Introduction Mapping the Blackground

Recently, I decided to gain a better appreciation of our country's struggle with racism by visiting Central High School, a National Historic Site in Little Rock, Arkansas.[1] I wanted to better understand the histories of our desegregation efforts by seeing for myself one place where the civil rights movement triumphed during the month of September 1957. When nine black students attempted to integrate the leading white high school in the state, they were denied entry, and the attention of our nation, not to mention the world, was riveted through television on the ensuing battle between the state and federal government in an effort to end segregation and associated notions of racial purity, white supremacy, and violent oppression. This battle actually originated in the North during the antebellum era when the U.S. Supreme Court resolved to preserve school segregation in Boston, Massachusetts, with the 1849 decision *Roberts v. The City of Boston*. Of course, the Supreme Court's 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision is even more infamous and telling since it established the "separate but equal" doctrine which the country used to validate racism particularly in the South.

With the entire world watching, the Little Rock Nine—Minnijean Brown, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Thelma Mothershed, Melba Pattilo, Gloria Ray, Terrence Roberts, Jefferson Thomas, and Carlotta Walls—needed an escort by the federalized Arkansas National Guard to even approach the school. They were truly brave that month during the "Little Rock Crisis" facing such an unreasoning hatred that is difficult to imagine. As Daisy L. Gatson Bates, the Arkansas president

of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, famously declared, "Any time it takes eleven thousand five hundred soldiers to assure nine Negro children their constitutional rights in a democratic society, I can't be happy."

The science fictional conceit of time travel helps me to imagine the events of September 4, 1957. At the command of Governor Orval Faubus, the Arkansas National Guard barred the nine students from entering the school. If I simply close my eyes, time travel permits me to set foot on Park Street, to see the beautiful architecture of the high school itself, and to witness an angry white mob literally nipping at the heels of those nine black children—spitting, shouting, making rude gestures, and, above all else, violently hating. I can hear the foul vitriol spewing from the collective mob psyche—"Kill those NIGGERS!" or something along those lines. I can imagine fear causing my blood to race through my veins, pound in my ears, as I walk with those nine courageous youth.

All of a sudden, the deep bass booming from the trunk of a tricked-out white Cadillac Escalade, stopped at the intersection of Park Street and Daisy L. Gatson Bates Drive, snaps me back into the present. I think to myself how things have changed in the fifty-three intervening years, and I begin to notice the deteriorated urban neighborhood surrounding the school. White flight coupled with the "lost year"—Little Rock closed its schools to both white and black students during the 1958/59 school year—provided another wrinkle in the battle for civil rights.[2] The remains of segregation resonate powerfully across time and place. My surreal experience is the stuff of science fiction (sf). This rumination caused me to think "what if" . . .

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What if the lead character of a 2009 network television show, a young and beautiful white woman, were involved in a "platonic" relationship with an older black male character, a visible other? This exact scenario occurred when Joss Whedon's science fiction series *Dollhouse* debuted on the Fox Broadcasting Company on February 13, 2009. Whedon consciously pushes the racial envelope by featuring a mixed partnership between Echo (Eliza Dushku), an "active," and her "handler," Boyd

Langton (Harry Lennix). The basic premise of the show is that wealthy, powerful, and connected people can hire members of the illegal and secretive Dollhouse, actives/dolls with imprinted memories, to create a variety of personas for any kind of engagement ranging from sex to assassination. Actives are escorted to and from their engagements by the handlers. After the assignment, the doll's entire memory of the job is wiped clean. For example, the original episode, "Ghost," features Echo first as a party girl and second as a hostage negotiator.

As the show progresses, Echo's fragmented memories begin to return as she struggles for self-awareness and the recovery of her true identity. Langton protects her from danger outside and within the Dollhouse, and she sometimes protects him as well. In the second episode, "The Target," Boyd is injured by Echo's date, a zealous hunter who tracks human prey through the wilderness. A companionable intimacy necessarily develops between Echo and Boyd because trust is essential to the success of each engagement. Even in its remotest sense, for a black man "handling" a white woman was a lynching offense in America's immediate past. Whedon's decision to feature this mixed pairing for much of the season nearly got the show cancelled in its first season. This, in my estimation, was because of an inherent yet unconscious audience discomfort caused by the perceived taboo of miscegenation or race mixing.

This pairing is a dangerous retelling of racial stereotypes regarding white women, black men, and sex, and it unintentionally echoes Richard Wright's searing classic *Native Son* (1940), where the alienated black youth Bigger Thomas is hired to chauffer the wealthy Daltons around Chicago and ends up accidentally smothering the young white socialite Mary Dalton to death in her own bed, dismembering her corpse, and running for his life from a lynch mob in the middle of winter. Of course, Bigger is caught, tried for rape and murder, and sentenced to death. Even hinting at a possible mixed relationship, as Whedon does, evokes the powerful racial myth of the black male rapist. This very real unease among the show's audience prompted a new creative direction, where Whedon installs former FBI agent Paul Ballard (Tahmoh Penikett) as Echo's new handler in the season finale, "Omega," after Agent Ballard ends his search for "Caroline," i.e., Echo, by discovering the Dollhouse's location. Though I admire

Whedon's attempts to portray equality on television, I believe that the viewing audience's deeply embedded belief structures are essentially racist when it comes to an interracial dynamic between men and women. Unfortunately, Whedon gives in to audience pressure during the show's second and final season, when Boyd Langton is revealed as the nefarious head and founder of the Rossum Corporation,[3] essentially the creator of the Dollhouse ("Getting Closer"). In the penultimate episode, "The Hollow Men,"[4] Langton turns on Echo and nearly kills her before having his own memories remotely wiped by Topher Brink (Fran Kranz), scientist and designer of Dollhouse technologies. Langton is imprinted as an innocent, strapped into an explosive belt, and instructed to blow up the company's computer mainframe in an attempt to save the world from the evils of mind control technologies. More or less, the show's primary black character is lynched for his earlier racial transgressions—forcing a white woman into prostitution. In my opinion, science fiction has an unwarranted reputation for being "progressive" in matters of race and racism.

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Further reflection urged me to thinking "what if" . . . What if an American scientist devised a whitening process for the country's black population, and all blacks became white? Would its race problem be solved? George Schuyler, a controversial black journalist and author, considers such a scenario during the Harlem Renaissance in his 1931 novel *Black No More* (hereafter *BNM*) by playing "on the perception that some African Americans 'wish to be white'" (Kuenz, 173). Schuyler's character, Dr. Junius Crookman, is a black scientist who has conducted research on rare skin diseases such as "vitiligo" in Germany, and who declares that he has invented a three-day process "to turn darkies white" (Schuyler, *BNM*, 24) through "electrical nutrition and glandular control" over hair and other facial features such as lips and eye color (27).[5] Set in the Jim Crow era, Crookman's discovery creates a rush among America's black citizens who desire to leave the oppressed black race behind by paying the requisite fee to his start-up company Black-No-More, Incorporated.[6]

Max Disher, the ostensible hero of the novel and an accomplished hustler, is the first among millions to undergo the process in the near-future Harlem. In three days' time, there is "no more jim crow" for him: "As a white man he could go anywhere, be anything he wanted to be, do most anything he wanted to do, be a free man at last" (26). As the story unfolds, Max infiltrates white southern society by changing his name to Matthew Fisher, marrying a blond debutante, and passing himself off as a race scientist to the head of the Knights of Nordica, a white supremacist organization modeled on the Ku Klux Klan. In his first speech to the organization, Matthew/Max promotes notions of white supremacy and racial paranoia. He is "a hit simply by spouting Negrophobic clichés he has heard all his life from whites" (Reilly, 108). Along with Reverend Givens, an apparently white supremacist, Matthew/Max creates social and political unrest in the name of greed by capitalizing on southern white paranoia as the black population vanishes and chaos ensues: mulatto babies are born everywhere; white workers go on strike; businesses fail; and a heated presidential race based on a racial purity platform ends with a horrifying lynching scene.

This graphic and brutal lynching occurs when the Democratic vice presidential candidate and his statistician, Snobbcraft and Buggerie, flee from the uproar generated when the press outs them as Negroes. Their plane crashes near Happy Hills, Mississippi, during a revival where the pastor, Reverend McPhule, is praying for Negroes to lynch. Snobbcraft and Buggerie appear in blackface, claim to be white men at the first mention of lynching, and are later proven to be black by the late-arriving newspaper. They are subsequently stripped, beaten, castrated, disfigured, freed, shot, captured, and burned at the stake as well as having their skeletal remains picked over for souvenirs. The Happy Hill episode is clearly reminiscent of the countless acts of violence against blacks that took place in the United States, especially in light of the Red Summer of 1919 following World War I. It is doubly ironic in that the archetypal white racists Snobbcraft and Buggerie are lynched as despised "niggers" by a virtuous religious group extremely conscious of color. As critic Michael Peplow states, "The Happy Hill scene, ultimately, is a microcosm of what would happen in and to America if a 'mad' scientist tried to rob her of her oppressed minority" (257).

Eventually, most American citizens end up a happy shade of brown either through skin products, tanning, or birth. In a matter of seven years, Crookman's inexpensive treatment dismantles racial hierarchies that took countless generations of social, economic, and psychic investment to produce and maintain. Crookman enacts the ultimate integration dream by changing blacks into whites.[7] With this novel, Schuyler dares to answer the unspoken white desire for blacks to vanish, leaving behind a seemingly white world.

The power of Schuyler's satire rests entirely upon America's obsession with race. In the preface to his novel, Schuyler makes this point plain: "With America's constant reiteration of the superiority of whiteness, the avid search on the part of the black masses for some key to chromatic perfection is easily understood" (13). *BNM* is a powerful critique of the racial hierarchy of American society and our preoccupation with skin color and concepts of racial purity and white supremacy. Schuyler scathingly and humorously takes aim at social distinctions based on skin color, and through this strategy he makes an explicit science fictional account of race and racism in American culture. In fact, the novel's lengthy subtitle, *An Account of the Strange and Wonderful Workings of Science in the Land of the Free, AD 1933–1940*, suggests a strong conviction about the arbitrary—even worthless—nature of race from a scientific standpoint.[8] Likewise, the novel's dedication reveals Schuyler's thinking on the irrational fear of color and its inherent foolishness: "This book is dedicated to all Caucasians in the great republic who can trace their ancestry back ten generations and confidently assert that there are no Black leaves, twigs, limbs or branches on their family trees" (unnumbered page). Schuyler deliberately foregrounds race and racism in American culture through sf. In this context, he expresses the irrational and unscientific functioning of race and racism in the past, present, and, perhaps, future of the U.S.

As a black writer of sf during the pulp era, Schuyler is important because he is a part of the genre's blackground, a term created here to define the embedded perceptions of race and racism—intended or not—in Western sf writing and criticism. "Blackground" brings race and racism to the foreground of science fiction as it relates to the critical discussion of the black/white binary. Through this term, I question racialized structures and, perhaps more importantly, American culture

in the genre. Indeed, thinking about the blackground of sf in new ways makes discernible a range of race meanings. I trace the development of scientific racism through literary, cultural, and scientific discourses and how this shapes sf. I link social concepts such as miscegenation and passing for white with a variety of classic sf motifs—aliens, androids, cyborgs, and so on—and effectively create a viable dialectic to examine the pervasiveness of race in sf. Likewise, I utilize meta–slavery narratives, alternate histories, extrapolations of the Jim Crow era, and contagion narratives as more conventional maps of sf. I also conceptualize blackground as a way to illustrate new models for race-reading in sf that employ established critical categories such as ethnoscapes and technicities. To begin mapping this blackground, as such, I propose a new definition of a critical idea already in existence—the other—by combining a sense of it with personhood (identity) and neighborhood (environment) to produce a notion of "otherhood."

All this is not to say that no other racial or ethnic binaries exist because they do; for example, fear of the "yellow peril" presents a host of Asian stereotypes, *and* the frontier mythology of the American West, populated with a horde of noble savages, is often demonstrated in space opera. Also, some depictions of race and racism are a subtle part of a text's background, such as Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), while other portrayals of race and racism like *Black No More* overtly foreground the entire plot. Clearly, then, conversations on race and racism in sf have always existed, but only recently have these conversations emerged into the foreground of its criticism where scholars and critics seem to approach race and racism in similar manners. In this book, however, I am primarily interested in sf's treatment of the black/white binary rather than in the other dimensions of the American obsession with color or a generalized critique of the intersections between race and racism. Attempts have already been made to do such work with varying degrees of success and with other racial binaries in mind as well. Yet I believe that there is not only plenty more space available for this kind of work but also an urgent need.

Science fiction often talks about race by not talking about race, makes real aliens, has hidden race dialogues. Even though it is a literature that talks a lot about underclasses or oppressed classes, it does so from a privileged if somewhat generic white space. If science fiction

is about social change, let us talk about how this change comes about from an "other" space, a black space. This is absolutely one of the joys of sf and other speculative writings. Science fiction actually *does* think about the fact that things could be different and to not utilize that potential in it, I think, is limiting, if not downright disturbing. There is something to learn from investigating the black/white binary, and this book, with its explorations of cultural memories rooted in the thinking of otherhood, is further proof of this potential.

While otherhood is not exactly a new term, its meaning for sf is innovative because it attempts to change how racial difference is viewed by exposing the history and practice of discrimination operating inside and outside the genre simultaneously while also studying ways writers have used sf to expose and combat racism. "Just as it has been recognized as 'feminist friendly,' [sf] is uniquely suited for the critical study of race" because its "depiction of aliens, artificial persons, and supermen in subordinate positions, as well as its imagination of exotic landscapes and alternate histories," permits us to change and look in different ways at "our cultural memory of past events" (Lavender, "Ethnoscapes," 188). For instance, alien "others" stand in for racial "others" and vice versa. These archetypes are seemingly transposable. It would seem, then, that continual encounters and struggles with the "other" are the hallmark of true Western experience. In my estimation there is nowhere better than sf to examine the fear and excitement generated through alien encounters with race and racism. As a part of the blackground of science fiction, otherhood itself maps this dark territory.

Otherhood begins with thinking about race along the black/white binary. With this type of thinking, we can locate the historical consciousness embedded in sf in imagined events juxtaposed with real events in the space-time continuum. In this manner, I study the specific overlaps of history and imagination with proper seriousness as they relate to human experience. These relationships express meanings of otherhood that map racial discourse in sf and that can represent a variety of differences in relation to science, technology, and culture. Otherhood is capable of creating a cultural fluidity, a flexibility of insight, between historical reference and imagination of the future of race. With concepts of otherhood, we can examine degrees of black marginalization in sf (i.e., blackground).

Otherhood mapping is a descriptive representation of various science fictions or parts of various science fictions. For every element of one racial set, there is a unique element of another set available for mapping. To demonstrate, a human face could be described as being from dark brown to pink in color, but an alien face could be something else altogether, such as green and scaled with bug-eyed, iridescent pupils and no nose, or a robot face could be brightly polished silver and humanoid. These maps establish some of the features and details of race and make possible exploration and analysis to locate racism in sf.

To illustrate this point, the term "skin job" is used by the character Bryant in Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* (1982) as a racial slur in reference to the fugitive replicants, synthetic humans or androids. Bryant states: "Don't be an asshole, Deckard. I've got four skin-jobs walking the streets." In the theatrical voiceover version of the film the racist connotation is made even more explicit when the bounty hunter Deckard states: "Skin-jobs. That's what Bryant called Replicants. In history books he's the kind of cop who used to call black men niggers." As film scholar Adilifu Nama rightly suggests, "The presence of black people in *Blade Runner* is squarely located in the past—that is, the 'history books' that Deckard's narration suggests—and the visual absence of black people in *Blade Runner* further reinforces the idea that 'blackness' itself is historical and no longer exists" (57). Nevertheless, the term "skin job" powerfully reminds viewers of this very absence. In a conventional sense, "skin" means the soft or flexible external covering of a body, but it could also mean the outer surface of a machine that differs from the interior parts. Referring to the skin of a machine in the context of the film is racist because the "synthetic" humans irritate "real" human sensibilities by getting under the *skin* of the "real" humans, so to speak, to the point of hatred.

"Skin job" is used for the same purpose in the new television rendition of *Battlestar Galactica*, in the February 24, 2006, episode, "Downloaded." Samuel Anders, the leader of the human resistance on the Cylon-occupied colonial world, refers to the clone models as "skin jobs" shortly before detonating a bomb under one of the Cylon dwellings. Anders declares: "That skin job with Starbuck—'Sharon' they called her—she said that when they download, they remembered everything. Right up until the end. These skin jobs are going to remember being

blown into tiny little pieces." Ironically, Anders is himself a Cylon, as revealed in the final episode of season 3, "Crossroads, Part 2." "Skin job" exemplifies "otherhood" and exists in the blackground of sf when fictional settings are used to define racism, a human hatred of a *technological* difference: a difference created by man based on mechanical expressions of humanity as opposed to the biological differences between the races based on skin color. "Skin job" is a representation that compares the element of "skin" in one set of racial signs familiar to us to elements in a different set of signs, such as artificial persons or perhaps posthumans, in a defamiliarized yet racist way.

Depictions of such signs marked out in the details provide a layout of the blackground for us, and otherhood helps us to locate racial issues in a specific text; in the body of work by one writer in relation to other writers; in other eras of time; and in other mediums and traditions of sf such as film, television, comics, and music, as well as various themes and icons of the genre. Likewise, otherhood establishes the mapping of a single racial/ethnic element, or set of elements, and its potential distortions. Indeed, otherhood aids in perceiving the shapes and textures of meaning in sf and determines how, why, and to what extent they are bound together in an always shifting racial formation. (From another point of view the racial structures of sf may be static.) That said, my book will map a few ambiguous places in the blackground of sf as a step toward encouraging further explorations of race and racism in the genre.

The relationship between race and sf has been largely overlooked by scholars with the exception of an odd essay here or there not related to sf written by either Samuel Delany or Octavia Butler. The fictional writings of Delany and Butler, prominent black writers of sf whose work often foregrounds racial issues, suggest that race and racism *are* only discussed in the contexts of those writers. Even though sf seems to be uniquely suited to the critical study of race with its depiction of aliens, artificial persons, cyborgs, psi-powered beings, and exotic landscapes, sf critics pay scant attention to the relationship itself. The excitement and fear generated through these encounters with the "other" make clear matters of racial and ethnic contact, where prejudices, discrimination, hatred, and stereotypes, as well as empathy, tolerance, patience, and acceptance, take place because of difference. Sf will become "a

powerful literature of change" when it reaches the "point where writing from or about a racial minority is neither subversive nor unusual" (Leonard, "Race," 262). When cultural studies and critical race theories are applied to science fiction, knowledge analogous to afrofuturism is produced in the blackground of sf.

Although this conversation on race and racism in sf criticism has slowly become apparent in the past twenty-five years, afrofuturism has greatly amplified the discussion. To frame the history of this dialogue, the first special issue dedicated to race in sf occurs in 1984 with *Black American Literature Forum*, while the substantive debate on afrofuturism begins in 1993 when Mark Dery defines the term in a collection of interviews with Samuel Delany, Tricia Rose, and Greg Tate published in the *South Atlantic Quarterly*. Alondra Nelson next uses the term in 2002 "to challenge the notion of a future without race" when she guest-edits a special issue of *Social Text* featuring articles on afrofuturism (Lavender, "Critical Race Theory," 190). And the most recent rendition of this debate on afrofuturism appears in a 2007 special issue of *Science Fiction Studies* guest-edited by Mark Bould and Rone Shavers, where Bould charges that "sf avoids confronting the structures of racism and its own complicity in them" (Bould, "The Ships," 180). Consequently, afrofuturism illuminates the blackground of sf and its history with concerns of race and technology.

Along with afrofuturism, an increasing amount of scholarship has been published on racial issues in science fiction and technoculture in the past decade or so. Elisabeth Leonard's groundbreaking anthology, *Into Darkness Peering: Race and Color in the Fantastic* (1997), is the first text of consequence to undertake a discussion of race in the fantastic. In fact, the subject has been continually gaining popularity and respect with the publication of critical works such as De Witt Kilgore's influential *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space* (2003), which posits spaceflight as a possible solution to race issues in America, and Adilifu Nama's convincing *Black Space: Imagining Race in Science Fiction Film* (2008), the first full-length study of how race and racism function in sf film.[9] Additionally, scholarship addressing the intersections of race and technology has enhanced the study of sf.[10] For example, Lisa Nakamura's *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet* (2002) addresses issues of race and racism on

the World Wide Web. Likewise, Martin Kevorkian's *Color Monitors: The Black Face of Technology in America* (2006) compellingly argues that the black male body has been unconsciously raced as a natural machine in popular culture. All of this scholarship represents the various relationships between sf and race where cultural experiences and technological progressions illuminate sf's blackground.

Outside the traditional bind of the black/white binary, different iterations of the color line clearly manifest at the intersections of race and racism in sf. Unfortunately, sf has mirrored rather than defied racial stereotypes throughout much of its history. For instance, the myth of the noble savage is the dominant conception of North America's indigenous people; these Native Americans have an innate natural simplicity and virtue uncorrupted by European civilization. Put another way, American Indians have been romanticized as "wild" men possessing a fierce sense of savage honor and wisdom—undeniably, a blatant example of racism. This myth coupled with the "indefinitely receding frontier" of space exploration, populated with endangered alien stand-ins for Native Americans and Latinos, is able to keep the idea of the American West forever alive (McGregor, 247). As Christine Morris explains, "In space opera there is this same intellectual dichotomy between the idyll and the life of the savage, and in space opera as in horse opera, Indians are a natural target" (303). Yet this myth continues to endure in the popular imagination. For Mary Weinkauf, "The existence of the American Indian in science fiction is a reminder of a tendency to exploit and even annihilate those who stand in the way of progress, a recurring theme from Wells to Le Guin," but she later adds this caveat: "Science-fiction writers use Native Americans as a symbolic warning that progress is dangerous to tradition and as a plea to appreciate different lifestyles" (319).

Andre Norton's thoughtful treatment of the noble savage stereotype in *The Beast Master* (1959) is an illustration of how space opera can expose a kind of racism in sf, where Native Americans continue to face genocidal tendencies on other planets. The novel's "Navajo" protagonist Hosteen Storm considers such things as identity, ancestry, prejudice, and cultural destruction in his dealings with the Norbies, a race native to the planet Arzor (11). Such digressions exploring other color binaries in sf underscore the importance of developing the critical tools necessary for investigating racial formations in a meaningful way.

Just as Native Americans are stereotyped as noble savages, Asian Americans are targets for discrimination in sf as well. Critical analyses such as Patrick Sharp's *Savage Perils: Racial Frontiers and Nuclear Apocalypse in American Culture* (2007) also show that rampant paranoia concerning vast Asian hordes invading America existed in the late nineteeth and early twentieth centuries. White authors of the time used the popular concept of social Darwinism to concoct racist ideas with Asians embodying a perceived threat to Western living standards. This cultural anxiety is historically known as the "yellow peril" and is impossible to disassociate from our conceptions of the Orient in science fiction. The nineteenth-century influx of East Asian laborers willing to work for very low wages resulted in "the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882," which "stopped the legal immigration of all Chinese except teachers, students, merchants, diplomats, and tourists," according to William Wu (2–3).

The growing sense of American nationalism is supported by sf writers who imagined future wars with Asian powers for control of the world. For example, M. P. Shiel's *The Yellow Danger* (1898) and Edward Pendray's *The Earth-Tube* (1929) are the best among the earlier stories while Scott's film *Blade Runner* and William Gibson's groundbreaking novel *Neuromancer* (1984) reinvent the supremacy of the Orient. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay believes that fear of the yellow peril is "a model that easily expanded into Social Darwinian fantasies of race wars" (221–22). Some sf writers present battles in which the West opposes the rise of a superior Asian culture with preemptive strikes. Others show Asians as scientifically superior and merciless, a dreadful combination, and reason enough for annihilation. Yet Edward James detects a "general change in racial attitudes concerning [sf's] treatment of the 'yellow races'" in the cyberpunk subgenre through its depiction of multinational conglomerates based in the Orient that run the world by controlling the development of technology (28).

Whereas American Indians and Orientals provide exotic images, Africa creates a sense of primitivism as the Dark Continent in the sf imagination as it appears in the work of writers like Edgar Rice Burroughs, Michael Crichton, A. M. Lightner, Paul McCauley, and

Mack Reynolds.[11] Perhaps the best example of primitivism in sf is Mike Resnick's short story "Kirinyaga" (1988), in which a group of East African émigrés from Kenya has come to establish their Kikuyu tribal utopia on an isolated, artificial habitat modeled after the African savannahs. Shunning all things Western, trouble arrives when Koriba, the ancient village "witch doctor," decides to uphold the custom of killing a child born feet first to avoid a tribal curse (716). Maintenance, an off-world monitoring agency, chooses to intervene despite the black colonists' claims of autonomy. Such unwarranted interference reproduces postcolonial history where resistance proves futile. With their culture destroyed once already, the Kikuyu are trapped in a colonial system forcing them to experience otherness yet again.

Black fantasy writer Charles Saunders has even called "outer space. . . . as segregated as a South African Toilet" in regard to the lack of involvement by African Americans in speculative genres (J. Bell, "Interview," 91). Because of this troublesome depiction of black identity, Saunders feels that "the onus is on" black people to tell the stories they want to read instead of having "people like Mike Resnick . . . tell them for us" ("Why Blacks Should Read," 404). In response to Saunders's plea for blacks to use Africa as an influence in their speculative writing, black writers such as Steven Barnes, David Anthony Durham, Carole McDonnell, Nnedi Okorafor-Mbachu, Nisi Shawl, and Gregory L. Walker have recently answered the challenge.[12] We also have Saunders's own revised and reissued *Imaro* series as well as Caribbean influence in the work of Bill Campbell, Tobias S. Buckell, and Nalo Hopkinson.[13] Consequently, explicit explorations of sf's blackground by writers of color with colored characters in raced worlds are on the rise as an alternative to a kind of universal white space.

If nothing else, otherhood is about the portrayal of race by any speculative writer in sf regardless of his or her background. It is meant to question racial patterns that have been both familiar and unfamiliar in sf's blackground. For me, otherhood is why a writer like Tobias Buckell stands out. Despite his white origins in the Caribbean, Buckell is racially conscious and projects this awareness in his multiracial worlds featuring the black mercenary Pepper. Otherhood in relation to how it's dealt with in sf's blackground (what this book terms the black/white binary) questions our fears of difference, our hesitancy to explore

other models of reality that challenge our beliefs, rules, security, and ultimately, our identity. To this end, I have structured my chapters around traditional ways of reading this binary, such as extrapolations of slavery, segregation, and contagion narratives, as well as specific concepts largely of my own invention like ethnoscapes and technicities. Such an arrangement may reveal hitherto undiscovered aspects of sf, and provide a broader context for reexamining the genre.

In chapter 1, I look at the state of science fiction race criticism and view the development and practice of racism in the science fiction community. Beginning with the wellsprings of sf theory, mainly Darko Suvin and Samuel R. Delany, I position otherhood within it as a new mode of race reading. Then I consider the importance and utility of emerging theories for race-reading in science fiction, such as afrofuturism, before considering a tradition surrounding social Darwinism in Western culture that continues to influence and shape science fiction. I follow this point by critiquing the widely perceived authority of science discourse, a perception driven by approval of the ideal of pure research. I explain how this perceived authority can serve to generate prejudice and racism in sf. It is one of the cultural tasks of science fiction to draw attention to and to challenge racist attitudes in part by interrogating science discourse. While my discussion centers on various types of criticism, I use texts by Octavia E. Butler, H. G. Wells, and others to reflect how otherhood works in general as a mode of reading the blackground of science fiction.

With chapter 2, I examine and apply the national experience of slavery to sf texts by first considering the dehumanization process as told in slave narratives; its continuing ramifications as neo–slave narratives; and its ultimate expression as science fiction "meta-slavery" with its time travel motifs, alternate histories, alien contacts, and future visions. In this way, I am able to get at notions of disempowerment, unconscious reflections of racism, and also direct confrontations of racist attitudes displayed in the genre. Many science fiction writers work out complicated feelings toward the "peculiar institution" by creating representations of the historical events of slavery, charging their retellings of the past with their own rationality and truth, making them vivid and unflinching accounts of evil in their attempt to come to some kind of closure with fabulist impulses. In light of these purposes, this chapter

revolves around the analysis of texts by Isaac Asimov, Butler, Steven Barnes, David Brin, and Delany.

Chapter 3 considers extrapolations of the Jim Crow era in American history. Though our national memory tends to remember issues of segregation as they were played out in landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases in the areas of education and public transportation, the separatism tales of science fiction offer many views of segregation, some that uphold blatant structures of racism, others that deconstruct them, and still others that provide optimistic and pessimistic solutions to problems of the color line. Our reality is deliberately distanced by writers creating the social, political, and cultural possibilities of race in other places and times. This extrapolative style of thinking about race is intriguing for science fiction because the entire course of historic world events can be reimagined and changed by writers, and in this chapter I make close connections between the writers who distance us and concepts of otherhood as it relates to blackground. And so my discussion in this chapter focuses on texts by Ray Bradbury, Evie Shockley, Schuyler, Walter Mosley, and Derrick Bell.

Chapter 4 investigates ailments of race linked to the notion of contagion as a race metaphor in science fiction. This chapter explores the idea of the one-drop rule and miscegenation. Sf narratives built around the threat or devastation of some form of contagion frequently manifest racial fears and assumptions. Whether the product of nature or technology, accident or design, contagion narratives depict change so swift and so drastic that it can underscore or undermine a wide range of cultural assumptions, including those about race. In every case, however, these narratives derive their power from fear of the ready and rapid transmission of a harmful disease or idea from person to person. And this fear shares many characteristics with the fear of race mixing. Consequently, many sf contagion narratives manifest protocols of racial discrimination and sometimes challenge racist assumptions. Discussion centers on texts by Greg Bear, Butler, John W. Campbell Jr., Tananarive Due, Walter Miller, and Mosley.

With chapter 5, I posit a novel way to think about the various environments that sf provides as well as a new way to think about science fiction characterization. An ethnoscape provides a symbolic transfer of meaning between racial/ethnic politics and the shifting world of the sf text, resolving the contradictions of homogeneity and exposing the ways that sf unthinkingly reproduces white privilege. The writer constructs a socio-spatial environment in which to tell a story, but the reader can reconfigure those arrangements, draw out the assumptions and implications of the text to perceive its ethnoscape. Even if the fictional socio-spatial environment is constructed so as to foreground issues of race, it will nonetheless contain tensions, contradictions, and connotations beyond the author's control and in which the reader can discern the text's ethnoscape. The ethnoscape foregrounds the human landscapes of race and ethnicity as constituted by sf's historical, social, scientific, and technological engagement with the present. This chapter features analysis of works by William Gibson, Robert A. Heinlein, Ursula K. Le Guin, Delany, Ishmael Reed, and Colson Whitehead.

In chapter 6, I consider technologically derived ethnicity, "technicity," as one pervasive manifestation of these new race paradigms in science fiction. I define technicity as the integration of various technologies with humanity to produce new racial forms such as AI (artificial intelligence), cyborgs, artificial people, and posthumans. Technicity is a reimagining of how race is affected by technology, a way of imagining how individuals might newly conceive identity within increasingly technological worlds. Key works by Nalo Hopkinson, Harlan Ellison, Gibson, Philip K. Dick, and Frederik Pohl are investigated.

My conclusion asks if science fiction has changed enough to incorporate readings of race and racism within its curious history and production; to withstand illuminating its blackground. The task of engaging this social past, a past kept alive by cultural memory, becomes difficult because of political correctness and how it colors present views of history. Otherhood is a particular way of thinking about race relationships in science fiction which have previously suffered from incomplete and trivial reflections. It highlights the interwoven relationships between science fiction and race where cultural experiences, social knowledges, singular visions, technological progressions, and mixed realities are rigorously questioned by looking at historical and futurological worlds. In this respect, science fiction can help us better understand what directions to take in struggling against racism and striving for equality. Consequently, I challenge the sf community to live up to its "progressive" label. To accomplish this task, I offer two

impressions. First, I present my thoughts on the science fictional paradigm shift America experienced with the election of its "first" African American president. Second, I discuss Robert Heinlein's unforgettable novel *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress* (1966) to illustrate the interconnections between each chapter in this book. With this in mind, subsequent cultural anxiety has been echoed through a science fiction aesthetic in film, literature, and reality.

Although otherness, alienation, and difference are motifs frequently explored in the genre, sf has been largely "color-blind," depicting racial discrimination as a relic of the past and race as a biological fiction. This book will investigate the "racing" (engaging, acknowledging, discovering, and/or elucidating race and racism) of sf in the context of a "blackness" informed by cultural studies, postmodernism, and America itself. Put another way, the science fictioning of race is increasingly drawn from postcolonialism, from the popular imagination, and from works emphasizing biological factors. Yet there remains a danger of letting such a discussion fade into the background as efforts are made to draw attention away from such connections through the academic perceptions of the sf status quo. Contrary to critical opinion, this literature does *not* shed light on ideas of racial otherness in terms of the black/white binary just because it *does* break down oppositions with its prevalence of cloning, hybrids, cyborgs, and so on. Our attention needs to be focused on why this omission occurs when considering the futurist imagination dealing with entrenched problems.

For what I am trying to accomplish, a sexy term such as afrofuturism seems too restrictive in scope even though it has been successful at drawing attention to race in sf. Despite the clunkiness of the term "blackground" (and that it is not meant to be a tacky pun), I have not been able to find a better one. I use "blackground" as an interpretive/critical effect and trust it to challenge the perpetuation of racism in sf. There may be no proper way of racing sf, but "blackground" is *meant* to instigate significant change in how we approach race and racism in the genre. After all, American sf has participated in the discourse of science and the politics of race during its nascent years, and it continues to do so. This participation has obscured a really simple fact: African Americans have been forced to confront a sense of "blackness" grounded in the stuff of science fiction that has taken root in American culture.

The exact ways in which my book is, if not unique, then different from all of the others now emerging are difficult to quantify. Although I am not the first scholar to advocate the race-reading of science fiction, my interrogation goes far beyond the usual recognition of the importance of race in sf due to the contribution of black writers such as Delany, Butler, and Hopkinson. I am careful to include much earlier sf, some of which was inescapably, if not overtly, racist. My subject is the odd construction of race in a literature that has both reflected and constructed concepts of otherness informed by and distorted by science, oversimplified science, pseudo-science, incorrect science, and out-and-out fantasy. This book is my attempt to design another critical method to encourage and direct attention to long-overlooked racial aspects of science fiction.

Nonetheless, I have two additional answers to what makes my book distinct—one short and one long. The short answer is that this book is unique mainly in that it brings together for the first time race criticism and sf agendas to see the kinds of reciprocal relationships these two discourses have with each other, each at times informing and at times challenging the other. Simply put, my view is that science fiction is a form that engages race in complex and profound ways.

The long answer involves intuition. My hunch is that race, more particularly "blackness," is always in the background of this historically "white" genre, and I hope to be forgiven my repeated sin of awkward coinage—"blackground," "otherhood," "meta-slavery," "ethnoscape," and "technicity"—for what it reveals. These terms describe how sf's estranged landscapes and powerful technologies extrapolate and model new racial formations in addition to old ones, thus providing a compelling anatomy of a previously neglected dimension of the genre. Therein lies the key: my study is distinctive precisely because it offers readers a critical vocabulary for understanding the role of race in what is commonly assumed to be a deracinated popular genre. Appropriately enough, I put key concepts from critical race studies, literary theory, and science fiction studies together in what I hope are exciting new ways.

I also believe this approach makes my work comprehensible within the tradition of black studies even as it locks me into the classic black/white racial binary. Given that that binary is a dominant feature of American culture, this lends "blackground" some critical traction and

analytical power. However, I am fully aware that blackground does pose a historical/social limit for the more general claims that I make about race in sf. So my use of "otherhood" is a way around the specificities of blackground. It allows me to suggest that the racial binary is merely the foundation for race as a preoccupation of science fiction. This move gives us a way of thinking about how the genre plays with race, making of it something other than a simple reflection of historic and current social conditions. The implication is that sf, as a medium of social extrapolation, produces all kinds of "others." In this respect, my study is a framing and expression of the idea that American sf is characterized by an investment in the proliferation of racial difference, that racial alterity is a fundamental part of sf's narrative and social strategies. I recognize, however, that new differences provide fertile ground for new racisms. Thus the political and economic hierarchy empowered by the black/white binary remains in place while the binary itself evaporates when it is no longer based on biological markers. To this end, I have been influenced by Stuart Hall's concept of "cultural racism" (339).

This gut feeling of mine leads me to think my exploration of the reciprocal relationship between "racing science fiction" and "science fictioning race" brings to light and analyzes the numerous ways in which sf is far from being the "postracial genre" its writers and critics have long assumed it to be. Science fiction is actually transmitting assumptions of racism even in stories that are ostensibly envisioning a future where race has become irrelevant. To this end, I attempt to harness the signature language of modernity—science fiction—to explore and better understand the American heritage of race and racism related to black experiences with displacement, dispossession, and alienation filtered through more familiar racist structures such as slavery, Jim Crow, or offensive language.

1 Racing Science Fiction

Science fiction produces alien and divergent neighborhoods, with strange and dissimilar signs, shifting identities, and distorted realities of existence. For example, Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* (1993) is a dystopian novel set in the not too distant future around the city of Los Angeles, where downward spiraling middle-class people live in interracial walled communities for protection against the decaying and regressing social order of twenty-first-century America. This sf narrative takes the form of an autobiographical journal relating Lauren Olamina's intimate experiences of the world as her community crumbles around her. She begins a new religion, Earthseed, where "God is change," as she flees north through the ensuing anarchy and violence with her multiracial band of survivors, encountering various situations, ranging from gunfights and cannibalism to escaped slaves and wildfire (*Sower*, 3). Ultimately, the destiny of Earthseed is to take root among the stars (*Sower*, 199). Butler's story is of great consequence to readers because she explores the psychological and spiritual repercussions of racism on a disintegrating country that illustrate the importance of examining attitudes, assumptions, and feelings by which society has conditioned everyone.

Lauren is afflicted with hyperempathy syndrome, a congenital disease passed to her from her mother, an abuser of a drug called "Paracetco, the smart pill" (*Sower*, 11). Hyperempathy syndrome is a delusional ailment, which causes Lauren to experience the pain and pleasure of others around her. This illness creates in her a profound

sense of compassion, allowing her to fight the sense of hopelessness and indifference surrounding her. It grants her the wisdom to lead people. In this light Lauren learns to value community and all it offers—solidarity, activism, and self-reliance. She and her followers must learn, teach, adapt, and grow. As Butler writes: "Embrace diversity. Or be destroyed" (*Sower*, 181). And so by embracing all that her community is, Lauren adapts, in the Darwinian sense, in order to survive.

Butler and other sf writers like her use sf to move us outside of our normal comprehension and allow us to see how race operates culturally. This kind of writing takes us beyond the scope of our ordinary experiences and forces us to mediate between what we already know about race and what we can learn about it by reading sf. The means to accomplish this kind of mediation relates to concepts of otherhood. And in terms of the black/white binary, sf authors would do well to examine settings, signs, and characters, even themselves, based on how otherhood fits science fiction. Butler does understand these relations, and her Parable books present a bleak, nightmarish view of a possible future in alarming detail—where there is unchecked violence and crime; the rapid spread of drugs like pyro, which induces people to start fires; gangs, drug addicts, and homeless people dominating the streets; greedy multinational corporations buying up pieces of the country; federal deregulation of minimum wages, which allows (debt) slavery to make a comeback; escalating energy, food, and water prices; spreading hunger; a corrupt, lazy, and ineffectual police force; simple diseases such as measles and cholera raging out of control; an exponentially increasing birth rate; global warming; a growing gap between the rich and poor; declining educational systems; polygamy; the failure of moral teachings from various religions, most especially Christianity; the decay of modern communication technologies such as television and dependence on older technologies such as public radio for world news; dismantling of the space program; rusting cars, guns and fire—literally social chaos caused by a convergence of social, environmental, and economic crises. As Peter Stillman describes it, "The United States is no longer the storied land of freedom and plenty" (18). In other words, twenty-first-century American life is a living hell.

Though Butler's second novel is complicated by dual narrators, Lauren and her resentful daughter, Larkin/Asha Vere, *Parable of the Talents* (1998) continues the story of Lauren and her fledgling Earthseed religion, where "change is the one unavoidable, irresistible, ongoing reality of the universe" (75). The U.S. is dominated by lawlessness, violence, slavery, and religious fanaticism, among other things. Lauren's missing brother, Marcus, is back from the dead and rescued from slavery. Later, the first Earthseed community, Acorn, is destroyed; Lauren and her followers are enslaved with electronic "slave collars" by brutal extremists known as the Church of Christian America (*Talents*, 189); her husband dies in the reeducation camp that Acorn becomes; and her baby daughter is kidnapped and conditioned. Yet somehow Lauren manages to survive and spread the teachings of Earthseed. As the story comes to its end, Lauren is revered as a deity, but she is estranged from her now grown daughter as well as from her brother, a prominent minister in Christian America and an opponent of Earthseed. Lauren dies before the first Earthseed ship rockets into space, but her ashes are sent with the crew to seed the stars. The second Parable novel is possibly greater in consequence than the first because Butler makes visible the strength and perseverance necessary to unlearn racist patterns and resist oppression. Here is a writer attempting to come to terms with the hurts suffered as a result of racism.

With its depictions of slavery, concentration camps, and religious zealotry, *Parable of the Talents* addresses issues of racism and persecution far more directly than its predecessor. The "potential" of Earthseed to overcome differences such as race or class or sexual preference is a part of the struggle for survival (*Talents*, 361). The promise of human diversity is knotted with the "apocalyptic potential" of "the current racial formation of American society" (Phillips, 306). Butler embeds her critique of racism in the background of the text in such a way that the ability to reason, create technology, and use scientific advances is the only plausible means to potentially survive and progress beyond the evolutionary dead end of discrimination. As described by Patrick Sharp, "The key to Darwin's vision of evolution was technology: [Darwin] argued that humans had been naturally selected for their ability to invent and use technology" (4). Capitalizing on this sentiment, Butler's writing estranges reality in such a way that addresses concerns about our lack of preparedness for change as a society and as individuals. As Lauren declares, "If we're to be anything other than

smooth dinosaurs who evolve, specialize, and die, we need the stars" (*Talents*, 179). Leaving Earth is the only solution to the coming race war that Lauren is able to envision. The Parable books are politically poignant because many people are afraid to look at reality; instead, they close their eyes and hope it will go away or become better. It is in sf writing such as Butler's that we see a need for the necessary critical tools to interrogate a genre permeated by racial assumptions.

Butler's Parable books are important to science fictional race discourse in many ways. First, she offers an incisive critique of race and class in postmodern culture by creating the walled community of Robledo, which happens to be an interracial mix of blacks, whites, Asians, and Latinos struggling to survive together in the midst of social, economic, and environmental crises. Butler's use of diversity shows us that embracing human differences would eliminate many of the difficulties that we face today because it would dismantle the problem of the color line as society restructures itself. Second, Butler promotes the importance of building a community through thinking, teaching, and activism, where diverse groups of people work together to solve current social problems created by distrust, prejudice, hate, and greed in conjunction with separatism. As Madhu Dubey acknowledges, "The process of finding unity in diversity is necessarily risky and difficult, requiring the ability to interpret unfamiliar cultural codes and the alert balancing of suspicion and trust typical of urban social interactions" ("Folk," 113). Third, through questioning dominant social paradigms and dismissing them, Butler undermines racial coding in sf with a black woman protagonist without explicitly talking about race. Her work is an effective counter model against racist images presented in the works of white writers, and lends itself nicely to investigating the obvious tensions between these competing representations.

What may be thought of as "black" science fiction has been written by many people of diverse backgrounds—black, white, and other. Of course, factors from race and class to geography and the media help determine how these people write their own kind of black sf. However, addressing this "blackness" in sf is central to changing how we read, define, and critique the genre itself. It is essential to build a dialogue with existing theories of sf, racial science, and popular culture in order to create new ideas about how to apply sf studies to race.

Acknowledging and dealing with race in sf may have a significant cultural effect for the twenty-first century because it can prepare us for the looming social changes that may descend upon us as America ceases to be dominated by the white majority, such as those imagined in Butler's Parable novels. We will be in strange territory with such alarming changes, and sf has already charted a few new paths through that territory. These paths present both opportunities and challenges for society to establish new values. In this regard, sf criticism is essential for stimulating appreciation of diversity. Many sf critics, as well as scholars outside the field, coincidentally suggest spaces in which race can be explored in the genre. Brian Aldiss and David Wingrove's *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction* (1986) and Brooks Landon's *Science Fiction after 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars* (1997) are very important to the premises (and promises) of seeing sf criticism through the unique concepts of blackground and otherhood. These authors begin to fill in the historical gaps in our knowledge of sf and its various movements, and by ignoring race in their work, they let us see the vast need to address race and all of its complexities in sf. In fact, these texts further buttress my belief that an underdeveloped, and perhaps checked, tradition of resistance to the sf genre exists. Representations of race in many of the various themes, motifs, metaphors, and icons of the sf tradition are being resisted. Race and racism in sf has hardly been discussed by scholars or fans in any meaningful way. A cultural critic could turn the tradition on its head by offering an overview of sf similar in scope to Aldiss and Wingrove and Landon that discusses racial codes. There are many other sf works that function in much the same way, hinting at racial spaces open to question in science fiction. In other words, room exists in sf to query racial spaces.

For instance, Mark Rose's *Alien Encounters: Anatomy of Science Fiction* (1981) establishes a framework for the sf genre by defining its controlling paradigm as the alien encounter. He states, "We can observe the way the concern with the human in relation to the nonhuman projects itself through four logically related categories," which he identifies as "space, time, machine, and monster" (32).[1] Rose begins here to devise a valuable model that can be used to uncover problematic representations of race as "alien" others. External encounters with aliens symbolize the internal conflicts of a humanity marked, or

perhaps scarred, by racial experience, our continual state of difference. Aldiss mentions that "the essential American obsession" in science fiction "is with the Alien—and thus perhaps with self-identity" (Aldiss and Wingrove, 119). To amend his statement: the American obsession with race is often superimposed onto science fiction aliens. Somewhat ironically, Sharon DeGraw welcomes "an extraterrestrial Other" as a "replacement for terrestrial othering focused on ethnicity, race, nationality, or gender" (16). In this respect, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay Jr.'s commentary on aliens is more pointed in terms of race. He notes that sf constructs "alien-human difference as analogous to terrestrial racial difference," permitting "much the same imaginary sleight-of-hand as the concept of race" (228). The sheer volume of criticism pertaining to the alien dictates that I expand and enrich my exploration of race and racism by touching on the subject of other beings.

Other scholars use the cyborg as a metaphor to complicate notions of identity, such as race that exists on the edge of the human-machine boundary, or to speculate on the idea of a posthumanity: human-artificial hybrids that are disturbingly other. Envisioning exactly how the cyborg occupies a new race position becomes possible when thinking about future projections of human racial history. In the same way, posthumanism changes how we think about our physical being by raising new questions of what is innately or naturally human. Scott Bukatman's *Terminal Identity: The Visual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (1993) looks at the intersection of man and machine as a posthuman subjectivity. Donna J. Haraway's classic essay, "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1991), also provides a blueprint for investigating new manifestations of race ideology, the cyborg imaginary. Likewise, N. Katherine Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999) relates how posthumanism challenges human subjectivity through the increasingly complicated technological development of man machines such as the cyborg or artificial intelligence. "The fact remains that technology is rapidly making the concept of the 'natural' human obsolete," as Sherryl Vint describes it in her book *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction* (7). Tension will manifest between humanity and its mechanical progeny along the lines of race and racism, a "new" racism based on "old" ways of thinking about difference. For instance, Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) complicates what it means to be human in regard to race in one important way: androids pass for human. The severity of discrimination against biological androids, manufactured human beings in the text, is clearly a human fear that manifests racism based on a paranoid belief that machines could replace men.

My own thinking diverges here from that of posthumanist scholars in that I consider these new beings as new races. For example, would constructed humans or informational systems be privileged over their human counterparts? Is individual consciousness essential for machine races? How would this machine identity evolve? How would humanity interact with these other beings? How should race exist if the human body cannot be distinguished from a computer simulation or a cybernetic being? Certainly, sf criticism inspires a hotbed of ontological questions in regard to race and racism.

Aldiss, Landon, Rose, Bukatman, Haraway, Hayles, and Vint suggest spaces where race-reading can be mapped as well as analyzed; they call to mind the deep, dark spaces in criticism defined here as blackground. However, these readings do not go far enough to provide a combination of spatial and social locations ideal for exploring ideas of race. In dealing with the shortage of race criticism, blackground becomes invaluable in seeking to fill in the logical gaps and spaces left by other scholars. Because sf helps us think about the continually changing present through the dual lenses of defamiliarization and extrapolation, it also helps us to think about alternate tomorrows as well as to question images of these tomorrows, distortions of the various historical presents and realities.

We begin at the intersection of Darko Suvin and Samuel R. Delany. Suvin's *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979) outlines the intellectual gravity and verve necessary for investigating the various textual codes of sf, and Delany's *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* (1977; hereafter *JHJ*) pinpoints the language of sf as a word-by-word, sentence-by-sentence revisionary reading process that produces innovative meanings unique to sf. Suvin supplies a rigorous definition of sf aimed at the content of the genre, and Delany provides a style-conscious definition designed to unveil the distinctive means of expression in sf. Placed together, the trenchant perceptions of these two stars provide a blueprint for deciphering the content and style of sf as the genre presents alternate referential worlds.

As a result, science fiction has cultivated and encouraged new ways of reading because of the many valuable attempts at defining it. In the tradition of Suvin's and Delany's theories, I am attempting to articulate otherhood in relation to the blackground brought forth in this book as my own mode of reading that offers a new way of interpreting race and racism in sf. I feel that investigating the state of race criticism in terms of how otherhoods work on blackgrounds will illuminate the development and practice of racism in the sf community. Both Suvin and Delany serve as a foundation for this thinking.

Perhaps the most renowned and influential sf theorist, Suvin defines "science fiction as the *literature of cognitive estrangement*" (4; italics in original). Suvin's celebrated definition of sf is one of the wellsprings of the genre because it brings a measure of respectability to the study of this "popular" genre in the academic world. His definition also remains a continual source of information over thirty years later. It provides sf with a sense of importance to scholars working in other fields—but why?

In his effort to garner high regard for sf, Suvin emphasizes literary theory in his definition by constructing carefully arranged binary oppositions between everyday forms of fiction and sf and establishing a framework of estrangement. Normal "mainstream" fiction operates through a recognizable framework of naturalism or realism that provides an accurate representation of humanity and culture. The world of the text is similar to our own world; it is concerned about the facts and rejects the visionary component of sf. However, sf functions through estrangement, that is, by presenting something familiar in a way strange enough to make it unfamiliar.

Estrangement ironically separates the known from the unknown, creating a sense of the alien about a familiar object or concept. In other words, the ordinary world is defamiliarized; it is presented in a way that is exceedingly, and perhaps eerily, different from our own experience. In Suvin's usage, estrangement is a response to genuine originality. For Suvin, "The attitude of estrangement . . . has grown into the *formal framework* of the genre" (7; italics in original). Nonetheless, Suvin realizes that estrangement alone is not enough to distinguish sf from other genres because estrangement is also produced in fantasy, horror, gothic

fiction, fairy tales, myth, and so on. Cognition comes into play here by making a distinction between sf and everything else in literature.

Cognition literally means the act of knowing based on elements of perception. This knowing can be further reduced to empirical factual knowledge, and in turn empirical knowledge is gained through applying scientific methods of recognition, formulation of a problem, and collecting data through experimentation and observation to form and test hypothetical solutions to the problem. For example, Francis Crick and James Watson discovered the double helix structure of DNA in 1953, and this breakthrough has made many medical advances possible. Cognition, then, becomes a procedure of analyzing and understanding the alternative reality of sf texts that is generated through estrangement.

Hence, cognitive estrangement expresses an alternative invented make-believe world, but develops this world with a scientific severity adhering to the natural rules of the universe. Often, the "cognitive estrangement" paradigm allows for a conceptual breakthrough where one model is replaced by another, thus providing the idealized reader with a changed or altered perception of the world according to the rules of science or perhaps the conventions of modern culture.[2] A change in perspective causes the reader to realize new ideas or interpret the world differently. Thus, this reader is able to see beyond old theories and wrap his/her mind around new ones. The perspective shift seems to be a dialectical movement of perception. Certainly, the idealized reader can arrive at a new understanding of politics, social environments, materialistic desire, technological marvels, and perhaps even race through "cognitive estrangement."

In contrast, there is Samuel R. Delany, a black gay writer and critic of science fiction. One of Delany's monumental contributions to the study of science fiction is the notion of "subjunctivity," a concept that looks closely at the style of writing in sf. He describes subjunctivity as "the tension on the thread of meaning that runs between (to borrow Saussure's term for the 'word') sound-image and sound-image" (*JHJ*, 31). The concept of subjunctivity does three things. First, it splits apart content and style by focusing on style. Second, it differentiates between kinds of fiction. And third, it establishes degrees of subjunctivity within sf itself.

In subjunctivity, content functions as the topic treated in a written work; content represents the work's events, physical detail, and information. The analysis of this underlying content is performed through classification, tabulation, and evaluation of its key symbols in order to ascertain its meaning. This manner of interpretation in criticism is fine for naturalist fiction, but not for sf. "Put in opposition to 'style,' there is no such thing as 'content,'" according to Delany (*JHJ*, 21). Content focuses on information presented by words placed together in a specific arrangement. Information separated from the content of the words generates the meaning of the text. Delany does not mean that content is not important, rather that the form of the content, the way it appears on the written page, is subject to style. Juxtaposed with style, content becomes unstable because "even the literal meanings of various sentences and phrases are all read differently in science fiction from the way they are read in mundane fiction" (Delany, *Starboard Wine*, 49). Sf requires a unique mode of reading because of the rift between content and style. Language that can be easily understood in mundane fiction may signify something entirely different and unrelated in sf. Science fiction's "style," says Delany, separates it from all other forms of fiction because of the capacity of science fictional metaphors.

Because of style, subjunctivity also separates sf from other genres by emphasizing the interaction between the reader and the text. Subjunctivity permits Delany to explore variations of images built and modified through words to capture the sense of wonder generated through science fictional phrases. Considering various kinds of writing, subjunctivity definitively positions sf between news, naturalistic or realistic fiction, and fantasy. For example, one kind of subjunctivity, fantasy, is linked with *events that could not have happened*. And the sf kind of subjunctivity connotes *events that have not happened*, such as time travel. Certainly, "*events that have not happened* are very different from the fictional events that *could have happened*, or the fantastic events that *could not have happened*," as indicated by Delany (*JHJ*, 32; italics in original). The highly stylized language(s) of science fiction used to describe events that have not happened can obscure racialist meaning in any text because the images created by sf authors often mask the presence of race and racism. This is exactly why otherhood is needed to break through the façade of a white-oriented genre, meaning

that the potentialities of human progress require change and science fiction can lead the way.

The third way in which subjunctivity functions at the level of sf is to determine degrees within the genre itself because fundamental differences exist between the kinds of *events that have not happened*. First, events depicted in sf *might happen:* they have the potential to take place. Stories that might occur are extrapolative and usually follow along the lines of technological development. Second, there are *events that will not happen*. These stories entail fantastic elements woven into science, such as hollow-earth tales. Third, some sf stories function as warnings of technological, environmental, or societal disaster. They symbolize *events that have not happened yet*. Fourth, Delany identifies the parallel-world story as a degree of sf subjunctivity symbolic of "*events that have not happened in the past*," such as "Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*" (*JHJ*, 32; italics in original). Subjunctivity as a concept, then, offers critics and fans alike a comprehensive understanding of how style affects sf through distortions of language representing the present. Science fictional language distortions embedded in style introduce unusual opportunities to explore race and racism within the genre.

The obvious merits in defining ways of reading sf as Suvin and Delany do are the creation of a poetics for understanding the literature produced by sf, from the very bad through the very fine, and the relationship between readers and texts. Otherhood is a mode of reading sf separate from Suvin's cognitive estrangement and Delany's subjunctivity. I believe racist attitudes are masked via cognitive estrangement (science) or changed via subjunctivity (ifness), but they are revealed and examined via otherhood (race approach). Race and racism are obscured by these otherwise fascinating modes of reading (less so in Delany's critical work as this subject is not central to his scholarship, though racial issues are certainly part of his fiction).

Otherhood's rhetoric draws attention to race and racism as they are constituted by sf's historical, social, scientific, and technological engagement with the present. In my view, race essentially indicates the presence of diverse ethnic groups in alternative worlds as well as outlines the details of characters; but it should not reduce the deeds or impact of racialized characters as it often does in early-twentieth-century

sf. However modest, otherhood answers the challenge presented by the rise of cultural studies by providing a future-oriented examination of humanity. Otherhood as a mode of sf reading evolves from traditional thinking about race to radical race thinking.

Traditional thinking about race presumably begins with the body of literature composing the blackground of sf—from the recovery of older sf focused on race in general to the continuing explosion of new race-centered fiction focused on the black/white binary. Important new anthologies featuring speculative themes by people of color have recently appeared.[3] A case in point is Sheree Thomas's Dark Matter series. With the publication of *Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora* (2000) and its follow-up, *Dark Matter: Reading the Bones* (2004), Thomas has created a definitive collection of stories and essays representative of a rich, yet untapped tradition of speculative writing. More importantly, her provocative title "Dark Matter" suggests a metaphor for discussing the speculative fictions of black writers. Dark matter is literally invisible space debris whose existence has been deduced because of its gravitational effect on other visible bodies. Black-authored sf is like dark matter because these works are seemingly invisible to readers, yet have an indisputable pull on the genre.

As a testament to this undeniable pull, white critics and black writers offer various speculations on the location of blacks, both writers and readers, in sf in the twentieth century. Bearing in mind that this speculation is only plausible guesswork, a lively exchange takes place in the back pages of the literary journal *Science Fiction Studies* (in the Books in Review and Notes & Correspondence sections) between Kathleen Spencer, Fred Lerner, and Graham Stone across volumes 14, 15, and 16, from 1987 through 1989. The gist of the debate concerns the small number of black writers of sf throughout the twentieth century, especially in the early years of the pulps. After recognizing the modern efforts of Delany, Butler, and Steven Barnes, Spencer concedes all will agree that the number of black writers is "strikingly low . . . so low as to need explanation" (Spencer and Stone, 247). She closes this exchange by speculating about why many blacks apparently do not participate in sf: editorial discrimination, concealed identity, "unequal access to education and to jobs," leading to silence among black writers (248). More

recently, in *The Subject of Race in American Science Fiction* (2007), sf scholar Sharon DeGraw posits that "a discussion of race has been, and in some cases continues to be, viewed as antithetical to the science fiction genre. A glaring indication of this distinct separation is found in the lack of an entry for 'Race' in the contemporary *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*" (103). So blackground relates not only to how sf critics view the works of sf authors and the subject matter of the books, but also to the scarcity of black-authored sf.

To date, I believe only one black sf writer of the 1930s, George Schuyler, more noted as a satirist and journalist, has been unearthed. Using the pseudonym Samuel I. Brooks, Schuyler published in the *Pittsburgh Courier* a weekly pulp-style sf adventure (featuring the black mad doctor Belsidus in his conquest of Africa and later the Western world) that was collected as *Black Empire* (1991) by Robert A. Hill and R. Kent Rasmussen. Amidst the questions concerning the lack of black sf writers, an unasked yet profound question surfaces: what does sf offer its black readership and its black authors? What does the genre say to African Americans?

Of course, various answers to the question above have been supplied by major and emerging black science fiction writers over the years. Only Spencer nods in the direction of Samuel R. Delany's deft criticism during the debate. In fact, two of Delany's many critical collections—*The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* (1977) and *Starboard Wine* (1984)—precede the debate. However, Delany is not alone in giving his answer relating to the impact of sf on black people. Octavia Butler, arguably the most famous black sf writer; Walter Mosley, the celebrated black detective novelist who has recently moved into sf; and Nalo Hopkinson, an emerging talent, each articulate informed responses to the question: what does the genre offer its black participants? The black critical reply is not necessarily any more valid than the white critical response, but clearly the black sf community has a better grasp on the reality of the racial situation because of its members' lived experiences as an oppressed people.

For example, Delany has offered many opinions in the past thirty years on what sf offers African American readers. He wonders, "Just exactly how does the situation of [Asimov's] robots in these stories [*I, Robot*] differ from the reality of the racial situation of [his] world?"

(*Starboard Wine*, 29); he also ponders "what the 'improved racial situation' was actually going to look like" as presented in *Starboard Wine*: "Oh yes, *equality* was a word I knew; but what would it look like, feel like, smell like?" (31) In effect, this kind of ruminating has made Delany a far more perceptive observer of the present world and its racial situation by allowing him to question the various images depicted in sf.[4] Delany has much to say on the issue of what sf potentially means for blacks, as do other sf writers and critics, such as Octavia Butler.

Butler responds to the question of the African American relationship to sf frequently and in a variety of ways. In an early interview published in *Black Scholar* (April 1986), Butler relates a conversation that she had with a white editor: "He said that he didn't think that blacks should be included in science fiction stories because they changed the character of the stories . . . you could use an alien instead and get rid of all this messiness and all those people that we don't want to deal with" (Beal, 18). In her own essay "Positive Obsession" (1995), she reveals what she thinks is good about sf with a series of rhetorical questions:

> But still I'm asked, what good is science fiction to Black people? What good is any form of literature to Black people? What good is science fiction's thinking about the present, the future, and the past? What good is its tendency to warn or to consider alternative ways of thinking and doing? What good is its examination of the possible effects of science and technology, or social organization and political direction? At its best, science fiction stimulates imagination and creativity. It gets reader and writer off the beaten track, off the narrow footpath of what 'everyone' is saying, doing, thinking—whoever 'everyone' happens to be this year. And what good is all this to black people? (134–35)

Sf offers black people a chance to think about the future of race relations as they are impacted by science and technology and to rethink painful moments in racial history such as slavery in uncommon ways. In this respect, Butler demonstrates how the questioner's insensitive "air" reflects a perceived imbalance in social power at the expense of African Americans as other, meaning lesser. She is committed to the struggle against racism, not to mention other problems like sexism, by raising awareness through her writing.

Another author foregrounding otherhood in relation to blacks is Walter Mosley. He has recently crossed into sf with novels like *Blue Light* (1998), *Futureland* (2001), *47* (2005), and *The Wave* (2006). Mosley states: "Science fiction promises a future full of possibility, alternative lives, and even regret . . . through science fiction you can have a . . . a black world, or simply have a say in the way things are. This power to imagine is the first step in changing the world" ("Black to the Future," 405–406). He makes a bold prediction in direct response to the issue of black participation in the field: "Within the next five years I predict there will be an explosion of science fiction from the black community" (407).

Additionally, Nalo Hopkinson, one of the most celebrated of a new generation of black sf writers, reiterates the dark matter metaphor in a 1999 interview. Hopkinson thinks that "there's an invisible readership of people of color. You rarely see them at cons, so it becomes easy to think they aren't there" (Rutledge, "Speaking in Tongues," 590). As a black reader of sf, I have to agree with Hopkinson. She firmly believes that "if black people can imagine our futures, imagine—among other things—cultures in which we aren't alienated, then we can begin to see our own way clear to creating them" (592). As Hopkinson suggests, the implication that black Americans tend to avoid sf is insincere at best. Even if the issues of race are seemingly relegated to the sidelines with visions of a raceless future, race remains a part of sf by its very absence.

Sf is a literature of possibility, and as such it certainly demands a mode of reading critical to race and racism in order to go along with increasing black participation in the field. And a body of race criticism focused on sf has begun to emerge in response to this demand, this dark matter, advancing various theories, ideas, and directions for race-reading. The triangulated intersections of mainstream literature and criticism with African American culture and sf provide fascinating points to take up the study of race in the genre.

Critics in the 1970s, among them Eric Rabkin and Robert Scholes, regularly assumed, however, that sf had resolved the various problems of racism in a future America with the notion of a unified humanity where race fades away. Rabkin and Scholes claimed that "the presence of unhuman races, aliens, and robots, certainly makes the differences between human races seem appropriately trivial, and one of the achievements of science fiction has been its emphasis on just this feature of human existence" (188).

This assumption is contradicted and overturned, however, by critics of the new millennium close to thirty years later. In 2003 black sf scholar De Witt Kilgore states:

> Within this logic, the problem of racism can be erased if its victims forgive its perpetrators and if we all forget the history of racialization and the richness of cultural variation. The problem with this solution is that it enshrines white masculinity, unmarked or troubled by culture, race, and gender, as the norm to which all "difference" must assimilate. (231)

In agreeing with Kilgore four years later, British sf scholar Mark Bould adds:

> Whatever their intentions, sf's color-blind future was concocted by whites and excluded people of color as full subjects; and because of the particularities of US history, the most obvious omission was that significant proportion of the population descended from the survivors of the West-African genocide, the Middle Passage, and slavery. ("The Ships," 177)

Bould states later in the essay, "Sf avoids confronting the structures of racism and its own complicity in them" (180). Both Kilgore and Bould are touching upon issues of power that were oversimplified by an older generation of critics. The earlier distortion, or perhaps evasion, by members of sf's critical circles on issues of race touches on the question of whether or not science fiction is the open, progressive community that it likes to think it is. Kilgore and Bould are emblematic of the shift to radical race thinking in the genre as they begin to make significant inroads.

As demonstrated by Kilgore's and Bould's incisive commentary, a body of race criticism in sf has emerged as various theories, ideas, and directions for reading race have been articulated, if not accepted, in recent years. These models include afrofuturism, Kilgore's own astrofuturism, and black militant near-future fiction. Not only are black theories of sf being developed, but a documentary film, *The Last Angel of History* (1996), and the Afrofuturism and Carl Brandon Society websites also consider the role of sf in black culture.[5] The fact that these web pages exist is significant for all minorities who might not have access to this communication technology for a variety of reasons. As Alicia Hines, Alondra Nelson, and Thuy Tu report, "The 'digital divide' has become popular shorthand for the myriad social and cultural factors that shape *access* to technological resources" (1). Another revealing area has been the huge amount of critical attention focused on the work of the two best known black sf writers, Samuel R. Delany and Octavia E. Butler. Critiques and analyses of their work must be considered mainstays in sf. However, the body of criticism on these two writers is simply too large to engage with here in a cohesive fashion.

To better understand the work being done on race and racism in sf, we have to consider the cultural politics involved in the construction of a racialized sf criticism focused on race, power, and technology. By tradition, black voices have been rejected and black experiences have been left out of criticism. This is what makes the first attempt to codify a black system of thought so important. In this respect, the best-known theory of black coded readings of race in sf, afrofuturism, has been around since 1993, nearly twenty years. Mark Dery coined the term, stating, "Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of twentieth century technoculture—and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future—might, for want of a better term, be called 'Afrofuturism'" (736). He goes on to say: "The notion of Afrofuturism gives rise to a troubling antinomy: Can a community whose past has been deliberately rubbed out, and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures?" (736). Afrofuturism considers the ways in which technology is said to be changing black culture and its potential.

Afrofuturists feel that sf unceasingly symbolizes events that have shaped black culture, such as the legacy of slavery and the forced abduction and relocation of Africans to a strange land governed by strange white beings. In other words, the African American historical and cultural condition is inherently the stuff of sf. Slavery as the foundation of the U.S. depended on the "systematic, conscientious, and massive destruction of African cultural remnants," according to Delany (Dery, 746). As such, the afrofuturists claim that black arts, especially music, resonated with a sense of alienation with the mixing of technology and sound (synthesizers, turntables, scratching, and sampling) while at the same time referencing the displacement of

slavery. Artists such as Sun Ra, George Clinton, and OutKast quickly come to mind.[6] But afrofuturism has expanded to claim all black cultural production—music, dance, painting, theater—and in particular literature. This is to say that nearly all black writing is sf because of black peoples' perceived and experienced dislocation in the Western world dating back to the transatlantic slave trade. Herein lies the flaw of afrofuturism. Afrofuturism is its own aesthetic register that "merely" borrows from the sf tradition by adopting some science fictional motifs such as the alien encounter or time travel to explore black life—past, present, and future—as well as how technology impacts black people. Afrofuturism is separate and distinct from sf, not synonymous with it.

Not surprisingly, a novel such as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) may be considered as afrofuturist with its themes of profound alienation, erasure of a black future, and dystopia. The unnamed narrator struggles to fit in anywhere—college, Liberty Paint factory, or the Brotherhood—as he seeks his future when forced to migrate from the Jim Crow South. When he recollects the events that landed him beneath the streets of New York stealing electricity in the first place, the protagonist realizes he has no future in a whitewashed world and continues to hibernate indefinitely. *Invisible Man* is afrofuturist, but is *Invisible Man* science fiction?

My answer is no. Though there does appear to be something speculative about the novel, particularly when considering the hospital scene after the explosion at the paint factory or Rinehart's shape-shifting ability or the narrator's time in his underground hideout itself, some kind of recognized science fictional textual apparatus is necessary for a work or works to be called sf. As afrofuturist scholar Lisa Yaszek points out in regard to Ellison's novel, there was no name "for a literature predicated upon both realist and speculative modes of storytelling" until the emergence of afrofuturism (41). Over thirty years earlier, John Pfeiffer made a similar observation regarding sf and African American literature in *Extrapolation:* "Both literatures [sf and African American] could supply or reflect the altered content and perspective that social transformation requires. Science fiction sometimes does; Black American writing almost always has" (35).

Essentially, both critics feel that both sf and African American literature are future oriented in that they depict radical social change. This thinking comes apart, however, when we consider its totalizing ideological construction from a sociohistorical perspective. Both sf and African American literature are the consequence of cultural memory: they are related to the rise of industry and slavery, respectively—two key factors in the history of the United States. However, the argument that all blacks are primarily alienated from themselves and their collective past is simply not true for present generations. For better or worse, African Americans and other colored people have an existence in America.

In *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia* (2003), De Witt Kilgore presents an approach to race and sf that is altogether different from that of afrofuturism. His theory focuses on the hard and popular sciences, race, and utopian visions, something he calls astrofuturism. More to the point, Kilgore's theory argues that spaceflight will free us from the cultural myopia of racism as technology expands the human horizon, shaping all of us into something better, perhaps something posthuman. The idea of astrofuturism is significant because in Kilgore's reckoning black people and other minorities are not absent from these possible visions of the future. In fact, for Kilgore the imperative of spaceflight "demands a progressive, evolutionist account of physical reality and social history; correspondingly, the political hopes fostered by astrofuturism are classically liberal in orientation" (3). Moreover, he believes the optimism engendered by the twentieth-century space race might "free [humanity] from the powerful hierarchies of our world" (238). The narrow focus of astrofuturism benefits sf race studies because it promotes freedom and equality, offers technological hope for a multicultural world, and even celebrates the social transformation of humankind—but that is the problem. Astrofuturism excludes other sf motifs that might be pertinent to race studies, such as alternate history, dystopia, time travel narratives, aliens, supermen, artificial people, and lost-race tales. As valuable as they are, afrofuturism and astrofuturism are only a part of the blackground; neither should be thought of as the one governing idea for the study of race and racism in terms of the black/white binary in sf. These theories have established the right to explore discernable links among blacks, technology, and the future, yet they, like otherhood, are only other ways of reading, interpreting, and questioning the deeply rooted perceptions of race and racism in the genre.

Another relevant idea in sf is the notion of a race revolution. Kali Tal does not think of her term "black militant near-future fiction" as a theory, but as "one subgenre of African American science fiction," where "African Americans join in violent revolution against the system of white supremacy" (66). There are more than a few such novels in black literature with a "take down *the man*" theme, or as Tal terms it, "kill-the-white-folks futurist fiction," enough that this theme could be offered as a model for black sf (67). But does this theme alone make a novel sf? The premise is clearly linked to the science fictional idea of presenting an alternate world where violent black revolutions in America could happen, a change in the relationship of power as such.[7] Then again, Tal carefully indicates, "black militant near-future fiction is a genre that lends itself to the expression of that absurdity" because such extreme examples of revenge could never happen (88).

A good example of this black militant near-future fiction is Sam Greenlee's novel *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* (1969). The plot involves a senator running for reelection who accuses the CIA of segregation in order to garner the Negro vote. Because the senator plays his "race card," Dan Freeman is selected for CIA training only to become a token black agent, special assistant to the CIA director. Freeman retires from this role after five years and trains a Chicago gang, the King Cobras and others like them, in CIA tactics and black history to foment revolution while posing as a social worker. However, the story itself is difficult to recognize as belonging to sf because it has been excluded from critical circles in sf through canon formation; the sf canon only had room for the brilliance of Samuel Delany at that point in American sf history. Perhaps, the discomfiture of the white literary establishment has kept this book buried in relative obscurity, and Tal's thinking represents a worthwhile rescue.

Either way, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* is a political measure of the 1960s black sentiment toward white America, and its sf veneer does little to mask a Black Power ideology "promising rupture and new realities" (Bould, "Come," 221). It offers new world conspiracies of the invisible black malcontent with an agenda to free the black poor through revolution. In fact, the novel can claim to be sf only in that it is a political fantasy set in a world disturbingly like our own. It is an acute critique of the fragility of the color line. Certainly, there have been plenty of white politicians who have hired blacks to sit and do absolutely nothing but provide colored window dressing, but this novel helps readers recognize empty symbols within sf and society.

To read Black Power sf such as *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* in conjunction with Tal's notion of a black militant near-future fiction is a good idea, if a somewhat limited one. Tal's notion provides a new direction to conduct research that reaches far back in time to include Martin Delany's nineteenth-century insurrection novel *Blake, or the Huts of America.* In other words, black militant near-future fiction provides a new way of thinking about social developments in U.S. history. However, the idea is limited because if pushed too far it will only exacerbate stereotypes of angry black men. For better or worse, black militant near-future fiction, along with afrofuturism and astrofuturism, is a part of science fiction because it fills a particular niche in the study of race and racism in the genre. In other words, each of these theories makes it possible to more accurately assess the checkered heritage of race in sf by building an environment focused on changing people's thoughts in a radical way.

Unquestionably, a rich vein of ideas for sf is the science of biology, which has been mined time and again by writers seeking to craft stories of evolution, aliens, and exotic landscapes. Biology can offer a master sf narrative of sorts because it creates alien cultures that reflect either positively or negatively on humanity. Strategically, sf writers use the extraterrestrial emblem against which to compare and contrast the racial situation by offering social commentary on these alien models of humanity. This connection has been historically accomplished through social Darwinism. Science fiction, then, reflects current social problems set against a fictive history beyond our experience of historical reality—the bugs of Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959) readily come to mind.

It is important to remember that the "science" of race has been developed more or less exclusively by white men of various European extractions in an effort to prove their own racial superiority. Undoubtedly, racial science and pseudo-sciences have had some bearing on sf from influential editors, such as Hugo Gernsback and John Campbell, and esteemed writers, among them Isaac Asimov and H. G. Wells, as well as on critics and fans. From the start of social Darwinism, the

impact of scientific racism on sf can be traced to the present. This impact includes examining how the social codes and representations of race have changed over time in American sf.

In sf, social Darwinism is certainly a master narrative when considering the subject of race. Social Darwinism creates binary systems that divide humanity, and we as a species cannot seem to cross such divisions as inferior/superior, self/other, us/them, or, in particular, the black/white binary. Seemingly, an absolute border must always be established between the culturally constructed races of the world. This separation is radical in the sense that it has always led to violence against, and destruction of, those who are considered different. While the roots of racism stretch well beyond the advent of social Darwinism in 1859, a tradition of speculation around this idea in Western culture has influenced and shaped sf as both have changed throughout time.

Scientific racism disguised as social Darwinism has harmed both American culture and sf because through extrapolation it traces human evolution to the posthuman and beyond. Consequently, we need to map out the historical framework of intersections between scientific racism, culture, and sf. Therefore, my interest lies in exploring the friction between scientific racism and the demands of history relating to racialized sf. To do this, I have to question what produces the racist patterns in sf by explaining social Darwinism and its relationship with American culture and history as well as with literary production. At the center of this tangled web of relationships is the notion of race-thinking and its various incarnations as social Darwinism, biological determinism, eugenics, genomics, degeneration theory, and so on.

Possibly the single most important intellectual event of the nineteenth century was the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859), in which he expressed his ideas on biological change as a theory of evolution. Of course, the idea of evolution had been around long before Darwin, but none of the competing theories were able to capture the popular imagination because they were not so well expressed. A brief review of Darwin's evolutionary theory offers four essential factors to remember. First, the element of variability suggests that divergence in the characteristics of an organism from the species norm takes place over time. Second, the characteristic of heredity implies that the sum of the qualities and potentialities genetically

derived from one's ancestors would be passed onward through the genes. Third, the quality of excessive fertility means that organisms with beneficial hereditary variations stay alive longer to produce more offspring for the species. And fourth, the aspect of selection entails a natural process that results in the survival and reproductive success of those individuals or organisms who best adjust to their environment. This ability to adjust leads to the perpetuation of genetic qualities suited to that particular environment. This natural selection is by chance rather than by divine planning, and the most fit eventually produce new species.

In its radical challenge to accepted notions of man's creation and character, Darwin's theory painstakingly demonstrates that man is a product of nature as well as subject to nature's whims. In truth, he shattered the existing theological opinions pertaining to man's beginning. As a result, Darwin's theory of natural selection is synonymous with the entire concept of evolution, and Darwin himself has become legendary. "The key to solving social problems" had been found because Darwin's skill with language convinced the educated masses that the science of biology had "uncovered the mystery of life and deciphered the enigma of evolution" (Barkan, 137).

Darwin's biological theory of evolution also became a social theory of evolution. His theory crossed the boundary between science and culture when it transformed into "social Darwinism." It is important to note that social Darwinism is based on an erroneous and inappropriate extension of Darwinian theory to the evolution of societies, rather than species. As such, social Darwinism has nothing to do with biology—and little to do with Darwin himself—although it has often been used in support of racist arguments. Even if social Darwinism has been thoroughly discredited in the modern scientific community,[8] it is still very potent in the popular imaginary of recent sf television shows if the Sci Fi Channel's reimagining of *Battlestar Galactica* (2003) or the USA Network's *The 4400* (2004) are accurate indications.[9] To a large extent then, Darwinian theory is a driving engine of racialist sf because of the scientific entanglements of racial history within the genre. Though Darwin was against racism, his theory "provided a new rationale within which nearly all the old convictions about race superiority and inferiority could find a place" (Gossett, 145).

Indeed, the phenomenon of social Darwinism elevated race as an issue for science as scholars and scientists scrambled to justify the superiority of white culture and to rationalize "that black and white races had evolved as separate species" (Smedley, 237). "Survival of the fittest" is one notion that gained the necessary cachet to justify racism. The English sociologist Herbert Spencer coined this expression, the most popular phrase generally attributed to evolutionary theory, in 1851, eight years before Darwin published *The Origin of Species.*[10] Darwinian principles could be used to support almost anything if the situation was sustained by the notion of the "survival of the fittest." Racism, "justified" as a "scientific" response, became rampant as ideas concerning evolution that were mistakenly attributed to Darwin came into vogue. A moment of otherhood happens because of the transference of real social messages onto sf as people explore relationships of race, racism, and power.

Nowhere is this idea more apparent than in H. G. Wells's quintessential time travel narrative, *The Time Machine* (1895). The future world that Wells envisions is unquestionably racialized as he extrapolates from Darwin's evolutionary ideas, though traditional critical opinion emphasizes the class allegory projected in the novel where class struggle brings about human degeneration. Nonetheless, Neil Barron indicates:

> So much attention has been given the Eloi and Morlocks during that passing moment—the year 802,701—that too many critics read the novel solely as a statement of the inevitable fate of Western industrial society—the evolution of humanity into two distinct species. This Marxian projection is but one of the dichotomies of the period that the Eloi and Morlocks may suggest. (21–22)

One of these other dichotomies is race. *The Time Machine* is a nameless man's account of the development of mankind, if not all life on Earth, as he journeys into the remote future with a machine that he himself builds and from which he witnesses the end of the world. In the year 802,701, the Time Traveller observes that humanity has divided into two distinct species, the passive and bucolic Eloi and the brutish Morlocks; ultimately both species die out.[11] In other words, Wells opens the way for a Darwinian reading of the future, where

humanity devolves into two contrary ends of evolutionary possibility. In an inventive complication of existing racial stereotypes, Wells establishes the darker childlike and vacuous Eloi as the food supply of the white, inhuman, almost alien Morlocks. Both races evoke memories of slavery—the Eloi are mindless, docile primitives and the Morlocks are "ape-like" savages (45). The physical difference between the two races is startling when considered in conjunction with how they both accentuate contrary myths concerning blacks. On the one hand, the Eloi are sympathetic figures because of their placid temperament and are fondly regarded by the Time Traveller. And on the other hand, the Morlocks are portrayed as callous monsters whom the Time Traveller has no hesitation about indiscriminately killing. Placed together the divided vision of evolution provided by Wells signals the triumph of nature over humanity—the utter regression of culture. Wells takes his grim Darwinian extrapolation even further into the future, ending with the flopping tentacled "thing" about "the size of a football . . . hopping fitfully about" on the beach (106).

From a historical perspective on science, scientist Stephen Jay Gould informs us of how Darwin's theory forced mid-nineteenth-century scientists to change their racist thinking. Using Louis Agassiz, "the greatest biologist of mid-nineteenth-century America," as a primary example, Gould describes Agassiz's original position, "that God had created blacks and whites as separate species. The defenders of slavery took much comfort from this assertion, for biblical proscriptions of charity and equality did not have to extend across a species boundary" (243). However, Agassiz abandons this theological stand by constructing scientific claims supporting racism. He turns to the practice of phrenology to display the base nature of blacks compared to whites. Damien Broderick points out, "Agassiz, in any event, did not measure skulls and brains in a value-neutral laboratory, a social vacuum, and *discover* Negro inferiority" (68). Instead, Agassiz was driven by the racist culture in which he lived to fabricate his racist findings.

In Wells's novel, the Time Traveller's arrogance, much like Agassiz's, is clearly marked by his conviction that the race of men in this future time period is inferior and savage, if not inhuman. The Time Traveller makes a racial link himself by comparing his time among the Eloi with a Negro's hypothetical visit to late-nineteenth-century

London "fresh from Central Africa" (41).[12] He ponders: "Think how narrow the gap between a Negro and a white man of our own times, and how wide the interval between myself and these of the Golden Age!" (41). In this analogous comparison of the Negro's abilities to the white man's and the Eloi's abilities to his own, the Time Traveller's sense of racial superiority is overwhelming as he mocks what is left of humanity by calling this distant future the "Golden Age." Wells's use of evolution in a far future environment to ridicule society is a vivid display of how racial dynamics are created by mere surroundings and chance circumstances. And in relation to my point, Wells demonstrates in this particular book sf's historic inability to see race and racism.[13]

Although historians of science and others may differ in their opinions about the impact of *The Origin of Species*, only now are the many inferences of social Darwinism concerning race beginning to be known. I say this because social Darwinism has the remarkable ability to seemingly reincarnate or reinvent itself in various guises as time passes. It has an enduring appeal for two such reasons: race-thinking and Darwin's facility with language to express his theory. As Linda Bergmann notes, Darwin "succeeds because he engages the mind and respects and addresses the emotions provoked by such a new way of seeing the world. That most readers have acquiesced is a measure of his achievement" (94–95). His style of argument gained immediate influence for his conclusions, whereby recognition of natural selection as the vital mechanism in biological change had revolutionary implications for the biological and social sciences. His use of language cleared the way for social Darwinism by creating a conflict between science and culture in regard to race. So then, "what we call 'race,'" according to Joseph Graves, "is the invention not of nature but of our social institutions and practices," and "the social nature of racial categories is significant because social practice can be altered far more readily than can genetic constitution" (2). Race and racism in this light are social conventions governed by the illusion of science's incorruptibility put to ill use by fostering hatred and discrimination.

The operation of natural selection, its variability, is the very thing that makes Darwinian reasoning indispensable to race theory. Thus, science, heavily influenced by Darwin in the twentieth century, provides the foundation for an ideology of race encompassing the world.

In other words, science is now responsible for articulating the correct truth about race as well as for providing scientific evidence to support this dubious truth. The general principles of natural selection were co-opted and adapted to reflect the struggle between different races, leading to nature's development and production of superior races.[14] Significantly, the notion of race in the United States signals a fixed and inflexible boundary between white and black based on the belief that hereditary differences are permanent. As a result, rigid cultural beliefs concerning race govern American society and grant status and privilege to some groups and not to others, since physical differences cannot be transcended. The scientific basis provided by the theory of natural selection has been critical in making existing physical and social differences seem inviolable, thus legitimating racism as a system that changes over time. Of course, the intolerant nature of racism is intellectually, if not emotionally, connected to all xenophobic attitudes whether or not they are ethnocentric, supernatural, or geographic in origin.

At the end of the nineteenth century, social Darwinism was fully disguised as scientific racism, and racial ideas travel across the Atlantic between Europe and the United States to maintain racial hierarchies. Scientists indulged in pseudo-sciences such as phrenology, craniometry (which dealt with the size, shape, and proportions of skulls among human races), and degeneration (a theory of human retrogression revealed through deteriorating mental and physical abilities in individuals) to justify racism by conflating facts and opinion. The use of pseudo-science to validate racist beliefs as an extension of social Darwinism is truly malicious because it involves the selective collection of data as well as manipulation of this data to support certain assumptions or arguments. Pseudo-science represents superficial and insincere scientific research. True scientific research disregards religion, offers structured doubt to garner a theoretical knowledge of the natural world as its marvels are explained, and adheres to the principle of science for the sake of science. Social Darwinism's ability to reshape itself is what makes it a dangerously powerful agent of scientific racism.

A striking example of scientific racism in the twentieth century is the notion of eugenics, the pseudo-science that deals with the improvement (as by control of human mating) of hereditary qualities of

race and breed. The eugenics movement was chiefly "interested in attempting to prove that geniuses tend to come from superior human stock, and that feeblemindedness, criminality, and pauperism are also strongly influenced by hereditary factors," according to Thomas Gossett (155). "Overtly combining science and politics," Sharon DeGraw asserts, "eugenics connected scientific theories with social reform" (7). Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, began the eugenics movement in England and advocated a policy of selective breeding to eliminate detrimental weaknesses such as alcoholism, prostitution, drug addiction, and an assortment of other social diseases. He introduced the word "eugenics" as well as the biological motto "'nature and nurture,' which precipitated so much controversy over the relative importance of heredity and environment" (Gossett, 155).

Certainly, it seems as though there are two distinct eugenic notions arising from the early twentieth century. One approach might be considered positive. It entails a planned improvement of the human species by creating a racial stock of superior individuals and then regulating their reproduction to create a pure race of "super" humans. The positive strategy is at the root of the "Aryan Myth"—a hypothetical ethnic type descended from early speakers of Indo-European languages, or Nordic. Nancy Kress's Hugo and Nebula Award–winning novella *Beggars in Spain* (1991) is a good example of the optimistic intent of eugenics. In the story, set in the twenty-first century, Kress extrapolates from eugenic notions by having scientists genetically modify selected children to never sleep. The "Sleepless" display greater intelligence, psychological balance, ideal fitness, and near immortality. However, the optimism of the text takes a turn for the worse as the story's protagonist, Leisha Camden, and the other Sleepless encounter America's racist response to their remarkable difference, their "evolutionary fit[ness]" (173). Eugenic stories are an important part of racing science fiction because many people—writers, readers, and scholars—are intrigued by the idea of creating a master race of human beings, homo superior as it were.

The second approach is negative in the extreme because it advocates the destruction of inferior races as well as the elimination of inherited defective traits (a precursor to some of the twenty-first century's ideas about genetic engineering). Political acceptance of the eugenic

movement across Europe and in the United States is what allowed the Holocaust to happen as Nazi Germany abused the "Aryan Myth" in order to spur its military toward the near genocide of all Jewish peoples. Philip K. Dick's alternate history novel *The Man in the High Castle* (1962) is an excellent illustration of the negative consequences of eugenic beliefs. In this novel the Axis powers have won World War II. Presumably, after exterminating the Jewish race, the Nazis turned their attention to black people by using nuclear weapons as the "*the Final Solution of the African Problem*" (25). In planning their conquest of the world, Nazi Germany is plotting against their Japanese allies with "Operation Dandelion . . . an enormous nuclear attack on the Home Islands [of Japan] without advanced warning of any kind" (188).

A second, and equally remarkable, example of scientific racism has been the historical abuse of genetics throughout the twentieth century. Coupled with Darwin's theory of natural selection, Gregor Mendel's research, which involved variation, mutation, and heredity in pea plants and was published in a little-known journal in 1866, though not formally recognized until 1900, became a cornerstone of biology, and subsequently of scientific racism as well. The fledgling science of genetics provided a gratifying explanation for natural selection—heredity is almost invariable, but favorable changes in genetic structures remain intact and provide a chance for newer adaptations. Scientists desired to improve human potential and eliminate harmful traits by artificial selection rather than leave it to the natural course of evolution. The scientific revolution in biology truly began in 1953 when Crick and Watson figured out the structure of the DNA molecule.

While twenty-first-century applications of genetic testing are yet to be fully developed, it is not difficult to imagine the dawn of genetic discrimination in sf terms. The Andrew Niccol film *Gattaca* (1997) quickly comes to mind, in which a natural-born and inferior man living in a sterile genetically improved world feigns the identity of a superior one to achieve his ambition of space travel. Law scholar Frank Wu reckons, "The human genome project threatens to give us knowledge for which we are not ready. All of us have hidden weaknesses, some incurable and even fatal. We will meet in genetic testing the most aggressive form of rational discrimination" (212). There is little room

for doubt that the meaning of racial difference is changing because of the impact of genetics. As sf scholar Sherryl Vint notes, "Both science fiction and discourses on genetics are concerned with marking the boundaries of humanity" (*Bodies of Tomorrow*, 56). The possibilities for remaking mankind are frightening and exciting at the same time as science increases its understanding of the human genome through mapping and studying the entire structure. The tremendous potential of genetic science to discredit racism (and even the notion of race itself) as completely inconsistent with the biological reality of human existence is a noteworthy dream. Although we certainly like to think that scientific progress pushes prejudice and discrimination to the side, science fiction suggests otherwise.

I have discussed specific examples of how scientific racism historically poses as social Darwinism, which in turn masquerades as honest scientific inquiry with sf examples such as *The Time Machine*, *Beggars in Spain*, *The Man in the High Castle*, and *Gattaca*. Still, the question remains: how does social Darwinism relate to sf? I will briefly argue that sf has achieved several related objectives in its management of scientific theories. First, it has made scientific speculation popular, meaning that it has made various scientific theories understandable to many people without substantial knowledge of science. Second, sf functions as an unconscious barometer of public attitudes. This function is particularly beneficial in understanding the assumptions of our society before, now, and later, in technocultural terms, because sf's vision concerns the cultural and philosophical consequences of technological advancement and scientific progress. Third, sf increases our knowledge of the human condition, meaning that it enriches our understanding of Western society's violent past. Fourth, evolutionary ideas abound—from Darwin to cyborg theory—and have a lasting influence on the genre. Indeed, ideas such as man evolving into a superior race of beings or battling for survival with competing species are conventions of sf. As Brian Aldiss puts it, "Evolutionary speculation has become, and remains, one of the staples of science fiction. It lends secular perspective to the human drama. The glacier-like grandeur of natural selection and adaptation colours our thought" (94). It should come as no surprise when I state that social Darwinism is one of the master narratives that govern racial thinking within sf.

In twenty-first-century America, some hold that science is inherently superior to other academic disciplines because it is driven by a public perception of pure and impartial research attempting to find the truth of existence through the accumulation of facts, data, and information. Science should be easily understood, have an everyday application, or make common sense—an American credo of sorts—yet it does not for the most part, because it is often too obscure and too technical for the public to grasp. Perhaps it is the cryptic nature of the information provided by science that gives it authority over people. We can certainly imply that we feel secure in the belief that scientific knowledge will improve our lives. As social scientist Christopher Tourney declares, "Science does not really deserve such awe, nor do most scientists believe such things about it. But many nonscientists do. Thus, to invoke the symbols of science is to make policies sound, commodities desirable, and behavior legitimate. By definition, these things are meritorious when they have the appearance of being scientific" (6). From a humanities standpoint, scientific knowledge seems to be the wrong mode of questioning a racialized sf in terms of authority.

The authority of science and its perception of superiority is a fallacy built on social and political prejudice. Gould is absolutely right when he states we must recognize "our belief in the inherent superiority of pure research for what it is—namely social prejudice—then we might forge among scientists the union between theory and practice that a world teetering dangerously near the brink so desperately needs" (213). We forget that scientists are human beings after all, subject to the same passions as ordinary people. When I think of all the harm that science has done concerning race, I must concede Gould's point. Public respect for science is affirmed on the mere appearance of scientific authority. This authority is tapped into quite easily by television, music videos, films, and other manifestations of pop culture, especially sf, by invoking something as simple as a test tube. I maintain that sf borrows from this global view to mask awareness of race and racism. The important question that needs answering remains: why does sf do this? I am left wondering if science fiction writers still continue to frame ideas of race through invoking the cultural influence of science.

Clearly, then, sf is problematic because it has resisted race-reading. It has displayed racist attitudes and presented "solutions" for the race

problem by imagining postrace worlds, albeit imperfectly. Race is a continually elastic conception where physical differences are no longer essential to its operation as displayed in sf. The difference between reactionary and progressive sf may be whether it views race and racial difference as "biological" and therefore real. For me, one of the functions of sf is to draw attention to and challenge racist and ethnocentric attitudes, in part by interrogating science. Both science and literature are linked by how they express information using rhetorical means. However, science is measured objectively while literature is analyzed subjectively. Still, the link between science and literature is more important than what splits them apart.

In understanding sf, it is important to be mindful of how generic conventions utilize scientific language. Such conventions—DNA, particle physics, radiation—must be invoked to generate the illusion of reality that sf needs in order to be convincing. Thus, sf is granted a sense of cultural authority. Scientific language in sf stories is used to create the story, not by engaging our subjective experience, "but to operate a narrative fiction. Frequently, the rhetoric of science is a sop to reason, allowing the reader to indulge in a fantasy which may be entirely irrational," according to sf critic John Huntington (*Rationalizing Genius*, 79).

Sf assumes a rhetoric of change by always questioning the cultural moment. It occupies a privileged position from which it is capable of attuning its readership to the intersections of scientific theory, technological development, and social conventions. These intersections are significant because they put human interests such as race on display, making it essential that we question the social implications of these imagined worlds. I think sf subverts cultural, historical, and even technological boundaries where we encounter social problems such as racism generated by the misuse of science, among other things. Unlike science, sf also allows us to reflect on real life where we can transform the social values presented in texts into something more beneficial by assessing our feelings on race matters. This approach to sf, I feel, is something new.

Certainly, discrepancies exist between claims of what sf critics believe they as critics are doing in regard to race and what is actually being done. Sf as a cultural production, however, supports racism as a

system (and perhaps postracial moments too) in its near and far-flung histories and visions of the future. The concept of otherhood addresses the problem of systemic racism in sf and the underlying reasons for neglecting to get rid of it. As a matter of convenience, many sf scholars have presumed that racial distinctions will become insignificant when represented in the possibilities of science fiction. In other words, providing racialized characters becomes irrelevant to a future that transcends race. I find this supposed vanishing of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and white ethnics exceedingly odd—astonishing, really. However, it seems unlikely that collective cultural attitudes on the subject of race will be overlooked in sf because they are *so* deeply rooted. After all, sf writers depict futures of conquest, power-mongering, hegemony, greed, and the like. Race and racism are no less a constant than human greed or the desire for dominance.

The greatest problem of the twentieth century, the color line, as first articulated by W. E. B. DuBois, has yet to be explored convincingly in sf. The science fictional expression of otherhood, like the DuBoisian double consciousness, only more so, is the objective of this study.[15] National concerns such as immigration, reverse discrimination, affirmative action, cultural diversity, the mixed-race movement, racial profiling, and terrorism test our developing society daily. These issues are also depicted in sf. We can foreground issues of the color line in sf and possibly transcend them by deliberately remaining aware of how race is buried in the genre. To this end, the next chapter will necessarily focus on depictions of slavery in science fiction as both the logical and unavoidable starting point in this particular discussion of race and racism.

2 Meta-slavery

Read as a labor-based technology, race has been used to code black human beings in the New World as natural machines essential for the cultivation of the physical landscape and capable of producing wealth. From this standpoint, Ben Williams realizes that "the mechanical metaphors" used for blacks "embody a history that began with slavery" (169). Forcibly uprooted from Africa, alienated by the middle passage, dehumanized in the Americas, and controlled by strange white men, is there any wonder that the slavery experience has been interpreted as the very substance of sf for blacks? Describing his own experience with slavery in *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789), Olaudah Equiano writes, "If ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country" (33). Evoking the sf theme of other worlds as long ago as 1789, Equiano speaks of trading ten thousand other worlds to be free of the inequities of slavery. In fact, this passage displays how Equiano compares his time as a slave in his own country, present-day Nigeria, to his initial experience of the European slave trade in the hold of a slave ship headed for the West Indies. Fittingly, the historical legacies of slavery and colonization, which have shaped black cultures in the Americas, are easily taken up within sf motifs to explore the dynamics of power and race.

Slavery is not science fictional. It is, however, a "peculiar institution" that can be made even more peculiar when imagined in terms of technological forms of bondage or captivity. Sf constructions of slavery

tend either to recontextualize captivity narratives in terms of new technologies or to employ technology to relocate in time the observation or experience of bondage as a cultural norm. Either approach uses technology or science to distance and defamiliarize the institution and practice of slavery, resulting in constructions of slavery as neo–slave narratives or *meta-slavery narratives*. As the epitome of racism, then, slavery is the inevitable starting point of any exploration of a race in science fiction.

With this in mind, Samuel R. Delany's celebrated *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand* (1984), set in the far future on a distant planet, Rhyonon, opens with the line "'Of course' . . . 'you will be a slave'" (3). The lead character, Korga, voluntarily undergoes Radical Anxiety Termination at nineteen years of age, rendering him incapable of independent thought while ridding him of his anger, antisocial disposition, drug addiction, and sexual deviance (3). This "gamma ray laser" technology painlessly strips Korga of his identity, and he is sold into a life of corporate slavery by the RAT Institute, where he is chronically underfed and overworked, dressed in ill-fitting clothes while routinely beaten and cursed at by his supervisors before being allowed to rest in a filth-encrusted cage (6).[1] This is his life for twenty-two years, except for a few days when he is illegally sold to a nameless rich woman and later recaptured. Only corporations can legally possess slaves on this particular planet.[2]

During his brief time as a fugitive slave, the previously illiterate Rat Korga is given a black sensory glove by the rich woman that restores and even improves his mind, and he takes full advantage of this by reading voraciously. Gaining the ability to read is a powerful moment in the text because Delany consciously mirrors "the classic slave-narrative scenario in which learning to read is an illicit act of discovery" (Dubey, *Signs*, 239). However, Rat Korga's glove is yanked off upon his recapture, allowing the RAT procedure to reestablish its grip, and his mind is cast back into darkness.

The prologue ends suddenly as the inhabitants of the planet apparently blow themselves up in what is known as "Cultural Fugue"—a nuclear holocaust caused by socioeconomic failure and conflicting political systems, resulting in planetary extinction (70). Rat Korga, who was working in an underground refrigerated storage vault at the

moment of the explosion, is the only survivor to be dug out of the smoking ruins of Rhyonon. The remainder of the novel explores the romance between the former slave Rat Korga and the industrial diplomat Marq Dyeth, ambassador to alien worlds, on the planet Velm. Their bond threatens to destabilize another planet that is polarized by two political factions, the Family and the Sygn, a destabilization that could end in Cultural Fugue.

In *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand,* Delany deliberately distances our cultural memory of slavery by providing a reappraisal of the peculiar institution's legacy through the future. The success of his story hinges upon alien cultures echoing the sociohistorical structures of the United States of America. Slavery in the text results in civil war and the destruction of Rhyonon. Delany uses "cultural fugue" to critique the destructive power of American slavery and to force reconsideration of the tenuous nature of racial tolerance in America today. Although he does not engage with race directly, Delany does suggest that sf has the ability to free the United States from the psychological legacy left by slavery.

Undoubtedly, American slavery survives in our cultural imagination, in our records, even in our sf. Terry Bisson's provocative *Fire on the Mountain* (1988), for example, describes an alternative history where John Brown's raid, with the assistance of Harriet Tubman, succeeds at Harpers Ferry. The resulting changes include a socialist black republic in the Deep South that shapes much of the world's politics. Bisson's novel demonstrates that slavery is very thoughtfully studied by the author, giving us a feel for its social environment, its common activities and values, as we progressively compile as much of its tradition as possible. Yet some aspects of the slave experience will always remain outside of this constructed history because the manner in which history is written is largely flawed. I say "flawed" because individual authors bring their various prejudices to bear on historical records and translate happenings through specific agendas. In other words, they influence our understanding of slavery by carefully shaping and manipulating our knowledge. This influence, positive or negative, affects how different races perceive historical slavery and each race's position in relation to it. Racism, then, becomes specific to these social experiences recorded in history, charging "black" and "white" subjectivities

in different ways, and fixing identities in racial categories that have proven nearly impossible to transcend.

A case in point, William Styron's Pulitzer Prize–winning *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967), offers a fictionalized account of the brutal and violent 1831 Southampton, Virginia, slave revolt led by the infamous Nat Turner, in which fifty-nine white people died. Black objections to the novel concern the possible misrepresentation of history and the appropriation by white writers of the iconic image that Turner symbolizes for many black Americans. Undeniably, some people will feel that Styron's race undermines the artistic value of his novel as a social document because he has little personal association with slavery as a white man in America. Styron is a white man from the South using a black historical figure to talk about slavery. His reinterpretation of the past through his neo–slave narrative clearly diminishes the blacks' sense of ownership of this history. But even more, his interpretation sees only white men as historical subjects, and as a white American male he is fundamentally incapable of seeing beyond that fact. In defense of Styron, I believe that people on both sides of the color line have to deal with the consequences of slavery. "Although slavery has ended," Sherryl Vint comments, "its traumatic and continued effects on Americans, both black and white, have not been dealt with" ("Only," 242).

One way of dealing with these consequences, as demonstrated by Styron, is the neo–slave narrative. African American literary scholar Bernard Bell coined the term "neoslave narrative" in his book *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition* (1989) by labeling Margaret Walker's novel *Jubilee* (1966) the "first major neoslave narrative: residually oral, modern narratives of escape from bondage to freedom" (289).[3] Bell uses "neoslave narrative" to describe the writing of contemporary black writers, "fabulators" who "combine elements of fable, legend, and slave narrative to protest racism and justify the deeds, struggles, migrations, and spirit of black people" (285). By returning to fictional representations of the antebellum South, contemporary writers use the historical era of slavery to critique the status of race relations and engage in cultural politics. Writers accomplish this task by informing their fiction with the firmly bound characteristics of the slave narrative established by escaped slaves such as Frederick Douglass and

Harriet Jacobs. At present, "neo–slave narratives" are widely read and have become an important tool in revising history, literature, and the promise of freedom.[4] Black authors use this revised slave narrative form to comment on current racial politics in the United States by imitating its structure, revising its conventions, and demonstrating an unbroken cultural connection of African American experience. Neo–slave narratives are a repository of cultural memory as they witness and testify to the dehumanization process and our negligent attempts to forget. Importantly, the neo–slave narrative confirms the abiding worth of the slave narrative as a reflection on oppression and freedom, yet these fictional accounts are steadfastly framed by the conventions of the slave narrative. Thus, sf is a perfect medium for such excursions into the past as well as the future.

From this point of view, the careful interplay of science fiction and contemporary thought on racial memories makes apparent a pattern of how significant relationships relate to the traumatic experiences of humanity. With sf's motifs of time travel, alternate history, alien contact, and future visions, meta-slavery narratives capitalize on the freedom sf provides from the restraints of race and racism. For instance, Cherene Sherrard's short story "The Quality of Sand" (2004) tells of Delphine, an Afro-Caribbean woman who roams the Atlantic as a pirate captain disrupting slave trafficking. She and her crew become the "scourge of the triangle trade" by sinking slavers and rescuing their human cargo (12). This story, and others like it, encompasses the proper realm of sf meta-slavery tales. Meta-slavery cannot be understood without a historical understanding of slavery and its literature, because meta-slavery takes slavery's conventions, such as violence, human chattel, and identity, as its subjects and goes beyond them by changing our understanding of them.

Connections between the historical reality of slavery and its narrative arc—slave narratives, neo–slave narratives, and meta-slavery tales—have to be made in order to recognize how sf motifs contribute to the dialogue on race. These connections take us clear of what we "think" we know about history and cultural memory. I acknowledge that a genre label such as "sf" must necessarily be permeable because it may overlap with other genres such as fantasy, magical realism, westerns, and in some cases fictional autobiography. To successfully

negotiate this territory, we need to be triangulated among mainstream criticism, African American literature and culture, and sf itself when slavery is the issue at hand.

Mainstream as well as African American literature usually bases itself on character development and relationships between characters to reflect human reality as it occurs in the familiar world. But sf is as much about the environment, the constructed world, as it is about character. In truth, sf is more about the environment, the characters' relationships with the environment, and what these interactions can tell us about the possible futures and alternate pasts of humanity in the present. Hence, the extrapolative element changes our empirical world in either slight or significant ways; the setting is often somewhere else in space and time, like a comet, a spaceship, or even an antebellum plantation. Likewise, we cannot assume anything about the world of the sf text because its rules are most likely different from those in our experience of narrative realism—that is to say, we have to first recognize and understand the innate conditions of the sf text before we can grasp the story itself. For instance, the Sleepless in Kress's *Beggars in Spain* face all the jealousy, fear, hatred, prejudice, violence, oppression, and discrimination generated by the historical legacy of slavery in America.[5] Thus, Kress's future vision is able to take full advantage of the racial past because of the defamiliarized environment.

Because science fiction in general and meta-slavery in particular allow us to think about slavery in an artificial time continuum, we can see both the flaws in the telling of racial history and the most extreme outcomes of racism and oppression that have resulted in the "peculiar institution" of American slavery. We break away from the "actual" historical continuum when we read sf, going forward and backward in time, experiencing alternative realities and an unfamiliar humanity, leaving us free to change our history, our society, and ourselves in our examination of its process. Science fiction also gives us the chance to envision less virulent forms of bondage in addition to imagining the best possible alternative—a world without slavery. It gives us imagined possibilities to choose change for the better.

Indeed, in sf new things can be said about the intersection of otherhood and the literary challenge of reading and understanding. Such a thoughtful intersection offers transformative approaches to the study

of race, because slavery can be situated beyond its historical conventions with one of otherhood's critical expressions, *meta-slavery*. The prefix *meta* calls attention to the distancing and analytical dimensions that sf provides in shedding light on representations of *slavery*. These dimensions, in turn, enable writers to transcend the narrative arc between historical and literary accounts of captivity and take us into a space where the interplay of past, present, and future allows readers to experience slavery and examine the painful social divisions it has created in our culture. Meta-slavery narratives help us realize how and why racisms rip and tear the fabric of society. Out of thousands of robot stories in science fiction, grandmaster Isaac Asimov's use and governance of robots seems the perfect place to begin a discussion of slavery and technology.

With his influential collection *I, Robot* (1950), Asimov describes the ascent of robots in relation to humanity. *I, Robot* is a collection of nine interrelated stories spanning roughly sixty years in robot history, from 1998 to 2059; the stories are linked by an interview with Dr. Susan Calvin, the world's first and best "Robopsychologist" at "U.S. Robots and Mechanical Men Inc." (vii–viii). As the interview progresses, Dr. Calvin relates many of her problematic encounters as well as those of her colleagues, Powell and Donovan, with robot/human evolution. From the beginnings of robotics in "Robbie" to the provocative conclusion with "The Evitable Conflict," Asimov influences our perceptions of intelligent machines by giving us glimpses into a possible future world of science and technology. The problem with this world is that slavery has been reinvented for humanity's mechanical offspring with three laws.

Central to Asimov's future are the famous three "laws" of robotics: First, "a robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm"; second, "a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law"; and third, "a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws" (44–45). These laws ensure that humanity remains in charge, perhaps an unthinking construction of what might be called meta-slavery, wherein technology, i.e., enslaved robots, presents conditions that distance us from historical human slavery but promote interrogations of its essential characteristics. Asimov's laws regulate

robot behavior toward humanity by placing conditions upon robot actions. More specifically, while Asimov's three laws are intended to ensure the safety and superiority of humans, they actually ensure the technological bondage and inferiority of robots.

In essence, the three laws require robots to protect humans from harm, to follow the commands of humans to the letter unless this conflicts with the first law, and to practice self-preservation if, and only if, the self-saving act does not interfere with the first two laws. Arguably then, Asimov is refashioning the slave codes that subjugated blacks while he serves a progressive philosophy based on the assumption that technological consciousness can be denied free will because it is inherently inferior. The concept of free will is obviously key because it is a repetition of the antebellum period in American history, a human sense that African slaves did not possess wills and were therefore not human. Asimov's relatively simple laws dictate that mechanized beings shall always be subordinate to humanity because men are afraid of their own creations; that the relationship between man and machine must be that of master and slave because robots are rivals that will surpass human capabilities. Therefore, humans must protect themselves by creating a limiting consciousness for robots in the form of a positronic brain. Such benign edicts are the basis of Asimov's seemingly inadvertent endorsement of racism as an acceptable starting point for relationships between conscious, intelligent entities. Ultimately, the robots of the stories take command of the Earth in a quiet uprising led by the "passing" robot Stephen Byerly. Robots can better protect humanity as a whole by managing the world's resources.

It is questionable whether Asimov saw the racial implications in his stories—that the difference between humanity and the robots mirrors, mechanically, the difference between white masters and black slaves. I am suggesting, however, that in science fiction robots represent technological descendants of humanity, thus becoming a logical step in our transformation to posthumanity. I contend, then, that these implications must be examined. If, for example, Asimov is indirectly suggesting that the practice of slavery is required for the betterment of humanity at the expense of artificial persons, he is apparently unconscious of the racist innuendo. Other scholars pick up on the underlying robot as slave connotation, and a formerly "hidden" race dialogue

emerges. Consequently, I think it would be useful to investigate a few critical responses to Asimov's celebrated laws.

Polish sf writer and critic Stanislaw Lem critiques Asimov's three laws in his essay "Robots in Science Fiction" (1971). Lem justly claims that Asimov's "laws of robotics . . . give a wholly false picture of the real possibilities" by inverting "the old paradigm: where in myths the homunculi were villains, with demoniac features" (314). Lem goes on to make a parallel between man-robot relationships and that of "'the good white man' and the 'good-natured black servant'" (314). He states, "Asimov has thought of the robot as the 'positive hero' of science fiction, as having been doomed to eternal goodness by engineers" (314). Because Asimov's three laws are modeled on the stereotyped relationships that Lem has identified, particularly that of the master and slave, he finds it impossible to forgive Asimov for creating the robot laws that condemn them to be harmless to man as well as dumb, since a robot could not change its programming and subsequently evolve. Lem himself believes that the human attempt to play God by creating an artificial man, i.e., a robot, is an illogical one because it would not make sense for humans to build robots if these automatons were higher beings. In terms of sf, Lem considers the relatives of robots, cyborgs and computers, as having better value for the genre because they have an unlimited potential for stories whereas robots do not have infinite promise as mirror images of us.

Asimov himself proudly admits in his essay collection *Asimov on Science Fiction* (1981), "Robots can be the new servants—patient, uncomplaining, incapable of revolt. In human shape they can make use of the full range of technological tools devised for human beings and, when intelligent enough, can be friends as well as servants" (88–89). Asimov's robots resonate with the antebellum South's myth of a happy darkie—a primitive, childlike worker without a soul, incapable of much thought—cared for by the benevolent and wise master. This resonance is hard to ignore. As Edward James has observed in his own critique of Asimov, "The Three Laws restrain robots, just as the slave-owner expected (or hoped) that his black slaves would be restrained by custom, fear and conditioning to obey his every order" (40). Clearly, then, an otherhood reading allows us to consider the historical roots of *I, Robot*'s cultural bigotry.

The intersection of slavery, history, and sf suggests that these kinds of stories have a place in American cultural memory. Thus, meta-slavery tales are a kind of living history of slavery as told in sf. I believe that the meta-slavery metaphor is a particularly effective way to produce meaning from science fictional accounts of slavery, enabling us to achieve an artificial yet telling relation to the social structures in which slavery occurred. To conceive of meta-slavery in this way is to undermine the dominant, controlling, and authoritative myths of history such as social Darwinism. Meta-slavery changes, alters, and transforms our perceptions of slavery by its artificial yet "telling" nature. Perhaps the ultimate dream science fiction holds out for African Americans is the prospect for freedom of social transformation through science and technology; and this prospect demands a mental release from the legacy and turmoil left behind by American slavery.

Recognizing this need for release in addition to other insufficient underrepresentations is critical to identifying science fiction's historical impact on race relationships. More appropriately, sf literature must attend to the outright violence of the Jim Crow era along with attempts to scale back gains made by the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement. When sf literature does not address these issues, it obscures the necessity of seeing race through an essential lens of otherhood, that is, along both *neo-slave* and *meta-slavery* narrative lines. Sf writer Octavia Butler is one who uses time travel, aliens, and genetic engineering in her work to interrogate slavery's historical paradigms.

Against the backdrop of Asimov's ambiguo
adigms, various works of Octavia Butler—*Kin*
(1984), and the Xenogenesis trilogy (originall
collected and published as *Lilith's Brood* in
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emerges. Consequently, I think it would be useful to investigate a few critical responses to Asimov's celebrated laws.

Polish sf writer and critic Stanislaw Lem critiques Asimov's three laws in his essay "Robots in Science Fiction" (1971). Lem justly claims that Asimov's "laws of robotics . . . give a wholly false picture of the real possibilities" by inverting "the old paradigm: where in myths the homunculi were villains, with demoniac features" (314). Lem goes on to make a parallel between man-robot relationships and that of "'the good white man' and the 'good-natured black servant'" (314). He states, "Asimov has thought of the robot as the 'positive hero' of science fiction, as having been doomed to eternal goodness by engineers" (314). Because Asimov's three laws are modeled on the stereotyped relationships that Lem has identified, particularly that of the master and slave, he finds it impossible to forgive Asimov for creating the robot laws that condemn them to be harmless to man as well as dumb, since a robot could not change its programming and subsequently evolve. Lem himself believes that the human attempt to play God by creating an artificial man, i.e., a robot, is an illogical one because it would not make sense for humans to build robots if these automatons were higher beings. In terms of sf, Lem considers the relatives of robots, cyborgs and computers, as having better value for the genre because they have an unlimited potential for stories whereas robots do not have infinite promise as mirror images of us.

Asimov himself proudly admits in his essay collection *Asimov on Science Fiction* (1981), "Robots can be the new servants—patient, uncomplaining, incapable of revolt. In human shape they can make use of the full range of technological tools devised for human beings and, when intelligent enough, can be friends as well as servants" (88–89). Asimov's robots resonate with the antebellum South's myth of a happy darkie—a primitive, childlike worker without a soul, incapable of much thought—cared for by the benevolent and wise master. This resonance is hard to ignore. As Edward James has observed in his own critique of Asimov, "The Three Laws restrain robots, just as the slave-owner expected (or hoped) that his black slaves would be restrained by custom, fear and conditioning to obey his every order" (40). Clearly, then, an otherhood reading allows us to consider the historical roots of *I, Robot*'s cultural bigotry.

The intersection of slavery, history, and sf suggests that these kinds of stories have a place in American cultural memory. Thus, meta-slavery tales are a kind of living history of slavery as told in sf. I believe that the meta-slavery metaphor is a particularly effective way to produce meaning from science fictional accounts of slavery, enabling us to achieve an artificial yet telling relation to the social structures in which slavery occurred. To conceive of meta-slavery in this way is to undermine the dominant, controlling, and authoritative myths of history such as social Darwinism. Meta-slavery changes, alters, and transforms our perceptions of slavery by its artificial yet "telling" nature. Perhaps the ultimate dream science fiction holds out for African Americans is the prospect for freedom of social transformation through science and technology; and this prospect demands a mental release from the legacy and turmoil left behind by American slavery.

Recognizing this need for release in addition to other insufficient underrepresentations is critical to identifying science fiction's historical impact on race relationships. More appropriately, sf literature must attend to the outright violence of the Jim Crow era along with attempts to scale back gains made by the mid-twentieth-century civil rights movement. When sf literature does not address these issues, it obscures the necessity of seeing race through an essential lens of otherhood, that is, along both *neo-slave* and *meta-slavery* narrative lines. Sf writer Octavia Butler is one who uses time travel, aliens, and genetic engineering in her work to interrogate slavery's historical paradigms.

Against the backdrop of Asimov's ambiguous trace of racialized paradigms, various works of Octavia Butler—*Kindred* (1979), "Bloodchild" (1984), and the Xenogenesis trilogy (originally published in the 1980s, collected and published as *Lilith's Brood* in 2000)—display how the temporal undercurrent of conversation on race relations takes place in sf. Butler's work might be considered as a rebuke to Asimov because of its explicit, visceral, and above all intelligent remembrance of slavery.[6]

Very few sf stories can be remotely classified as belonging to both the neo–slave narratives and the meta-slavery tales. *Kindred* is the only novel that comes readily to mind. I think it is necessary to distinguish between the roots of meta-slavery tales and neo–slave narratives because not many sf narratives can be or should be associated with the principles of neo-slavery. These principles reflect the complicated

relationships between masters and slaves, particularly among the enslaved, as we witness courage and shame, love and hate, and the resulting anxieties meticulously depicted by modern writers in such a way as to encourage cultural awareness of this painful era in U.S. history. While certain attributes are shared with neo–slave narratives, meta-slavery tales go beyond this paradigm because they are not limited by the preexisting patterns of the slave narrative itself as most neo–slave narratives are. Also, the neo–slave narrative tradition is limited from a definitional standpoint in ways that sf is not. I believe the resources that sf can bring to bear on black experiences are simply greater than realistic modes of writing. Meta-slavery is the contact point between different types of reading protocols in relation to sf and the sociohistorical past of slavery.

In contrast to Asimov's work, a novel such as Octavia Butler's *Kindred* is very difficult to place because it does qualify as a fictional "rememory"[7] of slavery as well as being science fictional. Rememory brings the past into the present, forcing us to account for the experience of slavery and the problems slavery has caused for people living today. Rememory is a way of sharing the past experiences of others; it establishes a relationship between then and now. Thus, Butler takes us through time, making intimate contact with the historical reality of slavery. Put another way, "incorporating time travel, one of the common tropes of science fiction," allows Butler to establish "the movement between past and present as the central event of her novel" (Spaulding, 43). Though *Kindred* was considered a fantasy by Butler herself and as historical fiction—a neo–slave narrative—by most other academics, the aforementioned effect is achieved and made possible through science fiction alone.[8] Sandra Govan notes: "Butler's works do something else not generally asked of good historical fiction. They reach an entirely different audience, an established science fiction readership which, taken as a whole, is more accustomed to future histories and alien spaces than it is to authentic African and African American landscapes" (95). Put simply, *Kindred* surpasses the neo-slave-narrative paradigm by challenging our historical understanding of slavery and renewing it painfully. We lay claim to this silent past through her main character's struggle for identity and freedom because Butler chooses to utilize time travel and its inherent disorientation, alien contact, and displacement as her source of revelation.

Kindred is a postmodern slave narrative that uses the scientific fantasy of time traveling to change our conception of American history and position us to experience the horrible realities of slavery. Dana, a black woman living in 1976 San Francisco with her white husband, Kevin, tells the story as a first-person account of slavery. The couple is celebrating Dana's twenty-sixth birthday when she is impossibly and suddenly pulled back across time and space to early-nineteenth-century Maryland into the heart of the antebellum South—slavery. Rufus Weylin, the only white son of a plantation owner, is drowning in a river, and Dana saves him before she is scared back across time to her own present by an angry white man holding a rifle to her face. Yet she will return again and again to the plantation after this initial summons to save Rufus, consequently experiencing life as a slave as each trip lasts longer, becomes more intense and perilous. Dana's interaction with human beings from a different era is akin to alien contact because she is not truly familiar with their customs or beliefs despite her historical knowledge of slavery. In safeguarding Rufus, Dana will make certain that he reaches adulthood and has a girl child with his misappropriated slave Alice. This child will be the beginning of Dana's family line.

With this novel, Butler asks a pertinent question: "How can anybody endure being a slave?" Butler's answer is that Dana must survive her visits to the past to ensure her very existence in the future. While Butler's response may seem a simple one, there are three points of contention that complicate it: the tangled relationships of Dana, Alice, and Rufus; the intertextual moments between *Kindred* and actual slave narratives; and finally the time travel motif itself. Through the perspective of otherhood, all three of these factors together grant an authentic feel to Butler's text that makes it something more than a neo–slave narrative.

Conflict arises from the tragic love triangle of Dana, Alice, and Rufus. Dana and Alice are inextricably chained together by time, blood, and history just as they are tied together as "one woman" in Rufus's irrational mind: "'You were one woman' . . . 'You and her. One woman. Two halves of a whole'" (257). Because of this absurdity, Rufus coerces Dana into helping him rape Alice because of his unrequited and destructive love: "Go to her. Send her to me. I'll have her whether

you help or not. All I want you to do is fix it so I don't have to beat her. You're no friend of hers if you won't do that much!" (164). Learning to do as she must, Dana fosters the subjugation and rape of her friend and matrilineal forebear, Alice, by Rufus. Dana reflects on the surreal nature of having willingly aided in the victimization of Alice, who "was like a sister," by Rufus, who "was like a younger brother" because "it was so hard to watch him hurting her—to know that he had to go on hurting her if my [Dana's] family was to exist at all" (180). The situation—Dana's continued existence—demands that Dana compromise her morals when she helps Rufus and learns to hate him. This moment of submission functions as the harbinger of "a life and death struggle" between Dana and Rufus (Hegel, 114).

Alice kills herself after Rufus attempts to control her by pretending to sell her children. Naturally, Rufus tries to replace her with Dana as his sexual property, his most heinous act of dehumanization, because what Rufus does severs the understanding that was shared—friendship. When he tries to force himself on her, he confirms his own identity by denying Dana, black and a slave, her identity—the basic instability of the master-slave relationship. Certainly, it takes power to deny anyone their identity as a human being. Dana, comprehending her plight that "a slave was a slave [and] anything could be done to her," chooses to live at the expense of Rufus's own life (260). As a twentieth-century black woman striving to bear all the viciousness of slavery, Dana reacts by grabbing her freedom and not succumbing to her realization of "how easily people could be trained to accept slavery" (101). Dana's rebellious spirit and determination to be free gives her the strength to kill Rufus by using her hidden knife. She achieves self-emancipation because she no longer fears death or psychological dependence on Rufus.

While *Kindred* functions well as a neo–slave narrative, echoing firsthand accounts of slavery, more importantly, the novel provides intertextual moments linking Dana's experience with perhaps the two most important autobiographies written by escaped slaves, those by Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs. There are many parallels between Douglass's *Narrative* (1845) and Butler's *Kindred*, from the setting in Maryland, to the everyday, almost casual, violence, to various superstitions. However, the best parallel is how dangerous education and literacy can be to slaves who are made unfit for bondage by

learning. Douglass recalls teaching as many as forty of his fellow slaves how to read on Sundays at Sabbath school because "their minds had been starved by their cruel masters" and "it was the delight of [his] soul to be doing something that looked like bettering the condition of [his] race" (88). He and enslaved friends decide to write themselves free passes and escape, but they are caught and Douglass barely manages to destroy his note in a fire without being noticed as the white men beat his friend Henry into submission.

Similarly, Dana is approached by a young slave named Nigel, Rufus's companion, who wants to learn how to read, and with little hesitation she agrees to teach him in the cookhouse. Dana is unquestionably careful, but not careful enough. One day she gives Nigel a surprise "spelling test," and he passes easily. As Dana is reflecting bitterly on Nigel's ease at learning compared to Rufus's difficulty, Tom Weylin, Rufus's father, steps into the cookhouse, an event that "wasn't supposed to happen . . . for as long as [Dana] had been on the plantation, it had not happened—no white had come into the cookhouse" (106). Weylin in his anger fails to notice that Dana is teaching Nigel because he is so blinded by her disobedience—stealing from his library and reading in the cookhouse—that Nigel has the chance to hide a pencil. Afraid for her life, Dana is hurled back to her time as Weylin proceeds to whip her bloody.

Just as Butler's *Kindred* resembles Douglass's autobiography, so it shares a likeness to Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). The most powerful similarity occurs when children are sold from their mothers. In *Kindred*, the cook Sarah recounts how Tom Weylin sold her children.[9] Sarah states, "Marse Tom took my children, all but Carrie. And, bless God, Carrie ain't worth much as the others 'cause she can't talk. People think she ain't got good sense" (76). Much later in the novel Sarah reveals that she "just wanted to lay down and die" after her children were sold (250). This moment is nearly identical to one of Jacobs's reports regarding a slave auction:

> I saw a mother lead seven children to the auction-block. She knew that *some* of them would be taken from her; but they took *all* . . . I met that mother in the street, and her wild haggard face lives to-day in my mind. She wrung her hands in anguish, and exclaimed, 'Gone! All gone! Why *don't* God kill me?' (350–51)

Butler's sf neo–slave narrative mirrors exactly the agonizing endurance and courage of slave narratives. Not only does Butler's novel affectively function as a chronological record, *Kindred* itself becomes a living history that encourages a revision of both American history and race in science fiction.

Butler's science fictional moorings of the text break away from the neo-slave paradigm by collapsing Dana's experience and perception of time through time-travel. These sf moorings also grant sincerity to Dana's voice, which, in turn, disintegrates time boundaries and testifies to the horrors of slavery. Butler hardly explains Rufus's psychic ability, preferring to keep it as a part of the background, and thus allowing the atmospheric quality of slavery, of Dana's experience, to emerge as the foreground. Importantly, the means of Dana's time travel, her familial bond with Rufus, "underscores the inseparability of black and white in the United States," as Missy Kubitschek points out (41). This is also reflected by Dana's marriage to Kevin, a more hopeful forecast for race relations. As her complex relationship with Rufus develops, Dana attempts to thwart cultural history by molding the emerging man, her great-great-grandfather, into a benevolent master, and she fails miserably.

As present and past collide, *Kindred* interrogates the importance of freedom and its meaning to America. While only a few minutes or hours of her life pass in 1976 San Francisco, Dana's irregular trips into the past extend into days, weeks, and even months at a time as she is forced into slavery to look after Rufus as a boy. The nausea and disorientation that Dana experiences as she unwillingly shuttles back and forth across time also evokes a sense of the middle passage from Africa to the New World in the dark hold of slave ships. It is no mistake that Dana's last trip occurs on the Fourth of July in the bicentennial year of 1976. In this manner, Butler suggests that we have much more racial progress to make before any meaningful unity can take place. The date also makes an ironic evocation of the values of the American Revolution, "in life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The various traumas of slavery embedded in the text are brought into the present by both Dana and Kevin as we read and work through our emotional difficulties toward the past and try to resolve them.

However, we are never able to become comfortable with the distance between the past and present in the structuring of this novel because Dana and Kevin deal with racism and prejudice in the present also. Dana first meets Kevin at a temporary employment agency, ironically dubbed a "slave market" (52), where they are the target of verbal abuse, being called "chocolate and vanilla porn" (56). When they decide to get married, Kevin is shocked by his sister's bigoted reaction, although Dana is not as surprised by her own family's reaction. Dana's aunt is not opposed to the wedding because "she prefers light-skinned blacks," but Dana's uncle takes her impending marriage to Kevin as a personal betrayal since he wanted her to marry a black man (111). Nonetheless, the couple ignore their families' hostilities to the interracial union and move forward into a life together largely oblivious to societal prejudice. In fact, their journey into the past makes them stronger in the present as they confront the overt oppressions of nineteenth-century slavery by sharing this awful experience as a couple. Weakly rooted in the past, the taboo of miscegenation is a full-blown part of Dana's present.

Although Dana breaks her link to Rufus by killing him on her last visit, she loses her left arm to the past, where it is "still caught somehow [at] the exact spot Rufus's fingers had grasped" (261). The loss of her limb is a visible reminder that the past is not simply history. As Butler's novel suggests, it has the capacity to hurt us deeply. As Tara McPherson fittingly remarks, "Dana . . . does not free herself from the past; rather, Rufus and Antebellum Maryland stay with her, haunting her like a phantom limb," suggesting that the past haunts many of us, that even in the present, racism is still crippling (91). *Kindred* revises both the slave narrative and science fiction by opening a rift in history that witnesses and testifies to the cultural memory of slavery in the present moment, a reading experience that meta-slavery encapsulates. Despite being classified as a neo–slave narrative, *Kindred* is the gateway to science fictional accounts of slavery as it contests and expands the boundaries of sf with unambiguous racial subjectivities.

With meta-slavery in mind, our knowledge of American slavery is superimposed on science fictional trappings. For instance, alien masters on a plantation planet make us stop and think about oppression in Butler's Nebula Award–winning "Bloodchild" (1984). The story is the

first-person account of Gan, an Asian boy, who reveals that humanity has been virtually enslaved as brooders on another planet for the alien Tlic, which are three-meter-long centipedes. Over time, the feeling of enslavement seems to become harmless as the Tlic recognize humanity's intelligence. A symbiotic relationship develops between humanity and the Tlic. The Tlic provide humans with their sterile eggs, granting extended life, and in return human males are impregnated with Tlic eggs, which have to be removed by caesarean section before the hatched grubs eat through the host body. While Butler vehemently denied that "Bloodchild" is about slavery, that it is her "pregnant man story," critics often feel otherwise (Butler, *Bloodchild and Other Stories*, 30).

Nevertheless, there is room to interpret Butler's story as a quasi–slave narrative of the future because it "can also be read as a sly allegory of the violations that historically occurred under the institution of chattel slavery" (Crossley, xxv). Gan and his family certainly experience a slavelike bondage through their dependence on their Tlic family member, T'Gatoi, for protection, health, and the pleasure of her narcotic stings; Gan's family certainly seems like the property of T'Gatoi; and T'Gatoi certainly coerces Gan into carrying her children by threatening to impregnate Gan's older sister, Xuan Hoa. A close reading of "Bloodchild" demonstrates several of the general themes attributed to slave narratives, especially the first-person narration by a captive minority, in this case a human. The point is that Butler's success at remaking history and our relation to it demonstrates that slavery is an established part of sf, even with its own long-standing record of critical neglect.

Issues of meta-slavery occur in Butler's Xenogenesis trilogy as well. Butler uses meta-slavery to explicitly reawaken the unbearable memory of American slavery. She leaves no doubt about the racial context in her writing, offering direct representations of race relations in all of her work. The overarching plot of the trilogy involves humanity on the verge of annihilation because of nuclear holocaust. An alien species known as the Oankali is passing through the solar system when they detect and rescue the dying remnants of humanity. As it turns out, the completely alien and utterly grotesque Oankali are gene traders, a term with interesting connotations, since they also seem to be aggressive colonizers. They recognize two conflicting genes

in humanity—hierarchical tendencies and intelligence—that when left together result in extinction. As Rebecca Holden explains, "The Oankali enforce their point of view, like groups of humans throughout history, with essentialist definitions. Again and again, they point to the genetic flaw in humanity in order to justify their colonization and virtual erasure of this species" (52). Thus, the Oankali treat humanity through biological engineering (cross-species reproduction), merging themselves with the human species to create something new—without permission. As a result, Butler's novels, *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989), mix the alien contact theme with elements of the slave narrative. For instance, the Oankali starship is a slave ship where the aliens enact a breeding program on a captive humanity. The Oankali are unwilling and unable to control their own hereditary disposition to acquire others' genetic material. In fact, the first book of Butler's trilogy, *Dawn*, shows us a kind of miscegenation that recalls the history of slavery's sexual exploitation.[10]

Dawn is the story of Lilith Iyapo, a black woman awakened from 250 years of suspended animation aboard a starship, cured of her cancer, and chosen to eventually lead humanity back to the restored Earth after acculturation with the Oankali. Butler presents us with a black woman who will give birth against her will to a new race of genetically engineered children of human-Oankali heritage. Much like slave owners in the antebellum era, the Oankali are in charge of Lilith's fertility as well as of any of her offspring. As Jenny Wolmark points out, "Considerable emphasis is placed on the role of reproduction in the narrative because control over reproductive technology is a key issue in any political struggle for autonomy" (35). Lilith herself will come to be something "other" with her strength and memory enhancements, thus transcending humanity (*Dawn*, 120). Lilith asks her Oankali host, Jdahya, what will happen and he responds, "Your people will change. Your young will be more like us and ours more like you. Your hierarchical tendencies will be modified and if we learn to regenerate limbs and reshape our bodies, we'll share these abilities with you. That's part of the trade" (*Dawn*, 42). Hence, Butler crafts her meta-slavery tale to invert our perception of slavery through the aliens, thereby suggesting a strange kind of slave narrative where all of humanity is "other" as an incidental part of the story.

Dawn is a reworking of the slave narrative that develops an alternate view of race relations: humanity itself positioned as the colonized "other" by the superior biotechnology of an alien species. As Holden states, "The Oankali commitment to their own view of how things are and the 'truth' of genetic codes leads them to become imperialistic colonizers of the remaining remnants of humanity" (51). Indeed, Butler's novel participates in an open dialogue on race while Asimov foments dreams of a nonexistent past of slavery masked as robots—a dialogue confirmed by two things throughout the trilogy: resistance and change.

As the story progresses in the second and third books, the struggle of the resister humans to remain pure is futile as Lilith will reluctantly aid the Oankali in transforming the race through her construct children. Michelle Osherow points out in her argument that "the price of Lilith's empowerment is her estrangement, for when she is permitted to interact with humans she has been altered to so great an extent that her fellow earthlings do not recognize her as an ally . . . Lilith is the 'alien other' to all those with whom she comes in contact" (76). It seems logical that Lilith, a member of a despised race, would be the first human to reluctantly join the alien race. It is fascinating to contemplate humans positioned as the colonized "other" by the Oankali. Just as humans are configured as other, the Oankali are others, too, as they make use of living technologies to travel the stars and forcibly trade with various life forms. These ironic "otherhoods" occur often in sf but go unrecognized by critics because the necessary tools to effectively analyze and challenge race and racism in sf have not been provided. In fact, explorations of power and race dynamics ingrained in the annals of slavery and empire are essential to reinterpretations of science fiction.

As a counterpart to resistance, change has an equally important part to play in Butler's complex reworking of history. In *Adulthood Rites* and *Imago*, the issue of change is strongly represented by the children, who are something else entirely. Through use of living technology, the Oankali exploit a weaker, inferior humanity to create a monstrous humanity, where boundaries such as gender, race, sex, and class dissolve—a eugenic nightmare and a civilization's dream. Butler envisions a cyborg identity derived from the human Oankali genetic exchange.

She completely bypasses the human-machine interface problem tangential to any cyborg identity by the Oankali's use of living technology. In the landmark "Cyborg Manifesto" (1991) Donna Haraway names Butler among the twentieth-century cyborg storytellers, manipulating cyborg myth developed from "an informatics of domination" (161); and featuring the "constructions of women of colour and monstrous selves in feminist science fiction" (174). These cyborgs dramatically redefine our traditional social values: by making violence obsolete, by allowing males to leave family structures behind, by arriving at consensus decisions made by the adults of a community, and by respecting the sanctity of life, among other changes. And so Haraway's cyborg represents an otherhood perspective which addresses racism at the crossroads of gender oppression.

The human-Oankali construct children, Akin and Jodahs, represent the aforementioned changes in the second and third books respectively. In the second book, *Adulthood Rites*, Lilith's construct son, Akin, a human-Oankali child, is kidnapped by human resisters against the Oankali. He's taken to the Phoenix colony and bought by former friends of his mother. Xenophobia causes some of the resister colonies to participate in race wars against one another as well as the human-Oankali communities. This blind hatred is dangerous to Akin because he is racially marked by otherness in two ways: he is black and alien. Unquestionably, this double affliction is open to discussion of a new racial awareness offered by otherhood. Butler creates a complex racial subjectivity based on human disempowerment to consciously reflect on how such racism is displayed in sf by transforming familiar social boundaries that speak to the historical truths of racism in America.

Yet Akin learns that not all humans are fatally flawed despite their inclination for violence and stupidity. Akin is convinced that it is wrong for the resisters to face the choice of destruction or a forced joining with the Oankali as the growing starships will deplete the Earth. After he is rescued, Akin successfully argues for the establishment of a human colony on Mars because "there should be Humans who don't change or die" (*Adulthood Rites*, 371). The establishment of this colony goes against the interests of the alien authorities in that the resisters have been given a chance to break the hold of racism on humanity. In this

respect, the demands of principle as opposed to power are, once again, explored in Butler's trilogy.

The final book, *Imago*, extends notions of otherhood even further by demonstrating how the unfailing application of democratic principles has the potential to break down racial boundaries and other kinds of subordination. *Imago* is the tale of Lilith's last child, Jodahs, a human-Oankali ooloi. Jodahs, a shape-shifting genetic engineer, is a being beyond gender as an ooloi—a third gender/sex. Like Akin, Jodahs involves his/herself with an undiscovered human village isolated in a South American mountain range. These humans are deformed from inbreeding and fearful of what the Oankali represent—change. Jodahs ultimately convinces the community to end its seclusion by healing a brother and sister and mating with them. Jodahs negotiates an agreement between the humans and the Oankali that allows the humans to decide to either go with the Oankali or go to the Mars colony. Jodahs is representative of issues of profound difference. S/he is completely different in that "it" defies racial and gender classifications as a shape-shifter who is human and nonhuman, natural and technological. As a mixed being, Jodahs is symbolic of race consciousness itself because s/he is aware of every evolutionary change that has produced a modern and conflicted humanity in addition to every transformation experienced by the Oankali. Understanding this state of being allows Jodahs to transcend race.[11]

As alien creatures, these children of humanity must help with the transition into a nonraced posthuman society. Butler contests racial constructions both directly and indirectly in this trilogy by crafting a meta-slavery narrative that is clearly linked to the history of slavery through its alien colonization theme. Unlike Asimov, Butler uses enslavement as the conscious foundation of much of her work. She focuses attention on the mostly unspoken nature of race relationships in sf and alters our perceptions of difference by honestly engaging our painful and violent memories of slavery. As Amanda Boulter suggests, Lilith Iyapo's cancer is a metaphor invoking "African-American history," and Butler's "representations of these experiences are curative, a homeopathic response to a painful past" (182).

As seen in Butler's work, meta-slavery can be subtle in science fiction when new races have been envisioned, even if the authors

intentionally remind readers of slavery with their treatment of artificial people. David Brin imagines a near-utopian future where humans can make disposable clay copies of themselves to handle the routine everyday business of life, or hazardous jobs, or deviant sexual encounters. These throwaway clay bodies make possible all kinds of experiences, and at the end of the day humans can choose whether or not to retrieve their "ditto" memories and add them to their own (5). In such a fashion, humanity can live several lifetimes occupying multiple bodies each day. Brin builds such a world in his tech-noir novel *Kiln People* (2002).

However, Brin is best known for his Uplift novels,[12] a future history series where humanity becomes a spacefaring race on a galactic scale without the aid of other patron species. These patron species practice biological engineering in an effort to uplift other potential spacefaring life forms to sapience, with the caveat that the uplifted species are indentured for 100,000 years to their patrons. Humanity is an anomaly because they have no apparent patrons, though they have themselves uplifted dolphins and chimpanzees. As a technologically inferior race, humankind has several enemies among the great galactic powers that are eager to dominate or destroy humanity. Most of Brin's other works of fiction are concerned with the impact of technology developed by man for himself. And *Kiln People* is no different in this respect. Even so, I have chosen to explore *Kiln People* for two reasons. First, it is a relatively overlooked but important novel, a finalist for four different best science fiction/fantasy novel awards for 2002.[13] Second, I think Brin consciously builds an undercurrent of slavery in *Kiln People* because he feels that humanity cannot overcome its will to dominate other beings. In addition, I also believe that most readers will overlook the slavery subtext in amazement at Brin's skill at visualizing a possible future, and it is this subtext that should be essential because of Brin's depiction of racial difference in an increasingly globalized world.

Kiln People is ostensibly a detective story concerning the industrial espionage of new technologies and murder. Private investigator Albert Morris, along with his "ditective" selves, is hired to investigate the mystifying disappearance of the scientist who invented duplication technology (18). As he pursues the case, Albert can occupy many places at once as he or his copies converse with many people—humans, dittos, and humans masquerading as dittos. He and his dittos are soon

caught up in the dangerous conspiracy surrounding the scientist's disappearance. Albert's various selves take on three evil masterminds who are using the science and philosophy of "soulistics" to search out and unlock eternal life (321). He eventually discovers his value to the conspirators as a perfect imprinter, ascertains the secret and successful development of new ditto-enhancements, and exposes the unexpected secret identity of his archenemy, Beta.

What makes *Kiln People* unusual is its first-person account told from four different points of view, all versions of Albert. The novel conveys our own sense of multiple lives. Through duplication technology, Brin is able to create multiple narrators from one person who all experience the day in disparate ways. Albert, perplexed by the different actions of each of his three dittos, especially the green, decides to get his real flesh personally involved in the investigation. The point here is that all the dittos' narratives give shape to a complex slave narrative as we go deeper into the story, where the dittos gather information for their master and act on his behalf. Although each "Albert" knows only what he knows, we benefit from their collective knowledge by witnessing and testifying to this future account of slavery, hinged upon Hegel's philosophy that the fear of death turns into the source of lordship and bondage—oppression (115). Three factors in the novel validate the nuanced occurrence of meta-slavery: new racisms of the color line, modern human problems, and ditto slavery itself. Clearly, Brin raises crucial questions about the future of racial identities and individual rights as the meaning of humanity changes through his calculated redesign.

A literal DuBoisian color line exists between the dittos of assorted colors as well as between the dittos and the "bland looking" humans "ranging from pale-almost white to chocolate brown" (37). And this color line of the future produces new racisms based on the quality of the commercial materials purchased for ditto blanks. Dittos come in many different colors, showing the class and suggesting the capabilities of the oven-baked golem.[14] Brin uses "ditto" and "golem" more or less interchangeably in the text. Also, a golem is derisively known as a "ditto," "rox," and "mule," among other things, thus suggesting a sense of bigotry toward dittos by humankind—something similar to the black experience of contemptuous name-calling in America.

An entirely complex ditto hierarchy exists. Orange dittos live purely for industrial labor; blue-skinned cop dittos possess "needle-tipped fingers coated with knockout oil [that] would stop any golem or human cold" (9); cheap green roxes aren't overly smart, but they are good for taking care of domestic household tasks like cleaning. At the higher end, gray dittos are a considerable step up in class because they are nearly as smart as their originals, and often come loaded with customized options. Ivory copies are expensive pleasure models. Ironically, ebony dittos are intellectual specialists with tremendous powers of concentration. I find this peculiar in that these attributes are a departure from previous biased representations of black intelligence in America, surely a conscious choice made by Brin for that very reason. At the very top of the line are the exorbitantly priced platinums with unknown abilities. Even "archies"—real humans—respect these models because they signify the wealth and power of their originals. Clay people are also subjected to familiar kinds of bigotry "because of skin color" (4) as authentic humans target golems for all kinds of abuse just for passing through town. These humans use the dittos' color as a racial slur, such as "greenie," and threaten them with violence, mirroring much of white sentiment towards black throughout American history. Unmistakably, Brin is commenting on the nature of racism in having the kiln people the object of human hatred, and yet this commentary is veiled by technology. In other words, technology masks the racial paranoia of this world as prominent race paradigms are grafted onto the artificial bodies. The similarities between "raced" bodies and "technologized" bodies are easy to miss without a sense of otherhood.

Dittos are also viewed as chattel by the human minority. They can be harmed without fear of criminal prosecution; the only possible penalty is a fine. And the dittos accept their bondage without qualms. Though they are not human, they literally possess a human's soul, a symbolic move on Brin's part recalling the argument of whether African slaves were truly human, whether they were in possession of a soul. In the context of a meta-slavery reading, Brin's novel can be said to reinvent old concepts of discrimination by recasting race and racism in a technological form, and yet nothing has truly changed because this new kind of racism is based on skin color. As described above, the novel's scenario seems to be that the popularity of the

cheap technology has led to, or at least facilitated the establishment of, a color line reflecting the human problems of this world, such as unemployment and continual surveillance.

With his extrapolation, Brin is exploring the idea of racial identity in conjunction with meta-slavery, implying that the industrial development of replication technologies for the human soul will result in "a new race of disposable beings"—in other words, slaves (35). Such an implication has meaning for us today in terms of otherhood. The social consequences of a world governed by this imaginary technology powerfully recall the institution of slavery, because the novel's humanity severely mistreats a new race of duplicate beings. Human owners of dittos are largely unappreciative of their mostly devoted servants. They regard dittos as second-class citizens, "a perfect serving class that can't rebel and always knows what to do" (524). In fact, this civilization is built on the notion of human superiority, and the world's economic stability depends on it—a situation highly reminiscent of antebellum Southern society. While Brin's central theme is certainly identity, slavery is a subtext that cannot be overlooked since dittos are disposable property, even though they are, if only for a limited time, sentient beings with the capacity to think and feel.

Another issue shared by *Kiln People* and slave narratives is the generation of realism through first-person narration of a mystery. In other words, the air of mystery belonging to detective fiction is analogous to the plots of slave narratives, according to Charles Davis and Henry Louis Gates Jr., "since the plots of all the slave narratives turn upon the resolution of a mystery, already resolved in fact by the first-person 'detective' narrator" (xv). What the authors mean by "mystery" is that the experience of slavery is an unsettling one and the details of escape are obscured or kept secret to arouse a sense of speculation beyond the end of the narrative itself. Brin's crime story goes to the core of otherhood as it creates an enslaved artificial populace. For example, the sense of technoscientific bondage in the text begins with an "ID pellet" in the center of a ditto's forehead (95). This identification marker is a new kind of shackle, a "tag" (6) with its "owner's code" on it (5) that makes it easy to identify the human to which the ditto belongs. As a matter of custom, "a golem-duplicate has to show his tag to a realperson, on demand" (6). In the best sf tradition, Brin allows us to make

our own conclusions; in this case about the ethics of a technological enslavement, where humans can imprint their consciousness upon clay replicas who accomplish tasks for their human archetypes.

Brin also explores the idea of abolition and the ethical controversy generated by pro-slavery and anti-slavery factions. Given the notion of a technology that binds others, it seems likely that questions concerning the value of the human soul are central to understanding how and why this text is a meta-slavery narrative. Two examples, one from each faction, best encapsulate this contentious debate in the textual world. Just as it did in the American past, slavery in Brin's novel produces uncompromising activists on either side of the debate. On the one hand, there are extremists known as "mancies" who believe that ditto existence is just as sacred as humanity's and that enslaving them is immoral (42). Nonetheless, this group cannot seem to live without the convenience of ditto technology. On the other hand, the camp known as "True Lifers" consists entirely of archies who denounce the daily making of disposable people because these clay beings are technological abominations against God's will. Of course, both of these fanatical groups "think Universal Kilns is a front for the devil" (63). Certainly, Brin exploits the issue of abolition momentarily to foreground slavery in the text. I find this issue fascinating today because technoscience and belief in God seemingly do not mix well together. Oddly enough, a technospiritual movement exists in our world, and Brin is taking advantage of this paradox. A perfect example is how churches are making use of technology to recruit new believers as pastors podcast sermons around the globe on the World Wide Web. In addition, the Wachowski brothers' film *The Matrix* (1999) is a relevant illustration; in it a cyborgized computer hacker is the messiah of an enslaved mankind in its war with the machines.

As the novel ends, ditto slavery still exists. Yet, Brin suggests that "interesting times" are ahead because the release of "the new golem-technologies"—long-lived dittos, remote dittoing, and ditto-to-ditto copying—will result in a "social war" (564). As the novel's American title suggests, oven-baked dittos are technologically enslaved beings designed to serve their human counterparts. Perhaps even more fascinating, the British title, *Kil'n People*, is a pun on "killing people," which suggests that some kind of ditto revolt is near. Unquestionably,

the undercurrent of Brin's novel is that of meta-slavery because of its many implications for society's abuse of technology that creates new repetitions of racism. The promise of technocracy in this possible future has spectacularly failed to make racial designations and markers of race irrelevant; instead, it has invented and envisioned entirely new kinds of people to oppress.

Whereas *Kiln People* explores slavery in the future, Steven Barnes's *Lion's Blood* (2002) is an equally powerful story of meta-slavery set in an alternate nineteenth-century world, which continues in the novel's sequel, *Zulu Heart* (2003). Blacks and whites have switched positions in the master-slave relationship, but this is a device used to show how all of humanity is essentially the same in its desires for freedom and the ability to oppress. Barnes makes racial borders indistinct for his audience because of this switch. Even more so, we are seeing humanity with alien eyes, or perhaps we are aliens with racialized eyes measuring the environment by standards not our own. Barnes rewrites the myth of American slavery, revealing its dehumanizing effects on both slaves and masters while simultaneously exploring the meaning of friendship, honor, religion, and humanity. He capitalizes on familiar notions of race by twisting our national memory of the past, allowing us to question the racialized formations of American culture and those of science fiction as well. *Lion's Blood* is not a simple alternate history tale because it can be used to teach the importance of tolerance and equality. America is a composite experience.

Lion's Blood has two protagonists: Aidan O'Dere, an Irish boy captured and sold into slavery in the New World, and Kai ibn Jallaleddin ibn Rashid, the privileged second son of a powerful black noble. Kai leads a life of privilege, worshipping according to the teachings of Islam and learning the basics of warfare, while Aidan is just another of the many white slaves working on the estate of Dar Kush. Though the ruling family of Dar Kush is known to indulge its white population, allowing slaves to keep their "pagan" names and Christian beliefs, the seeming tranquillity of the plantation masks a world where slave families are torn apart to pay bets, whippings and rapes are routine, numerous racist taunts and slights are delivered, and runaways are slaughtered by vicious animals. An uneasy friendship, somewhat similar to that of Dana Franklin and Rufus Weylin in *Kindred*, develops

between the two boys as the years pass and they both mature. This friendship is a complex articulation of Hegel's master-slave dialectic in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) because both Aidan and Kai are seeking recognition of the self (i.e., mastery of ego). The reality of their master-slave relationship permeates their lives and continuously assaults their closeness. Despite their many differences, each dreams about a life of dignity and freedom. Aidan participates in a slave revolt that forever changes the outwardly peaceful atmosphere of Dar Kush.[15] Subsequent tension between Azteca, the indigenous empire to the south, and Bilalistan, an African colony in North America, leads to armed conflict, during which Kai and Aidan learn to trust in one another again as a matter of survival, that their blood is essentially the same, neither black nor white. Writing like this is important because Barnes is making this science fictional retelling of slavery transparent by suggesting that given the chance blacks would have been just as harsh on whites. Significantly, Barnes believes the violent nature of the human species is universal.

While Barnes has been writing sf for over twenty-five years, he has been overshadowed by the overwhelming presence of Delany and Butler, perhaps suggesting that there is not enough room in the genre for other people of color to receive much critical attention. Science fiction critic Greg Beatty believes that "*Lion's Blood* is Barnes's best work to date" because of "how Barnes uses history in the novel" (4). Beatty identifies the strength of the novel as Barnes's use of the power of race in history to create a paradigm shift, "one that is as likely to be the site of science-fictional change as any other" (5). Beatty is correct. Barnes's intense alternate history presents a defamiliarized slave plantation saga set in the Deep South—an African-ruled South where Islam holds sway.[16] I believe that four factors make *Lion's Blood* such a compelling example of meta-slavery: the time system, the impact of religion, paradox events, and repetitions of slavery.

Nothing is simple about Barnes's portrayal of bondage and freedom in this alternate world, least of all time. The novel begins in the year 1279, or, to those who worship the son of Mary, 1863. "America" has been settled by Islamic Africa, not by Christian Europe, which has been locked in the Dark Ages by various plagues. Arabic is "the great trading tongue, uniting a thousand tribes, a hundred nations" (141) and

Islam the dominant religion. It is appropriate to question how we get to the place Barnes created and still have historical personages such as Socrates, Alexander the Great, Da Vinci, Montezuma, and Shaka Zulu. In the world of *Lion's Blood*, history began to change around the time of Socrates, or 400 BC, when "most Greek philosophers had fled to Egypt along with Socrates," who refused to drink the lethal draught of hemlock that killed him in our world (214). Other pivotal events in our world history also happen differently, such as the invention of the "steamscrew" in AD 200, whereby Africans dominate the Nile with their boats (140). And the alternate history continues to grow from there. Barnes carefully establishes the supremacy of Islam over Christianity and of African civilization over a European one, and sets the stage for Islamic Africans to colonize the "New World" with the help of enslaved whites. The point here is that Barnes *is* reimagining race and racism as not all that different in a changed world. His disruption of our "reality" indelibly marks sf by stressing the social realities of racism that exist at the intersections of national memory, alternate history, and otherhood.

This history is made all the more convincing by Barnes's use of two calendars to impart a sense of time. Our own Gregorian calendar makes it possible for us to compare his alternate history with our history. However, he also reflects the Africanized Muslim world through an Islamic calendar that begins about six hundred years later with the death of Muhammad. Thus, the novel starts in the Gregorian year of 1863 in contrast to year 1279 of the Islamic calendar. I think the alternative systems of time measurement ingeniously function as a doubling of vision, highlighting the perspectives of Aidan and Kai as well as revealing to us how history truly works—that it is always shaped by the victors and that "others" have no "true" history.[17] Through his calendars, Barnes provides us with a split view of the past that explains the main faults of humanity through enslavement, its penchant for domination and racism. Despite the Islamic hegemony, I, as a reader, certainly thought in terms of the Gregorian calendar in our world, even though Euro-American civilization was in a subordinate position. Barnes relies on the Gregorian calendar for this very reason, because its meaning to us is predicated on Euro-American dominion. This reluctance to break with our timeline presents a problem because there is never any doubt that the white hero Aidan will survive and prosper. Another flaw in the

text is the absence of an Aztec calendar because it raises the question of whether native New Worlders are living in a "primitive" timeless age. Barnes problematically estranges our sense of history as he alters how slavery played out in our own world. By focusing on religious convictions as well as the relationship of Aidan and Kai, he guides us through a common experience of slavery on one level and a series of ironic moments on a second level.

Spirituality and religion have a particular significance in this alternate history. Faith is needed to survive slavery just as it is necessary to oppress others. Barnes carefully crafts an amalgamated spirituality for the white slaves that combines Celtic practices of tree worship, ancestor worship, other pagan rituals, and a form of Christianity in order to make the parallel nature of this world believable. He provides a subtle imitation of the African religions that arose in the slave quarters of the Deep South in our history and adeptly shapes this echo of slave mysticism into history as it might have occurred. As many American slaves were forced to accept Christianity, most of the Muslim masters of Bilalistan forced an Islamic conversion on their livestock, though they rightly feared false conversions by slaves seeking a sense of equality and freedom.

I think Barnes's exploration of Islam overshadows the technological and scientific aspects of the novel, an important step for establishing humanity—rather than technology and science—as the driving force of his science fiction. His application of Muslim principles juxtaposes the imaginary Fatimite faith with the imaginary Sufi faith, perhaps a deliberate echo of Catholicism and Protestantism. Readers get a sense that the novel is shaped by traditional U.S. anti-Catholicism with Sufis in the position of Catholics, resulting in a kind of dystopian version of what might have happened if the Protestants had not dominated early American life. On the one hand, the Fatimites have spiritual leaders, "the Ayotallah" in Africa and "the Ulema," in Bilalistan, who is very likely corrupted by greed (292). And on the other, the Sufi sect, persecuted though not illegal, believes that the path to Allah is direct, and those who truly love Allah "must beware of those who twist His holy word for power" (317). This notion complicates the Catholic/Protestant analogy a bit since it's the Protestants who emphasize a direct relationship with God. Through Kai's conversion to the Sufi faith, we

are able to see how the principles of Islam establish a moral compass as he endures tremendous difficulties in his spiritual growth and comes to know himself. He seeks Allah for understanding because the complex nature of having a slave for a best friend transcends the master/slave paradigm. Kai's sensibility toward humanity dictates his need for spiritual guidance in a world where color defines a man's position.

Barnes further complicates the spiritual issues raised by Islamic-Christian tensions by drawing distinctions between Northern Africans as Muslims and sub-Saharan Africans. Zulus in the text are presented as racist savages embodied by the historical figure of Shaka Zulu. The legendary South African warrior king of our history is every bit as mad, egotistical, and bloodthirsty when transplanted to the nineteenth-century alternate New World. His death in the novel mirrors that in real life.[18] Whether Barnes is not fully thinking through the differences between depicting them as savages or depicting Arab perceptions of them as savages, it becomes necessary to at least acknowledge the Arab slave trade of Africans. Consequently, Barnes's inversion is not quite as straightforward as the text suggests. Likewise, there is something to be said about the Aztecs—who seem to be savages that practice human sacrifice—and the absence of other Native Americans. To my way of thinking, a bit of racist erasure occurs because these fictional versions of real-world civilizations are still depicted as being trappings in a savage culture, though they have not been the victims of European genocide.

A combination of alternate time and religious conviction creates several instances of paradox between the textual world and our own that deepen our understanding of the relevance of freedom. For example, upon arriving in a harbor in the New World, Aidan is astonished by his first glimpse of a colossus "standing astride a stone island, its titanic back turned to them . . . Taller than thirty men, the great columns of its legs were like the spurs of a mountainside, its shoulders as wide as the horizon" (52). Barnes consciously replaces our Statue of Liberty on Ellis Island with the statue of a majestic black man on an island in the Gulf of Mexico. When I think of the Statue of Liberty, I immediately think of freedom, its costs, and the spirit of Americans; it is a defining landmark of the United States.[19] In contrast, when I think of a giant black man, I think of the racist paranoia that such a statue might project in

our world. In Barnes's world, however, the black statue symbolizes the spirit and dreams of Bilalistan, something that mirrors the sentiment in our world, a paradoxical moment, because Aidan is not coming as a person with dreams of a better life. Instead, his innocence has been stolen by the horrors of the middle passage and his impending subjugation. Hence, the statue comes to represent forceful displacement and an alienated existence. In contrast to Asimov, then, we can see Barnes consciously reworking sf to deal with race relations in the open.

Another paradox occurs in the war between Bilalistan and Azteca as the famous battle for the Alamo is reenacted at the battle for the "Shrine of the Fathers" (84). Barnes's reinvention of history signals the colonial impulses of his world, the high cost of liberty for all men. It also signals how the fanaticism of faith demonstrates the dangerous combination of religion, politics, and race. After this battle, Kai provides Aidan with his free papers, one of which reads, "DECLARATION OF EMANCIPATION" granting "the rights of citizenship" to Aidan and his family because of his "distinguished service to the throne" (588). This moment is analogous to the missed opportunities for equality in our own history. Barnes deliberately joins Thomas Jefferson's contradictory idealism in the Declaration of Independence, where all men are created equal, with Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which ostensibly freed black slaves. Still, Aidan has to produce his documents every time he and his family are "stopped by road patrols" on their way west; he also carries "a map . . . showing places where free whites might find shelter and food along the way"—an intentional merging of the Underground Railroad and free papers (597).

Though arguably racist, Barnes's reinvention of slavery is quite impressive because of its racial role reversals, which allow him to subconsciously engage his audience in this painful topic. Aidan's experience of bondage reads like a slave narrative. His childhood in Eire is shattered when Viking raiders invade his "crannog," murder his father, and kidnap the rest of his family (3). They're taken to an unknown trading port, where his mother, Deidre, convinces their captors to keep them together (34). He also sees black people for the first time, a supremely alienating moment, and thinks of them as "demons that looked like human beings smeared with soot or mud . . . bare heads . . . crowned with what looked more like black lamb's wool than real hair . . . their

lips were thick, noses wide and blunt" babbling "in a language Aidan had never heard" (34–35). In fact, this moment in the story is a deliberate parallel of Olaudah Equiano's first contact with Europeans.[20] Aidan and his family endure a long terrifying voyage across the ocean by airship to the New World, a middle passage from Western Europe to Bilalistan, echoing the triangle trade of slavery: Africa, the Americas, and Europe. In the New World Aidan suffers through the absolute humiliation of a public auction, whereupon he and his mother are sold to Dar Kush while his twin sister is sold into the unknown. Aidan and his ailing mother take up residence in a small shack in the plantation's slave quarters, also known as "Ghost Town" (113). From this point, the description of daily plantation life is similar to that of most slave narratives except, of course, the slaves are white.

The intensity of slavery is perhaps best captured in one of the several imaginary slave songs that Barnes uses to provide us with a moment of detached familiarity. Music is surely a key element in a culture based on slavery because it records an oral history through song.[21] With the help of musician Heather Alexander's corresponding album, *Insh'Allah: The Music of Lion's Blood*, Barnes's alternate world is set to music, brought to life by providing an auditory setting. Alexander's melding of Celtic, African, and Middle Eastern sounds produces another registry for understanding the melancholy richness of it. In the novel, the song "Laddie Are Ya Workin?" has one meaning for white slaves and a distinctly different meaning for the black masters:

> *Storm clouds gather as the hands to the field*
> *Raindrops scatter as the land's made to yield*
> *Body separate from its fine golden head*
> *Stalk and sheaf and chaff for a bed*
>
> *Cut her low, swing her round*
> *Iron wire, tightly bound*
> *Thresh the teff by the morning lark,*
> *Lie in her arms in the still of dark,*
> *Laddie are ya workin'?* (232)

To the slaves this is a song of mourning though it masks an undertone of rage that the masters are incapable of hearing. Instead, the masters believe it is a simple, if not crude, work song. This double meaning

indicates Barnes's meaningful consideration of the nature of slavery, its subtle deceptions and misunderstandings. This is a deliberate reminder of American slavery and its spirituals and how these songs add another dimension to Barnes's alternate history. Regarding slave songs in his own narrative, Frederick Douglass writes:

> I have often been utterly astonished, since I came to the north, to find persons who could speak of the singing, among slaves, as evidence of their contentment and happiness. It is impossible to conceive of a greater mistake. Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears. (30)

The historical processes of race are thoroughly explored in *Lion's Blood* and its sequel, *Zulu Heart* (2003), where Barnes imagines African intervention in the American complex of the New World juxtaposed against our myth of freedom. As Beatty suggests, "The myth of America . . . is the myth of liberty" (5). Our experience of meta-slavery in this text vividly renders a sense of anger and sadness at racism and its antecedents. However, Barnes also designates the strength and beauty of the human spirit as a necessary means in defying oppression. And this notion is not myth, but simple truth. In other words, Barnes uses the power of ideology to reverse the broader conception of history which sees white men as its subjects and is fundamentally incapable of seeing beyond that contradiction. While it is undoubtedly true that Barnes brings his various prejudices to bear, he also functions within an ideological constraint of which he seems to be unaware. For example, he does present a monolithic view of indigenous people. This is not to say that Barnes is not successful with his tale of meta-slavery, but he falls short of breaking the chains of race and racism in this regard. Nonetheless, Barnes's writing suggests that racism is a crucial and undying element in sf, and he uses his stories, permeated with historical precedents, to impart creative approaches for discerning, resisting, and fighting racism in the genre.

Meta-slavery tales, and in some respect neo–slave narratives, are essential to the study of race in science fiction, especially as they record the abiding interest in slavery's legacy. Although science fiction is largely overlooked by the academy on the subject of race, meta-slavery

narratives can make positive contributions to the ongoing dialogue on race and American identity. Such sf stories as *Stars in My Pocket like Grains of Sand, Kindred, Kiln People,* and *Lion's Blood* have certainly been patterned after slave narratives, consciously or otherwise. These stories and others like them reveal the imbalance between the reality of race and the dream of freedom that still endures in America today. By exploring how slavery plays itself out in sf, meta-slavery gets at notions of disempowerment, unconscious reflections of racism, and also direct confrontations of racist attitudes displayed in sf. Meta-slavery demonstrates how slavery lives on in our cultural awareness and helps us ask how to deal with this history. Such interchange is implicit in any discussion of race. These narratives also articulate disempowerment as well as the cultural horrors of American history, if not Western history, transforming literary expressions of this painful time into complex associations of racial subjectivities. Consequently, the various tools of otherhood such as meta-slavery provide us with a means to explore the black/white binaries of science fiction in new ways. So the next chapter continues along the historical chain of black-white race relations by considering how segregation has been recorded in science fiction through various Jim Crow extrapolations.

3 Jim Crow Extrapolations

Imagine that green-skinned humanoids representing a galactic federation of civilized worlds set down on Earth to explore the possibility of shaping humanity into a refined society despite problems of human aggression. A husband and wife team, Flin and Ruvi, advanced beyond seeing other beings in terms of color, are driving through the Mississippi countryside when they stop in the town of Grand Falls. While there, they are subjected to all kinds of racist insults such as "greenie" and "green nigger." A southern minister clearly reveals his prejudicial beliefs by stating to Flin, "I been seeing faces on my teevee for years. Green faces like yours. Red ones, blue ones, purple ones, yellow ones—all the colors of the rainbow, and what I want to know is, ain't you got any white folks out there?" (Brackett, 231). Fleeing in fear for their personal safety, Flin and Ruvi are pursued by several young white men, led by Jed, who continues their education in racism by running the aliens off the road. Jed teaches them the rules of living Jim Crow, particularly the third lesson: "And this is one you better remember and write out and hang up where all the other red, blue, green and purple niggers can see it. *You never lay a hand on a white man.* Never. No matter what" (236–37). After beating Flin, the group of men goes on to rape his wife, forcing the aliens to learn the emotion of hatred. As the story ends, this hatred prompts Flin to come back to the town a few months later with some kind of advanced weapon from off world. The implication is clear: Flin is going to wipe the town off the face of the Earth. It seems that this "advanced" alien is not much better

hole into the space-time continuum. A spiritual transcendence echoes in the sound of pulsing blood, affirmed by the release of this collective consciousness from human limitations such as politics and race. While blood evokes a legacy of physical trauma and violence as well as kin relationships, music reminds us of humankind's aesthetic heritage. Undoubtedly, Bear's title, *Blood Music*, suggests that humanity should be very careful with the transformative potential of nanotechnology. Out of control, it might be the cause of our extinction by a lethal contagion. Artificial contagions, constructed through genetic engineering or nanotechnology, represent the possibility to change humanity in a single generation, exploding the color line itself. This explosion can only occur in the pages of sf, where new races arise in place of old ones and old racial concepts are used to describe new beings.

Contagion as a metaphor is a response to racial alienation accompanied by xenophobia, territoriality, and raw hostility. It questions the racial power dynamics in existence by asking for whom the crisis of racial difference is most threatening in a multicultural state. Though this issue goes beyond the black/white binary, it is most often construed and discussed in terms of black/white relationships. We must recognize that the contagion metaphor represents a diversity of subjective black positions, experiences, and identities that have been politically, historically, socially, and culturally differentiated. Further, the contagion metaphor depicts race as a biological reality instead of as a social construction. In this sense, otherhood enables us to investigate and understand why the various ailments of race occur by bridging gaps between reality and science fiction. While bridging these gaps in sf criticism is necessary, the next chapter is equally relevant in that we delve into the space *between* these gaps, the strange and unfamiliar environments created by sf authors, seeking a new, if not radical, way of looking at science fiction and race.

5 Ethnoscapes

It could be that science fiction's frequent assumption of a color-blind future—whether an unintentional or deliberate privileging of whiteness—has blinded critics to matters of race. This is a paradox that Richard Dyer makes note of, stating that "whites are not of a certain race, they're just the human race" (3). Certainly, one solution to polarizing racial identities along a black/white binary would be to challenge the representational power of whiteness as the symbol of humanity per se. With this in mind, otherhood is helpful in illuminating the ways that sf typically and unthinkingly reproduces white privilege in its representations of technology and social interactions. Despite those visions of a color-blind future, race has always been a part of sf, or lent its markings to it, as Sheree R. Thomas's *Dark Matter* anthologies indicate, even though decades of civil rights movements and racial consciousness in American culture have not produced a corresponding awareness of race in sf.

Customarily, discussions of sf reflect on various aspects of setting and characterization, while practically ignoring the dialogue on race and ethnicity evoked by the incredible backdrops envisioned. Science fiction's lack of this sort of dialogue is largely due to its lack of a critical vocabulary necessary to understand how race works within the genre. Historical overviews of the genre are still divided by racial assumptions, and sf story collections and histories by white writers and critics barely mention race as a category of interrogation or speculation. For example, of the sixty-seven stories collected in the *Norton*

Book of Science Fiction (1993), two are by African American writers (Delany and Butler), and one explicitly about race (Mike Resnick's "Kirinyaga" [1988]).[1] This deficiency is roughly analogous to the scant attention devoted to sf written by women or concerned with feminist issues before the 1970s and 1980s.[2] Indeed, the history of sf looks vastly different, if not barren, to scholars interested in racial issues because of publishing customs such as those practiced by John W. Campbell Jr. while editing *Astounding* in the 1940s and 1950s. Although otherhood is an important map of this estranged territory, partly influenced by Campbell, it still requires an expanded critical vocabulary to explore the racial constructions of science fiction. Therefore, I propose a new use for the term "ethnoscape" as a fresh way to think about the various environments that sf describes, as well as a new way to think about characterization in sf.

Social anthropologist Arjun Appadurai coined the term "ethnoscape" in 1990 and defines it as "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live" in relation to the cultural flow of social imagination across the globe (33). These persons include "tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers, and other moving groups and persons" and "constitute an essential feature of the world" as they "appear to affect the politics of (and between) nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree" (33). Adapted to science fiction, an ethnoscape provides a symbolic transfer of meaning between racial/ethnic politics and the shifting world of the sf text, resolving the contradictions of homogeneity and exposing the ways that sf unthinkingly reproduces white privilege. The writer constructs a socio-spatial environment in which to tell a story, but the reader can reconfigure those arrangements, draw out the assumptions and implications of the text to perceive its ethnoscape. Even if the fictional socio-spatial environment is constructed so as to foreground issues of race, it will nonetheless contain tensions, contradictions, and connotations beyond the author's control and in which the reader can discern the text's ethnoscape. The ideas and histories which the text uses, defines, discards, renovates, and invents define and situate the ethnoscape. The ethnoscape foregrounds the human landscapes of race and ethnicity as constituted by sf's historical, social, scientific, and technological engagement with the present. It both fabricates and reconceptualizes racial difference,

enabling us to unpack sf's racial or ethnic environments and to think about human divergence in social behaviors.

There are several well-known canonical sf works that do not seem to be about race but that are relevant to racial issues, as the words on their pages build a rich, dense space that produce traces of racial experience. Each of these widely discussed narratives can further benefit from recontextualizing their content through ethnoscapes. For example, future war novels, such as Robert Heinlein's classic *Starship Troopers* (1959), are most often driven by the social Darwinian impulse, where humanity struggles for survival against alien species. The context of colonialism could be interpreted in terms of race. The novel begins with a pitched battle between the Mobile Infantry and an alien race known by the derogatory name "skinnies," and it ends with a military engagement between the Mobile Infantry and the main adversaries known as the "bugs." Both the humans and the bugs penetrate each other's space in the drive to conquer the galaxy, and a war of extinction between the species breaks out. Johnnie Rico, the young protagonist, joins the federal service to fight the bugs in order to gain his citizenship in a postrace world. Through Rico and others, like Dubois, Heinlein strongly broadcasts a racist belief in social Darwinism, where "violence, naked force, has settled more issues in history than has any other factor . . . Breeds that forget this basic truth have always paid for it with their lives and freedoms" (26). Social Darwinism is at the root of most of these future war scenarios depicting interspecies warfare, and ethnoscapes make the racial undercurrent much more tangible and revealing in sf.

Heinlein's racial polemics are difficult to fathom with his hardly noticeable indication of Johnnie Rico's racial makeup. Samuel Delany provides a celebrated account of this very detail—a world where race is inconsequential—in two of his theoretical texts: *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* (1977) and *Starboard Wine* (1984). In *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*, Delany reflects on how "a description of a mirror reflection and the mention of an ancestor's nationality" led him to realize that Rico "is noncaucasian" (80). Delany reiterates this point in *Starboard Wine* when he recalls his "strange double take" at Rico's fleeting reference to "the chocolate brown hue of his face" (30). Though Delany made these famous remarks a long time ago, I have not been able to find this

passage in Heinlein's novel. A character from South America is not odd in itself, but it is rather strange to have a minority as the major figure of the text and anglicize him with the white nickname Johnnie. The name change from Juan to Johnnie signals the colonial impulse to lighten the darker races.

An even more fascinating ethnoscape appears in Ursula K. Le Guin's memorable *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), where she constructs a political ethnoscape from a first-contact story line mixed with a lost-race tale. Her novel focuses on first contact between humanity's descendants, where an emissary, Genly Ai, from the galactic human culture is sent to the winter planet of Gethen to assess whether the lost human civilization found there will become a member of the Ekumen. The people of Winter are androgynous beings, capable of being either male or female during the peak of their sexual cycle, kemmer—and they are also a dark-skinned race. As he attempts to establish an alliance with the Gethenians, where intellectual ideas and technology will be freely exchanged in peace, Genly Ai becomes entangled in the local politics of two nations: the feudal monarchy of Karhide and the capitalistic imperialism of Orgoreyn. Over the course of his involvement with the Gethenian Estraven, his guide, Genly Ai is forced to reevaluate his own prejudices and attitudes about human relationships.

Unquestionably, the novel hinges on notions of gender difference, but race enters the picture as well when the alienness of Le Guin's androgynous characters is considered more fully. Gethenian nations are extremely jingoistic, and the roots of racial tension between the two dominant nations of Gethen—Karhide and Orgoreyn—are clearly on display as they struggle over the possession of a strip of land known as the "Sinoth Valley" (83). The sense of difference because of language, biology, and nationality is utterly convincing bearing in mind that these persons are of both sexes, yet somehow manage to reflect our own assumptions of patriotism and race pride. Estraven puts these assumptions into perspective for Genly Ai by remarking, "No, I don't mean love, when I say patriotism. I mean fear. The fear of the other. And its expressions are political, not poetical: hate, rivalry, aggression. It grows in us, that fear" (19). Such fear leads to political acts of aggression, hatred, and a growing sense of rivalry in the text just as it does in

our world. In this respect, political ethnoscapes inform questions about race and racism that we ask ourselves, our society, and science fiction itself, particularly our historical need to first create the other and then to attempt to harm, destroy, dehumanize, and exploit it, whether the other is human, alien, or artificial.

Finally, Arthur C. Clarke's monumental *Childhood's End* (1953) describes the appearance of an alien race, known as the Overlords, which ushers in an unprecedented era of peace to assist humanity's transformation to a higher order of being. However, this golden age of humanity is marred by two things: the mysterious Overlords refuse to reveal themselves for the first fifty years and the destruction of the Earth. Karellen, the Overlord supervisor, explains that "the human race will experience what can only be called a psychological discontinuity" upon viewing the true physical form of the Overlords as archetypal devils (52). Humanity has been scarred by a previous meeting between the races during the prehistory of man, and such a terrifying racial memory reverberates "down all the ages, to haunt the childhood of every race of man" (55). This early encounter with the alien beings produces an odd feeling of racial memory that simply cannot be dismissed. The power of this racial myth, of an absolute evil, heals the racial and ethnic schisms between humanity. Consequently, the Overlords are simultaneously the harbingers of destruction and of freedom in this ethnoscape of alien contact. Whether Clarke intended this sense of prejudice or not in his writing, it exists because of his evocation of racial memory.

Clarke's vision is also distorted by another kind of race memory—nostalgia for blackness. Visible markers such as skin color should not truly exist in the utopia created by the social engineering of the Overlords. Nonetheless, unconscious racism disrupts the story. For instance, a minor white character, George, is aware of a woman's skin color: "she was . . . about one-quarter Negro. Her features were practically Grecian and her hair was long and lustrous. Only the dark, rich texture of her skin—the overworked word 'chocolate' was the only one that described it—revealed her mixed ancestry" (71). This moment in the text is made odd by the fact that the woman, Maia, is described as white in all her mannerisms. Such a disjunction implies that Clarke is privileging whiteness.

This strange narrative shift becomes even stranger when Clarke attempts to take the sting out of the racist epithet "nigger" through the major black character, Jan, who ironically is the last man on earth. Jan reflects on how color "meant nothing" to twenty-first-century humanity; that "nigger" is a term used as a matter of convenience in "polite society"; that the word "was used without embarrassment by everyone"; and that the word "had no more emotional content than such labels as republican or Methodist, conservative or liberal" (82). Clarke's imagination of a postrace world fails here because the psychological impact that race has had on all of humanity cannot be summarily dismissed. If Clarke means for this to be so, then strange social moments of disparagement should not exist in the text. Such racial tensions are deeply embedded in this particular ethnoscape, just one of many where alien beings represent a range of potentialities for exploring racial differences.

This brief discussion of key sf narratives exposes how the works unconsciously assume an intrinsic racial or ethnic value, and highlights the need for ethnoscapes to explore race and racism in sf. Perhaps the canonical nature of such texts shields them from the conscious application of race-reading, but the advantages of such reading are clear. Science fictional extrapolation creates settings and characters that represent humanity as we recognize ourselves elsewhere in time and place. The result of such recognition is often, though not always, perceived as some kind of discrimination or diminishment of stature that complicates our understanding of humanity from the past through the future. In this sense, Heinlein, Le Guin, and Clarke develop unique ethnoscapes, where racial relationships presented in their texts can be tested against our contemporary cultural perspective. These alien backdrops and beings are necessary to our perception of identity. Adapting the culture critic Stuart Hall's thoughts on "otherness" to sf, "the Other is not *out there*, but *in here*. It is not outside, but inside" (342). Thus, a variety of racial questions in sf can be examined as articulations of otherhood, such as the ethnoscape. Science fiction can take advantage of critical ethnoscapes to explore issues of race and racism that have otherwise been missed in the unique and fascinating visions of the future.

A fictional environment is the aggregate of perceived and lived space articulated through the author's imagination. The ethnoscape renders such environments unfamiliar, defamiliarizing the ordinary or conventional world and presenting it in a way that is exceedingly, and perhaps eerily, different from our own experience. In other words, a familiar environment is represented in a strange way to create a sense of the alien or unknown. While sf's conventional estrangements populate the fictional environment with, or structure it around the presence of, science, technology, mythology, aliens, androids, humanity, natural and artificial phenomena, politics, culture, language, religion, and so on, the ethnoscape reformulates that construction so as to create an alternative image which enables us to rethink the intersections of technology and race as well as their political, social, and cultural implications. In this sense, Ishmael Reed's *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972) both acknowledges and transforms sf through the revisionary power of black cultural experience as a "fabulist" ethnoscape. *Mumbo Jumbo*'s fabulist ethnoscape parallels sf protocols, including the disaster narrative and the android, and in doing so destabilizes sf's existing racist structures.

To be specific, the fabulist ethnoscape entails world-building where racial myth can be told in a visibly subjective world. It is a combination of history, folklore, and sf that counters sf's racial assumptions about humanity's color-blind future *and* uses sf devices to confront the racial assumptions of American culture more generally.[3] A fusion of historical figures, caricatures, jazz, minstrelsy, the occult, and Black Power, *Mumbo Jumbo* revolves around the conspiracy of a secret white supremacist organization to maintain control of America's black population by stopping the spread of a pathogen that crosses racial lines, and around the HooDoo priest who tries to counteract the conspiracy by locating an arcane text. The novel reflects upon the operations of race in sf through depicting an insistence upon the concrete fable of race: that difference is based on the reality of skin color. Such racial thinking is refuted by the outbreak of "Jes Grew," a nonlethal plague of sorts that erupts in New Orleans and rapidly spreads north toward New York. This plague is symbolic of the inestimable inner quality known as SOUL. People infected with Jes Grew, both black and white, inexplicably become invigorated and express this newfound energy

through song and dance as they struggle against the realities of racism. The concept of SOUL is a cultural myth rendered science fictional by Reed's depiction of it as a plague. Roughly analogous to William S. Burroughs's viral language in *The Ticket That Exploded* (1962) or Neal Stephenson's pathological meme in *Snow Crash* (1992), Jes Grew infects people with freedom by fomenting cultural evolution. Needless to say, the novel's powerful white upper class is not thrilled with this turn of events. *Mumbo Jumbo*'s ethnoscape addresses the past and present state of race relations in the U.S. by parodying the world its readers occupy, literalizing fears and constructions of difference as a disease and of otherness—particularly black culture—as a contagion which might reduce white rationality to bodily excess.

The story follows the epic struggle between PaPa LaBas, a practitioner of HooDoo at Harlem' s "Mumbo Jumbo Kathedral" (23), and Hinckle Von Vompton, "a Knight of the Wallflower Order of Atonists,"[4] as they come into conflict over Jes Grew (55). Von Vampton has successfully infiltrated the Harlem literary community as well as the black upper class, and thus is well placed to manipulate black artists and destroy the burgeoning outflow of creative expression caused by Jes Grew. He also attempts to stop the plague through the creation of a Talking Android:

> The 2nd Stage of the plan is to groom a Talking Android who will work within the Negro, who seems to be its classical host; to drive it out, categorize it analyze it expel it slay it, blot Jes Grew. A speaking scull they can use any way they want, a rapping antibiotic who will abort it from the American womb to which it clings like a stubborn fetus. In other words this Talking Android will be engaged to cut-it-up, break down this Germ, keep it from behind the counter. To begin the campaign, NO DANCING posters are ordered by the 100s. (17)

Von Vampton attempts to use this imagined technology to isolate and expel black culture, which he considers to be both primitive and evil. He controls the speech of his Talking Android to unduly influence the upper tier of black society, instructing them on the inferiority of blacks and black culture, though this is hardly a problem for the black bluebloods who would divorce themselves from their race if possible.

Much like a slave owner, Von Vampton seeks to divide the black race by sowing seeds of distrust, and to maintain white privilege through the Talking Android, which itself speaks to the alienated experience of blacks in the New World—it is, after all, an obedient machine whose ethnicity is technologically produced. When Von Vampton cannot find any black person foolish enough to become his Talking Android and participate in a plan designed to stop the outbreak and continue racial oppression, he selects his white right-hand man, Hubert "Safecracker" Gould, to be his mouthpiece. It is Gould who delivers the comical epic poem "Harlem Tom Toms" to black high society (158), and through whom Reed lampoons the practice of minstrelsy. Appearing in blackface as the Talking Android, Gould tries to pass as an authentic black person—instead of merely exaggerating the black stereotypes that minstrel shows made famous—so as to undermine black culture. However, PaPa LaBas and his friends arrive just in time to break up the first Talking Android event by revealing Von Vampton and Gould's trickery. LaBas grazes "a quick finger across [Gould's] face, leaving a white streak" behind while displaying "the black paint on his finger" to the influential black audience (160). Shortly after this ruse is revealed, the Jes Grew epidemic peters out sixty miles short of New York, because its arcane embodiment as a book, symbolizing a concrete register of black experience, has been destroyed.

With the image of a white person in blackface posing as an android, *Mumbo Jumbo* makes an unconventional connection between a traditional sf motif and African American iconography. By doing this, Reed creates an alternate history and landscape of black-white contact that powerfully indicts the irrationality of racism in the United States through social satire. His use of sf devices produces a fabulist ethnoscape that questions existing racial power dynamics by asking for whom the crisis of racial difference is most threatening in a multicultural state.

Similarly, Colson Whitehead's *The Intuitionist* (1999) provides a counterfactual ethnoscape, in which race and sf intersect in a vaguely familiar mid-twentieth-century New York City. The counterfactual ethnoscape estranges our sense of history by emphasizing the importance of the technological development of elevators and how this

impacts race relations. It is constructed with the sense that technology in the hands of a black person represents a dangerous situation. By rupturing the known timeline and postulating alternatives, the counterfactual ethnoscape is able to highlight the influence and consequences of racial history, and to offer estranged visions of the social, political, and cultural possibilities of race in other places and times. In a story that blends sf, hardboiled detective fiction, and satire in a manner reminiscent of Philip K. Dick, *The Intuitionist* focuses on Lila Mae Watson, the first and only black woman to become an elevator inspector in the largest city in the world. By following her hunches, she has maintained a perfect service record on the job, but when a new elevator which she has recently inspected disastrously crashes, she becomes embroiled in a political battle between the Intuitionists and the Empiricists for control of the "department of elevator inspectors" (23). She goes underground to investigate whether the crash is a deliberate act of sabotage aimed at undermining her credibility as an Intuitionist. While trying to avoid the clutches of the Empiricist chairman of the department, Frank Chancre, who is covertly backed by mob muscle, Lila Mae discovers several dangerous undisclosed facts about James Fulton, the deceased founder of Intuitionism and a vertical philosopher. At the time of his death, Fulton was known to be working on "the black box," an elevator that would revolutionize the world by ushering in the second elevation, unlocking the sky. *The Intuitionist* is thus a step closer to sf, resonating with racial issues in a technosocial world evoked through alienated urban experience.

Although the conflict in *The Intuitionist* stems from a debate in technosocial philosophy—Intuitionism versus Empiricism—Whitehead's ethnoscape is structured by the concept of verticality, both architectural and cultural, that governs the action of both camps as they vie to find the black box. Intuitionists rely on contemplation, instinct, and gut feeling to observe, remedy, and repair elevators, as we learn when we first encounter Lila Mae at work. Whitehead describes her sixth sense, her "own set of genies," inspecting "geometric forms" in her head to uncover the elevator's shortcomings, rather than physically examining its mechanical parts (6). The building superintendent riding with Lila Mae calls her a "voodoo inspector" as well as a "witch doctor" before attempting to bribe her (7). This racialization of her philosophy and technique connects her to the long history of blacks being associated with the occult. She certainly is a worker of professional magic inasmuch as she relies on her perceptions to cure the elevator of its sickness in the primitive yet sophisticated urban society. In contrast, Empiricists depend on the cold, hard facts of physical measurement to rigorously check the structural and mechanical details of the elevators. Whitehead carefully implies another racial stereotype by depicting whites as a no-nonsense, rational people who do not believe in the supernatural. This allusion is reinforced by the fact that only one black person in the story, Pompey, is an Empiricist, and Lila Mae considers him a race traitor, an "Uncle Tom, the grinning nigger, the house nigger who is to blame for her debased place in this world" because he "gave them a blueprint for colored folk" (239). Pompey is a black user of white technology, a black Empiricist cog who has conformed himself to an otherwise white machine. In this ethnoscape, whites own and control technology, while blacks respond to it either on a preconscious level or by learning the routines of their white counterparts. Understandably, there is significant animosity between the two factions, with Empiricist hostility toward Intuitionism manifested in racially charged monikers that hint at a primitive and other magic: "some nicknames Empiricists have for their renegade colleagues: swamis, voodoo men, juju heads, witchdoctors, Harry Houdinis. All terms belonging to the nomenclature of dark exotica, the sinister foreign. Except for Houdini, who nonetheless had something swarthy about him" (57–58). While the narrator notes the dark, exotic, sinister, and foreign nature of the practice of Intuitionism, Lila Mae claims that the "reality" of Empiricism—"White people's reality"—is "built on what things appear to be" (239).

The Intuitionists and Empiricists are deeply divided on the issue of verticality because one group seeks transcendental answers to mechanical problems while the other is supremely doubtful of results garnered without rigorous and quantifiable exertion. From an architectural standpoint, verticality in the novel relates to the continual construction of higher and higher buildings. Humanity strives for the heavens. In truth, as the sky reminds us, there will always be something higher. The elevator marks the beginning of this rise because it is a technological conveyance that allows humans to build higher into the sky—the vertical ideal—but unfortunately there are also and always

those people who are left behind. The concept of verticality creates a counterfactual ethnoscape because the social relations of race come together with the technological dreams of attaining the heavens in such a manner that blacks remain trapped in the basement. While the historical development of this fictional oppression is different from our own, it nonetheless shares the same essence.

The spatialization of class in sf cities, such as the Los Angeles of *Blade Runner* (1982), helps to contextualize the spatialization of race in *The Intuitionist*'s New York. *Blade Runner*'s ethnoscape is layered with new technologies grafted onto old buildings, deteriorating slums oppressively packed by the masses of human waste (Asians, Latinos, punks, and midgets) unable to emigrate, deserted buildings, intrusively glaring neon signs and ads, white noise, ethnic restaurants, and of course a continual police presence. While the inner city is certainly a confined space in a blighted area where people live from day to day, it is also, in the middle-class imaginary, a bad and inferior place, a public space to be feared. Eldon Tyrell, the creator of the replicants and one of the remaining whites, escapes the city streets in the only direction left—upwards. In *The Intuitionist*, the counterfactual ethnoscape involves the ascension of humanity, particularly the black race, from the city as we know it, from the cramped spaces of inequality. The black box is important because it signifies the cultural implications of the second elevation in which "everything . . . will come down" (182). The second elevation, of course, refers to the buildings themselves, but also to the social changes necessary to modify our understanding of race relations. All of our beliefs would have to collapse to build the utopian ideal hinted at by the concept of the second elevation. In his *Theoretical Elevators, Volume Two*, Fulton writes, "Remember the train, and that thing between you and your words. An elevator is a train. The perfect train terminates at Heaven. The perfect elevator waits . . . [i]n the black box, this messy business of human communication" (87). The black box is emblematic of communication between human beings and the lack of it between the races. We cannot comprehend the dark heart of the black box because our vision cannot penetrate the outside of the box.

It is no mistake that Fulton's theoretical elevator design is named "the black box." It symbolizes the plight of the black race. Blacks can

ride up and down, but they are forever boxed in, enclosed, trapped by the racist ideals of an unchanging society, ensnared in a horizontal environment. The black box realizes America's vertical race hierarchy. The novel's black characters are restricted to horizontal movement by overt racism, politics, and mob activity. This lateral movement is clearly demonstrated by Pompey, the first black elevator inspector, who experiences "the difficulty of all colored 'firsts'" in having "an exceedingly hard time of things" in the all-white elevator community (25). While the novel concerns the vertical movement of humanity itself, it is also about the immobility in black uplift. Blacks are barred from the ascension by white racists like Chancre. Blacks cannot rise. This fact is the ethnoscape. The second elevation calls for the realignment of race relationships generated by the utopia it represents, but it will not be realized because of the vertical nature of a racialized social Darwinism. Though the black box is meant to produce a postrace society, its meaning has been misappropriated to serve the interest of white people. The black box is a reimagining of white flight, but instead of outward to the suburbs it goes upward. Rather than being locked in an inner city with blacks and other minorities, the whites (like *Blade Runner*'s Tyrell) move upward to display their superiority and to separate themselves from contact with blacks permanently locked, motionless, in the lower class. After all, suburban whites still have to come into the inner city to work, but if whites are elevated, they can leave that "ghetto" behind permanently.

Fulton's black box is an impossibility because the races cannot or will not recognize their common humanity. We as readers only acknowledge this, however, after Lila Mae learns that Fulton was a colored man who passed as a white man, a mystery that directly contributes to the text's counterfactual ethnoscape. This secret is closely guarded because of its potential to disrupt society by making Intuitionism a joke on society. It is really about the black situation, not verticality, since Fulton must hide his race in order for his ideas to be accepted. Ironically, he is worshipped by white society for his ideas, which have shaped both Empiricism and Intuitionism. Lila Mae is trapped by this irony because she can tell no one what she knows, while the Elevator Guild wishes only to find his designs for the black box in order to begin the second elevation, get rich from it, and stay in power. Fulton's

attempts to communicate difference and racial uplift are unrealized. Only after learning Fulton's secret does Lila Mae slowly come to realize, while rereading his Intuitionist volumes, the meaning of his view that "*horizontal thinking in a vertical world is the race's curse*" (151; emphasis in original). The ambiguity of the word "race" is stunning because Whitehead is deriding all of humanity and its inability to transcend racism. Likewise, he is critical of American society's conformity to the past, its unwillingness to escape the accepted racial paradigms suggested by the black box—the intersection of vertical and horizontal thought in diagonal notions such as a multiracial or postrace world.

Whitehead's novel works on several levels as a counterfactual ethnoscape, skewering human stupidity and challenging us to think outside the "box." First, it suggests that ideas will change the world. At the end of the novel, Lila Mae uses Fulton's name and notes to write the third volume of *Theoretical Elevators*, which contains the black box designs. This volume anticipates possible alternatives to the choices humans are making and has the potential to bring down the prevailing social structures of racism. An ethnoscape built on one of the principal themes of sf—perception—takes us beyond our normal thinking on racial subjects. Second, the counterfactual ethnoscape renders highly visible Whitehead's unusual perspective regarding the social and political constraints of race operating now. Well-constructed sf stories such as this one dissolve the borders between us and the fabricated reality of the text. Third, Whitehead measures racial history on a counterfactual timeline that creates a unique repetition of cultural memory within sf; and fourth, he questions and counterbalances the facts underlying race matters as they have been historicized in sf literature.

In *The Intuitionist*, black people can be users of technology, but only if they use it as whites have allowed. Whitehead challenges conventional thinking on this subject, which suggests that "crude preconceptions of mental inferiority went well beyond simple tool using to include almost any aptitude for technological competence and these notions flowered in the basic conditions of forced servitude" (Sinclair, 1–2). As an Intuitionist, Lila Mae is able to make quick judgments independent of any conscious reasoning process while fixing elevators. This ability, this spiritual technology, makes her dangerous, however, because it is outside the application of science. Her work methods cannot

be understood by her white supervisors, which makes her an object of suspicion because she threatens existing power structures and cannot be controlled. In contrast, Pompey, who also has direct access to elevators, has been victimized because of his color. As an Empiricist, he uses scientific means to gain knowledge for the practical purpose of fixing the machines. Like Lucius Brockway in Ralph Ellison's classic *Invisible Man* (1952), Pompey functions like a machine "*inside the machine*" (217; emphasis in original), and he is not feared because he unquestioningly serves his white employers, like a good slave, actively participating in the technological oppression of his race. In this vertically racialized, counterfactual New York, blacks are revealed as the real inventors of technology. As such, they are dangerous because they appear equal in status to other humans and have the right to challenge their domination. Technology has historically been conceptualized in ways that emphasize racial difference and limit employment opportunities for nonwhites in regard to one criterion, the "capacity for advanced intellectual accomplishment" (Sinclair, 1), traditionally attributed to the white race alone. Sf has largely shared this conceptualization. *The Intuitionist* overturns it.

While the physical and geographical settings of *Mumbo Jumbo* and *The Intuitionist* construct distinctive ethnoscapes, language itself is capable of being the basis for others. Language is a technology that allows intelligent social beings to express and record the events of their lives with a system of symbols that may be verbal, alphanumeric, lights, colors, smells, pictures. It is a method of coding knowledge. It marks the differences in values, perceptions, and behaviors of conscious life forms. It can erect the inflexible boundaries characteristic of prejudice just as it can free us from the conventions of discrimination. Language maps the ever-changing landscape that the linguistic sf novel attempts to fix. In sf, it constructs and reveals the invented world, and within that world language often functions as a plot device or as a meditation on the difficulties of interspecies communication or as a representation of a culture and its beliefs. The ubiquitous presence of instantaneous spacewide communication devices—like a Dirac communicator or an ansible—and universal translators are perfect examples of imaginary linguistic icons in sf that advance the story line.[5] Related to tales of astounding technological contraptions are sf stories that focus on the

problems of interspecies communication most often linked to human and alien interactions. First-contact stories normally involve the initial encounter between humanity and aliens and their attempts to communicate with each other as intelligent beings. For example, Murray Leinster's "First Contact" (1945) is, perhaps, the most recognized story on this theme. Language is a pivotal aspect of these stories, unless of course a universal translator is involved. Yet other kinds of sf narrative point to the likely impossibility of communication between humanity and aliens. A novel such as Stanislaw Lem's *Solaris* (1961) quickly comes to mind.

Also, societal beliefs are often reflected through language and its tools in sf as well. A case in point is the language of "Newspeak" in George Orwell's classic *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949). "Newspeak" is a severely reduced form of English used by the totalitarian Airstrip One government (signified by images of Big Brother and the thought police) to control the population by stripping and fixing language—a strong version of Sapir-Whorf linguistic relativity. This linguistic hypothesis proposes that different patterns of language give way to different thought patterns, that how a person speaks a language represents how that person understands and behaves in his or her environment. Further, the subtleties of any language can be used as a tool to condition the thoughts of the society speaking the language. As such, Newspeak is a sinister use of language to broadcast the falsehoods and propaganda of the state and ensure the appropriate public way of conventional thinking. Ray Bradbury presents an example of a language device in *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), where firemen are used to set books containing dangerous knowledge and subversive ideas aflame as a means of censorship to prevent people from thinking. Books have a technological capacity in that they store and display thought, which is precisely what the autocratic system desires to repress. A more recent illustration is the use of an Afro-Caribbean vernacular by Nalo Hopkinson in her debut novel *Brown Girl in the Ring* (1998).[6] Clearly, technological contraptions and societal beliefs in relation to language can shape the many distinctive sf environments.

A number of sf narratives are primarily concerned with the nature of language and its power to affect the nature of reality.[7] Among these novels is Samuel R. Delany's *Babel-17* (1966), which constructs

a unique linguistic ethnoscape that conveys the importance of communication in accepting and appreciating difference. Delany's novel tells of an intergalactic war that is ultimately stopped by Rydra Wong's intuitive understanding of language and meaning. A famous poetess of ethnic origin, Rydra is enlisted by the Alliance military to battle the invasion of alien humans by translating the Babel-17 language, transmissions of which are believed to coincide with acts of strategic sabotage. She figures out that Babel-17 is a nearly perfect and concise analytical language which has no word for "I" and which is used as a means of thought control.[8]

Gregory Rutledge suggests that "reading *Babel-17* without reference to Du Bois's double consciousness, and hence ethnicity . . . will lead the reader away from much of the subreality Delany has incorporated into his plot" ("Science Fiction," 132). This double consciousness is articulated through the alien language that infects and possesses its victims. *Babel-17*'s aliens from another galaxy are bent on conquering a galaxy similar to ours; the only difference between them and us is semantic. That they are *human* aliens is evident from Rydra's thoughts about being born in Alliance territory: "Born a galaxy away, she might as easily have been an Invader. Her poems were popular on both sides. That was upsetting" (72). Delany figures the aliens as white through their desire for power and territory. This configuration by Delany is reflected in the Babel-17 language, a weapon that forcibly initiates people into the alien culture and controls them by eliminating their identities. As Rydra explains:

> You can program a computer to make mistakes, and you do it not by crossing wires, but by manipulating the "language" you teach it to "think" in. The lack of an "I" precludes any self-critical process. In fact it cuts out any awareness of the symbolic process at all—which is the way we distinguish between reality and our expression of reality. (214)

Once the individual's self-awareness—the "I"—is gone, the Babel-17 language overlays his or her reality with an alien perception and compels acts of sabotage. The personality thus sublimated is robbed of vital memories and cut off from his or her culture. Consciousness splits as the perception of the self is replaced with an alien, external perception. As Jane Weedman argues, "When a person is exposed to two cultures,

double consciousness evolves. To survive, the person must be able to function in both cultures; this means mastering both languages" (133). Simultaneously articulating a version of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and double consciousness, Rydra remarks that "when you learn another tongue, you learn the way another people see the world, the universe" (23) and tells the Butcher, when she frees him from the Invaders' influence, that "there are certain ideas which have words for them. If you don't know the words, you can't know the ideas. And if you don't have the ideas, you don't have the answer'" (150).

Clearly, thought is a crucial component of a linguistic ethnoscape because there must be a relationship between how the characters interact with their world and how they identify their place in it. In Delany's use of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, language becomes the symbol and system of domination, a notion played out on a galactic scale as the mutually incomprehensibly of the Alliance and Invader languages result in war. *Babel-17*'s evocation of the biblical story of the Tower of Babel implies that such conflict is inevitable, but as the Alliance and the Invaders are both human species, communication between them should be possible. If Rydra's adventures among the Alliance are anything to go by, these rivals cannot be homogenized into uniform linguistic cultures; internal difference implies the permeability of external boundaries, across which translations, as well as misunderstandings and conflicts, can occur. The problem the Alliance faces with Babel-17 is that it does not seem to allow the possibility of heterogeneity because it is an artificial language (i.e., it is fixed, monolithic, singular); but the fact that it is artificially constructed indicates that the Invaders themselves are as various as the Alliance. Babel-17 represents an attempt to calibrate the significance of the universe in those it infects, producing a form of mind control which eradicates the subject as anything other than the subject of its command sentences. This narrow delimitation of subjectivity draws out the tensions between trying to fix identity and the historical processes of constant flux and interaction between identities which are far from discrete and fixed.

The difference between natural and artificial languages is key to understanding Delany's linguistic ethnoscape. Where a natural language historically evolves in a community's complex feedback systems, an artificial language is consciously invented for a specific purpose, whether

to foster communication between linguistic groups by providing a third language native to neither (such as Esperanto, Interlingua, or Volapük), or to program computers. The problem with artificial languages are that they are top-down impositions which have built into them the need to fix the language, to prevent it from changing, as in the restriction to 850 words of Ogden-Richards Basic English. This, of course, is not how languages work in the world and in history. While Rydra's mind is temporarily fused with the Butcher's mind, she recognizes that "Babel-17 is more or less like Onoff, Algol, Fortran . . . ancient twentieth-century languages—artificial languages that were used to program computers, designed especially for machines" (198–99). Her latent telepathic ability enables her to understand that Babel-17 has gained control of the Butcher by imposing its "I"-less linguistic paradigm and then implementing another personality that "is flexible," capable of handling "ideas [that] come in huge numbers of congruent sets, governed by the same words" (210). Babel-17 "almost assures you technical mastery of any situation you look at," Rydra explains, even as "the lack of an 'I' blinds you to the fact though it's a highly useful way to look at things, it isn't the only way" (215).

The Babel-17 model of absolutely de-centered language (no "I") undoes the notion of fixed identity, even as its superimposition on the Alliance language opens up the social component of race and its uncertainty, creating a double consciousness. In order for the afflicted person to survive Babel-17's elimination of the "I," the language programs "a self-contained schizoid personality into the mind of whoever learns it, reinforced by self-hypnosis" (216). The individual thus divided measures the world by standards that are not his or her own. Powerful Invader stereotypes are bought to bear on the Alliance to the extent that the created persona "has the general desire to destroy the Alliance at any cost, and at the same time remain hidden from the rest of the consciousness" (216). This is the danger of double consciousness: changing one's identity to fit the perceptions of others. The foreign language makes the Butcher into a tool with no identity, no self-awareness; a slave in every sense of the word, he is forced to avoid self-referential pronouns, thus disabling him from claiming ownership of his identity. This is what makes Babel-17 such a powerful weapon.

Rydra's mental fusion with the Butcher (a literal double consciousness, further complicated by questions of ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality) restores his human identity as Nyles Ver Dorco. Through Rydra's eyes, he becomes self-aware, gradually recognizes his autonomous being, and breaks free of his linguistically constructed mental enslavement. Ironically, in a quasi-Hegelian master-slave dialectic, he reacquires selfhood through consciousness of the other's consciousness of him. Likewise, Rydra comes to know herself better by penetrating the Butcher's mind, a disconcerting rape metaphor, but one which allows her to see a deeper truth.

Rydra Wong's astounding ability to communicate allows her to overcome all manner of prejudice from the various communities in the text as she socializes with generals, doctors, government officials, space crews, wrestlers, dead people, pirates, and ultimately the aliens. It is amplified by exposure to Babel-17, forcing her "mind . . . to sudden growth" (113). This awakens her fledgling gift of telepathy, the ability to read minds, "the nexus of old talent and a new way of thinking. It opened worlds of perception, of action" (146), exposing her in a less threatening way to other perceptions that might overlay her own. The study of language informs her opinion of race, which, to borrow Paul Gilroy's view, is "an active, dynamic idea or principle that assists in the constitution of social reality" (57). She functions as a multicultural broker of acceptance, tolerance, open-mindedness, and difference, who "will enable humanity to bridge the gap between Self and Other, healing the breach of isolation and alienation" (Malmgren, 12). When she becomes completely conscious of the connection between thought and language, she is transformed from an interpreter into a shaper of reality.

While humanity apparently cannot escape the Darwinian struggles of existence, Delany demonstrates that language and perception can break through the historical conditioning of a racialized America. He shows how the actions of people can be shaped by words themselves as well as how words and their meaning gain significance through life, and his novel functions as a metafictional guide to reading an ethnoscape, bringing the language of one world, the fictional world, into collision with the language, experience, and perception of an extratextual reality in which race functions as a technology of oppression.

In "Speech Sounds" (1983), Octavia Butler presents an entirely different linguistic ethnoscape, in which she imagines the total social collapse of the world, symbolized by a Los Angeles devastated by an incurable global contagion initially, and perhaps falsely, attributed to the Soviets. Aside from killing many people, the sickness adversely affects all forms of communication between people: some of its victims lose the ability to speak, read, write, or any combination thereof. A largely incomplete and derisory form of language, often misinterpreted, remains. Body language—gestures, motions, signs—usually culminates in violence, the only universal language.[9] Most of the afflicted manage to survive by scavenging among the remnants of civilization and by avoiding armed criminals while struggling with suicidal thoughts and loneliness. Some things, like public transportation, still operate sporadically, yet government is no more and chaos is supreme. Butler's vision emphasizes the importance of language in a racialized society that, in turn, produces a kind of otherhood.

Amidst a mob scene on a bus, the female protagonist, Rye, fears for her safety because two young men "involved in a disagreement of some kind," begin "grunting and gesturing at each other" using "mock punches, hand games of intimidation to replace lost curses" (89). Rye's fear derives from the state of savagery that humanity has descended into because of the loss of verbal expression. She has lost her husband and three children to the virus. She is also frightened because she realizes that her ability to speak puts her life in danger in this public space. People kill for lesser reasons than sheer envy in this world. With the failure of interpersonal contact, misunderstandings occur frequently and "the possibility of life-threatening violence is just under the surface of all relationships" because the hierarchical social structure provided by language has been destroyed by the epidemic (Green, 175). Violence erupts on the bus because the men have no means of verbal communication to settle their differences.

Rye is rescued by Obsidian, a former member of the Los Angeles Police Department. Though they cannot talk to each other, Rye decides to trust him, albeit warily, because he uses his left hand to beckon to her: "Left-handed people tended to be less impaired, more reasonable and comprehending, less driven by frustration, confusion, and anger" (91–92). Left-handedness has been associated with evil in the past, but

now this notion has been inverted to mark the right-handed majority as the more primitive group. In fact, in this linguistic ethnoscape, race can be determined by what hand is used.

Obsidian uses teargas to disperse the combatants on the bus, but he is angrily confronted by the wildly gesticulating driver in what is surely a moment of racial conflict. Butler describes it:

> The bearded man stood still, made no sound, refused to respond to clearly obscene gestures. The least impaired people tended to do this—stand back unless they were physically threatened and let those with less control scream and jump around. It was as though they felt it beneath them to be as touchy as the less comprehending. This was an attitude of superiority, and that was the way people like the bus driver perceived it. Such "superiority" was frequently punished by beatings, even by death. (93)

From this passage, we learn that there are two groups of people: those who can control themselves and those who cannot, those with some language use and those without. Butler makes this distinction to reflect that notions of superiority and inferiority remain intact although they have shifted away from normal concepts of this dualism, namely skin color. Race, as we know it, has dramatically changed. It is no longer based on skin color, but on the retention of language skills. The bus driver and his riders interpret Obsidian's calmness as arrogance because they are resentful of their physical loss of speech. Michelle Green remarks that people have a tendency to "destroy what they resent, without the need for debate or defensiveness," in this linguistic ethnoscape (176). As a kind of otherhood, this *new* racism is made all the more powerful because it is expressed physically without the use of epithets to underscore its ugliness.

Of course, it is impossible not to mention the color associations of the pair's name charms. Rye's symbol, "a pin in the shape of a large golden stalk of wheat," suggests that our female protagonist is white, or perhaps biracial, and that Obsidian is black based on his "smooth, glassy, black rock" pendant on a gold chain, though she is quick to note "his name might be Rock or Peter or Black" as well since he is unable to talk (97). Traditionally speaking, their skin color is meaningless, but according to the rules governing Butler's world, language ability becomes a complex racial issue in the sense that Rye can only speak while Obsidian can only read. Both of them are initially jealous of the other's language ability. In a way, the loss of speech unites the races as never before as the population dwindles and regresses into primitivism.

After losing Obsidian in his attempt to prevent an incident of domestic violence, Rye is left to contemplate the future of two children who have witnessed a triple homicide—their mother stabbed by a man presumably their father, who in turn shoots Obsidian, and is shot dead by Rye. At first, she pities the children of this world because "they would run through the downtown canyons with no real memory of what the buildings had been or even how they had come to be" (101). She thinks of them as "hairless chimps" without language (105). In effect, Butler is racializing the children because they are the devolved offspring of the human race to which she compares primates—a black stereotype. Rye has a change of heart, however, upon overhearing one of the children speak fluently; she wonders if the virus has "run its course," leaving behind a glimmer of hope, provided verbal communication can be made possible again (106). With this in mind, Rye speaks to the children, saying, "I'm Valerie Rye . . . it's alright for you to talk to me" (108).

The racial possibilities of a world without spoken language are certainly daunting in Butler's linguistic ethnoscape, especially when considering that the plague may have been released as a political act fueled by prejudice. Language skills—speaking, writing, and reading—become an invaluable commodity in a world without words, where communication may be the only possible way to end racism. Examining race in sf through linguistic ethnoscapes, such as Butler's "Speech Sounds," is engaging in a dialogue on racial difference that is revolutionary in the sense that it forces people to "hear" the underlying racism in a white-dominated genre that does not really want to listen to the conversation.

The consequences of modern racial behaviors can be frightening, but they are not often analyzed in worlds where things have gone horribly wrong, where dreams are eclipsed by fears and degenerating social conditions. Thus, dystopian ethnoscapes are instructive in the sense that they bring new awareness to the problems created by racism. Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* is an example of a dystopian ethnoscape. The Earth has been damaged by nuclear fallout,

and humans are left with a choice: either emigrate to colonized worlds or face the possibility of deterioration in the radiation. Some humans are enticed to move by the government offer of a free organic android of any type. Those humans who remain behind risk being classified as "special" because of the radiation. The story revolves around Rick Deckard, a married android bounty hunter in San Francisco and his hunt to retire and collect the bounty on six escaped Nexus-6 andys. The only way to detect these androids, who are passing for human, is to administer a "Voight-Kampff Empathy test." which causes older models to react by shaking. As the story unfolds, Deckard grows more and more paranoid as he questions what it means to be human while retiring the various andys.

Dick's setting has been severely altered by nuclear fallout. Harmful dust particles resulting from the war have caused a decrease in population as people have fled, died, or been rendered sterile. The neglected apartment buildings reflect recognized patterns of development in inner cities—white flight due to minorities moving into the neighborhood and the perceived drop in quality of life. The actual physical transformation of the cityscape occurs as the remaining humans grow their food and take care of their mostly robotic animals from the rooftops. The development of robotic and electronic technologies to mimic all manners of animal life indicates how barren the planet has become. Depopulation of radioactive zones dictates that all the remaining humans live near one another, though they can basically choose to live anywhere they desire within less radioactive zones on the planet's surface. These harsh living conditions provide the first indication of racial discrimination.

A sense of otherhood is generated as a direct result of radioactive exposure and the presence of "passing" androids. Seriously affected people are labeled "special" because of the degeneration of their mental faculties. Because of the dust, John Isidore has "been a special now for over a year . . . which made him in popular parlance a chickenhead," to humanity's contempt across "three planets" (15). The term "chickenhead" used to describe a special can be read as a racial epithet because it is based on a tangible difference in intelligence. It marks Isidore as less than human as well. "Chickenhead" is no less hurtful a word in Dick's ethnoscape than "nigger" is to a black person. Likewise,

fugitive androids are considered as racial "others" by Deckard and the other humans because those "androids equipped with the new Nexus-6 brain unit [have] evolved beyond a major—but inferior—segment of mankind" (26).[10] The artificial intelligence of these androids is a threat to humankind, even though they are made to serve. As David Desser concludes, these androids "are outlawed because they are different—a strategy [with] numerous precedents in Mankind's tragic history of racial, religious, and ethnic discrimination" (111). An "escaped" android "which had killed its master" and "had been equipped with [greater] intelligence" that "had no regard for animals" must be destroyed, according to Decker's beliefs (27). These manmade beings have no rights that humanity must respect, which makes it very easy to discriminate against them. A slave allegory is impossible to miss here since Deckard is portrayed as a futuristic slave catcher sent to kill "escaped" androids (27). All of the racial tension evident in the novel can be attributed to the environment in one way or another. Clearly, specials and androids are discriminated against because they are perceived as being racial others.

Dick's novel epitomizes the dystopian ethnoscape by complicating what it means to be human. The distinctiveness of humanity as a race becomes slippery considering Dick's vision of insensitive androids made from human zygotes with an artificial brain and capable of having sex. Likewise, he imagines a completely believable hierarchy of categorization for the human races. Androids are the servants, specials are the peasants, and normal humans are either emigrants from the planet or preservers of life. However, the distinctions between these races are truly blurred since they all watch television and are influenced by it. This identity distortion happens because both humans and androids are the victims of reification, the fusing of subjectivity and objectivity resulting from the technosocial response to the radioactive environment. For instance, androids try to disprove empathic feeling by defrauding the human religion of Mercerism while humans and specials use electric empathy boxes to stimulate feelings in a cyborg-like joining of man and machine. The line between humanity and androids becomes so indistinct that it is right to ask who is more human, man or machine. Dick simultaneously breaks and preserves the black/white binary in sf with androids occupying the new (old) position of oppression.

While Dick's novel is set in San Francisco, Ridley Scott's classic film adaptation, *Blade Runner* (1982), is set in Los Angeles, and the movie presents a somewhat different dystopian ethnoscape than does the novel. Scott makes several changes to the book, of which the most memorable is the replacing of the term "android" with "replicant." In the film, "replicants are explicitly perceived by the police as inferior," and this "is made clear by the racial epithet with which they are characterized by Capt. Bryant—'skin jobs'" (Desser, 112). In fact, Dick was aware of the film's making and viewed the "novel and screenplay as 'two halves to one meta-artwork,'" which prompted Brooks Landon to declare "that we attempt to see both written text and film as part of the same hermeneutic system" ("There's Some," 99). The sense of otherhood doubles as the ethnoscape of the novel is enhanced by that of the film, and we are better able to understand the racial implications beneath the surface of the "meta-artwork."

The hermeneutical connection between the narratives is provided by an inner city feel. For example, the invasive searchlights flashing through apartments in the film echo the sense of an overwhelming police presence in any inner city today. Other factors, such as addiction (mood organs, Mercerism, and alcohol), crime, violence, gangs, limited space, sex, discrimination, substandard housing, and unemployment, contribute to the dystopian ethnoscape. Although traditional representations of racism and its accompanying violence are presented in both works, this aspect is superseded by the science fictional quality offered by the presence of the androids. In this manner, race is deliberately buried in the background.

A final ethnoscape to consider involves implications of race and technology in the settings of cyberpunk—the human body, urban space, and cyberspace. William Gibson's pioneering *Neuromancer* (1984) contends with all three of these topographies. The human body is a landscape unto itself where Gibson envisions posthumanity—a fusion of flesh and technology. For example, the presence of cyborgs as a new race in the novel is embodied by the protagonist Case. To great effect, Gibson blends our current cultural moment of computer technology with the spiritual desire to transcend the flesh and relates it as a hallucinatory reality. Case is able to enter the virtual reality of cyberspace, allowing his consciousness to leave its flesh behind. This

transcendence of the physical body occurs when Case is "jacked into a custom cyberspace deck that projected his disembodied consciousness onto the consensual hallucination that was the matrix" with some kind of electrodes attached to his head (5). An information feedback loop between physical space and virtual space happens because Case is directly linked to the computer.[11] For cyborgs such as Case, mere humans are simply meat, unable to experience the rush of the matrix. The body becomes "a switching system" for culture critic Andrew Ross, meaning that there is "no purely organic identity to defend or advance" (153). Case's contempt for flesh is purely discriminatory in this sense.

As a further illustration of Case's cyborg body as a switching system, his computer deck is installed with a "simstim" switch that allows him to ride along in the mind of another person. With the flip of a switch signaling an "abrupt jolt into other flesh," Case is able to key into Molly's "sensorium, into the sinuous flow of muscle, senses sharp and bright" while still in cyberspace (55–56). These man-machine interfaces made possible through mechanical enhancements and computer technology enable humans to escape bodily limitations. Their very identity comes into question because it is fused with reality and simulation, self and other, man and woman, black and white, and many other binaries. Thus, as a technologically derived ethnicity, the cyborg is an expression of an ethnoscape.

Additionally, Case observes the biotechnological grafts and implants of Angelo and Lupus Yonderboy, two members of the Panther Moderns, a Sprawl gang, who expand and improve upon their post-identity. The transformed visage of Angelo, "a simple graft grown on collagen and shark-cartilage polysaccharides, smooth and hideous," is "one of the nastiest pieces of elective surgery Case had ever seen" (59). Later, Case encounters the pink-haired Lupus, who is wearing "a polycarbon suit with a recording feature that allowed him to replay backgrounds at will . . . like some kind of state of the art gargoyle" with "a rainbow of microsofts bristl[ing] behind his left ear" and "pupils [that] had been modified to catch the light like a cat's" (67). Both are certainly powerful expressions of a posthuman identity and, as such, are crucial components of the text's ethnoscape. In David Mead's words, this is "the neuromantic vision of William Gibson," where "technology permits us to become what we will, to realize our selves, however banal,

in ways undreamed of" (353). At the very least, the dissolving boundary between man and technology alters how we must think about racial differences of the future. Namely, the discomfort generated by a sense of technological difference can only be described as racial.

Along with the body, two other closely connected terrains contribute to the ethnoscape of *Neuromancer*: the Sprawl and cyberspace. In the text, the real world is overflowing above and the virtual world of information and technology is spreading out below it. N. Katherine Hayles puts it another way: "The world of information exists parallel to the 'real' world, the former intersecting the latter at many points and in many ways . . . it seeks to connect virtual technologies with the sense, pervasive in the late twentieth century, that all material objects are interpenetrated by flows of information" (*How We Became Posthuman*, 14). Perhaps, the most striking illustration of the cityscape and cyberspace suffusing each other occurs when Case arrives back home to "BAMA, the Sprawl, the Boston-Atlanta Metropolitan Axis," where he "program[s] a map to display frequency of data exchange, every thousand megabytes a single pixel on a very large screen. Manhattan and Atlanta burn solid white . . . threatening to overload" the computer (43). He increases the scale of his simulation to "a hundred million megabytes per second," which allows him "to make out certain blocks in midtown Manhattan" (43). Case's actions demonstrate how cyberspace is shaped by the real world as it replicates values from the old world, thus allowing the social space of both to be traversed like a map. The infinite space of the matrix has already been plotted by a technocultural determinism that removes any traces of its own racism. The end of difference based on biology is proclaimed because of the incorporeal nature of cyberspace. The erasure of a recognizable identity politics, in this case a racial/ethnic space, by the convergence of two environments is a tried-and-true practice dating back to the colonial period.

The promise of the internet—disembodied being in the unbounded everywhere of the near future—is empty in spite of Gibson's attempt to capture this sentiment in *Neuromancer*. Instead, the impasse of a global society, problematic constructions of identity, remains. Cyberspace preserves and strengthens existing hierarchies of difference by means of the social coding of technology which requires a system of

domination. New racial structures materialize between posthumanity and its AI (artificial intelligence) offspring as the two groups struggle for power in the cyber realms of Gibson's ethnoscape. The sense of racial difference is predicated on the basis of technology and its abstractions, where differences of skin pigment are replaced by differences of pixel tints.

Notions of otherhood, like ethnoscapes, are a key to reading race in sf because they offer a way of traversing unfamiliar topographies populated by strange beings speaking foreign tongues. Ethnoscapes focus on the racial elements of individual sf texts, offering not only new ways to understand them but new ways to imagine our world. But "the color-line," identified by W. E. B. Du Bois as the greatest "problem of the Twentieth Century," has yet to be explored convincingly in sf criticism (xi). We can foreground the color line in sf by drawing to the surface the way race is typically buried in the background, but mostly we do not. Race has always been of concern to sf, even—maybe especially—when it did not know that that was what it was talking about. By refiguring sf milieus so as to reveal their ethnoscapes, we will not only transform our understanding of specific texts but perhaps also be encouraged and enabled to refigure the world in which we live, to perceive its ethnoscapes, and maybe even change them. In fact, the last chapter provides another way to look further at the racial structures of ethnoscapes, hence otherhood, by analyzing a range of technologized characters that inhabit these worlds.