

Abstract This article explores the enabling intimacy between sentimentalism and biopolitics by turning to a less-than-obvious and yet characteristic example of the sentimental mode: the ubiquitous orphan tale of the mid- to late nineteenth century. It argues that individual orphan heroines of domestic plots not only function as tropes of domestic and national belonging, as has been widely recognized, but also of population regulation at the biological level of species. Sentimentalism functions as a mode of evolutionary theory, one that articulated the Lamarckian belief that sensory impressions shape the development of the individual body and of the species. Sentimental Lamarckism extended across literature, reform, and scientific theory and preceded naturalism's deep engagement with evolutionary thought by decades. The sentimental orphan trope figures as a key aesthetic technology for regulating the growth of the population. Sentimental novels about orphans are not just about children who transform through their experiences; they were also directed at children readers and crafted to elicit emotional identification that could spur similar changes off the page.

Keywords sentimentalism, biopolitics, domestic novel

The full deployment of biopower in the United States and the emergence of the nation's first mass culture industry overlap temporally, unfurling simultaneously over the course of the first half of the nineteenth century.¹ How might these two seemingly distinct phenomena—the rise of the modern liberal democratic state, which made tandem moves to conceive of the biological as the domain of the political and the national population, in turn, as itself a biological phenomenon, and the proliferating print cultures of sentimentalism—be brought into conceptual relation? Certainly there is ample precursor for such a thought experiment: Nancy Armstrong (1987) undertook a Foucauldian read of the politics of the British domestic novel to argue for the formative role of women's fiction in the rise of modern

subjectivity more than three decades ago. Scholars including Lora Romero (1997), Marianne Noble (2000), and Richard H. Brodhead (1988) have illuminated the disciplinary thrust of the sentimental mode, which constitutes the female subject via the erotics of embodied domination. Sentimentalism, a discourse premised on emotional attachment and embodied identification as the preeminent method of justice, is widely considered to link the individual corpus with the abstract notion of the body politic, a project that resonates with the biopolitical imagination (Hendler 2001; Samuels 1992; Sanchez-Eppler 1993).² In this article, I explore the enabling intimacy between sentimentalism and the biopolitical regulation of the population by turning to a less-than-obvious and yet characteristic example of the sentimental mode: the ubiquitous orphan tale of the mid- to late-nineteenth century.³

Sentimentalism coordinated and constituted a broad biopolitical imagination among the bourgeoisie, and the orphan novel was one of its key instruments. Biopower, as understood in the Foucauldian vein, encompasses two distinct yet overlapping mechanisms of power: discipline and biopolitics. Disciplinary power exerts at the level of the individual organism and produces the subject through its embeddedness within institutions such as the prison, hospital, and the school. Biopolitics, in turn, deploys regulatory mechanisms that calculate, stabilize, and optimize phenomena inherent to the population itself, such as rates of birth, death, disease, and economic productivity. I show how the sentimental orphan novel also helped consolidate the practice of regulatory biopolitics that addresses itself to the population, a phenomenon conceived of at the dimension of species. Building on Dana Luciano's (2007) theory of the biopolitics of sentimental temporality, I elaborate how sentimentalism itself was understood to be a disciplinary and regulatory technology that tempered the impulses compelled by sensory stimulation with the forward-thinking habit of emotional reflection. Far beyond an aesthetic mode or even an epistemology, sentimentalism denotes a biocultural technology for fostering the evolution of the civilized races and managing, and sometimes disposing, those racialized bodies it figures as outside the looping but ultimately forward-moving flow of time.

I argue the somewhat counterintuitive point that individual orphan heroines of domestic plots function not only as tropes of domestic and national belonging, as has been widely recognized, but also of population formation at the biological level of species. Within the diegetic world of the novels themselves, orphans are portrayed as isolated

victims of circumstantial abandonment and deserving objects of sympathy. Critics have aptly illuminated how, nonetheless, in the decades following the American Revolution the trope of the solitary orphan carries the symbolic weight of the democratic social contract and the rejection of aristocratic forms of governance (Murphy 2014). Within domestic plots as within liberalism more generally, family relations figure as the microcosm of democratic alliance. The orphan whose familial ties have been chosen on the basis of deliberate affiliation, rather than bestowed through consanguineous lineage, neatly furthers the political work liberalism assigns to the private sphere. The broadest political implications of the elective family, however, extend beyond liberal modes of governance. As Michel Foucault elaborated (2010), classical liberalism was itself one of the key formations of the gradual consolidation of biopower across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The orphan trope, I suggest based on a broad survey of the genre, figures as a key aesthetic technology of sentimental biopolitics. I pay particular attention to how the novels employ the orphan as a technology of settler colonialism, in which self-disciplining orphan girls are not only the root of the liberal family but also the evolutionary seeds of seizing and managing western lands.

Sentimentalism, not naturalism, inaugurated US literature's extended engagement with evolutionary theories. Nineteenth-century sentimentalism took shape within a Lamarckian evolutionary frame. In this pregenetic era, repeated behaviors, habits, and intimacies were widely understood to be the grounds of individual development as well as forming hereditary material. Rather than the Darwinian competition and struggle more typically highlighted in literary scholarship on late nineteenth-century evolutionary thought, the favored approach to species change emphasized a differential capacity of feeling, understood as both the capacity to direct and mitigate impulsive desires and to absorb and incorporate the effects of sensory impressions over time. The Lamarckian interpretation of heredity and species change dominated for decades even after Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* was released in 1859. The chronobiopolitics of sentiment, to use Luciano's (2007: 9) apt formulation of how sentimental reflection properly oriented the individual into the forward flow of time, extends beyond the epoch of individual development into the evolutionary intervals of species.

Sentimentalism functioned as a biopolitical technology in which the individual's capacity for feeling and self-discipline produces desired evolutionary outcomes, as I argue in my book, *The Biopolitics of*

Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century (2018). In this essay, I expand this argument by taking it into the realm of the sentimental novel—a pivotal terrain of sentimental discourse not covered in the book. Drawing on thirty multiethnic sentimental novels about orphans, I explore how sentimentalism engages with evolutionary theory at the level of aesthetics, with respect to characterization, didactic modes of address, plot typology, and genre. Sentimental novels about orphans are not just about children who transform through their experiences; they were also directed at children readers and crafted to elicit emotional identification that could spur similar changes off the page. Sentimentalism trains an individual to reflect on their sensory stimulations and to craft an appropriate emotional response, and it was understood in the nineteenth century to enable the civilized to direct the evolution of races and the species. Sentiment thus served as a key biopolitical technology to regulate the population.

Adoption and Adaptation

Sentimentalism was understood as a broad-based discourse of emotional control and self-regulation prior to the twentieth century. Its purview extended far beyond the literary, encompassing not only an aesthetic mode prioritizing emotional affiliation as the grounds of truth claims but also a scientific epistemology and an ontology of the sensory body. Historian of science Jessica Riskin (2002: 1) highlights that sentiment, for Denis Diderot, connoted “an emotional ‘movement’ in response to a physical sensation,” and this process of reflecting on sensory stimulations formed the grounds of what she terms the “sentimental empiricism” of the eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century French sciences. Riskin uncovers how sentimentalism was an established scientific methodology in the era that interpreted sensory experience and emotional feeling as the best methods to arrive at new knowledge. This key reframing from aesthetic genre to scientific method enables sentimentalism’s function as a biological, and biopolitical, technology to emerge.

Appreciating the wide influence of Lamarckian, Spencerian, and other evolutionary theories on literary culture before and after Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* appeared in the United States at the end of 1859 illuminates the evolutionary, and biopolitical, dimensions of sentimentalism. In the new discipline of biology at the dawn of the nineteenth century, Jean-Baptiste Lamarck and his followers extrapolated the process of receiving sensory impressions, which John Locke and

others had elaborated into an account of mental development, into one of the first accounts of evolutionary species change. For Lamarck, organisms habitually seek pleasure and avoid pain, and these movements incur sensory impressions. A sensory impression stimulates the rush of sensory fluid to the affected body part; when movements are habitually repeated, the flood of sensory fluid gradually enlarges frequently used parts of the body and atrophies others. In the Lamarckian view, sensory experience creates the body's physical shape, a principle often summarized as "function determines form." Lamarck postulated that these modifications were then transmitted to progeny, a principle named the inheritance of acquired characteristics. The doctrine's significance rests in the introduction of temporality to the phenomenon of species, such that species were no longer fixed forms but somewhat malleable types that incur changes due to their pursuit of feelings (Wilkins 2009: 107). Lamarck (1914: 336) stressed that the most advanced species had developed the faculty of "moral sensibility," an emotional state that allowed them to regulate their sensory impressions, enabling distance from captive sensation. Lamarckian theories of heredity and evolution form part of sentimental discourse (Schuller 2018).

Sentiment, understood as emotional reflection on sensory impressions, entails disciplining the body's stimulations. Civilized bodies were ascribed with the capacity of impressibility, or the capacity to be affected over time. Interactions with the bodies, objects, and atmospheres of the environment were understood to trigger heritable adaptations. This posed both great potential and risk. As I argue in *The Biopolitics of Feeling*, it was the job of sentiment, and especially that of white women, to regulate habitual tendencies so that they were aimed toward benefiting the evolution of the population, rather than gratifying the individual's immediate pleasure. Here, I show in detail how sentimental Lamarckism was developed not only in scientific and reform texts but right in the heart of sentimental culture: the orphan novel.

The paradigmatic figure of sentimental Lamarckism might be little Eva of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), who repeatedly warns her parents that her keen sensitivity to the abuses of slavery renders her constitutionally vulnerable. "These things sink into my heart," she cautions, highlighting the impressions cruelty makes on her malleable soul that ultimately usher her toward an early demise (Stowe 1998: 256). Self-reflection conditions the "civilized" to conceive of themselves as subjects embedded in time whose immediate and distant futures

depend in part on their capacity to discipline their sensory stimulations. Little Eva, still a child, was too young to discipline her body's plastic flesh, and she perishes as a child. Yet while the civilized body was embedded in time, the primitive was consigned to the state of sexually undifferentiated, racialized stasis existing within "mythical time" that Hortense J. Spillers (1987: 67, 66) has aptly termed "flesh," a state in which the human form is rendered raw material ripe for extraction. The unimpressible, characterized as lacking the emotional capacity of self-regulation and remaining perennial captives of primitive sensation, were denigrated as threatening the security of the population as a whole. The domestic orphan plot emerged in the nineteenth century within this broader context in which feeling, emotion, and intimacies made habitual were thought to be the substance of whiteness and to drive evolutionary species change.

The *longue durée* of sentimental chronobiopolitics reframes the kinship politics of orphanhood, the mode's characteristic trope, from the smaller scale of the family to the epochal scale of the race and species. Following Nina Baym (1993), scholars often cite heroines' orphan status, which enables them to choose their own kinship relations, as evidence of the novels' feminist agenda to promote women's self-determination, destabilize the sanctity of the family, and replace aristocratic notions of lineage with liberal models of chosen affinity. Cindy Weinstein (2004: 9–10), for example, argues that many sentimental novels "fiercely challenge the patriarchal regime of the biological family by calling attention to the frequency with which fathers neglect the economic as well as emotional obligations owed to their children" and work to replace the duties of consanguinity with the elective ties of the social contract. Carol J. Singley (2011: 53) argues that in removing heroines from their birth parentage and placing them within entirely new domestic contexts, the adoption trope seemingly provides "an opportunity—even a laboratory—for the study of cultural and biological differences." In Singley's view, this allows both novelist and reader to assess the relative effects of heredity versus environment, and biology versus culture, in shaping character.⁴ Yet these contemporary perspectives conflate biology with lineal descent and set the social and biological in opposition, in keeping with postgenetic conceptions of familial belonging. In the decades before the rise of modern genetic science, however, both emotional and biological relations and cultural and biological evolution were understood as neither discrete nor delineable categories. As the historian of anthropology George W. Stocking Jr. (1994: 10) explains: "Lamarckianism made it extremely difficult to distinguish between physical and

cultural heredity. What was cultural at any point in time could *become* physical; what was physical might well *have been* cultural." The elective emotional bonds of formal and informal adoption do not preclude the existence of physiological ties but rather are interdependent with the transmission of biological material. The patriarchal family was less destabilized by sentimental fiction than it was modernized by a burgeoning belief in the lasting physiological impressions of contractual kinship.

The domestic white orphan novel captures the feedback loop between physiology and social relations in its character representation in two key ways. First, it portrays visages and figures that unfailingly reflect internal morality and inherited position outward, or in the words of Maria Cummins's narrator in *The Lamplighter* (1854: 138), "tell-tale faces, that speak the truth and proclaim the sentiment within." Body and character are fused into a feedback loop that extends over the time of generations. The thoroughness of the link between *The Lamplighter's* protagonist Gertrude Flint's physicality and interiority results in a performative face that at once proclaims her capacity for feeling and reinforces it through the very iteration of these emotions. This link manifests most completely in the gradual lightening of her already white skin over the course of the novel. Second, the genre charts the dissolution, reconfiguration, and resolution of family relations within the lengthened and meandering flow of reproductive time, rather than the smaller time frame of the individual life span. As Cummins's narrator attests, Gerty's adoption by her guardian, Emily, provides "additional proof of the fact that the tie of kindred blood is not always needed to bind heart to heart in the closest bonds of sympathy and affection" (152). Yet the narrator's words prove to be foreshadowing a plot twist, rather than chronicling the past: Emily turns out to be Gerty's father's old flame, whom he now courts once more, their relationship validated by Gerty's triangulation in the position of their child. Biological relations dictate emotional affiliation: Gerty meets her father, Mr. Phillips, in a series of wild coincidences in which the child and elderly man strike up a friendship that is only later discovered to be a sanguineous tie. At the same time, emotional bonds have come to mimic biological relations: Gerty loves as a mother the woman who would have been so, were it not for a tragic accident that left Emily without sight and Gerty's father without parental permission for their engagement. The narrative structure and characterization of the orphan novel pivots around the hereditary impact of affect, spooling plots in which emotional and biological states are endlessly reciprocal relations.

Meanwhile, by the end of the novel Gerty matures into her own romantic desire, which is directed in the manner typical of the orphan genre: at her adoptive brother. Willie, recently returned from business in India, had in childhood fulfilled the myriad roles of “teacher, her protector, the partner of all her childish amusements” (370). Marriages between orphan heroines and their adopted brothers are one of the domestic genre’s defining features, an endogamous eroticism made yet more narrow by brothers’ simultaneous role, as Willie had been for Gerty, as father figures to their young charges. Orphan novels understand romantic feelings to be born out of familial intimacy: Gerty’s “heart yearned with more than a sister’s love,” Cummins’s narrator relates, neatly overlaying the bedrock of sibling familiarity with a new stratum of erotic ardor (125). While family romance plots in nineteenth-century Latin American fiction, for example, tend to unite two characters from disparate regions, colonial histories, or ethnic affiliations, the nineteenth-century US domestic romance plot is often precisely domestic (Sommer 1991).⁵ Instead of following the licentious and animalistic impulses of the body, sentimental characters’ sexual feelings stem from self-control and a disciplinary imperative so thoroughly impressed on the heroine by her brother/father/lover that (informal) adoption frequently culminates with copulation.

So pervasive was the expected happy ending of fraternal marriage that the 1882 anti-Mormon sentimental novel *Elder Northfield’s Home* signals the social disorder of polygamy through its youthful protagonist, effectively orphaned by fleeing Salt Lake City where her father is a leader in the church, *not* accepting her new brother’s marriage proposal. Yet a harrowing experience reveals that she and her independently chosen betrothed in fact share the same polygamous father, returning her to her sensibilities: “a year had taught her to regard the lover as her brother, — the brother as a lover, and Mayon was happier than she had thought it possible” (Bartlett 2015: 298). Quasi-incest, as the culture of sentiment would have it, is a mark of civilization.

Impressions bind together bodies into a population, itself understood to be comprised of distinctly unequal racial-familial lineages consolidated through the circulation of impressions over time. In light of the developing sciences of heredity and evolution, the fleeting unmooring of literary orphanhood represents a transient moment compared to the temporal scale across which novels posit that the family and the milieu, whether created by birth or adoption, shapes generation upon generation. As Catherine Ward Beecher exhorted to mothers, children’s “plastic nature will receive and retain every

impression you make; who will transmit what they receive from you to their children, to pass again to the next generation, and then the next, until a *whole nation* may possibly receive its character and destiny from your hands!" (quoted in Wardley 1988: 45–46). Beecher's words function on both a material and a symbolic dimension. Her text, like all sentimental texts, affectively crafts immediate sensory impressions in her individual readers that will shape their development even as she conjures women's social reproduction as taking place within the biopolitical temporality of the nation—less an abstract political formation than a phenomena that comes into being over the maternal work of generations. In this view, cultural affiliation creates racial and national lineage.

The temporal reach of the heart's attachments extends the affiliative family–turned–procreative family into the reproductive time of the race, in addition to the linear time of the nation. Gillian Silverman (2002: 355) aptly summarizes, "Incest stood at the heart of the sentimental family . . . because it promised a continuity of [racial] lineage as well as feeling." The familial climax of the adoption narrative reveals the orphan trope to do the same sort of conceptual work consolidating under the notion of hereditary substance emergent in the 1830s, a pregenetic framework that understood heredity to be the precipitate of the milieu.⁶ After immersing a child in an environment that conditions her growth, the effect of the milieu is marked by her consecration of her biological tie with her adoptive family via her future reproduction with her new brother. What Pierre Bourdieu would later call the *habitus*, or the bodily dispositions inculcated by cultural capital, had in this period of malleable heredity an extended time frame, one that exceeds the embodiment of the individual. Culture inhabits the subject, but habituated subjects, in turn, form a race. Sentimentalism was deployed as a disciplinary and regulatory technology to modulate the habitual impressions, and thus growth, of the nation newly conceived as comprised of the racialized entity of the species.

Lamarckian Aesthetics

The co-constitutive nature of nineteenth-century evolutionary theories and sentimental discourse suggests that evolutionary species being, as understood in the period, was not primarily characterized by struggle and competition in the public market. Rather, it inhered in the training of individual desires, habits, and dispositions. This is in line with the corrective to the social Darwinism thesis historians of

science have been making for decades—that the competitive aspects of natural selection were not widely embraced until the early twentieth century (Bannister 1979; Bowler 1992). In the nineteenth century, evolutionary theory was distinctly Lamarckian, and the process of species change was widely understood as a teleological path of progress that the civilized races could direct through regulating the sensory impressions of the population.

Naturalism has typically been recognized as the first major US genre to engage with evolutionary thinking as a fundamental literary strategy, in part because literary studies often takes evolutionary theory to be synonymous with Darwinism. Yet Lynn Wardley (1992) explores *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* investment in the evolutionary effects of domestic space in which characters' temperaments and physiques are determined in large part by the material culture of their habitations. Lora Romero (1997) usefully analyzed the ways that nineteenth-century ideas of physical health structure Stowe's critique of patriarchal power, revealing the extent to which the novel participates in the era's wide embrace of biopolitical discipline. These studies suggest the incompleteness of Philip Fisher's (1985: 17) earlier claim, in recognition of what he terms *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* anticipatory "Darwinism," that the "texture" of Stowe's novel "is sentimental but its structure is naturalist." Sentimentalism, in his view, represents a transition between historical romance and naturalist fiction, a halfway point where the political concerns of authors like James Fenimore Cooper meet the economic critique of Theodore Dreiser or Stephen Crane.

The literary mode of naturalism stages evolutionary experiments that investigate, via their plot, the influence of fate and free will on characters' decisions and development. It emplots the relative effects of "nature versus nurture," a phrase coined by eugenics founder Francis Galton in 1869 that helped gradually inaugurate a new, non-Lamarckian notion of heredity in which heredity materializes as a distinct substance impervious to its environment (Keller 2010). Fate weighs heavy on naturalist texts, in which characters' inability to change drags protagonists such as McTeague, the eponymous hero of Frank Norris's novel, toward his ruin and his death. By contrast, fate enables intimacy in sentimental texts, as far-flung relatives invariably unite in plots in which strangers almost always end up being family. There are no coincidences in the sentimental plot: rather, characters follow the outlines of contact and alliance forged by their ancestors or in their youths that have transformed the nation into an extension of the individual family.

Sentimental fiction theorizes evolution by affect and anticipates naturalist writers' interest in evolutionary change by more than four decades, a contribution still generally overlooked on account of the novels' Lamarckian framework. Lamarckian doctrine is often dismissed as a pseudoscientific imposter from science's premodern era when it maintained too-intimate relations with sentimentalism. This failure to recognize the evolutionary structures of sentimentalism comes at a high cost: it precludes from view the breadth of its political discourse and aesthetic characteristics, which extend far beyond the important vernacular and imperial frames scholars have identified into the biopolitical dimension of coordinating the modern notions of race, species, and power (Tompkins 1986; Wexler 2000).

Following the rise of genetics in the early twentieth century, heredity is overwhelmingly understood to be synonymous with a substance that is immutable and innate. Before the late nineteenth century, however, heredity was conceived of as flexible, malleable—impressible, especially among white youth. Lamarckian thinking promised that the physical impressions received by one youthful generation would be transmitted to the next. Accordingly, Lamarckian-influenced literature did not merely represent evolutionary plots: it staged them in the affective dynamics linking text to reader.

Sentimentalism crafts didactic plots that enact bodily change in the reader through representing sensory cultivation and bodily transformation on the page. The oft-maligned didactic nature of the sentimental mode is not primarily a sign that the work lacks artistic sophistication. Rather, it's a sign of its performative nature—designed to craft sensory stimulations that reach from character to reader. Its style of direct address, for example, makes plain that this genre involves the writer directly eliciting the reader's emotion; its didacticism aims to train the reader in appropriate emotional responses. Sentimental orphan novels are infamous for the sensory engagement they stimulate through their tales of children sobbing, hearts throbbing, hands praying, and families ripped apart by death. In an early revisionist take on sentimentalism's political power, Karen Sánchez-Eppler (1993: 26) observed that “sentiment and feeling refer at once to emotion and to physical sensation, and in sentimental fiction these two versions of *sentire* blend as the eyes of readers take in the printed word and blur it with tears”; in particular, the sobs of the reader often blend with the sobs of the character. Affective sympathy is not only an emotional and corporeal phenomenon—it's also an evolutionary one. It trains the body at the level of sensory discipline, guiding the reader's

body to mimic the sensations and feelings of the protagonist. Sympathy, in other words, could be cultivated and grown within the body.

Sensory stimulation is at the heart of aesthetics itself. As Elizabeth Maddock Dillon (2004: 500) emphasizes, “From its inception, aesthetics has been focused on *bodily sensation*. . . . While it is indeed the case that aesthetic theorists such as Kant and Schiller aim to explain the meaning and value of what we might call the ‘formal feeling’ produced by aesthetic experience, the sensate, felt aspect of aesthetic form is nonetheless resolutely tied to the subjective experience of bodily sensation.” She argues that sentimental aesthetics are right in line with classical understandings of aesthetics and that the mode deploys the meanings of aesthetics itself to “link the capacity of individuals to feel deeply (often, to suffer) to an essential, shared humanity.”

This linkage between the individual body that feels and the collective body is precisely how sentimentalism functions as a key biopolitical technology. Sensation is a hinge between the individual and the population, and sentimentalism is the aesthetic practice of stimulating, cultivating, and regulating that hinge, of modulating the felt immediacy between the individual and the body politic. It works through mimesis that twins the body of the reader and character—particularly when both are white children, construed to be the perfect impressible Lamarckian subjects. Tales of orphaned heroines directed at children readers whose sympathetic tears blend with the protagonists and the emotional reflections the characters and narrators undertake are aimed to act as guides for their impressible readers. Though the sentimental plot follows the maturation of an orphaned girl, the genre is less *bildungsroman* than it is an example of performative aesthetics that seek to enact in the flesh the transformation taking place on the page.

Sentimental Experiments

Sentimental writers and activists treated the body’s affective dimensions as a tool for managing the development of the reader—as well as the evolution of the population, especially the poor and the racialized. Institutions such as children’s literature, public schools, boarding houses, and adoption schemes became experimental sites where sentimental aesthetics were deployed beyond the scale of the individual domestic reader. Evolutionists beginning in the 1860s designated the noncivilized races as stuck in the infancy of the white race, a developmental stage that white males, and to some degree white

females, would surpass at puberty. For white racialists, the flexible body of whiteness positioned the civilized as the pliable juncture of biological and social life whose vulnerability must be protected from the racialized members of the population who lacked the capacity to absorb impressions and move forward through time. Among sentimental novelists dedicated to some measure of racial equality, impressibility was unevenly distributed throughout the races, but all individuals possessed some degree of affectability. The solidifying middle classes granted themselves a far-reaching duty and power: to uplift the primitive, inculcating impressions they deemed beneficial, mostly through their labor but also through their leisure time.

Sentimental abolitionists objected to the characterization of Black subjects as wholly unimpressible and stressed the ability of the civilized to elevate Black workers gradually on the grounds that they retained the allegedly childlike capacities of mimicry and imitation. Even race scientists often conceded that Black children retained some degree of impressibility, for young nerves were more sensitive and malleable. At the conclusion of Lydia Maria Child's 1867 domestic novel *A Romance of the Republic*, for example, the wealthy Mr. King seeks to demonstrate that whites may "bring [African Americans] all up" to the "level" his class deems prudent by hiring a formerly enslaved couple as domestic servants (Child 1867: 434). After working for the Kings for three years, "the improvement in [Henrietta's] appearance impressed [Mr. King] greatly," though "her features were not handsome" and her "black hair" remained "too crisp" to conceal her "brown forehead" (433). Repeated behaviors produce mental and corporeal changes at a rate relative to the individual's degree of racial advance; in the end it is Mr. King, rather than Henrietta, who is most distinctly "impressed." Sentimental biopower unevenly distributed the capacity of affectability throughout a population and extrapolated the repetitive movements of labor into a mechanism of directing the evolution of the less impressible, a strategy at play in both abolitionist and pro-slavery contexts.

The orphan could serve as a literary—and nonliterary—test case of just how far reformers could upwardly evolve a nonwhite child through orchestrating her impressions. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the orphan slave Topsy is presented as an "experiment" who demonstrates how easily domestic feeling could leave its mark on this highly "sensitive and impressible race" (Stowe 1998: 313). She is a "fresh-caught specimen," whose "virgin soil" is ready "to be educate[d] . . . and train[ed] in the way she should go" (260, 264). Topsy's noted

“talent for every species of drollery, grimace, and mimicry” and powers of “imitating every sound that hit her fancy” suggest that she will be a particularly successful automaton whom Eva’s Northern aunt, the abolitionist Ophelia, can direct to her liking (270).⁷ Throughout the novel, Stowe is clear that divergent behaviors create distinct characteristics that differentiate racial groups over time. “The Saxon is born of ages of cultivation, command, education, physical and moral influence!” she enthuses, while “the Afric [is] born of ages of oppression, submission, ignorance, toil, and vice!” (268). White residents of Kentucky, in particular, are “a good illustration of the doctrine of transmitted instincts and peculiarities,” having inherited the “ frankest, easiest, and most jovial” traits possible from their rural lifestyle (115). An orphaned slave, raised as a valuable domestic, could thus be a tool to deliberately intervene in the evolutionary effects of everyday experience. For Stowe, women’s sentimental sympathy is a physiological force that can reshape African American children’s emotional, mental, and physical characteristics before and after the race’s removal to Liberia, where Topsy and others will serve as midwives to the “birth-pangs” of a Christian Africa (469). In this potent image, Black women will themselves replicate the role of civilized maternal influence, enabling themselves to birth a gradually emergent civilization from the savagery of Blackness that exists outside of the movements of reproductive time.

Stowe carried her civilizing experiment to drag the primitive into the movements of time off the page. In the years following the Civil War, she and her husband became part owners of one of the largest cotton plantations in Florida in order to demonstrate that the influences of “civilized life” would physically transform former slave hands into disciplined wageworkers (Stowe 1876). For Stowe, such a transformation was necessary, as “the negro is the natural laborer of tropical regions. . . . [T]hey increase and multiply, and bear healthy children, in situations where the white race deteriorate and grow sickly” (Stowe 1968: 283). Civilization thus depended on Black labor in its southern climes, and it was the particular task of middle-class white women to acculturate Black families into the tightly orchestrated rhythms of domesticity. “As the first white ladies upon the ground,” Stowe related, “Mrs. F— and myself had the task of organizing this barbaric household, and of bringing it into the forms of civilized life. We commenced with the washing,” a literal and figurative scrubbing off the residues of the past (306). Her project memoirs explain her evolutionary rationale, aimed toward future generations: while the

laborers “were a fair specimen of the Southern negro as slavery had made and left him,” they “and their children are and will be just what *education* may make them” (289, 314–15).

While in Florida, Stowe visited Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt’s experiment in enforced acculturation that he developed at the Fort Marion prison where he had been placed in charge of more than seventy youthful insurgent leaders from the Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho, and Southern Cheyenne tribes in the aftermath of their defeat by the United States in the Red River War (1874–75). Pratt submitted his prisoners in Florida to military discipline aimed to civilize, developing a tactic of rigid sensorial discipline he later implemented at his infamous Carlisle Indian Industrial School, which initiated the off-reservation boarding school movement. Stowe was full of praise for Pratt’s real-life orphan experiment at Fort Marion, which included enforced haircuts and military-issued uniforms. “These are splendid specimens of youth and physical vigor,” she reported to the *Christian Union*. “They are the young braves of their tribes and unmarried. . . . Is not here an opening for Christian enterprise? (Stowe 1877: 17). The Florida prisoners had arrived “seem[ing] more like grim goblins than human beings,” she related, but discipline had transformed them into “docile and competent workmen,” a metamorphosis the before and after photographs Pratt first staged at Fort Marion seemed to exemplify (16). Stowe’s remarks highlight the evolutionary cast of Pratt’s orchestrated discipline, such that acculturation entails the evolution from savagery barely recognizable within the human fold into assets, rather than threats, to the capital accumulation of the civilized. The novel, the plantation, and the prison coalesce across Stowe’s writing and sentimentalism more generally as coextensive strategies of evolutionary discipline.

Some African American authors confronted head-on the racialization of whiteness as mobility and Blackness as paralysis. Harriet Wilson’s remarkable text *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859) narrates the life of Frado, an unfree worker in the North, in part through showing how the sentimental language of biological inheritance structured her life and labor. Widely read as a combination of a sentimental novel and slave narrative, *Our Nig* emplots the consequences of the view that ancestral sensation-seeking behavior becomes inescapable racial inheritance for those called “primitive.” Frado’s mother is a European American orphan who fails to develop the self-control advocated by domestic writers and succumbs to seduction and abandonment. Wilson’s narrator dwells on the impact of this

origin for the resulting baby. “How many pure, innocent children not only inherit a wicked heart of their own, claiming life-long scrutiny and restraint,” she asks, “but are heirs also of parental disgrace and calumny, from which only long years of patient endurance in paths of rectitude can disencumber them[?]” (Wilson 2002: 6–7). The interrogative poignantly asks her readers to consider the physical and emotional trials of inheritance for those consigned to the realm of the primitive, encapsulating her tale of childhood enslavement in the free North in the biological language of the period. The tension in the passage between the “pure, innocent” child and its “wicked heart” desperately in need of “scrutiny and restraint” disrupts a fictional genre going to great lengths to characterize childhood as precisely a stage of blooming development. In constructing a primitive baby as by definition unable to claim the innocence and potential that was the birthright of the civilized child, Wilson casts her protagonist as a youngster without a youth. Unlike a civilized sentimental protagonist, Frado’s foster home among well-known abolitionists sees her as a workhorse, not a delicate flower. Though she falls in love with a son of her enslaving family, who is also something of a father figure, such sentimental unions are meant to be endogamous. Frado is not raised to be James’s companion but rather is an experiment of his mother to “train up in my way” a servant “from a child” in hopes that she would “be able to keep them awhile” (26). Accordingly, Frado’s father/brother/lover marries another and dies, having failed to deliver on his promise to free her. Wilson’s tale is a powerful reworking of the sentimental adoption plot to illuminate how frameworks of biosocial inheritance work against the poor and racialized who, at best, are cast as subjects capable of receiving training but who remain the constitutive outside of the sentimental white family.

Elastic Youth

While the primitive were generally understood to lack the agential capacity of impressibility, so that they must be directly impressed by the civilized during the more malleable stage of youth, the domestic orphan plot represented its protagonists as inherently responsive, expansive, and self-governable. The orphaned child embodied the intersection of sensation and discipline, a physiological state of potentiality captured in a ubiquitous nineteenth-century adjective describing white childhood: *elastic*. The prized quality of the gaits and moods of orphan heroines, elasticity encapsulates the biopolitical notion that

the civilized nervous system is receptive to new sensory impressions yet can maintain its own coherence in distinction from the milieu pressing down on it.⁸ “Such is the elastic nature of childhood,” the narrator of one of the earliest sentimental novels opines, “its moral, like its physical constitution, is subject to the most sudden changes” (Sedgwick 1995: 20). Originating in the physical sciences, the term *elastic* describes the ability of gaseous substances to regain shape after slight or significant expansion. When applied to humans, *elastic* denotes light-heartedness, emotional buoyancy, and springiness of motion.⁹ The term connotes an emotional and physical state at once expansive and stable. Such a physicality and temperament allow the heroine to make judicious adaptations, emphasizing a capacity for movement that is preordained to guarantee that what is new will also be reassuringly familiar.

Elasticity was particularly deployed by women writers, to describe female protagonists, in ways that transformed feminine susceptibility into innate endurance, becoming a quality of responsiveness marked by such alacrity that stimulation worked to fortify internal vigor. E. D. E. N. Southworth’s domestic sensation novels *The Discarded Daughter* (1852) and *The Hidden Hand* (1859), for example, restore her malleable, adventurous orphaned heroines to their biological and financial inheritance at the conclusions of plots that are as expansive and resilient as their heroines and snap back into place at their denouements. Capitola Black begins *The Hidden Hand* as a New York newsboy who is taken in by an elderly Southern benefactor, Old Hurricane. Old Hurricane’s aristocratic attachment to lineage and descent is not so much destabilized by Capitola’s remarkable elasticity throughout the novel, which enables her to combine the street smarts sensational literature regularly assigned to newsboys with the emotional skill of a sentimental heroine, as it is substantiated. Capitola is revealed to be Hurricane’s niece and sole heir to his large plantation. Her physical, cultural, and economic inheritance itself enabled her to pose successfully as a street seller and to outwit the region’s greatest villain, Black Donald. “Black with crime,” yet in fact Hurricane’s brother, Donald Le Noir easily tricks Capitola’s stolid slaves and turgid housekeeper throughout the novel, who are simply no match for the adaptability—for good or evil—of the plantation aristocracy (Southworth 1988: 389). Southworth depends on static characters of color to portray, by contrast, the vitality and malleability of the civilized.

In domestic sentimental novels set in rural and newly conquered western territories, such as Susan Warner’s *The Wide, Wide World*

(1850), María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's *Who Would Have Thought It?* (1872), A. Jennie Bartlett's *Elder Northfield's Home* (1882), and Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona* (1884) and *Zeph* (1885), elasticity embodies the settler colonial fantasy of the simultaneous expansibility and resilience of the physiological and political body. The domestic orphan genre charts the disciplining of a female subject whose regulatory mastery of her sensory capacity is characterized less as *docile*, as in the Foucauldian read of nineteenth-century biopower, than as *autochthonous*. Settler girls learn to thrive in new soil as wildflowers do in the rain, their vitality and adaptability naturalizing their self-made families and the political order. The trope of the orphan wildflower suited a settler colonial nation that authors opportunistically and frequently portrayed as an orphan of the civilized world.¹⁰ As Anna Brickhouse (2004: 33–34) has pointed out, the recurring figuration of the United States as an orphan of Europe in American Renaissance writing not only ignored the extent to which US cultural producers were involved in extensive networks with Caribbean and Latin American writers but also served as a metaphor for the political investment in US exceptionalism that denied the nation's ongoing project of settler colonialism. In the case of popular sentimental writing, the recurring parallel to wildflowers further suggested a fertile and thriving girlhood with firm roots in the North American continent. Unlike the hot-house flower imported from the colonies for display in the greenhouse of a British baronage, a frequently employed literary symbol for the society belle, the trope of European American girl as a wildflower seemingly attested to whites' autochthonous relationship to the rapidly expanding territory of the United States. The image of US girls as thriving blooms—the reproductive part of the plant—covering the newly conquered prairies evoked an imperialism that prided itself on its civility and future fertility.

Sentimental Lamarckism is a key tactic of settler colonialism. It glorifies the orphaned body that can adapt and adjust, whose corporeal porosity takes to the allegedly empty West, blending its own form with the land she is seizing and occupying. Settler orphan plots, which extrapolate from the domestic space of the household to the expanding domestic frame of US territorial acquisition—a frame Amy Kaplan (1998) aptly termed “manifest domesticity”—also extend into evolutionary time. María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's satirical *Who Would Have Thought It?*, the first Mexican American novel in English, argues for the civilized status of its criollo Mexican heroine through

emphasizing her elasticity against the arrested development of southwestern Native tribes, Irish domestic servants, and African Americans. It does so through emphasizing the orphan's body as itself an organic treasure, akin to priceless gems. Dr. Norval brings home a young Mexican orphan he rescued from Mohave captivity while on a geological expedition in California, to the horror of his abolitionist wife and daughters who recoil from Lola's dark skin and her wild origins. They protest that Dr. Norval has begun to collect "animal . . . specimen[s]" from "savage" lands (Ruiz de Burton 1995: 16, 12), and they force Lola to share a bedroom with the Irish maid. The irony of this plot is soon revealed, in that Lola not only brings with her tremendous riches in the form of rough pebbles containing unpolished gems collected by her Spanish-born mother whose value the Mohave lacked the sophistication to recognize but that she is herself an organic treasure, a "spotted mongrel" only in need of a buff to reveal her priceless origins (210). A specimen who has mastered the cyclical movements of evolutionary time, Lola's true worth is suspected only by Dr. Norval, the novel's scientist. Once East, Lola seemingly evolves before their eyes as she takes to her new environs, while carefully avoiding intimacy with the Irish to whom she has been consigned and cultivating instead her relations with her eventual beau, the Norval son. By the novel's close, observers ask, "Can anything be whiter than Lola's neck and shoulders?" for her skin had been painted dark by her captors (232). For Burton, wealthy Mexican women possess elastic constitutions, capable of moving quickly throughout time and of snapping back into place when restored to civilization. The conclusion of her orphan brother/husband plot entails the removal of the happy couple to Mexico, figured as the site of true civilization.

While it targets the individual body, orphaning was deployed to orchestrate evolutionary effects at the level of the racial subunits that compose a population. Elsewhere I theorize the widespread sentimental biopower tactic of biophilanthropy, or the attempt to impress new hereditary material into the flesh of the young of the uncivilized races in order to render their labor useful to the nation as a whole (Schuller 2018: 134–71). Key biophilanthropic projects include the off-reservation boarding school movement, the removal of 200,000 Irish and German youth from urban areas to rural, often western homesteads in the so-called orphan trains between 1854 and 1929, as well as juvenile reformatories. Like the prison, which reformers conceived as a rehabilitative experience that would symbolically destroy the offender and birth him into a newly useful life, orphan-management techniques moved recursively, orchestrating a virtual death—in this

case, of parental and cultural influence—and a subsequent rebirth into the wage-garnering rhythms of civilization (Smith 2009: 27–52). Here, I focus on how orphaning played out as a literary trope and direct performative aesthetics that invested a wide readership in the possibility that middle-class domestic life and domestic orphan novels could upwardly evolve youthful elements that threatened the stability of the population as a whole.

Sentimental orphanhood frequently represents the death of familial influence that enables rebirth into a new future, an extended horizon that transpires on the scales of evolutionary, rather than familial, time. One of the many points of intersection between sentimental literature and evolutionary science was its shared concern with the child, a nexus that literary critic Caroline Levander (2000) aptly observes that Louisa May Alcott theorized with particular care. In Alcott's *Little Men* (1871), Jo March boasts of the youthful residents of her reform boarding school that "This is the crop I like best," while "she pinched the once thin cheeks, now getting plump and ruddy, or stroked the bent shoulders that were slowly straightening up with healthful work, good food, and the absence of that heavy burden, poverty" (Alcott 1996: 52). Jo's techniques for the charges of Plumfield—all white, impoverished children of varied backgrounds and dispositions—are a far cry from the military discipline of biophilanthropic projects, yet nonetheless evolve the boys' carriage from their slouching, animalistic, beginnings.¹¹ Instead of early labor, the school—which Jo envisions as a "wilderness of boys" (102)—brings the youth into intimacy with the organic rhythms of the natural world, "to see and love the providence of God in the beautiful miracles which nature was working before their eyes" (34). In the recursive movements of evolutionary time as understood in the nineteenth century, poor, and thus not fully civilized, white boys must be immersed within the eternal and blessed time of the organic before they can join the forward movements of civilized time. Their relations with nature and the study of natural history are central to this process; befriending wild birds, learning to use a microscope, and gleaning "sermons from stones" are all necessary steps that nurture their relationships to God and respect for His creation (35).

Over time, the boys transition from elements of nature into its guardians, each acquiring a plot of land to cultivate and an animal pet to tend as they develop caretaking practices that grant them dominion, and therefore distinct separation, from the natural world. The prime role of sympathetic treatment of farm animals in their civilizing

process resonates with some social evolutionary paradigms of the period. Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, for example, stressed that tenderness to animals represented the eighth and final stage of civilization, coming well after the attainments of domestic life and private property (Mason 2005: 18). Republican motherhood was replaced by sentimental guardianship as writers updated women's role from preparing future citizens and homemakers to working as the master gardener who tends to the germination and breeding of her plot, a plot she may have birthed or may have adopted as her own to tend. Domestic novels helped solidify the sentimental ethic of reproduction, which privileges child-rearing over childbirth (the reverse schematic from the determinist eugenic years to come) in shaping the child's outcome.

Two of the school's pupils serve as limit cases of the desired flow of evolutionary progress at Plumfield. Billy Ward had been primed too soon, rigorously trained in book learning by his overeager father who "crammed" knowledge into him at the tender age of six (Alcott 1996: 20). "The overtaken brain gave out, and Billy's mind was like a slate over which a sponge has passed, leaving it blank," rendering Billy "a feeble idiot" unable to absorb any more impressions (20). Dan, a homeless "specimen" with a predilection for criminal behavior gleaned from his habit of "imitat[ing] the low men who surrounded him" before he came to Plumfield, is the novel's Topsy—Jo and her husband take him in as an "experiment" testing the efficacy of their own approach (82, 94–95, 86). Their eventual success comes as proof of the beneficial effects of training boys in "the law of kindness to every dumb creature on the place" (93), a sympathy that, in keeping with sentimental sympathy more generally, primarily functions to refine the capacities of feeling of the sympathizer at the expense of nurturing an ethics of commonality with their object (Berlant 2008; Barnes 1997). Yet Dan stumbles many times before he sets on the straight and narrow path. It is his new hobby of collecting for his "cabinet of curiosities" that ultimately disrupts his errant tendencies (Alcott 1996: 164). His devotion to "the shrine of science" delineates him from the animalistic nature he had previously indulged; Dan has become a disciplined observer trained to pause and reflect on the magnitude of God's creation and is no longer a savage immersed within the flow of organic time (164). Sympathy and scientific study forge compatible methods within sentimental biopower, a means of moving simultaneously in communion with the natural world while nonetheless looping steadily forward up and out of its organic rhythms into a position of carefully regulated distance—to be intimate with the natural world but not *of* it. Indeed, the chief goal articulated by the

sentimental racists of the American School of Evolution as well as Christian physiologists like Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell and sentimental paragons such as Sarah Josepha Hale was that evolution would culminate in the millennial return of Christ, delivering the civilized races into an eternal plane of harmony here on earth. The endpoint of organic time for the civilized looped back to its divine origins.

Sentimental evolutionary paradigms entail both optimism and optimization. Naturalism's characteristically strong use of foreshadowing, "unnatural" images, and overbearing symbolism, in contrast, work to curtail characters' opportunities in the reader's mind long before they even appear within the text's diegetic world. In Stephen Crane's *Maggie* (1893), for one, the eponymous heroine "blossoms in a mud puddle" (Crane 2006: 20). When the reader learns that Maggie's floral room decoration, bought to impress a beau with her attention to the domestic arts, "appeared like violated flowers," she anticipates the heroine's turn to sex work several chapters later and perhaps also her eventual demise (27). In the naturalist schema, innate and immutable heredity dominates, rendering any attempt to improve oneself a tragicomic indulgence. The sentimental genre, however, enacts a regulatory optimism in which whiteness will triumph and insists that bringing flowers to the urban poor and removing the urban poor to the countryside, as in Alice Wellington Rollins's pro-orphan train 1888 novel *Uncle Tom's Tenement*, can effect an ameliorative constitutional change. Whereas sentimental classics such as *The Lamplighter* and *A Wide, Wide World* originally addressed audiences who had yet to hear of Darwinian natural selection, Alcott's novel and others appeared during a time when evolutionary theories were hotly contested in the wake of the wide dissemination of Charles Darwin's and Herbert Spencer's notions of organic growth and the belief that society itself functioned according to the same principles guiding individual organisms. The similarity of the model of organic growth *Little Men* and *Uncle Tom's Tenement* share with their antebellum literary predecessors, however, reflects the continuity of evolutionary theories held throughout the century that the popularity of the phrases "Darwinism" or "social Darwinism" in literary and cultural studies fails to capture. Both Lamarckism and Darwinism were bound together in the nineteenth century as co-constitutive frameworks of biopolitical optimization in which individual discipline would lead to racial and species outcomes that would benefit the solidifying white middle classes.

The body subject to biophilanthropy is the inverse of the elastic child's body. The former needs to be built up, to accumulate the

sensory rhythms of civilization through immersive labor over time. In contrast, the elastic body of middle-class white youth is independent, self-directed, and simultaneously malleable and hardy, capable of undergoing dramatic transformations yet remaining ultimately unmarked by these experiences. The primitive child, on the other hand, who was cast into reformers' real-life domestic plots, was subject to an extensive regime of deprivation and then imitation to accrete the sensory rhythms of civilization, so that her vital energy could be usefully extracted.¹² Denied the vital powers of elasticity, the orphaned and migrated body was animated and set into the motions of production. Divergent materialities coordinate with divergent temporalities, as sentimental biopower extrapolated literary paradigms into population management techniques that resonated on and off the page.

Family/Race/Nation/Species

Recognizing the role of Lamarckism in sentimental literature reframes our view of the discourse's reach and politics, extending its purview far beyond aesthetic representation and liberal epistemology. Sentiment was more broadly elaborated as a disciplinary and regulatory technology for modulating the vulnerability of the civilized body, which was dependent on its interactions with the outside world for its own self-constitution and that of its descendants. The orphan plot was a device that could modulate the population in several dimensions: through didactic representation that could cultivate sensorial self-regulation in its readers; through a transportable trope that could guide reformers' child welfare schemes for racialized members of the population; and even through directly leaving a mark on impressive readers who experienced bodily emotion in union with that of the characters, a phenomenon that stoked fears of stimulating romance novels, particularly from abroad. The symbolic and material dimensions of sentimental feeling helped coordinate a broad biopolitical imagination in which the sensations and emotions circulating throughout a milieu consolidated over time into the overlapping formations of family, race, nation, and species.

The biopolitics of sentimental literature illuminates how biopower took shape within key institutions of liberal reform, not only in its alleged states of exception, such as the prison, plantation, or concentration camp. The key agents of biopolitical thought were not only biologists, race scientists, enslavers, and capitalists but also the realms of

the private world that liberal individualism relied on to stabilize the competitive world of the public sphere. Sentimental biopower, which extrapolated a differential capacity of feeling into the species-being of population, particularly consolidated in the work of social reproduction assigned to women and the domestic sphere. Biopower did not yet separate biological and social phenomena into distinct trajectories, the work of a later epoch. Rather, it framed feeling and emotion as key vectors that composed the species-body and therefore supplied its inherent means of management. Biopower in the nineteenth century outlines overlapping temporalities of family, race, nation, and species that materialize at the intimate level of affective capacity.

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Notes

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- 1 Molly Farrell (2016) and Greta LaFleur (2018) argue that US biopower initially deploys in the eighteenth century.
- 2 Simon Strick (2015) has investigated the intersection of sentimentalism and biopower in the domain of pain discourse.
- 3 I approach sentimentalism as a mode that appears in many divergent contexts, rather than a distinct literary genre. For more on sentimentalism as a mode, see Chandler 2013.
- 4 Similarly, Claudia Nelson (2003: 3) suggests that the trope of adoption functions democratically as "one way of detaching [orphaned children] from the suspicion of hereditary moral taint."
- 5 The domestic patterns of sentimental fiction are thus quite distinct from what Shelley Streeby (2002: 102–38) calls the transnational family romance genre of midcentury US sensation dime novels. According to Streeby, these plots pair a feminized Mexico with a virile United States in an attempt to narrate conquest as willing romance.
- 6 The notion of heredity as a biological substance that passed between individuals was first introduced in the 1830s, an extension of the preexisting

- legal concept of bequeathing property into the developing realm of the biological sciences. Historians of science Staffan Müller-Wille and Hans-Jörg Rheinberger (2007: 16–23) argue that the notion of heredity newly consolidated at this surprisingly late date on account of the biopolitical nature of its use: heredity was deployed to trace difference across populations of animals, plants, and humans over time in Europe and colonies in the Americas, Asia, and Africa, rather than similarity within families. The temporal scale of heredity, in other words, is the evolutionary phenomenon of species, rather than the limited spatiotemporality of the family.
- 7 Sianne Ngai (2007: 89–125) usefully names the racialized condition of lacking agency of movement and being set into rhythms of labor by others as “animatedness.”
 - 8 Sentimental biopower develops according to a Lockean framework in which the individuation transpires through repeated impressions from the outside world, as opposed to the para-humanity Monique Allewaert (2013) identifies in nineteenth-century Caribbean ontologies that embrace the entanglement between the body and its environment.
 - 9 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “elastic,” <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/60128?redirectedFrom=elastic#eid>, accessed February 14, 2020.
 - 10 For examples of the trope of the United States as an orphan of Europe, see Nathaniel Hawthorne, “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” (1832), and Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1850).
 - 11 Levander (2000: 42) aptly notes the evolutionary implications of the boys’ straightening carriage over time.
 - 12 Kalindi Vora (2015) theorizes the body’s vital energy as the target of capitalist modes of production that extract and transfer the body’s force across colonial space.

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