by members of the freedmen community that there is hidden ambush awaiting him up the road. Although the attack is thwarted, the effort to kill him supports his contention that South is incapable of open debate without violence. Illustrating this principle, he declares that “you all want to shoot, whip, hang, and burn those who do not agree with you” and blames the legacy of slavery for perpetuating this mindset. He also maintains that it is “the fruit and outcome of two hundred years of slavery” that encourages white Southerners to “deem disagreement an insult,

and opposition a crime, which justifies any enormity” (94-95, 96). Convinced that the South still lies in the shadow of slavery, he argues that “no community has any right to have, cherish, or protect any institution which can not bear the light of reason and free discussion” (95). If Servosse shows any pity for the ruling class it rests in his contention that they, in a deep, self-inflicted wound, have become debased by the same hereditary institution through which they exerted their social power. Forced to relinquish their claim upon their slaves as well as their political control, the angry, disenfranchised mobs in Verdenton find an unobjectionable means of self-expression through intimidation and violence (94-95).

Tourgée does not portray all white Southerners in *A Fool's Errand* as hostile detractors of racial progress. He does, however, suggest that those who object to the established social order risk being persecuted as traitors of their race and region. For example, a young man named Jesse Hyman is taken out of his home and beaten for reading Servosse's books on “slavery and kindred subjects” (84). Jesse's father is an old-guard Southern Democrat named Nathaniel “Squire” Hyman, and he grieves his son's political conversion as well as his attack, claiming that it “could not be worse if he were dead” (198). Ironically, the elder Hyman was involved in the assault of a visiting group of Northern preachers and abolitionists before the war. At the time, he justified his involvement with the Southern mob who “striped the preachers' backs,” but after Jesse is beaten in the same manner, the father must pay for his sins with the brutal humiliation of his son (94). In a continuation of this cycle of retribution and moral redemption, it is one of the attacked preachers who harbors Jesse after he is branded as a “nigger-living Radical” in Verdenton (198). Although Jesse embodies the potential for racial progress within the younger generation of white Southerners, his fate also suggests the consequences that such a

transformation will entail, for his willingness to challenge the ideals of his ancestors resulted in violence and exile from his birthplace.

If Jesse Hyman represents the potential for moral enlightenment in the white South, it is John Walters, the leader of the interracial Union League, whose death embodies the ultimate sacrifice of protesting the status quo. Like other white Southerners who supported the Republican ticket after the Civil War, he is an outcast in Verdenton who has been branded a “scalawag.” Unlike Jesse Hyman, who was a member of the slave-holding aristocracy, Walters is a poor white with no formal education who feels that the rigid class system of the antebellum days has left him no better off than a slave. For this reason, he is an ally of the black community, determined to give them, as well as his children, the education that class lines denied him. Shortly after a political convention, however, Walters is brutally murdered under mysterious circumstances. The local press releases numerous accounts of his death, all of which grow increasingly exaggerated in their political bias. In one such commentary, a reporter wonders whether the Radical bummer Walters was killed by some of his nigger understrappers, by some of his Carpet-bag scalawag associates who were jealous of his power, by his own relatives, or by some paramour of his wife who was anxious that she should obtain a large amount of insurance on his life, we do not know. But one thing we do know, that the State is well rid of a miserable, unprincipled Radical and infamous scoundrel, who ought to have been a Carpet-bagger, but we are sorry to admit, was a native (208).

Unrest pervades the small town after the murder, a loss that is felt most keenly by the freedmen community. Crowding the streets in mournful solidarity, they surround the county courthouse, convinced that it is here where their fallen leader’s body has been hidden.

The dramatic image of the black mob encircling the county courthouse reaches a devastating climax when a drop of red blood is spotted on a window ledge. With their worst fears confirmed, the crowd storms the building to find Walters's body "pressed down into a box, with a pile of firewood heaped upon him, a stab in his throat, and a hard cord drawn taught about his neck" (215). A former slave named Nat Haskell overhears a Klansman named Marcus Thompson divulge the details of the murder, and he relays what he heard:

Wal, he [Jim Walters] axed us to let him look out o' de winder, at his children playin' onde slope o' de hill over by his house. . . . He made a spring, and, wid all dat agin him, managed to git his left leg ober de winder-sill. . . . We pulled him back in, and frew' him on de long table dat's in de room. . . . Jim Brad he drew de cord till it fairly cut inter de flesh. Den dey turned him half over, all us holdin' his arms an' legs, like a hog; but we caught de blood in a bucket. . . . De boys are goin' to take him ober, an' stow him away under dat damned nigger schoolhouse ' his [Walters's]; an' den see we'll claim de niggers done it, an' perhaps hev some on 'em up, an' try 'em for it (221).

Tourgée concludes Nat's recitation of what happened to Walters with a footnote claiming that "his account of an incredible barbarity is based on the sworn statement of a colored person who overheard just such an account. . . . It is too horrid to print, but too true to omit" (221). Jeffrey W. Miller has suggested that it is appropriate that Walters is "entombed in the courthouse, since he has become the embodiment of black citizenship."⁴⁰ Miller's insightful reading fails to mention that had the plot proceeded without a hitch, Walters was to be buried beneath a freedmen's school. The trinity of black citizenship rested in three places after the war: the

courthouse, the ballot box, and the school house. In *A Fool's Errand*, all three are graveyards for the black community.

In *Black Reconstruction* (1935), W. E. B. Du Bois argued that “the chief witness in Reconstruction, the emancipated slave himself, has been almost barred from court. His written Reconstruction record has been largely destroyed and nearly always neglected.”⁴¹ Tourgée dramatizes the notion of historical omission through the life and death of Jerry Hunt, a crippled religious leader in the black community. As his name suggests, Jerry is captured and lynched after he speaks the truth before a white audience regarding the murder of John Walters and castigates all who have failed to investigate the incidents surrounding his death. The next morning, he is found hanging lifeless from an oak tree in front of the courthouse, or the “Temple of Justice,” as the narrator sardonically refers to it. With bitter irony, the white townspeople are described as walking their familiar route to church on Sunday when they pass the lynched body and “all except the brown *cadaver* on the tree spoke of peace and prayer” (229-30). Shocked to find that the corpse was not immediately cut down, Servosse asks a neighbor why it remains suspended. With caution, the local man responds that “I would rather charge up the Heights of Gettysburg again than be the object of a raid by that crowd” (231). Thus, with devastating brutality, social order has been restored on the Sabbath.

In *A Fool's Errand*, Tourgée not only uses details of factual authenticity in his inclusion of state and national political issues but also in his portrayal of John Walters and Uncle Jerry, whose characters were modeled on two powerful North Carolinians: the Unionist and State Senator, John W. Stephens; and the newly appointed Justice of the Peace, Wyatt Outlaw. Both leaders were killed by the Klan in the same horrific manner that is presented in the novel. In an 1873 *New York Times* article that discussed whether not the assassins of Stephens would be

granted amnesty, the reporter claims that upon entering a local courthouse the Senator was “struck with horror when a rope, fixed as a lasso, was thrown over his neck from behind, and he was told by the spokesman of the KuKlux [sic] crowd that he must renounce his Republican principles, or die.”⁴² Regarding the development of Uncle Jerry, there are numerous statements, depositions, and letters submitted to North Carolina Governor William H. Holden in 1871 that suggest that Jerry Hunt was based upon a “colored” man named Wyatt Outlaw who was “a leading Republican, an industrious mechanic, and a man of unblemished character.” In a scene nearly identical to the lynching of Jerry described in the novel, Wyatt Outlaw “was dragged from his house at midnight, his little son clinging to him as long as he could, and his aged mother pleading for him. He was hanged near the Court House, that the Kuklux [sic] might thereby show their contempt for the civil law.”⁴³ For all of the fantastic revelations, coincidences of fate, and improbable plot-devices within *A Fool's Errand*, Tourgée also transposed real incidents of Southern violence into his novel, an effort that is a largely understated accomplishment of his work.⁴⁴

Throughout *A Fool's Errand*, Tourgée presents Northern and Southern attitudes towards the Klan and its acts of terror upon three central groups: the newly enfranchised blacks, particularly those whom asserted their newly obtained civil rights; the “scalawags,” who were the Southerners supporting federal Reconstruction efforts; and Yankee strangers like Comfort Servosse, who were uniformly categorized as unwelcome carpetbaggers.⁴⁵ In an extended passage, the narrative voice claims that federal policymakers, as well as many Northerners, believed that black “enfranchisement” had effectively ended their responsibility towards the freedmen communities after the war. The North is personified as stubborn in its refusal to acknowledge Southern injustices as it “stopped its ears” and “shook its head blankly” after

deciding that "the negro *could* have no further ground of complaint, and it would hear no further murmurs" (250-51). Even the "old-guard" abolitionists, argues Servosse, were too eager to step aside from their work before all the work of reconstructing the nation was completed.

One of the more subtle themes of the novel thus explores the notion that it was not merely the blacks, scalawags, and carpetbaggers that the Klan was terrorizing "but the power—the Government—the idea they represented" (256). Considering what will become the historical legacy of Reconstruction, Servosse anticipates that its failures will be blamed on "carpetbaggers" such as himself who followed the procedural codes devised by the "Wise Men" in Washington, many of whom had never visited the region they presumed to control.

Towards the end of his time in the South, Servosse comes to see the fundamental failure of Reconstruction as the federal government's inability to take more aggressive positions when dealing with the "monarchial" and "kinglike" South (382). While working on the fruit nursery at Warrington, he offers a natural metaphor for this problem when talking to a former slave named Andy as they cut back grape vines. Articulating his vision for Warrington as a microcosm for the new South, he explains that "when vines have run wild for a long time, the only way to bring them back to sober, profitable bearing is to cut them back without scruple. . . . It's wasting the past, but saving the future" (115). Extending this metaphor to the ruling class, Servosse maintains that "when a part of a country rebels, and runs wild for a time, it ought to have the rank wood, the wild growth, cut away without mercy. They ought to be held down, and pruned and shaped, until they are content to bear 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness'" (115). Through this metaphoric language of cutting back old growth "without scruple" to make room for the new, Servosse emphasizes his belief that the government should have divided the former Confederacy into territories with no attention to former state lines or legislative alliances. He

also claims that no Southern citizen, black or white, should hold the right to “mold or fashion national legislation” for an extended period of time. Not until their “crude ideas” of social order were rectified “by the light of experience” and a nationalized system of education does he believe that either group should be able to offer representation in the Congress (132). This gradualist plan to let the South “molder in the grave of rebellion” that was supported by Servosse and other Radical Republicans was ultimately rejected by Congress. Throughout *A Fool’s Errand*, however, the narrator suggests that giving the former slaves legislative rights in the early stages of Reconstruction was a mistake, and one for which new citizens like Jerry Hunt fell as martyrs of lost opportunity.

After Jerry Hunt and John Walters are murdered by the Klan, Servosse becomes their intended victim, and it is his daughter, Lily, who saves his life when an anonymous letter warns he will be murdered. After a childhood spent in North Carolina, the narrator claims that Lily has “developed under the Southern sun” and carries “the rounded form and softened outlines indicative of womanhood” (259). Despite appearing the quintessential Southern belle, however, she has absorbed the political values of her father, as well as his fighting spirit, traits that give her the courage to ride through the dark woods to warn her father that he is the target of an assassination plot:

She had no fear of her horse. . . . She had not forgotten, even in her haste and fright, the lessons her father had taught. . . . Her spirits rose at the prospect. . . . The fragrance of the pines came to her nostrils, and with it the thought of frankincense, and that brought up the hymns of her childhood. The Star in the East, the Babe of Bethlehem, the Great Deliverer,—all swept across her wrapt

vision; and then came the priceless promise, “I will not leave thee, nor forsake”

(277-78).

The highly romanticized scene of his rescue draws upon biblical allusion to reinforce the emergence of Lily as a young heroine. With little thematic subtlety, it is suggested that she, like her father, is not merely a Northern peacemaker but also a courageous Christian who will risk her life in the name of social justice.

The streak of violence in Verdenton eventually begins to subside once the “cries become so clamorous” that the “Wise Men” of the North appoint a congressional committee to investigate claims of Southern violence (251). In poetic, exclamatory prose, the atrocities they find are presented as

the wounded, the mangled, the bleeding, the torn! Men despoiled of manhood;
women gravid with dead children! bleeding backs! Broken limbs! Ah! the
wounded in this silent warfare were more thousands than those who groaned upon
the slopes of Gettysburg! Dwellings and schools and churches burned! . . . The
poor, the weak, the despised, the maltreated and persecuted—by whom? Always
the same invisible power (252).

The reign of terror in Verdenton is eventually slowed by this congressional inquiry, as well as the confession of a former Klan member named Ralph Kirkwood who names over forty people who were involved in the lynching of Jerry Hunt. He confesses his involvement to a magistrate named Mr. Eyebright who is despised in Verdenton for his “unsparing denunciations” of the Klan (307). Kirkwood’s testimony launches a series of other confessions of guilt that seem to transpire “by some strange intuition” until “all the ramifications of the Klan in that county, and much in adjacent ones, were laid bare before the magistrate” (315). Significantly, Mr.

Eyebright's nickname is earned from a "soft lazy-rolling brown eye" and a "noticeable birthmark" (307, 308). Tourgée, too, was often mocked in the Southern press for having one glass eye.⁴⁶ If Comfort Servosse is the author's literary doppelganger, it seems that Mr. Eyebright, whose very name suggests transparency and truth, is a personification of the novel itself.

Another unique textual dimension of *A Fool's Errand* surfaces in Tourgée's depiction of the Ku Klux Klan and the psychological motivations for its rise. In a theory that would be expanded upon in *The Invisible Empire*, the narrator maintains that the organization was probably "intended, at first, to act solely upon the superstitious fears of the ignorant and timid colored race," though the "transition from moral to physical compulsion was easy and natural, especially to a people who did not regard the colored man as having any *inherent* right to liberty and self-government, or the personal privileges attendant thereon" (256). In a sentiment repeated throughout the novel, it is also suggested that the granting of black voting rights in the early stages of Reconstruction was a cultural humiliation for the South far worse than the defeat of Lee's Army. Regarding this grievance, the narrator explains that when "the war ended, they had proudly said, 'All was lost but honor;' but, when the reconstruction measures came, they felt themselves covered with shame, degraded in the eyes of the world. . . . They felt like one who has been assaulted by a scavenger" (324). It is only at the end of his stay in the South that the Fool has the perspective to realize that "the pride, resentment, and sense of ignominious oppression" ran so deep in the "hearts of the Southern people" that the desire for white redemption "had swallowed up all other thought" and provided the "tone and color to the whole intellectual and moral life" (326). Ironically, although Klan violence is portrayed as having been temporarily halted in Verdenton by the Congressional inquiry and the confessions of Southerners

like Ralph Kirkwood, the narrator insists that “the triumph of the ancient South was incredibly grand” when “another surrender” occurs with the end of Reconstruction in 1877 (258, 319).

After his years spent in North Carolina trying to change the social order, Servosse is disillusioned and exhausted, claiming to feel once more like the “battered soldier” who has returned from war (341). Though he still believes in the civil empowerment of black Americans, he has also learned that nothing will change in the former Confederacy until the North “learns to consider facts, and not to sentimentalize” and until the South works out “the problem of race-conflict in her own borders, by the expiration or explosion of a system of unauthorized and illegal serfdom” (383). Perhaps most significantly, the self-described “Fool” has come to realize that the key to social progress in the Southern states lies not in lofty abstractions regarding patriotic unity, uplift, and healing but rather in pragmatic legislation that will secure these goals. Specifically, he champions a nationalized system of public education that will be overseen by the federal government. In phrasing that echoes Frederick Douglass’s assertion that the “New England School House is bound to take the place of the Southern whipping post,” Servosse urges Northern legislators to “make the spelling-book the scepter of national power” (387).⁴⁷ In his portrayal of education as the key to moral enlightenment for all citizens of the country, regardless of race, he demands that

the Nation undo the evil it has permitted and encouraged. Let it educate those whom it made ignorant, and protect those whom it made weak. It is not a matter of favor to the black, but of safety to the Nation. . . . Let the Nation educate the colored man and the poor-white *because* the Nation held them in bondage and is responsible for their education; educate the voter *because* the Nation cannot afford that he should be ignorant (387).

It is with bitter irony that after withstanding continual threats by the Klan, Servosse dies alone of Yellow Fever in the land he gave his life to reform. Before his death, he selects his final words upon his tombstone inscription: “He followed the counsel of the Wise, / And became a Fool thereby” (403). In an argument he would return to with greater force throughout his life, Tourgée closes the novel with the suggestion that education is not only the fundamental cornerstone to ensuring the social progress in the South, but it is the responsibility of the federal government to ensure that this occurs.

After the critical excitement surrounding *A Fool's Errand*, Tourgée was encouraged by his publishers at Fords, Howard, and Hulbert to write another novel set in the Reconstruction South. *Bricks without Straw*, which serves as a thematic sequel, was composed in a matter of months and published in the fall of 1880. Though it did not meet the phenomenal success of its predecessor, it sold over fifty-thousand copies in its first few months of publication.⁴⁸ Despite this early success, nineteenth century critics pointed out that the novel was not as influential as *A Fool's Errand*. A critic writing for *The Literary World*, for instance, remarked that “coming after that powerful and impressive tale, *Bricks without Straw* is feeble and almost tedious; taken by itself, it would have been adjudged well-written and interesting.”⁴⁹ Another review for *The Independent* engaged the political themes of the novel and maintained that “we vindicate the Federal attitude toward the South from the reproach involved in this title, *Bricks without Straw*; but we agree with the author that time and education will rebuild society there by the hands of free citizens, and . . . we agree with him that the nation cannot entrust to Southern hands any large part of the National Government.”⁵⁰ The majority of the action in *Bricks without Straw* takes place in Horsford County, North Carolina, with scenes of Southern life before and after the war. It is through the development of Hesden Le Moyne, an aristocratic white Unionist who

reluctantly fought for the Confederacy; Mollie Ainslie, an idealistic Northerner who has moved South to teach for the Freedman's Bureau; Eliab Hill, a crippled spiritual leader of the black community; and Nimbus Ware, an entrepreneurial former slave and tobacco farmer, that Tourgée explores the need of extended federal intervention in the South, particularly with regard to a nationalized public education system. With few literary exceptions, it would not be until the first decades of the twentieth century and the concurrent explosion of works by African American authors that the political realities of race and nationhood would be so frankly incorporated into mainstream fiction as a means of protesting the failed promises of the postwar era.

Much like the presentation of the Klan in *A Fool's Errand*, there are brutal scenes of racial violence in *Bricks without Straw*, though in the latter novel Tourgée also explores more subtle instances of racism and misguided paternalism, particularly in the relationship between the Northern teacher Mollie Ainslie and her pupil Eliab Hill. Similar to Stowe's development of Aunt Ophelia in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, who wanted to reform but not touch the slave-child, Topsy, Mollie wants to educate Eliab without taking the time to understand the impact that slavery has had upon his life and worldview. Unlike Topsy, Eliab is not a child, but rather an adult who has endured slavery and the crippling effects of disease and poverty. Despite these setbacks, he holds an "insatiable" desire to learn, yet his grasp of Mollie's lessons "always seemed to lack a certain flavor of completeness" (144). Attempting to articulate his frustration with formal education, he tells her that "it ain't so much the words as it is the ideas that trouble me. These men who write seem to think and feel differently from those I have known. I can learn words, but when I have them all right I am by no means sure that I know just what they mean (146). Mollie is unable to grasp the import of Eliab's perspective as he tries to explain to her that "there are thoughts and bearings" that he "can never gather from books alone," for there is "part of

knowledge that can't be put into books" (146). Referring to a passage by Tennyson, he continues to explain that "his thoughts are your thoughts, his life has been your life. You belong to the same race and class. I am cut off from this, and can only stumble along the path of knowledge" (147). Eventually Eliab forsakes his lessons with Mollie so she can give her full attention to "the young and the strong" of his race, whose life experience has not been impacted by a generation of slavery (150). Though he continues his quest for knowledge independently, his rift with Mollie is one that the young teacher cannot grasp. The narrator remarks upon her confusion and claims that "had she herself been less a child she would have seen that he whom she had treated as such was, in truth, a man of rare strength." Though Mollie is developed as a sacrificing and brave missionary, she is ultimately limited by her inability to empathize with the plight of her students.

The Southern aristocrat and former Confederate Hesden Le Moyne is also a student of Mollie's metaphoric schoolhouse, for she "reconstructs" his sense of social responsibility in the postwar years and refuses his courtship until he fully supports her progressive ideals. Though she is a cultural outcast in Horsford County, Le Moyne and Mollie eventually decide to marry and work together for the betterment of their community. The majority of the popular interregional romance plots in postbellum fiction featured an impoverished Southern belle who is courted by a Union veteran. In *Bricks without Straw*, however, it is a Confederate veteran who marries a liberal Northern schoolteacher, a union that shows the possibility for cultural transformation in the male-dominated sphere of Southern politics and social life. Nonetheless, there still remain several instances in which Hesden is unable to fully grasp the individualism and desire for betterment in the former slave community. Immediately after the war, for instance, Eliab decides to leave the Le Moyne household, a decision that confuses Hesden who

remarks that “for some reason, I have never known exactly what, he became anxious to leave my house . . . although I had offered him the free use of the little shop where he and his mother had lived, as long as he desired” (57). Hesden, with many of the same limitations of perspective as Mollie, is unable to recognize Eliab’s innate desire for autonomy and individualism, the same stirrings that eventually cause the white patrician to revolt against the values of his own Southern community.

These notions of self-sufficiency and patriotic manhood are two pervading themes of the novel, and, interestingly, the narrator suggests that slavery has diminished the white man’s confidence in his own abilities by separating them “farther and farther from that independent self-relying manhood, which had built up American institutions and American prosperity. They feared the fruit of this demoralization. *For the sake of the white man*, they wished that the black had never been enslaved” (271). Hesden in many ways epitomizes this perspective of the planter class, which is more concerned with how slavery has diminished their own masculinity rather than the effects that the institution has had upon those who were denied freedom. His humanistic epiphany, however, occurs as he watches Eliab and Nimbus transform a discarded piece of farmland called Red Wing into a thriving tobacco business and settlement for their black community. It is at this point that Hesden begins to doubt the notions of hereditary superiority that have been largely indistinguishable from his personal identity. Describing his moral transformation and the anxiety it provokes, the narrator remarks that the former Confederate had gone so far—a terrible distance to one of his origin—as to admit the possibility of error. He had begun to question—God forgive him, if it seemed like a sacrilege—he had begun to question whether the South might not have been wrong—might not still be wrong—wrong in the principle and practice of slavery, wrong in the

theory and fact of secession and rebellion, wrong in the hypothesis of hate on the part of the conquerors, wrong in the assumption of exceptional and unapproachable excellence (272).

As the certainties of his personal and cultural identity grow increasingly complex, Hesden comes to realize that the future of the South, and his position in it, “was as misty as the gray morning” (272). His suspension between the ethics of planter class and the more progressive notions of equality is epitomized by his devotion to the two women in his life: his invalid, racist mother, Hester Le Moyne, and Mollie, his Northern love interest.

Ultimately, however, as Hesden absorbs the values of Mollie, he becomes increasingly distanced from the nexus of Southern white ideology with which he previously identified. With the death of his mother and his marriage to the Northern schoolteacher, his conversion is complete and the town observes with horror that “the kindly gentle Southern man of knightly instincts and gallant achievements” has been transformed into a “pestiferous Radical” (368). In the eyes of his neighbors, “he had lost his rank, degraded his caste, and fallen from his high estate” (368). From this point forward, Hesden is no longer considered a gentleman by his class, for his devotion to the Red Wing community has branded him a dangerous outcast who is even more offensive than a carpetbagger, for he was one of their own. Interestingly, Hesden’s crisis of cultural identity is mirrored in Tourgée’s description of the former slaves, who also undergo an existential search for identity after the war. For example, the narrator observes that “the transformations of the slave were not yet ended. The time came when he was permitted to become a citizen. For two years he had led an inchoate sort of existence: free without power of right; neither slave nor freeman; neither property nor citizen” (33). Ultimately, Southern life is

in an extended state of metamorphosis throughout *Bricks without Straw*, with ritualistic codes of honor, class, and identity being turned upside down.

This transition is captured with thematic force in the character of Nimbus Ware, the runaway slave and Union veteran who, along with Eliab Hill, is the tragic hero of the novel. The opening chapter begins *in median res* with Nimbus delivering a monologue reflecting upon the chaos of slavery and its aftermath. Explaining the legal complications of having no surname after the war, he laments that “wal, I’ clar, now, jes de quarest ting ob’ bout all dis matter o’ freedom is de way dat it sloshes roun’ de names ‘mong us cullud folks” (3). While enlisting in the Federal Army, applying for a marriage license, and registering to vote, Nimbus takes upon various last names when he is forced to do so by administrators. When he is encouraged to take the name of his former master, however, he refuses and claims that he does not want his children to wear the “slave-mark” of his master’s last name and to think “dat der daddy wuz jes annuder man’s critter one time” (45). The idea of a fixed identity is central to the theme, and in many ways Nimbus’s lack of a consistent legal name is similar to the political promises regarding citizenship after the war, another journey that proves to be a “sloshing” of terms that change little for the nation’s new citizens. Regarding the confusion surrounding his identity, the narrator claims that

the slave who had been transformed into a “contraband” and mustered as a soldier under one name, married under another, and now enfranchised under a third, returned to his home to meditate upon his transformations. . . . The reason for these metamorphoses, and their consequences, might well puzzle a wiser head than that of the many-named but unlettered Nimbus (41-42).

The narrator thus clarifies that it is Nimbus, the uneducated former slave, who realizes that his life of freedom in the postwar years, like his name, does not look or feel entirely different than his life did before the war. Forsaken by the promises of Reconstruction, Nimbus knows all too well that he remains “*nullis filius*” or “nobody’s son” in the eyes of the law (38).

Though Nimbus’s vernacular speech patterns are often broken and colloquial, his deeply humanistic musings upon his name reveal a more intellectually complex drawing of a former slave than many of the representations that were circulating in popular culture and literature after the war. The narrator refers to these stereotypes in his observation that Nimbus “was far from that volatile type which, through the mimicry of burnt-cork minstrels and the exaggerations of caricaturists, as well as the works of less disinterested portrayals of the race, have come to represent the negro to the unfamiliar mind” (20). Reinforcing the arbitrary nature of racial distinction, it is also pointed out that “the slave Nimbus in a white skin would have been considered a man of great physical power and endurance, earnest purpose, and quiet, self-reliant character. Such, in truth, he was” (20). Interestingly, the notion of Nimbus appearing in “white skin” is presented with devastating irony in the development of his former master, P. Desmit, whose personal history is strikingly similar to the slaves he once owned. Much like Nimbus, who is considered “*nullis filius*” after the war, the narrator claims that “just two generations prior” Desmit would have been considered “a nameless son of an unknown father” (8). Furthermore, similar to Nimbus, his former master has also changed his name multiple times, though he has done so in an attempt to affect more aristocratic roots in Southern society. The narrator humorously reveals that “hardly anyone remembered and none alluded to the fact that the millionaire of Horsford was only two removes from Old Sal Smith of Nubbin Ridge” (9). Desmit’s obscure origins and his subsequent rise to power thus reinforces not only the arbitrary

boundaries of race and social power in America but also the inherent fluidity in its class system, a “sloshing” that could ultimately benefit the former slaves as they grow into their new citizenship.

In a powerful display of physical violence between the racialized foils, Nimbus overpowers Desmit and demands that he pay the money that is legally owed to him in reparations. When Desmit attempts to attack him, he catches his blow with an “upraised arm,” throws him to the floor, and warns him that “yer musn’t try to beat a free man” (90). Although the antebellum power structure between master and slave has been dramatically toppled in this scene, Nimbus’s victory is short-lived, as the narrator sarcastically points out:

The silly fellow thought that thenceforth he was going to have a “white man’s chance in life.” He did not know that in our free American Government, while the Federal power an lawfully and properly ordain and establish the theoretical rights of its citizens, it has no legal power to support and maintain those rights against the encroachment of any of the States, since in those matters the State is sovereign, and the part is greater than the whole (91).

It is thus suggested that Nimbus, who has threatened to take his case against Desmit to court, does not yet realize that the federal government is no longer invested in his protection now that Reconstruction has ended and left him but “half free ennyhow,” as he will later describe it (42). Furthermore, although he has briefly overpowered his nemesis, it is his former master who has the last laugh, for he sells Nimbus the rights to the Red Wing farm in a dishonest contract.

Red Wing is the tobacco farm and freedman’s village that Nimbus and Eliab create after the war, and it functions as a short-lived Eden of opportunity for the former slaves who are able to reap the benefits of their own labor for the first time in the postwar agrarian market. After

years of working the land, Nimbus recognizes the property as an overlooked piece of countryside with twenty-five acres of promising soil for tobacco cultivation. It is a time of unprecedented “mirth and happiness” for the community: their crops begin to prosper, Eliab Hill becomes the head of the church, and Mollie Ainslie teaches eager students in the growing schoolhouse (164). In a historical allusion to the early Pilgrims and their church-centered community system, the narrator remarks that “the most English of all English attributes has, by a strange transmutation, become the leading element in the character of the Africo-American” (160). Significantly, it is not just the former slaves’ religious commitment but also their “devotion to political liberty” that makes them, in Tourgée’s depiction, kindred spirits with America’s earliest settlers (160). The fecundity of soil and patriotic spirit is given personification in Nimbus’s wife, Lugena, who has recently given birth to two healthy children, evidence of “what even a brief period of happiness and prosperity would do for her race” (163). Tragically, the residents of Red Wing do not realize that their new schoolhouse and growing prosperity have become “particularly odious” to the white community and that their days in paradise are numbered (157).

In the most violent scene of the novel, the social utopia of Red Wing is destroyed by the Klan. Similar to the burning of Warrington Place in *A Fool’s Errand*, the attack is fueled by the fear that Nimbus and Eliab’s thriving tobacco crop, as well as their structured community system, are encroaching upon the benefits of white citizenship, a privilege the ruling class is not ready to grant to the former slaves, despite the law of the land. A deadly assault is carried out in the middle of the night, and though Nimbus is not present, it is he for whom the mob is searching. Eliab, the crippled spiritual leader, refuses to tell his friend’s whereabouts and is brutally tortured while the schoolhouse and church are burned. In a particularly gruesome scene, Nimbus’s wife, Lugena, kills Eliab’s assailant with an axe. In an impressionistic rendering of the

violence, Tourg  e writes that there was “a gleam of steel, and then down through mask and flesh and bone crashed the axe” in her hand, covering both her naked body and Eliab’s prostrate figure in the blood of their attacker (252-53). The blow results in the Klansman’s death as well as the villagers’ exile from paradise. Depictions of black rebellion or self-protection were not common to postbellum era, making Lugena’s actions contextually significant with regard to both race and gender, for it is a black woman who kills a white man in *Bricks without Straw*. Both Nimbus’s wrestling his former master to the ground and Lugena’s killing of the Klansman anticipate the depth of rage and violence that would surface in the works of Charles Chesnutt, Sutton Griggs, Richard Wright, and Ralph Ellison, who were among the first African American writers to depict scenes of retaliatory racial violence in fiction.

Once the attack on Red Wing occurs, the small village and its dreams are destroyed: Eliab goes into hiding with the help of Hesden Le Moyne; Lugena and her children are taken to the North with Mollie Ainslie; and Nimbus, who cannot return to North Carolina for fear of his safety, searches for work in Texas and is wrongfully imprisoned. After the characters disperse, the action becomes increasingly tangled in a series of unlikely coincidences and contrived plot twists, though the closing scenes are especially poignant when the major protagonists reunite. Eliab, who has spent time in a Northern college, has decided to rebuild the schoolhouse at Red Wing, for he has realized that the benefits of education are ultimately for the next generation. His time away from North Carolina has “widened and deepened his manhood as well as increased his knowledge,” and he returns to his Southern community with a new sense of purpose and confidence (420). Nimbus, on the other hand, has retained less optimism. With “his spirit broken” from the hardships he has endured, he cannot bear to begin anew at Red Wing and decides that he and his family should move to Kansas, a less volatile environment where he

believes more opportunities exist (420). Together Eliab and Nimbus function as an embodiment of the potential of the freed population, as well as the importance of working together to help uplift weaker members of the community. Since childhood, Nimbus had carried Eliab when his friend's severely deformed legs prevented him from walking. After the fall of Red Wing, however, it is Eliab whose vision for the future is lifting the former slaves towards a better future through educational advancement. The central theme of the text thus suggests that education is the only lasting solution to the problems of racism in the South, for even if the freedmen are as able in body and as entrepreneurial in spirit as Nimbus, without the proper tools of education, they will not be able to survive in the former Confederacy.

Ultimately, knowledge is linked to power throughout *Bricks without Straw*, a concept given full expression by Hesden Le Moyne in the final two chapters, as he articulates his vision for township communities and nationalized educational reform, proposals he sees as the solutions to the ills of Southern racism. In the didactic closing section, Hesden claims the Northern township system is an "essential concomitant of political equality" and a "vital element of American liberty" that the South is lacking (444-45). He sees this self-governing model as the "shield and nursery of individual freedom of thought and action" where citizens are able to appeal to their neighbors for reform and change, a concept of communal efficiency and order that the South has lost in an insular political monopoly of the white ruling class (444). Along with the restructuring of local governments, Hesden argues that a nationalized education system is the only remedy for Southern ignorance and racial violence. Regarding the dangers of illiteracy, he claims that forty-five percent of the voters in the former slave states cannot read the ballots they cast and that the uneducated whites, in addition to the newly enfranchised black population, are susceptible to ballot fraud in the upcoming elections. Extending his defense of a nationalized

system of education, and how it will break this cycle of ignorance, he maintains that “while education does not make the voter honest, it enables him to protect himself against the frauds of others, and not only increases his power but inspires him to resist violence. . . . The *only* remedy, is to educate people until they shall be wise enough to know what they ought to do, and brave enough and strong enough to do it” (452). Though Hesden envisions a system similar to the one that Comfort Servosse offers towards the end of *A Fool’s Errand*, he more specifically articulates possible solutions for Southern life after the war and visits the nation’s capital to argue his case. Despite the many setbacks and frustrations experienced by the freedmen at Red Wing, the closing scenes of the novel retain an open-ended optimism that is idealized by Hesden's transformation from paternalistic master to civil rights lobbyist.

Unlike Comfort Servosse, the Northern stranger who dies in the land he tried to change, Hesden is able to persevere in his reform pursuits, perhaps because as a Southerner he is more empathetic to the values and resentments of his neighbors. Despite their differences of regional perspective, however, both protagonists epitomize the difficulty of effecting lasting change in the Reconstruction South. Though *Bricks without Straw* essentially restates the same thesis for educational reform that is put forth in *A Fool's Errand*, a significant thematic difference is marked by Eliab’s decision in *Bricks without Straw* to rebuild the Red Wing schoolhouse, his return to the South suggesting that it is black teachers and mentors, rather than the white missionaries and schoolteachers, who are best equipped to uplift members of their own communities from illiteracy and despair. The closing scenes also warn that without the funding and framework of a nationalized system of public education, community activists such as Eliab will not be able to work safely and efficiently, a point that Tourgée elaborates upon four years later with the publication of *An Appeal to Caesar* (1884).⁵¹ This book-length study was

composed at the request of the newly elected President James A. Garfield, who asked Tourgée for a detailed report regarding Southern racial problems and his views towards social reform.⁵² In his inaugural address in March of 1881, Garfield expressed his concern regarding the plight of the freedmen of the South and demanded that the “danger” of illiteracy be met with “the savory influence of universal education.”⁵³ Tragically, however, the President was assassinated after less than four months in office. He never lived to read Tourgée’s strategies regarding how the government could implement educational reform in the region Tourgée had studied from an outsider’s perspective for fourteen years after the war. Somewhat prophetically, in *An Appeal to Caesar*, Tourgée claims that “what is to be done must be done at once; to-morrow it may be too late.”⁵⁴ This call to action was taken up by the reformers of *A Fool’s Errand* and *Bricks without Straw*, but ultimately in these novels and the history of the period, no meaningful change came about and African American citizens were denied the benefits of educational reform for the better part of the next century.

Notes

¹Otto H. Olsen, *The Carpetbagger's Crusade: The Life of Albion Winegar Tourgée* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), 12-25. Tourgée was first enlisted with Twenty-Seventh New York Volunteers. Upon their retreat from the First Battle of Bull Run, he received a spinal injury from the wheel of a gun carriage. At Perryville, Tourgée was again wounded, this time in the hip, by a shard of shell. While encamped at Murfreesboro, he was captured and spent nearly four months in Confederate prisons.

²Albion W. Tourgée, "Preface," *John Eax and Mamelon; or, The South without the Shadow* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1882), v.

³Albion W. Tourgée, "Preface," *A Royal Gentleman* (Ridgewood: Gregg Press Incorporated, 1967), vii.

⁴See Sidney Andrews, *The South Since the War, As Shown by Fourteen Weeks of Travel and Observation in Georgia and the Carolinas* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866). Also see Whitelaw Reid, *After the War: A Southern Tour, May 1, 1865, to May 1, 1866* (New York: Moore, Wiltach & Baldwin, 1866).

⁵See Edward King, *The Great South: A Record of Journeys in Louisiana, Texas, the Indian Territory, Missouri, Arkansas, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1875). For an informative discussion of the nineteenth century periodical culture, see Nancy Glazener, *Reading for Realism: The History of the U. S. Literary Institution, 1850-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

⁶In “Literature in the South Since the War,” Thomas Nelson Page wrote that in the South “conditions for a literature now exist as perhaps they do not exist in any other country or section” and mentions Tourgée as an example of an author who “has impliedly acknowledged his indebtedness as a writer to the romantic element in the Southern life.” Interestingly, he remarks upon the Northern author Constance Fenimore Woolson and her “scornful” view of the South, but he does not make any such observations about Tourgée’s political themes. See Thomas Nelson Page, “Literature in the South Since the War,” *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine* 48 (1891): 756.

⁷See Constance Fenimore Woolson, “In the Cotton Country,” *Appletons’ Journal* 15 (1876): 547-51; Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Palmetto Leaves* (Boston: J. R. Osgood, 1873); Sarah Orne Jewett, “The Mistress of Sydenham Plantation” *Atlantic Monthly* 62 (1888): 145-50; and Henry James, *The American Scene* (London : Chapman and Hall, 1907).

⁸See Nina Silber, *The Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 4-5.

⁹In his influential study of the Civil War and its cultural aftermath, David Blight has maintained that the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a time of pathological healing in which “sentimental remembrance won over ideological memory” for both Northerners and Southerners. See David W. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 4.

¹⁰Tourgée blamed both the North and the South for using patriotic sentimentalism for what W. E. B. Du Bois would later call “our own pleasure and amusement, for inflating our

national ego, and giving us a false but pleasurable sense of accomplishment.” W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 714.

¹¹Thomas Nelson Page to Grace King, in Grace King, *Memories of a Southern Woman of Letters* (New York: Macmillan, 1932), 378.

¹²See Blight, *Race and Reunion*, 4.

¹³Albion W. Tourgée, *The Invisible Empire* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1880), 387.

¹⁴Albion W. Tourgée, “The South as a Field for Fiction,” *Forum* 6 (1888): 405-07.

¹⁵ See Tourgée, “The South as a Field for Fiction,” 404.

¹⁶Quoted in Roy F. Dibble, *Albion Tourgée* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1921), 135.

¹⁷Albion W. Tourgée, “Americanism in Literature,” *The Continent* 4 (1883): 219.

¹⁸Albion W. Tourgée, “The Claim of ‘Realism’,” *The North American Review* 148 (1889): 386, 388.

¹⁹Albion W. Tourgée, “Preface,” *Hot Plowshares* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1883), 2.

²⁰Albion W. Tourgée, “The Literary Quality of ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’,” *The Independent* 48 (1896): 1127.

²¹Tourgée, “Preface,” *Hot Plowshares*, 1.

²²For an extended discussion of concepts of nineteenth century Realism and Romanticism, see Kenneth Warren, *Black and White Strangers: Race and American Literary Realism* (University of Chicago Press, 1993). Also see Glazener, *Reading for Realism*, 1-25.

²³Tourgée, "The South as a Field for Fiction," 411.

²⁴See Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 212-13.

²⁵See Björnstjerne Björnson's remarks about the sales of *A Fool's Errand* in his untitled editorial for *The Critic* 1 (1881): 51.

²⁶See Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 165.

²⁷Benjamin A. Railton, *Contesting the Past, Reconstructing the Nation* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 162-63.

²⁸See Tourgée, *The Invisible Empire*, 19.

²⁹See George J. Becker, "Albion W. Tourgée: Pioneer in Social Criticism," *American Literature* 19 (1947): 59.

³⁰This untitled literary advertisement was printed in *The Dial* 1, No. 3 (1880): 63.

³¹*The Invisible Empire*, the supplementary text of authentication to *A Fool's Errand*, was perhaps inspired by Stowe's *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which served a similar purpose. See Harriet Beecher Stowe's *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin Presenting the Original Facts and Documents Upon Which the Story is Founded* (Boston, J. P. Jewett, 1853).

³²President James A. Garfield's remarks were printed in *Christian Union* 22 (1880): 426.

³³C. H. Jones, "Sectional Fiction," *Appletons' Journal* 54 (1880): 565, 566.

³⁴See "Brevities," *Southern Planter and Farmer* 42 (1881): 72.

³⁵See Henry James, *The American Scene* (New York: The Library of America, 1993), 697.

³⁶Constance Fenimore Woolson, "In the Cotton Country," *Appletons' Journal* 15 (1876): 547-51.

³⁷See Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 158, 351.

³⁸See Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993), 246.

³⁹Jeffrey W. Miller articulates this position in “Redemption Through Violence: White Mobs and Black Citizenship in Albion Tourgée’s *A Fool’s Errand*,” *Southern Literary Journal* 35 (2002): 20.

⁴⁰See Miller, “Redemption Through Violence,” 24.

⁴¹See Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 721.

⁴²See “Life in North Carolina: The Murder of Senator John W. Stephens—A Terrible Scene—Shall his Assassins Be Amnestied?” *The New York Times* (Feb. 26, 1873): 1.

⁴³“Statements, Depositions, and Other Records Submitted by Gov. William W. Holden Relating to Crimes of the Ku Klux Klan against Citizens of North Carolina, 1869-1871.” Electronically accessed: <http://whgbetc.com/mind/reconstruction2.html>

⁴⁴ Referring to the factual authenticity of *A Fool’s Errand*, Tourgée wrote that “perhaps never before in literature has an apparent romance linked together so many literal facts. Strange, almost incredible to a Northern reader, it is, in itself, a marked verification of the adage that truth is stranger than fiction. It has been well denominated ‘truth in the disguise of fiction,’ for the web of romantic incident—itself mainly true—is but the garb which truth assumes the better to perform her task. Its verity has been fully substantiated since publication by letters to the author from a large number of northern men resident in the South, clergymen, ladies who have been teachers of colored schools, colored men, Southern white men who have suffered for their opinions, repentant Ku-Klux, and in fact all ranks and classes who would naturally have intimate

knowledge of the truth portrayed in that work, and also of the spirit which underlay the incidents depicted.” See Tourgée, *The Invisible Empire*, 15.

⁴⁵For more information on these political groups during Reconstruction, see Richard L. Hume and Jerry B. Gough, *Blacks, Carpetbaggers, and Scalawags: The Constitutional Conventions of Radical Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008).

⁴⁶The author William Sydney Porter, who wrote under the pseudonym, O. Henry, was a native of Greensboro, North Carolina, and in 1875, at the age of thirteen, he published a mocking illustration of Tourgée crying from his glass eye upon his departure back to the North. Dr. Rufus W. Weaver, a childhood acquaintance of Porter’s, would recall that the white children of Greensboro regarded Tourgée as the “one-eyed scoundrel” who had sought “to introduce social equality among negroes and whites; who had wrecked the good name and the financial integrity of our fair State by his unexampled extravagance when he was in control of the State legislature, and who had brought about almost a reign of terror, so that he was justly considered by all good people to be a veritable monster.” Another Greensboro native named Thomas H. Tate would claim that “as to Judge Tourgee [sic], we looked upon him as some sort of a pirate, mysterious and blackened by a thousand crimes, and we glanced at him covertly when he happened around. He was a sort of an ogre, but even then we admired him for his courage and wondered at it, coming as he did from the North. Very dark stories were whispered of his doings out in far-off Warnersville, the negro settlement out by the Methodist graveyard. He held meetings out there that we were almost prepared to say were a species of voodooism.” See Charles Alphonso Smith, *O. Henry Biography* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1916), 62, 63.

⁴⁷See Frederick Douglass, “The Mission of the War,” in *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787-1900*, Philip Sheldon Foner and Robert James Branham, 420. On January 13, 1864, Douglass delivered “The Mission of the War” at an event sponsored by the Women’s Loyal League at Cooper’s Institute in New York City.

⁴⁸See “Editorial Notes,” *New York Evangelist* 51 (1880): 4.

⁴⁹See “Current Fiction,” *The Literary World* 11 (1880): 374.

⁵⁰See “Literature” *The Independent* 32 (1880): 11.

⁵¹For more insight upon Tourgée’s views towards universal education, see Dean H. Keller, “Albion Tourgée and a National Education Program,” *Peabody Journal of Education* 41 (1963): 131-135.

⁵²In *An Appeal to Caesar*, Tourgée refers to this conversation with Garfield, who asked him to “write out your views of what is possible to be done and let me have them—or, better still, put them into a book and I will study it.” Both Tourgée and Garfield grew up in Ohio, where they were childhood acquaintances. See Albion W. Tourgée, *An Appeal to Caesar* (New York: Fords, Howard, & Hulbert, 1884), 17.

⁵³In his inaugural address on March 4, 1881, Garfield declared that “the elevation of the negro race from slavery to the full rights of citizenship is the most important political change we have known since the adoption of the Constitution of 1787.” He also claimed that there was “no middle ground for the negro race between slavery and equal citizenship.” Regarding a nationalized system of education as a remedy for illiteracy and voter ignorance, Garfield also claimed that “the nation itself is responsible for the extension of the suffrage, and is under special obligations to aid in removing the illiteracy which it has added to the voting population.

For the North and South alike there is but one remedy. All the constitutional power of the nation and of the States and all the volunteer forces of the people should be surrendered to meet this danger by the savory influence of universal education. It is the high privilege and sacred duty of those now living to educate their successors and fit them, by intelligence and virtue, for the inheritance which awaits them.” See *Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States, Vol. I* (Bedford: Applewood Books, 2000), 145, 146.

⁵⁴Tourgée, *An Appeal to Caesar*, 324.

CHAPTER 3

AMERICAN BOODLINES IN GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE'S *THE GRANDISSIMES*
AND MARK TWAIN'S *PUDD'NHEAD WILSON*

In his reasoning that "justice cannot sleep forever," Thomas Jefferson, in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, foresaw "a revolution of the wheel of fortune" between master and slave once the "manners and morals" of the oppressor and the "amor patriæ" of the oppressed were diminished beyond recognition.¹ The anxiety that Jefferson evokes in his metaphor, comparing racial revolution to an inevitably-turning wheel, pervades the fictional worlds of George Washington Cable's *The Grandissimes* (1880) and Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins* (1894).² In both novels, the instability of racial bloodlines, particularly their threat upon white patriarchal order, is reflected by tangled webs of multigenerational histories, duplicative time shifts, allusive narration, and the incremental repetition of black and white twinning, given its fullest development in the Grandissime half-brothers and the swapped infants of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. The rhetorical chaos at the center of both plotlines culminates in the murder of two leading citizens of the slave-holding aristocracy, Agricola Fusilier of *The Grandissimes* and Judge York Leicester Driscoll of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. In iconoclastic scenes of black violence, both men die at the hands of the interracial heirs who have been denied entrance into their venerable family-lines. Cable and Twain's psychologically complex depictions of violent, non-white protagonists challenged not only the prevailing modes of racial

representation in the postwar literary market but also the mythology of cultural progressivism in the post-emancipation period.

Scholarship devoted to Cable and Twain often focuses on the four months the two authors spent “stumping the Union” on their wildly popular reading tour, which encompassed eighty cities in the United States and Canada from November 5, 1884 to February 28, 1885.³ In 1900, Major J. B. Pond, the tour manager who advertised the authors as the “twins of genius,” published a retrospective account of their time together on the road in *Eccentricities of Genius* and observed that both men

were Southerners, born on the shores of the Mississippi River, and both sang well. Each was familiar with all the plantation songs and Mississippi River chanties of the negro, and they would often get to singing these together or by themselves, or with their manager for sole audience. So delightful were these occasions, and so fond were they of embracing every private opportunity of “letting themselves out,” that I often instructed our carriage driver to take a long route between hotels and trains that I might have a concert which the public was never permitted to hear.⁴

While on the road in the fall and winter of 1884-1885, Cable was at the height of his literary career, having published *Old Creole Days* (1879), *The Grandissimes* (1880), *Madame Delphine* (1881), and most recently, *Dr. Sevier* (1884), a novel that earned him particular favor with Northern readers and increased resentment from the South.⁵ Before packed houses, Twain was reading sections of *Huckleberry Finn*, which was being advertised in excerpts in the December, January, and February issues of *Century Magazine*. The novel, in full, would not be published until the tour ended.

Cable and Twain, in many ways, were as oddly matched as the conjoined Cappello twins of *Those Extraordinary Twins*, the companion text to *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. The twins, Angelo and Luigi, have spent two years in a traveling "freak-show," and they suffer the differences of one another's temperament and habit, especially with regard to religion and alcohol. As different physically as they are in disposition, the Cappello twins are described as "a combination" who "broke all the laws of taste known to civilization" (141, 134). Mary Cable Dennis, in her 1932 biography of her father, reflected upon Cable and Twain in strikingly similar terms when she noted that

father's relationship with Mark Twain was a rather unusual one. The two men were as different in temperament as in appearance, and as different in habits of life as any two men could be. Father was a small, slight, very trim man: I would call him dapper except that that word seems to me to carry with it a sense of pertness, or flippancy. Mark Twain was a larger man, slouchy in carriage and in his dress, his hair half long and always on end. Father was a serious minded man, in spite of quick wit and love of fun, while one could never be sure whether Mark Twain meant what he said or not. He was always joking when one least expected it. Mark Twain could never understand Father's religious prejudices. When they gave a series of readings together one winter Father insisted that it be written into the contract that he should not be forced to travel on Sunday. This Mark Twain never understood and he never ceased to remark about it whenever he had a chance. Mark Twain never hesitated to use profanity when it suited his purpose: Father's strongest expletive was "plague on it" and he seldom used even that, for it was reserved for special occasions.

Despite their obvious differences in personality, Dennis recalled that “there was something which drew these two men into a very close friendship from the beginning of their acquaintance. There was a mutual admiration which was absolutely sincere and each enjoyed the other and found the companionship profitable.”⁶

Although Twain was the more established American author during their “Twins of Genius” tour, Cable's literary status had reached its height in the early 1880s, a short-lived surge in popularity evidenced by the fact that the *Critic* ranked Cable ahead of Twain on its list of “Forty Immortals” in 1884.⁷ Part of the groundswell surrounding Cable's reputation during this period was owed to his controversial and increasingly vocal stance on American race relations. On the third month of the tour, his essay “The Freedman's Case in Equity” appeared in *Century Magazine* and caused a sensation that eclipsed the prepublication marketing of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.⁸ In his appraisal of the postwar racial crisis, Cable claimed that

the late Southern slave has within two decades risen from slavery to freedom, from freedom to citizenship, passed on into political ascendancy, and fallen again from that eminence. The amended Constitution holds him up in his new political right as well as a mere constitution can. On the other hand, certain enactments of Congress, trying to reach further, have lately been made void by the highest court in the nation. The popular mind in the old free States, weary of strife at arm's length, bewildered by its complications, vexed by many a blunder, eager to turn to the cure of other evils, and even tinctured by that race whose grosser excesses it would so gladly see suppressed, has retreated from its uncomfortable dictatorial attitude and thrown the whole matter over to the States of the South.⁹

In his criticism of the North for its abandonment of reformist ideals, Cable makes a subtle reference to miscegenation with his use of the adjective "tintured." He expands upon the topic of racial intermixture in his claim that the African slave was regarded as "purely zero as the brute on the other end of the plow-line" and that "the occasional mingling of his blood with that of the white man worked no change in the sentiment: one, two, four, eight, multiplied upon or divided into zero, still gave zero for the result."¹⁰ His remarks upon the paradoxes of one-drop determinism echo his literary development, four years prior, of the Creole and octoroon half-brothers in *The Grandissimes* who are nearly identical in all things but social privilege. Twain's first novel to foreground the crossing of bloodlines, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, would not appear for nine more years, and in his portrayal of Thomas á Becket Driscoll and Valet de Chambre, he would also use the trope of black and white half-brothers to satirize the arbitrary boundaries of racial inheritance.

Although there are obvious strains of influence shared between *The Grandissimes* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, there are relatively few instances in which the novels have been studied together. In the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, a period that coincided with a renaissance of critical interest in Cable's works, Fred W. Lorch, Guy A. Cardwell, and Arlin Turner published archival-based studies of the "Twins of Genius" tour, though the emphasis of their research is focused upon the personal dimensions of the authors' relationship rather than the literature they were producing during this time.¹¹ In his study of the "free man of color" motif, Lawrence I. Berkove has observed similarities between *The Grandissimes* and *Huckleberry Finn* (1884) but does not explore the more obvious connections that the latter novel shares with the free black characters depicted in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*.¹² Similarly, John Cleman has noted the thematic

parallels between *The Grandissimes* and *Huckleberry Finn* and emphasized the manner in which both authors use historical analogy to link the problems of the Old South and the New South.¹³

While *Pudd'nhead Wilson* has received renewed interest, particularly after influential studies of Shelley Fisher Fishkin and Eric J. Sundquist, the genre-breaking representations of racial violence and miscegenation in Cable's *The Grandissimes* are less often observed.¹⁴ While Sundquist recognized the influence that *Pudd'nhead Wilson* had upon African American authors such as Charles Chesnutt, Pauline Hopkins, James Weldon Johnson, and George Schuyler, he does not explore the role of *The Grandissimes* as a literary antecedent to *Pudd'nhead Wilson*.¹⁵ Accordingly, Arthur Pettit has claimed that "more than any nineteenth-century novel except Cable's *The Grandissimes*, *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* implies that the greater tragedy of the South is not miscegenation but the curse that white Southerners have placed upon it." Pettit, however, does not elaborate upon his evocative claim.¹⁶ David Lionel Smith, on the other hand, uses Cable as a point of comparison to illustrate the school of Southern writers who valued "nostalgic sentimentality" and "the safe domesticity of 'the good old days'."¹⁷ By classifying Cable among the sentimental apologists of the plantation school, Smith distorts the progressive themes of novels such as *The Grandissimes* and overlooks the radical reformism of Cable's political essays in *The Silent South* (1885) and *The Negro Question* (1890).

Cable, in fact, encouraged Southern authors to work towards a national rather than regional literary tradition, as his 1882 speech "Literature in the Southern States" clearly illustrates. Speaking before a crowd of Southerners at the University of Mississippi, he called the "plantation idea" a "semi-barbarism" and asked his fellow writers if "we have the courage to be iconoclasts in our own homes?"¹⁸ Gavin Jones, noting the groundbreaking nature of *The Grandissimes*, has suggested that the novel

was such a radical work not simply because it predicted the exposure of ironic racial boundaries in later works like Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894) and Charles Chesnutt's *The House Behind Cedars* (1900). Cable's allusive, enigmatic style was considered his most dangerous political weapon. It was a style largely dependent on the satirical ambiguity of black expression, a style in which the subversive potential of black dialect was fundamental.¹⁹

As Jones notes, Cable embeds reformist themes within the texture of his novel without compromising the allusive quality of his art. He would not be able to achieve this balance between his politics and his prose throughout his career, as later novels such as *John March Southerner* (1895) would illustrate. Cable's development of psychological realism in *The Grandissimes* prefigures not only *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, published fourteen years later, but also the racial themes, historical preoccupation, and fractured form of William Faulkner's Southern novels in the modernist era.²⁰

Both Cable and Twain's depictions of race are contextualized by antebellum settings that function as thematic mirrors to the post-Reconstruction South. *The Grandissimes* opens in September of 1803, shortly after Thomas Jefferson announced his intention to purchase the Louisiana territory from Napoleon Bonaparte. Cable's novel, as often observed, is essentially a *Kulturroman*, or the story of two opposing civilizations. The old-guard society of French-speaking New Orleans, led by their Creole patriarch, Agricola Fusilier, refuse to submit to United States authority and threaten to secede from the Union if they are forced to conform to the new, imposed government. Throughout *The Grandissimes*, the clash between new and old forms of governments, as well as scenes of racially-motivated mob violence, evoke the tumultuous period of federal Reconstruction, a connection that forms the central historical

allusion of the novel. Louis Rubin, emphasizing the significance of the antebellum setting, has noted that at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, the New Orleans Creoles

faced the necessity of coming to terms with a government imposed upon them and not of their own choosing, and they saw in that government a threat to their own institutions and rights. Similarly the New Orleans of the years following the Civil War had a government imposed upon it by force, and pledged, in theory at least, to political and social principles very much at odds with those of the society thus subjected. In both instances, what was being forced upon New Orleans from the outside was, as Cable saw it, a government based upon the ideals of liberty and attitudes of progress which ran counter to established prejudices and which demanded new and more enlightened responses. And in making the problems of race and caste the central theme of his novel of the Louisiana of 1803, Cable was dealing with the single most controversial and inflammatory issue of post-Civil War Louisiana life.²¹

Regarding the political import of his novel, Cable openly remarked "I meant to make *The Grandissimes* as truly a political work as it ever has been called. . . . I was still very slowly and painfully guessing out the riddle of our Southern question. . . . I wrote as near to truth and justice as I knew how."²² The political implications of the setting were not lost on contemporary critics. In an 1880 review for *Scribner's*, for example, Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen noted that the "state of affairs in Louisiana in 1804 is so nearly parallel with the state of affairs to-day, or at all events previous to 1876, that to all intents and purposes the book is a study (and a very profound and striking one) of Southern society during the period of reconstruction."²³ Using the problems

of the past to mirror the issues still vexing their contemporary society, both Cable and Twain condemned a Southern ideology that was built upon racial entitlement and insular provincialism.

In his 1882 speech "Literature in the Southern States," for instance, Cable maintained that when "the whole intellectual energy" of the Confederacy "flew to the defense" of slavery, "we broke with human progress. We broke with the world's thought."²⁴ He further argued that this social paralysis, owed to slave culture, was also reflected in Southern literature that was "mired and stuffed with conservatism to the point of absolute rigidity." Referring to his Southern upbringing during slavery, he claimed that

our life had little or nothing to do with the onward movement of the world's thought. We were in danger of being a civilization that was not a civilization, because there was not in it the element of advancement. Under these conditions how could we produce or even receive a new literature? We were used to the old. We were not widowed from the past; how could we wed the present or affiance ourselves to the future? Our country was America, but the impulses of our thought still found the old highways of English literature running nearly enough in our desired direction to beguile us from the arduous paths of the uncleared wilderness. Our book reading ran down the scale of time to 1800 and there it stopped.²⁵

In *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), Twain also criticized the anti-progressivism of the South and the influence of English literature. As he would throughout his career, he places a particular blame on the works of Sir Walter Scott for reversing the cultural influence of the French Revolution, which, in his opinion, "broke the chains of the *ancien régime* and of the Church, and

made a nation of abject slaves a nation of freemen."²⁶ Twain claimed that nowhere was Scott's influence more detrimental than in the American South where

the genuine and wholesome civilization of the nineteenth century is curiously confused and commingled with the Walter Scott Middle-Age sham civilization and so you have practical, common-sense, progressive ideas, and progressive works, mixed up with the duel, the inflated speech, and the jejune romanticism of an absurd past that is dead, and out of charity ought to be buried. But for the Sir Walter disease, the character of the Southerner—or Southron, according to Sir Walter's starchier way of phrasing it—would be wholly modern, in place of modern and mediæval mixed, and the South would be fully a generation further advanced than it is.

Echoing Cable's criticism of a tradition "mired and stuffed with conservatism," Twain reflected on how little literary progress had been made in the Southern states where authors "write for the past, not the present; they use obsolete forms, and a dead language."²⁷ Cable and Twain's remarks regarding a backwards-thinking South are particularly relevant to their development of character, plot, and setting in *The Grandissimes* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*.

In both novels, the force of historical tradition comprises the unwritten laws through which the ruling class perpetuates social power. This inherited hierarchy exerts psychological control over the black and white protagonists, keeping both parties from transcending the chains of the past. *The Grandissimes*, for instance, opens with the elite caste of Creoles *en masque* as their famous colonial ancestors, their costumes functioning as emblematic manifestations of their cultural history. In a more overt reference to the burdens of the past, the narrator compares

colonial Louisiana and the postbellum South when recounting the story of the rebellious slave Bras-Coupé and his punishment for striking his master, Don José Martinez, who

swore a Spanish oath, lifted his hand and—fell, beneath the terrific fist of his slave, with a bang that jingled the candelabras. Dolorous stroke!—for the dealer of it. Given, apparently for him—poor, tipsy savage—in self-defense, punishable, in a white offender, by a small fine or a few days' imprisonment, it assured Bras-Coupé the death of a felon; such was the old *Code Noir*. (We have a *Code Noir* now, but the new one is a mental reservation, not an enactment.) (180-81).

Breaking the rhythm of third-person narration in a moment of authorial intrusion, Cable uses the pronoun "we" to clarify the historical parallel between the race laws of the French colonial empire and those of the post-Reconstruction South.

In the preface to *Pudd'nhead Wilson* entitled "Whisper to the Reader," Twain also mocks the presumption of social progress in the South. Writing from Florence, Italy, in 1893, he claims to have met an expatriated lawyer, William Hicks, who left Southwest Missouri in 1858 for his "health" and has been living in a local horse-feed shed (1). By implying that Hicks, who was once a Southern lawyer and is now a reclusive stable-keeper, is mentally unstable, it is humorously ironic that Twain submitted the "law-chapters" of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* to him for "rigid and exhausting revisions and correction" (1). These "two or three legal chapters" are "right and straight" now, promises Twain, for they were "re-written" under his "immediate eye" (2, 1). In the final courtroom of the novel that Hicks presumably helped to inform, the Dawson's Landing jury will declare a white man a slave and a slave an aristocrat in a scene that satirically parodies the regressive revisionism of American race law in the postbellum era, a reality of

American life that the Civil Rights Cases of 1883 and *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) would tragically illustrate.²⁸

Both Cable and Twain use suggestively ironic modes of narration and duplicative planes of action to emphasize the problems of cultural advancement in the South. In November of 1879, *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* began its serial run in *Scribner's Monthly*. The appearance of the final chapters in the October 1880 issue coincided with the publication of the novel by Charles Scribner's Sons. From its earliest reviews, *The Grandissimes* had the reputation of being "too luxuriant" for the "average reader" and "full of allusions which are hard to trace."²⁹ Throughout the narrative, the ancestral histories of black and white characters are established through disjointed narrative flashbacks, frame stories, and allusive exchanges in caste-specific iterations of French and the Creole vernacular. The reformist nature of the theme as well as the colloquial "double meanings" of the dialogue in *The Grandissimes* infuriated many hometown readers in New Orleans.³⁰ Shortly after its publication, for example, a slanderous pamphlet entitled "Critical Dialogue between Aboo and Caboo on a New Book; or Grandissime Ascension" began circulating. In the sketch, Aboo is the ghost of a central character in *The Grandissimes* named Agricola Fusilier who has returned from the dead to declare the author who created him to be "a pert, waggish, flippant, somewhat bold upstart, brazen-faced wit-ling, who supplies the Northern literary market with that sort of adulterated, but gratifying, stuff: How disloyal, how basely unfilial, how despi-*cable*!"³¹ Echoing this sentiment, the New Orleans writer Grace King claimed that Cable "stabbed the city in the back, as we felt, in a dastardly way to please the Northern press."³² Although the Northern reviews were more generous than those of his hometown, some critics were frustrated by the narrative structure of Cable's social satire.

An unsigned critic for *Atlantic Monthly*, for instance, complained that "the chronology

. . . of the tale is confusing, and it is not easy to say how long an interval elapses between the opening and the close, while the reminiscences and the retrocessions [sic] in the story add to the reader's confusion."³³ A review in *Nation* noted that the thematic "uncertainty" of the text was "annoying" and that "the narrator comes to have the air of caressing what he has to tell, of fondling it and letting you get glimpses of it, but retaining it long and handing it over wholly to your inspection at last with wistful regret."³⁴ The most astute readers of the time, however, were overwhelmingly impressed with Cable's representations of consciousness, caste, and race, as well as his dialect patterns and regional character-models. One of the leading literary critics of the period, Hjalmar H. Boyesen, saw Cable as "a literary pioneer" and "the first Southern novelist (unless we count Poe a novelist) who has made a contribution of permanent value to American literature."³⁵ Lafcadio Hearn called *The Grandissimes* "the most remarkable work of fiction ever created in the South."³⁶ Twain referred to Cable as "the South's finest literary genius" and claimed that he was "the only master in the writing of French dialects that the country has produced."³⁷ In 1910, at Twain's memorial service, William Dean Howells concluded that "if some finer and nobler novel than *The Grandissimes* has been written in this land, any time, I have not read it. From Mark Twain himself I learned to love the literature of the delightful Master who wrote that book."³⁸ The admiration that Howells, Hearn, and Twain expressed toward Cable's ability to capture the nuanced rhythm of life in New Orleans speaks not only to his artistic talents in fiction but also his ability to keenly negotiate the literary transition from the picturesque mode of the Victorian novel to the burgeoning movements in Regionalism.

One of Cable's greatest achievements in *The Grandissimes* is the manner in which he embedded elements of social realism into the novel without encumbering the plotline with overt

moralizing in the manner of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and other reformist texts of the abolitionist period. The narrative style, as Howells once remarked, was "romantic in character but realistic in characterization," a balance that allowed the "dark presence of slavery" to be "perceptible not in any studied attitude, but in the casual effects of character among the Creole masters and the Creole slaves."³⁹ As the tone shifts from "a light comic vein" to one that relies upon metaphors of "savage irony," Cable was able to "make an unpopular theme palatable" and attack Southern attitudes of racism without heavy-handed didacticism.⁴⁰ Reflecting on his drafting process with *The Grandissimes*, Cable claimed to have pushed himself to create something that was "beyond and above the mere puzzle of the plot, something great and thought-compelling, that teaches without telling, that brings to view without pointing, that guides without leading and allures without fatiguing."⁴¹ Noting the groundbreaking nature of Cable's literary technique as well as his uncompromising look at the burdens of history and race in the postbellum period, Louis D. Rubin has suggested that *The Grandissimes* is "the first 'modern' Southern novel," claiming that "if the loss of the Civil War had at last freed the Southern writer from the need to defend Southern racial attitudes, it was Cable who first took advantage of that new freedom."⁴² In many ways, the publication of *The Grandissimes* marks the artistic birth of Southern fiction, for it was one of the first successful novels that portrayed the intersections of time, history, and community upon both black and white characters who are portrayed with the psychologically realistic dimensions of pride, anger, moral confusion, and autonomy.

Though earlier works by Twain, such as the sketch "A True Story" (1874), addressed the problems of slavery and white entitlement, his longest and most sustained development of these themes would not appear until *Huckleberry Finn* (1885), and, with greater satire, in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894). Leslie Fielder, comparing the thematic gravity of *Huckleberry Finn* and

Pudd'nhead Wilson, perceptively called the latter text "a dark mirror image of the world evoked in the earlier work" in which "the lyricism and euphoria are gone" with "no triumphs of Twain's rhetoric to preserve us from the revealed failures of our own humanity."⁴³ Arlin Turner, on the other hand, suggested that Twain's most powerful satire was published a decade too late, for "the problems explored in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* had grown wearisome in the North as well as the South" by the mid-1890s and that Twain "wrote his most perceptive and most impressive attack on racism and related doctrines at a time when his attack could stir no spark in his reading public."⁴⁴ Although they were composed at different historical moments, both *The Grandissimes* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson* deal with the manner in which a society is to bound the problems of its past. Over the fourteen years that passed between the publication dates of the two works, the nation moved even closer to replicating the slave-status of its newest citizens through Jim Crow legislation, a problem that would extend into the next century.⁴⁵

From December of 1893 to June of 1894, *Pudd'nhead Wilson; A Tale* ran serially in seven installments in *Century Magazine*. When the first American edition appeared in November of 1894, it was published as *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson and the Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins*.⁴⁶ The extended title reflects Twain's decision to unite the original text with *Those Extraordinary Twins*, a ten-chapter novella centering upon the rise and fall of the Cappello brothers, a pair of conjoined Italian twins who are lynched after running for political office in Dawson's Landing. Luigi and Angelo Cappello also appear in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, though they are no longer the central protagonists, nor are they conjoined and later killed by a lynch mob. Similar to the critical reception of *The Grandissimes*, many readers took issue with the narrative complexity of Twain's work. An early critic for *Athenæum* complained that "the story at times rambles on in an almost incomprehensible way . . . and the Twins altogether

seem to have very little *raison d'être* in the book."⁴⁷ *The Critic* maintained that *Pudd'nhead Wilson* "cannot be called in any sense *literature*." Regarding the "absurd extravaganza" of *Those Extraordinary Twins*, the reviewer asked, "What is this? is it literature? is Mr. Clemens a 'writer' after all?"⁴⁸ In one of the more antagonistic reviews, the Southern writer Martha McCulloch Williams proposed that "a better title, perhaps, would be 'The Decline and Fall of Mark Twain;' for, looking at it solely as a piece of literature, there is no denying, that his much-advertised serial is tremendously stupid."⁴⁹ The debate regarding the artistic quality of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, as well as its intertextual relationship to *Those Extraordinary Twins*, was renewed in 1984 by Hershel Parker's claim that together the works were "patently unreadable," an assertion that overlooks the thematic similarities of twinship between the two books as well as the manner in which the rhetorical chaos at the center of both narratives very much mirrors the late-century perversions of race and law that both books parody.⁵⁰

Similar to Cable's development of the Grandissime, De Grapion, and Fusilier clans in *The Grandissimes*, Twain foregrounds three prominent families who deny social power and privilege to those relatives born from the intergenerational history of miscegenation within their ancestral lines. The action of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* occurs from 1830 to 1853, in Dawson's Landing, Missouri, a river-port village where social order and cultural custom are maintained by the Driscoll, Essex, and Howard families. Twain refers to the patriarchs of these clans collectively as the "F. F. V.," a regional acronym used to designate one descended from the "First Families" of Virginia. The gentlemen of Dawson's Landing regard this ancestral claim as a "supremacy" of social caste (62). Particularly relevant to Twain's development of the F. F. V. in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is his claim in *Life on the Mississippi* that "it was Sir Walter that made every gentleman in the South a Major or a Colonel, or a General or a Judge, before the war; and it was he, also,

that made these gentlemen value these bogus decorations."⁵¹ The decorated F. F. V. of Dawson's Landing, comprised of a judge, lawyer, and colonel, embody this one-dimensional model of false honor. As Scott Moore has maintained, the culture of violence in Dawson's Landing, legitimized by constructions of the *code duello*, "has the power to trump laws, religious creeds, and moral principles."⁵² Twain mocks the cultural significance of the *code duello* throughout, particularly through the characters of Judge Driscoll and his best-friend, the "prominent lawyer" Pembroke Howard, "a man always courteously ready to stand up before you in the field if any act or words of his had seemed doubtful or suspicious to you, and explain it with any weapon you might prefer, from brad-awls to artillery" (5). Although both men hold prestigious positions in Dawson's Landing's legal community, they view honor maintained through duel violence as a commitment above the law. Twain satirizes the mythology of Southern masculinity with the decidedly effeminate reaction of the Judge when he discovers that his nephew, Tom, has taken Luigi Cappello to court rather than fighting him in a duel. Having "sank forward in a swoon," it is Pembroke who catches his friend, "took him in his arms, and bedded him on his back in the boat" (64). With a "weak" voice, Driscoll begs, "Say it ain't true Pembroke, tell me it ain't true!" (64). The romanticism of the scene, with its overt suggestions of homosexuality, is farcical satire on the overblown chivalry of Sir Walter Scott's most popular novels. Twain puns upon this connection directly when Tom cries "Great Scott!" upon learning that his uncle has engaged Luigi in a duel of his own (75).

Throughout *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the Driscoll, Howard, and Essex patriarchs function thematically as a composite protagonist.⁵³ The collective nature of their development is reminiscent of an exchange in *The Grandissimes* when the Northern interloper, Joseph Frowenfeld, complains that "there are so many Grandissimes . . . I cannot distinguish

between—I can scarcely count them." Responding to his confusion, the quick-witted Charlie Keene suggests that he "take them in the mass—as you would shrimp" (29). Cable would reiterate this metaphor in "The Freedman's Case in Equity" when he referred to the "fixed" privilege of the "master caste" as "a solid mass."⁵⁴ In *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the conflation of the F. F. V. into an elite "mass" occurs through a series of coincidental plot-details. Judge Driscoll is the "first citizen" of Dawson's Landing while Pembroke Howard is "the second citizen." Both men are born in Virginia and "of the same age" (63). Though Driscoll is a "free-thinker" and Howard a "strong and determined Presbyterian," their "warm intimacy suffered no impairments as a consequence," for above religion and above the law stands their bonded commitment to honor and class:

The F. F. V. was a born gentleman; his highest duty in life was to watch over that great inheritance and keep it unsmirched. He must keep his honor spotless.

Those laws were his chart; his course was marked out on it; if he swerved from it by so much as half a point of the compass it meant shipwreck to his honor; that is to say, degradation from his rank as a gentleman. These laws required certain things of him which his religion might forbid: then his religion must yield—the laws could not be relaxed to accommodate religion or anything else (63).

Extending the trope of the ruling class as a "solid mass," two other members of the F. F. V., Colonel Cecil Burleigh Essex and Percy Northumberland Driscoll, die on the same day in the fall of 1845. As the slave-woman Roxy tells it, Essex is the father of Chambers, who lives for twenty-three years as Tom. Percy Driscoll, according to the narrator, is the father of the heir-infant Tom who lives for twenty-three years as Chambers. Both infants are born on the "first of February, 1830" in the Driscoll household where Roxy is a slave (5). After Tom's birth, Mrs.

Percy Driscoll "died within the week," leaving Roxy "in charge of the children" (5). The cracks and coincidences in the narrator's "chronicle" suggest that it was in fact Percy Driscoll who impregnated Roxy (3). This possibility is extended by the fact that the children look so similar that their switch in the cradle goes unnoticed. More cryptically, when introducing Percy Driscoll, Twain writes, "he was a F. F. V. of formidable caliber—however, with him we have no concern" (5). The racial burlesque thus develops as Twain lampoons not only the idea that ethnicity is "fixed" but also the notion that a Southern "gentleman" lives "without stain or blemish" (4). The F. F. V. 's devotion to "spotless" honor makes an acknowledgement of miscegenation, the ultimate "stain" in the family line, an unthinkable concession, as Tom's sale downriver unequivocally suggests (63,4).

Like Twain's Missouri gentlemen of the "F. F. V.," Agricola of *The Grandissimes* is a subversive exaggeration of the Cavalier stereotype in Southern literature who epitomized "the sillinesses and emptinesses, sham grandeurs, sham gauds, and sham chivalries of a brainless and worthless long-vanished society."⁵⁵ The embodiment of social aristocracy in New Orleans, Agricola finds "family tradition" to be "much more authentic than history," and he refuses to surrender his colony to the American government on his deathbed (19). Upon hearing that the Louisiana Territory will be sold to the United States, an exchange that will disrupt the localized power of the Creoles in New Orleans, Agricola declares that "the Cession is a mere temporary political manoeuvre!" (51). Agricola's stubborn state-patriotism, as well as his enthusiasm for social justice via dueling and lynching, is indistinguishable from his belief in Louisiana's archaic *Code Noir*, the race laws that had been in place since its establishment in 1724.

Allusions to American history and contemporary race politics are associated with the character development of Agricola throughout the text. When questioned about his racial views,

for instance, Agricola's defense of one-drop determinism is couched in rhetoric reminiscent of the United States Constitution: "How free we people are from prejudice against the negro! . . . When we say, 'we people,' we *always* mean white people. The non-mention of color always implies pure white; and whatever is not pure white is to all intents and purposes black" (59). Despite his racial prejudices, Agricola is proud to be descended from a mythologized Indian Queen, Lufki-Humma, who, ironically, was the child of an Indian slave-mother and forced in marriage to one of Agricola's earliest ancestors. That he is a direct descendent to a non-white slave-bride does not affect his social standing nor does it alter his self-perception. The narrator points to the racial hypocrisy of Agricola and his class by noting that his "darkness of cheek" does not make him "less white," nor did it "qualify his right to smite the fairest and most distant descendant of an African on the face" (18). Suggestively describing the ancestral histories of the Fuslier and Grandissimes clans, the narrator claims that

while the pilgrim fathers of the Mississippi Delta with Gallic recklessness were taking wives and moot-wives from the ill specimens of three races, arose, with the church's benediction, the royal house of the Fusiliers in Louisiana. But the true, main Grandissime stock, on which the Fusiliers did early, ever, and yet do, love to marry, has kept itself lily-white ever since France loved lilies—as to marriage, that is; as to less responsible entanglements, why, of course—(22).

The understated narration, stressing the understood differentiation between marriage and sexual relationships, implies, through ellipses and ironic phrasing, that the leading families have risen to power with a racial mythology that denies the hybridity of their own biological inheritance.

Paradoxes of racial purity also surface throughout *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Hearing that Tom was too cowardly to fight Luigi Cappello in a duel, Roxy shames her biological son for not living

up to his white "Essex blood" or the ancestry of her own line (75). Similar to Agricola's proud claim of kinship to "a mythologized Indian Queen," Roxy tells Tom that "de Smith-Pocahontases," from which she claims to be descended, would never be afraid of fighting in a duel (77). Recounting the lineage of her family line, she claims that

my great-great-great-gran'father en yo' great-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—en yit here you is, a slinkin' outen a duel en disgracin' our whole line like a ornery low-down hound! Yes, it's de nigger in you! (76).

Roxy's satiric diatribe has been misinterpreted as Twain's reinforcement of a racist ideology in the nature versus nurture debate. Myra Jehlen, for instance, has attempted to use Roxy's condemnation of her son's black blood as an example of the novel's essentialist view of race.⁵⁶ Michael Rogin, in a similar position, has affirmed that Tom's fraction of black blood is the "sign of and explanation for his guilt. This is not just what Roxana, Tom's mother says; it is what the novel says. Tom is guilty because he is black; he is guilty from birth, from his mother's birth and from her mother's before her."⁵⁷ By overlooking the thematic irony in her remarks, both Jehlen and Rogin limit Roxy's range as a satirical character within a bitterly-comic mode of racial burlesque. Lee Clark Mitchell, in a more accurate reading of Roxy's racial views, has interpreted Roxy's remarks as "no more than a self-confirming logic, parodied in the novel as creating the very behavior it supposedly describes."⁵⁸ Ultimately, Roxy's shaming of Tom is part of the overwhelming satire of the plot that hinges on layers of carnivalesque reversals. Roxy's family skein of "Ole Virginny stock," which places John Smith as a direct descendent of Pocahontas and

an African King, is a delusion of racial grandeur no less absurd than the ones through which the white F. F. V. of Dawson's Landing have claimed their own superiority (47).

In both works, the natural world functions as a mirror to the strains of miscegenation and repression that run through the communities of Dawson's Landing and New Orleans. In the opening chapter of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Dawson's Landing is described innocuously as "a slave-holding town" that is "sleepy, comfortable, contented" (4). Much like the submerged truth of racial identity in the village, the quaint homes have "whitewashed exteriors" that are "nearly concealed from sight by climbing tangles" of flowering vines (3). On the windowsills of the houses, a "breed of geranium" grows with "an intensely red blossom" that is likened to "an explosion of a flame." Evoking the shared bloodlines of the village, this breed of flower accents "the prevailing pink" of the roses that climb upon the house-fronts (3). The trope of red and white combining to create the "prevailing pink" of Dawson's Landing is underscored by the incremental repetition of these shades. In addition to the "whitewashed exteriors" of the homes, the front yards are fenced in "white palings," and before a barber shop stands a "candy-striped pole" (3). When Roxy switches the twins shortly after their birth, she takes the "coral necklace" from heir-infant's neck and gives it to her son, Chambers (15). A further use of this trope occurs when Tom disguises himself in a dress that is "patterned in broad stripes of pink and white" and wears a "pink veil" after learning that he is only "thirty-one parts white" (36, 9). Pink as a textual metaphor for racial mixing appears again when the narrator claims that among the "dozen rivers" that feed into the Mississippi River trade-route that passes Dawson's Landing are the "Red river" and the "White river," the names of these two waterways evoking the colors that form pink when combined (4). In the satirical language of cultural sanctification, the narrator claims that the village "was washed by the clear waters of the great river" (3). Ironically, in *Life*

on the Mississippi, Twain described the Mississippi River as the antithesis of "clear." In a racialized metaphor, he remarked upon the "mulatto complexion" of the river and maintained that "you can separate the land from the water as easy as Genesis . . . but the natives do not take them separately, but together, as nature mixed them," terms that could readily apply to the black and white interdependence of Dawson's Landing.⁵⁹

In *The Grandissimes*, the waterways of New Orleans also function as emblems of racial fluidity, as does the motif of yellow and white. When Brás Coupe arrives as a slave in New Orleans, the narrator describes the buildings of the city as "all dazzling white and yellow" (170). Accordingly, the mysterious and powerful quadroon Palmyre de Philosophie has a "pale yellow forehead" and lives in "a small, yellow-washed house" filled with "brass mountings," "brass globes," and a floor stained "a bright, clean yellow" (59, 70). Ironically, Cable uses the color yellow, and its associations with a submerged racial identity, to depict the powerful men of the Grandissime family. In one instance, they are described onboard a small fishing boat whose "hull [is] yellow below the water line and white above" (270). Like the "mulatto" current of Twain's Mississippi, the "clear, dark, deep bayous" that surround New Orleans reflect the racial intermixture of its residents. Cable, like Twain, stresses the number of tributaries and rivers that form the waterways that surround the setting:

An oddity of the Mississippi Delta is the habit the little streams have of running away from the big ones. . . . Though depleted by the city's present drainage system and most likely poisoned by it as well, its waters still move seaward in a course almost due easterly, and empty into Chef Menteur, one of the watery threads of a tangled skein of "passes" between the lakes and the open Gulf (270).

Cable's evocative description of New Orleans as "a tangled skein" shares an interesting connection to an 1895 review of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* by Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen. In the review, Boyesen describes the "general unraveling" of characters and plotlines in Twain's novel as a "tangled skein."⁶⁰ Whether or not the events that take place in Dawson's Landing reminded Boyesen of *The Grandissimes*, a novel he championed a decade earlier, the expression "tangled skein" aptly suites the interweaving of race and family that is at the center of both texts.⁶¹

One of the more subtle similarities of *The Grandissimes* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is the ironically-detached tone with which both authors contrast the brutality of slave culture to the bucolic mythology of the plantation system and Southern life. Similar to Twain's blithe portrait of Dawson's Landing as "sleepy, and comfortable, and contented," Cable associates the verdant landscape of colonial New Orleans with a pervading sense of violence and doom. In one such instance, the narrative voice assumes the perspective of historical retrospection to describe the trans-Atlantic voyage of Bras-Coupé, the legendary slave:

Of the voyage little is recorded—here below; the less the better. Part of the living merchandise failed to keep; the weather was rough, the cargo large, the vessel small. However, the captain discovered there was room over the side, and there—all flesh is grass—from time to time during the voyage he jettisoned the unmerchantable. Yet, when the reopened hatches let in the sweet smell of the land, Bras-Coupé had come to the upper—the favored—the buttered side of the world (169).

In addition to evoking the loss of "living merchandise" upon the Middle Passage, aggressive images such as the "savage current" and "little forts" with "whitewashed teeth" describe New Orleans upon the arrival of the slave ship (170). Ironically, the narrator claims that it is a

"splendid" portrait of colonial life that appears before Bras-Coupé when he enters the Place de Armes and sees "a green parade-ground, and yellow barracks, and cabildo, and a hospital, and cavalry stables, and custom-house, and a most inviting jail, convenient to the cathedral" (170). In a similar scene in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Judge Driscoll enthusiastically shows the immigrant Cappello brothers the "splendors" of American democracy in Dawson's Landing. In addition to the many churches, he directs their attention to the slaughter house, the jail, the militia company, and the "new" graveyard, where they will both end up in *Those Extraordinary Twins* after challenging the political machinery of the small town (34).

In both texts, the narrative portraits of New Orleans and Dawson's Landing are filled with suggestive pieces of gossip and vague implications that call to mind Twain's observation that "human nature cannot be studied in cities except at a disadvantage—a village is the place. There you can know your man inside & out—in a city you but know his crust and his crust is usually a lie."⁶² In *The Grandissimes*, Cable subtly delves beneath the "crust" of a people and place in his depiction of Clotilde and Aurora De Grapion Nancanou. The possibility that both women are passing as white has not been previously explored, though the instability of their bloodlines is consistently implied. Aurora's tempestuous will, whimsicality, and prideful vanity has largely overshadowed the development of Clotilde. William Dean Howells, for example, wrote that Aurora "is always the wild, willful heart of girlhood, which the experiences of wifhood, motherhood, and widowhood have left unchanged. She is a woman with a grown-up daughter, but essentially she is her daughter's junior, and, adorable as Clotilde is in her way, she pales and dulls into commonplace when Aurora is by."⁶³ There is, however, an aura of mystery and half-revelation surrounding Clotilde's "defiant little bosom so full of hidden suffering" that suggests a deeper complexity and racial ambiguity (216).

In the opening scene of the novel, at the *bal masqué* in the Théâtre St. Philippe, Clotilde is dressed as one of her earliest ancestors, also named Clotilde, who was supposedly a *fille á la cassette* who arrived in colonial Louisiana with only a suitcase and the understanding that she would marry one of the French settlers who were "taking wives and moot-wives from the ill specimens of three races," owing to the lack of white women in the Mississippi Delta (22).

Regarding the early De Grapion line from which Aurora and Clotilde have descended, the narrator claims that "it was sad to contemplate, in that colonial beginning of days, three generations of good, Gallic blood tripping jocundly along in attenuated Indian file" (23).

Accordingly, when describing the marriage of Clotilde *la fille á la cassette* and Georges De Grapion, the colonial settler, the narrator compares his bloodlines to hers in a way that suggests both husband and wife are racially intermixed. Their "union" is described as the merging of the "hot" De Grapion blood with "a stream equally clear and ruddy, but of a milder vintage" (23).

Adding to the possibility that the women could be of mixed blood is the instance in which Joseph Frowenfeld sits in the home of the Nancanou women, lecturing on racial and class equality, and Clotilde timidly questions: "I thing, me, dey hought to pud doze quadroon free?" (143). The narrator describes her remarks, largely outside of the predominant values of Creole society, as "ending with the rising inflection to indicate the tentative character of this daringly premature declaration" (144). Shortly after her outburst, Frowenfeld's attention, "twenty times," is pulled to a portrait on the wall (147). Ironically, early in the novel, the narrator claims that the portrait of the colonial Clotilde is "hopelessly lost in some garret" and that "those Creoles have such a shocking way of filing their family relics and records in rat-holes" (24). Though he is "somewhat puzzled in the matter of the costume," Frowenfeld remarks upon the "good likeness" of the image to Clotilde (148). Her confirmation, "Daz ma grade-gran'-mamma," and Aurora's

explanation, "Dass one *fille á la cassette*," contradict the narrator's earlier assertion that the portrait has been lost, adding another layer of half-revealed mystery to the ancestry of the Nancanou women.

One of the strongest indications that Clotilde has a submerged racial identity, however, occurs during her courtship with Joseph Frowenfeld. When Frowenfeld first arrives in New Orleans from Philadelphia, he is the only member of his German-born family to survive Yellow Fever. While battling for his life, he has moments of delirium in which he is unable to distinguish between the face of "an old negress" and "a beautiful girl" (12). Cable describes his hallucinations with racially impressionistic language: "He turned his eyes, and through the white gauze of the mosquito-bar saw, for an instant, a strange and beautiful young face; but the lids fell over his eyes, and when he raised them again the blue-turbaned black nurse was tucking the covering about his feet" (12). In the final chapters, the "beautiful girl" who nursed Joseph during his episode of Yellow Fever is revealed to be Clotilde. Ironically, in a scene of representational parallelism, it is when she is again nursing Frowenfeld back to health in the presence of a black nurse that he recognizes her as his earlier caregiver. When rushing to help him, Clotilde grabs a "little yellow attendant" as her "shield"; during this moment of racial transposition, with the "yellow" woman standing before her, the narrator remarks that "she had given him too much light. He recognized her, and she knew it" (207, 209). After this occurs, Clotilde bewails to Aurora that "'e reg---'e reggo-ni-i-ze me!" (214). This moment of recognition, in which Frowenfeld identifies Clotilde as his former nurse, is a significant and overlooked plot detail. In the nineteenth century, a commonly-held medical belief in the South maintained that African ancestry contained a racial characteristic that provided immunity to Yellow Fever.⁶⁴ That Clotilde was by his side during his illness, and that she is inconsolable when he remembers her

presence in the sick-room, suggests that she is of mixed blood. If her racial identity is indeed her secret, Frowenfeld's proposal of marriage, despite the fact that he "recognizes" her bloodlines, would be a depiction of interracial marriage not commonly developed in the literary market of the 1880s.

The possibility that Aurora is also of mixed blood is not developed with equal attention, though it is implied that Palmyre de Philosophe, once Aurora's slave-maid on the De Grapion's Cannes Brulée plantation, is her half-sister or possibly her twin. Like Tom and Chambers of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Palmyre and Aurora are born the same year, in 1770, and they are one another's "constant and only playmate" (59). When Aurora's father learns of Palmyre's plans to marry Bras-Coupé in 1795, he forbids the marriage on grounds that it would "dishonor one who *shared the blood of the De Grapions*" (176). Despite this admission of kinship, the narrator claims that Aurora's childhood "passed without brothers or sisters" (59). Much like the shifting, untrustworthy voice of the "chronicler" in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* who urges that "we have no concern" with Colonel Essex or his paternal role, Cable's narrator cryptically emphasizes that the "account" of Palmyre and Aurora's childhood "may be passed by" (*Pudd'nhead* 5; *Grandissimes* 145). By suggesting that attention not be paid to the possibility that Essex is the father of Chambers or that Aurora and Palmyra are half-sisters, the narrators of both texts ironically emphasize the likelihood of these unspoken relationships.

There are also suggestions throughout the text that Palmyre has suffered abuse as a slave woman, for she, who "hated men," is frequently sexualized in metaphors of "untamable beauty" (134). The narrator, with characteristic obfuscation, claims that the "explanation" as to why Palmyre was sent away from Cannes Brulée as an adolescent would be "almost superfluous" to detail and merely suggests that her assertion of a "ruling spirit" was viewed as problematic (60).

The emphasis placed on her physical appearance, however, suggests an additional motive for her sale to Agricola Fusilier: "The fullness of the red, voluptuous lips and the roundness of her perfect neck, gave her, even at age fourteen, a barbaric and magnetic beauty, that startled the beholder like an unexpected drawing out of a jewelled [sic] sword" (60). At the urging of a Kentucky slave-trader, she is given as a "complimentary gift" on behalf of Agricola to his niece, Honoré Grandissime's sister (60, 145). The possibility that Clotilde is in fact Palmyre's daughter does not receive sustained attention, though the year that Palmyre is sent away, 1785, coincides closely with the birth of Clotilde in 1786. Adding to the unexplained overlaps of racial identity and kinship, Aurora once describes her daughter as "the orphan" (216). In another inconsistency of plot, Dr. Keene once refers to Aurora as "a coon" and when referring to the Nancanou women in a broken digression claims that "quadroon balls are not to me mentioned in connection. Those ladies—" (296, 15). Ultimately, however, there are more suggestions that it is Clotilde and not her mother who is racially intermixed (296). Not only is her "black hair" "rippled once or twice" and "somewhat heavier" than her mother's, but her very name suggests the congealing of bloodlines (140).

Though the possibility that Clotilde is a quadroon is only implied in *The Grandissimes*, her portrayal holds many similarities to the interracial marriage plots that Cable put forth in "'Tite Poulette" (1874) and *Madame Delphine* (1881), two works that feature quadroon mothers and octoroon daughters who challenge the miscegenation law that forbade interracial marriage. Arlin Turner has suggested that both "'Tite Poulette" and *Madame Delphine* are reworkings of an article entitled "A Life-Ebbing Monography" that Cable published in the *Picayune* on December 24, 1871. In the short sketch, Cable "recounts from old records the story of a white man who opened a vein in his arm and inserted the blood of a fair mulatto so that he could legally marry

her."⁶⁵ "Tite Poulette," which was one of Cable's earliest stories, was published in *Scribner's* in 1874 and collected in *Old Creole Days* in 1879. Zalli, also known as "Madame John," is a beautiful quadroon and, like Clotilde, a "yellow-fever nurse" who is known as the "best" in New Orleans (157).⁶⁶ Her daughter, "Tite Poulette, is "white like a water lily" (157). The romantic plotline of the story is largely a plea for the quadroon caste, a theme that is reflected in Zalli's lamentation, "There is no place in this world for us poor women. I wish that we were either white or black! . . . If we were only *real white*!" (161). When a Dutch immigrant named Kristian Koppig, whose characterization is reminiscent of Joseph Frowenfeld of *The Grandissimes*, falls in love with "Tite Poulette, Zalli encourages her daughter to "not tell him you are not white" (162). After much moral conflict, Koppig begs for "Tite Poulette's hand in marriage despite the fact that she is a octoroon, though she initially refuses to enter a white marriage on the grounds that it is "against the law" (176). In a dramatic plot turn in the final scene, Zalli produces papers proving that her daughter is in fact the orphan of Spaniards and therefore "white as snow" (176). With this suspicious authentication of racial identity, the marriage plot is realized.

Madame Delphine, a fifteen-chapter novella set in New Orleans of the 1820s, progresses with the same basic theme and plot as "Tite Poulette, although the quadroon mother, Madame Delphine Carraze, admits to her priest, Père Jerome, that she lied when she claimed that her daughter, Olive, was a white orphan in order to make her marriage to Ursin Vignevielle less scandalous. Much like Kristian Koppig and Joseph Frowenfeld, Vignevielle is an independent thinker who does not feel tethered to the Black Code forbidding interracial marriage. Not only do the beautiful octoroons "Tite Poulette and Olive resemble Clotilde of *The Grandissimes* in their shared age of seventeen, but their mothers, Madame John and Delphine Caraze, are

developed with the same whimsical defiance that has made Aurora Nancanou such a memorable character. Although Cable deals openly with the issues of racial passing and illegal marriage in "Tite Poulette" and *Madame Delphine*, there has not been substantial attention paid to the bloodlines of the Nancanou women of *The Grandissimes*, despite the similarities shared between the three texts. Barbara Ladd has commented that "at times there is altogether too much insistence on the racial purity of Clotilde and Aurora Nancanou [sic]," but she does not expand upon her evocative observation.⁶⁷ John Cleman, on the other hand, has suggested that Aurora's financial despair echoes the "situation and psychology of other quadroon mothers" developed by Cable. Though he recognizes representational similarities in Cable's portrayal of Creole and quadroon women, Cleman concludes that these parallels are metaphoric in nature and meant to link "the themes of racial and sexual oppression" in a political manner that highlights the shared social burdens of all Southern women.⁶⁸ Whether or not Cable intended to depict the possibility that the Nancanou women are of mixed blood, the instability of their development adds yet another layer of ambiguity to the "kaleidoscope" of "tints and costumes" that permeates the novel (81, 103).⁶⁹

Allusive representations of racial masking and twinship also occur throughout *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, and the critical confusion surrounding its textual "double," *Those Extraordinary Twins*, has been heightened by Twain's remarks regarding the composition process. In the preface to *Twins*, he claimed that

I had a sufficiently hard time with that tale [*Pudd'nhead Wilson*], because it changed itself from a farce to a tragedy while I was going along with it,---a most embarrassing circumstance. But what was worse was, that it was not one story, but two stories tangled together. . . . I had not noticed, as yet, that it was two

stories in one. It took me months to make that discovery. I carried the manuscript back and forth across the Atlantic two or three times, and read it and studied over it on the shipboard; and at last I saw where the difficulty lay. I had no further trouble. I pulled one of the stories out by the roots, and left the other one---a kind of literary Caesarean operation (125).

The imagery of tangled twinship that appears in the preface resurfaces in Twain's suggestively ironic representations of childbirth and racial doubles throughout the novel. For example, in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the slave-woman Roxy, who is "one-sixteenth" black and looks as "white as anybody," has a father, presumably a member of the ruling class, who is never named (9). The bloodlines of Dawson's Landing become increasingly complex, verging upon the carnivalesque, when Roxy switches her son, Valet de Chambre, in the cradle with the infant-heir, Thomas á Becket Driscoll. Twenty-three years later, under the prosecution of David "Pudd'nhead" Wilson, the ostensible "Tom" is identified as the murderer of his uncle, the "chief citizen" of Dawson's Landing, Judge York Leicester Driscoll (4). The greater crime that Wilson exposes, however, is that Tom is "imitation *white*" (39). Ironically, Tom is pardoned by the governor of Missouri for the murder charge. As the newly-discovered son of Roxy, he is now considered the "lawful property" of his mother's deceased master, Percy Driscoll, whose creditors sell him to settle the debts of his estate (121). His sale downriver for profit, as James M. Cox has noted, is the "last ironic stroke in a savagely ironic novel."⁷⁰ Neither his "blue eyes and flaxen curls," nor the twenty-three years he has spent passing as a Driscoll son, can save the false-heir from "the fiction of law and custom" that label him "a negro" (9).

In a scene that mirrors the broken-logic sentencing of Tom, Luigi Cappello is lynched at the end of *Those Extraordinary Twins*, an act that will undoubtedly kill both twins, though

Angelo is not the subject of the mob's resentment. The conjoined twins, like Tom and Chambers, are developed as racial foils who are perversely linked. Luigi is "dark-skinned" and "brunette" whereas Angelo has a "fresh complexion" and "copper hair" (133, 134, 133). The twins become a "variegated nightmare" within the consciousness of Dawson's Landing, their composite body a racial grotesque that is linked *in utero*, to extend Twain's metaphor of a "literary Caesarean operation" with the tragedy of Tom and Roxy in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (183, 125). Stressing the thematic interdependence of the two works, John Bird has suggested that

Luigi and Angelo are supposedly identical Siamese twins, two heads and bodies joined with a single pair of legs, but one is light and one is dark. This absurdity points to the absurdity of racial identity in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, where white and black (supposedly absolutely different) become intertwined and interchangeable terms---where Roxy is one-sixteenth black, and that one-sixteenth does not show; and where a white baby and a black baby, born on the same day to a slave woman and her white mistress, look identical enough to be switched in the cradle. The identity confusion that rules *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is heightened when read with its companion text. For the whole of *Those Extraordinary Twins* plays on identity difference---one body containing completely divergent halves.⁷¹

Catharine O'Connell, who also maintains the importance of reading both texts as a "composite novel," has noted that the "multiple images and instances of division reiterate the novel's thematic concern with race slavery and segregation, and with the social damage wrought by both."⁷² The nativist theme associated with the Cappello brothers is seldom observed, though their experience, especially in the Dawson's Landing of *Those Extraordinary Twins*, evokes the "new" racism of the post-war era of European immigration. As both Eric Sundquist and Joseph

B. Cosco have pointed out, in March of 1891, eleven Italians were lynched by a mob in New Orleans, a tragedy that might have inspired the fate of the Cappello twins.⁷³ Extending further Twain's textual preoccupation with duplication, the lynching of Luigi and Angelo in *Those Extraordinary Twins* mirrors Tom's sale downriver in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. A virtual death sentence, the narrator claims that "no Missouri negro doubted" that being sold downriver was "equivalent to condemning them to hell!" (13). Thus, through two symmetrical closing scenes of violence towards the cultural "other," Twain subtly connects the Southern black experience with the bigotry facing European immigrants in the late nineteenth century.

Twain used the trope of identity confusion and twinship elsewhere in his literary career, most notably in the swapping of Tom Clancy and Edward Tudor of *The Prince and the Pauper* (1882). Like Tom and Chambers of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the boys are born on the same day into opposing social castes. On April 19, 1906, in a speech he claimed to be his "last appearance on the paid platform," Twain even declared himself to be a twin. Explaining the art of the illusive interview, he recounted a particularly nonsensical conversation with a reporter:

Then we got to talking about my brother Samuel, and he told me my explanations were confusing. "I suppose he is dead," I said. "Some said that he was dead and some said that he wasn't." "Did you bury him without knowing whether he was dead or not?" asked the reporter. "There was a mystery," said I. "We were twins, and one day when we were two weeks old—that is, he was one week old, and I was one week old—we got mixed up in the bath-tub, and one of us drowned. We never could tell which. One of us had a strawberry birthmark on the back of his hand. There it is on my hand. This is the one that was drowned. There's no doubt about it. "Where's the mystery?" he said. "Why, don't you see how stupid

it was to bury the wrong twin?" I answered. I didn't explain it anymore because he said the explanation confused him. To me it is perfectly plain.⁷⁴

With regard to racial doubling, Shelly Fisher Fishkin has offered a convincing argument that Twain modeled Huck from *Huckleberry Finn* on the vernacular patterns of a young black child that he immortalized in the sketch "Sociable Jimmie."⁷⁵ A more obscure instance of Twain using metaphors of racial masking occurs in his use of the adjective "whitewashed" to describe his daughters' confusion over the merged literary identity of Joel Chandler Harris and Uncle Remus: "He visited our home in Hartford and was reverently devoured by the big eyes of Susy and Clara, for I made a deep and awful impression upon the little creatures—who knew his book by heart through my nightly declamation of its tales to them—by revealing to them privately that he was the real Uncle Remus whitewashed so that he could come into people's houses the front way."⁷⁶ Humorously, in a speech before the New England Society during their commemoration of the arrival of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, Twain went so far as to insist that he was of mixed blood. Explaining why he had no reason to celebrate the group's colonial ancestors, he claimed kinship to "an early Indian" as well as "the first slave brought into New England out of Africa by your progenitors." After tracing his colonial roots to various groups oppressed by the early settlers, he concluded, "I am of a mixed breed, an infinitely shaded and exquisite Mongrel."⁷⁷ Late in his life, Twain would return to this idea of a "mongrel" identity in his reflection that "in my individual person I am the entire human race compacted together. . . . It follows that my estimate of the human race is that duplicate estimate of myself."⁷⁸ Twain's most sustained treatment of racial twinning, however, occurs in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, in which the half-siblings Tom and Chambers, much like the Honoré half-brothers of *The Grandissimes*, allegorize a national brotherhood still divided by race in the decades following the Civil War.

Though Honoré, f. m. c. and his white half-brother, Honoré, share the same name and the same father, the free man of color is born to Numa Grandissime's quadroon mistress and is therefore a second-class citizen. That both the brothers are wealthy, educated in Paris, and ostensibly "white" in appearance makes no difference under the laws of the *Code Noir* or in the eyes of the Grandissime family. The relative freedom of the quadroon class in *The Grandissimes* thus evokes the legal and social restraints facing the newly enfranchised blacks of the postwar era, a new class of citizens who were not entirely free. When the f. m. c. declares "ah ham nod a slev," Joseph Frowenfeld, the liberal outsider, retorts that "it seems to me . . . that you—your class—the free quadroons—are the saddest slaves of all. . . . For a paltry bait of sham freedom [the quadroons] have consented to endure a tyrannous contumely which flattens them into the dirt like grass under a slab" (196). The development of Honoré, f. m. c. in many ways anticipates the points that Cable would make in "The Freedman's Case in Equity" five years later.

In this controversial essay that was published during his speaking tour with Twain, Cable described the plight of the emancipated slaves and asked if

the freedman a free man? No. . . . The South stands on her honor before the clean equities of the issue. It is no longer whether constitutional amendments, but whether the eternal principles of justice, are violated. And the answer must—it shall—come from the South. It will not cost much. . . . The answer is coming. Is politics in the way? Then let it clear the track or get run over, just as it prefers.⁷⁹

Three months after Cable's indictment of the postbellum South in *Century*, Henry W. Grady, one of the associate editors of the *Atlanta Constitution*, published an editorial rebuttal entitled "In Plain Black and White." Grady called Cable's vision of race reform "sentimental rather than

practical" and declared that "the South will never adopt Mr. Cable's suggestion of the social intermingling between the races." In a hypothetical scenario ironically similar to the plot of *The Grandissimes*, and perhaps even more reminiscent of the racial swapping in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Grady surmised that

if the blacks of the South wore white skins, and were leagued together in the same ignorance and irresponsibility under any other distinctive mark than their color, they would progress not one step farther toward the control of affairs. . . . Intelligence, character, and property will dominate in spite of numerical differences. These qualities are lodged with the white race in the South, and will assuredly remain there for many generations at least; so that the white race will continue to dominate the colored.⁸⁰

In *The Grandissimes*, Honoré, f. m. c., who looks as white as his brother, is formally educated, the primary inheritor of his white father's estate, and a successful *rentier*. He is thus equipped with the "intelligence, character, and property" that Grady saw as characteristics "lodged" within only the ruling class.

Ultimately, it is not for a lack of education or ability that the f. m. c. cannot transcend his social caste, but rather the ignorance, fear, and intimidation of the white society that surrounds him. Joseph Frowenfeld's conclusion as to why the quadroon class of New Orleans is "palsied" reflects a social burden marked not by biological inheritance or inherent inferiority but from the constructions of prejudice perpetuated in Southern life and law (197). He reasons that the free blacks are withered "not in the shadow of the Ethiopian, but in the glare of the white man," a metaphor that strikes at the damaging interdependence of racism in what Frowenfeld calls the "double damage of all oppression" (197, 196). In the chapter aptly entitled "Paralysis,"

Frowenfeld challenges the "sham freedom" of the quadroon class and asks Honoré, f. m. c. why he will not give "time—wealth—attainments—energies—everything—to the cause of the down-trodden race" with which he is forced to identify (195). The free man of color, however, rejects Frowenfeld's vision of racial uplift marked by "enlightenment," "moral elevation," and "training in skilled work" and claims that his attempt to protest will result in his certain death. He also asserts that no change will occur until Agricola Fusilier "ess keel," a rhetorically passive construction that foreshadows his murder of his powerful uncle (196).

Cable's characterization of Honoré, f. m. c. was unique to the postbellum literary period, for portraits of quadroon and octoroon women were more common than depictions of men of mixed-blood in American fiction. Remarking on literary characters of mixed blood in his essay "A Stream of Dark Blood in the Veins of the Southern Whites" (1900), Charles Chesnutt noted that

the Creole Stories of Mr. Cable and other writers were not mere figments of the imagination; the beautiful octoroon was a corporeal fact; it is more than likely that she had brothers of the same complexion, though curiously enough the male octoroon has cut no figure in fiction, except in the case of the melancholy Honoré Grandissimes, f. m. c.; and that she and her brothers often crossed the invisible but rigid color line was a historical fact that only an ostrich-like prejudice could deny.⁸¹

Chesnutt's description of the f. m. c. as "melancholy" conveys the overwhelming pathos with which Cable develops his quadroon protagonist. The feelings of apathy that Honoré, f. m. c. has towards the problems of racial injustice are in many ways conflated with a romantic subplot revolving around his suicidal despondency in unrequited love for Palmyre de Philosophe, who is

in love with his white half-brother, who, in turn, is in love with Aurora Nancanou. The white Creole Honoré embodies the reconciliationist potential of the New South in a portrait that is largely idealized, though he is not as static as the morally-rigid Frowenfeld who never waivers from his progressive ideals. Considered the prince of his sprawling clan, the "uttermost flower on the topmost branch of the tallest family tree," Honoré's ability to transcend the stubborn provincialism of his caste allows him to function as both a moral hero and a romanticized Creole character-type (82). When Honoré learns of his half-brother's first suicide attempt, he likens his society to "a spectacle to civilization sitting in a horrible darkness," the same image that Frowenfeld describes as "the shadow of the Ethiopian" (156). Extending this metaphor to articulate his epiphany that blacks as well as whites have been blinded by caste and slavery, Honoré exclaims

Ah! my-de'-seh, when I try sometimes to stand outside and look at it, I am *ama-aze* at the length, the blackness of that shadow! . . . It is the *Némésis* w'ich, instead of coming afteh, glides along by the side of this morhal, political, commercial, social mistake! It blanches, my-de'-seh, ow whole civilization! It drhags us a century behind the rhes' of the world! It rhetahds and poisons everhy industrhy we got!—mos' of all our-h immense agrhicultu'e! It brheeds a thousan' cusses that nevva leave home but jus' flutter-h up an' rhoost, my-de'-seh, on ow *heads*; an' we nevva know it!—yes, sometimes some of us know it (156).

The moral dilemma that Honoré must face is what course of action he will take. Although he recognizes the Grandissimes' "ancestral, perennial rebellion against common sense," Honoré, true to his name, feels sincere loyalty to the Creoles however backward in their thinking (282). Not only does he resolve to negotiate compromises between the new "Yankee governor" and the

more extreme factions of his family, but he also returns lost property titles from the De Grapion estate to the remaining heiress, Aurora Nancanou, and her daughter, Clotilde (82). Sixteen years prior to the action of *The Grandissimes*, Agricola killed Aurora's husband, M. Nancanou, in a duel provoked over false allegations that Agricola cheated at cards. With what the local physician, Dr. Charlie Keene, diagnoses as the "preposterous, apathetic, fantastic, suicidal pride" of the Creole caste, Nancanou wagered his entire estate on the card game (32). Neither he nor Aurora, his equally-prideful wife, would agree to lower the stakes before the duel, despite the fact that Agricola encouraged them to do so. The scandal leaves Aurora and her infant-daughter, Clotilde, in genteel poverty. With the decidedly romantic and reconciliationist marriage-plot centering upon Honoré and Aurora, the long-standing feud between the De Grapion and Grandissime families comes to an end.

Honoré's most significant act of reparation, however, is his public gesture of acceptance towards his quadroon half-brother. Attempting to atone for what he calls "our dead father's mistakes," he decides that he is morally obligated to distinguish himself from the collective values of a family-line that thrives on unity of perspective and political position. Breaking away from family tradition in a contentious act of reconciliation, Honoré joins Honoré, f. m. c. in his mercantile firm that is renamed Grandissimes Brothers. When Agricola hears of this merging interest in family business, he provokes an angry mob to lynch his quadroon nephew. In a diatribe that brings to mind the racial philosophy of the White League and the Ku Klux Klan during the Reconstruction Period, Agricola demands of his kinsmen that

we know that mixed blood has asked for equal rights from a son of the Louisiana noblesse, and that those sacred rights have been treacherously, pusillanimously surrendered into its possession. . . . The time has come when Louisiana must

protect herself! If there is one here who will not strike for his lands, his rights and the purity of his race, let him speak! . . . Meet me at nightfall before the house of this too-long-spared mulatto. Come armed. Bring a few feet of stout rope. By morning the gentlemen of color will know their places better than they do to-day; h-whe shall understand each other! H-whe shall set the negrophiles to meditating (283).

Ultimately, Grandissime Brothers, which was formed in a spirit of optimistic reconciliation, cannot survive in a community marked by racial hostility and fear. Shortly after Agricola's speech, Honoré, f. m. c. murders his powerful uncle, an act that dramatizes Cable's claim in "The Freedmen's Case in Equity" that "we have had a strange experience: the withholding of simple rights has cost us much blood; such concessions of them as we have made have never cost a drop."⁸² To an extent, the f. m. c. is stereotypically "tragic" as a sentimentalized victim of his race and society, though the momentous defiance that leads him to stab Agricola to death disrupts a purely one-dimensional construction of his character. His murder of his uncle, the figurehead of white supremacy in New Orleans, is an ominous representation of black revenge uncharacteristic to the period.

In *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the fate of the restored Driscoll heir, who has lived his entire life in slavery as Chambers, also personifies the experience of the newly enfranchised African Americans of the postbellum era. When Chambers, who is in fact the real Tom Driscoll, discovers his real identity,

the real heir suddenly found himself rich and free, but in a most embarrassing situation. He could neither read nor write, and his speech was the basest dialect of the negro quarter. His gait, his attitudes, his gestures, his bearing, his

laugh—all were vulgar and uncouth; his manners were the manners of the slave. Money and fine clothes could not mend these defects or cover them up, they only made them more glaring and pathetic. 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. . . . But we cannot follow his curious fate further—that would be a long story (121).

Twain notes that Chambers, uneducated and free, could not "endure" the "terrors" of the "white man's parlor," an ironic comment that evokes not only the educational restraints facing the emancipated slave of the postwar era but also the epidemic of race violence in the Southern states. Myra Jehlen, overlooking the political allusions in the "long story" of Chambers's fate, has mistakenly identified Tom (of mixed blood) as the embodiment of the post-Reconstruction African American experience, a reading that she uses to support a theme of racial essentialism within the novel. She claims that Tom, despite being reared as a Driscoll, is "the very type of the upstart Negro of the post-Reconstruction plantation fiction: cowardly, absurdly pretentious, lazy and irresponsible, a petty thief and potentially a murderer."⁸³ It seems more likely that Tom, as heir to the pretensions and paradoxes of the F. F. V., is an ironic embodiment of the "New South" during a time in which the veil of social aristocracy was wearing increasingly thin. Lawrence Berkove has maintained that "circumstantial evidence strongly suggests" the influence that Cable's depiction of the "f. m. c." in *The Grandissimes* had upon Joel Chandler Harris in "Free Joe and the Rest of the World" (1884) and Twain in *Huckleberry Finn* (1884). While a strain of influence could very well exist in the authors' development of Honoré, f. m. c., "Free Joe," and Jim, Berkove is incorrect in his assertion that in "no other work" than *Huckleberry Finn* does Twain make "such a pointed use of an f. m. c." (70).⁸⁴ Ultimately, Twain's strongest, most

embittered depiction of the postwar black experience surrounds Chambers's fate in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, a novel that suggests that even a genetically white aristocrat cannot integrate into the "freedom" of white society when bearing the psychological and social burdens that twenty-three years of slavery has brought.

Not only are the black freedmen of both novels ostracized by the ruling class, but so too are the cultural outsiders Joseph Frowenfeld and David "Pudd'nhead" Wilson, who both undergo an initiation into the "unwritten laws" of the white patriarchal order that is led by Agricola Grandissime and Judge Driscoll (63). Like David Wilson, the idealistic New Yorker who comes to Dawson's Landing to "seek his fortune," Frowenfeld, an American-born son of German immigrants, arrives in New Orleans with "bright anticipations of verdure, and fragrance, and tropical gorgeousness" (*Pudd'nhead* 5; *Grandissimes* 8). Both protagonists face sudden disillusionment upon their arrival. Cable conveys the impending misfortunes of the Frowenfeld family in naturalistic terms: "in the afternoon they entered a land—but such a land! A land hung in mourning, darkened by gigantic cypresses, submerged; a land of reptiles, silence, shadow, decay" (9). Similar to the fate of the Yankee reformer in Albion Tourgée's popular postwar novel *A Fool's Errand* (1879), all members of the Frowenfeld family, except for Joseph, die of Yellow Fever.

Similar to Tourgée, Cable uses the historical epidemic of Yellow Fever in the Southern states as a figurative manifestation of what Twain once likened to the "disease" of a Southern ideology perpetuated by the rites and rituals of honor and violence.⁸⁵ Frowenfeld, who refuses to conform to the values of the Creole society, is considered among the unwelcome "aliens, interlopers, invaders" in the new territory (151). Finding himself pulled between his idealistic beliefs in human equality and the racist attitudes of New Orleans, Frowenfeld must decide, as

Honoré Grandissime puts it, if he will "get acclimated" (37). Honoré warns his moralistic friend of the like-minded immigrants who have come before him and eventually "open their stores on Sunday . . . import cargoes of Africans . . . bribe the officials . . . smuggle goods . . . [and] have colored housekeepers" (37). To the Creole's entreaty, "My-de'-seh, the water must expect to take the shape of the bucket; eh?," however, Frowenfeld replies, "One need not be water!" (37). True to his word, Frowenfeld risks his own life with his support of Honoré, f. m. c. and the quadroon class of citizens. This refusal to be "shielded by a fiction," as he calls it, also makes him a target of violence (229). The radical cousins of the Grandissime family, infuriated by the takeover of Louisiana by outsiders, conclude that "we ought to hang that fellow . . . with his books tied to his feet" (89). Richard Chase has suggested that in the development of Frowenfeld, Cable found "a way to make capital out of the Jamesian theme of the innocent Yankee whose views are enlarged and humanized by contact with an old, rich, corrupt social order."⁸⁶ While a comparison to James's expatriated protagonists might be relevant, it is important to read Frowenfeld, as well as David Wilson of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, in the distinctly regional context of America's postwar literary period, for both characters are Northern interlopers in the fallen South, a familiar character-type in postbellum literature that was popularized in such works as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Palmetto Leaves* (1872), Edward King's *The Great South* (1875), Albion Tourgée's *A Fool's Errand* (1879), Constance Fenimore Woolson's *Rodman the Keeper: Southern Sketches* (1880), and Sarah Orne Jewett's "The Mistress of Sydenham Plantation" (1888).

Unlike Frowenfeld, who remains an ideological outcast, David Wilson of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* undergoes a transformation from a "perfect jackass" to a "made man for good" in Dawson's Landing (6, 120). Central to his transformation is his absorption of the town's values

and legal codes. Essentially, he must unlearn his "post-college course in an eastern law school" in order to succeed in the legal community of Dawson's Landing (7). Before his triumph in the final courtroom scene that reveals Tom Driscoll's true racial identity, Wilson is ostracized for a "deadly remark that had ruined his chance—at least in the law" (7). For twenty years, Wilson has carried the nickname "pudd'nhead" after hearing a howling dog and claiming that he wished that he "owned half the dog" (6). When asked by the townspeople why he would say this, he explains "because, I would kill my half" (6). His bantering conclusion to kill "half" the dog leaves his new neighbors baffled, and they express their distrust of his comment in a series of nonsensical comments:

Said he wished he owned *half* of the dog, the idiot. . . . What did he reckon would become of the other half if he killed his half? Do you reckon he thought that it would live? Why, he must have thought it, unless he *is* the downriest fool in the world; because if he hadn't thought that, he would have wanted to own the whole dog, knowing that if he killed his half and the other half dies, he would be responsible for that half, just the same as if he had killed that half instead of his own. Don't it look that way to you gents? Yes, it does. If he owned one half of the general dog, it would be so; if he owned one end of the dog and another person owned the other end, it would be so, just the same; particularly in the first case, because if you kill one half of a general dog, there ain't any man that can tell whose half it was, but if he owned one end of the dog, maybe he would kill his end of it and—No, he couldn't either; he couldn't and not be responsible if the other end dies, which it would. In my opinion the man ain't in his right

mind. . . . Yes sir, he's a dam [sic] fool, that's the way I put him up. . . .

Anybody can think different that wants to, but those are my sentiments (6).

That fact that Wilson thinks "different," as the jury of his townspeople confirm, leads to "that first day's verdict" that "made him a fool" for "twenty long years" (7). His "fatal remark" is often read in relation to the issues of racial "halves" and "doubles" that pervade *Pudd'nhead Wilson* as well as *Those Extraordinary Twins*. As John Bird has succinctly shown, Wilson's comment regarding killing "half the dog" is related to the black and white dependency of the Dawson's Landing in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* as well as *Those Extraordinary Twins*, for both texts showcase Twain's preoccupation with bodies "containing completely divergent halves."⁸⁷ In an interesting symmetry of historical rhetoric, Wilson's remark regarding an animal divided echoes a metaphorical comment made by Thomas Jefferson in his objection towards the Missouri Compromise: "We have the wolf by the ear, and we can neither hold him, nor safely let him go. Justice is in one scale, and self-preservation in the other."⁸⁸ With his participation in the sentencing of Tom Driscoll, Wilson fulfills his quest to "live down his reputation and work his way into the legal field" (7). Thus, in the terms put forth by Jefferson, he chooses the route of "self-preservation" rather than the logic of procedural law or "justice."

Ultimately, with the verdict that sends the whole body of Tom Driscoll down the river, despite the fact that only one part of his person is a "negro," the full irony of Wilson's earlier remark is realized. Beneath the layers of farce and rhetorical punning, it is implied that Wilson, like the jury of his townspeople, has accepted the reasoning that one part of man that is black can "kill" the half that is biologically white. In an ironic turn of events, Tom's ruin brings about Wilson's rise to power, for his "long fight against hard luck and prejudice was ended" (120). This exchange of cultural power has led James Cox to claim that it is Tom and Wilson who are

the "real twins" of the novel, for "the ascending fortune of Pudd'nhead [comes] necessarily at the expense of Tom's fall."⁸⁹ Unlike Frowenfeld, who resists the cultural influence of Agricola and the Creoles throughout *The Grandissimes*, Wilson is eventually absorbed into the "cacophony of the crowd," a phrase that Bertram Wyatt-Brown used in *Honor and Violence in the Old South* to describe "the weight of the community upon the individual" in the white societies of the slave-holding South. When Frowenfeld continues his support for the quadroons of New Orleans, he not only receives death-threats, but his pharmacy is vandalized by the "stampede of the mob" that progresses down the street shouting "huzza" and chanting a "song" (284). By contrast, Wilson has "subordinated personal autonomy to the collective will," to use Wyatt-Brown's terms, and is thus the object of celebration rather than violence in Dawson's Landing.⁹⁰ Twain, underscoring the power of the crowd, describes the fêting of the new hero in militaristic terms: "Troop after troop of citizens came to serenade Wilson, and require a speech, and shout themselves hoarse over every sentence that fell from his lips" (120). Ironically, Wilson was once relegated to the "extreme western verge" of Dawson's Landing in a house that personified his position as outsider in a community that "has no place for intelligence, wisdom, or procedural law" (7).⁹¹ By providing the finger-prints that prove that Tom Driscoll is not only the murderer of his uncle but also a "negro," Wilson has moved to the cultural center of the slave-holding village (7). With this shift, he participates not only in the village's "mass hallucination" of racial justice, but he also emerges as the ideological heir of Judge Driscoll and the F. F. V.⁹²

Although Frowenfeld and Wilson are portrayed dramatically in either their acceptance or rejection of their white Southern communities, neither character is developed with the defiance of the non-white protagonists who surround them. In *The Grandissimes*, Cable depicts Honoré, f. m. c., Palmyre de Philosophe, and Clemence as agents of insurrection, all three characters

infused with the spirit of Bras-Coupé, the mythical slave who "couldn't be tamed" (10). In *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the slave-mother, Roxy, is a trickster figure whose manipulation and desire for revenge in many ways resembles Palmyre and Clemence of *The Grandissimes*. Both Cable and Twain's foregrounding of black revenge plots can be read as interesting antipodes to Frederick Douglass's "The Heroic Slave" (1852), one of the few works of the antebellum period that foregrounded the death of white Americans at the hands of black Americans. In the novella, Madison Washington, the leader of a maritime insurrection, declares to his captors-turned-captives, "You call me a *black murderer*. I am not a murderer. . . . We have done that which you applaud your fathers for doing, and if we are murderers, so were they" (253). In his assertion "that LIBERTY, not *malice*" motivated him to organize the mutiny, Washington evokes the revolutionary spirit as well as the rhetorical patriotism suggested by his first and his last name. Douglass's treatment of nation, violence, and race prefigures *The Grandissimes* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Madison Washington, who "loved liberty as well as did Patrick Henry" and "deserved it as much as Thomas Jefferson," is the clear philosophical heir to the nation's founding fathers and drawn as the idealized embodiment of their spirits. By contrast, Cable and Twain's black revolutionaries are the biological rather than the ideological heirs of prominent white fathers, and their desire for justice and autonomy is merged with an unrepentant spirit of revenge.

In *The Grandissimes*, the saga of the rebellious slave Bras-Coupé lingers in the minds of all of the characters, black and white. Though he has been dead for eight years when the novel opens in July of 1803, his presence is reflected in the actions and anxieties of the central protagonists. Cable originally tried to publish his account of Bras-Coupé, which has historical origins in the New Orleans folk tradition, as the short-story "Bibi." The violent work was

rejected repeatedly for serial publication. George Parsons Lathrop of the *Atlantic Monthly* refused to publish the tale "on account of the unmitigatedly distressful effect of the story," a sentiment likely shared by the editors of *Scribner's* and *Appleton's* who also rejected it.⁹³ In *The Grandissimes*, the legend of Bras-Coupé is told to Frowenfeld at three different points by the white Honoré, his half-brother, and the spirited Grandissime cousin Raoul Innerarity, whom Frowenfeld values as "a key, a lamp, a lexicon, a microscope" to Creole life (118). The version that is presented in Chapters 28 and 29 of the text is a combination of all three accounts. As Bryan Wagner has noted, the authorial interjection that "we shall not exactly follow the words" of any one telling reflects "a group rendition whose texture bears the markings of oral transmission" (169).⁹⁴ Cable often attributes animal-like qualities to the regal slave, once a Jaloff *candio* or prince who is bought by Agricola in 1794 and then resold to Don José Martinez, the owner of La Renaissance plantation and husband of Honoré Grandissime's sister. After a series of violent incidents and his refusal to participate in manual labor, the six-foot-five slave gains the reputation of being "an animal that could not be whipped," an "African buffalo," "the blackest of black men," and one who felt bondage as "a spider's web across the face" (172, 173, 190, 177). A purely one-dimensional characterization of Bras-Coupé as a "Noble Savage," however, is complicated by the overtly political manner in which Cable suggests that Bras-Coupé's instinct for violence and rebellion is provoked and even justified.

The climactic events that define Bras-Coupé's legacy arise when he falls in love with Palmyre de Philosophe. Though she is in love with the white Honoré brother, Palmyre reluctantly agrees to marry Bras-Coupé, for she thinks that Agricola, perceiving her desire for the slave, will forbid their union. Agricola does attempt to halt the wedding at the urging of M. De Grapion, Palmyre's former master, presumably her father, who forbids the marriage on the

grounds that it would "dishonor one" who shared his family blood (176). Don José, however, refuses to cancel the wedding, for he "was not desirous of disappointing" Bras-Coupé, his "terrible pet" (176). Having found that she had "played her game a little too deeply," Palmyre plans to kill the great slave if forced to marry him and carries "a dirk in her bosom, for which a certain hard breast was not too hard" (176). The night of the wedding, Bras-Coupé, perceiving Palmyre's hesitation, becomes agitated and intoxicated. After being denied more alcohol, he strikes his master, though it is Don José who "lifted his hand" first (180). This act of "self-defence [sic]," as the narrator describes it, "assured Bras-Coupé the death of a felon" (181). It also leads to mass chaos that Cable relates to his contemporary society's fear of black rebellion: "The guests stood for an instant as if frozen, smitten stiff with the instant expectation of insurrection, conflagration and rapine (just as we do to-day whenever some poor swaggering Pompey rolls up his fist and gets a ball through his body)" (181). Bras-Coupé's escape from the wedding is described ironically in carnivalesque terms of revolution and national independence. Forced to remove his tribal costume, he was married in his master's "gaudy regimentals." His "red and blue" uniform makes a "streak down the hall" as he flees to the swamp to "practically [declare] his independence on a slight rise of ground hardly sixty feet in circumference" (181). In the same manner that Douglass's runaway, Madison Washington, is associated with the patriotic rhetoric of independence, Bras Coupé inhabits the revolutionary defiance of 1776.⁹⁵

Upon his capture, Bras-Coupé is tortured according to the Black Code's provisions for runaway slaves. After being whipped and branded, his ears are shorn from his head and his hamstrings are cut. Enduring these punishments without complaint, the "mutilated but unconquered African" agrees to lift the voodoo curse that he placed upon his dying master, Don José, and his plantation (191). His change of heart occurs after the urging of Palmyre and her

mistress, Madame Martinez, who carries her infant to Bras-Coupé's deathbed in a scene of heightened melodrama in which

the lady came, her infant boy in her arms, knelt down beside the bed of sweet grass and set the child within the hollow of the African's arm. Bras-Coupé turned his gaze upon it; it smiled, its mother's smile, and put its hand upon the runaway's face, and the first tears of Bras-Coupé's life, the dying testimony of his humanity, gushed from his eyes and rolled down his cheek upon the infant's hand. He laid his own tenderly upon the babe's forehead, then removing it, waved it abroad, inaudibly moved his lips, dropped his arm, and closed his eyes. The curse was lifted (193).

As John Cleman has pointed out, "the message of this conversion for the Southerners of Cable's own day seems relatively clear: just as Bras-Coupé has responded to the power of sympathy, so might they if they wish to evolve beyond the savagery of the *Code Noir* and its modern equivalents in the racial violence and segregation laws that followed in the wake of Reconstruction."⁹⁶ Bras-Coupé's final words, "To Africa," are ironically mirrored in the fate of Agricola's Grandissime, whose last words, "Louis—Louisian—a—for—ever," echo the slave's evocation of home (328). Joseph J. Egan has perceptively observed that the deathbed scenes of the two antithetical antagonists "give emphatic testimony to the manifold destruction---and self-destruction---accompanying malice and intolerance."⁹⁷ Whereas Bras-Coupé lifts his curse against his white oppressors, Agricola's only act of reparation is his blessing of marriage between white Honoré and Aurora, a gesture that signals the end of the Grandissime and De Grapion feud. His final, truncated cry, "patriots! protect the race! Beware of the," is a plea for white

supremacy in Louisiana as well as an indication that his racial views have not been transformed as he approaches his death (328).

Although Bras-Coupé's ability to forgive the crimes of his oppressors might indicate a "vision of hope," as Egan has asserted, Agricola's murder, owed to his uncompromising racial beliefs, offers a grim forewarning to a society that refuses to progress past the tenants of slave culture.⁹⁸ Palmyre, Clemence, and Honoré, f. m. c., the succeeding generation of black revolutionaries, are embittered not only by their oppression but also by Bras-Coupé's brutal murder, and it is upon Agricola, the figurehead of white Creole rule, that they focus their anger. Though Palmyre never loved Bras-Coupé, she was in awe of his physical power, for he "seemed to her the gigantic embodiment of her own dark, fierce will, the expanded realization of her lifetime longing for terrible strength" (175). With the death of the great slave, Palmyre "now dedicated herself to Agricola's ruin" (184). Accordingly, the night that Clemence is caught placing a voodoo spell on Agricola, she carries with her "the image, in myrtle-wax, moulded and painted with some rude skill, of a negro's bloody arm cut off near the shoulder---a *bras-coupé*---with a dirk grasped in its hand" (314). It is infrequently observed that the timeframe of *The Grandissimes*, which takes place from 1803 to 1804, corresponds not only to the annexing of the Louisiana Territory but also with the Haitian Revolution led by Toussaint L'Ouverture. The influence that this revolution has had on the black characters of the novel is made apparent several times. Predicting his own death if he attempts to challenge the white rule, Honoré, f. m. c. tells Frowenfeld "Ah cannod be one Toussaint l'Ouverture. Ah cannod trah to be. Hiv I trah, I h-only s'all soogceed to be one Bras-Coupé" (196). Accordingly, the only solace that Palmyre could find in marrying Bras-Coupé was "the lesson she had hoped to teach him. She had heard of San Domingo, and for months the fierce heart within her silent bosom had been leaping and

shouting and seeing visions of fire and blood. . . . The lesson she would have taught the giant was Insurrection" (183-84). With the murder of Bras-Coupé, Palmyre becomes "fifty times the mutineer she had been before—the mutineer who has nothing to lose" (184). Ironically, in their willingness to risk death in a racial war motivated by hatred and revenge, Honoré, f. m. c. and Palmyre resemble the extremists of the Creole caste who are also driven by a "suicidal pride" and "mutinous patriotism" (32, 94). This destructive cycle of oppression and violence culminates as the central design of the narrative structure, and Cable offers no overwhelming vision of optimism in his presentation of racial conflict.

Much like Bras-Coupé's death at the hands of the Créoles, which leads to the murder of Agricola by Honoré, f. m. c., the black revolutionaries of *The Grandissimes* meet a tragic fate when the great patriarch is finally killed. The f. m. c., having secured a certain death, drowns himself after stabbing his white uncle. Palmyre, who is shot the first time she attempts to kill Agricola, is forced to live in exile in France when the patriarch is finally murdered. Her accomplice, Clemence, endures one of the more gruesome deaths of the novel. After being caught in a steel trap and tortured in a noose, the slave-woman is freed only to be shot in the back while running away. Cable conveys the depravity of the scene with little narrative embellishment or moralizing:

"Run! If you don't run I will shoot you this minute!" She ran. "Faster!" She ran faster. "Run!" "Run!" "Run, Clemence! Ha, ha, ha!" It was funny to see her scuttling and tripping and stumbling. "*Courri! courri, Clemence! c'est pou' to vie!* ha, ha, ha—" A pistol-shot rang out close behind Raoul's ear; it was never told who fired it. The negress leaped into the air and fell at full length to the ground, stone dead (323).

Unlike the melodramatic, nearly mythic, death of Bras-Coupé, the murder of Clemence is not presented as a sacrifice of independence or nationhood. Having long lost her belief that the "order of society" could ever change, the narrator claims that "no upheaval could reach the depth to which she was sunk" (251). Like Palmyre, Clemence sees herself as a "mutineer who has nothing to lose," and it is this nihilistic detachment from hope that is one the greatest dangers of social oppression (184).

Cable's presentation of Palmyre and Clemence as embittered and complex revolutionaries in many ways anticipates Twain's portrayal of Roxy in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. All three protagonists were atypical to the literary period, for they are not merely sexualized as "tragic mulattos" nor are they purely sentimentalized as "mammy figures." These two literary stereotypes of black women, perpetuated before and after the Civil War, were ingrained into the popular imagination by Harriet Beecher Stowe in her portrayal of Eliza Harris and Aunt Chloe in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the best-selling novel of the century. Though Palmyre, Clemence, and Roxy have few literary antecedents, the ferocity and cunning that they use to destabilize white patriarchal control is reminiscent of Cassie, a minor character of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as well as the speaker of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poem "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point," which was published in the American anti-slavery periodical *The Liberty Bell* in 1848. Similar to Toni Morrison's portrayal of Sethe in *Beloved*, Stowe, Browning, and Twain depict slave mothers who either contemplate or commit acts of infanticide. Notably, however, in a subversive twist that puts the plot of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* in motion, Roxy chooses revenge over suicide and switches her son, Chambers, with the white Driscoll heir, Tom. In a bitterly ironic turn of events, Roxy's biological son becomes her "accepted and recognized master" (21). After submitting to his abuse for twenty years, Roxy asserts control over Tom, now the heir to the

Driscoll line, and once again seeks retribution for the countless "insults and injuries" she has endured (42). Though minstrel satire and racial burlesque at times complicate Twain's portrait of Roxy, she, like Palmyre and Clemence of *The Grandissimes*, emerges as a radical heroine within a racist social order.

The nature of Roxy's character has been observed and debated for over a century. In one of the earliest reviews, an unsigned critic for the British periodical *Athenæum* felt that Roxy was deserving of "sympathy" despite her "unscrupulous actions" and notes that "nobler feelings" are "occasionally seen in her elementary code of morals."⁹⁹ A 1904 review in *The Booklover's Magazine* claimed that Roxy was "a strongly conceived, but rather repellent character," an observation qualified by the remark that "there is no one character in the book capable of arresting and retaining our sympathies."¹⁰⁰ In a 1932 essay that marked a resurgence of critical interest in Twain's novel, Bernard De Voto admired the "verity" of Roxy's portrait. In slightly paradoxical terms, he claimed that "her experiences and emotions are her own, and, being her own, are faithful to the history of thousands."¹⁰¹ Arthur G. Pettit also addressed the fractured nature of Roxy's development and suggested that the "problem" of her portrayal is that she has "too many" qualities: "The archetypal black matriarchal figure," the "pious and simple Black Mammy," "a vengeful bitch," "a black shrew," and the "all-white Southern belle." While Pettit proposed that Roxy was "the victim of Mark Twain's own color confusion," it seems more likely that Roxy was drawn to ironically engage the many stereotypes of black women in literature.¹⁰² Similar to the F. F. V. patriarchs who surround her, she is a composite protagonist who functions at different levels of pathos, burlesque, and satire. The performative aspect of Roxy's development is problematic in that it obstructs a definitive reading of her authentic self. Ultimately, the elusive veil of caricatures with which Twain draws Roxy mirrors the many masks

that she and the other slaves of Dawson's Landing must wear in order to survive in a racist environment.

An attempt to locate the definitive moment in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* when Roxy evolves from a supplicating mammy-figure to a "shrewd, calculating free woman," or vice versa, is complicated by the fact that Twain, throughout the text, employs a flux of stereotypes that characterize her in contradictory terms.¹⁰³ Her first lines, directed at another slave, named Jasper, are delivered in the informal rhythm of the Southern slave vernacular. Their bantering dialogue reveals sharp wit and mutual familiarity:

"Say, Roxy, how does yo' baby come on?" This was from a distant voice. "Fust rate; how does *you* come on, Jasper?" This yell was from close by. "Oh, I's middlin'; hain't got noth'n to complain of. I's gwyne to come a-court'n you bime by, Roxy." "You is, you black mud-cat! Yah-yah-yah! I got sump'n better to do den 'sociat'n wid niggers as black as you is. Is ole Miss Cooper's Nancy done give you de mitten?" Roxy followed this sally with another discharge of care-free laughter. "You's jealous, Roxy, dat's what's de matter wid you, you huzzy---yah-yah-yah! Dat's de time I got you!" "Oh, yes, you got me, hain't you. 'Clah to goodness if dat conceit o' yo'n strikes in, Jasper, it gwyne to kill you, sho'. If you b'longed to me I'd sell you down de river 'fo' you git too fur gone. Fust time I runs acrost yo' marster, I's gwyne to tell him so" (9-10).¹⁰⁴

The colloquial ease of the exchange, which touches on major themes such as paternity, racial hierarchy, sexuality, and the threat of being sold down the river, is presented in such a way that the newcomer David Wilson, who overhears their conversation, is excluded from understanding their "duel of wit" (10). It is only after their conversation that background information pertinent

to the logic of their remarks is revealed, like the fact that Roxy is "as white as anybody," has recently given birth, and is standing before Jasper with "two charges" in a "local hand-made baby-wagon" (9). That Jasper's question about Roxy's "baby" is the comment that provokes their argument suggests that he has put forth a slight regarding the paternity of the boys to which only the two slaves are privy.

In an excised passage from a manuscript version of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Twain presents another argument between Jasper and Roxy at the end of Chapter Five. Twelve years have passed since the opening of the novel, and, once again, Wilson finds himself in the middle of a sparring match. Jasper has recently saved the life of his young mistress and attributes his ability to be at the right place at the right time to divine intervention or "special providences," a religious principle that Roxy refuses to believe. Attempting to drive home his winning point, Jasper shouts, "Dah, now! Dey ain't no special providences, hain't day? *Who put me dah?*—aha, you answer me dat!" Responding to him with a "disabling" comeback, Roxy demands to know "who sent de *hoss* dah in daat shape, you chucklehead? Answer me *dat!*" Immediately prior to this exchange, Wilson warns Roxy that she should "modify" her "highflyer attitude" and "stop putting on airs" around Jasper, for he has been made "a free citizen and a hero" after saving his master's daughter. That the "two theologians" answer Wilson's scolding "with a laugh apiece" and resume their argument suggests, yet again, that they share a mutual understanding of life in Dawson's Landing that transcends his simplistic understanding of behavior, caste, and the ostensible divisions of "free" and "slave."¹⁰⁵

Twain's development of Roxy as a cynical trickster-figure in many ways resembles Cable's portrayal of Clemence and Palmyre of *The Grandissimes*. As the inheritor of "fires that do not refine, but that blunt and blast and blacken and char," Clemence's name paradoxically

reflects how little mercy she has been shown in life. She is likened to the "heiress" of wrongs that have "left her the cinders of human feelings" (251). In similar terms, Twain describes Roxy as "the heir of two centuries of unatoned insult and outrage" (43). Roxy, like Clemence, understands that her white masters find comfort in the notion that slaves are "the happiest people under the sun," and she also knows how to perform this stereotype to her advantage (249). Roxy's ability to shift between public and private personas is reflected in her physicality as well as her personality:

From Roxy's manner of speech, a stranger would have expected her to be black, but she was not. Only one-sixteenth of her was black, and that sixteenth did not show. . . . Her face was shapely, intelligent, and comely—even beautiful. She had an easy, independent carriage—when she was among her own caste—and a high and "sassy" was, withal; but of course she was meek and humble enough where white people were (9).

Her skill at playing the role of a "meek and humble" slave is displayed when her master, Percy Driscoll, demands to know which one of his four household slaves has stolen a "small sum of money" from him (11). All of the slaves are "eloquent in their protestations of innocence" until Driscoll threatens to send all four down the river if the culprit is not named. With this threat, which "was equivalent of condemning them to hell," the slaves quickly appeal to their master for mercy:

Roxy reeled in her tracks and the color vanished out of her face; the others dropped to their knees as if they have been shot; tears gushed from their eyes, their supplicating hands went up, and three answers came in the one instant:

"I done it!" "I done it!" "I done it!"—have mercy, marster—Lord have mercy on us po' niggers!" (13).

Ironically, immediately prior to their pleas for forgiveness and cries of gratitude, the narrator explains that the slaves of Dawson's Landing have no remorse for taking "military advantage of the enemy" for they "had an unfair show in the battle of life" and "would smouch provisions from the pantry whenever they got a chance" (12). Among the items often stolen from the master's house are a "brass thimble," a "cake of wax," an "emery-bag," and other household goods of "light value." Humorously, on the list of domestic wares Twain also places "a silver spoon," an item that foreshadows the social status that Roxy will steal from the Driscoll heir when she switches Tom and Chambers in the cradle (12).

Roxy's ferocity is also reminiscent of Palmyre of *The Grandissimes*, whose deadly hatred for Agricola Fusilier leads her to declare that she "cannot die" until he is punished and that "there is nothing that could kill me, I want my revenge so bad!" (75). A similar declaration of intent appears in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* when Roxy realizes that her son could be sold downriver by Percy Driscoll. Raging before the two infants, she cries, "I hates yo' pappy. . . . I hates him, en I could kill him!" (14). Though she does not kill the father, she effectively kills his son by switching the infants, an act that denies the real Tom the life and liberties that he would have secured as the Driscoll heir. Ironically, her biological son, who was reared as Tom, also suffers a virtual death when he is sent downriver at the end. Throughout *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, as Carolyn Porter has shown, "death is not merely the equivalent of being sold down the river, but is identical to it."¹⁰⁶ Also like Palmyre, who "played her game a little too deeply" with her Bras-Coupé marriage scheme, Roxy becomes "the dupe of her own deceptions" when her "mock obsequiousness" towards Tom becomes "real obsequiousness" and "the little counterfeit rift of

separation between imitation-slave and imitation-master widened and widened, and became an abyss, and a very real one" (20). By creating a blackmail scheme that will secure her independence at the risk of Tom's exposure, Roxy effectively reverses the roles between master and slave, though she does not maintain the upper-hand consistently in her "conquest" (45, 46).

The scenes in which Roxy does rule over her son-turned-master, however, are presented with a jarring note of intimidation and revenge. In one such instance, Roxy tells Tom the truth about his bloodlines, rising "above him like a fate" with her eyes "flamed with triumph" to declare "You is a *nigger*!—*bawn* a nigger en a *slave*!—en you's a nigger en a slave dis minute; en if I opens my mouf, ole Marse Driscoll'll sell you down de river befo' you is two days older den what you is now!" When Tom raises a "billet of wood" over Roxy's head, the narrator claims that she "only laughed" and chastises him to "set down, you pup! Does you think you kin sk'yer me? . . . Oh, bless yo' soul, if you puts yo' mother up for as big a fool as *you* is, you's pow'ful mistaken, I kin tell you!" (45). When Tom dupes his mother into being reënslaved and sends her downriver to a brutal Arkansas plantation, Roxy, dressed as a man and in blackface, breaks into her son's hotel room in St. Louis to confront him. The city, like son and mother, is described in racialized terms of disguise: "It rained all day long, and rained hard, apparently trying its best to wash that soot-blackened town white, but of course not succeeding" (90). Demanding that he secure her a new bill of sale, she threatens Tom: "You see dis knife? I's toted it aroun' sense de day I seed dat man en bought dese clo'es en it. If he ketched me, I 'us gwyne to kill myself wid it. . . . if you gives a sign in dis house, or if anybody comes up to you in de street, I's gwyne to jam it into you" (97). Ironically, the mother once willing to drown her son in what she saw as an act of mercy, is now threatening to take his life in a spirit of unrepentant vengeance.

The raw intelligence, rage, and pragmatism that Roxy reveals in her private conversations is ironically juxtaposed by the condescending naivety that Twain associates with her character at other points. For example, when contemplating the likelihood that her infant could be sent down the river, Roxy, in the artificial rhetoric of popular plantation novels, cries, "Dey shant, oh, dey *shan't!*—yo' po' mammy will kill you fust!" (14). Her use of the archaic contraction "shan't" satirically contrasts the minstrel theatricality of her ritualistic preparation for death:

She had caught sight of her new Sunday gown—a cheap curtain-calico thing, a conflagration of gaudy colors and fantastic figures. . . . She put down the child and made the change. She looked in the glass and was astonished at her beauty. She resolved to make her death-toilet perfect. She took off her handkerchief-turban and dressed her glossy wealth of hair "like white folks;" she added some odds and ends of rather lurid ribbon and a spray of atrocious artificial flowers; finally, she threw over her shoulders a fluffy thing called a "cloud" in that day, which was of a blazing red complexion. Then she was ready for the tomb (15).

Another instance in which Roxy becomes more of a literary caricature than a multi-dimensional character occurs when she discovers that Tom has tricked her into being sold downriver to the Arkansas plantation: "Her practised eye fell upon that tell-tale rush of water. For one moment her petrified gaze fixed itself there. Then her head dropped upon her breast and she said—'*Oh, de good Lord God have mercy on po' sinful me—I's sole down de river'!*'" (88). Echoing his earlier use of the archaic contraction "shan't" in Roxy's consideration of infanticide, the formal British spelling of "practised" underscores the extent to which this scene is removed from the historical reality of American slavery. Accordingly, in the marginal illustration by C. H. Warren that accompanies the first American edition, Roxy is unshackled and formally dressed, gazing at

the water whose Southbound current "told her a thing to break her heart" (88). The farcical gentility of Roxy's trip downriver, as well as her passivity, ironically contrasts the dramatic account she tells of her escape from the plantation. After watching another slave being beaten by the overseer, Roxy claims that "all de hell-fire dat 'uz ever in my heart flame' up, en I snatch de stick outen his han' en liad him flat. He laid dah moanin' en cussin', en all out of his head, you know, en de niggers 'uz plum skyerd to death. Dey gethered 'roun' him to he'p him, en I jumped on his hoss en took out for de river as tight as I could go" (92). Further contrasting the farcical theatricality in Roxy's trip downriver is the grim description of the Missouri slave-trade that Twain put forth in his autobiographical reflections. Recalling his youth in Hannibal, the river-port village upon which Dawson's Landing of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* was likely modeled, Twain wrote that "I vividly remember seeing a dozen black men and women chained to one another, once, and lying in a group on the pavement, awaiting shipment to the Southern slave market. Those were the saddest faces I have ever seen."¹⁰⁷

One of the most contentious scenes in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* occurs when Roxy drops to her knees in the courthouse and begs for forgiveness after Wilson uses his scientific method of finger-printing to expose Tom as a murderer and a racial imposter. When the truth is revealed, Roxy "flung herself upon her knees, covered her face with her hands, and out through her sobs the words struggled—'De Lord have mercy on me, po' misable sinner dat I is!'" The clock struck twelve. The court rose; the new prisoner, handcuffed, was removed" (120). After Tom is sent down the river, the narrator claims that "Roxy's heart was broken. . . . Her hurts were too deep for money to heal; the spirit of her eye was quenched, her martial bearing departed with it, and the voice of her laughter ceased in the land. In her church and its affairs she found her only solace" (120). Without taking into account the countless instances of untrustworthy narration, as

well as Roxy's many performances of "religious etiquette," "laughter," and "broken-hearted" servility before a white audience, the closing scene of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is often criticized as one marred with racial condescension (12, 8, 87). James M. Cox, for example, suggested that the real "tragedy" belongs to the devolution of Roxy's character, "for the bitter plot of Pudd'nhead overrides the character of Roxana, reducing her vernacular to dialect and severing her humor from the sources of her instinctive power. Exposed by Wilson's detection, that power is reduced to a mere guilty minstrel cry."¹⁰⁸ In a similar position, Carolyn Porter has remarked that

in some nightmarish version of Cinderella, Roxana is reduced to the rags of a racial stereotype. And rather than a prince, she finds Twain as a stern judge who condemns her in the final chapter. . . . There is no way to read this and other comparable passages without succumbing to a kind of ethical nausea. But there might be a way to account for such passages by suggesting that the aggression Roxana's plot unleashes in Twain's text is driven out of control by the horror that provokes it, so that Twain gives in to the temptation to turn that aggression against Roxana herself. As black women in this country have always known and have testified repeatedly, this would not be the first or last time that the black mother got blamed.¹⁰⁹

The courtroom scene that ostensibly victimizes Roxy, however, merely extends the ironic treatment she has received from the earliest chapters. Throughout *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Roxy shifts between a beautiful mulatto, a tragic slave-mother, a nurturing mammy, a supplicating servant, and a laughing "darkie," while functioning as a satiric composite of the literary stereotypes heaped upon her.¹¹⁰ Ironically, these archetypes are destabilized rather than

reinforced as Roxy breaks through the narrative layers to reveal herself, if only momentarily, as autonomous in spirit and capable of revenge.

Furthermore, there is the indication that the courtroom verdict that leaves Chambers free, Tom punished, and Roxy the recipient of a monthly stipend, has turned out just as she had planned. Often overlooked is a passage from Chapter 5 in which Roxy fantasizes about the day that Tom will be exposed:

Sometimes she could not go to sleep, even when worn out with fatigue, because her rage boiled so high over the day's experiences. . . . Sometimes when some particular outrage of peculiar offensiveness stung her to the heart, she would plan schemes of vengeance, and revel in the fancied spectacle of his exposure to the world as an imposter and a slave; but in the midst of these joys fear would strike her: she had made him too strong; she could prove nothing, and—heavens, she might get sold down the river for her pains! So her schemes always went for nothing, and she laid them aside in impotent rage against the fates, and against herself for playing a fool on that fatal September day in not providing herself with a witness for use in the day when such a thing might be needed for the appeasing of her vengeance-hungry heart (24).

Although a definitive reading of Roxy's motives is obscured by farce, her portrayal seems all the more iconoclastic when read as an antecedent to Twain's unpublished manuscript for *Which Was It?* (1902), which also foregrounds a former slave's revenge plot. Set in the antebellum town of Indiantown, Missouri, a mulatto protagonist named Jasper, after being reënslaved several times, travels across the country to track and punish his white oppressors. Like Roxy, he uses blackmail to reverse the roles of master and slave with a local aristocrat, George Harrison, the

nephew and primary beneficiary of Jasper's former master, who was also his biological father. In addition to the general plot outline, there are several passages in *Which Was It?* that are nearly identical to the exchanges of power that occur in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Jasper, for instance, echoes Roxy's admonishments to Tom when he warns Harrison "You b'longs to me, now. You's my proppity, same as a nigger, en I ain' gwyneter was'e you. By God, I kin hang you any minute I want'er! Git up en fetch yo' marster a dram!"¹¹¹ When in public, Jasper orders Harrison to treat him as a cruel master while he performs the part of humble house servant. When in private, Harrison is forced to reenact the day's events and become the slave while Jasper assumes the role of the master. In terms that could readily apply to Twain's development of Roxy in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Arthur Pettit has claimed that "Jasper's performance as part-time lord of manor and part-time servant drives home the point that slavishness results from slavery, not from racial inferiority, and that each race and each man is a potential master and a potential slave."¹¹² Both works echo Twain's claim that "the skin of every human being contains a slave," a sentiment that Twain recorded in his notebook near the end of his life.¹¹³

Unlike Roxy of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, however, there is no ambiguity regarding Jasper's motives, no sentimentalism attached to his character, and no fluctuation in his desire to "settle" what he calls "a long bill agin de low-down ornery white race."¹¹⁴ Ultimately, in both *The Grandissimes* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, racially-motivated revenge plots serve as a grim warning of what the future could look like if the "long bill" of insults and injuries against black Americans continues. Though Cable offers a vision of reconciliation in the marriage-plots that connect the Nancanou women to Honoré Grandissime and Joseph Frowenfeld, these unions are most obviously linked to region and caste. The undercurrent of racial strife that runs throughout *The Grandissimes* remains unresolved, and the deaths of Bras-Coupé, Honoré, f. m. c.,

Clemence, and Agricola suggest that both the black and white communities of the South will be victimized in a cycle of chaos and violence if the post-war race crisis persists into the next century. In his bitter satire on bloodlines in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Twain also offers a bleak vision of the future in a land where racial hostility prevails and the "bond of brotherly affection," supposedly linking all Americans, is revealed to be a carnivalesque farce.¹¹⁵ Through the murder of Judge Driscoll, the embodiment of old guard values, and the emblematic deaths of Chambers and Tom, the interracial successors to the next generation, Twain, like Cable, depicts a society in which no one is free from hypocrisy and fear and all are punished for the sins of their fathers.

Notes

¹Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, ed. David Waldstreicher (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002), 196, 195. Quoted from "Query XVIII: Manners." More of Jefferson's comments regarding racial violence appear in "Query XIV: Laws," in which he lists the reasons that racial integration after emancipation would be improbable: "Deep-rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race" (175-76).

²All references to *The Grandissimes* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins* will be made from the following editions, with citations included parenthetically: George Washington Cable, *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* (New York: American Century Series, 1957). Originally published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1880.; Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins: Authoritative Texts, Textual Introduction, Table of Variants, Criticism*, 2nd Edition, ed. Sidney Berger (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005). Originally published as *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson; and the Comedy Those Extraordinary Twins* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1894).

³Mark Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, ed. Charles Neider (New York: Perennial Classics, 1990), 27. The first edition of Twain's autobiography, edited by Albert Bigelow Paine, was published in two volumes by Harper & Bros. in 1924.

⁴Major J. B. Pond, *Eccentricities of Genius* (New York: G. W. Dillingham Company, 1900), 231.

⁵Mary Cable Dennis, *The Tail of the Comet* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1937), 74-75.

⁶Fred W. Lorch, "Cable and His Reading Tour with Mark Twain in 1884-1885," *American Literature* 23 (1952): 474.

⁷Alice Hall Petry, *A Genius in His Way: The Art of Cable's Old Creole Days* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988), 13-14.

⁸Stephen Railton, "The Twain-Cable Combination," in *A Companion to Mark Twain*, ed. Louis J. Budd and Peter Messent (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 175.

⁹George Washington Cable, "The Freedman's Case in Equity," *Century* 29 (1885): 409.

¹⁰George Washington Cable, "The Freedman's Case in Equity," *Century* 29 (1885): 409.

¹¹See Guy A. Cardwell, "Mark Twain's 'Row' with George Washington Cable," *Modern Language Quarterly* 13 (1952): 363-71; Guy A. Cardwell, *Twins of Genius* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1953); Lorch, "Cable and His Reading Tour with Mark Twain in 1884-1885," 471-86; Fred W. Lorch, *The Trouble Begins at Eight: Mark Twain's Lecture Tours* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1968); Arlin Turner, "Mark Twain, Cable, and 'A Professional Newspaper Liar,'" *Tulane Studies in English* 5 (1955): 5-27; Arlin Turner, *Mark Twain and George W. Cable: The Record of a Literary Friendship* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1960).

¹²Lawrence I. Berkove, "The Free Man of Color in *The Grandissimes* and Works by Harris and Twain," in *The Grandissimes: Centennial Essays*, ed. Thomas J. Richardson (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1981), 60-73.

¹³John Cleman, *George Washington Cable Revisited* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 61.

¹⁴Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Was Huck Black?: Mark Twain and African American Voices* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1993). Also see Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹⁵Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 226-27.

¹⁶Arthur G. Pettit, *Mark Twain & the South* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 155.

¹⁷See David Lionel Smith, "Mark Twain's Dialects," in *A Companion to Mark Twain*, 434.

¹⁸George Washington Cable, "Literature in the Southern States," in *The Negro Question: A Selection of Writings on Civil Rights in the South by George W. Cable*, ed. Arlin Turner (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), 45, 44. Cable delivered this speech on June 28, 1882 at the University of Mississippi.

¹⁹Gavin Jones, *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 123.

²⁰Barbara Ladd, *Nationalism and the Color Line in George W. Cable, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996).

²¹Louis D. Rubin, Jr., "The Division of the Heart: Cable's *The Grandissimes*," *The Southern Literary Journal* 1 (1969): 34.

²²George Washington Cable, "My Politics," in *The Negro Question*, 14. Cable drafted "My Politics" between December of 1888 and January of 1889. Turner was the first to publish the complete essay.

²³Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, "Cable's *Grandissimes*," *Scribner's Monthly* 21 (1880): 160.

²⁴Cable, "Literature in the Southern States," 43.

²⁵Cable, "Literature in the Southern States," 41. On June 29, 1882, the day after he gave the address in Oxford, Cable wrote to Twain that "I think I told you that I had promised to make the annual oration there to the University of Miss. It's done & I still live. I am said to have scored a decided success." See Cardwell, *Twins of Genius*, 83.

²⁶Mark Twain, *Life of the Mississippi*, in *Mark Twain: Mississippi Writings*, ed. Guy Cardwell (New York: Library of America, 1982), 500.

²⁷In his tirade against the South's antiquated modes of literary expression, Twain praises only Cable and Joel Chandler Harris as "two of the very few Southern authors who do not write in the Southern style." See Twain, *Life of the Mississippi*, 500-01, 502.

²⁸Both *The Grandissimes* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson* explore the inability of a society to move beyond its mistakes, a concept that Twain would later coin "The Law of Periodical Repetition" to convey his belief that "everything which has happened once must happen again and again and again. See Mark Twain, *Letters from the Earth: Uncensored Writings*, ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York: Perennial Classics, 2004), 102. Twain's reference to "The Law of Periodical Repetition" appears in a manuscript he drafted in the first years of the twentieth century. *Letters from the Earth* was originally published by Harper & Row in 1962.

²⁹Boyesen, "Cable's *Grandissimes*," 161.

³⁰Gavin Jones, *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 123.

³¹E. Juinus, *Critical Dialogue between Aboo and Caboo on A New Book or a Grandissime Ascension* (Mingo City: Great Publishing House of Sam Slick Allspice, 1880), 10. As Arlin Turner has noted, the author of the pamphlet, writing under the pseudonym "E. Juinus,"

was the Creole Adrien Rouquette. See Arlin Turner, *George W. Cable: A Biography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1956), 102.

³²Grace King, *Memories of A Southern Woman of Letters* (Gretna: Pelican, 2007), 60.

King's memoir was originally published by The Macmillan Company in 1932.

³³Anonymous, "Dr. Heidenhoff's Process, And Other Novels," *Atlantic Monthly* 46 (1880): 831.

³⁴W. C. Brownell, "Cable's *The Grandissimes*," in *Critical Essays on George W. Cable*, 18. Originally published in *Nation* 31 (1880): 415-16.

³⁵Boyesen, "Cable's *Grandissimes*," 159.

³⁶Lafacadio Hearn, "*The Grandissimes*," in *Critical Essays on George W. Cable*, 8. Hearn's review also appears in *Creole Sketches*, ed. Charles Woodward Hutson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), 115-23.

³⁷Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 485, 504.

³⁸Turner, *Mark Twain and George W. Cable: The Record of a Literary Friendship*, 129.

³⁹William Dean Howells, "Mr. G. W. Cable's Aurora and Clotilde Nancanou," in *Heroines in Fiction*, Vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1903), 235.

⁴⁰Donald A. Ringe, "Narrative Voice in Cable *The Grandissimes*," in *The Grandissimes: Centennial Essays*, 16, 18, 13.

⁴¹George Washington Cable to Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen (March 6, 1878). Quoted in Arlin Turner, "A Novelist Discovers a Novelist: The Correspondence of H. H. Boyesen and George W. Cable," *Western Humanities Review* 5 (1951): 358-59.

⁴²Louis D. Rubin, *George W. Cable: The Life and Times of a Southern Heretic* (New York: Pegasus, 1969), 78.

⁴³Leslie Fiedler, "Free as Any Cretur. . . ." in Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins: Authoritative Texts, Textual Introduction, Table of Variants, Criticism*, 2nd Edition, ed. Sidney Berger (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 250. Originally published in *The New Republic* 133 (1955): 130-39.

⁴⁴Arlin Turner, "Mark Twain and the South: *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, 294. Originally published as "Mark Twain and the South: An Affair of Love and Anger," *The Southern Review* 4 (1968): 493-519.

⁴⁵In 1885, Cable declared that "the greatest social problem before the American people to-day is, as it has been for a hundred years, the presence among us of the negro." Nearly twenty years later, in *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903), W. E. B. Du Bois would echo Cable in his assertion that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line." See Cable, "The Freedman's Case in Equity," 409. Also see W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks*, ed. Farah Jasmine Griffin (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003), 3. *The Souls of Black Folks* was originally published by A. C. McClurg & Co. in 1903.

⁴⁶The novel was originally published serially in seven installments in *Century Illustrated Magazine* 47 (1893): 232-40; 47 (1894): 329-40; 47 (1894): 549-57; 47 (1894): 772-81; 47 (1894): 816-22; 48 (1894): 17-24; 48 (1894): 232-40. The first American book version of *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson and the Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins* was published in Hartford by American Publishing Company in 1894.

⁴⁷Anonymous, "Our Library Table," *The Athenæum* 3508 (1895): 84

⁴⁸Anonymous, "*Pudd'nhead Wilson*," *The Critic* 26 (1895): 338.

⁴⁹Martha McCulloch Williams, "In Re 'Pudd'nhead Wilson'," *Southern Magazine* 4 (1894): 99.

⁵⁰Hershel Parker, "Pudd'nhead Wilson: Jack-leg Author, Unreadable Text, and Sense-Making Critics," in *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons: Literary Authority in American Fiction* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1984), 136.

⁵¹Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 501.

⁵²Scott Moore, "The Code Duello and the Reified Self in Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," *American Transcendental Quarterly* 22 (2008): 499.

⁵³Henry Nash Smith, "Pudd'nhead Wilson as Criticism of Dominant Culture," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, 273. Originally published in Henry Nash Smith, *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962), 173-83, 207.

⁵⁴Cable, "The Freedman's Case in Equity," 411.

⁵⁵Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 500.

⁵⁶Myra Jehlen, "The Ties that Bind: Race and Sex in Pudd'nhead Wilson," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, 411-26. Originally published in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture*, ed. Susan Gillman and Forrest G. Robinson (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 105-20.

⁵⁷Michael Rogin, "Francis Galton and Mark Twain: The Natal Autograph in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture*, 74.

⁵⁸Lee Clark Mitchell, "De Nigger in You: Race or Training in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," *Nineteenth Century Literature* 42 (1987): 301.

⁵⁹Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 364.

⁶⁰Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, "Two Humorists," *Cosmopolitan* 18 (1895): 379.

⁶¹Turner, *George W. Cable; A Biography*, 79-85.

⁶²See Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals*, 1887-83, Vol. 2, ed. Frederick Anderson, Lin Salamo, and Bernard L. Stein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 503.

⁶³Howells, "Mr. G. W. Cable's Aurora and Clotilde Nancanou," in *Heroines in Fiction*, 240-41.

⁶⁴Shirley Elizabeth Thompson, *Exiles at Home: The Struggle to become American in Creole New Orleans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 36-38.

⁶⁵Turner, *George W. Cable: A Biography*, 50.

⁶⁶See George Washington Cable, "'Tite Poulette,'" in *Old Creole Days* (New York: Signet Classic, 1961), 155-176. Published serially in *Scribner's Monthly* 8 (1874): 674-84. The first edition of *Old Creole Days* was published by C. Scribner's Sons in 1879. All references to "'Tite Poulette'" will be to this edition and included parenthetically in the body the text.

⁶⁷See Ladd, *Nationalism and the Color Line*, 49.

⁶⁸Cleman, *George Washington Cable Revisited*, 56.

⁶⁹The suspension of clarity in *The Grandissimes*, particularly with regard to racial identity, is in many ways analogous to Twain's description of touring the French Quarter with Cable in 1883: "With Mr. Cable along to see for you, and describe and explain and illuminate, a jog through that old quarter is a vivid pleasure. And you have a vivid sense as of unseen or dimly seen things---vivid, and yet fitful and darkling; you glimpse salient features, but lose the fine shades or catch them imperfectly through the vision of the imagination: a case, as it were, of ignorant near-sighted stranger traversing the rim of wide vague horizons of Alps with an inspired and enlightened long-sighted native." See Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 485-86.

⁷⁰Cox, "The Ironic Stranger," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, 279.

⁷¹John Bird, "Killing Half a Dog, Half a Novel: The Trouble with *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson and The Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins*," in *A Companion to Mark Twain*, 445-46.

⁷²Catharine O'Connell, "Resecting Those Extraordinary Twins: *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and the Costs of "Killing Half," *Nineteenth Century Literature* 57 (2002): 114, 100.

⁷³Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 261-63. Also see Joseph P. Cosco, "Mark Twain: Racism, Nativism, and the Twinning of Italianness," in *The Clash of Romance and Race in American Perceptions, 1880-1910* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 143-70.

⁷⁴Mark Twain, "Untitled Speech," in *Mark Twain Speaking*, ed. Paul Fatout (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), 516. Twain delivered this speech at the Robert Fulton Monument Association Benefit at Carnegie Hall on April 19, 1906.

⁷⁵Fischer, *Was Huck Black?*, 11-41.

⁷⁶Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 61.

⁷⁷Twain, "Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims," in *Mark Twain Speaking*, 163-64. Twain delivered this speech at the First Annual Dinner of the New England Society of Philadelphia on Dec. 22, 1881.

⁷⁸Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 174, 175.

⁷⁹Cable, "The Freedman's Case in Equity," 418.

⁸⁰Henry W. Grady, "In Plain Black and White; A Reply to Mr. Cable," *Century* 29 (1885): 909, 910, 916-17.

⁸¹Charles Chesnutt, "A Stream of Dark Blood in the Veins of the Southern Whites," in *Charles W. Chesnutt: Stories, Novels, & Essays*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Library of America, 2002), 851.

⁸²Cable, "The Freedman's Case in Equity," 418.

⁸³Jehlen, "The Ties that Bind: Race and Sex in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," 417.

⁸⁴Berkove, "The Free Man of Color in *The Grandissimes* and Works by Harris and Twain," 60, 70-71.

⁸⁵Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 501.

⁸⁶Richard Chase, "Cable and His *Grandissimes*," *The Kenyon Review* 18 (1956): 375.

⁸⁷John Bird, "Killing Half a Dog, Half a Novel: The Trouble with *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* and *The Comedy of Those Extraordinary Twins*," in *A Companion to Mark Twain*, 446.

⁸⁸Thomas Jefferson to John Holmes (April 22, 1820). Reprinted in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Being His Autobiography, Correspondence, Reports, Messages, Addresses, and Other Writings, Official and Private*, ed. H. A. Washington (Washington: Taylor & Maury, 1853), 159.

⁸⁹Cox, "The Ironic Stranger," 284, 282.

⁹⁰Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Honor and Violence in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 22.

⁹¹Barry Wood, "Narrative Action of Structural Symmetry in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, 341. Originally published in the first Norton Critical Edition of *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins* in 1980.

⁹²Stephen Railton, "The Tragedy of Mark Twain, by Pudd'nhead Wilson," *Nineteenth Century Literature* 56 (2002): 535-36.

⁹³George Washington Cable, *Creoles and Cajuns: Stories of Old Louisiana*, ed. Arlin Turner (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1965), 20. Also see Bryan Wagner, "Disarmed and Dangerous: The Strange Career of Bras-Coupé," in *Representations* 92 (2005), 127.

⁹⁴Wagner, "Disarmed and Dangerous," 127.

⁹⁵The plight of Madison Washington and Bras Coupé dramatize W. E. B. Du Bois's claim that "there are to-day no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes." See Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folks*, 15.

⁹⁶Cleman, *George Washington Cable Revisited*, 67.

⁹⁷Joseph J. Egan, "Lions Rampant: Agricola Fusilier and Bras-Coupé as Antithetical Doubles in *The Grandissimes*," in *The Grandissimes: Centennial Essays*, 80.

⁹⁸Egan, "Lions Rampant: Agricola Fusilier and Bras-Coupé as Antithetical Doubles in *The Grandissimes*," 78.

⁹⁹Anonymous, "Pudd'nhead Wilson Review," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, 241-42. Originally published in *The Athenæum* 3508 (1895): 83-84.

¹⁰⁰T. M. Parrott, "Mark Twain: Made in America," *Book Lover's Magazine* 3 (1904): 153.

¹⁰¹Bernard De Voto, "Mark Twain's Presentation of Slavery," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, 247. Originally published in Bernard De Voto, *Mark Twain's America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1932), 293-94.

¹⁰²Pettit, *Mark Twain and the South*, 149-50.

¹⁰³Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, "Reconstructing Mammy at the Turn of the Century; or, Mark Twain Meets Aunt Jemima," in *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 79.

¹⁰⁴In order to clarify which character is speaking in the exchange between Roxy and Jasper, I have standardized the quotation marks surrounding their dialogue.

¹⁰⁵See Emendations of the Copy-Text, in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, 206-07.

¹⁰⁶Carolyn Porter, "Roxana's Plot," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, 409. Originally published in *Mark Twain's Pudd'nhead Wilson: Race, Conflict, and Culture*, 121-36.

¹⁰⁷Twain, *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 39.

¹⁰⁸Cox, "The Ironic Stranger," 286.

¹⁰⁹Porter, "Roxana's Plot," 410-11.

¹¹⁰The shifting nature of Roxy, who is at times a pragmatic and empowered heroine and at other times a clichéd and pitiable caricature, is captured in the frontispiece image of the 1899 Harper & Brothers edition of the novel that was illustrated by Edward Windsor Kemble. The illustration is captioned "Roxy Harvesting Among the Kitchens" and shows four slaves in the midst of "harvesting" or stealing food from the pantry of their master's house. As Werner Sollars was keen to observe, the two slave-women in the picture provide a visual metaphor for the dual-nature of Roxy's character development. The slave occupying the center of the image is drawn, in full-form, as the stereotypical mammy-figure. With a stout figure and dark skin, she is dressed in an apron and wears heavy round earrings and turban. The other woman, with lighter skin and sharper features, is crouched between the other slaves and only the profile of her face is

revealed. Sollars has pointed out that a generation of astute readers have either overlooked the illustration or criticized Kemble for perpetuating an image of Roxy as a stereotypical mammy-figure that Twain's readers would find familiar, despite the fact that the secondary literature claims her to be a nearly white woman. No attention was paid to the crouching figure standing between the slaves. However, as Sollars has shown through his comparison of "Roxy Harvesting" to Kemble's other illustrations of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* published in 1899, Roxy is in fact the half-revealed woman hiding behind the mammy-figure in the kitchen pantry. Not only does Kemble's clever illustration speak to the power of stereotypes and their ability to deceive the observer, but it also captures Roxy "in the act" of hiding beneath a fixed perception of her race and using this position to her advantage. See Werner Sollars, "Was Roxy Black?," in *Interracialism: Black-White Intermarriage in American History, Literature, and Law* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 70-87.

¹¹¹Mark Twain, *Which Was It?*, in *Mark Twain's "Which Was the Dream?" and Other Symbolic Writings of the Later Years*, ed. John S. Tuckey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 413. Twain composed portions of the unfinished manuscript for *Which Was It?* between 1902 and 1903.

¹¹²Pettit, *Mark Twain & the South*, 172.

¹¹³Mark Twain, *Mark Twain's Notebook*, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1935), 393.

¹¹⁴Twain, *Which Was It?*, 415. Ironically, in the conclusion of the first edition of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, published by the American Publishing Company in 1894, the final marginal illustration shows a smiling slave pushing a wheelbarrow of "bills." Trailing behind him are six white men, all carrying rolls of paper also labeled "bills" (121).

¹¹⁵John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," in *The Founding of Massachusetts: Historians and the Sources*, ed. Edmund S. Morgan (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), 191.

CHAPTER 4

PASSING AND ADVANCEMENT IN THE FICTION OF CHARLES CHESNUTT

Throughout his extended literary career in essays, short-fiction, and novels, Charles Chesnutt explored both the benefits and burdens of racial intermixture. In "The Future American," a three-part essay published in the *Boston Evening Transcript* in 1900, he proposed that a "complete racial fusion" of black and white blood was the surest method through which racial antagonism in America could be combated. His argument revolved around the contention that "there can manifestly be no such thing as a peaceful and progressive civilization in a nation divided by two warring races, and homogeneity of type, at least in externals, is a necessary condition of harmonious social progress."¹ In the final and most controversial installment of "The Future American" series, Chesnutt portrays racial assimilation as a necessity of circumstance rather than a moral compromise for black Americans and reasons that "if it is only by becoming white that colored people and their children are to enjoy the rights and dignities of citizenship, they will have every incentive to 'lighten the breed,' to use a current phrase, that they may claim the white man's privileges as soon as possible."² Five years later, in a speech before the Boston Literary and Historical Association, he would reiterate his belief that "the admixture of the races will become an accomplished fact."³ Urging his audience to "dismiss from your mind any theory, however originated, or however cherished, that there can be built up in a free country, two separate sorts of civilization, two standards of human development," Chesnutt hypothesized that the end of racial segregation hinged not merely on the moral enlightenment of

white Americans or the educational and economic advancements of black Americans.⁴ Rather, in a vision of the future that ran counter to the prevailing ideologies of both the white segregationists and the black separatists of his time,⁵ he imagined a utopian nation-state achieved through the elimination of physical blackness by intermarriage, miscegenation, and the concealment of bloodlines.⁶

In *Mandy Oxendine* (1897), *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900), *Paul Marchand*, *F. M. C.* (1921), and *The Quarry* (1928), as well as numerous pieces of short-fiction, Chesnutt would portray a series of light-skinned protagonists of African descent who actively pursue, fundamentally reject, or remain psychologically conflicted regarding the possibility of entering white culture via the suppression of their ancestral identity. *Mandy Oxendine*, an iconoclastic novella devoted to the question of racial passing, remained unpublished during his lifetime. In February of 1897, Chesnutt submitted the manuscript version, which he referred to as a "long story," to Walter Hines Page, a fellow North Carolinian who was an editor at *Atlantic Monthly* and a literary liaison for Houghton Mifflin.⁷ At the time that he began corresponding with Hines regarding *Mandy Oxendine*, Chesnutt had already found success in the popular marketplace with the serial publication of several sketches, stories, and essays, a literary debut that earned him the distinction of becoming the first African American to publish fiction in *Atlantic Monthly*, the leading magazine of his day.⁸

The completion of his first work in long fiction was the fulfillment of a goal that Chesnutt expressed in an 1881 journal entry when he was a twenty-three-year-old school teacher who declared that

every time I read a good novel, I want to write one. It is the dream of my life---to be an author! It is not so much the *monstrari digito*, though that has something to

do with my aspirations. It is not altogether the money. It is a mixture of motives.

I want fame; I want money; I want to raise children in a different rank of life from that I sprang from.⁹

Despite the achievements that he had earned in periodical literature by 1897, Chesnutt received a rejection letter six weeks after sending off his manuscript of *Mandy Oxendine*. Without much elaboration, Houghton Mifflin responded with a brief note to inform him that "we do not publish many novels, and though we recognize elements of truthfulness, and some novelty of situation in this, we are not able to persuade ourselves that we should find publication a safe venture."¹⁰

Though there is a discernible lack of stylistic fluidity as the plot gives way to coincidences and a melodramatic murder plot, it is likely that the rejection of the manuscript was related to issues of theme rather than form. As Charles Hackenberry has suggested, the publishing house's refusal to underwrite the project was probably owed to the genre-breaking actions and airs of the title character, a light-skinned woman of mixed-race who unapologetically passes for white in a small southern town where she suffers the sexual advances of a degenerate aristocrat and a repressed priest.¹¹

Similar to Chesnutt's reasoning in his "The Future American" essays, that "becoming white" is perhaps the only manner in which one can enjoy the benefits of citizenship, Mandy Oxendine feels entirely justified in burying her black identity if it will secure her economic and social advantage in a culture that otherwise offers her only limited opportunities.¹² Whereas Mandy's devotion to personal advancement overrides any sentimental attachment that she might hold towards her cultural community, Tom Lowrey, another light-skinned character, believes that transcending racial caste should be achieved through education rather than racial concealment. Not only is Mandy's unapologetic act of passing a more contentious portrayal of

societal defiance than Tom's more abstract, philosophical musings on racial injustice, her development is markedly antithetical to the sentimentalized heroine of the late-century race novel, a stereotype that Chesnutt would engage three years later with his depiction of Rena Walden in *The House Behind the Cedars*.

An autobiographical source of inspiration for *Mandy Oxendine* seems to be rooted in the time that Chesnutt spent as a student and educator at the Howard School, a free public grade school for black children established by the Freedman's Bureau in Fayetteville, North Carolina in 1867.¹³ The struggles as well as the achievements of the postwar schoolhouse in *Mandy Oxendine* reappear in *The House Behind the Cedars* and recur throughout Chesnutt's four-decade oeuvre in fiction, in short-stories such as "The March of Progress" and "The Bouquet" as well as his final published novel *The Colonel's Dream* (1905). In "The March of Progress," a committee of African American citizens must decide to whom they should award a new teaching contract, Henrietta Noble, a northern white schoolmarm who has been a loyal friend since the days of the Freedman's Bureau, or one of her former pupils, a promising black educator named Andrew J. Gillespie. The subject of interracial mentorship between students and teachers, and the tenuous nature of these relationships within southern communities, is also explored in "The Bouquet," the story of Mary Myrover, whose death is grieved by a young black student named Sophy. In a departure from the stock literary depiction of pious northerners who have moved to the South after the Civil War to educate black communities, a stereotype that Chesnutt would engage in Henrietta Noble of "The March of Progress" and in Martha Chandler of "Cicely's Dream," Mary Myrover is a member of the white southern elite whose decision to teach the former slaves is anomalous to her social class. Henry French of *The Colonel's Dream* is also a former southerner

who becomes ostracized because of his support for educational improvement in his hometown, efforts that are met by violence and his subsequent disillusionment.¹⁴

Mandy Oxendine, Chesnutt's first novel devoted to issues of education and passing, opens with the description of Tom Lowrey arriving in a North Carolina train depot sometime during the summer months of the early 1880s. Two years prior to the action of the novella, he left Mandy, his hometown girlfriend, in order to pursue his "burning desire" for "a broader culture" and a "higher life" (28). Rather than crossing the color-line, as Mandy will do in his absence, Tom passes through the "gates of a new world" in a small, southern college "where Northern philanthropy had provided opportunity for the higher education of colored youth" (29). Upon his return home, Tom learns that Mandy has moved seventy-five miles away to the town of Rosinville, where she and her mother are now passing as white. In an effort to rekindle their romance, he accepts a teaching position at the Sandy Run Colored School in Rosinville, but he does not know that his former girlfriend is now being courted by Bob Utley, a white aristocrat with an unwholesome reputation. As Tom walks across the train platform in the opening scene, the third-person narrative voice depicts him with ambiguous racial signifiers as "a tall young man, somewhat fair of complexion, with grey eyes and light slightly curly hair" (3). Pausing to read the sign warning that only white people are allowed in the depot waiting room, Tom is described as flushing "angrily," the first indication that there is a submerged dimension of his racial identity that was not revealed in the introductory remarks regarding his physical appearance (3).

The dramatic tension surrounding his entrance is relieved when an "elderly negro" named Jefferson Pate breaks the stilted rhythm of the formal narration and declares with stupefaction in the vernacular-mode: "Why, laws-a-massy! . . . I never would a drempt' you wuz de teacher. I

was lookin' fer a dark man, er a yaller man f'um de secon'-class kyar. I wuz'n' lookin' fer no white gen'leman f'um de fus'-class kyar. Nobody wouldn't never b'lieve you wuz colored, ef sombody didn' tell 'em" (4).¹⁵ Upon hearing Deacon Pate's remarks, Tom experiences the "mingled feeling of pleasure and annoyance," a sensation that resurfaces throughout the novel when he contemplates the instability of his position on the color-line (4). The narrator's explanation as to why Tom avoids the company of white people offers further insight into the psychological barriers that his racial identity imposes, despite the confidence and opportunities that a formal education has provided him:

He knew he was as white as they, he believed he was the superior of many of them, in intellect, in culture, in energy; and he tried to look down, with a fine philosophic scorn, upon the unworthy prejudice that condemned him to hopeless social inferiority. But, after all, human nature was stronger than philosophy, and he never went where white people were without feeling as though he were being robbed of his birthright (46).

Believing that "he had a right to the same God-given opportunities as any other man," Tom does not regard passing as an act that would be "wronging anyone else," but, unlike Mandy, he finds "something repugnant" about suppressing his ancestry (46).

In a letter written to George Washington Cable in 1890, Chesnutt expressed his resentment towards literary depictions of "cultivated white Negroes" who were filled with self-loathing and, as he saw it, always "bemoaning their fate" and "cursing the drop of black blood" that made them social outcasts.¹⁶ Countering this stock characterization in *Mandy Oxendine*, Tom feels no "shame or humiliation" in his "drop of dark blood" and views himself as worthy of advancement as well as respect (46). Rather than lamenting the limitations that his bloodlines

impose, he attempts to harness the promise of the American Dream, a pursuit that universalizes his desires outside the realm of race. As the narrator unambiguously puts it: "He believed in himself, he hoped to make a man of himself, he even dreamed of fame, this low-caste boy, in the back-woods of one of the most backwards States of the Union; and he did not wish ever to be ashamed of or to blush for his origin" (46). Tom's youthful optimism leads him to reason that "if he climbed up in life to any considerable altitude, the fact that he started low would not detract from the merit of his success" (46). Ultimately, however, with what it revealed to be tragic naivety he believes that if his intellectual efforts lead him to accomplish any "great or worthy deed," he will be able to transcend what he likens to the "mud-puddles" of caste (46). Tom's near-death experience at the hands of a Rosinville lynch-mob is a grim reminder that his own moral enlightenment, however advanced, cannot protect him from the ignorance and prejudice of those who surround him.¹⁷

Though Chesnutt's portrayal of Tom in *Mandy Oxendine* as a philosophically-minded, ambitious black man was atypical in the mainstream currents of the literary period, it is unlikely that his character was the reason that northern literary editors assessed the novella as a less than a "safe venture."¹⁸ In fact, in a matter of months after Chesnutt received his rejection letter, the *Atlantic Monthly* published an essay by W. E. B. Du Bois that would boldly explore the dilemma of racial liminality that Tom in many ways personifies. In "Strivings of the Negro People," which would later become "Of Our Spiritual Strivings," the first chapter in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois introduced his theory of double-consciousness as the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity." Similar to Tom, who attempts to reconcile an identity that Chesnutt describes as "white in fact and black in theory," Du Bois explores the

"two-ness" of being "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings." Particularly relevant to the lack of shame with which Tom views his "black drop" is

Du Bois's reasoning that one experiencing double-consciousness

does not wish to bleach his Negro blood in a flood of white Americanism, for he believes -- foolishly, perhaps, but fervently -- that Negro blood has yet a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without losing the opportunity of self-development.¹⁹

Significantly, however, Chesnutt develops his character with psychologically realistic dimensions of doubt and philosophical questioning, traits that make it difficult to label him as an exemplar of any ideological theory, whether it be double-consciousness, racial uplift, or an anti-assimilationist attitude towards passing (46). For example, despite the fact that Tom finds "something repugnant" about the idea of racial concealment, he is not necessarily Mandy's ideological foil with regard to this issue, for at one point in the novella he promises her that "for you I'd be white or black---or blue or green, if it would please you, sweetheart" (46, 24). In other words, though Tom does not regard passing into white culture as a desirable or necessary step towards personal fulfillment or success, it is something that he will consider if it will allow him to win back Mandy. His overriding commitment, throughout the narrative, is to his former lover and their mutual advancement rather than a devotion to black culture at large.

Though the depiction of Tom Lowrey as a self-confident intellectual was an uncommon literary portrait, it is Mandy who functions as the most iconoclastic character in the text, and her spirited disregard for social castes and conventions likely influenced the difficulties that Chesnutt faced as he attempted to secure a publication contract for the manuscript. Upon the protagonists'

first meeting in Rosinville, Tom tries to explain to his former fiancée that it was for "her sake" that he attended college, a place that would enable him to "be somebody, and give you a chance" (22). Unmoved by his reasoning for abandoning her, Mandy tells Tom that "you lef' me 'mong's' niggers, an' I wouldn' be a nigger, fer God made me white . . . an' I 'termined ter be what God made me, an' I *am* white. Nobody here knows anything different, an' nobody will, unless you come here with your frien'ship and tell it" (23). She pleads with her jilted lover to accept the fact that she is engaged to Bob Utley, whom she describes, with no sentimental embellishment, as the key to her social advancement: "He is a gentleman; he is white, he is rich, he rides on horseback, he lives in a big house" (24). Despite the fact that he is engaged to a woman of his caste, Mandy is blinded by the opportunity that he represents as "that great, rich, powerful white world of which she dreamed" (40). She is overtly opportunistic in her assessment, and her decision as to which man she should choose, her hometown boyfriend or her white suitor, is not marked by melodrama or uncertainty.

Articulating the central theme, the narrative voice relays the clarity with which Mandy could see that "to be white meant opportunity, and to him who had it not, opportunity means everything" (28). The narrator's formal assessment of racial "opportunity" is ironically juxtaposed with the heroine's articulation of the same sentiment, expressed in her own words as she claims that "a person has got to be white or black in this worl', an I ain't goin' to be black. . . . I'd ruther die than to be a nigger again . . . to be hated by black folks because I'm too white, and despised by white folks because I'm not white enough" (23). Mandy's raw vernacular style, as well as her unapologetic desire to marry into white society, was an obvious departure from the genteel, racially-ambiguous heroines in the tradition of the uplift novel epitomized by the protagonist of Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*.²⁰

Noting the originality with which Chesnutt portrays Mandy, William L. Andrews has claimed that "in an age which stereotyped black women primarily as robust mammies or retiring octoroons, Mandy's resolute self-assertiveness, her manipulativeness, and her unwillingness to be deterred by the niceties of abstract morality and social convention remove her from the popular tradition of race fiction."²¹ In a similar appraisal of the risks that Chesnutt was taking in his depiction of Mandy, Charles Hackenberry has pointed out that "in its day, only a decade after the violence accompanying the collapse of Reconstruction, *Mandy Oxendine* would have been considered shocking. Chesnutt's endorsement of such a route to opportunity would have offended almost all of the white reading public."²² Ultimately, however, Mandy's single-minded ambition to be white, which is described as her "revolt against iron custom," is thwarted when she refuses to give Bob Utley "the last, best proof" of her love (23, 73). In a daring portrait of interracial desire and sexual violence, Bob attempts to rape her when she refuses his advances. Seeing through his "web of lies" and his promise of marriage, she orders him to "let me go . . . or I'll scream. I hate you and despise you" (73). Though she is intent on taking extreme risks by "declaring her independence" from her black identity, Mandy is unwilling to forsake her "maidenhood" to enter the world of white privilege, a moral condition that further separates her from the patriarchal degeneracy of southern masculinity that Utley epitomizes throughout the novella (23, 25).

The latter half of the novella, which revolves around a series of sensational revelations regarding the murder of Bob Utley, marks a stylistic shift "from a story of character and theme to a story of plot," as Hackenberry has aptly described it, and it is this bifurcation that ultimately diminishes the racial themes and psychological realism of the initial chapters.²³ Mandy's radical portrayal as a sentimental antitype is abandoned midway through the text. Not only does her

hard-scrabble black vernacular transform into more genteel patterns of speech, but her passages of dialogue are dramatically reduced. No longer afforded much direct-agency, most of her thoughts are filtered through a third-person narrative voice, as evidenced by the melodramatic embellishment with which her change of heart regarding Tom is described. It was not until the murder of Bob Utley, the narrator claims, that Mandy

realized how deeply, how passionately, how completely she loved Lowrey. There seemed to come back to her, in a great surge of feeling, the passion of two years before, when her heart first woke to love, when Tom was all the world to her, and father and mother, home and friends, duty, virtue—everything—would have seemed but dim phantoms, to be swept away as with a breath, if they had stood between her and her love (85).

Assuming that it was Tom who was the dark figure who burst through the woods and murdered Utley on the night that he attempted to rape her, Mandy confesses to the crime so that her former lover will not be punished. Though she is willing to "pay the forfeit" for a crime that she believes Tom committed, her sacrificial act is foiled when Tom overhears a conversation between a group of white men who, with sexual euphemism, anticipate the "good treatment" that Mandy will receive from the local jailer (94). Fearing her exploitation while incarcerated, Tom confesses to a murder that he did not commit so that he can take her place in jail.

As they both make drastic sacrifices for one another, neither Mandy nor Tom are aware that a white preacher named Elder Gadson was the "dark form" who "burst from the woods" and murdered Utley (73). Gadson, who is infatuated with Mandy, stalks her throughout the novella, and his presence causes her to feel "dislike and repulsion" whenever they meet (53). Though Utley, Gadson, and the jailer believe Mandy to be a poor white woman, the narrator presents the

truth of her bloodlines early in the novella, and this submerged dimension of her racial identity would have made the sexually-charged advances of three white men contentious representations, perhaps contributing to the hesitations and concerns of Chesnutt's northern editors. Matthew Wilson, noting the genre-breaking depiction of white men desiring a sexual relationship with a black woman in *Mandy Oxendine*, has suggested that the "nexus of white desire focused on Mandy is quite remarkable and daring on Chesnutt's part, particularly because Mandy is a mixed-race woman who a potential audience would have seen as always already sexually desirable in contrast to the asexual white innocent to whom Utley was betrothed."²⁴

One of the most psychologically resonant aspects of *Mandy Oxendine* is the character of Rose Amelia Sunday, a young black girl in Tom's schoolhouse who becomes obsessed with her light-skinned teacher and increasingly resentful of his affection for Mandy, whom she regards as "the hated white woman" (105). With an "ugly little face," a pitiful sense of self-loathing, and a propensity for mischief, Rose Amelia is reminiscent of Topsy before her religious transformation in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (14). In what he has described as a relationship of "reverse symmetry," Dean McWilliams suggests that

Rose Amelia Sunday, Tom's love-struck pupil, is, in most respects, the direct opposite of Bob Utley. Utley, white, male, adult, and an aristocrat, stands at the top of the local social hierarchy; Rose Amelia, a black daughter of a sharecropper, is at its bottom. To accentuate the reverse symmetry, Utley is classically handsome, while Rose Amelia's body is cruelly malformed. But the young black girl's passion for Tom more than matches Bob's attraction to Mandy.²⁵

Though Rose Amelia, as McWilliams describes her, is clearly antithetical to the privileges of white patriarchy that Utley personifies, her most evocative function is her allegorical role as

Mandy's "little black shadow" (70). The child, who is "little and dark and ugly," is the stalking embodiment of blackness and self-loathing within Mandy, who society perceives to be "full-grown and white and beautiful" (70). When Mandy announces to Tom that she would "rather die than to be a nigger again," he shames her for speaking "as though God didn't make black people" (23). To his condemnation, she responds that "He made 'em; an' he made 'em black, an' ugly an' pore" (23). Similarly, Rose Amelia is described as resenting "colored folks," whom, according to the narrator, "she had always despised because they were poor and black!" (80). Rose Amelia's soul, writes Chesnutt, "was that of an aristocrat, which by some wanton freak of fate had been locked up in a chrysalis from which it could never emerge; she had been heard to say that she was born white, but had been changed in her cradle" (80). Functioning metaphorically as a reflection of Mandy's suppressed identity, Rose Amelia dies in a fit of madness in a desolate swamp, her life and death an embodiment of the psychological damage that so many of Chesnutt's characters on the color-line experience.

Interpreting the death of Rose Amelia as the "most shocking feature of *Mandy Oxendine*," Ryan Simmons has suggested that although Chesnutt was attempting to avoid the "tragic mulatto" stereotype, he was still writing in a tradition that demanded that "*someone* pay for Mandy's indiscretion," and it is Rose Amelia who "very literally dies for Mandy's sins."²⁶ If the child functions metaphorically as a scapegoat for Mandy's ambitions, as Simmons maintains, it is inaccurate to suggest that the overall theme of the text is one that denounces the "sin" of crossing the color line for pragmatic advancement. Rather, it is the emotional resentment of blackness, epitomized by Rose Amelia's "chrysalis" of self-hatred, that is most obviously disparaged throughout *Mandy Oxendine* (80). In the ambiguous closing, it is not revealed if

Mandy and Tom choose to pass as white in the future. The novella concludes with the statement that

whether they went to the North, where there was larger opportunity and a more liberal environment, and remaining true to their own people, in spite of some scorn and some isolation, found a measureable degree of contentment and happiness; or whether they chose to sink their past in the gulf of oblivion, and sought in the great white world such a place as their talents and their virtues merited, it is not for this chronicle to relate (112).

Without judgment or moralizing, the narrator closes with the assertion that whatever path the couple embarks upon that "they deserved to be happy" (112). Overlooking this equanimity, Donald Gibson has maintained that Chesnutt makes "an emphatic stance against passing" in *Mandy Oxendine* by presenting "examples of people who could easily pass if they chose to but whose experiences and consciences countermand any such temptation."²⁷ Rather than offering any such didactic certainty, however, the irresolution underscores the psychological complexity and difficult choices that accompany life on the color-line, issues that will resurface in the lives of Chesnutt's mixed-race protagonists for the next thirty years.

In October of 1900, three years after *Mandy Oxendine* was rejected by Houghton Mifflin, Chesnutt found critical success with *The House Behind the Cedars*, his first published work of long fiction to deal with what he called the "the miscegenation problem."²⁸ Initially conceived as a long story entitled "Rena" in the late 1880s, the manuscript underwent numerous revisions and rejections before it was published as a novel.²⁹ The personal anguish brought on by the composition process is evidenced in a letter that Chesnutt wrote to George Washington Cable in 1890, shortly after he submitted a draft of "Rena Walden" to Richard Watson Gilder, the editor

of *Century Magazine*. Chesnutt compared Gilder's criticism that the "sentiment" of the racial plot was "amorphous" to a comment he recently overheard:

I say this gentleman remarked to me in substance that he considered a mulatto an insult to nature, a kind of monster that he looked upon with infinite distaste; that a black Negro he looked upon with respect, but any laws which tended in any way to bring the two races nearer together, were pernicious and in the highest degree reprehensible. I fear there is too much of the same sentiment for mulattoes to make good magazine characters, and I notice that all of the many Negroes (excepting your own) whose virtues have been given to the world in the magazine press recently, have been blacks, full-blooded, and their chief virtues have been their dog-like fidelity to their old master, for whom they have been willing to sacrifice almost life itself.³⁰

Chesnutt also expressed anger towards Gilder's suggestion that he was lacking in "humor" as a writer, a comment that led him to remark that "my position, my surroundings, are not such as to make me take a humorous view of life. They tend the other way." Resolving to make his work more appealing to the mainstream public Chesnutt concluded that

Mr. Gilder finds that I either lack humor or that my characters have a "brutality, a lack of mellowness, lack of spontaneous imaginative life, lack of outlook that makes them uninteresting." I fear, alas, that those are exactly the things that do characterize them, and just about the things that might have been expected to characterize people of that kind, the only qualities which the government and society had for 300 years labored faithfully, zealously, and successfully to produce, the only qualities which would have rendered their life at all endurable

in the 19th century. I suppose I shall have to drop the attempt at realism and try to make them like other folks.³¹

Nearly a decade after his embittered letter to Cable, Chesnutt wrote to Walter Hines Page regarding the ongoing project, now a novel entitled *Rena*, and his emotional attachment to the work is still evident in his lamentation that "your house has turned down my novel *Rena* in great shape. They have condemned the plot, its development, find the distinctions on which it is based unimportant, and have predicted for it nothing but failure. I have not slept with that story for ten years without falling in love with it, and believing in it."³² Despite Chesnutt's belief in the quality of his work, he would change the plot significantly before it was finally published in 1901 as *The House Behind the Cedars*.

To an obvious extent Chesnutt, as he predicted he would, did indeed "drop the attempt at realism" in what would become the melodramatic tragedy of *Rena* and John Walden, two interracial siblings who pass with different degrees of success into the world of white gentility in Clarence, South Carolina shortly after the Civil War. The illegitimate children of a quadroon called Molly, the Walden siblings are reared in relative seclusion in a small home tucked behind a cedar hedge in Patesville, North Carolina, a fictional southern town where the past is irrevocably linked to the present time. *Rena* and John, who hold only one-eighths of a percentage of African blood, function as genetic prototypes for the three-generation process of racial admixture proposed as a remedy to social discord in "The Future American." In his essay, Chesnutt describes the reproductive methodology that would result in the elimination of blackness if

taking the population as one-eighth Negro, this eighth, married to an equal number of whites, would give in the next generation a population of which one-

fourth would be mulattoes. Mating these in turn with white persons, the next generation would be composed one-half of quadroons, or persons one-fourth Negro. In the third generation, applying the same rule, the entire population would be composed of octoroons, or persons only one-eighth Negro, who would probably call themselves white, if by this time there remained any particular advantage in being so considered, and there would be no perceptible trace of blacks left.³³

John Walden, whose white wife bears him a son before she dies, is the dramatic epitome of Chesnutt's vision of racial amalgamation. In *The House Behind the Cedars*, however, maintaining a new identity proves to be far more complicated for the Walden siblings than merely calling "themselves white," as Chesnutt described the process of racial transformation in "The Future America."

Mandy Oxendine's spirit of unwavering commitment towards personal advancement reappears throughout *The House Behind the Cedars*, though it is reincarnated in John Walden, the unemotional opportunist, rather than his sister, Rena, who remains bound to the realm of sentiment and family throughout the novel. Whereas Mandy's position as a folk revolutionary is diminished by the melodramatic plot twists that accompany her unconvincing transformation into an eloquent and emotional heroine, John remains a static character who consistently resists "the common level of impulse and affection" in his decision to break ties with his ancestral family in order to pass as white (21). As William Andrews has pointed out, Chesnutt's protagonist is "perhaps the first character in American fiction who, having been raised 'black,' decides on his own to pass for white and constructs a legal and moral justification for doing so" (164). Furthermore, unlike Rena, who is tormented with the guilt of abandoning her mother,

John enters “the white world unburdened by the ponderous psychological baggage which virtually all the mixed-blood figures in late nineteenth-century American fiction consume their energies wrestling with” (164). Although John's philosophical rejection of blackness dramatizes the argument for assimilation also put forth in “The Future American,” the complexities of the color-line would be illustrated quite differently by Chesnutt two decades later in his portrayal of Paul Marchand in *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* and Donald Glover in *The Quarry*, two protagonists who, in stark contrast to John Walden, decide to live as black men although they are genetically white.

In her study of historical memory, or what she has described as “cultural amnesia” in *The Conjure Tales* and *The Wife of His Youth*, Zoe Trodd has maintained that in “Chesnutt's post-war America, the past walks hand in hand with the present, the dead with the living.”³⁴ The image of a southern community paralyzed in time by its own prejudices is a motif that recurs throughout much of Chesnutt's fiction, and in *The House Behind the Cedars*, Patesville's historical inertia is embodied by a “tall tower” that stands in the middle of town with a “four-faced clock” that “rose as majestically and uncompromisingly as though the land had never been subjugated” (4). What Daniel Worden has aptly referred to as the “timeless quality” of Patesville is heightened by the physical seclusion of the Walden home and the cultural isolation of those who reside behind its cedar-lined garden.³⁵ The small cottage and the grounds that surround it are described in antipodal images of the natural world that evoke both summer and winter, seasons through which Chesnutt develops metaphorical associations of prelapsarian grace and fallen virtue:

The garden walks were bordered by long rows of jonquils, pinks, and carnations, inclosing clumps of fragrant shrubs, lilies, and roses already in bloom. Toward the middle of the garden stood two fine magnolia-trees, with heavy, dark green,

glistening leaves, while nearer the house two mighty elms shaded a wide piazza, at one end of which a honeysuckle vine, and at the other a Virginia creeper, running over a wooden lattice, furnished additional shade and seclusion. On dark or wintry days, the aspect of this garden must have been extremely sombre and depressing, and it might well have seemed a fit place to hide some guilty or disgraceful secret. But on the bright morning . . . it seemed, with its green frame and canopy and its bright carpet of flowers, an ideal retreat from the fierce sunshine and the sultry heat of the approaching summer (9).

The garden's fecundity, as well as its inscrutable aspect of secrecy, in many ways personify the private world of Molly Walden who lives "a secluded life of an obscure woman of a class which had no recognized place in the social economy" (110). Molly's precarious position on the color-line is attributed to her free-status before the war, as well as her unusually light skin-tone, which is the result of having one black grandparent. Regarding the one-fourth of her bloodlines that reveals her African ancestry, the narrator explains that "in Louisiana or the West Indies she would have been called a quadroon. . . . In North Carolina, where fine distinctions were not the rule in matters of color, she was sufficiently differentiated when described as a bright mulatto" (108). Molly's "false relation to society," as the third-person narrator calls it, is not only the consequence of her nearly-white skin but also the result of her romantic relationship with a local white man who purchased the home for her and their two children, John and Rena, before he died.

Structurally, the organization of plot in *The House Behind the Cedars* bears a close resemblance to the opening framework of *Mandy Oxendine*. For instance, in the same manner that Tom Lowrey's racial identity is obscured upon his arrival in the Rosinville train station, the

omniscient narration of *The House Behind the Cedars* works slowly towards the revelation that the “tall” and “dark” lawyer who checks into the Patesville Hotel as “John Warwick” is in fact John Walden, the native son of a reclusive black woman and her white lover. Unlike Tom Lowrey, who finds “something repugnant” about suppressing his ancestry, John Walden feels wholly entitled to reaping the benefits from “the blood of his white fathers” and has been sinking his “past into oblivion” in Clarence, South Carolina, where he has been living as a white man for a decade (*Mandy Oxendine* 46, *The House Behind the Cedars* 113, 118). In a number of his works of short fiction, such as “Appreciation,” “Aunt Mimy’s Son,” “The Wife of His Youth,” “The Passing of Grandison,” and “Uncle Wellington’s Wives,” Chesnutt presents the journey of southern protagonists who follow the historically conventional migration pattern towards the promise of opportunity in the northern states.³⁶ John’s seemingly counterintuitive decision to travel deeper into the Confederacy, however, is influenced by the unusually lenient system of racial classifications established by the South Carolina state legislature before the Civil War, laws that affirmed that “juries would probably be justified in holding a person to be white in whom the admixture of African blood did not exceed one eighth” (118). John, born to a “quadroon” woman and her white lover, is thus descended from one full-blooded African great-grandparent, giving him the “somewhat unusual privilege” of “choosing between two races” should he move to South Carolina where he would be considered white by law and reputation (108, 119).

In his essay “What is a White Man?,” which was published a decade prior to *The House Behind the Cedars*, Chesnutt expands upon the anachronistic policies of racial classification that inform John’s decision to move to South Carolina. He suggests that the state’s uncharacteristically liberal race codes were rooted in an overwhelming sense of white anxiety

towards racial purity as well as slave insurrection. With understated sarcasm regarding the legislature's decision to allow for a one-eighth fraction of black blood in a white man, he questions

why there should exist in that state a condition of public opinion which would accept such a law. Perhaps it may be attributed to the fact that the colored population of South Carolina always outnumbered the white population, and the eagerness of the latter to recruit their ranks was sufficient to overcome in some measure their prejudice against the Negro blood. It is certainly true that the color-line is, in practice as in law, more loosely drawn in South Carolina than in any other Southern State, and that no inconsiderable element of the population of that state consists of these legal white persons, who were either born in the state, or, attracted thither by this feature of the laws, have come in from surrounding states, and, forsaking home and kindred, have taken their social position as white people. A reasonable degree of reticence in regard to one's antecedents is, however, usual in such cases.³⁷

Not only does Chesnutt suggest that the fear of black insurrection in South Carolina has convinced the white minority to "recruit" more members of their race, he also implies that a great number of South Carolinians have taken the same journey as John Walden and concealed their antecedents.

In *The House Behind the Cedars*, the liberal-minded Judge Straight echoes Chesnutt's reasoning in "What is a White Man?" when he concludes that "there was dark blood among the white people—not a great deal, and that very much diluted, and, so long as it was sedulously concealed or vigorously denied, or lost in the mists of tradition, or ascribed to a foreign or an

aboriginal strain, having no perceptible effect upon the racial type" (82). Ironically, in the first passage of dialogue spoken in the vernacular in *The House Behind the Cedars*, the desk-clerk at the Patesville Hotel looks at John Walden's "very clean-cut, high-bred features" and assumes that he is "one of the South Ca'lina bigbugs" who has made a fortune "probably in cotton, or turpentine" (4). Much like Tom's bristling reaction at the "white only" sign in the Rosinville train station, John's lingering attention upon the degrees of racial progress in Patesville, as well as a flood of memories relating to the town's antebellum past, are the first clues that there is a submerged dimension to his identity. As he wanders the streets of his youth, he notices that since the war a "colored policeman" has taken the place of the old constable whose job used to entail ringing the "curfew bell" that "clamorously warned all negroes, slave or free, that it was unlawful for them to be abroad after that hour [nine o'clock], under penalty of imprisonment or whipping" (5). Passing the steps to the town hall, he also recalls that "on this stairway he had once seen a manacled negro shot while being taken upstairs for examination under a criminal charge" (5). When John stops in brief conversation with a black undertaker, his sister's downfall is ominously foreshadowed when the man evokes Scripture in his declaration that "man dat is bawn er 'oman hath but a sho't time ter lib, an' is full er' mis'ry. He cometh up an' is cut down lack as a flower" (6). Shortly after this exchange on the streets of Patesville, the image of the flower, and its associates with death, are extended in the narrator's initial description of Rena, who is described as having blossomed in unrecognizable beauty since her brother's absence.

Rena's physical beauty, as well as the ease with which she will be accepted into John's world of white gentility, legitimizes his feelings of class entitlement and offers him the sentimental comforts of family that he has denied himself for the past decade. When he first sees Rena in Patesville he is immediately drawn to her physical appearance, though he does not

recognize the young woman, whom he presumes is white, to be his sister. Describing their reunion, the narrator claims that his

first glance had revealed the fact that the young woman was strikingly handsome, with a stately beauty seldom encountered. As he walked along behind her at a measured distance, he could not help noting the details that made up this pleasing impression, for his mind was singularly alive to beauty, in whatever embodiment. The girl's figure, he perceived, was admirably proportioned; she was evidently at the period when the angles of childhood were rounding into the promising curves of adolescence. Her abundant hair, of a dark and glossy brown, was neatly plaited and coiled above an ivory column that rose straight from a pair of gently sloping shoulders, clearly outlined beneath the light muslin frock that covered them (7).

John's acknowledgement that "something more than mere grace or beauty had attracted him with an increasing force toward this young woman," as well as his understanding that "there were degrees in brotherly love, and that if she had been homely or stupid, he would never have disturbed her in the stagnant life of the house behind the cedars" have been interpreted as having undertones of an incestuous nature (9, 46). Judith Jackson Fossett, for instance, has noted that Rena "is described through the double gaze of John: as Warwick, likely suitor; and as Walden, loving black brother," an observation that serves as the basis for her conclusion that the siblings' relationship "symbolizes the uneasy dual threat posed by racial passing: miscegenation and incest."³⁸ Rather than being rooted in the sort of sexual attraction that Jackson Fossett has suggested, John's desire to bring his sister into his white life is resoundingly self-serving.

For example, when contemplating Rena serving as a nurse for his son, John imagines her "lending grace and charm to his own household" (47). She not only adds the novelty of aesthetic

pretension to the life that he has constructed in South Carolina, but she also legitimizes what he sees as the inherent quality of their shared bloodlines. Appreciating the ease with which she has transitioned into his white life, John feels that "her graceful movements, the quiet elegance with which she wore even the simplest gown, the easy authoritativeness with which she directed the servants, were proofs of superior quality, and he felt correspondingly proud of her" (47).

Furthermore, Rena's impending marriage to George Tyron, the white aristocrat to whom she is briefly engaged, would have resulted in a union that would have also elevated her brother's own social-standing. Ultimately, the narrator relates John's blithe disregard for the bonds of immediate family to a fundamental distortion of human sympathy that is as unnatural as the restrictive race laws that have prompted the Walden siblings to journey across the color-line.

In a characteristically self-interested justification for seeking his sister's company, John recognizes that "another motive, a purely psychological one, had more or less consciously influenced him" (47). The narrator reveals that John, despite his impassive exterior, "felt now and then a certain sense of loneliness; and there was a measure of relief in having about him one who knew his past, and yet whose knowledge, because of their common interest, would not interfere with his present or jeopardize his future" (47). Viewing himself as "a naturalized foreigner in the world of wide opportunity" he sees his sister as "one of his old compatriots," and he is eager to initiate her "into the populous loneliness of his adopted country" (47). Having no fear that the truth of his past would ever be uncovered, John temporarily descends into "the common level of impulse and affection" and reunites with the family members he abandoned for a better life a decade prior (47, 21). However, when Rena's bloodlines are revealed and his own reputation is compromised, he quickly concludes that "sentimental weakness" has jeopardized

his “scheme for a new life” and he separates from Rena and Molly once more (21, 126). Neither mother nor sister will fit into his vision of the future as a white man.

Ironically, despite the implications of incest that have been read into John and Rena’s relationship, it is the white characters who cross bloodlines through familial intermarriage, a social custom that Chesnutt suggests to be far more worrisome than racial amalgamation. Similar to Bob Utley’s engagement to his cousin Florence Brewington in *Mandy Oxendine*, the southern aristocrat George Tyron in *The House Behind the Cedars* is betrothed to a “distantly related” family member named Blanche Leary (132). George is also encouraged to court one of the daughters of Dr. Edward Green, who is his mother’s cousin. The diminishing strength of the Anglo-Saxon racial ideal is the implied result of this type of familial intermarriage, a conclusion that is echoed in the musings of Judge Straight who, ironically, has recently read a pro-slavery pamphlet alleging “the physical and moral degeneration of mulattoes” (114). Gazing out of his office window, the judge compares a youthful John Walden to a white playmate who is the “son of a leading merchant of the town.” Whereas John is “straight, shapely, and well-grown,” his companion is described as “sallow” with “amorphous features, thin shanks, and stooping shoulders” (116). Although the white child’s parents are “both of old families which had lived in the community for several generations and whose blood was presumably of the purest strain,” it is John whose features are of “the high-bred, clean-cut order that marks the patrician type the world over” (116).³⁹

Midway through *The House Behind the Cedars*, the chronological progression of the plotline is suspended in the chapter entitled “Under the Old Regime,” which offers a retrospective account of life in the Walden household before the war. Perhaps most significantly, the narrator provides background information on the character of Molly Walden

and suggests how her racial views have influenced her children. Similar to the northern members of the Blue Vein society whose racial elitism is satirically epitomized by the light-skinned Clayton family in Chesnutt's short story "A Matter of Principle," Molly Walden is an intraracial snob who views the darker members of her cultural community with contempt. The condescension with which she treats Frank Fowler, Rena's dark-skinned admirer, is subtly mocked by the narrator, though her choice to engage in an unrecognized relationship with a white man is not criticized. Rather, the narrator justifies the legitimacy of her secret romance with the equivocation that "what life gave her she returned an equivalent; and what she did not pay, her children settled to the last farthing" (110). Significantly, however, although the concubinage that Molly entered when she was "scarcely more than a child in years" is rendered in terms of moral relativism and a tone of sympathetic objectivity, her illusory worship of white culture at large is portrayed as misguided and ultimately disastrous (109).

Since her lover's death, Molly's measure of self-worth has been bound to the past, and her idealization of the world beyond the cedar grove is transferred unto her children in detrimental ways that culminate in Rena's psychological destruction, a state that Chesnutt captures in his figurative description of the "brain fever" that ultimately kills her (191). Rena's "early training," the narrator reveals, "had not directed her thoughts to the darker people with those fate her own was bound up so closely, but rather away from them" (134). Absorbing the values of her mother, she is taught to "despise" those who "were not so white as she was, and had been slaves while she was free" (134). Ironically, it is John and Molly who are most similar in their romanticized view of white culture and their antipathy towards their black bloodlines. Whereas Rena eventually experiences a moral epiphany that allows her to evolve past her racial insecurities and resentments, John's hunger for success is unambiguously linked to burying "the

blight of his inheritance” (21). Although her darker skin limits her ability to pass, Molly, like her son, longs for what she regards as the world of white privilege, as the narrator reveals in his assessment of her private ambitions: “She was not white, alas! she [sic] was shut out from this seeming paradise; but she liked to see the distant glow of the celestial city, and to recall the days when she basked in its radiance” (111). The vast cultural distance with which John views the plight of the black community is further emphasized by his management of the “women and slaves” on a southern plantation during the Civil War, an estate that he will eventually inherit through marriage as he replaces the deceased white patriarch who “lost his life upon the battlefield” fighting for the Confederacy (17). Similarly, Molly sees no great reward in associating herself with the black community when it affords her no benefits, advancements, or material opportunities. Describing her worldview, Chesnutt writes that “she did not sympathize greatly with the new era opened up for the emancipated slaves; she had no ideal love of liberty; she was no broader and no more altruistic than the white people around her, to whom she had always looked up” (111). Since her white lover’s death, Molly longs for the comforts of the antebellum past, which to her, were “the good days” (111). Ironically, John also holds a romantic view of white cultural history, a perspective that he has absorbed through the books, in the romantic literary vein of Sir Walter Scott, that have been left by his white father in his library.

The romantic influence of his early cultural education in “romances, adventures, and histories” is satirized when he declares to a friend that the postbellum South is undergoing a “renaissance of chivalry,” a claim that proves to be as fictional as the name “Warwick” that he has adopted (113, 34).⁴⁰ Ironically, upon his return to Patesville, Rena listens to her brother’s story of passing into white life with the same romantic awe that John once viewed the books in

his father's library. She sees not the brother who has abandoned his family for a better life but instead a character at the center of his own fairytale that holds "the charm of an escape from captivity" as well as the "thrill of a pirate's tale" (17). It is these notions of adventure and romance that inform Rena's own decision to cross the color-line (17). To his mother and his sister, the new John Warwick represents the gilded opportunities of white culture, and they admire him with a reverence that the narrator likens to unwise hero-worship in his observation that "no king could have received more sincere or delighted homage" (16). In the same manner that Molly regarded her former lover as vastly superior to herself, she and Rena view John by the novelty of his position in white society rather than the consistency of his devotion as a son and brother (110).

John's impulsive journey back to Patesville ultimately leads to the destruction of Rena, and though he sees himself as rescuing his sister "from life as a Negro," he instead brings her "another form of imprisonment—entrapment within white Southern ideology."⁴¹ In stark contrast to the romantic ideal with which she views her brother's journey, Rena's own passage into whiteness is described in terms that evoke a slave captivity narrative, for it is after entering the world of supposed privilege that she feels the psychological entrapment of two constructed, unreconciled identities. The metaphoric association of Rena's ostensible freedom with the emotional bondage she endures after living as a white woman is introduced in the chapter ironically entitled "Down the River," which depicts her departure from Patesville in terms evocative of the antebellum slave trade. For one year, John has arranged for his sister to attend a southern boarding school where she will learn the "mind and manners" of Victorian womanhood, lessons that he views as essential for her entrance into his life in Clarence, South Carolina, where she, as his newly transformed white sibling, will serve as a nanny to his son, Albert (40).

Despite the fact that she is received enthusiastically in Clarence, where the aristocrat George Tyron seeks to make her the “queen of his home and mistress of his life,” Rena is unable to find comfort in her new world, an inability to disassociate with the past that Chesnutt presents in psychological terms. He reveals that “her months in school had not eradicated a certain self-consciousness. . . . The brain-cells never lose the impressions of youth, and Rena’s Patesville life was not far enough removed to have lost its distinctness of outlines (50, 43). Unlike her brother, who prides himself on his ability to start anew, Rena suffers “the tortures of homesickness” and remains conflicted rather than resolute in her decision to conceal her past and marry George (63).

A striking contrast in the temperament and worldview of the Walden siblings is illustrated by their differing opinions regarding whether Rena's fiancé should know the truth of her bloodlines before they are married. Whereas John did not waver in his decision to marry the white woman with whom he has fathered a child, Rena begins “shrinking from the irrevocable step of marriage” as she becomes increasingly haunted by the “consciousness of her secret” (52). Although she, like her brother, would be considered white in South Carolina, where the one-eighth percentage of their African ancestry would place no “legal bar to their union,” she feels that happiness is not “a matter of law or of fact” but rather something that resides entirely “in the domain of sentiment” (53). Rena’s moral instincts encourage her to tell her George the truth. His reaction, she reasons, will be the best proof of his unconditional love. Unlike John, whose devotion to personal advancement consistently overrides his commitment to his biological family, she decides not to reveal her past on the grounds that disclosing the truth would unfairly expose her brother as a fraud (54). John, however, remains unmoved by Rena’s moral predicament and sees the issue that torments his sister as “a matter of argument, of self-

conviction” (56). With the same equanimity provided to Molly Walden despite her life-choices, the narrator concludes that “it was not the first time, not the last, that right and wrong had been a matter of view-point” (58). Thus, a didactic resolution is not imposed upon the siblings’ debate regarding the ethical responsibility of racial disclosure, an issue upon which they express vastly different perspectives.

Overlooking the emotional sacrifices and logistical complications of maintaining a new identity, John attempts to convince Rena that leaving the past behind them is a relatively simple act over which they hold control. “We are under no moral obligation,” he assures her, “to inflict upon others the history of our past mistakes, our wayward thoughts, our secret sins, our desperate hopes, or our heartbreaking disappointments. Still less are we bound to bring out from this secret chamber the dusty record of our ancestry” (57). Although John reluctantly agrees to speak with George on his sister’s behalf, he offers his future brother-in-law only the deceptively veiled admission that “my sister and I are not of an old family, or a rich family, or a distinguished family; that she can bring you nothing but herself. . . . You must take us for ourselves alone---we are new people” (59). Rena also broaches the subject of her racial identity euphemistically with George when she points to her nephew’s caretaker, understood to be black, and asks, “Would you love me . . . if I were Albert’s nurse yonder?” (61). George’s assurance that “true love has no degrees” proves to be a hollow promise, a romantic ideal as illusory as the “celestial city” that Molly Walden imagines beyond the color-line (61, 111).

After crossing paths on the streets of Patesville, where Rena has briefly returned to nurse her ailing mother, George is horrified to learn that his fiancée holds mixed-blood (50). With the discovery of her secret, his impression of her shifts dramatically, and the woman he once regarded as his “ideal mate” is morphed in a monstrous caricature of black womanhood, a

grotesque reflection of his race anxiety and prejudice (50). Feeling as if he has seen her "with the mask thrown off," George suspects that it has been "with monkey-like imitateness of the negro" that she has "copied the manners of the white people while she lived among them" (154).

Unable to reconcile his two visions of Rena, he is haunted by a nightmare in which

in all her fair young beauty she stood before him, and then by some hellish magic she was slowly transformed into a hideous black hag. With agonized eyes he watched her beautiful tresses become mere wisps of coarse wool, wrapped round with dingy cotton strings; he saw her eyes grow bloodshot, her ivory teeth turn to unwholesome fangs (102).

In a series of conflicting emotions, George wavers in his "hour of revulsion" towards Rena, and at one point in the text, he resolves to "make her white" by moving with her to a different state where no one will know of her past (155, 144). Rena, however, no longer accepts his advances or desires his company, for she has undergone a moral epiphany upon his initial rejection. She has explained to her brother that "he looked at me as though I were not even a human being. I do not love him any longer, John; I would not marry him if I were white, or he were as I am" (124). Her refusal to reunite with her former lover only heightens his desire, which is expressed in terms of lust rather than love after the discovery of her bloodlines. Although George has married his former girlfriend, Blanche Leary, it is a "smouldering [sic] passion" and "white heat" that drives him to see Rena (184).

Emerging from her disastrous experience "on the other side," Rena has undergone a rite-of-passage through which she abandons the white adoration and color bias that she learned from Molly Walden in the remote house behind the cedar grove (120). Not only does she refuse to participate in unrecognized concubinage with a white aristocrat as her mother did, she no longer

resents those members of the African American community who are “not so white as she was” (134). Rena’s moral transformation is accompanied by her resolution to devote her life to racial uplift and educational advancement. Chesnutt presents her metamorphoses as one that has afforded her the perspective of an insider and an outsider to the trials of the black community, a cultural double-vision that resembles the Du Boisian worldview of Tom Lowrey in *Mandy Oxendine*. Having experienced more of the world, as both black and white, Rena has developed

the mental eye of an outsider and the sympathy of a sister: she could see their faults, and judge them charitably; she knew and appreciated their good qualities. With her quickened intelligence she could perceive how great was their need and how small their opportunity; and with this illumination came the desire to contribute to their help (135).

With melodramatic tragedy, Rena's newfound empathy is given little time to develop. Shortly after her decision to teach in the Sandy Run Colored School, she descends into a state of madness that is precipitated by psychological exhaustion. Since her broken engagement, she has been pursued relentlessly by George as well as his racialized doppelganger, a mulatto superintendent of "evil passions" named Jeff Wain (188). Similar to Bob Utley in *Mandy Oxendine*, both Tyron and Wain are portrayed as manipulators with sexual intentions who pursue a racially-mixed heroine despite the fact that they are engaged or married to other women. Unlike Mandy, however, Rena is not strong enough to survive the advances of the men who surround her or to overcome the emotional instability of crossing the color line.

Through the "congealed morass" of the swamp in which Rena catches the “brain fever” that eventually kills her, the social paralysis of life on the color-line is allegorized (191). These tensions find figurative expression at the end of the novel when Rena walks alone down a

country road and finds herself standing at the "juncture of two paths." At one end of the fork stands Tyron, at the other, Wain. Uncertain of how to proceed, Rena faces a "problem" that is "too much for her overwrought brain" (188). Instead of choosing either path, she flees from the road and runs "deeper and deeper" into an adjacent forest until she realizes "with a horrible certainty that she was lost in the swamp" (189). In metaphoric terms, Rena is unable to survive the "nervous shock of her forest experience" or the "attack of brain fever" that eventually kills her (191). This thematic tragedy surrounding Rena's psychological degeneration in *The House Behind the Cedars* resembles the emotional destruction of Rose Amelia in *Mandy Oxendine*, whose "paroxysms" in the North Carolina swamplands also lead to her death. Both characters are torn between racialized visions of themselves as well as the world around them, and although Rena is able to gain a heightened sense of "double-vision," she, like Rose Amelia, endures a crisis of identity that results in a nervous breakdown and death.

The image of a southern swamp as a cultural and psychological graveyard is a recurrent trope in *Mandy Oxendine* and *The House Behind the Cedars* as well as several of Chesnutt's vernacular short stories, many of which appeared in his short-story cycle *The Conjure Woman* (1899). In "The Goophered Grapevine," which was the first piece of fiction that Chesnutt published in *The Atlantic Weekly* in 1887, a subplot to Julius McAdoo's tale of a "goophered," or bewitched, vineyard involves a hunt for a runaway slave who "tuk ter de swamp" and is hunted by a group of neighboring slave-owners (10, 13). In "Po' Sandy," a slave woman named Tenie conjures her husband, Sandy, into a pine tree that sits "down by de aidge er de swamp" so that they can remain together after he is sold (23). In a gruesome scene that evokes trauma of slavery, Tenie returns to the swamp, sees the "stump" that remains of her husband, and runs "a-hollerin' en cryin'" after the wagon that carries the tree to the sawmill (25). Forced to witness

his brutal death, Tenie is overcome with grief and found dead in the abandoned kitchen that is built with Sandy's remains and believed by all to be haunted. In "The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt," Uncle Julius claims that a local swamp is haunted by another former slave named Dan, who was permanently transformed into a wolf after killing a local conjure man's son. In "Lonesome Ben," Uncle Julius tells the plight of a "yellow" mulatto named Ben who tries to run away from his plantation. He starts eating the local clay and turns so light that neither his family nor his master recognize him when he returns. Living in the swamp, he bakes in the sun and turns to dust, an metaphorical expression of the mulatto's social isolation and psychological deterioration. The trope of the swamp, significantly, was one of the earliest settings developed in Chesnutt's fiction, as evidenced by an extant draft of his first short story that appears in his journal from the 1870s, which features a young man lost in the swamp.⁴²

In addition to the psychological burdens presented in *The House Behind the Cedars*, the central themes that deal with racial disclosure and marriage are also portrayed by Chesnutt in "Her Virginia Mammy" and "White Weeds." In "Her Virginia Mammy," which was collected in *The Wife of His Youth* (1899), Clara Hohlfelder has been reared by adoptive parents of German descent in Cincinnati, Ohio, and she believes herself to be white. She is reluctant to become engaged to her boyfriend, John Winthrop, because she cannot know for sure that she has come from a "good family," and she worries that she will "burden" her new husband with a "nameless wife" (31, 28). Her insecurities are exacerbated by the fact that Winthrop, whom Chesnutt, with little rhetorical subtlety, names after the first colonial governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, comes from a long line of illustrious American ancestors. As Clara reminds him, he is the descendent of a Mayflower pilgrim, a governor of Connecticut, a judge, and a Harvard

professor. Although he epitomizes old-guard wealth and prestige, John is a thoroughly modern man, as his declaration to his fiancé confirms:

We are all worms of the dust, and if we go back far enough, each of us has had millions of ancestors; peasants and serfs, most of them; thieves, murderers, and vagabonds, many of them, no doubt; and therefore the best of us have but little to boast of. Yet we are all made after God's own image, and formed by his hand, for his ends; and therefore not to be lightly despised, even the humblest of us, least of all by ourselves. For the past we can claim no credit, for those who made it died with it. Our destiny lies in the future (33).

Unlike George Tyron, who promises Rena Walden that "true love has no degrees" only to become repulsed by her "dark ancestral strain," Winthrop is steadfast in his devotion to his lover despite his discovery of her mixed-blood (61, 155). At the climax, he realizes that a former slave named Mrs. Harper, whom Clara believes to be her childhood mammy, is in fact her black mother. Nevertheless, John remains undeterred, his impending marriage an optimistic vision of the homogeneous, historical past merging with a future built upon the tenants of racial acceptance.

"White Weeds," on the other hand, offers a portrait of a husband who is tormented to his death by the fear that his wife carries latent black bloodlines. Set at the turn of the century in a northern university town, a former southerner named Professor Carson is engaged to marry Marian Tracy, a vivacious young woman who has the reputation of being "an exceedingly beautiful and charming lady" (392). On the eve of their wedding, the professor receives an anonymous letter claiming that Marian has been hiding her black antecedents. It is only after the two are married that he confesses to his wife that he has received the letter, which has become an

increasing source of anxiety for him. Marian subtly inquires as to what his reaction would have been if she, before the wedding, had confirmed the allegations. To her mounting disgust, he replies that their relationship “would have existed in name only” (401). Providing insight into how Carson’s racial prejudices were formed, the narrator reveals that the professor’s father had an extramarital affair with one of his slave women, a betrayal that led his wife to suffer “deeply in her pride and her affections” (402). Absorbing the racial resentments of his mother, Carson thus inherited “a deadly antipathy to the thought of any personal relation between white people and black but that of master and servant.” Owing to this ingrained prejudice, Carson tells his wife that “nothing” could make him feel that “the touch of a Negress was not pollution” (402).

Initiating a conversation based upon what she clearly views as the arbitrary degrees of racial difference, Marian inquires as to “how white” one must be “to come within the protection” of what she sardonically refers to as her husband’s “code of Southern chivalry” (402). Echoing a racist ideology built upon immutable categories of identification, Carson explains to his wife that “men and women are either white or black. Those who are not all white are all black.” To marry a woman who is “not entirely white” would be an act equivalent to “a mortal sin” in his eyes. Similar to George Tyron in *The House Behind the Cedars*, who is haunted by nightmares once he learns of Rena’s bloodlines, the professor in “White Weeds” confesses that if his wife had even a trace of black blood, he “should lie awake at night, dreading lest my children show traces of their descent from an interior and degraded race” (402). Repulsed by what she views as his lack of loyalty, Marian refuses to either affirm or deny the accusations in the letter. Tortured by the possibility of her black blood, Carson falls ill and dies within a year of their marriage. At his funeral, Marian dresses not as a widow but as a bride in her “white weeds,” attire that she views as an act of

posthumous revenge, which had satisfied her mind, while it only mystified others; indeed she cared very little, at the time, for what others might think. That having known her, and loved her, and married her, a prejudice which reflected in no wise upon her character, her intelligence or her beauty could keep them apart, was the unpardonable sin. She must be loved for what she was (403).

Ironically, in the closing scenes, a minor character named Dr. Trumbull, to whom Carson had previously confided the details of letter, learns that Marian is not only white but that “her line of descent for two hundred years is quite as clear, quite as good, as that of most old American families” (404). Much like Marian’s intentional reticence on the rumors surrounding her racial history, the narrator of “White Weeds” neither confirms nor denies the second-hand gossip surrounding her ancestral roots, a rhetorical silence that emphasizes the socially conditioned nature of racist thinking as well as the overwhelming anxiety it can produce.

More than twenty years after *The House Behind the Cedars* appeared in print, Chesnutt returned to the theme of latent bloodlines, marriage, and miscegenation in the novels *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* (1921) and *The Quarry* (1928), both of which remained unpublished in his lifetime. In the winter of 1921, Chesnutt’s manuscript for *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* was rejected by three different publishing houses in a matter of months.⁴³ Sixteen years had passed since his last novel, *The Colonel’s Dream*, was published to mediocre sales in 1905, and the literary market, which was on the cusp of witnessing the Harlem Renaissance, had evolved past the late nineteenth-century movements in Local Colorism and Regionalism, literary traditions to which *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* in large part conforms. The novel, which is set in antebellum New Orleans of the 1820s, borrows heavily in terms of character, atmosphere, and theme from George Washington Cable’s 1880 novel *The Grandissimes*.⁴⁴ Though Cable’s mixed-race characters

were psychologically complex representations for the time period in which they appeared, Chesnutt, nearly a half-century later, recast the “free man of color” from *The Grandissimes* in significant ways. In *The Grandissimes*, Honoré Grandissime, f. m. c. is so embittered by his second-class citizenship that he attempts to murder his white uncle, Agricola Fusilier, the scion of his biological family. Honoré's fatalistic and depressive nature is given full expression when he kills himself after enduring the rejection of his family as well as the unrequited love of the quadroon Palmyra de Philosophe. In *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, on the other hand, the title character, also a “free man of color” in antebellum New Orleans, displays a resolute assurance in his identity as a black man that remains unshaken even when he learns that he is genetically white and the sole heir to a fortune left to him by his biological father, the Creole aristocrat Pierre Beaurepas.

Paul Marchand, F. M. C. opens in 1821, nearly a decade after the former colony of Louisiana had been incorporated into the United States. Capturing the energy and prosperity of New Orleans during this period of great change, Chesnutt writes that “from a sleepy, slow, but picturesque provincial French town, with a Spanish veneer, the Crescent City had been swept into the current of American life, and pulsed and throbbed with the energy of the giant young nation of the West” (6). Much like his portrayal of the town of Patesville in the opening scenes of *The House Behind the Cedars*, however, Chesnutt suggests that the progressive transformation of New Orleans is superficial rather than intrinsic, for the “great heart of the community—the thoughts, the feelings, the customs, the prejudices, the religion of the people—remained substantially unchanged. The current was swifter, but the water was the same” (6). As Cable did before him in *The Grandissimes*, Chesnutt uses the antebellum setting of the newly absorbed state of Louisiana and the enduring tensions between its Creole, non-white, and American

residents to parallel the problems of racial and regional reconciliation in the wake of Federal Reconstruction in the postbellum South. Both authors also use the relative freedom of the New Orleans quadroon as an analogous evocation of the postwar plight of the members of the southern black community who were no longer slaves, yet not entirely free since their emancipation.

The title character in *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* is a distinguished member of the *gens de couleur* or "the colored people of Louisiana," a social caste that Chesnutt describes as "a separate class, inferior to the whites, but superior in the eyes of the whites, and vastly more so in their own eyes, to the Negroes, who were not only black but mostly slaves as well, while the people of color were in large part free" (163-64). Paul, who is a wealthy merchant, was an orphan adopted by an elderly quadroon woman named Angeline Dufour. Although he presumes his biological parents were likely a white man and his concubine, he has been told that his mother has died. He knows no details regarding his father's identity, though there was a substantial trust left for his education, which allowed for him to be educated in France. While studying abroad, Paul met his wife, Julie Lenoir, another wealthy member of the New Orleans *gens de couleur* whose white father also left her the entirety of his inheritance. Though they are prosperous, educated, and hold an "enviable" position "compared with that of the black slaves," they still face discrimination on a daily basis and chafe under the restrictions of their caste (165). Regarding the precarious social position of their quadroon class, Chesnutt writes that "the very privileges they enjoyed, and the refinement of feeling that grew out of them, only made them more keenly alive to the things they were denied" (165). It is with this paradoxical sense of restricted freedom that Paul Marchand lives and eventually revolts.

The historical parallels between the systematic disenfranchisement of the black communities of the Jim Crow South and the quadroons of New Orleans during its absorption into the United States are emphasized throughout the novel. The “transition period” that took place in Louisiana as it evolved from a colony to a state brought with it the elimination of the quadroon rights that were established under its tripartite racial caste system, which, anomalous to most southern race laws, gave partial liberties to its residents of mixed blood (165). The “northern American,” writes Chesnutt, brought with him to Louisiana “an exaggerated scorn of dark blood,” a growing discriminatory sentiment that was keenly felt by residents such as Paul Marchand and his family. Much like the regressive race laws that accompanied the failure of Federal Reconstruction in the era of separate but equal citizenship, the New Orleans quadroons in *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* are pushed “back deeper into the mire” with “every old right denied, every former privilege withheld” (165-66).

The revelation that Paul Marchand, the reputed free man of color, is in fact a white man is preceded by a series of offenses against him by the white members of the Beaurepas family, who are unaware that the man who they continue to insult is in fact the biological son and sole heir to their ailing uncle and presumed benefactor, Uncle Pierre. When walking down a crowded street in New Orleans, for example, Raoul Beaurepas slaps Paul across the face when the two men accidentally collide. In a frustrated diatribe that foreshadows the duel that he will demand once he is revealed to be a white man, Paul cries that

my time will come---I feel it! I am free born---I am rich---I am as white as they;
and I have been better educated. Yet they treat me like a Negro, and when I am
struck I cannot return the blow, under pain of losing my liberty or my life. Ah,
could I but face them as man to man! he cried, putting his hand to his side, upon

an imaginary sword hilt. "But I forget---nom de Dieu---a man of color cannot bear arms! But we shall see! We shall see!" (17).

In another altercation with one of the cousins at the local cotton exchange, Hector Beaurepas claims that Paul's winning bid was his own. When the free man of color attempts to rectify the situation with the auctioneer, Hector calls him a "pig of a Negro" and threatens to slit his ears to "improve" his hearing (31). Though Paul is "consumed with rage" over the continued harassment he receives from the Beaurepas cousins, he knows that he must "suffer in silence" in order to protect his family and his life (31).

The culminating offense against the free man of color occurs at a quadroon ball that his sister-in-law, Lizette, has attended in secrecy. Paul and his wife are horrified that she is participating in the ball, which, as the narrator clarifies, is little more than "a bid for protection, without the marriage ceremony, of some gentleman who could afford such a luxury" (68). If Lizette does enter concubinage with a white aristocrat, as they fear she will by attending the ball, she will no longer be able to find a white suitor in France, where the Marchand family plans to relocate in order to leave the increasingly oppressive social environs of New Orleans. Although the color-line is less strictly drawn in France, Paul acknowledges that if his sister-in-law enters an unsanctioned relationship with a white Creole, it would be a breach in chastity that even the most liberal French man could not overlook. With euphemistic language, the narrator contemplates this quandary of class and circumstance:

Marchand had planned to take her with his wife and children to France, and there, with the money her father had left her, to marry her to some gentleman to whom, with Gallic liberality, the bar sinister and the dash of African blood would not outweigh an ample dowry. If, however, there should be any added disability to

overcome, the task would be by that much the more difficult. Even the most liberal of decent Frenchmen was likely to demand the elementary virtue in a wife (68).

In order to protect the honor of his sister-in-law, Paul enters the masked ball in disguise to bring her home. He hopes to remain unnoticed, for it is considered a “serious breach of caste” for a man of color to attend one of the quadroon balls (73). When he locates Lizette and makes his way to the door, minutes before the unmasking, he is attacked by the cousins Henri and Hector Beaurepas. Taken by surprise, Paul strikes back in “blind indignation,” an offense for which he is arrested and incarcerated in the Calabozo, the city prison (77).

Ironically, it is when his antipathy towards Creole supremacy has reached a breaking point that Paul learns that he is the white heir to the Beaurepas dynasty that has continuously subjugated him to personal insults and public humiliation. Shortly after his release from prison, but before the life-changing contents of Pierre Beaurepas's will have been revealed, Paul tells Julie that “the air of New Orleans stifles me. I am a man—a free man and not a slave—and I must breathe the air of a free country. I hate these *sacré* whites!” (91). Julie, in an attempt to remind her husband that not all whites are “unkind,” uses the generosity of her white father as an example of racial equanimity. Although Paul admits that some white men “are merely the exceptions which prove the rule,” he remains unmoved by her appeals for a less embittered attitude towards his oppressors (91). Articulating his deep-rooted resentments, as well as his desire for revenge, Paul claims that

they despise us, and I hate them all, each according to his own degree of scorn.

Your father was kind in a way, yes; he gave you his name and his fortune. As for mine, I have not been permitted even to know who he was. I hate them all, and I

feel that I shall have my revenge for the slights they have put upon me; I do not know when or how, but that sometime, somehow, I shall have it (91).

Soon after his impassioned diatribe, Paul learns that he is the only biological son of Pierre Beaurepas and his deceased white wife, who gave him up at birth to avoid a possible scandal set in motion when her previous husband, presumed to be dead at war, returned to New Orleans. To the mortification of the five Beaurepas nephews, the "great bulk" of their Uncle Pierre's estate, including the "land, houses, slaves, ships, stocks, bonds, money, pictures, books and personal effects," is left to Paul, the former free man of color (93).

In order to exercise his long-standing resentments against the five Beaurepas cousins, Paul challenges them each to a duel for their previous harassment. Dismissing his demand for a swordfight as a mere formality, the cousins believe that "blood without breeding is not enough to make a gentleman" and that their new cousin "has been trained to subordination, to submission" (110). Ironically, it is Paul who embodies the motto that is engraved on the Beaurepas family crest, "*Coup pour Coup*"—"Blow for Blow," when he wounds each cousin in a series of meaningful injuries. Raoul, who slapped him across the face when they collided in the *vieux carré*, is cut on his cheek; Hector, who threatened to slit his ears at the cotton exchange, is slashed on his right ear; Henri, who attacked him at the quadroon ball, is stabbed in the thigh so that he can no longer dance. Paul's greatest act of revenge, however, is psychological rather than physical in nature. With much theatricality, he gathers the five cousins together for a formal dinner in his inherited mansion to reveal that one of them is the quadroon grandson of a slave woman of Haitian descent. In a humorous scene that evokes the overwhelming anxiety that latent bloodlines can produce, Chesnutt writes that cousins

looked at one another furtively, and studied their own reflections in the mirrors which lined the walls of the dining room. One perceived in another a certain breadth of the nostril, but in himself a certain fullness of lip---in one a certain thickness of eyelid, in himself a certain wave of the hair. They examined their fingernails furtively for the telltale black streak (182).

When Paul demands to know if they want the bloodlines of the secret quadroon revealed, Chesnutt writes that the thunderous response, "No!," was shouted from the cousins "as one voice" (183). Ironically, it is implied that Phillipe Beaufort, the only cousin who has shown kindness and honor, is in fact the cousin who carries black blood. Significantly, the revelation that it is he, the moral exemplar, who holds intermixed bloodlines counters other popular literary representations and cultural beliefs regarding the mulatto and his biologically determined traits of corruption and cowardice.

In a dramatic rejection of all of the wealth and power that he has inherited, Paul emancipates his slaves and transfers the entirety of his father's estate to Philippe. Explaining his motivation for the duel, he tells his cousins that "the honor that I fought you for the other day, was not the honor of my family; it was my own starved, my own maimed self-respect which clamored for satisfaction" (180). On many levels, Paul Beaufort, née Marchand, is drawn as the fictional antithesis of John Warwick, née Walden, in *The House Behind the Cedars*. Whereas John marries into the former slave-holding aristocracy and creates a life modeled on the tastes and values of his white father, Paul tells his cousins that "I shall not even assume the family name---I would not bear the name of a man who would treat his son as Monsieur Pierre Beaufort has treated me" (180). Furthermore, while John continuously makes decisions, including the abandonment of his family, based on his relentless sense of opportunism in the

world of white privilege, Paul refuses to abandon his wife despite the fact that their marriage is now "illegal and void" on account of Louisiana's racial statutes that forbid interracial marriages (108). Paul's decision to stay loyal to his wife, however, is not without indecision. Although he is tempted by the beauty of a young heiress named Josephiné José, whom Uncle Pierre had arranged for the Beaurepas heir to marry, he moves with his family to France where his marriage to Julie can remain intact. Unlike John Walden, who feels that retaining a relationship with his immediate family has been a "sentimental weakness" that has "weakened the structure of his own life," the narrator describes Paul Marchand as "a man of sentiment" who has "accepted and proclaimed the radical doctrine of the Right of Man as applying to all men, with no reservations" (*The House Behind the Cedars* 21, 126; *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* 108).

Along with scenes of black violence that evoke the embittered revenge plots of Josh Green in *The Marrow of Tradition* and Bud Johnson in *The Colonel's Dream*, there are multiple allusions to racial uprisings throughout *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, particularly the Haitian Revolution of 1791. Midway through the novel, the narrator reveals that the five Beaurepas cousins, Adolphe, Raoul, Henri, Hector, and Phillipe, were sent to New Orleans to be reared by their Uncle Pierre because their parents were murdered in San Domingo uprisings. Another allusion to Haitian race violence takes place shortly after Paul regains consciousness in the Calabozo and overhears two prisoners plotting their revenge against a corrupt overseer named Mendoza. The two prisoners, a mulatto and black man, claim to be shipwrecked free men, but because they do not have the papers to prove their status, Mendoza plans to sell them back into bondage for his personal profit. One prisoner claims to the other that "we shall have revenge. . . . I hate them all, root and branch. I would kill the last one, even as our people did in San Domingo" (81). At another point in the text, the narrator references the Haitian

Revolution as a source of latent anxiety for the white ruling class, claiming that “negro insurrections were ever the nightmare of slavery. . . . The awful example of San Domingo, where the land, for its sins, had been drenched in blood, was always before the eyes of those just across the Gulf of Mexico” (82). Claiming that the bloodshed in Haiti was just retribution for the sins of the ruling class, the narrator evokes the same “*coup pour coup*” logic that Paul relies upon in his decision to give his cousins wounds for their wrongdoings in the duel. For example, when the prisoners escape from prison and gruesomely murder Mendoza with an ax on the Trois Pigeon Plantation, the narrator reasons that “the overseer had lived by violence. He had made himself the instrument of the greed and avarice of others; he had done the dirty work of slavery, and had paid the price at the hands of one of the victims of the system” (158). Significantly, the mulatto and black prisoners, who are shackled together, are a composite grotesquery of suffering and resentment.

Upon their capture in New Orleans, for example, they are described as “a giant, deeply pockmarked Negro and a one-eyed mulatto, shackled together, wrist to wrist and ankle to ankle, so that they must move as one man” (57). Similar to the thematic import of Rose Amelia, who functions as the “little black shadow” of self-loathing within Mandy Oxendine, the prisoners are a mirror to Paul’s fractured racial identity, particularly as he contemplates his own act of revenge and wonders to whom his loyalties lie, the black insurgents or their white victims (70). For example, when Paul overhears the inmates’ revenge plan, he, who has just been assaulted by the Beaurepas cousins, empathizes with their hunger for retribution:

Under other circumstances Marchand would have been deeply impressed and indeed shocked by this conversation, and would have felt it his duty to warn the authorities and denounce the conspirators. But his recent experiences had drawn

him for the moment away from his quadroon leaning toward the whites and aloofness from the blacks, and left him in the camp of the latter. They, too, had suffered; they, too, had been wronged; they, too, were entitled to compensation, if only by way of revenge (83).

After their murder of Mendoza, the plantation owner's white daughter is taken hostage by one of the prisoners, and once more Paul must decide to which party he feels the responsibility to help.

Though he is able to see "beyond the evil countenance" of the fugitive by acknowledging "the long night of crime which had produced this fruit . . . the slave coffle, the middle passage, the years of toil beneath the lash," he also realizes that he "must save" the woman, despite the fact that he "pitied" and "condemned" the plight of "the ravisher" (159). The connection between Paul's journey to whiteness and the African American community's relative freedom in the postbellum epoch is emphasized by the narrator's assertion that "in one moment, by the stroke of a decrepit old man's pen, he was raised from a man of color to a white man. What this might mean in the South today is at least conceivable to any thoughtful, observant person who reads newspapers" (164). The limited opportunities, resentments, and conflicted loyalties that Paul experiences as a free man of color, and eventually as a white man, thus forms the central theme of the novel, which parallels the disenfranchisement of the New Orleans quadroon and the Jim Crow free man.

Nearing his seventieth birthday, Chesnutt completed *The Quarry*, the last novel that he would devote to the complexities of racial identity in America. He sent the manuscript off to Alfred Knopf, Inc. in 1928 and to Houghton Mifflin Company in the winter of 1930. Similar to the disappointing experience of trying to see *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* into print, *The Quarry* was rejected by both publishing houses. Differentiating his work from the themes of racial

disillusionment and urban debasement in the postwar black literature of the Harlem Renaissance, Chesnutt wrote to Houghton Mifflin regarding *The Quarry*: “I have not dredged the sewers of the Negro underworld to find my characters and my scenes but rather essayed to depict a cross section of the life of the ‘upper tenth’ of the colored people, along the edge of the color line.”⁴⁵ As William L. Andrews has aptly noted, Chesnutt’s remarks to the editors reveal not only the goals of his final project but also the limitations of his increasingly anachronistic cultural vision, a problem that even Chesnutt identified as being rooted in a “certain Victorian hangover” of perspective.⁴⁶ In large part, the central protagonist of the novel, Donald Glover, is drawn as an exemplar of the “talented tenth” whom W. E. B. Du Bois, at the turn of the twentieth century, referred to when he claimed that “the Negro race, like all races, is going to be saved by its exceptional men.”⁴⁷ Within the text, however, the overt idealization of Donald’s racial pride, intelligence, and propriety detract from his believability, and he functions less as a believable character than a counter-stereotype to the disillusionment reflected in the black arts movement of the 1920s. Despite the artistic shortcomings, however, *The Quarry* is a significant bookend to Chesnutt’s five-decade literary exploration of race in America, for the protagonist, like the title character of *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, refuses to abandon his black identity even when he learns that he is genetically white.

The novel opens at the turn of the century in Ohio, where a young white couple, Angus and Grace Seaton, have decided to adopt a baby after six years of marriage and no child of their own. While visiting the Columbus City Hospital, where they adopt Donald as an infant, they refuse the doctor’s suggestion that they look up the “pedigree” of their new son (9). Ironically, Mrs. Seaton declares that such a step is unnecessary, for she does not “attach a great deal of importance to heredity”; however, much like the promises of unconditional love made by George

Tyron in *The House Behind the Cedars* and Professor Carson in “White Weeds,” the young mother’s declaration of loyalty is proven false when her son’s racial identity is called into question by the women in her bridge club who declare that Donald looks “almost like a little coon” (10, 17).⁴⁸ Returning to the hospital for more information, Mr. Seaton is disappointed to learn that Donald’s biological father is described as a “bright mulatto” in the adoption records (21). Deciding that it would be best to find Donald parents of his own race, the Seatons seek council at the home of Senator James L. Brown, a distinguished member of Cleveland’s black community who, upon hearing their quandary, angrily declares that “I should like to see a white man, by God, who had the courage to bring up a colored child! They have begotten many of them, given them of their blood and brain, and then disowned them and thrown them back on their black cousins, into an infertile soil where their better heritage had no opportunity to direct their lives” (37). Despite Senator Brown’s urging that the Seatons remain the loyal parents of their adopted son, they arrange to have Donald placed in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Glover, a prominent couple in the African American community.

The dramatic antithesis of Molly Walden in *The House Behind the Cedars*, Mrs. Glover is an “ardent ‘race’ woman” whose belief that “the Negro had a future, and a worthy one” is transferred unto Donald, whom she believes will “lead his people, her people, out of the wilderness of poverty and ignorance and low estate which the abolition of slavery had not yet dissipated” (64). Describing her vision for the future as well as her progressive views on race and caste, Chesnutt writes that Mrs. Glover “anticipated the scientists of our day in maintaining that there is no essential intellectual difference in races, any apparent variation being merely a matter of development. . . . She dreamed of a future in which her people should be adequately and personally represented in lawmaking bodies, in the courts, and in all branches of the public

service” (63). Ultimately, Mrs. Glover views her adopted son as the Moses-figure who, through education, loyalty to his race, and high morals, will free the black community from legal disenfranchisement and social oppression in the United States.

It is Donald, she foresees, who will take the second generation of former slaves who are “still exploited and robbed and scorned by children of their former masters, and weld them into a racial solidarity that could resist and overcome the powers of oppression” (64). To mold her adopted son into the powerful leader she imagines him to be, Mrs. Glover places an overt emphasis on his education, though eventually Donald’s “expanding intelligence” reaches beyond “the instruction imparted at the high school and by his mother” as he seeks more knowledge through books and private tutors (66). After receiving a doctorate of philosophy from Columbia University, Donald realizes that his career goal is “to teach the student to think correctly” (186). He realizes, however, that it was “not enough to think, even correctly,” and that “thought must be transmuted into action” with regard to the social elevation of his people (187). With little subtlety of social import, Chesnutt emphasizes not only the importance of education in the black community but also the necessity to question, reason, and act independently.

These characteristics, which Mrs. Glover fosters in her son from an early age, are presented as the key to his personal and professional success, for “he never at any time in his life, after he became old enough to think, believed anything simply because someone else said it” (70). Though he does not use violence or overt protest to transcend the limitations of race, Chesnutt writes that Donald “was a born rebel, in the sense that instinctively he had no respect for authority which was not founded on reason, and he early discovered that a large part of life was hedged around inhibitions, sounding in prejudice, selfishness and greed, and having no warrant whatever except that of superior force” (70). Towards matters over which he holds no

control, such as his racial categorization, Donald learns that one “must, as Goethe said, ‘accept the universe,’ bow to the inevitable and make the best of it, and try to help forward the day when it would be no disadvantage not to be white” (161-62). With an emphasis on the artistic, intellectual, and emotional growth of the young protagonist, the novel thus unfolds as a *Bildungsroman* that follows Donald through adolescence into adulthood as he interacts with various segments of the black community and contemplates how he will best achieve cultural uplift through his intellectual leadership.

Various leaders in twentieth-century black America are fictionalized in *The Quarry*, and an aspect of historical significance is the manner in which Chesnutt provides thinly-veiled, autobiographically-inspired portraits of Marcus Garvey, Booker T. Washington, and W. E. B. Du Bois. Garvey receives the most negative literary treatment of the three leaders and is satirized as a “black Napoleon” who is dangerous in his notions of black purity and delusional in his vision of the expatriated colonization of Africa (152). After hearing a speech in which the self-proclaimed President of the African Empire claims that American mulattoes are “hand-in-glove” with the whites and should therefore be excluded from his vision of an African utopia, Donald cannot determine whether he is a “fool, fanatic, self-deluded visionary, crook, or a more or less unconscious combination of them all” (167, 168). Dr. Jefferson, an educator modeled on Booker T. Washington, is described by the narrator as an “opportunist” who values “patience and forbearance and the importance of winning, by whatever temporary compromise or concession might seem necessary or expedient, the friendship and good will of the white people among whom they lived” (65-66). Although Dr. Jefferson promotes industrial and agricultural training rather than liberal or classical education, Donald holds an “intellectual respect” for the leader and views him as a man of “great native ability” (189). After finishing his graduate studies, Donald

even works as Dr. Jefferson's assistant secretary in order to better expose himself to the realities of life among the black community he seeks to uplift through intellectual leadership (189).

Whereas Dr. Jefferson is described as an "opportunist" in the field of racial advocacy, his foil is the "idealist" Dr. Lebrun, a visionary of the "radical wing of national Negro thought" who clearly resembles Du Bois (106). Unlike Dr. Jefferson's ethos of gradualism with regard to racial opportunity, Dr. Lebrun argues that it is "unjust and wicked to ask the colored people to wait several generations before they could enjoy the rights and liberties which were freely open on equal terms to all white men and guaranteed to themselves under the Constitution of their country" (65). Armed with the intellectual "weapons of knowledge and reason and ridicule and sarcasm," Dr. Lebrun is portrayed as persistent and bold in his effort to "slay" the "flaming dragon of race prejudice" (66). Serving not only as the literary antithesis of the tragic mulatto trope that Chesnutt deplored, Donald also dramatizes a vision of successful black leadership that merges the most desirable traits of Dr. Jefferson, the pragmatic Washington figure, as well Dr. Lebrun, the idealistic educator based on Du Bois. Ultimately, Donald must serve a cultural residency in black America—in the industrial schools as well as the Ivy League—to learn how to best impact the cultural as well as racial divide in the United States.

The only articulated difference between Dr. Lebrun's worldview and Donald's own is that the professor is more internationally-minded with regard to racial oppression and devotes his studies to issues of the African Diaspora in America and abroad. Donald, who has begun working on a new book in which he applies his philosophical theories upon the "present-day problems and the future of the American Negro," is encouraged by Dr. Lebrun to "broaden its scope to include all the dark races of the world" (238). Imagining that his mother, to whom he still feels indebted, would have no interest in issues of race beyond her own country, Donald

rejects his advice. Mrs. Glover, as the narrator describes her, is “interested in Africa merely as the mother country of her race,” but in her eyes the “welfare of one Negro in the United States meant more to her than that of a hundred Bantus or Croos or Kaffirs in Africa, not to mention Japanese or Chinese or East Indians” (238). Although Mrs. Glover views herself as a “crusader” for Dr. Lebrun despite the fact that her racial views are not as far-reaching, it is Donald who she dreams of becoming the “Messiah” for their race, “of whom these smaller men [Jefferson and Lebrun] were merely the forerunners.” With complete faith in her son, she is determined that it will be he who finds “the key to the puzzle” that keeps them locked out of the privileges of citizenship (66).

The influence of the racial pride that Mrs. Glover passes onto Donald is so great that he continually refuses to pass as white when the opportunity presents itself. For instance, when Donald turns fifteen years old, Mr. Seaton arrives at the Glover’s home with hopes of reclaiming his son. His wife has died, and he is haunted by regret after having “let Donald go” (86). Much like Judge Straight’s foiling of a young John Walden and his white playmate in *The House Behind the Cedars*, Mr. Seaton notes the difference between Donald, who is “tall, upstanding, clear-eyed” and his own “rather scrawny, sickly looking children whom not even the lavish expenditure of his now large income had been able to do much more than keep alive” (84). Regretfully, he tells Mrs. Glover that “had I known that he would turn out to be the boy he is, I’d not have permitted myself to be stampeded by my wife’s foolish fears” (86). After revealing to Donald that he was twice adopted as an infant, the Glovers ask their son if he would like to take Mr. Seaton up on his offer to forsake his black identity in order to reap the benefits of “everything that money can buy---education, luxury, travel, society” as well as “the freedom and opportunity that is open to a white man” (90). Out of loyalty to his mother and devotion to her

dreams for him, Donald declines Mr. Seaton's patronage, his rejection marking the first of five instances in which he will refuse to abandon his identity in the African American community.

In the same manner that his intellectual gifts, charisma, and creative talents are idealized throughout the novel, Donald's rejection of a white identity is continually portrayed without moral conflict or much temptation. As the narrator puts it, "one of Donald's finest intellectual attributes was the faculty of prompt decision," and he continually rejects the offer to pass. While working on his graduate degree at Columbia University, for example, Donald refuses to pass as white when asked if he would do so by Amelia Parker, a beautiful white girlfriend who desires his hand in marriage. After his failed romance, he again refuses the chance to suppress his bloodlines when Moe Silberstein, a powerful movie producer who thinks that Donald would be "an ideal male lead," suggests that he is billed as French or Spanish actor. Donald, however, does not care to "seek any privilege that his darkest friend might not share" and turns down the opportunity for stardom on the big screen (147). Towards the end of the novel, Donald meets an English aristocrat named John Culver Bascomb who would like Donald to take his half-sister's hand in marriage on the condition that he does not mention to members of their social class that he is in fact an African American.

A marked departure from the argument for miscegenation and intermarriage that Chesnutt put forth in his "The Future American" series of articles at the turn of the century and dramatized through John Walden in *The House Behind the Cedars*, Donald turns down the offer of marriage to a white woman in order to stay loyally devoted to the African American woman to whom he was previously attached. Much like Paul Marchand, who stays loyal to his wife, Donald refuses to marry Lady Blanche Bascomb and instead proposes to Bertha Lawrence, whom he met years prior as an undergraduate at his Athena University, a "Negro school" filled

with ambitious young members of the African American community such as himself (104). Donald's most dramatic rejection of white patriarchy, however, occurs in the final chapters, after Mr. Seaton learns that there was a mistake in the adoption records and that Donald is in fact white. In a plot twist that is nearly identical to the revelation that Paul Marchand is the son and heir to Pierre Beaurepas in *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, Donald not only learns that he is genetically white, but he also discovers that owing to an overlooked portion of the adoption contract, he remains the legal son of Mr. Seaton. Despite being presented with this ostensibly life-changing news, Donald's devotion to the African American community, to whom he feels "psychologically" and "spiritually" connected, remains unshaken (277, 278).

Unlike John Walden, the unemotional pragmatist of *The House Behind the Cedars* who views familial and cultural bonds as "sentimental weakness," and unlike Paul Marchand of *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, the hot-headed "man of sentiment" who is often overwhelmed by his resentments, Donald Glover of *The Quarry* is a combination of these characters' most desirable traits (*The House Behind the Cedars* 21, 126; *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* 108). Described as both a "practical philosopher" and "a man of sentiment," he exudes a balance of temperaments that most clearly resembles Chesnut's first mulatto protagonist in long fiction, Tom Lowrey of *Mandy Oxendine*. With an unshakable sense of self-confidence, Tom "always felt instinctively, that he had a right to the same God-given opportunities as any other man," yet he "did not wish ever to be ashamed or blush for his origins" (46). Donald, in similar terms, "had never suffered from any sense of inferiority because of his assumed mixed blood" (277). In many ways, Donald's racial ethos in *The Quarry* articulates the overarching theme of individualism that runs throughout Chesnut's four-decade career in literature.

For instance, explaining why Donald rejects his white identity, the narrator states that he is “first of all, a man” and to desert the African American community would be a “sacrifice of love and loyalty” through which he would have to abandon “the whole setup of his life.” Echoing the resounding spirit of so many of Chesnutt’s works on personal identity in the postbellum period, Donald concludes that “manhood and self-respect were more important to race” (278). Passing into white society would be an act of desertion in Donald’s eyes, not only to filial bonds cultivated in the Glover home but also to his sense of autonomy and integrity. Ultimately it is his commitment to individualism and family that outweighs his devotion to racial identification.

In *The Quarry*, the character most obviously disparaged for having no governing sense of racial loyalty or self-respect is Abraham Lincoln Dixon, an acquaintance of Donald’s from college who is paid to deliver rousing speeches before various political groups in the black community.⁴⁹ More of an actor than an activist, however, “Link” alters his ideological views as well as his appearance depending upon the political beliefs of the audience whom he is hired to uplift. The juxtaposition of his first and last names, which puns upon Abraham Lincoln, “the Great Emancipator,” and Thomas Dixon, the postbellum propagandist of racist literature, captures the duplicitous shape-shifting upon which his career is built. As Link describes himself: “I’m a Negro for revenue only” (161). Preparing for a speaking engagement before the supporters of the “the new black Napoleon,” Link restores the “natural roughness” to his hair and powders his face with “dark brown powder” (152, 163). Before the “unrelievedly black” audience, Link claims that he “hated the little white blood in his veins” (165). The concept of manipulating one’s racial identity as rhetorical propaganda recurs when Donald reflects upon hearing Dr. Jefferson claim that if he were reincarnated after death, he would “choose to be born

an American Negro” for “those who survived would have proved their equality with the world’s best and get credit accordingly” (161-62). Donald dismisses this type of hypothesizing as misguided, for he feels that Dr. Jefferson, who is among elite class of black Americans, is overlooking the reality that to be of color in a country divided by race creates insurmountable hardships, prejudices, and obstacles for the vast majority of his race.

Anticipating the theme of racial authenticity in *The Quarry*, Chesnutt, in a 1918 speech before Cleveland’s Association of Colored Men, also claimed that it is easy for “a light mulatto” to claim that he would be born again black, as he can “escape a good many of the disabilities and slights that the real Negro finds himself up against.” Candidly revealing his reflections upon his own racial identity, Chesnutt discloses that

I am neither proud nor ashamed of the colored blood in my veins. If it has brought me any good, as I think it has—it gave me the impulse to write, the material for, and a hearing for the books to which I owe such little reputation as I have, and the invitation to address you today—I am duly thankful for it. If it has subjected me to any disabilities, as I am sure it has, as it has all of us who share it, I have tried to bear them with patience and to look upon the bright side of the shield.

Reiterating his thesis from “The Future American,” which was published nearly twenty years prior to his 1918 speech, Chesnutt closes with the prediction that “I am sure the time will come, sometime in the distant future when all the colored people of the U. S. will have Anglo-Saxon blood in their veins, for I am as firmly convinced as I ever was that there will be no permanent solution of the race problem in the U. S. until we are all one people.”⁵⁰ The various paths of towards racial identification pursued by the mixed-race protagonists of his novels thus illustrate

attempts to find happiness and opportunity in a country with a race crisis that Chesnutt felt had no enduring solution in the present time.

Paradoxically, in *The Quarry* as well as in *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, it is a genetic Caucasian who sees most clearly what it is like to be of African descent in a nation divided by race. The irony of this scenario, which suggests that a white man must live as a black man to truly understand the arbitrary distinctions of race and crippling restrictions of the color line, was introduced by Chesnutt early in his literary career in the vernacular short story "Mars Jeems Nightmare," which focuses upon a plantation owner who is conjured into a slave for a short period of time.⁵¹ After enduring long hours of field labor and the abuse of a cruel overseer named Nick Johnson, Jeems eventually reemerges as his former self, but he has undergone a rite-of-passage, or, as Uncle Julius describes it, "a monst'us bad dream," in suffering and empathy (38). Attaching a karmic warning to his story of racial swapping, Julius claims that

dis yer tale goes ter show . . . dat w'ite folks w'at is so ha'd en stric', en doan
make no 'lowance fer po' ign'ant niggers w'at ain' had no chanst ter l'arn, is
li'ble ter hab bad dreams, ter say de leas', en dat dem w'at is kin' en good ter po'
people is sho' ter prosper en git 'long in de worl' (41-42).

While the theme of racial retribution is also evoked in the short stories "A Midnight Adventure," "A Roman Antique," "The Sheriff's Children," "The Doll," "The Web of Circumstance," and "The Dumb Witness," Chesnutt most trenchantly illustrates the South's greatest nightmare, the destabilization of white order through racial uprising, through the shackled twins in *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, Bud Johnson in *The Colonel's Dream*, and Josh Green of *The Marrow of Tradition*, who is found dead "with a smile still upon his face" after killing a white supremacist named Captain McBane (200).⁵²

To varying degrees, Tom Lowrey of *Mandy Oxendine*, John Walden of *The House Behind the Cedars*, Paul Marchand of *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, and Donald Glover of *The Quarry* each achieve Chesnutt's goal, as he expressed it to George Washington Cable in 1891, of developing a mixed-race protagonist who carries neither self-pity nor self-doubt towards "the drop of black blood" that keeps him from experiencing the dignities of equal citizenship.⁵³ Although Chesnutt's portrayal of characters on the color-line became increasingly one-dimensional over the decades in which they were produced, the continuum of their development echoes both the disillusionment and the idealism of the postbellum period for black Americans, a tension between despair and hope that Chesnutt, as a twenty-four year-old southern schoolteacher in 1882, candidly recorded in his private journal:

I have no white friends. I could not degrade the sacred name of "Friendship" by associating it with any man who feels himself too good to sit at table with me, or to sleep at the same hotel. True friendship can only exist between men who have something in common, between equals in something, if not in everything; and where there is respect as well as admiration. I hope yet to have a friend. If not in this world, then in some distant future eon, when men are emancipated from the grossness of the flesh, and mind can seek out mind; then shall I find some kindred spirit, who will sympathize with all that is purest and best in mine, and we will cement a friendship that shall endure throughout the ages.⁵⁴

Ultimately, however, the mixed-race protagonists that he would develop for nearly half-a-century were not merely autobiographical reflections. As the descendent of both the master and the slave, the postbellum mulatto who consumes so much of Chesnutt's fiction was a potent metaphor for the paradoxical status of a people who, since the Civil War, were neither slave nor

free but resided somewhere less defined, somewhere less like the world that Molly Walden imagined and more like the swamplands where Rose Amelia and Rena Walden lost their way.

Notes

¹Charles W. Chesnutt, "The Future American: A Complete Race-Amalgamation Likely to Occur," in *Charles W. Chesnutt; Essays and Speeches*, ed. Jesse S. Crisler, Robert C. Leitz, III, and Joseph R. McElrath, Jr. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 135. Three installments of "The Future American Series" were originally published in the *Boston Evening Transcript*: "The Future American: What the Race Is Likely to Become in the Process of Time," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Aug. 18 1900): 20; "The Future American: A Stream of Dark Blood in the Veins of Southern Whites," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Aug. 25, 1900): 15; "The Future American: A Complete Race-Amalgamation Likely to Occur," *Boston Evening Transcript* (Sept. 1, 1900): 24.

²Chesnutt, "The Future American: A Complete Race-Amalgamation Likely to Occur," in *Charles W. Chesnutt; Essays and Speeches*, 134. Helen Chesnutt, the author's daughter, describes the critical reaction to "The Future American" series and notes that the "essays in the *Transcript* were extremely controversial." See Helen Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 149-50.

³Charles W. Chesnutt, "Race Prejudice: Its Causes and Cures," in *Charles W. Chesnutt; Essays and Speeches*, 233. On June 25, 1905, Chesnutt delivered this speech before the Boston Literary and Historical Association in Boston, Massachusetts.

⁴Chesnutt, "Race Prejudice: Its Causes and Cures," 233. Regarding the critical response to her father's vision of a homogeneous American race in "Race Prejudice," Helen Chesnutt wrote that "this speech, which was widely discussed, brought much bitter criticism upon

Chesnutt. He received abusive letters, many of them from illiterate and anonymous writers, and some unpleasant newspaper notoriety." See Helen Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line*, 211.

⁵William L. Andrews has noted that "neither white segregation nor black separatism seemed a viable program for the achievement of racial equality and justice. Neither struck at the cause of America's racial problem, which was to Chesnutt the ingrained, traditional prejudice held by whites against a formerly enslaved black population. The only way to eradicate this prejudice was, in Chesnutt's view, to eradicate the 'racial differences'—social, economic, political, and physical—which perpetuated the prejudice and kept whites separate from blacks" See Andrews, *The Literary Career of Charles W. Chesnutt* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 141.

⁶Although Chesnutt acknowledged that the amalgamation process would "never happen" in the organized method that he describes, he felt that a homogenous American racial type was an eventual inevitability in the United States. See Chesnutt, "The Future American: What the Race is Likely to Become," in *Charles W. Chesnutt; Essays and Speeches*, 124-25. Chesnutt's prediction of a new racial-type in America was perhaps a rhetorical tactic meant to emphasize the arbitrary distinctions of race created by the nation's long history of miscegenation. SallyAnn Ferguson suggests the ways in which the article can be interpreted as a rhetorical performance in "Charles Chesnutt's Genuine Blacks and Future Americans," *MELUS* 15 (1988): 95-107. Dean McWilliams, in *Charles W. Chesnutt and the Fictions of Race* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2002), has also suggested that "the entire article, read in the context of racial attitudes prevalent at the time of publication, seems a deliberate provocation" (51). Building upon the

readings of Ferguson and McWilliams, Keith Byerman has maintained that the series holds "calculated acts of provocation designed to discomfort the audience rather than persuade it."

See Byerman, "Performing Race: Mixed-Race Characters in the Novels of Charles Chesnutt," in *Passing in the Works of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Susan Prothro Wright and Ernestine Pickens Glass (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 85.

⁷Charles W. Chesnutt to Walter Hines Page, Feb. 13, 1897, in Helen Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line*, 77-78.

⁸Though Chesnutt published several short-stories, poems, and humorous sketches in the popular press beginning in the mid-1880s, the appearance of "The Goophered Grapevine" in the *Atlantic Monthly* 60 (1887), 254-60, was his first contribution to an established literary magazine.

⁹See *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Richard H. Brodhead, 154.

¹⁰See Charles W. Chesnutt, *Mandy Oxendine*, ed. Charles Hackenberry (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), xv. All references to *Mandy Oxendine* will be from this edition of text. Hereafter, all quotations will be cited parenthetically within the body of this chapter.

¹¹Regarding Chesnutt's portrayal of Mandy as an embittered black woman who is unapologetic in her pursuit of a white man, Hackenberry has suggested that "one can only imagine the controversy that *Mandy Oxendine* would have stirred up, and the consequent effects on Chesnutt's budding literary career, had the editors at Houghton Mifflin decided to publish this slim novel in 1897." See Hackenberry, "Introduction," in *Mandy Oxendine*, xix, xviii.

¹²See Chesnutt, "The Future American: A Complete Race-Amalgamation Likely to Occur," in *Charles W. Chesnutt; Essays and Speeches*, 134.

¹³With the support of northern philanthropy the Howard School, which was eventually renamed the State Colored Normal School, became one of the most well-funded, progressive schools for black students in the state of North Carolina. For a thorough history of the institution see *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Richard H. Brodhead, 5-6.

¹⁴See "The March of Progress," *Century* 61 (1901): 422-28; "The Bouquet," *Atlantic Monthly* 85 (1899): 648-54; "Cicely's Dream," in *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 132-67; "Po' Sandy," *Atlantic Monthly* 61 (1888), 605-11; *The Colonel's Dream* (New York: Doubleday Page, 1905).

¹⁵Cassandra Jackson has suggested that Deacon Tate, who displays a lack of understanding about the role of liberal education that Tom Lowrey has pursued, was intended to be a "jibe" on Booker T. Washington's support of industrial education. She claims that "Pate's inability to understand the world beyond its practical value distinguishes him as forever exiled from the intellectual space that Lowry occupies" (561, 562). See Jackson, "'I Will Gladly Share With Them My Richer Heritage': Schoolteachers in Frances E. W. Harper's *Iola Leroy* and Charles Chesnutt's *Mandy Oxendine*," *African American Review* 37 (2003): 553-68.

¹⁶Charles Chesnutt to George Washington Cable, June 5, 1890, in Helen Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line*, 58.

¹⁷In *Mandy Oxendine*, Tom Lowrey is wrongly accused of murdering Bob Utley, Mandy's white boyfriend. Tom's realization that education alone cannot free him from the confines of a racist society in many ways resembles Chesnutt's portrayal of another mixed-blood

character, also named Tom, in the short-story "The Sheriff's Children." Whereas Tom Lowrey of *Mandy Oxendine* remains optimistic despite his philosophical acknowledgment of racial injustice, Tom of "The Sheriff's Children" is wholly embittered towards the opportunities denied to him in life. In a perverse unraveling of family and bloodlines, Tom holds his estranged father, a white sheriff, at gun point, only to be shot by his white half-sister. Rather than waiting upon the mercy of his father or an unlikely acquittal by the local court-system in Branson County, North Carolina, the sheriff's son undresses his wounds in his jail-cell and bleeds to death, a closing scene that bitterly dramatizes the farce of cultural consanguinity in a nation still divided by race. "The Sheriff's Children" originally appeared in *New York Independent* (Nov. 1889): 30-32.

¹⁸Although Tom Lowrey is not as defiant as Mandy Oxendine in his racial resentments, his character is nonetheless a counter-stereotype to the tragic mulatto motif that Chesnutt disliked. Matthew Wilson has pointed out that "as a representative of a newly educated black middle class, the figure of Lowrey would have been disorienting for Chesnutt's audience, which was used to a literary diet of subservient plantation blacks or, in the case of writers such as Thomas Dixon, black male rapists---big burly black brutes." See Wilson, *Whiteness in the Novels of Charles W. Chesnutt* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2004), 56.

¹⁹W. E. B. Du Bois, "Strivings of the Negro People," *Atlantic Monthly* 80 (1897): 194, 195.

²⁰Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's *Iola Leroy* was originally published in 1892 by Garrigues Brothers in Philadelphia.

²¹Andrews, *The Literary Career of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 146-47.

²²See *Mandy Oxendine*, ed. Hackenberry, xviii.

²³See *Mandy Oxendine*, ed. Hackenberry, xix.

²⁴Wilson, *Whiteness in the Novels of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 51.

²⁵McWilliams, *Charles W. Chesnutt and the Fictions of Race*, 123.

²⁶Ryan Simmons, *Chesnutt and Realism: A Study of the Novels* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 64-65.

²⁷Donald B. Gibson, "A Question of Passing or a Question of Conscience: Toward Resolving the Ending of *Mandy Oxendine*," in *Passing in the Works of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Ernestine Pickens Glass and Susan Prothro Wright (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 93.

²⁸See Andrews, *The Literary Career of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 137.

²⁹See Judith Jackson Fossett, "Introduction," in Charles W. Chesnutt, *The House Behind Cedars* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), xiv-vv. All references to *The House Behind Cedars* will be made from this edition. Hereafter, all quotations will be cited parenthetically in the body of the chapter. Regarding the development of the novel, also see Robert P. Sedlack, "The Evolution of Charles Chesnutt's *The House Behind Cedars*," in *Critical Essays on Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath Jr. (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1999), 181-88. Originally published in *College Language Association Journal* 19 (1975): 125-35.

³⁰Helen Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line*, 58.

³¹Helen Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line*, 58, 59.

³²Helen Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line*, 107-08.

³³Chesnutt, "The Future American: What the Race is Likely to Become," in Charles W. Chesnutt; *Essays and Speeches*, 125.

³⁴Zoe Trodd, "Vanished Past and Vanishing Point," in *Charles Chesnutt Reappraised: Essays on the First Major African American Fiction Writer*, ed. David Garrett Izzo and Maria Orban (Jefferson: McFarland & Co., 2009), 128, 122-23.

³⁵Daniel Worden, "Birth in the Briar Patch: Charles W. Chesnutt and the Problem of Racial Identity," *Southern Literary Journal* 41 (2009): 7.

³⁶In "Appreciation," a vernacular sketch set shortly after the Civil War, Old Pilgrim Dixon has recently returned home to Missouri after facing economic hardship in the North. Originally published in *Puck* (April 20, 1887): 128. In "Aunt Mimy's Son," a former southerner has also found economic hardship in the North and returns to the South to die. Originally published in *Youth's Companion* (March 1, 1900): 104-05. In "The Wife of His Youth," Mr. Ryder, a former slave, has found social distinction and economic prosperity in the North. His former wife, Eliza Jane, after twenty-five years of estrangement, also travels to the North to find him. Originally published in *Atlantic Monthly* 82 (1898): 55-61. In "The Passing of Grandison," a Kentucky slave named Grandison, along with his family, escapes for Canada to find freedom. Originally published in *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 168-202. In "Uncle Wellington's Wives," a former slave named Uncle Wellington leaves his wife, Aunt Milly, and moves to Ohio, where he also marries an Irish cook named Katie Flannigan. Disillusioned by poverty and abandoned by Katie, Uncle Wellington returns to Milly in the South. Originally published in *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 203-68.

³⁷See "What is a White Man?," in *Charles W. Chesnutt; Essays and Speeches*, 71. The essay originally appeared in *Independent* 41 (1889): 5-6.

³⁸See *The House Behind Cedars*, ed. Jackson Fossett, 206, 212. In footnotes 9 and 12, respectively, Jackson Fossett explores the nature of the Walden siblings' relationship.

³⁹The robust physical health of John Walden is mirrored in the resolute self-confidence that he displays from a young age. As a teenager in Patesville, John learns from his schoolmates that he is black and therefore a second-class citizen, despite the whiteness of his skin. Unwilling to accept their judgment, he feels that "the mirror proved that God, the Father of all, had made him white; and God, he had been taught, made no mistakes,---having made him white, He must have meant him to be white" (112). He reiterates this conviction to Judge Straight when he declares that "I am white. . . . and I am free, as all my people were before me" (117). Though the judge attempts to explain the cultural belief that "one drop of black blood makes the whole man black," John declines to accept this abstraction, a refusal that has led SallyAnn Ferguson to claim that "if whiteness is a way of thinking, feeling, behaving, then John Walden is white. See Ferguson, "Rena Walden: Chesnutt's Failed 'Future American,'" *Southern Literary Journal* 15 (1982): 76.

⁴⁰Dean McWilliams has pointed out that John selects his new surname from Edward Bulwer-Lytton's historical novel *The Last of the Barons* (1843) but does not taking warning in the fact that his "namesake's career ended, in history as in fiction, with defeat, disgrace, and death." See McWilliams, *Fictions of Race*, 135.

⁴¹McWilliams, *Fictions of Race*, 135.

⁴²Chesnutt's early sketch of a young man lost in a swamp appears in *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Richard H. Brodhead, 47-48.

⁴³On October 8, 1921, Chesnutt wrote to Houghton Mifflin that "I wish to offer for publication a novel which I have entitled, tentatively 'Paul Marchand, F. M. C.,' the manuscript of which I send you herewith. I should have liked to call it 'The Honor of the Family,' but Balzac has used that title" (150). On November 12, 1921, Chesnutt sent his manuscript to Harcourt, Brace and Company and was again rejected (154-55). On December 20, 1921, he submitted the manuscript directly to Alfred A. Knopf and claimed that "I have written a short novel of life in old New Orleans which I submit to you herewith for publication, if you find it available. I am quite aware that it deals with a somewhat remote epoch in our national life and with conditions which have in large part disappeared, but it was a very interesting period, and enough of the old conditions still prevail to make it of interest to thoughtful readers" (157). See *An Exemplary Citizen: Letters of Charles W. Chesnutt, 1900-1932*, ed. Jesse S. Crisler, Robert C. Leitz, III, Joseph R. McElrath, Jr. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

⁴⁴In his "Foreword" to *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* Chesnutt acknowledges the influence of Cable as well as another New Orleans native, Grace King. Writing with removed formality in the third-person perspective, Chesnutt claims that "the author has made free reference" to the "careful studies of life in the old Creole city" produced by Cable and King, in addition to the "more obscure records and chronicles from which they drew their information" (3). Ultimately, however, the ingratiated tone of the "Foreword," as it relates to the interracial themes of the novel, is an ironic literary performance set in motion by Chesnutt's allusion to Cable and King, two authors whose antithetical perspective of black blood within the Creole elite was a well-

documented source of contention. In works such as *The Grandissimes* (1880) and *Madame Delphine* (1881) Cable boldly dramatized the presence of black blood in the wealthiest caste of New Orleans families, whose pretense of racial purity he satirized as being little more than a socially-constructed fiction. For these reasons, Cable was viewed as a traitor to his class by King, whose representations of black characters typically conformed to the nostalgic mode and racial condescension of plantation tradition. See Chesnutt, *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, ed. Dean McWilliams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). All references to *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* will be from this edition of text. Hereafter, all quotations will be cited parenthetically within the body of this chapter.

⁴⁵Chesnutt to Houghton Mifflin, Dec. 29, 1930, in Chesnutt Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society Library. Quoted in Andrews, *The Literary Career of Charles W. Chesnutt*, 269.

⁴⁶See Chesnutt, "The Negro in Present Day Fiction," in *Charles W. Chesnutt; Essays and Speeches*, 523. Speech originally delivered in Oberlin, Ohio in 1929.

⁴⁷See W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of Today*, ed. Booker T. Washington (New York: James Pott and Company, 1903), 33.

⁴⁸Chesnutt, *The Quarry*, ed. Dean McWilliams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999). All references to *The Quarry* will be from this edition of text. Hereafter, all quotations will be cited parenthetically within the body of this chapter.

⁴⁹Although Link Dixon is Donald's most obvious foil within *The Quarry*, the unnamed protagonist of James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) seems

to be another literary character to whom Donald was antithetically drawn. Although Johnson's narrator decides to pass as a white man, there are many similarities in terms of plot structure and dialogue in Johnson's novel and *The Quarry*. Dean McWilliams has aptly suggested that "*The Quarry*, which might well be subtitled 'The Biography of an Ex-White Man,' turns the novel of passing on its head by recounting the story of a white man who decides to be colored." See *The Quarry*, ed. McWilliams, xiii.

⁵⁰Chesnutt, "Negro Authors," in *Charles W. Chesnutt; Essays and Speeches*, 459.

⁵¹Chesnutt, "Mars Jeems's Nightmare," in *The Conjure Woman* (Champaign: Book Jungle, 2008), 29-42. All references to *The Conjure Woman* will be from this edition of text. Hereafter, all quotations will be cited parenthetically within the body of this chapter. Originally published in *The Conjure Woman* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin 1899), 64-102.

⁵²See Charles W. Chesnutt, "A Midnight Adventure," *New Haven Register* 6 (1887): 3; "The Sheriff's Children," *New York Independent* (Nov. 1889): 30-32; "The Doll," *The Crisis* 3 (1912): 248-52; "The Web of Circumstance," in *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 291-323. In "The Dumb Witness," a slave woman named Viney has had her tongue cut out by her master for telling his fiancé of their affair. After his attack, she takes revenge upon him by refusing to reveal where his family will, which will secure him his fortune, is hidden. Ironically, at the end of the story, it is revealed that she can indeed still speak and has been pretending to be mute to torture him. "The Dumb Witness" existed only in typescript form before it was anthologized in *The Short Fiction of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Sylvia Lyons Render (Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press,

1974), 153-63. A slightly different version of "The Dumb Witness," with a less embittered character drawing of Viney, appears as a subplot in *The Colonel's Dream* (1905).

⁵³Chesnutt to George Washington Cable, June 5, 1890, in Helen Chesnutt, *Pioneer of the Color Line*, 58.

⁵⁴See Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Richard H. Brodhead (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 172. See *The Journals of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Richard H. Brodhead, 172.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In 1935, W. E. B. Du Bois reflected upon the decades after Federal Reconstruction in the American South and claimed that “the slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery.”¹ In many of the postbellum works of fiction by Albion Tourgée, Charles Chesnutt, George Washington Cable, and Mark Twain, such as *The Grandissimes*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Pudd’nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins*, *A Fool’s Errand*, *Bricks without Straw*, *Mandy Oxendine*, *The Conjure Woman*, and *The House Behind the Cedars*, the authors developed antebellum settings that evoked the persisting racial problems of American life in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century, thus dramatizing Du Bois’s suggestion the nation was still mired in the problems of its past. Perhaps the most significant aspect their postwar novels share is the manner in which the authors present African American protagonists who actively pursue a better life for themselves by challenging the white patriarchal order. Through various methods of empowerment, such as verbal trickery, escaping slavery, passing into white life, educational and economic advancement, as well as the subversive acts of protest, violence, and revenge, these characters refuse to submit to the social hierarchy to which they are bound by either custom or law.

In many of the Southern works by Tourgée, Chesnutt, Cable, and Twain, the authors develop protagonists who undermine white authority through acts of storytelling, verbal manipulation, and nuanced vernacular exchanges. The presentation of black characters as

holding important secrets of the past, and using their knowledge as power over their white oppressors, is epitomized by Roxana of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, who attempts to secure her financial freedom by blackmailing the aristocrat Tom Driscoll with the knowledge that he was born her son and thus a slave. Viney of Chesnutt's "The Dumb Witness" also asserts control over her master, Malcolm Murchison, by refusing to reveal the whereabouts of an ancestral will that would secure his fortune. Her twenty-five years of secrecy is retribution for his cutting out her tongue in an act of rage, his attempt to silence her thus becoming a grotesque irony through which he must also suffer. The power shift between slaves and masters regarding a secret is also presented by Twain in *Which Was It?*, a novella in which George Harrison's slave Jasper threatens to reveal him as a murderer if he does not conform to his wishes, which include acting as a servant to Jasper behind closed doors. Likewise, in Chesnutt's *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, the title-character's final act of retaliation against the Beaurepas cousins is psychological rather than physical when he reveals that one of them was born to a Haitian slave, an implicit threat that they accommodate his wishes lest he expose the holder of the latent bloodlines.

It is perhaps Uncle Julius McAdoo of Chesnutt's short-story cycle *The Conjure Tales* who most consistently illustrates the subversive and redeeming nature of language for those who hold neither political nor social power. In the frame stories, he describes episodes of plantation life before the Civil War to the white Northerners who have bought the North Carolina property upon which he was once enslaved. Uncle Julius "has an axe to grind," as Chesnutt described him in an essay decades later, and in nearly every story the former slave manipulates his listeners to his material advantage.² Significantly, most of the things that Uncle Julius uses his tales to secure are tied to the natural world. For instance, in "The Goophered Grapevine" he hopes to keep his claim to an overgrown vineyard; in "The Gray Wolf's Ha'nt" a honey-producing

beehive; in “A Deep Sleeper” a watermelon; and in “Dave's Neckliss” a ham from the smokehouse. All of these items suggest that he feels entitled to reap the benefits or profit economically from the land on which he was “bawn en raise’,” though he has legal claim to none of it.³

The slaves of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* are also described as feeling entitled to a share of the household goods and farm-raised animals in Dawson's Landing, and they frequently take "military advantage" of their oppressors through small acts of theft. The third-person narrator justifies their actions by claiming that they "had an unfair show in the battle of life" and that the "negro prowler" stealing a chicken was "perfectly sure that in taking this trifle from the man who daily robbed him of his inestimable treasure—his liberty—he was not committing any sin that God would remember against him in the Last Great Day."⁴ Tourgée would develop a similar point regarding the reparations of bondage in *Pactolus Prime*, when the title-character, an embittered former slave, evaluates the complexities of exercising his case in lost equity and asks

who shall estimate the damages of lost opportunity, to say nothing of violated right? Who shall state the money value of two centuries of enforced ignorance and depravity? What sum could compensate a people for the stain of universal illegitimacy, the denial of fatherhood, the violation of maternal right, the debasement of female virtues, the utter effacement of all family ties and family relations, the refusal of even a family name?⁵

Ironically, with the help of his assistant, Benny, he calculates the exact sum at ten cents a day that the federal government owes his people since the advent of slavery in the American colonies. Explaining how they derived their figure, Benny tells the white politician whose shoes he shines that “there were two hundred and forty-seven years of bondage; there were twenty-six

slaves at first and five million at the last. Making it an even progression, counting only three hundred days to the year, and throwing out two-fifths of the whole for childhood, old age and sickness, and putting the rest at ten cents a day, and it would amount to *more than ten billions of dollars!*”⁶ Though Pactolus feels the government owes the ex-slaves financial compensation, he has earned his own fortune in secret real estate investments that he plans to leave to his daughter, Eva, who is living as a white woman and does not know the identity of her father. To his disappointment, when Eva learns of her bloodlines, she enters a convent, adopts her father’s name, and invests her inheritance towards the uplift of the African American community.

Feigning complicity before a white audience is a rhetorical tactic mastered by Uncle Julius of *The Conjure Tales*, and this type of verbal manipulation is also explored by Twain in “Corn-pone Opinions.” In the essay, Twain reflects upon a slave of his youth named Jerry, whom he at fifteen believed to be “the greatest orator in the United States.” He claims that he was “a gay and impudent and satirical and delightful young man—a slave—who preached sermons from the top of his master’s woodpile, with me for a sole audience.” Jerry, he notes, would stop preaching “now and then” to pretend to saw a piece of lumber by “imitating the sound the bucksaw makes in shrieking its way through the wood” so that his master would believe him to be busy. In addition to admiring his work-time trickery, Twain insists that one of the slave’s sermons imparted upon him an important lesson: “You tell me whar a man gits his corn pone, en I’ll tell you what his ‘pinions is.” In other words, as Twain explains, “the black philosopher’s idea was that a man is not independent, and cannot afford views which might interfere with his bread and butter. . . . He must restrict himself to corn-pone opinions—at least on the surface.”⁷ Expressing “surface” opinions as an act of self-preservation for the slave is also explored by Tourgée in *Bricks without Straw* when Nimbus’s master, Colonel P. Desmit,

believes him to be a “faithful fellow” who is “too dull” to have the desire to run away like the other “fool-notions niggers” he owns. Believing in Nimbus’s loyalty, he puts him in charge of twenty of his slaves as “a sort of headman” to work on fortifications for the Confederacy. Almost immediately, the slave escapes through the swamps and waterways of South Carolina to join the Union Army.⁸ In a similar plotline developed by Chesnutt in “The Passing of Grandison,” the title-character claims to have no interest in running away and even assures his master that “I is better off, suh, dan dem low-down free niggers, suh!” Ironically, when the opportunity presents itself for him and his family to escape to freedom, they do so. As Grandison crosses Lake Erie on steamboat on his way to Canada he waves his hand “derisively” at his master, who could only shake his fist “impotently” in return, their positions of power inverted.⁹

Although he is most often remembered for his acts of loyalty to Huck on the river, and to Tom Sawyer after he is shot, Jim of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* also undertakes a major act of defiance when he runs away from St. Petersburg upon learning that Miss Watson plans to sell him “down to Orleans” for “eight hun’d dollars.”¹⁰ Similarly, in *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, Roxy escapes from the plantation to which Tom Driscoll has sold her when she realizes that her overseer will work her “to death” or sell her “further down de river,” both acts amounting to “de same thing” in her estimation.¹¹ When the slave prince Bras-Coupé of Cable’s *The Grandissimes* runs away to the swamps, his act of defiance is described in revolutionary terms by the narrator who notes that he was “practically declaring his independence” from the oppressive confines of antebellum New Orleans.¹² In Tourgée’s *A Royal Gentleman*, the slave mother Mabel Lovett also runs away when her daughter, Toinette, is given to Geoffrey Hunter as a Christmas present. On the verge of insanity, Mabel attempts to murder her fourteen-year-old daughter so that she

will not be taken as a lover by her new master, a fate that occurs despite the mother's attempt to intervene.

Unlike Tourgée's portrayal of Mabel as a slave who would rather see her daughter dead than in interracial concubinage, Cable and Chesnutt develop memorable female protagonists who encourage their mixed-race daughters to suppress their bloodlines in order to marry white suitors. Madame Delphine, the "dark quadroone" of *Madame Delphine*; Zalli, the barely "colored" mother in "'Tite Poulette"; and Molly Walden, the "bright mulatto" of *The House Behind the Cedars* all persuade their daughters to pursue a new identity through marriage.¹³ Though there is a tone of self-loathing in their idealization of white life, there is also a quiet strength and "defiant spirit" within the three mothers who sacrifice their maternal claim so that their children may pursue dreams that they were denied. Through their own life experiences on the color-line, they have come to learn a truth that Madame Delphine articulates when she claims that her daughter, Olive, has "no more place here than if she had been dropped upon a strange planet."¹⁴ In Chesnutt's *Mandy Oxendine*, Mandy echoes the isolation and despair expressed by Madame Delphine when she asserts that "I'd rather die than to be a nigger again. . . . To be hated by black folks because I'm too white, and despised by white folks because I'm not white enough."¹⁵ Significantly, however, both Mandy Oxendine and Rena Walden have horrifically disillusioning experiences with their white suitors, episodes that change their outlook upon their bloodlines as well as their belief that a better life exists for them in the "seeming paradise" of white society.¹⁶

Whereas the complexities of racial identity with which female protagonists are confronted in the works of Tourgée, Chesnutt, Cable, and Twain are typically polarized by issues of marriage and maternity, the male mixed-race characters portrayed by these authors are often in conflict with their ancestral claim to social power and a white national identity. Both Honoré,

f. m. c. of *The Grandissimes* and Tom of “The Sheriff’s Children,” for instance, resent the fraction of black blood that keeps them from harnessing the privileges of their whiter siblings. When Tom confronts his father with a gun in the Branson County jailhouse he declares that “you gave me your own blood, your own features. . . . You gave me a white man’s spirit, and you made me a slave, and crushed it out.”¹⁷ Likewise, John Walden of *The House Behind the Cedars* considers his mother’s bloodlines the “the blight of his inheritance” and justifies his decision to pass upon the “inalienable birthright” of his white father’s ancestry.¹⁸ Despite the fact that Chesnutt criticized popular literary depictions of “cultivated white Negroes” who were always “bemoaning their fate” and “cursing their drop of black blood,” John Walden and Sam of “The Sheriff’s Children” very much conform to this stereotype.¹⁹ Overwhelmed by their resentments and disillusioned with their contemporary societies, both characters endure varying degrees of cultural and familial isolation. Sam of “The Sheriff’s Children” eventually commits suicide. Though John Walden continues his life as a white man in the Deep South, he must suffer the realization that his attempt to transfer his dreams of social elevation upon his sister Rena led to her “brain fever” and eventual death.²⁰

Chesnutt, however, is unique in that he also developed African American characters who fundamentally reject the privileges of white society when made available to them. Although Tom Lowrey of *Mandy Oxendine* is never in the company of white people “without feeling as though he were being robbed of his birthright,” he feels no “shame or humiliation” in his “drop of dark blood” and believes firmly in his own potential and intellect. Furthermore, unlike John Walden of *The House Behind the Cedars*, Tom finds “something repugnant” in the idea of racial concealment.²¹ In the same manner, Donald Glover of *The Quarry* continually refuses to pass even when he, like the central protagonist of *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, learns that he is

genetically white. When Paul Marchand discovers that he is the heir to the Beaurepas family fortune, for instance, he rejects the contents of his father's inheritance and tells his cousins that he "shall not even assume the family name" on account of the way he had been treated by the dynasty as a free man of color.²² In a similar scene in *The Marrow of Tradition*, Janet Miller learns that her white father provided for her in a lost will, yet she rejects the terms of her inheritance and tells Olivia Carteret that "I throw back your father's name, your father's wealth, your sisterly recognition. I want none of them,—they are bought too dear!"²³ Much like Roxy of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, who transforms from a groveling supplicant to a powerful force who rises "above" her oppressor "like a fate," the narrator describes Janet as having undergone "a marvelous transformation" as she "towered erect, with menacing aspect, like an avenging goddess" over the white half-sister by whom she had been "hated and scorned and despised" throughout her entire life.²⁴

In many of the works by Tourgée, Chesnutt, Cable, and Twain, acts of self-improvement, education, and entrepreneurship within the African American community are met with violence and even death. The racial anxiety that leads to such acts is articulated by Pap Finn in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* when he vents about "a free nigger" from Ohio who is "a mulatter, most as white as a white man." Despite the fact that he is an educated "p'fessor in a college," Pap believes him to be "a prowling, thieving, infernal, white-shirted free nigger" who should be sold back into slavery.²⁵ In *A Fool's Errand*, the thriving freemen community at Warrington is destroyed when a "gang of disguised ruffians" attack its inhabitants and destroy their property. Jerry Hunt, the self-educated spiritual leader, is lynched when he speaks the truth about the murder of a white Republican. Similarly, when Bob Martin becomes too successful in the eyes of his neighbor, he is brutally whipped and his child is murdered by the Klu Klux Klan,

who warn that he is getting "too dam smart!"” Regarding his new found freedom in a time of great violence, Bob asks Comfort Servosse

can’t de President or Congress do somefin? De gov’ment sot us free, an’ it ’pears like it oughtn’t to let our old masters impose on us in no sech way now. . . . I’d be willin’ ter fight fer my liberty, er fer de country dat give me liberty. But I don’t tink liberty was any favor ef we are to be cut up an’ murdered jes’ de same as in slave times, an’ wuss too.

Within the novel, an excerpt of Comfort Servosse’s journal is also presented in which he records that three former slaves were “whipped by the K. K. K.” for having been “sassy.” The “true reason” for the assault, he estimates, is “that they were acquiring property, and becoming independent.”²⁶ The resentment towards the Warrington settlement in *A Fool’s Errand* is also directed towards the prosperous farming community at Red Wing that is also attacked by the Klan in *Bricks without Straw*.

In the assault upon Red Wing, the entrepreneurial ex-slave Nimbus Ware watches his house burn to the ground. In a similar scene in Chesnutt’s “Uncle Peter’s House,” a former slave who has always dreamed of owning his own home witnesses his efforts set on fire by the Klan. In the same gruesome manner in which Viney was punished in “The Dumb Witness,” a black man named James Leroy in *A Fool’s Errand* has his “tongue cut out” and “put in his pocket” before he was hanged for allegedly slandering a white woman.²⁷ Cable also illustrates violence and acts of bodily mutilation towards black characters in *The Grandissimes*, particularly when Clemence is caught in a steel trap and then shot in the back when she attempts to flee and when Bras-Coupé has his ears cut off and the tendons in his ankles slit. Twain more subtly engages issues of race violence in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* when Aunt Sally is relieved that a

steamer explosion only “killed a nigger.”²⁸ He would speak more directly on postwar racial atrocities in pieces of satire such as “Only a Nigger,” an attack on Southern chivalry and violence, and “The White House Funeral,” in which he claims that President Johnson and the Democrats “smiled upon the Ku-Klux” as well as their acts of “murder, robbery, & arson” in the Deep South.²⁹

With devastating cynicism in *The Marrow of Tradition*, black Americans are subject to horrific acts of violence even when they have not challenged the white patriarchy with their economic, political, or social advancements. For instance, although the character Mammy Jane has loyally served the Carteret family her entire life, she is killed in the race riot that has taken over the streets her small town. Regarding her death, the narrator writes that “not all her reverence for her old mistress, nor all her deference to whites, not all their friendships with her, had been able to save her from this raging devil of race hatred. Similarly, Jerry Letlow, the obsequious employee of the racist newspaper editor Captain McBane, “desperately” searches the crowd during the riots trying “to find his white patron and protector” and telling all white men that he passes that he is not involved in the uprising. Nonetheless, when he is murdered the narrator concludes that “Jerry’s poor flag of truce, his explanations, his reliance upon his white friends, all failed him in the moment of supreme need. In that hour, as in any hour, when the depths of race and hatred are stirred, a negro was no more than a brute beast, set upon by other brute beasts whose only instinct was to kill and destroy.”³⁰ Chesnutt thus suggests that young revolutionaries like Josh Green, as well as loyalists of the old guard tradition of deference, such as Mammy and Jerry, will be indistinguishable from one another when the anxieties of race and violence collide in the postwar South.

Countering these representations of black victimization, these authors also depict wildly subversive scenes of racial empowerment in which non-white characters impose violence upon their oppressors out of self-protection as well as revenge. In *A Royal Gentleman*, Mabel murders her master and lover, Arthur Lovett, when she learns of his engagement to another woman. Roxy of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is also enraged that her master, Percy Driscoll, has the power to sell her son down the river, and she claims that "I hates him, en I could kill him!"³¹ Though she does not kill Driscoll, she metaphorically transfers the act unto his heir when switching him with her slave child, thus murdering his identity as well as the privileges associated with it. In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Josh Green murders Captain George McBane with "a huge bowie-knife" that he buries "to the hilt" in the heart of the man who murdered his father years before.³² In "The Sheriff's Children," Tom briefly turns the tables on his father who sold him to the "rice swamps" and his mother, Cicely, to an Alabama plantation where she "died under the lash." Though he does not succeed, Tom holds Sheriff Campbell at gunpoint and threatens to "blow" his "brains out" before he is shot by his white half-sister, Polly.³³ In what unravels into a grotesque melodrama of violence, a son attempts to murder his father, on account of his killing his mother decades prior, only to be fatally wounded by his half-sister. Thus, the conflict within Sheriff Campbell's interracial family very much evokes the larger problems of race, violence, and national consanguinity that were playing out in American society in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

In another revenge plot against the white race, the "half-breed" Injun' Joe of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* stabs Dr. Robinson to death as retribution for the doctor's father having sent him away from his kitchen years earlier when he came to "ask for something to eat." Injun' Joe also plans to "tie" the Widow Douglass "to the bed" so that he can "slit her nostrils"

and “notch her ears like a sow,” for it was her deceased husband who was the justice of the peace who ordered him horsewhipped “like a nigger” for loitering outside the Robinson’s home.³⁴ In another scene illustrating a shift in positions of social power, Nimbus of *Bricks without Straw* confronts Colonel Desmit about money owed to him, and when his former master attempts to hit him, the former slave throws him to the ground and warns that he “musn’t try ter beat a free man.” Similarly, when Eliab Hill is attacked in *Bricks without Straw*, Nimbus’s wife, Lugena, fights back with an axe that crashes “down through mask and flesh and bone” of the Klan member.³⁵ In *The Grandissimes*, Bras-Coupé also strikes his master, Don José, who collapses under the “terrific fist of his slave.”³⁶ Within the same novel, the quadroon Palmyre attempts to stab Agricola Grandissime to death, though it is another mixed-race character, Honoré, f. m. c., who eventually murders the great patriarch. In *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, the two shipwrecked prisoners, who claim to be freeman, brutally kill the overseer, Mendoza, who plans to sell them back into slavery.³⁷ Similar to Palmyre’s plan to teach Bras-Coupé the “lesson” of “Insurrection” that she had learned from hearing about the Haitian Revolution, the runaways of *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* declare that they will have “revenge” as “our people did in San Domingo.”³⁸

After Roxy has been sold back into slavery in *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, she wreaks vengeance upon her new master as well as her former one. When she confronts Tom and demands a new bill of sale, she shows him a knife and threatens that she is “gwyne to jam it” into him if he does not purchase her freedom back. Likewise, when Roxy was on the plantation to which he sold her, she saw a young slave girl abused by the overseer and offers a memorable description of her anger and retaliation:

Dey was a little sickly nigger wench ‘bout ten year ole dat ‘uz good to me, en hadn’t no mammy, po’ thing, en I loved her en she loved me; end she come out

whah I ‘uz workin’, en she had a roasted tater, en tried to slip it to me—robbin’ herself, you see, caze she knowed de overseer didn’t gimme enough to eat—en he ketched her at it, en give a lick acrost de back wid his stick which ‘uz as thick as a broom-han’le, en she drop’ screamin’ on de groun’, end squirmin’ en wallerin’ aroun’ in de dust like a spider dat’s got crippled. I couldn’t stan’ it. All de hell-fire dat ‘uz ever in my heart flame’ up, end I snatch de stick outen his han’ en laid him flat.³⁹

The “hell fire” that flames within Roxy’s heart is also articulated by black characters such as Palmyre of *The Grandissimes* who declares that “there is nothing that could kill me, I want my revenge so bad!”⁴⁰ The manner in which Injun’ Joe of *Tom Sawyer* rationalizes his crimes is also strikingly similar to the manner in which Roxy justifies her acts against her oppressors. Before robbing a grave and killing the young Dr. Robinson, for example, Injun’ Joe declares that “‘tain’t robbery altogether—it’s *revenge*!” (170). Similarly, before Roxy switches her child with her master’s child, she declares that “‘t ain’t no sin—white folks has done it! It ain’t no sin, glory to goodness it ain’t no sin!”⁴¹ Both Roxy and Injun Joe speak at great length about “settling the score” against the white people who have wronged them, a trope that would be extended by Twain in *Which Was It?*, when the former slave Jasper is driven to “settle” what he calls “a long bill agin de low-down ornery white race.”⁴²

In *The Marrow of Tradition*, Josh Green also voices his resentment towards the uneven scale upon which black and white crimes are weighed. He demands that “w’ite folks are killin’ de niggers, an’ we ain’ gwine ter stan’ up an’ be shot down like dogs.” When Dr. Miller attempts to talk him out of his “murderous fancies” by reminding him that “the Bible says that

we should ‘forgive our enemies’,” Josh finds no truth or comfort in that message. Instead, he responds

yas, suh, I’ve learned all dat in Sunday-school, an’ I’ve heard de preachers say it time an’ time ag’in. But it ’pears to me dat dis fergitfulniss an’ fergivniss is mighty one-sided. De w’ite folks don’ forgive nothin’ de niggers does. . . . De niggers is be’n train’ ter fergiveniss; an’ fer fear dey might fergit how ter forgive, de w’ite folk gives ’em somethin’ new ev’y now an’ den, ter practice on. A w’ite man kin do w’at her wants ter a nigger, but de minute de nigger gits back at ’im, up goes de nigger, an’ don’ come down tell somebody cuts ’im down. If a nigger gits a’ office, er de race ’pears ter be prosperin’ too much, de w’ite folks up an’ kills a few, so dat de res’ kin keep on fergiven’ an’ bein’ thankful dat dey ’re lef’ alive. Don’ talk ter me ’bout dese w’ite folks—I knows ’em, I does! Ef a nigger wants ter git down on his marrow-bones, an’ eat dirt, an’ call ’em “master,” *he’s* a good nigger, dere’s room fer *him*. But I ain’ no w’ite folks’ nigger, I ain’. I don’ call no man “marster.”⁴³

Much to Josh Green’s point regarding the risk of challenging the white patriarchy, Sam of “The Sherriff’s Children,” Bras-Coupé and Honoré, f. m. c. of *The Grandissimes*, one of the shipwrecked runaways in *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, and Bud Johnson of *The Colonel’s Dream* die tragically after attempting to enact violent retribution against their oppressors. Although Palmyre of *The Grandissimes* is not killed after her attempt to murder Agricola, her accomplice, Clemence, is tortured and brutally shot to death as she begs for mercy.

Likewise, in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Injun Joe starves to death in the cave where he has been hiding since killing Dr. Robinson. Although he is a violent and manipulative

criminal in St. Petersburg, the narrator is sympathetic to his plight, even suggesting that Tom's "pity was moved" by the "sorrowful sight" of the half-breed's dead body in the cave.⁴⁴ Though he ends up killing one of the runaways in order to save a white victim, Paul Marchand is also empathetic to the prisoners who wreak havoc upon New Orleans in *Paul Marchand F. M. C.*, concluding that "they, too, had suffered; they, too, had been wronged; they, too, were entitled to compensation, if only by way of revenge."⁴⁵ This type of humanistic reasoning is perhaps most trenchantly expressed by Huckleberry Finn after Jim is recaptured on the river. Although the duke and the king have delivered his friend to a virtual death sentence in slavery for "forty dirty dollars," Huck feels "sorry for them poor pitiful rascals" when they are gruesomely tarred and feathered. Distraught with the "sivilization" that surrounds him, he admits that "it seemed like I couldn't ever feel any hardness against them any more in the world. It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings *can* be awful cruel to one another."⁴⁶ The notion of violence begetting violence is also evoked in *The Marrow of Tradition* when Captain McBane shoots Josh Green in the face at the same instant that the Green drives a knife into the heart of the white supremacist.

Equivocating upon this double-murder, the narrator contemplates that "one of the two died as the fool dieth. Which was it, or was it both? 'Vengeance is mine,' saith the Lord, and it had not been left to Him. But they that do violence must expect to suffer violence."⁴⁷ Chesnutt reiterates this point in *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.* when the narrator claims that Mendoza the overseer "had lived by violence" and had "paid the price at the hands of one of the victims of the system."⁴⁸ This cycle of violence and desire for vengeance is explored from a different angle by Chesnutt in "The Web of Circumstance" and "The Doll," two stories in which the black protagonists decide not to murder the white person they feel to be the enemy. In "The Web of Circumstance," a local blacksmith named Ben Davis is wrongly accused of stealing a whip from

a white man named Colonel Thornton. After spending five years in a convict camp for a crime he did not commit, Ben develops a “black hatred of all mankind” especially towards the Colonel, “the man to whom he attributed all of his misfortunes.” Unbeknownst to Ben, however, he was actually set up by a man of his own race who was having an affair with his wife, Nancy. When he decides to “wreak his vengeance” upon the Colonel, he makes an “ugly-looking bludgeon” out of a walking stick as his murder weapon. At the last moment, however, Ben catches a glimpse of the Colonel’s young daughter, and her innocence compels him to “flee” the scene. Despite his change of heart, when the Colonel sees a “desperate-looking negro, clad in filthy rags, and carrying in his hand a murderous bludgeon, running toward the child” he shoots him dead.⁴⁹

In “The Doll,” the African American barber Tom Taylor also decides against violent retaliation on account of an innocent child. He has promised his daughter, Daisy, that he will bring her mended doll home from work, a commitment he remembers when the man who raped his sister and killed his father walks into his barber shop. Tom contemplates murdering Colonel Forsythe using the razor with which he shaves him, for he knows that in “one stroke of the keen blade, a deflection of half an inch in its course, and a murder would be avenged, an enemy destroyed!” Regarding Tom’s desire for revenge, the narrator claims that “in his dreams he had killed this man a hundred times, in a dozen ways.” In the moment in which he is shaving him, however, he decides not to make the mistakes of his father before him who had died in defense of his daughter. Tom decides that he “must live to protect” Daisy and that if there was “a righteous God, who divided the evil from the good, the colonel would some time get his just deserts.” Dr. Miller of *The Marrow of Tradition* also fights the “manly instinct” that urges him to take part in the race riot and tells the group of black rebels that “alive, I may be of some use to

you. . . . Dead, I should be a mere lump of carrion.”⁵⁰ Reiterating the theme from *The Marrow of Tradition*, the narrator of “The Doll” claims that “vengeance was God’s; it must be left to Him to repay!” Nonetheless, Colonel Forsyth sees the barber’s inability to take revenge as proof that all blacks “are born to serve and submit” and have no desire to “avenge a wrong,” a judgment that Tom has to transcend through the restraint of non-violence and the desire to live for his daughter.⁵¹

In many of their postbellum works, the authors also portray white Northern characters who, like Tom Taylor and Dr. Miller, must decide if they are willing to risk their reputations and even their lives in order to challenge the culture of racism that surrounds them in the South. In Tourgée’s *Bricks without Straw*, for instance, Mollie Ainslie’s decision to teach at a southern freedmen’s school is derided by the community in Horsford County who derisively refer to her as the “nigger-teacher.”⁵² In Tourgée’s *A Fool’s Errand*, Comfort Servosse is threatened by the Klan when he challenges the white patriarchal order in Warrington, and both he and his family members suffer for it. Servosse as well as Mollie are metaphorically blackened by their real and ideological associations, and like the members of the African American community who have dared to disrupt the established social order, the white Yankees who support them become targets of hostility. In a similar plotline in *The Grandissimes*, Joseph Frowenfeld moves to New Orleans with the hopes of redeeming a fallen people. When he forms relationships with several black residents, such as Honoré, f. m. c. and Palmyre, however, the Grandissimes cousins conclude that “we ought to hang that fellow.” Regarding his differing ideological perspectives, they complain that he “has never held his tongue” and resolve to “hang him with the lamp-post rope!”⁵³ Similar to the community’s reaction towards Frowenfeld’s “too free speech” in *The Grandissimes*, David Wilson’s “fatal remark” regarding his desire to “kill” his “half” of the

barking dog in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* perplexes the townspeople of Dawson's Landing and ruins his legal career for twenty-three years. Unlike Ainslie, Servosse, and Frowenfeld, however, Wilson overcomes his "long fight against hard luck and prejudice" when he discovers that Chambers and Tom were switched at birth, a discovery that upholds the community's belief that you cannot "kill" even the tiniest fraction of non-white racial inheritance.⁵⁴ In *Those Extraordinary Twins*, by contrast, when the once-celebrated European immigrant Luigi Cappello gains political power, he, along with his other "half," his Siamese twin Angelo, are lynched when the people of Dawson's Landing come to "distrust and detest him," their anxiety towards the cultural outsider erupting in brutal violence.⁵⁵

In addition to the white Northern interlopers who become cultural outcasts on account of their racial beliefs, the authors also develop Southern characters who are ostracized for their associations with African Americans. Among these iconoclastic characters are Jesse Hyman and John Walters of *A Fool's Errand*, Hesden LeMoyne of *Bricks without Straw*, Henry French of *The Colonel's Dream*, Mary Myrover of "Cecily's Dream," Père Jerome and Ursin Vignevielle of *Madame Delphine*, Kristian Koppig of "Tite Poulette," and the white Honoré half-brother of *The Grandissimes* who decides it is time to move past "our dead father's mistakes."⁵⁶ Perhaps no character in nineteenth-century American fiction better exemplifies the role of a Southerner who is empathetic to the African American experience than Huckleberry Finn of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In *Tom Sawyer*, Tom declares that he has never met a black person who is not a liar. Huck, on the other hand, confesses that he eats with a slave named Uncle Jake who gives him a "little something" if he can "spare it" as well as a place to sleep in his master's hayloft. Attempting to convince Tom that Uncle Jake is what he calls a "mighty good nigger," Huck concludes that he "likes me, becuz I don't ever act as if I was above

him.”⁵⁷ The two boys’ different perspectives towards the slaves who surround them in *Tom Sawyer* is extended in *Huckleberry Finn*, the novel in which Huck decides to face the “everlasting fire” of hell, as it has been described to him in Sunday School back in St. Petersburg, so that Jim can live as a free man. Whereas Tom mostly views Jim as a prop through which he can pursue his own “romantic” adventures, Huck relates to his life experiences more deeply, for he too has lived impoverished and alone on the margins of mainstream society, and he too has escaped his own abusive master, his father Pap Finn.⁵⁸

Similar to Huck’s disillusionment with the Southern “sivilization” that he decides to abandon at the end of the novel, Tourgée, Chesnutt, Cable, and Twain were all ideological outsiders who eventually moved away from the South. Ironically, however, the authors would set their best works of fiction in the region they deserted. Their treatment of race was not always praised, though, particularly in the works that they published after 1890, a decade that seems to mark the end of public interest in themes of racial equality in works of popular fiction in the nineteenth-century. Remarking upon this turning point, which was likely related to immigration, regional economics, as well as political interests, Arlin Turner has astutely observed that when “state laws were enacted in the early 1890s which decreed for the former slaves a segregated, non-voting status, no effective protest was voiced in either section. The public, valuing the peace which had been achieved, did not welcome disturbances, even in fiction.”⁵⁹ Less than ideal sales and unfavorable critical reactions to Tourgée’s *Pactolus Prime; or The White Christ* (1890), Chesnutt’s *The Marrow of Tradition* (1900) and *The Colonel’s Dream* (1905), Cable’s *John March, Southerner* (1894), and Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1894) illustrate the waning reception towards racially reformist literature at the end of the century.

Pactolus Prime, for instance, is the story of a caustic bootblack who refuses to worship a “white Christ,” and it is the most unusual and iconoclastic piece of fiction published by Tourgée in his literary career. In a scathing review in *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, Joel Chandler Harris claimed that the author had a “burning hatred of his own race” and sought to “pave the way for black supremacy.” He criticized each “gloomy page” of the novel as making it appear that “in this fair land of the south the ruling class is cold-blooded and cruel, while the blacks are patient martyrs, barred out from their rightful place in society.” In his closing lines, Harris contemplated the motivation for composing such a work and asked “what shall we say of such a writer? Is he a monomaniac, or simply a refuge from his race.”⁶⁰ A decade after the publication of *Pactolus Prime*, Tourgée was living in Bordeaux, France, where he and his family moved in 1897 after being appointed consul by President McKinley. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, there was an emerging movement in anti-Reconstruction novels at the turn of the century, as evidenced by the publication of Thomas Nelson Page’s *Red Rock* (1898), Joel Chandler Harris’s *Gabriel Tolliver* (1902), and Thomas Dixon, Jr.’s trilogy *The Leopard’s Spots* (1902), *The Clansmen* (1905), and *The Traitor* (1907).⁶¹

When *The Leopard’s Spots* was published in early 1902, multiple copies of the novel were sent abroad to Tourgée by literary and personal friends who were struck by the fact that Dixon’s novel was an obvious rewriting of *A Fool’s Errand*, which was published twenty-three-years prior.⁶² *The Leopard’s Spots* holds many similarities of setting and plot to *A Fool’s Errand*, as both works take place during the Reconstruction in North Carolina and foreground the tensions between former Confederates, southern Unionists, carpetbaggers, emancipated slaves, and the Klu Klux Klan. There are ironic puns upon several chapter titles from *A Fool’s Errand*, reenactments of memorable scenes, and even a depiction of an outcast leader of the

North Carolina Republican Party who closely resembles Tourgée.⁶³ In *The Watchman*, E. H. Johnson compared *The Leopard's Spots* and *The Fool's Errand* and noted that the two books are “as contrary as possible in spirit and aim” and that “the sympathy awakened by the one story goes all to the colored race, that aroused by the other story all goes to the white race.”⁶⁴ The overriding theme of Dixon’s novel challenges the notion of social progress achieved through a federalized system of public education that is championed by Comfort Servosse at the end of *A Fool's Errand*. In the closing chapters of *The Leopard's Spots*, by contrast, a Southern preacher named Reverend John Durham claims that

the more you educate, the more impossible you make his position in a democracy. Education! Can you change the colour of his skin, the kink of his hair, the bulge of his lips, the spread of his nose, or the beat of his heart, with a spelling book? The Negro is the human donkey. You can train him, but you can’t make a horse. Mate him with a horse, you lose the horse, and get a larger donkey called a mule, incapable of preserving his species. What is called our race prejudice is simply God’s first law of nature—the law of self-preservation.⁶⁵

Regarding *The Leopard's Spots*, Tourgée wrote that the novel held “not the remotest similitude to anything that ever happened.” He also noted, however, that “as a delineation of the dominant thought of the southern white man of yesterday and to-day, it is of inestimable value,” an embittered remark regarding the accuracy of the racial anxieties that Dixon perpetuated in his novel.⁶⁶

Three years after the publication of *The Leopard's Spots*, Tourgée died in Bordeaux, and when his body was returned to the United States, one of the speakers at his memorial was Charles Chesnutt.⁶⁷ Incidentally, at the time of Tourgée’s death in the late spring of 1905,

Chesnutt was in the midst of composing *The Colonel's Dream*, his last published novel and one that very clearly pays tribute to *A Fool's Errand*. Both of the works are set in North Carolina shortly after the Civil War and feature white protagonists who are at times referred to as “the fool” as they suffer for their social idealism as well as their alliances with the black community they attempt to assist. Whereas Comfort Servosse of *A Fool's Errand* is a Northerner by birth, Henry French of *The Colonel's Dream* is a former Confederate who returns home after living in New York for several decades. Both characters are deeply disillusioned by the end of their stay in the South and decide that supporting legislation in favor of a federalized system of education is the only way the problems of the South can be remedied.

Chesnutt described the response to *The Colonel's Dream*, which he had meant to be “a study of Southern conditions in the form of a novel,” and remarked that “it was not a pronounced success.”⁶⁸ The critical reaction to his previous novel *The Marrow of Tradition* in many ways resembles the fate of his subsequent work. In October of 1900, in the wake of the success of *The House Behind the Cedars*, William Dean Howells wrote to Chesnutt and urged him to submit a manuscript to Harpers that was “about the color-line, and of as actual and immediate interest as possible.”⁶⁹ One year later, however, when Howells read the novel of contemporary life that he commissioned, he seemed surprised by the cynical tone of the narrative and noted in a private letter that

I have been reading Chesnutt's “Marrow of Tradition.” You know he is a negro, though you wouldn't know it from seeing him, and he writes of the black and white situation with an awful bitterness. . . . Good Lord! How such a negro must hate us. And then think of the Filipinos and the Cubans and Puerto Ricans whom we have added to our happy family. But I am talking treason.⁷⁰

In his review that was published in the *North American Review* one month later, Howells praised Chesnutt's literary talent but reiterated his claim that his latest work was "bitter, bitter," noting that "there is no reason in history why it should not be so, if wrong is to be repaid by hate and yet it would be better if it was not so bitter."⁷¹ Ironically, however, although *The Marrow of Tradition* is lacking in the vernacular humor of *The Conjure Tales* and romantic melodrama in *The House Behind Cedars*, it is in many respects Chesnutt's most powerful portrayal of race in America, the erupting frustration of Josh Green in many ways prefiguring Joe Christmas of William Faulkner's *A Light in August* (1932) and Bigger Thomas of Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940).

The year before his death in 1932, Chesnutt published "Post-Bellum—Pre-Harlem," an essay in which he praises both Tourgée and Cable and reflects upon the late century literary context in which all three authors struggled to maintain cultural relevancy. Describing the mainstream fiction of the day, he claimed that "Thomas Dixon was writing the Negro down industriously and with marked popular success. Thomas Nelson Page was disguising the harshness of slavery under the mask of sentiment. The trend of public sentiment at the moment was distinctly away from the Negro."⁷² In the time period to which Chesnutt refers, Cable had published his most controversial collection of essays in *The Negro Question* (1888), including one entitled "National Aid to Southern Schools" that echoes Tourgée and Chesnutt's contention that a federalized system of education would benefit the South immeasurably. Regarding the social consequences of slavery for the nation's newest citizens, Cable claims that

the educational destitution in the South, so contrary to our American scheme of social order, is distinctly the result of gross defects in that social order inevitably accompanying the institutional establishment of African slavery. It was certainly

the Nation's crime. It is not enough for the North to point to her bloody expiation in war, nor the South to her proportionately greater sacrifice. Expiations, however awful, are not restitutions. Expiations do not pay damages. Here is one of the vast evils resulting from the Nation's error still unremoved.⁷³

The critical fallout, particularly in the South, was intense after the publication of Cable's late century essays. In 1888, for instance, *The Atlanta Constitution* recorded a speech in which Cable encouraged African Americans to vote "in the name of the dead, black and white, of the living, and of your children yet unborn, not as of one party or another, but as American freemen." The reporter concluded his article with the claim that "if Mr. Cable is not a lunatic, we insist that he is no longer a man of letters, a writer of pretty, namby-pamby stories—he is a bloody shirt shrieker, only this, and nothing more."⁷⁴ It would not be until 1894 that Cable published another novel, and though it was far less contentious than his previous collections of non-fiction, it too was a critical failure.

The action of *John March, Southerner* takes place in Suez, Dixie, primarily in the 1880s, and follows the life of the title character from childhood to maturity as he navigates the pervading ideologies of his family and community in order to gain the perspective through which he can assess the economic and political concerns of the New South for himself.⁷⁵ On August 29, 1889, Cable's long-time editor, Richard Watson Gilder, read a portion of the novel and told him that he could "weep from disappointment." He claimed that *John March Southerner* was not a "return to literature," as he had hoped, but rather an attempt "to fetch everything into literature save & except literature itself." In what was clearly intended to be criticism, Gilder also warned "Shades of Tourgée!" to voice his disapproval towards the social themes evoked in the novel.⁷⁶ At the end of the century, the *New York Times* commented on a new five-volume

collection of Cable's previous novels and remarked upon the "comparative unpopularity" of *John March, Southerner* to his other works and reasoned that it was an "opportunity" for "critics" and "gossips" to "judge a man by his last performance."⁷⁷ *John March, Southerner*, however, was neither Cable's best work nor his last. He would continue to publish the occasional novel until his death in 1925, and though several were Southern in setting, he would never regain the momentum or vigor with which he led his fearless attack on American racism in the 1880s and 1890s, a crusade for which he sacrificed his personal reputation as well as the commercial viability of his literary career.

Although all of the authors devoted their greatest works of fiction to portraying life in the American South, only Twain was able to transcend political or partisan didacticism. Part of his literary genius, as well as his commercial success, was achieved through the power of thematic implication. In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, for instance, he avoided an intrusive or moralizing third-person narrator telling a postwar society how to feel. Rather, through the thoughts and actions of an uneducated child, he showed them how to act. The potential for transformation that is evoked in Huck and Jim's relationship on the river, however, is lost a decade later in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*. The two-part novel is Twain's most direct assault on the legacy of slavery in America, but it is also a deeply pessimistic tragedy. The conversion of Chambers de Valet from a slave into a white aristocrat is portrayed with a pervading sense of hopelessness, as illustrated when "the real heir suddenly found himself rich and free, but in a most embarrassing situation. He could neither read nor write. . . . His gait, his attitudes, his gestures, his bearing, his laugh—all were vulgar and uncouth."⁷⁸ Ironically, because Chambers was born white, his inability to succeed in mainstream society cannot be associated with a biological inheritance of racial inferiority, an irony that

reinforces the power of social conditioning and the penetrating wounds of slavery. These issues are central to the theme that “training is everything,” a claim that Wilson records in his calendar of axioms along with the assertion that “cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education.”⁷⁹

In February of 1905, both Cable and Chesnutt were among the one hundred and seventy guests who attended Twain’s seventieth birthday at Delmonico’s restaurant in New York City.⁸⁰

In his speech, Twain spoke of the first moral he ever acquired and explained to his guests that

it was an old moral, an old second-hand moral, all out of repair, and didn't fit, anyway. . . . When I got that mouldy old moral, she had stopped growing, because she hadn't any exercise; but I worked her hard, I worked her Sundays and all. Under this cultivation she waxed in might and stature beyond belief, and served me well and was my pride and joy for sixty-three years. . . . She was a great loss to me. Yet not all loss. I sold her—ah, pathetic skeleton, as she was—I sold her to Leopold, the pirate King of Belgium; he sold her to our Metropolitan Museum, and it was very glad to get her, for without a rag on, she stands 57 feet long and 16 feet high, and they think she's a brontosaur. Well, she looks it.⁸¹

Interestingly, in the public remarks he referred to as his “swan-song,” many of the terms with which Twain personifies his first moral evoke the image of a slave woman. Similar to Roxy of *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, who wears a “handkerchiefed turban,” as well as Aunt Rachel of “A True Story,” who wears a “big red turban,” the obscure figure from his childhood wears a “rag.” Furthermore, in the same manner in which Roxy is of “majestic form and stature” and Aunt Rachel is of a “mighty frame and stature,” the lesson that he claims to have carried with him for over half a century is imposing “in might and stature.”⁸² The likelihood that the overworked

“moral” that he acquired at the age of seven was that of slavery is reinforced by his sarcastic claim that he “sold her” to King Leopold II of Belgium, the colonial ruler who was responsible for the brutal exploitation of the Congolese people at the turn of the century, an imperial atrocity that Twain publically condemned.⁸³ Ironically, Twain goes on to claim that infants are “crammed with sin microbes, and the only thing that can extirpate these sin microbes is morals.” Thus, speaking before the literary and social establishment near the end of his life, Twain recast the theme of *Huckleberry Finn* in the ironic suggestion that people are born “poor” of the values that civilization teaches, and probably richer for it.⁸⁴

Cable was one of the guests invited to speak at Twain’s seventieth birthday party in 1905. Five years later, on November 30, 1910, he also spoke at his memorial service that was held by The American Academy of Arts and Letters in Carnegie Hall. Reflecting eloquently upon his late friend, he praised the “vast grotesqueness of his wit and humor” as well as the “rare beauty of his mind.”⁸⁵ Throughout their literary careers, Tourgée, Chesnutt, Cable, and Twain all offered unique glimpses into life in the American South as they saw it, for better and for worse. The central conflicts of *The Grandissimes*, *John March: Southerner*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *Pudd’nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins*, *A Fool’s Errand*, *Bricks without Straw*, *Pactolus Prime*, *Mandy Oxendine*, *The Conjure Woman*, *The House Behind the Cedars*, and *The Marrow of Tradition*, are not merely the racial tensions existing between black and white Americans but also the manner in which the mistakes of the nation’s past are irrevocably tied to the lingering problems of contemporary life, a reality that all of the authors explored with rare insight in their most important contributions to American literature.

Notes

¹W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880* (New York: Free Press, 1999), 30. Originally published in New York by Harcourt, Brace and Company in 1935. In his essay “The Freedman’s Case in Equity,” George Washington Cable makes a similar point when he argues that “the late Southern slave has within two decades risen from slavery to freedom, passed on into political ascendancy, and fallen again from that eminence. The amended Constitution holds him up in his new political rights as well as a mere constitution can. On the other hand, certain enactments of Congress, trying to reach out further, have lately been made void by the highest court in the nation. And another thing has happened. The popular mind in the old free States, weary of strife at arm’s length, bewildered by its complications, vexed by many a blunder, eager to turn to the cure of other evils, and even tinctured by that race feeling whose grosser excesses it would so gladly see suppressed, has retreated from its uncomfortable dictatorial attitude and thrown the whole matter over to the states of the South.” See Cable, “The Freedman’s Case in Equity,” *Century* 29 (1885): 409.

²Charles Chesnutt, “Post-Bellum—Pre-Harlem,” in *Charles W. Chesnutt: Essays and Speeches*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., Robert C. Leitz, III, and Jesse Crisler (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 543. Previously published in *The Crisis* 28 (1931): 193-94.

³Charles Chesnutt, “The Goophered Grapevine,” in *The Conjure Woman* (Champaign: Book Jungle, 2008), 10. *The Conjure Woman* was originally published in Boston by Houghton Mifflin in 1899.

⁴Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins: Authoritative Texts, Textual Introduction, Table of Variants, Criticism, 2nd Edition*, ed. Sidney Berger (New York:

W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 12. The first American edition of the text was originally published as *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson; and the Comedy Those Extraordinary Twins* (Hartford: American Publishing Company, 1894).

⁵Albion W. Tourgée, *Pactolus Prime; The White Christ* (Upper Saddle River: Gregg Press, 1968), 78. Originally published in New York by Cassell Publishing Company in 1890.

⁶Tourgée, *Pactolus Prime*, 76.

⁷Mark Twain, "Corn-Pone Opinions," in *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain*, ed. Charles Neider (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1963), 583-84. Originally published in Mark Twain, *Europe and Elsewhere*, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1923), 399-404.

⁸Albion Tourgée, *Bricks without Straw*, ed. Carolyn L. Karcher (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 102. Originally published in New York by Fords, Howard, & Hulbert in 1880.

⁹Charles Chesnutt, "The Passing of Grandison," in *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 179, 202. Originally published in *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 168-202.

¹⁰Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, ed. Gregg Camfield (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2008), 80. The first American edition of the text was originally published in New York by Charles L. Webster & Company in 1885.

¹¹Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 92.

¹²George Washington Cable, *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* (New York: Sagamore Press Inc., 1957), 181. Originally published in New York by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1880.

¹³See George Washington Cable, *Madame Delphine* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1881), 10; George Washington Cable, "'Tite Poulette,'" in *Old Creole Days* (New York: New American Library of World Literature, 1961), 156. Originally published in *Scribner's Monthly* 8 (1874): 674-84.; Charles Chesnutt *The House Behind the Cedars*, ed. Judith Jackson Fossett (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 109. Originally published in Boston by Houghton, Mifflin, & Co. in 1900.

¹⁴Cable, *Madame Delphine*, 48, 44.

¹⁵Charles W. Chesnutt, *Mandy Oxendine*, ed. Charles Hackenberry (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 23.

¹⁶Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars*, 111.

¹⁷Charles Chesnutt, "The Sheriff's Children," in *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 86. Originally published in *New York Independent* (November 7, 1889): 30-32.

¹⁸Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars*, 21, 17.

¹⁹See Charles Chesnutt to George Washington Cable, June 5, 1890, in Helen Chesnutt, *Charles Waddell Chesnutt: Pioneer of the Color Line* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952), 58. Interestingly, Chesnutt was criticizing "Judge Tourg  e's cultivated white Negroes" in his letter to Cable. He also takes issue with Tourg  e's "latest heroine," presumably Eva Collins of *Pactolus Prime*, who enters a convent when she learns of her mixed bloodlines.

²⁰Chesnutt, *The House Behind the Cedars*, 191.

²¹Chesnutt, *Mandy Oxendine*, 46.

²²Charles W. Chesnutt, *Paul Marchand*, F. M. C., ed. Dean McWilliams (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 180.

²³Charles W. Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2003), 212. Originally published in Boston by Houghton Mifflin and Company in 1901.

²⁴See Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 45; Chesnutt, *Marrow of Tradition*, 211.

²⁵Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 67.

²⁶Tourgée, *A Fool's Errand*, 98, 186, 189, 192.

²⁷Tourgée, *A Fool's Errand*, 192.

²⁸Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 235.

²⁹Mark Twain, "Only a Nigger," in *Mark Twain at the Buffalo Express*, ed. Joseph B. McCullough and Janice McIntire-Strasburg (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999), 22. Also see Samuel Langhorne Clemens to John Russell Young, March 8-10, 1869 (UCCL 00270).

<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL00270.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp>

³⁰Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 192, 195, 198.

³¹Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 14.

³²Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 200. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the white aristocrat Tom Driscoll murders his uncle, Judge Driscoll, while in black face. Likewise, the night that Tom Delamere of *The Marrow of Tradition* murders his benefactor, Aunt Polly Ochiltree, he is also in blackface and dressed as his slave Sandy Campbell.

³³Chesnutt, "The Sheriff's Children," 85, 86, 83.

³⁴Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 185.

The first American edition of the text was originally published in Hartford by American Publishing Company, 1876.

³⁵Tourgée, *Bricks without Straw*, 153, 276.

³⁶Cable, *The Grandissimes*, 180.

³⁷Chesnutt, *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, 158.

³⁸See Cable, *The Grandissimes*, 184; Chesnutt, *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, 81.

³⁹Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 97, 92.

⁴⁰Cable, *The Grandissimes*, 75.

⁴¹Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 931.

⁴²Mark Twain, *Which Was It?*, in *Mark Twain's "Which Was the Dream?" and Other Symbolic Writings of the Later Years*, ed. John S. Tuckey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 415.

⁴³Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 182, 73-74.

⁴⁴Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 207.

⁴⁵Tourgée, *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, 83.

⁴⁶Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 228, 243.

⁴⁷Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 200.

⁴⁸Tourgée, *Paul Marchand, F. M. C.*, 158.

⁴⁹Charles W. Chesnutt, "The Web of Circumstance," in *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 317-18, 318, 322. Originally appeared in *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899).

⁵⁰Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*, 183.

⁵¹Charles W. Chesnutt, "The Doll," in *The Short Fiction of Charles W. Chesnutt*, ed. Sylvia Lyons Render (Washington D. C.: Howard University Press, 1974), 409, 412, 406. Originally published in *The Crisis* 3 (1912): 248-52

⁵²Tourgée, *Bricks without Straw*, 178.

⁵³Cable, *The Grandissimes*, 89, 240.

⁵⁴See Cable, *The Grandissimes*, 240; Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 120.

⁵⁵Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 183.

⁵⁶Cable, *The Grandissimes*, 223.

⁵⁷Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 178.

⁵⁸Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 229, 247.

⁵⁹Arlin Turner, "Mark Twain and the South: An Affair of Love and Anger," in *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, 294. Originally published in *The Southern Review* 4 (April 1968): 493-519.

⁶⁰Joel Chandler Harris, "A Refugee from His Race," *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (April 22, 1890): 4.

⁶¹Mark Emory Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice: Albion Tourgée and the Quest for Racial Equality from the Civil War to Plessy v. Ferguson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 306).

⁶²Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 17-18.

⁶³For example, in Book I in *The Leopard's Spots*, Chapter Two is entitled "A Light Shining in Darkness" and Chapter Ten is entitled "The Man or Brute in Embryo," phrasing that resembles Chapter Thirty-Nine and Chapter Fourteen of *A Fool's Errand*: "Light Shineth in

Darkness” and “Citizens in Embryo.” A character named Hon. Allan McLeod in *The Leopard’s Spots* seemed to be based upon Tourgée in that as both are leaders of the Republican Party in North Carolina during Reconstruction who face assassination for the controversial editorials that they publish in the local newspapers. Like McLeod, Tourgée accepts a federal appointment and leaves the United States, a plot detail that is included in the Chapter Sixteen, which is entitled “The End of A Modern Villain.” See Thomas Dixon, Jr., *The Leopard’s Spots: A Romance of the White Man’s Burden—1865-1900* (New York: Doubleday, Page, & Co., 1902).

⁶⁴E. H. Johnson, “The Leopard’s Spots” and “The Fool’s Errand,” *The Watchman* (April 24, 1902): 10.

⁶⁵Dixon, *The Leopard’s Spots*, 460.

⁶⁶Albion W. Tourgée to E. H. Johnson, May 15, 1902. See Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 18, 19.

⁶⁷Tourgée’s funeral was held in Mayville, New York on November 14, 1905. In a letter to Shelby J. Davidson on September 18, 1905, Chesnutt wrote “with reference to Judge Tourgée, I knew him personally, have visited at his home and have held him in high esteem for the zeal and perseverance with which he labored in the interests of our race. It would be a pleasure to speak in his praise if I could conveniently do so.” See *To Be An Author: The Letters of Charles W. Chesnutt 1889-1905*, ed. Joseph R. McElrath, Jr. and Robert C. Leitz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 229-30. A few weeks after the Mayville funeral for Tourgée, the Niagara Movement, which was established by W. E. B. Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter, Harry C. Smith, and twenty-six other black men, held a memorial service in honor of three “Friends of Freedom”: Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Tourgée. See Elliott, *Color-Blind Justice*, 313.

⁶⁸Charles W. Chesnutt to John S. Durham, September 5, 1905, in *To Be an Author*, 227.

Also see Charles W. Chesnutt to Benjamin G. Brawley, July 29, 1914, in *An Exemplary Citizen: Letters of Charles W. Chesnutt, 1906-1932*, ed. Jesse S. Crisler, Robert C. Leitz, III, and Joseph R. McElrath, Jr. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 118.

⁶⁹See William L. Andrews, "William Dean Howells and Charles W. Chesnutt: Criticism of Race Fiction in the Age of Booker T. Washington," *American Literature* 48 (1976): 331.

⁷⁰William Dean Howells to Henry D. Fuller, Nov. 10, 1901, in *W. D. Howells: Selected Letters, Volume 4: 1892-1901*, ed. Thomas Wortham, Christopher K. Lohmann, Jerry Herron, and David J. Nordloh (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981), 274.

⁷¹Howells also notes that Chesnutt "is fighting a battle, and it is not for him to pick up the cheap graces and poses of the joust. He does, indeed, cast them all from him when he gets down to work, and in the dramatic climaxes and closes of his story he shortens his weapons and deals his blows so absolutely without flourish that I have nothing but admiration for him." See William Dean Howells, "A Psychological Counter-Current in Recent Fiction," *The North American Review* 173 (1901): 832.

⁷²Charles W. Chesnutt, "Post-Bellum—Pre-Harlem," in *Charles W. Chesnutt: Essays and Speeches*, 545.

⁷³George W. Cable, "National Aid to Southern Schools," in *The Negro Question* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), 60. Originally published as "A National Debt" in *Northwestern Congregationalist* (September 6, 1889): 2-3. The essay was then collected in the second edition of *The Negro Question* that was published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 1890.

⁷⁴In this previously unrecorded speech, Cable also encourages the African American community to "cast your vote though taxed for it. . . . Keep your vote alive; better nine free

than ten half free. In most of the southern states the negro vote has been diminishing steadily for years, to the profound satisfaction of those white men whose suicidal policy it is to keep you in alienism. . . . For in the free land the people that do not vote do not get and do not deserve their rights.” See Anonymous, “A Bloody Shirt Shrieker,” *The Atlanta Constitution* (July 27, 1888): 4. A portion of another speech by Cable regarding black suffrage was disparaged by *The Atlanta Constitution* in 1890. The tenor of the article is evoked by the subheadings that read “Utters A Lot of Rot for Northern Consumption” and “The Great, Negro-Lover’s Ideas As to What Ought to Be Done if the Southern Whites do not Embrace the Negroes With Promptness and Dispatch.” See Anonymous, “Cable, The Crank,” *The Atlanta Constitution* (February 24, 1890): 1.

⁷⁵Arlin Turner, *George W. Cable: A Biography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1956), 285. Regarding *John March Southerner*, Turner also maintains that “readers in 1894 failed to be moved by John March’s struggle because they had lost interest in the social maze through which he had to find his way. As a practical matter the station of the Negro in American society seemed to be fixed, and to puzzle over the justice or the larger implications of it, as John March did, could not seem real or vital. Over half a century afterward, when the role of the Negro in the American scene came up for reassessment, the struggle delineated in *John March* regained some vitality it had for Cable in 1894.” See Turner, *George W. Cable: A Biography*, 296.

⁷⁶See Turner, *George W. Cable*, 291.

⁷⁷Henry Barrett Hinckley, “New Edition of Cable,” *New York Times* (December 10, 1898): BR840.

⁷⁸Twain, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, 120-21.

⁷⁹In the epigraph to Chapter Five, Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar reads: "Training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but cabbage with a college education." See Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 25.

⁸⁰See "Celebrate Mark Twain's Seventieth Birthday," *New York Times* (December 6, 1905): 1.

⁸¹Twain, "Seventieth Birthday," in *Mark Twain Speeches*, 432-33.

⁸²See *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, 15, 9; Mark Twain, "A True Story, Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It," *Atlantic Monthly* 34 (1874): 593, 591; and Mark Twain, "Seventieth Birthday," in *Mark Twain Speeches*, ed. William Dean Howells (New York: Harper and Brothers), 433.

In a letter to William Dean Howells, Twain also describes a servant named Mary Cord as "turbaned, very tall, very broad, very fine every way." He also notes that Aunt Rachel of "A True Story" is "her portrait." See Samuel Langhorne Clemens to William Dean and Elinor M. Howells, 25 and 27 Aug 1877, Elmira, N.Y. (UCCL 02515).

<http://www.marktwainproject.org/xtf/view?docId=letters/UCCL02515.xml;style=letter;brand=mtp>

⁸³It has been estimated that as many as ten million people, nearly half of the Congolese population, died between 1880 and 1920. See Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), 233. In Twain's political satire *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, the Belgium ruler laments the unjust manner in which public opinion has turned on him for his effort to "root out slavery and stop the slave raids, and lift up those twenty-five millions of gentle and harmless blacks out of darkness into light, the light of our blessed Redeemer, the light that streams from his holy Word, the light that

makes glorious our noble civilization—lift them up and dry their tears and fill their bruised hearts with joy and gratitude—lift them up and make them comprehend that they were no longer outcasts and forsaken, but our very brothers in Christ.” See Mark Twain, *King Leopold’s Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule* (Boston: P. R. Warren, 1905), 6. According to a publisher’s note within the pamphlet, Twain refused “to accept any pecuniary return” from the booklet and requested that all proceeds went towards humanitarian relief in the Congo. Also see Hunt Hawkins, “Mark Twain’s Involvement with the Congo Reform Movement: ‘A Fury of Generous Indignation’,” *New England Quarterly* 51 (1978): 147-75.

⁸⁴The reporter for the *New York Times* also noted that “it would be difficult to pick a more critical audience—and yet, as the great humorist talked on in his characteristic, inimitable drawl, the men and women present laughed until their laughter turned into groans. Yet a strain of melancholy ran perceptibly through the speaker’s sentences. Toward the end it gained predominance, and the last words were spoken with a voice quivering with emotion.” See “Celebrate Mark Twain’s Seventieth Birthday,” 1.

⁸⁵Regarding the “rare beauty” of Twain’s mind, Cable explains that “I do not mean a beauty consisting in great structural symmetry or finish, as of some masterpiece of Greek or Gothic elaboration. I mean a beauty such as the illimitable haphazard of Nature a few times in our planet’s history has hit upon, where angels would seem to have builded in a moment of careless sport, as in the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, or some equal wonder of supernal color and titanic form in that great West which had so much to do with the shaping of his genius—in so far as his genius was ever really shaped.” See *Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and of the National Institute of Arts and Letters 1909-1910* (New York: De Vinne Press, 1910), 21.

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