

"YET OF BOOKS THERE ARE A PLENTY": BIBLIOGRAPHY, DATA, AND THE  
CONSTRUCTION OF *AMERICAN FICTION*

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

This project investigates the case of a prominent bibliography and dataset of American fiction, the Wright *American Fiction* bibliography, and traces how the discrete items within that set come to compose a part of the whole as a result of human decisions, circumstances, and interpretations. Lyle Wright created a three-volume bibliography of American fiction from 1776 to 1900 in which he described over 10,000 texts. Wright's work became a guide for libraries and archives, but it has also informed the creation of digital datasets of American literature, including Indiana University's *Wright American Fiction Project* or Gale Cengage's *American Fiction 1774-1920* collection, which provide digital facsimiles and plain text versions of the titles listed by Wright for scholars. The bibliography's corpus has been invaluable for big data scholars desiring access to early American texts, but its use does not come without consequences. Minority authors, particularly Indigenous American authors are excluded. Some works are erroneously included, such as Harriet Jacobs' autobiographical *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). Canonical works are sometimes omitted, such as Walt Whitman's novel *Franklin Evans* (1842) or Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868). The projects that use Wright as their basis reproduce these errors and decisions in their digitizing of Wright's original list, ultimately affecting the datasets used by scholars. This work demonstrates how these idiosyncrasies of the Wright *American Fiction* bibliography come into existence and the effects Wright's decisions have had on work that relies on his list. As the humanities become increasingly interested in data, and the use of computational methods of analysis become more prominent, research such as mine is positioned to affect the ways in which scholars view the objects from which they derive their arguments. This work demonstrates how a list of American fiction titles is assembled, and reveals the process to be an interpretive and debatable process.

## CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

### **Contributors**

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## NOMENCLATURE

Below are a few frequently used terms and their definitions as they are understood in this dissertation. These terms are primarily drawn from and informed by the field of textual scholarship, which prescribes a very narrow sense to some of these terms.

Bibliography	This term can be used in two different senses and will be used in both within this dissertation. The first sense is as the name of a field and the systematic study of books as objects and their production. The second refers to the organized arrangement of bibliographical descriptions, generally in print, but not necessarily.
Enumerative Bibliography	A precise term used to identify bibliographies that privilege listing of works rather than in-depth descriptions. Typically, these resources testify to a large number of materials. This genre of bibliography is referred to as enumerative because of the tendency to number the entries, but this is not required.
Wright I, II, III	The standard for how to reference the three volumes of Wright's <i>American Fiction</i> bibliography is by use of Wright's name with a Roman numeral, I-III, that corresponds to the chronological volume Wright published. Thus, <i>American Fiction, 1775-1850</i> is referred to as Wright I, <i>American Fiction, 1851-1875</i> is Wright II, and <i>American Fiction 1876-1900</i> is Wright III. This dissertation will employ the same standard for referencing <i>American Fiction</i> .
Description	The formal notation of bibliographical elements is generally referred to as a <i>bibliographical description</i> , or simply a <i>description</i> . Likewise, the process of a bibliographer creating a description is referred to as <i>describing</i> . Descriptions appear similar to citations commonly found in academic publications, in that they often record the same data, but more advanced bibliographical descriptions will include elements that not seen in citations, such as collation formulas, information about illustrations, typesetting, ornamentation, and binding.

Work

The concept of a specific piece of literary writing. For example, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It should be noted as a distinctly different term from that of *Text* in that is unattached to a specific physical manifestation of writing.

Text

The physical incarnation of a work. The term will be used to refer to specific editions or copies of a work. For example, the 1853 John P. Jewett Illustrated Edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Beginnings

This dissertation seeks to place the idea of data and datasets into the realm of editorial, textual, and bibliographic theory. As "big data" (or, "distant reading," "cultural analytics," and "algorithmic criticism" to suggest a few alternative terms) has become a more prominent concept in humanities (and specifically, digital humanities), we have seen increased awareness of the structures that hold literary and cultural data. Scholars have brought attention to the databases, websites, research portals, etc. that all facilitate access for scholars to materials that may otherwise be impossible to see (i.e. manuscripts, first editions, or unknown works) and the logic by which they operate (or, at least, how scholars *think* they operate). These digital repositories have enabled large-scale, quantitative research of literary and historical materials because they enable access to these materials at a scale that was, if not impossible, impractical to humans. Methods that seek to read a large number of texts can do so at a scale of tens or hundreds of thousands in less time than it would take a scholar to read one (if it were, say, a novel).

My interest, however, is not in the methods themselves, nor the processes that scholars use to read a significant number of materials. Instead, my focus is on those tens of thousands of texts. For a dataset of approximately 10,000 texts of American literature, it would be expected that such works as Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, or Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* would be present. But what populates the rest of that hypothetical list, the other 9,997 works? How did they get there, and how do we find such works that do not have the benefit of canonicity, prestige, and decades of literary scholarship that keep them foregrounded in academic and popular culture? Wright's *American Fiction*, here, is a case study, but not unique in terms of its role, composition, and presentation as a bibliography. In the process of composing *American Fiction*, Wright needed to answer questions inherent to bibliographical work in the early twentieth-century, where bibliography was understood as an empirical process that required ex-

explicit principles and standards in order to execute. Those standards, I will argue, are what present the interpretative positions Wright held in composing *American Fiction* and inform the consequences of Wright's work since its publication.

Answering questions about how a corpus such as Wright's came to be requires investigating the history of a dataset, and the culture from which a dataset emerged, and what contingencies enabled the inclusion of a text in a collection. There is a need for this sort of work, and it is desired by data-focused scholars. As distant reading and work with textual materials at a large scale has solidified themselves as viable methods of humanistic research, scholars have become increasingly aware that the data employed in such research itself has a history. In a 2016 provocation, Sarah Allison advocates for what she calls a "turn to the *byproducts* of cultural analytics—to more project-specific tools, documentation, and discoveries." The "byproducts" Allison refers to are the data used in the course of research, data that are pulled from digital databases, print bibliographies, or others scholars' personal work. In the course of her provocation in the *Journal of Cultural Analytics*, she likens the idea of finding someone else's data as "like a new manuscript: an unexplored object that deserves attention in its own right." This metaphor, as Allison later explains via a conversation with Andrew Goldstone, also demands the asking of certain inherently bibliographical questions: "is this an authoritative source? what process created it? what is the chain of transmission by which it reaches us?" and so on. In short, what Allison is in fact advocating for in the study of data, is textual scholarship and bibliography; to see the knowledge of these fields applied to this conception of data as a text.<sup>1</sup>

Tracing the history of a collection of data, in regards to literary materials, inevitably leads to a time before the digital turn. A digital repository of literary materials that represent printed text point to sources and a history outside of the repository itself. A digital copy of a nineteenth-century text, of course, has a physical copy with its own history, from its conception and production to its circulation that places it in the hands of those who would digitize it. This circulation may involve preservation in libraries and archives, auctioning at a rare book sale to a private collector,

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1. Sarah Allison, *Other People's Data: Humanities Edition*, December 2016, accessed January 1, 2017, <http://culturalanalytics.org/2016/12/other-peoples-data-humanities-edition/>.

or any number of circumstances that have affected the text's movements and life up the point of its digitization. The life of a dataset is similar, and a dataset of textual materials may be derived from a single source that has history of composition, printing, and circulation. Demonstrating that fact is the purpose of this dissertation, and for that purpose we will need a suitable case study that can demonstrate not just how data can have a history, but the moments in those data's history that affect their reception and interpretation.

## 1.2 American Fiction: A Contribution To A Bibliography

In the previous section, I mentioned a hypothetical collection of American materials. A collection such as this could be found in several places: Gale Cengage, a commercial academic resource provider, makes available a digital collection of American texts, including individual facsimiles of texts, and the dataset as a whole for computational humanities work.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, ProQuest offers a digital American fiction corpus for the same purposes.<sup>3</sup> The *Wright American Fiction Project*, a repository based at a public university rather than a private commercial entity, makes available American fiction titles for research, both traditional and computational.<sup>4</sup> All of these examples (discussed further in Chapter 4) have a shared history in the enumerative bibliography appropriately titled *American Fiction*, compiled by Lyle H. Wright.

Thus, the not-so-hypothetical collection of American titles I previously mentioned began originally as a print bibliography. As a field, bibliography, or the collection and description of printed titles, is not as prevalent as it was during the early twentieth-century, when formative scholars such as W. W. Greg, Frederick Bowers, D. F. McKenzie, and Alfred Pollard began to theorize and codify the study of books and their production into terms that would evolve into contemporary fields we are more familiar with: book history, textual scholarship, and material culture. In the

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2. *American Fiction: 1774-1910 - Gale*, accessed June 19, 2017, [http://www.cengage.com/search/productOverview.do?N=197+4294904141+4294904588&Ntk=P\\_EPI&Ntt=795505236130858962513309899891566982931&Ntx=mode%2Bmatchallpartial](http://www.cengage.com/search/productOverview.do?N=197+4294904141+4294904588&Ntk=P_EPI&Ntt=795505236130858962513309899891566982931&Ntx=mode%2Bmatchallpartial).

3. *Early American Fiction, 1789-1875 - Early American Fiction, 1789-1875* [in en], accessed September 27, 2018, [https://www.proquest.com/products-services/early\\_am\\_fiction.html](https://www.proquest.com/products-services/early_am_fiction.html).

4. *Wright American Fiction - Home*, accessed November 26, 2018, <http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/TEIgeneral/welcome.do?brand=wright>.

twentieth-century however, what was known as the New Bibliography emerged (discussed in detail in Chapter 1), and the field saw the production of a large number of resources that recorded and described titles, regardless of their perceived aesthetic or historical value, and made their existence known to a wider audience. It was during this time that Pollard created the *English Short-Title Catalog* (ESTC), and Jacob Blanck created the *Bibliography of American Literature* (BAL), alongside a multitude of other, smaller and more narrow works that endeavored to provide a resource to the expansive world of print beyond what scholars would call the canon.

It is during this period that Lyle H. Wright would compose the primary case study of this dissertation: a three volume bibliography titled *American Fiction*. This bibliography, which constitutes Wright's lifelong work, covers the years 1775 to 1900, and lists 11,799 titles that fit under Wright's definition of American fiction in that span of time. From 1936 to 1966, Wright described and compiled these 11,000 texts in order to present them as a resource to American literary scholars, collectors, librarians, and students. His work was thorough, as he traveled to multiple libraries, delved into card catalogs, title-page collections, and auction listings in order to find texts that warranted inclusion in *American Fiction*.

*American Fiction* has its deficiencies, however; some of them are by design and others are erroneous. As Wright notes in his preface, "In general, it has been intended to omit annuals and gift books, publications of the American Tract Society and the Sunday School Union, juveniles, Indian captivities, jestbooks, folklore, anthologies, collections of anecdotes, periodicals, and extra numbers of periodicals".<sup>5</sup> Wright's parameters for the bibliography purposefully excluded materials that were published in serial extras, leading to the exclusion of Walt Whitman's *Franklin Evans* (1842) or Edgar Allan Poe's "The Balloon Hoax" (1844) to name canonical exclusions, alongside an untold number of non-canonical works that have gone undescribed. Wright was also interested in listing primarily fiction meant for adults and not juveniles. This means that some authors have absences in their lists that may seem odd to a human reader, such as Louisa May Alcott, whose *Hospital Sketches* (1863) is listed, but *Little Women* (1868), *Little Men* (1871), and *Jo's Boys*

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5. Lyle Henry Wright, *American Fiction, 1774-1850: A Contribution Toward A Bibliography*. (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Publications, 1939), vii-viii.

(1886) are absent.<sup>6</sup> Wright's inclusion of autobiographical slave narratives such as Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) and Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853) presents one of the more standout errors that denotes these works as fictional and contradicts the claims of those titles, potentially causing a modern reader to view *American Fiction* with some skepticism as to its accuracy.<sup>7</sup> The previous errors are compounded by the fact that other fictional works by black authors, such as Martin Delany's *Blake, or the Huts of American* (1859-1861), are absent in a seeming oversight. All of these individual cases reflect on the bibliography as a whole, asserting the conditions of its creation and the validity as a comprehensive source of American fiction titles. Each of these individual cases reflects an interpretive stance towards these items and posits an argument about them as to their apparent necessity in being recorded in a list.

It becomes apparent then, that the composition of a bibliography is more subjective a process than it might first be assumed. The creation of a bibliographer involves conscious decisions on the part of the bibliographer, and a list of American literary titles will necessitate interpretation. Wright, for his part, is clear about the standards he set for compiling a list of American fiction, but his process involved consulting with friends and colleagues, reading literary history, and revision, in addition to his own intellectual work and expertise in bibliography. This subject will be continued in chapter one, where I will argue for the interpretive capacity of data specifically in regards to the field of bibliography.

### 1.3 Lyle Henry Wright

Before beginning the critical discussion of Wright's work, it is also necessary to give a brief biographical summary of Wright's professional life, both to humanize Wright, and to explain further the context from which *American Fiction* emerges.

Lyle Henry Wright (1903-1979) was a Huntington Library employee and California resident for most of his life. He was born in 1903 and graduated high school in 1921 before enrolling in the Southern Branch of the University of California (now UCLA). He began working part time at

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6. Lyle Henry Wright, *American Fiction, 1851-1875 : A Contribution Toward A Bibliography*. (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Publications, 1957), 7.

7. *Ibid.*, 179, 242.

the Huntington Library in high school, but by 1923, when he was still a junior in college, began to work full-time at the Huntington in the photostat department. By 1928, at the age of 25, he began to work professionally in bibliography as an assistant bibliographer. Wright's only break from employment at the Huntington was during World War II, when in 1942 he enlisted in U.S. Army Air Corps. When Wright returned to the Huntington in 1945, he was promoted to bibliographer and the acting head of the reference department, positions he held until his retirement in 1966. Even after his retirement he continued his relationship with the Huntington, serving as a consultant to aid in the Huntington's American literature collection until 1971.<sup>8</sup>

Over the course of his career Wright published his three volumes of *American Fiction*. His first was *American Fiction, 1774-1850* (Wright I), published in 1939, after he had spent nearly a decade as a professional bibliographer. He would revise the first volume in 1948, after returning from the War, and soon after begin working on the second volume, *American Fiction, 1851-1875* (Wright II), which was published in 1957. By 1965, he had revised and expanded the second volume, and a year later published *American Fiction, 1876-1900* (Wright III). He retired almost immediately after the publication of Wright III.

Wright's influence is not to be understated. While his name is not common in American literary scholarship, *American Fiction* has helped to inform the development of literary scholarship and the way scholars are able to access and discuss American materials. Chapter two will discuss the way Wright was influenced by the institutions he visited, specifically the American Antiquarian Society, and how he, in turn, affected the Society with his bibliography. Chapter 3 will discuss one of his most notable errors, the inclusion of Harriet Jacobs' autobiographical *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) in his list of fiction, and the context that informed his decision. As well, this chapter will discuss the consequences, both good and bad, of Jacobs' inclusion in *American Fiction*. Finally, the last chapter will address the way Wright has been adopted by others and how his influence continues into the digital age as his bibliography migrates from analog media to digital.

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8. Roger E. Stoddard, "Lyle Henry Wright," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 90.2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1981), 312-3.

By exploring Wright and his *American Fiction* my goal is to respond to the provocation of Allison. As a case study, *American Fiction* presents a fascinating confluence of events that inform its creation and transmission. These events are not dissimilar in some ways to the study of an individual text. Reading Wright as an author of a text, and not just a bibliographer organizing information with sterile precision, allows for an understanding of the data he compiled in its social and subjective capacities. Furthermore, Wright's work presents an instance of an analog example to a digital problem. *American Fiction* as a collection of texts was composed in the context of a field that was pre-occupied with the theories that undergird the creation of collections and lists. Modern day scholars engaged in the creation of digital datasets, or in the adoption of digital datasets for their work, are participating in the same tradition of bibliographers such as Wright. Thus, an understanding and analysis of his work serves to bring a critical eye to the myriad of datasets modern scholars use in their work.



## 2. DATA, BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND INTERPRETATION

### 2.1 Preface

Before we can begin to explore Wright's *American Fiction*, it is necessary to put into context some of the central concepts that will guide my readings of Wright's work. Primarily, we must first understand the idea of data, specifically as it concerns literary materials, and place it into the context of bibliography that Wright was working within. Wright, as a bibliographer, arranged and modeled data he had collected from various libraries across the United States in order to populate *American Fiction*. This process, however, involved interpretive decisions on his part that affected how the data he collected was modeled and how it was then delivered to readers who approached *American Fiction*. While Wright was composing *American Fiction* in the mid-twentieth century, bibliography as a field devoted to the study, analysis, and description of printed books was entering into a golden era, so to speak. It is while Wright is compiling his list that some of the formative names in bibliography were theorizing about their role as scholars who work with the data that describes literary materials. What would come to be called the New Bibliography would conceive of itself as both a science and an art. As a science, bibliography was responsible for asserting claims as to the physical nature of a text and its production via evidence and logic. But bibliographers during this period also understood themselves as performing interpretations of the text and not just stating objective facts. In this way, the voices of the New Bibliography knew that through their descriptions of a text's physical nature they invariably affected how that text was perceived and read by others. Furthermore, because bibliographies as resources contain a large number of texts, these resources also offered arguments about the relationships amongst the materials they listed.

Bibliographies are an attempt to recognize the vastness of text, primarily published text.<sup>1</sup> Ev-

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1. Bibliographies often privilege published texts because they are what stand the best chance of leaving behind evidence that can inform a bibliography. Unpublished works can be featured and described in bibliographies, especially if they were well-preserved or cataloged. Bibliographies are not as prepared for media such as oral histories, where physical evidence is lacking or difficult

ery bibliography is an admission of the enormity of printed literature, regardless of how limited or broad the definition of that term. By means of example, we may compare Jacob Blanck's *Bibliography of American Literature* (*BAL*, 1955) to Wright's *American Fiction*. The *BAL* is far more limited in its scope than Lyle H. Wright's *American Fiction*, which is not to suggest that the *BAL* is a lesser work than *American Fiction*. Despite covering similar subject matter, the *BAL* has different aims from Wright's work. The *BAL* fills nine volumes and lists more than 40,000 entries, but is more discriminate in the authors it includes, preferring to list the works of those deemed the most influential or relevant American writers. As stated in the preface to the *BAL*: "What concerns us is that at one time these books were read and for a span held positions of sorts in American letters."<sup>2</sup> This, naturally, is a subjective statement, informed by the expertise of the committee that assisted Blanck in compiling the *BAL*, but a consciously interpretative statement nonetheless. Wright, however, was unconcerned with status, and concerned only with the question of whether or not a text was fictional. That an author only appeared once, or was relatively unknown even in their time, did not affect its inclusion in *American Fiction*.

In addition to the interpretive decisions that define inclusion into a list of titles, the way those titles are described by bibliographers also show discrepancies between what is considered important enough to tell the reader or what is within the scope of the bibliography. Below we can see a citation for the same work, Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance* (1852), as taken from Blanck's *BAL* and Wright's *American Fiction*, respectively.

7611. THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE

BOSTON: TICKNOR, REED, AND FIELDS. M DCCC LII

First American edition. For prior publication

see preceding entry.

<i>-vii, <9>-288. 7 1/8" x 4 7/16" (edges plain). 6 7/8"

full x 4 3/8" (edges gilded).

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to access.

2. Jacob Blanck, *Bibliography of American Literature*. (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1955), xi.

<1>-18<sup>8</sup>.<sup>3</sup>

HAWTHORNE, NATHANIEL. *The Blithedale Romance* . . . Boston: Ticknor, Reed, and Fields, 1852. 288p.

AAS, AP, BA, BP, BU, H, HEH, LC, N, NYH, NYP, UC, UM, UP, UVB, Y<sup>4</sup>

The descriptions Blanck appends to his entries are substantial and specialized. The *BAL*'s descriptions include title-page information, i.e. the publisher and year of publication (in Roman numerals, no less). Blanck includes as well the pagination system, which differentiates between introductory pagination (the <i>-vii) and body pagination (<9>-288). The paper size, and its properties, plain and gilded, are also described, with, finally, a collation formula (<1>-18<sup>8</sup>) that describes how the book was bound. What should become clear from the Blanck description is how precise it is in its attempt to describe the physical copy of the *Blithedale Romance*, and in doing so must use a specialized discourse that is difficult to understand for those outside the field. Wright, on the other hand, describes texts more simply and in a manner that resembles modern citation practices. Wright provides the author, title, place, publisher, date, and a cumulative page count, all listed in a manner that is easy to comprehend without formalized bibliographic training. The only piece of information that may need explanation for Wright's description are the library codes that appear under the book description, which list the sixteen libraries where that specific copy of the *Blithedale Romance* may be found (or could be in 1957). For both Wright and Blanck there is a question of perceived audience that informs how they model their information. Blanck has composed his bibliography primarily for librarians and bibliographers who would be able to read the specialized format of his data, while Wright appeals to a broader audience through his work, even when presenting the same information as Blanck; i.e. the 288 pages of *Blithedale Romance* are given by both bibliographers, though Blanck goes further in presenting, via a bibliographic formula, *how* those pages are numbered.

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3. Blanck, *Bibliography of American Literature.*, 11.

4. Wright, *American Fiction, 1851-1875*, 153.

What Wright, Blanck, and other bibliographers attempt to do in their bibliographies can not be said to simply list books they find, but rather to organize them into a schema, or a logically coherent model informed by a set of standards, that is understood by the bibliographer to best aid the reader of the list. For what purpose the reader may be viewing the bibliography is subjective and susceptible to change as scholars pursue different questions and conversations, but must nonetheless be considered in the creation of the bibliography. But while the bibliographer must consider their audience in the creation of a bibliography, they are also subject to what resources and institutions are available to aid them in their mission. This helps us to expand the textual nature of bibliography to a place beyond that of a simple bibliographer-reader relationship. The texts a bibliographer describe *are* somewhere, with curators, catalogers, and archivists that preside over them and make a text's data accessible and able to be described by the bibliographer.

A helpful term that has become common within textual scholarship to describe this relationship is the concept of the assemblage. I use the term *assemblage* because it concisely points to the wider social nature behind the construction of complex aggregations of data such as bibliographies. Ryan Cordell places the term within the sphere of textual criticism through his Viral Texts Project.<sup>5</sup> For Cordell, an *assemblage* is a text which is “defined by circulation and mutability,” and is not beholden to its author, or even its editors and publishers, but can be liberated, reimagined and reinterpreted, by its readers.<sup>6</sup> In this context, Cordell admits, it is an extension of D. F. McKenzie's “sociology of the text,” but with a focus on the life of the text after publication rather than before.<sup>7</sup> While McKenzie's theory of textuality gave necessary attention to the stages of a text's life beyond that of the writer, it was primarily concerned with a text's life in the process of production, including printers, paper makers, and publishers. Cordell's use of *assemblage* extends the sociol-

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5. Ryan Cordell, “Reprinting, Circulation, and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers,” *American Literary History* 27, no. 3 (September 2015): 417–445, accessed April 22, 2017, doi:10.1093/alh/ajv028, <https://academic.oup.com/alh/article/27/3/417/85989/Reprinting-Circulation-and-the-Network-Author-in>.

6. Ryan Cordell, *Two (of Three) Ways of Looking at C19 Newspaper Exchange Networks*, June 2016, accessed April 22, 2017, <http://ryancordell.org/research/two-of-three/>.

7. At the “What is Critical Bibliography?” panel at MLA 2017 in Philadelphia, MA, the term was discussed, though its meanings, the panel concluded, were variable.

ogy of the text to beyond production and into reception (not, however, at the cost of knowledge of production).

Bibliographies are assemblages; they are texts like any other that are reliant upon a network, a system of relationships, of persons each with their own intervention in the process of composition, circulation, and transmission. My use of *assemblage* is perhaps counter to Cordell's more progressive use in its application to textual criticism and bibliography, but that is because of the properties of a bibliography's composition and publication that influence not just the way readers interact with a text, but in fact, whether or not readers have access to the text at all.<sup>8</sup> A bibliography, as an assemblage, is not just the work of the bibliographer who compiled the lists, but a part of a larger network of connections between people and institutions. Certainly, Wright put great effort into compiling the three volumes of *American Fiction*, libraries and archives in the process of creating *American Fiction*; a total of thirty-one different institutional names can be found in each of the prefatory listing of libraries across the bibliography's three volumes. His descriptions, in turn, list for each entry the institutions in which a title can be found, presenting what Wright would call a census that informs the reader roughly how they might obtain a physical copy of a text. Wright's census not only reveals the network that informed his work, but additionally relies upon it as a testament to the truth of his entries. The presence of a text at multiple locations helps to verify Wright's claims that a given title exists, and can be viewed, if one should travel to the

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8. The term *assemblage* is rooted in discussions by Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, Bruno Latour, and "Actor Network Theory," a means of discussing the constructed nature of scientific classification. Cordell more directly has borrowed the term from Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, who employed *assemblage* in a literary context to describe the state of agency amongst colonized subjects amidst the Haitian Revolution, remarking on the fact that lack of sovereignty did not necessarily mean a lack of agency; for Dillon, the concept of the assemblage was that which defined how meaning was made not just by colonizers, but allowed for meaning to be constructed by colonized subjects as well. Cordell's use of the term retains that sense of allowing for a text's nature to be influenced by its readers. See Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, "Obi, Assemblage, Enchantment," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 1, no. 1 (April 2013): 172–178, ISSN: 2166-7438, accessed April 22, 2017, doi:10.1353/jnc.2013.0020, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/504853>; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Brian Massumi, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling The Social : An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory.*, Clarendon lectures in management studies (Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2005)

text's location. But Wright's explicit mentioning of the institutions involved in his work points to a level beyond the immediate relationship between the bibliographer and the reader and brings into focus the ways in which texts are preserved, cataloged, and made accessible. Finding a copy of a work listed by Wright does not involve Wright solely, but instead brings someone to a physical location where a library and its staff have cataloged and stored the text.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, I wish to bring attention to the fact that bibliographies such as Wright's function in part as arguments for how texts can be combined despite their different associations and relationships. Each act in the process of assembling a collection such as a bibliography requires conscious decisions. In the case of bibliography, these actions can be the choice of institution to visit, collection to browse, information given and recorded in the description, and naturally the parameters for what texts are admitted into the bibliography. At the same time, the bibliographer is subject to external contingencies; one can only record what has survived the sometimes hundreds of years between a text's composition and the bibliographer's description. Archives and libraries must actively choose what texts to purchase and catalog. These decisions will ultimately affect the bibliographer.

This rationale is what drives the process of assembling the assemblage. As stated, enumerative bibliographies represent one of the ways in which scholars have attempted to organize and represent aggregated information for use by other scholars. This argument, however, will also extend to the ways in which bibliographies and other collections of texts inform humanities scholarship, especially as scholars have increasingly resorted to digital tools for research. Aggregated collections of texts have become commonplace in modern literary studies as databases and repositories such as *Early English Books Online*, *Making of America*, and *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Digital humanities scholars have led to initiatives to not only use and promote these sorts of

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9. My definition and conceptualization of *assemblage* in this context is partially informed by Darnton's communication circuit, which describes the various pathways that influence a text's existence as an object, from author to publisher to reader. In the creation of a bibliography, events such as the visiting of libraries for research or the holdings of a specific library could be seen as an act which constitutes another "node" on Darnton's circuit. See Robert Darnton, "What Is the History of Books?," *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (1982): 65–83, ISSN: 0011-5266, accessed April 22, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20024803>

collections but also in creating them and interrogating their place as scholarly objects. Scholars originally sheltered in the realms of textual criticism and bibliography have found fresh topics of discussion in the digital possibilities for texts, and so often find themselves confronting the rationale of aggregation when attempting to discuss how databases of texts function as works. Others have taken advantage of the affordances of digital collections and begun to read texts at distance, to use Franco Moretti's term, at a scale far past what is humanly practical.<sup>10</sup> These scholars, however, are not necessarily approaching anything that we have not seen before. Enumerative bibliographies helped to create "big data" before the digital humanities. Contemporary work in the digital realm that finds value in considering the aggregate is informed by the work of the bibliographers that have helped to build that aggregate.

## 2.2 Data

To help further explain the interpretive capacities of bibliographies and bibliographic descriptions, it is necessary to spend time with the components that inform the bibliographers work; that is, the data of texts. My preferred definition of the term is that offered by the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) for its clarity, breadth, and nuance.<sup>11</sup> The OAIS definitions declares data as:

A reinterpretable representation of information in a formalized manner suitable for

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10. Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* [in en] (New York: Verso, 2005).

11. OAIS was adopted as ISO standard 14721 in 2002. Originally a product of the Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems, the OAIS prescribes a system for archival workflows and digital preservation. While I am primarily concerned with the way it has defined the term data and how this may help us approach bibliographical description, the OAIS covers a large, interdisciplinary and complex model of archives, preservation, and access. Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems, *Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System (OAIS)* (Washington DC: CCSDS Secretariat, 2002), accessed May 12, 2017, <https://public.ccsds.org/pubs/650x0m2.pdf> To reference the ISO standard, see *ISO 14721:2012 - Space data and information transfer systems – Open archival information system (OAIS) – Reference model*, 2012, accessed May 12, 2017, <https://www.iso.org/standard/57284.html>. For the OAIS in a humanities context and its relevance to the archives, see Matthew Kirschenbaum, "The .textual Condition: Digital Humanities, Born-Digital Archives, and the Future Literary," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 007, no. 1 (July 2013)

communication, interpretation, or processing. Examples of data include a sequence of bits, a table of numbers, the characters on a page, the recording of sounds made by a person speaking, or a moon rock specimen.<sup>12</sup>

This definition overtly states what are several important concepts for the term as they relate to bibliographical composition. First, the idea of data as "reinterpretable", rather than as statically informative, suggests a dynamic value to data. The use of "interpretive" twice in the definition emphasizes the process of encountering data as reader-centric, as having its value determined and subsequently defined by the observer. The definition does not suggest data as singularly objective, as possessing a finite amount of truth or factuality, as it assumes reinterpretability as inherent to the objects termed data, and so assumes multiple observers, each with their own means of interpretation that can produce variable outcomes. The word "processing" to some degree can be understood as nearly synonymous with interpretation, though with a distinction that processing refers to a method of interpretation and re-representation from a technical or computational point of view, rather than that of a human observer. The formalization of data and its ability to be communicated are codependent. In bibliographies, descriptions of titles obey a set sequence of details, determined by the bibliographer, but also often falling in line with a disciplinary consensus: author, title, place, date, with additional details that may be added to help facilitate the particular goals of the bibliography. The development of standards and conformity amongst representations of data is meant to allow the reader to both access individual units within the dataset, and see relationships amongst the units. As I will discuss in the New Bibliography section, while the characteristics of data defined here are meant to facilitate the reader's exploration and interpretation of the data, it does not necessarily always succeed in doing so.

The OAIS definition, while it does hint at the unfixed nature of data, bears only a trace of the fact that data itself has already undergone interpretation when it has been sorted, arranged, pared down, etc. In its use of the term "representation", the prefix re-, or "again", suggests a state prior to

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12. Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems, *Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System (OAIS)*, 1-10.



that of data. Thus, we may say data is not innocent of human involvement, tampering, or subjectivity, and thus, data itself is not a neutral object, but susceptible to ideology via the the methods and practices that inform the person producing the data. Johanna Drucker has argued for more humanistic approaches to data in her recent work. Drucker has stated in multiple venues that "data", derived from the Latin *datum* ("that which is given"), is taken, rather than given, and thus is *not data*, but *capta*.<sup>13</sup> Drucker's point with the term *capta* is to bring attention to the fact that data is "always interpreted," as summarized with her statement that "no data pre-exists its parameterization."<sup>14</sup> Parameterization, according to Drucker, is a construction and an interpretation; the term *capta* opens up the possibility of recognizing and "acknowledging the constructedness of the categories according to the uses and expectations for which they are put."<sup>15</sup> The parameterization that Drucker locates as inherent to data/*capta* is synonymous with the formalization and representation the OAIS definition prescribes.

The way in which data is arranged, according to discrete categories—date, author, title, publication place, etc.—represents a process of assigning terms or classes to concepts based on an interpretation of a pattern that is observed. For Drucker, these classifications can distort and simplify the complexity of the phenomena being forced into a classification framework, while also erasing the ambiguity amongst the different items arranged and united under the same concept. Drucker's example in this case refers to nations, genders, populations, and time spans; all are politically determined and institutionalized concepts that constrain identities to fixed notions, even though they are not "self-evident, stable entities that exist a priori."<sup>16</sup> The same can be said of bibliographical information, whose methods of description are institutionalized according to disciplinary expectations, the style guides of academic journals, and title-page printing conventions. Taxonomies that presume authorship as primary and as fitting into a set number of categories (i.e.

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13. Johanna Drucker, *Graphesis : Visual Forms of Knowledge Production.*, MetaLABprojects (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 2014), 128-9; Johanna Drucker, "Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display," 5, no. 1 (2011): 3, accessed February 17, 2017, <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html>.

14. Drucker, *Graphesis*, 129.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

pseudonym, autonym, anonymous) render the status of author to a position that may not be entirely indicative of the details that accompany the author's relationship to the work. In cases of anonymously published works, the state of a work being known to be by a certain author does not necessarily mean that the work itself is not anonymous, as it was actively published without the name, constituting a declaration of detachment from a source. An author may choose to detach themselves from a work for a variety of social, economic, or personal reasons. A bibliographer, however, may subvert those reasons in constructing a description of a text. Authorial attributions made to the work are performed due to the need for the bibliographical information to conform to a standard for reference by the reader of the bibliography. The work itself is filed under a certain protocol and so must be sought according to one's understanding of that protocol.

It is not enough to point out the idea of the "constructedness" of data and its parameters. To take the concept a step further and explain how mutable data is there are two things we must understand. The first is how the data's signification—that is, the concept of accuracy as it refers to the idea of trueness or correctness of data—must ultimately also be constructed if we accept Drucker's claim. If data is meant to accurately depict a phenomenon, and the way the data is arranged is susceptible to subjective interpretation, then the ascription of accuracy must also be a qualitative value informed by interpretation. As will be discussed in a moment, the field of bibliography expresses a desire for accuracy in its descriptions and considerations of material texts. What is termed accuracy however is susceptible to the aims of the scholar compiling the bibliography, who determines the mode of description which then informs how observers of the bibliography can understand information. The bibliographical description must point to the reality of the text, but it is a reality understood by the bibliographer and assumed by any one who views the bibliography unquestionably. A humanistic approach to data, as Drucker calls for, would be aware of the variance, subjectivity, and capacities of data to signify more than what may be represented on a page or screen. In a bibliographical sense, such an approach would also take into account how the accuracy of the data's representation is understood, and by what measures the truth of a text's description corresponds to the text's publishing history, but also how much of the information is

appended, by the bibliographer, onto the text with information that exists outside of the textual object.

The second is that data has a history, it is transmissible, and thus it can be subject to editorial hands and their accompanying judgments, interpretations, and critical impulses as it moves among different representations and reformations. This is the primary way in which collections of texts demonstrate their properties of assemblage, as they represent the piecing together of information, some of which is found in the wild, so to speak, by the same hand that is arranging them, but also because the data may be found amongst the arrangements and collections of others. Wright, in his *American Fiction*, consulted other bibliographies of early American publishing that preceded him, explicitly referring to such works as Oscar Wegelin's *Early American Fiction, 1774-1830*, Merle Johnson's *American First Editions*, P. K. Foley's *American Authors, 1795-1895*, B. M. Fullerton's *Selective Bibliography of American Literature, 1775-1900*, and the regional bibliographies of James Johnson and Lizzie Carter McVoy and Ruth Bates Campbell. This is in addition to more primary sources such as the *Publisher's Weekly* digests.<sup>17</sup> Each of these individual sources themselves arranged and described texts according to each compiler's own standards and interpretations; Wright, approaching these lists, would have had to confront how to change or otherwise adapt or omit the selections of those lists.

The practice of attempting to classify literature is not innately bibliographical however. Literary works have been cataloged and organized according to their semantic content (that which bibliography attempts to avoid).<sup>18</sup> Genres, in particular, represent a means of understanding collections of texts according to their content as it pertains to following specific themes or stylistic

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17. Lyle Henry Wright, "In Pursuit of American Fiction," in *Bibliography : Papers Read at A Clark Library Seminar, May 7, 1966*. Ed. Lawrence Clark Powell, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library seminar papers (Los Angeles : William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1966).

18. This sentiment is attributed to W. W. Greg: "To the bibliographer the literary contents of a book is irrelevant. This does not mean that special bibliographies should not be compiled, or that the merits of the works included, or somebody's opinion thereon, should not be recorded. It means that this is not the task of the bibliographer." W. W. Greg, "What is Bibliography?," *The Library* TBS-12, no. 1 (January 1913): 46, accessed April 4, 2017, doi:10.1093/libraj/TBS-12.1.39, <https://academic.oup.com/library/article-abstract/TBS-12/1/39/953125/What-is-Bibliography>

conventions. Wai Chee Dimock, in her introduction to a special issue of *PMLA* on genre, understands genres as "fields of knowledge," as she explains:

Far from being a neat catalog of what exists and what is to come, genres are a vexed attempt to deal with material that might or might not fit into that catalog...The membership—of any genre—is an open rather than closed set, because there is always another instance, another empirical bit of evidence, to be added.<sup>19</sup>

Dimock would seem to agree with and anticipate Drucker in her conceptualizing of genre, which drifts into a more scientific rhetoric (empirical, open versus closed set, evidence). Dimock recognizes the problems of attempting to fit genres onto groups of texts. Dimock acknowledges the same interpretive nature of data through her thinking about genre: "The spilling over of phenomena from labels stands here as an ever-present likelihood, a challenge to any systemizing claim."<sup>20</sup> Dimock's argument represents a means of understanding the creation of collections (catalogs, to Dimock) and its effect in the literary realm, but through its relevance to semantic and aesthetic considerations of literature, rather than bibliographic. It is perhaps easier, however, to see how genres and literary traditions, which are more obviously and strongly connected to a literary object and its subjective qualities, represent aggregation efforts that can be restrictive in terms of the claims of what defines a genre, or easily upset when its expectations are not conformed to. Though what Dimock suggests is that the particular accuracy, or the fidelity, of texts to the genre they are assigned to is not the reason for the classification. It is instead, an attempt that can be productive, rather than restrictive, if considered in the light that it is only ever going to "vexed," or failing to ever fully encapsulate literature as a whole. The vexed, or troubling and endlessly complicated process of trying to assign and understand the data of literary production was generative process that fueled early twentieth-century bibliographic scholarship.

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19. Wai Chee Dimock, "Introduction: Genres as Fields of Knowledge," *PMLA* 122, no. 5 (2007): 1378, accessed March 30, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25501790>.

20. *Ibid.*

### 2.3 The New Bibliography and Wright

To understand how our modern ideals of literary data manifest, we must first understand how they are in dialogue with, and in some capacity, still at the mercy of the bibliographic principles of the scholars who came before them. Bibliographic scholars who are referred to as the New Bibliographers discussed and codified the standards for the description of books and their arrangement in enumerated lists. These New Bibliographers emerged in the early twentieth century and systematized the process of book description, collection, and arrangement and prescribed set procedures for how other scholars should be able to view, find, and learn about different texts and works. It is at the same time that Wright would be composing *American Fiction*, and while not as actively contributing his theories of bibliography in an explicit form, Wright nonetheless expressed his ideologies in the composition of *American Fiction* that resonates with the New Bibliography. The process of systematization and prescription was not without its debates, despite aiming for objectivity, the standards and methods that New Bibliographers employed were sometimes embedded in interpretive and ideological decisions that nonetheless were codified as a standard practice that still persists today. Of particular interest in this section will be the interventions of those who considered the interpretive nature of bibliographic lists against those who dismissed enumeration as a lower form of bibliography due to its perceived lack of intellectual rigor.

For W. W. Greg, an enumerated bibliography is a list of books described, organized, and compiled according to a "guiding principle."<sup>21</sup> Theodore Besterman, on the other hand, offers a modified definition in his history of enumerative and systematic bibliography, preferring, rather than a "guiding principle," a "permanent principle."<sup>22</sup> What the two definitions presuppose with the term *principle* is that the bibliography is composed according to a deterministic framework that imposes simultaneously standardization and clarity unto the books described. Standardization and clarity are codependent in this case, as the conventions of bibliographical description offer a pattern of information representation that creates a comprehensible system for researchers and readers to

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21. Greg, "What is Bibliography?," 41.

22. Theodore Besterman, *The Beginnings of Systematic Bibliography*, Burt Franklin Bibliography And Reference Series: #216 (New York : B. Franklin, 1968), 2.

understand the construction of the bibliography, and to therefore use it for its intended purposes.

To more concretely define what is the referent of *principle*, observe the following samples drawn from the listing for Herman Melville's works in the *Epitome* of Jacob Blanck's *Bibliography of American Literature* (BAL, compiled by Michael Winship, Philip Eppard, and Rachel Howarth:<sup>23</sup>

13663. THE WHALE. Lon: Bentley, 1851.

3v. For U.S. edition see next entry.

13664. MOBY-DICK; OR, THE WHALE. NY: Harper & Bros., 1851.

Critical edition published in 1967 (No. 13711).

13666. PIERRE; OR, THE AMBIGUITIES. NY: Harper & Bros., 1852.<sup>24</sup>

Even from the sample of three listings, certain patterns that inform the construction of the bibliography become apparent even if they are perhaps unconsciously realized. Not shown in the above selection is Melville's name as a part of the description, which informs the larger organization of the list, as the titles of the *Epitome* are all arranged alphabetically by author. Melville's entries appear between authors Cornelius Mathews (1817-1889) and Joaquin Miller (1837-1913). The author's name assumes the primary position for the bibliography's organization and thus is the first layer of an information hierarchy or taxonomy for conceiving of the texts listed. Beyond the author's name we find the titles of the texts included with the accompanying information of place of publication, publisher, and year. It is at the year that we see the next organizational pattern—chronological—emerge, as the end of the description provides us with a means of knowing why the texts are listed in the order they are. The entry for *Pierre* (1852) at the end of this extract is what provides us evidence that the first two entries referring to two separate editions of *Moby-Dick* are in chronological order despite both listing 1851 as their publication year. In the case of Melville,

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23. Blanck passed away in December, 1974, before the final three volumes—seven (1983), eight (1990), and nine (1991)—were completed. The final three volumes were completed and edited by others, including Katherine Jarvis, Virginia L. Smyers, and Michael Winship. Winship is credited with the completion in all three volumes.

24. Michael Winship et al., *Epitome of Bibliography of American Literature*. (Golden, Colo. : North American Press, 1995), 200-1.

this informational structure is useful in elucidating basic publication details about *Moby-Dick*: its original title was not *Moby-Dick*, but in fact *The Whale*, the title under which it appeared first in London, England before its print run in America. The additional details provide further information, letting us know that while the British edition was first, it was the American edition that formed the basis of the first critical edition, described later in Melville's entry.

From understanding the hierarchy of the information that has formed the bibliography, we may then surmise the supposed principles—guiding, permanent, or otherwise—Winship, Eppard, and Howarth assumed in their adaptation and interpretation of Blanck's bibliography.<sup>25</sup> The *Epitome*, like the *BAL*, privileges the author as the prime piece of information that forms a bibliographic entry. In doing so, it assumes, like any bibliography whose construction is primarily modeled by an alphabetical author listing, that the primary use of the bibliography will be in researching individual authors; that the first means of reference for the scholar is to locate the author whom has been judged responsible for a given text and proceed from there in other directions (i.e. referencing other authors or other texts within the author listing). The secondary characteristic, the chronological organization, is subservient to the primacy of the author. The chronological listing is framed by the author and so places the author's texts within a timeline, but only with texts associated with the same author. The wider world of publishing is not easily visible; Other texts published the same

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25. Winship, Eppard, and Howarth explain in the introduction to the *Epitome* the principles they assumed for their work in adapting and interpreting Blanck's bibliography:

"Our goal has been to provide a useful complement to the full *BAL* rather than a replacement for it. We have followed the scope and style as set forth in Blanck's "Preface" in the first volume of *BAL* and have limited ourselves to information contained in the published volumes. In particular we have not included editions of an author's works that have appeared since the publication of that author's list in *BAL*, nor have we incorporated the few corrections or additions that have been discovered since publication of the original volumes." Winship et al., *Epitome of Bibliography of American Literature.*, vi

The primary criticism one could leverage against this practice as a principle is that it does not turn the *Epitome* into a reference that could point the reader to corrections over Blanck's errors, and would rather have the reader led to Blanck's entries by their own virtue, rather than seek to modify access to individual texts that Blanck does not describe, whether accurately or at all. In short, the *Epitome* in this case represents bibliography for bibliography's sake.

year as *Moby-Dick* are not placed in connection with Melville's work. Due to the isolating effects of consigning titles under an author header, more difficulty, on the part of both the bibliographers and the readers, becomes apparent when attempting to obtain information that is not determined by authorial association.

To return to Greg and Besterman's conception of principles, the distinction between Greg's use of *guiding* and Besterman's *permanent*, however, introduces complications into this supposition of how one constructs, and ultimately, obeys the principles the bibliographer lays out. For Besterman, *permanent* indicates a sort of finity, constraint, and superiority on the part of the bibliographer compiling the bibliography that a term such as *guiding* does not. What Besterman refers to with his idea of permanence is that which defines the pre-determined knowledge the compositor of the bibliography comes into the project possessing. This model of bibliography, that which is derived from what is "known" beforehand, demonstrates a disposition found among twentieth-century bibliography that imagines the discipline as a science, carrying the connotation of laws and facts, which are presumed to be stable, infallible, and observable (without considering who the observer is). When discussing St. Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus* (fourth century CE), which Besterman deems an early example of systematic bibliography, albeit accidental, he claims Jerome "looked upon his compilation as a piece of theological propaganda. He did not put out his bibliography to to guide or to instruct, but to convert."<sup>26</sup> Besterman reveals not just St. Jerome's predispositions here in terms of what a list of texts *should* do, but his own as well in clarifying Jerome's motives. Besterman believes bibliographies should "guide" or "instruct", which in itself reveals the placement of bibliographers as curators of facts, as those who lead others to knowledge by which they can be informed according to the bibliographer's standards.

Besterman's definition demonstrates a symptom of the New Bibliography in terms of its approach to the description, enumeration, and analysis of texts.<sup>27</sup> Other scholars have explored the

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26. Theodore Besterman, *The Beginnings of Systematic Bibliography*, 9.

27. The *Oxford Companion to the Book's* entry for "New Bibliography" goes as follows:

The New Bibliography involved 'the application of physical evidence to textual problems' (Tanselle) and one of its key achievements has been its systematic and rigorous methodology for describing such physical evidence...It's most enduring (and con-



premise that New Bibliography conceived of itself as scientific in nature and constructed the field in accordance with mechanical and technical methodologies.<sup>28</sup> New Bibliographers are not hesitant to affirm this claim. As Greg notes:

Facts are observed and catalogued by the systematizers, and then suddenly, as if by chance, an idea is born that introduces order and logic into what was the mere chaos, and we are in possession of a guiding principle, of an instrument of thought and investigation, that may transform the whole of our relation to knowledge or alter the face of the physical globe.<sup>29</sup>

Bibliographers certainly belong to the same population as those Greg calls “systematizers.” It is the responsibility of the bibliographer to order facts according to those “guiding principles” which

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tentious) legacy has been in the field of editorial theory, where its intentionalist and eclectic editorial principles (refined first by Greg, later by Bowers, and more recently by Tanselle) long dominated the production of critical literary editions.

Michael F. Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen, eds., *The Oxford Companion to The Book* (Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2010), 963. G. Thomas Tanselle, “Bibliographical History as a Field of Study,” *Studies in Bibliography* 41 (1988): 40, ISSN: 0081-7600, accessed April 23, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40371876>

28. G. Thomas Tanselle has published a lengthy article on the subject of bibliography and science, where he revisits the debate. He argues that science was only ever an analogy to refer to the empirical or systematic nature of bibliography and editing and to contrast it with the bibliophilic tradition that preceded the New Bibliography. Tanselle does, however, also lay some of the blame for the debate on bibliographers themselves for continued use of scientific terminology. G. Thomas Tanselle, “Bibliography and Science,” *Studies in Bibliography* 27 (1974): 57, accessed April 27, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40371588>. More recently, some scholars have also approached the debate by discussing it as a symptom of the cultural moment the New Bibliography emerged. Amanda Gailey discusses the Greg-Bowers method and the scientific rhetorical grounding of it as a response to the Cold War and the need to compete with scientific fields for federal funding and prestige. Amanda Gailey, *Proofs of Genius: Collected Editions from the American Revolution to the Digital Age* (2015), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.13607061.0001.001>. Amy E. Earhart has tied the Greg-Bowers method and its focus on the “purity” and “corruption” of the text to both Bowers’ interest in dog breeding and the resistance of textual scholarship to diversity issues. Amy E. Earhart, *Traces of The Old, Uses of The New : The Emergence of Digital Literary Studies.*, Editorial theory and literary criticism (Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 2015), 36-7. These discussions are all almost entirely dedicated to discussing the debate in regards to textual criticism and editing, however, and not necessarily covering bibliography as whole and its other subsidiary methods of description or enumeration.

29. Greg, “What is Bibliography?,” 41.

in turn produce knowledge. For Greg, knowledge seems to only come out of "order and logic" once it has been applied to "facts," or what may be termed in other circumstances as "raw data." Greg, however, seems to consider enumerative bibliographies to be "raw data" that have not yet had "order and logic" applied to them, and so are not necessarily productions of knowledge themselves, but only aids to its manufacture. Philip Gaskell is of a similar opinion; in his *New Introduction to Bibliography*, appearing almost sixty years after Greg's above statement, Gaskell understates enumerative bibliographies as useful, but not the "purpose" of bibliography. Instead, their job is to aid in the study of literature as reference tools and to aid bibliography in deterministically proliferating "accurate" texts.<sup>30</sup> A. S. G. Edwards makes a similar claim in discussing enumerative bibliographies: "One accepts, I assume, that the aim of any enumerative bibliography is to achieve as close an approximation to definitiveness as is practicable."<sup>31</sup> Terms such as "accuracy" or "definitive" depict a particular stance towards information that belies the ultimately subjective nature of texts and their production. Unironic or unqualified use of the word "accuracy," or even its corresponding term—precision—forgets that in the case of texts, what is "accurate" is ultimately subject to and defined by the whim of the bibliographer themselves.

Fredson Bowers is conscious of this detail when he attempts to conceive of the place of enumerative bibliographies—or, to him, catalogues, handlists, or checklists, terms which would likely not stand up to the scrutiny of formal librarians. He, like Gaskell, diminishes the role of enumerative bibliographies by making them subservient to descriptive bibliographies:

Their primary purpose is to make available a listing of books in a certain collection or library, or else in a certain field, such as a specific period, a particular type of literature, a definite subject, or an individual author. Noting the existence of these books is the end-all and be-all of a catalogue, and under ordinary circumstances only the minimum of identifying details is provided, as author, title (abbreviated when nec-

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30. Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*. (New York ; Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1972).

31. A. S. G. Edwards, "Some Problems in Modern Enumerative Bibliography," *Text* 1 (1981): 331, accessed January 14, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/stable/30234257>.

essary), the date and possibly the place of publication, and occasionally the format. Some catalogues may include the name of the printer or publisher, or both. The writer may compile his list partly from other catalogues and partly by personal examination of the books, supplemented by notes furnished by contributing libraries or scholars; but except in extraordinary cases he is not concerned with the textual history, circumstances of printing, or variation within issue (sometimes even within edition) of the books listed.<sup>32</sup>

What Bowers does note, however, is that, ultimately, these mere lists are subjective. While disparaging enumerative bibliographies whose "end-all and be-all" is simply stating their existence, he notes that details included in the lists are not always absolute. The compiler of the list is in control of what information is provided to the reader, and, in effect, can determine how the list is used as a research and reference tool. Bowers perhaps is seeing the nuance of Greg's "guiding principle" that Besterman's "permanent principle" discarded. To Greg's credit, he saw bibliography as empirical, based on evidence, but not rationalistic. In the ironically titled "Rationale of the Copy-Text," Greg argues that an editor's choice of a parent, or source, text which guides the creation of a new edition should be informed by the most "authoritative" copy of the text that can be located (by means, most likely, of an enumerative bibliography that goes uncredited). But Greg carefully notes that "authority" is always relative, never absolute.<sup>33</sup> For Greg, expertise—formal training and education in a subject—allows for the ability to determine "authority." But Greg does not necessarily turn his qualification of subjectivity onto himself. David F. Foxon, however, is apt to do so, as he targets both Bowers and Greg: "My researches suggest that some at least of our accepted conventions result from the idiosyncrasies of individual scholars; these were uncritically adopted by others and have finally come to be regarded as scientific."<sup>34</sup>

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32. Fredson Bowers, *Principles of Bibliographical Description*, St. Paul's bibliographies: 15 (Winchester, U.K. : St. Paul's Bibliographies ; New Castle, Del. : Oak Knoll Press, 2005), 3.

33. W. W. Greg, "The Rationale of Copy-Text," *Studies in Bibliography* 3 (1950): 19–36, accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/stable/40381874>.

34. David F. Foxon, *Thoughts on the History and Future of Bibliographical Description* (Berkeley, CA: School of Library Service, University of California, 1970), 7 In a memorial essay on

Foxon's criticism, again like most New Bibliography discussions, is focused on description, as his primary example in this case refers to Greg and Bowers' apparent disagreement about labeling recto (i.e. the right side page in a printed book) and verso (i.e. the left side) pages of a printed leaf and its adaptation into collation formulas despite the convention being, to Foxon, obviously illogical.<sup>35</sup> Foxon's critique is not irrelevant to enumeration, however. Certain standards as to the arrangement of bibliographies are in place that obfuscate the interpretive nature of enumeration. Alfred W. Pollard lists three primary methods of organization that are prevalent in bibliographies:<sup>36</sup>

- (i) Alphabetical
- (ii) Chronological
- (iii) Logical

Of relevance to this discussion are the first two points, which correspond to the major American literature bibliographies, including Wright.<sup>37</sup> While stated in 1907, these methods of classification, present long before the New Bibliography, and enduring long after its heyday and the emergence of

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Foxon, James McLaverty claims that Foxon's criticism against Greg, Bowers, and the enshrined practices of bibliography were derived from two sources: first, the development of technology in the 20th century, specifically the ability for scholars to xerox pages and compare them for both analysis and description. And second, that traditional methods were flawed in their ability to differentiate among editions. James McLaverty, "David Foxon, Humanist Bibliographer," *Studies in Bibliography* 54 (2001): 103, accessed April 25, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40372245>

35. To explain further, the convention Foxon is discussing holds that one should only ever explicitly reference verso pages, with either a *b* or *v* while recto pages go unremarked. Foxon addresses the fact the Greg and Bowers agree on the method but not its meaning. The lack of a marker that signifies recto or verso pages on a leaf, to Greg, says that the entire leaf should be considered, rather than a page, but Bowers claims that leaving the signature unmarked would suggest recto unless context implied differently. This moment of disagreement points to ambiguity that Foxon claims is antithetical to a scientific system. David F. Foxon, *Thoughts on the History and Future of Bibliographical Description*, 8-9

36. Alfred W. Pollard, "The Arrangement of Bibliographies," in *Alfred William Pollard: A Selection of His Essays*. Ed. Fred W. Roper, The Great Bibliographers Series: No. 2 (Metuchen, N.J. : Scarecrow Press, 1976), 133.

37. Not discussed here is what Pollard means by the term "logical", where he considers the "natural sequence" of a subject. An example here is a bibliography of mathematics, which Pollard states would have to be subdivided into smaller sub-topics (arithmetic, algebra, etc.) to be comprehensible and useful. *ibid.*, 137

critical theory, have affected the way in which information is presented and, thus, interpreted. As argued by Pollard, the proximity of pieces of information suggests a relationship. A bibliography always possesses claims as to the relationship amongst the texts it lists, whether intentional or not. For Wright's *American Fiction*, we can immediately assume a few qualities about the texts without reading them. First, the texts all share a genre: fiction. Second, the texts are produced within the same geopolitical area, i.e. America. For Pollard, the arrangement of the bibliography should help to acknowledge connections amongst the listed texts. Arundell Esdaile acknowledges this when he lambasts the concept of alphabetical organization:

Some bibliographers have simply sorted the titles into the alphabetical order of authors; but that is mere intellectual laziness or want of imagination (perhaps the same thing); for while the alphabet enables the searcher to get access in a library to a particular book of whose existence he is aware, or, it may be, to refresh his memory as to a title or date, or other detail in the title, it serves no other purpose. The alphabet does nothing to collocate material bearing on the same or a closely allied side of the subject; it serves you up impartially the prunes and prisms together.<sup>38</sup>

Esdaile's mantra for the use of referential materials and bibliographies specifically is that they should be "illuminating" in their organizational method for the researcher.<sup>39</sup> The bibliographer's task and thinking should be directed towards its organizational structure, as failure or indeterminacy in this area would mean the reader of the work, the student and would-be researcher, would "lose his way."<sup>40</sup> Esdaile's tone is patriarchal and authoritative, not dissimilar to that of Besterman's, in that both place the bibliographer in a superior position over the reader. Esdaile does, however, hold the bibliographer accountable for their organization should it present poorly aggregated material that does not allow space for interpretation via its combination of bibliographic

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38. Arundell James Kennedy Esdaile, *A Student's Manual of Bibliography*. [3d rev. ed.], ed. Roy Stokes, The Library Association series of library manual, 1 (New York : Barnes & Noble, 1954), 364.

39. *Ibid.*, 35.

40. *Ibid.*, 20.

descriptions. The fundamental aspect of enumeration is to ensure an open-ended but well-mediated pathway between the subject of the bibliography and its reader. *Collocation* is a favored term in Esdaile's manual as it hints at the interpretive nature of proximity. Esdaile's use of the term references patterns that should, ideally, be easily perceivable or possibly emergent when one entry is compared to many others, seemingly in the same physical space of a page, section, or chapter, as physical separation caused by a critically detached organizational scheme, such as alphabetical listing, hinders the reader's ability to recognize latent patterns.

Esdaile agrees with Pollard, who also considers alphabetic listing as unfavorable. On the one hand, alphabetical order is, according to Pollard, the most fundamental organizational system that one can assume a literate person will recognize; it benefits from being inherent to the ability to read, and thus is the simplest. This though is precisely the reason why Esdaile declares it lazy and serving "impartially the prune and prisms together." Alphabetic organization is impartial because it is detached from the subject of bibliography and bearing no relation to the connections, in the case of literary bibliographies, among authors—the primary subject of alphabetization. A relationship inferred between Melville and his colleagues in the *Epitome*, Cornelius Mathews and Joaquin Miller, purely on the basis of their proximity in an alphabetical listing would of course be erroneous. Any information that could emerge is at the mercy of chance. More consistently, research would require further digging into the entries for other details—year, publisher, collation, etc.—to form a more logically sound thesis. Thus, the the complexity of the bibliography's organization is increased without substantial aid to the information it provides<sup>41</sup> The simplicity, though, is why Esdaile also claims it is so widely used; its ease of access for the reader to grasp, despite the fact that it offers no new information and produces no knowledge. The "prunes and prisms" Esdaile mentions describe his ultimate opinion on the practice: it looks good, or has an aesthetic quality,

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41. An exception is in the case of family relationships where patronymics remain static. For example, Amos Bronson Alcott and Louisa May Alcott are together in the *Epitome*. A relationship could be inferred by a hypothetical unfamiliar scholar, though it would require confirmation. This is seemingly the only instance where alphabetization does help the reader understand a relationship between entries, but the limited application does not justify the lack of coherence amongst the other 279 authors in the *Epitome*.

but nothing more.

It is worth mentioning that when Pollard lays out his three common categories, he lists alphabetical as "according to the names of authors."<sup>42</sup> Traditional print bibliographies often organize themselves as such to allow the author to occupy the prime position, both in their overall organization scheme and at the level of the individual description. Author name however, while seemingly objective and certain, can introduce a variety of interpretive outcomes in the arrangement of entries, and those outcomes are informed by the bibliographers' own position and thinking about the purpose of their list. Recalling the example at the beginning of the chapter, The *BAL* is entirely guided by the author as a central figure for the way it presents its information and how it divides its volumes. Meanwhile, Wright's *American Fiction* is divided into volumes by chronology (1774-1850, 1851-1875, and 1876-1900), but within each volume the listed titles are arranged alphabetically by author. Wright provides a more meaningful organizational structure (e.g. chronological) above the level of author, but still defers to the author within a single volume. While Pollard and Esdaile do criticize alphabetical listings, they both allow the concept of the author as first and foremost in a description go with little comment. Pollard does claim the "reader who already knows the book which he wants will be able to find it at once under the name of its authors," but this only hints at the root issue of the arrangement: a reliance upon the assumptions that guide the bibliography.<sup>43</sup> The primary assumption being that a scholar seeks information based on a larger, overarching question that presumes the author or name listed as relevant to the conversation, when it is not necessarily always the case. Nineteenth-century American publishing, of course, did not lack its share of anonymous and pseudonymous titles. An alphabetical list according to author is immediately troubled by this fact. Wright's first volume of *American Fiction* (1774-1850) begins with an anonymous entry:

AN ACCOUNT OF THE MARVELOUS DOINGS of Prince Alcohol, as Seen

by One of His Enemies, in Dreams. [N.p.] 1847. 72 p. 12mo

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42. Pollard, "The Arrangement of Bibliographies," 133.

43. *Ibid.*, 134.

When an author is absent, Wright naturally defaults to a title, but this not only disrupts the inherent order of the bibliography Wright wished to enforce, but also serves to bury anonymous titles in odd places that makes tracing them more difficult, especially when titles have been shortened in the description.<sup>45</sup> Further complicating the scheme, the listing is interjected with notes that reference known pseudonyms of authors. When looking for Mark Twain in the second volume (1851-1870), readers will find in between title entries a note to find the works of Twain under Samuel Langhorne Clemens.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, searching for Fanny Fern will direct the reader to instead look under Sarah Payson Willis Parton.<sup>47</sup> For a print bibliography, this can mean searching through the text to find information in a different place than one suspects. In a bibliography that spans multiple volumes, this can pose issues of accessibility or impracticality if a researcher must sift through multiple printed copies to find the information they desire. *American Fiction* is not wholly consistent in this case, however. For a text such as *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, which was published by Harriet Jacobs pseudonymously as Linda Brent, Wright instead conflates the two names into one description:

[JACOBS, MRS. HARRIET (BRENT).] Incidents in the Life of a  
 Slave Girl. Written by Herself... Edited by L. Maria Child.  
 Boston: published for the author, 1861. 306 p.

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44. Wright, *American Fiction, 1774-1850: A Contribution Toward A Bibliography.*, 1.

45. Wright periodically does shorten the titles of works he describes when their titles are considered too long to practically list. For his explanation on this matter, see *ibid.*, ix.

46. Wright, *American Fiction, 1851-1875*, 341.

47. *ibid.*, 120. Wright does, however, denote names absent from the title page with square brackets ([ ]), which does include anonymous names that supplant pseudonyms; he physically places distance between the title of the work and the listed author name in this case. Blanck in the *BAL* also defaults to autonyms for the authors he lists, though there is little to help the reader realize this. Mark Twain is found under Samuel Clemens in volume 2. This introduces some difficulty for the reader at a practical level who may not go into the bibliography with the knowledge of Blanck's organization, and so goes searching volume 8 for Twain, rather than the correct volume.



The decisions for how authors are designated in the bibliographical descriptions represent a moment where the principles of aggregation, here inclined towards authorship and alphabetization, produce friction against the concept of bibliographies seeking to produce accurate and definitive lists. On the one hand, the preference of Wright, and other bibliographers, for autonymous author entries for their listing is deferential to the work of the person who created the work. The practice, however, also represents a process of interpretation of data that runs counter to more dominant discourse of these authors by literary scholars who are supposedly meant to be served by the bibliography. Mark Twain, rather than Samuel Clemens, it can be argued, is the dominant name attached to the works of *Huckleberry Finn* or *Connecticut Yankee*, and the suggestion of Clemens as the author dissociates these texts from the character of Twain and the standards of literary scholarship. The same can also be said of the less canonical authors such as Fanny Fern, the name attached to even the most recent editions of her works.<sup>49</sup> Bibliographical descriptions of the texts that abandon the common discourse of author reference offer a competing claim as to the creator of the work. This is an act of interpretation that demonstrates the gap between the the way the literary scholar conceives of a work versus that of the bibliographer. Wright inherently recognizes this by providing the signposts in his bibliography that point researchers from the pseudonyms, which are assumed to be sought first, and their place in the listing to Wright's preferred method of classification—the autonym.

This issue, I would argue, is bound to the New Bibliographical desire for accuracy, but enforces that these concepts are subjective when it comes to attempting to codify and arrange a subject such as early American writing. Wright's bibliography demonstrates an ideal that understands the author as synonymous with the person writing and publishing the work, rather than observing and

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48. Wright, *American Fiction, 1851-1875*, 179 More about the oddities of the inclusion and description of Harriet Jacobs in a bibliography of fiction will be explored in a future chapter.

49. See Susan Belasco's edition of *Ruth Hall*. Fanny Fern, *Ruth Hall: A Domestic Tale of the Present Time* [in English], Reprint edition, ed. Susan Belasco (New York: Penguin Classics, February 1997)

adhering to what the text claims about its author. This makes sense in cases such as Washington Irving, whom is used as the authorial reference in regards to his pseudonymously written works. For example, *The Sketchbook* (1819) is composed by Geoffrey Crayon, and the *History of New York* (1809) is written by Diedrich Knickerbocker, but these author figures are themselves fictional characters created by Irving.<sup>50</sup> However, in the cases of Twain and Fern, these issues are less clear. Neither Fern nor Twain are fictional characters within the texts that bear their names as is the case with Crayon and Knickerbocker. The writings of Fern, including her earliest published monograph, *Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio* (1853), does not suppose Fern to be a fictional entity, but a pseudonym that gives the author an alternate identity, a different means of referencing the real author. The distinction, however, is that Fern and Twain adopt the literary status their counterparts, Clemens and Parton, names that are leave behind in the course of both their publishing and circulation, wherein the names printed alongside the text become inherent to how the text is received and read. Scholars working with the texts continue to hold Twain, rather than Clemens, as the author figure. Thus, when *American Fiction* demotes Twain and Fern to pseudonyms while promoting Clemens and Parton to author figure in its organization, it does so counter to literary scholarship's standards. Instead, it has located its concept of accuracy in a discourse outside of the realm of the subject it is responsible for enumerating.

When a bibliography is running in opposition to its audience, it ends up making the process of turning data into information more difficult. Pollard prefers, over the alphabetical listing that, in conjunction with a fixation on the author figure, complicate research, the chronological format such as that used by Wright as the dividing line between the three volumes of *American Fiction*. For Pollard, chronology is easily comprehensible, similar to the alphabet in terms of the capabilities of the assumed reader, but is in general more generative and expressive as an organizing principle. Wright covers the years 1774 to 1900 in *American Fiction*, with each volume containing a division of that timeframe: 1774-1850, 1851-1875, and 1876-1900. This timeline is seemingly arbitrary to the reader, as Wright does not offer comment as to the *why* of his demarcation. The most Wright

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50. In the works of Irving mentioned, Knickerbocker and Crayon are narrators, but are also telling stories about themselves, implicating their own fictionality in the course of the narratives.

provides is some meditation as to what he perceives as the general overarching themes of the books included in the bibliography. From the preface of Wright II (1851-1875):

The momentous events that occurred during this quarter century are reflected in the fiction of the period. The slavery question, pro and con, was the theme of scores of novels, and as many more covered the Civil War, a national catastrophe that induced authors to attempt to be more realistic in their writing. The westward flow of the population was not overlooked...During the 1850's the sentimental novel reached its peak in popularity, aided and abetted by the large increase in women writers. And the woman's rights movement gained impetus through the numerous novels and short stories which presented it in a sympathetic vein. Religion, including controversies between denominations, was also a favorite subject with authors.<sup>51</sup>

These themes, however, are porous and not bound solely to the second volume of *American Fiction*, as several example titles that align with Wright's framing can be found in Wright's first volume. Let us return to the first anonymous entry in *American Fiction* I mentioned previously, *An Account of the Marvelous Adventures of Prince Alcohol* by "One of His Enemies," a temperance novel addressing the religious controversies Wright describes.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, an 1849 novel, *Amelia Sherwood; or, Bloody Scenes at the California Gold Mines*, references westward expansion.<sup>53</sup> J. Elizabeth Jones' *The Young Abolitionists; or, Conversations on Slavery* (1848), published by the Boston Anti-Slavery Office is obviously in dialogue with the "slavery question, pro and con."<sup>54</sup> Since the only apparent justification for Wright's chronological division are his thematic considerations, it is worth addressing how that division in the case of American history here, and of chronological classification systems generally, are to some degree always arbitrary and reliant upon judgment. Wright's thematic reasoning offered in the prefaces of his three volumes provide a general sense of contents, but do not clearly elucidate with specificity the nature of the time period bound by each

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51. Wright, *American Fiction, 1851-1875*, vii.

52. Wright, *American Fiction, 1774-1850: A Contribution Toward A Bibliography.*, 1.

53. *Ibid.*, 5.

54. *Ibid.*, 156.

volume.

Rationalizations attempting to explain Wright's demarcations meet inevitable walls in their logic but further show the divergence from literary history and criticism that a bibliographical work demonstrates. The second volume beginning at 1851 breaks from F. O. Matthiessen's pinpointing of 1850 as the first year of his "American Renaissance" (1850-1855).<sup>55</sup> The division between volumes by year that Wright draws causes the individual author bibliographies to become split, with works by Hawthorne and Melville included in all three volumes.<sup>56</sup> Book history complicates Wright's chronology significantly by moving events and innovations with drastic effects on American publishing earlier than 1851. Copyright (1790 with revisions in 1802 and 1831), the postal service (1792), continental railroad (1869), telegraph (1844 with its transcontinental implementation occurring in 1862), and dominance of the machine press over the hand press by the 1840s shift bibliographical qualities of texts outside of Wright's own parameters.<sup>57</sup> The bibliography's chronological ordering principally based on theme and disconnected from a more specific historical perspective means that Wright has taken the most interpretive step in organizing the publication dates of the titles he lists. This puts a constraint upon the researcher, whose ability to

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55. Matthiessen first published *American Renaissance* in 1941. Wright could have known Matthiessen's work by the time the second volume was being compiled. F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (New York ; London: Oxford University Press, 1980)

56. Posthumous works by Hawthorne, who died in 1864, are located in the third volume. Both *Doctor Grimshawe's Secret* (1883) and *The Dolliver Romance, and Other Pieces* (1876) are described there.

57. Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley, eds., *A History of the Book in America: Volume 2, An Extensive Republic, Print Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840*, vol. 2 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2010). See essays by Meredith McGill on copyright and the postal service; Richard R. John for a discussion of early postal service operations, and their relationship to the stagecoach industry; and Robert A. Gross' introduction for discussions of the telegraph and railroads. See Scott E. Casper's introduction where describes the gigantic shift in the amount of railroad coverage began in the 1840s. Scott E. Casper et al., eds., *A History of the Book in America: Volume 3, The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, vol. 3 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). See Jen A. Huntley-Smith, "Print Cultures in the American West," in *Perspectives on American Book History: Artifact and Commentary*, *Perspectives on Book History* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 255–284 for a discussion of book history in the American west as result of the telegraph and railroad.

evaluate events, phenomena, writers, or subjects that span years outside the scope of single bibliography find themselves facing, at a practical level, more difficulty in searching and comparing the information Wright offers than those who find their questions approachable with a single volume.<sup>58</sup>

Lastly, the selection principles of a bibliographer are informed by the biases of the bibliographer (and the institutions the bibliographer visits). The reader may be unaware of these biases, yet they will affect the text. Bibliographic theorists such as Pollard and Esdaile do not consider bias in their philosophies of the arrangement of bibliographies, yet it is an unavoidable component of the process. Again, Wright is a useful example as one whose goal of compiling a list of early American fiction is not as fundamentally clear as it may first appear. In the preface for each volume, Wright presents a similarly worded statement in an attempt to clarify his aggregation process: "The design of this bibliography is to list the American editions of novels, novelettes, tales, romances, short stories, and allegories, in prose, written by Americans."<sup>59</sup> This statement is not as all-encompassing as a reader may suppose, however; Wright excludes, despite their relevance to the above system: "annuals and gift books, publications of the American Tract Society and the Sunday School Union, juveniles, fictitious Indian captivities, jestbooks, folklore, collections of anecdotes, periodicals, and extra numbers of periodicals," as well as essays.<sup>60</sup> Wright is honest in what this may mean for his entries, as he notes that his parameters cause some questionable exclusions even for canonical authors; Poe's "The Balloon Hoax" (1844) and Whitman's *Franklin Evans* (his 1842 temperance novel) are consciously excluded because of Wright's decision to omit extra numbers of periodicals.<sup>61</sup> While some of his omissions seem to suggest themselves as obviously

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58. Amusingly enough, Wright's division of the three volumes does show an interesting pattern. Volume 1 contains just under 2200 entries (Wright does not provide exact numbering, but an estimate); volume 2 contains 2832 numbered titles; and volume 3 enumerates 6175 titles. Physically, each subsequent volume is larger than the other, visually suggesting that as time moved forward, more and more American titles were published. This a base assumption that could be more complicated; there may be better preservation efforts for more recent titles, or they have had easier times surviving. The institutions Wright traveled to may have privileged later titles over earlier ones, generally. Or, Wright's own standards and selection principles grew more relaxed.

59. Wright, *American Fiction, 1774-1850: A Contribution Toward A Bibliography.*, ix.

60. *Ibid.*

61. As reported by Wright, "The Balloon Hoax" was published in *The Extra Sun*, April 13, 1844. *Franklin Evans* appeared in *The New World*, II, No. 10, Extra Ser., No. 34.

outside the bounds of fiction (essays and jestbooks), others raise more questions or are in need of an argument for exclusion that is not provided.

The categories of "juvenile" or "fictitious Indian captivities" raise a question as to why these would not be desirable in Wright's bibliography, and its effects can be clearly noted when browsing the listings. The exclusion of juveniles, for example, results in Louisa May Alcott's section of Wright II to be lacking in her most prominent works. Wright lists for Alcott five titles: *Hospital Sketches* (1863), *Hospital Sketches and Camp and Fireside Stories* (1869), *Moods* (1865), *On Picket Duty, and Other Tales* (1864), and *Work: A Story of Experience* (1873). Absent are the arguably more popular and relevant works for reference to Alcott: *Little Women* (1868), and its sequels *Little Men* (1871) and *Jo's Boys* (1886, this text would be located in the third volume were it included). Wright's judgment, then, considers Alcott's major works as outside the bounds of more "adult" literature that he wishes to enumerate.<sup>62</sup> This is, again, an interpretive judgment that offers an argument both to claims as to what is valuable within the realm of American publishing and thus what should be accessed by researchers, with the consequence of limiting or obstructing access to a text based on a designation that would warrant exclusion. A genre such as the "juvenile" is less stable than the deterministic methods of arranging and presenting bibliographies acknowledge, in so far the methods operate on a completely binary system of either including or excluding an item in their arrangement. Wright would even admit at the end of his career that the category of juvenile was a never-ending headache for him, as the characteristics of the genre continued to evolve for him. A text being considered as a juvenile was the root of most of the revisions he made to *American Fiction* in second editions as he continued to reinterpret the texts he lists.<sup>63</sup>

Wright's other major oversight here is the omission of periodicals, which affects late-twentieth and twenty-first century scholars who have devoted increased attention to serial publication and in recovering works by marginalized writers who published their works in specialized serials. The expansion of communication technologies and the industrialized machine press gave rise to serial

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62. "Adult" becomes a term Wright adds to his preface in future volumes and revised editions. Wright, *American Fiction, 1851-1875*, vii

63. Wright, "In Pursuit of American Fiction."

novels as a prevalent form of fiction and literary writing that original embodied such works as Edgar Allen Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), Melville's *Israel Potter* (1855), and even Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). These works would eventually come to be found in book form that allowed them to be noted and described by Wright. Other serial publications were left out of this, however, including works by African-American authors, such as Martin Delany's *Blake, or, the Huts of America* (serialized in the *Anglo-African Magazine* in 1859), which is left undescribed by Wright. By ignoring serials, Wright also coincidentally ignores a prominent venue for black writers in the nineteenth century. As Eric Gardner has stated, black serials were "the central publication outlet for many black writers—and especially for texts that were *not* slave narratives."<sup>64</sup> Additional casualties of Wright's method include Julia C. Collins' *The Curse of Caste; or, The Slave Bride* (1865) as well as Frances Harper's *Minnie's Sacrifice* (1869).

On the other hand, Wright also reveals errors of judgment on his part, especially with regards to African-American literature. Wright offers in a bibliography of fiction, autobiographical works such as the previously mentioned Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of the Slave Girl*, and Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853). The inclusion of these materials suggest that Wright did not believe the accounts he read as based in truth, perhaps due to the sentimental writing styles that aligned them more with mid-nineteenth-century fiction.<sup>65</sup> In addition to the exclusion of serials which barred black authors from receiving more descriptions, the inclusions also present problems when they become described and framed under an erroneous assumption that then paints how the reader will read the work. With the overarching claim that the texts such as *Incidents* and *Twelve Years* represent fiction, these slave narratives have their receptions altered in a way the discredits their experiences and stories by implying these works possess fantastic or unreal qualities. At the

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64. 10 Eric Gardner, *Unexpected Places* [in English] (University Press of Mississippi, 2009), emphasis Gardner's, accessed May 16, 2017, <http://muse.jhu.edu/book/9988>.

65. This subject will be pursued in depth in Chapter 3. For now, it is important to know that at the time of *American Fiction's* composition, the autobiographical nature of a work like *Incidents* was not clear and there was no consensus until after the text's recovery in the 70s and 80s. Jean Fagan Yellin published her work authenticating *Incidents* in 1981. See Jean Fagan Yellin, "Written by Herself: Harriet Jacobs' Slave Narrative," *American Literature* 53, no. 3 (1981): 479–486, ISSN: 0002-9831, doi:10.2307/2926234, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/stable/2926234>.

same time, their inclusion possesses the possibility of creating an errant scholar whose reading of those texts pulls them out of their historical context, or supplants autobiographical content and lived experience with aesthetic and literary motives. Cases such as Jacobs and Northup are easy to determine were this happening, given their recent prominence in literary studies. It is for the titles that have not yet received the same consideration as these that are in vulnerable positions.

Several other oddities exist within the listings of Wright beyond the omissions and the gaps they produce. For example, an American edition of Charles Dickens' *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* is described; this edition of a work Dickens did not complete before he died in 1870 was completed by an American, Thomas Power James. According to Wright, the completion of *Edwin Drood* by an American warrants inclusion into his collection of American fiction.<sup>66</sup> And while Wright endeavored to exclude juveniles, and does in the case of Alcott, he decides to include Twain's *Tom Sawyer* (1876) and *Huckleberry Finn* (1885), texts that were marketed as juveniles when they were published.<sup>67</sup> Attempting to understand why Wright made such decisions can be difficult, especially should one try to investigate each and every unique case. For many of the odd exclusions and inclusions no published justification exists, and in general, it is only stated by Wright that he intended to exclude certain genres or forms of fiction from his bibliography. However, what should be clear is that this process of producing a resource for the study of American literature involved questions that, while at face value may seem objective, involves choices by the bibliographer, who is human, fallible, but also always interpreting. Wright's work, as with any bibliography, should be seen as a helpful resource, but not necessarily as immutable, as Wright himself would show in the numerous revisions he makes to his work, as well as with the subject of the next chapter, the friends and institutions that would help him in the process of creating *American Fiction*.

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66. Wright, *American Fiction, 1851-1875*, 422.

67. Lyle Henry Wright, *American Fiction, 1876-1900 ; A Contribution Toward A Bibliography*. (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Publications, 1966), 109, 111.



### 3. WRIGHT AND THE AMERICAN ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

#### 3.1 Preface

While the previous chapter addressed the theories, ideas, and interpretive decisions that undergird the organization of enumerative bibliographies, it remains important to investigate what can inform the decisions that affect the construction of a bibliography now that I have argued for the ultimately subjective qualities this genre possesses. The bibliographer attempting to compile and describe a list of books must, of course, endure the process of researching, finding, comparing, and collating the books they will inevitably list. But this process is iterative, littered with changes of mind, inconsistencies to be corrected, and ever more information to be found, documented, and described. This process is aided in the case of the bibliographer by the institutions that can support the exploration and documentation of bibliographic data—primarily academic research libraries and archives that have invested in amassing collections. Institutions and the people that work within them can affect the bibliographer in the course of the creation of an enumerated list. The bibliographer's work is complemented and complicated by the institutions, what they hold, their bibliographic data, and the expertise of their staff. This relationship, however, is not unidirectional, passing from the institution to the bibliographer. Institutions themselves can be affected by the work of the bibliographer, when it is revealed where their own collections stand amongst the compilation of titles that exist, particularly when such institutions have invested time into the production of a bibliography.

This chapter will look more closely at Lyle Wright and the composition of *American Fiction*. More specifically, I will address the composition of the first volume of the bibliography, *American Fiction, 1774-1850* (1939), and the relationship Wright formed with the American Antiquarian Society (AAS), one of the most significant libraries of early American materials in the U.S. The AAS was an early supporter of Wright's research; they provided Wright with access to their vast catalog but also vouched for Wright's project as a valuable contribution to bibliography and lit-

erary history. Wright was both affected by and affected the American Antiquarian Society, and those effects persisted for decades after the publication of the final volume, even continuing after Wright's death in 1979. Even now, Wright's legacy persists in terms not just of the holdings of the AAS, but the digital presence of the AAS in terms of its online catalog MARC records and the North American Imprints Program (NAIP) the AAS has maintained to the present day.<sup>1</sup> Through the archival materials found at the AAS, I will argue that the relationship between Wright and the AAS fundamentally informed the data of *American Fiction* and its representation. The AAS, in turn, had its collections informed by Wright after the publication of *American Fiction*, and went so far as to use Wright's work as a guideline for the development of the institution's fiction holdings. The result of which has had an effect on the ways scholars can and do interact with the titles described by the Wright. This chapter will trace the narrative of Wright's connection to the AAS, its people, and its collections. I will begin with discussing Wright's earliest communication with the AAS, primarily its head librarian, Robert. G. Vail, when *American Fiction* was simply an idea, and go to the publication of the first volume. After that, I will look at how the AAS adopted and worked with Wright's bibliography, and incorporated it into their mission and daily life.

To begin, let us first examine the AAS and its history. The American Antiquarian Society represents one of most prominent institutions that supports American cultural research and preservation. The Society itself was founded by Isaiah Thomas in 1812, and its library is located in Worcester, MA. Thomas' original petition for the establishment of the AAS as an institution denotes a future idea of the both the purpose of the society and its values as an institution. As Philip F. Gura reports, those in favor of the establishment of an American Antiquarian Society were "influenced by a desire to contribute to the advancement of the Arts and Sciences, and to aid, by their individual, and united efforts in collecting, and preserving such materials, as may be useful in making their progress" and "wish[ed] also to assist the researches of the future historians of our country."<sup>2</sup> The

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1. MARC, or Machine Readable Cataloging Record, is a standard for recording and displaying bibliographic information about a library holding that is easily digestible and configurable for digital databases and online catalogs of library holdings.

2. Philip F. Gura, *The American Antiquarian Society, 1812-2012 : a bicentennial history*. Philip F. Gura (Worcester, Mass. : American Antiquarian Society, 2012., 2012), 19, ISBN: 978-1-929545-

foresight of the statement recognizes the capacity of the institution to inform future scholars; historical associations, libraries, and collections have a perpetual influence on scholarship, both as the institution itself grows and as more and more scholars come to make use of the materials the institution holds. Inherent to this desire of the founders of promoting American scholarship is the fact that the labor of librarians and collectors is necessary to ensuring that future scholarship can be done.<sup>3</sup>

In 1937, as Wright was in the initial stages of creating *American Fiction*, The AAS celebrated its 125th anniversary since its founding. The annual report for 1937 includes a statement by the Director of the AAS at the time, Clarence S. Brigham, who declares the chief reason for the society's founding was the "far-seeing realization" that scholars of American history and culture would emerge in the New Republic. Brigham points to an undisclosed 1814 "Report" that says: "The philosopher and the historian, or any to whom the Library of this Society may be useful, will not greatly regret the distance which separates them from the objects of their pursuit, if they can but eventually obtain in one place, what, otherwise, they would have to seek in many."<sup>4</sup> Brigham's citation points to a key similarity between bibliographies and libraries. Both aggregate materials

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65-0. Gura's source is a copy of the petition found in the AAS Archives. See American Antiquarian Society, *An Account of the American Antiquarian Society, Incorporated, Oct. 24, 1812 ...* [in en] (Isaiah Thomas, 1813), 11-14 for a transcription of the petition.

3. The current mission statement presented by the AAS makes an appeal to a broad audience. It not only limits its mission to professional scholarship, but promises to serve anyone who may have an interest, professional or otherwise, in American history:

Our mission is to collect, preserve, and make available for study the printed record of what is now the United States of America from first European settlement through the year 1876. As a learned society, we offer a wide variety of programs for diverse audiences including: professional scholars, pre-collegiate, undergraduate and graduate level students and educators, professional artists and writers, genealogists, and the general public. *Mission Statement* [in en], Text, March 2017, accessed September 27, 2017, <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/mission-statement>

The appeal to an audience beyond the academy not only reinforces a more humanitarian view of education in American history, but also reveals how large a possible impact an institution can have via its collections.

4. Clarence S. Brigham, "Report of the Council," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 47 (1937), 6.

from many places in order to make them available in a single, more easily accessible location. The institution creates a physical space where a catalog of materials may be found while the bibliography compiles its information into a printed volume (that is then stored in the physical space of the library). In this light, the fact that the AAS would invest in the initial stages of *American Fiction*'s is less surprising. Wright, as a bibliographer, and the AAS shared a similar goal in this sense of wanting to make more accessible information about American culture. The work Wright was doing aligned with the desires of the AAS in realizing both the practical use to scholarship the aggregation of materials offers to scholars. It is important to recognize here the connections between the AAS and Wright, as it helps us to understand how *American Fiction* came into existence. The implied connection between the goals of Wright and the AAS helps us to understand why the early days of Wright's work were supported so enthusiastically by the AAS. And this support was crucial, because it ultimately shaped the project as a whole, and quite possibly, if not for the people of the AAS, *American Fiction* may never have gotten the support it did.

### **3.2 Wright and Vail**

One of the most significant figures in the early days of Wright's work was Robert G. Vail, the head librarian of the AAS from 1930 to 1939. Vail was a veteran in the library world and in bibliography, while Wright was relatively young, serving as an assistant bibliographer at the Huntington Library during this time. Vail's position at the AAS was relatively short, but a key period for the Society. Coming from the New York Public Library, Vail was hired to be the head librarian of the AAS in 1930. According to Gura, the allure of the AAS to Vail at the time had been the possibility of expanding collections, something that was not a priority at the time for the NYPL. The Society had a reputation for "significant acquisitions" but that would not be the reality of Vail's time at the AAS. As the Depression was affecting the nation, Vail found himself limited in his ability to acquire new materials, relying more on donations in this period rather than purchasing power.<sup>5</sup>

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5. Gura mentions that, while the Society's financial security was more precarious during the decade, the Depression did oddly benefit the Society in some ways however, as booksellers lowered their prices and seemingly desperate donations by private citizens helped to support continued

But these circumstances served to benefit Vail in terms of allowing him the ability to complete his own projects, and even moreso, Wright and others benefitted from Vail's ability to commit time and energy to their requests and needs.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the correspondence that exists between Vail and Wright, considering Vail's penchant for writing longer correspondences, is a byproduct of the increased ability for Vail to commit to the more personal service aspects of the library professions over those that acquisitions would demand. Adding to Vail's prestige, not just as a head librarian, was that fact that he had taken part in several bibliographical projects, as the lead in finishing a twenty-seven volume bibliography of North American print, Sabin's *Bibliotheca Americana*. Joseph Sabin, the original compiler of the *Americana* had died in 1881, before completing the twentieth volume of the *Americana*. The task of finishing Sabin's work had originally been assumed by Wilberforce Eames, another well-known bibliographer of American material, but Vail eventually joined the project as a collaborator and became the lead for volumes twenty-two through twenty-seven.<sup>7</sup> In addition to completing Sabin's work, Vail had previously committed time to enumerating every edition of Susanna Rowson's 1791 novel *Charlotte Temple* (a resource Wright would use), and was beginning to put together a bibliography of "Indian captivity narratives" as he called them.<sup>8</sup>

Given both his position at the AAS and involvement with the *Bibliotheca Americana*, it was natural that Vail was one of the first people Wright reached out to when he began to think about creating *American Fiction*. Over the years of correspondence, the two became not just professional acquaintances but friends as well. Wright respected Vail's input and would eventually make

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collections development. Gura, *The American Antiquarian Society, 1812-2012*, 225

6. Ibid., 220-3, 225, 231.

7. Sabin's *Bibliotheca Americana* is still considered a major resource for American research, as it combines historical documents, philosophical treatises, and literary works into a massive collection of over 100,000 titles covering the years 1500 to 1926. The bibliography is also notable because it is multilingual and international in scope. Currently, Lindsay Van Tine, a fellow at the Library Company of Philadelphia, is working on creating a digital repository of the *Americana* titles.

8. R. W. G. Vail, *Susanna Haswell Rowson, the Author of Charlotte Temple: A Bibliographical Study* (Worcester, Massachusetts, U.S.A: Published by the Society, 1933); R. W. G. Vail, *The Voice of the Old Frontier*, Publications / A.S.W. Rosenbach Fellowship in Bibliography Fund (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949).

decisions about the structure and contents of his bibliography based on Vail's influence, the title included. Vail was a consistent supporter and encouraging force for Wright as he was composing his first volume. Wright initiated the conversation with Vail in a letter dated June 24, 1933, wherein he discussed the idea of making a bibliography. His first message is short, but reveals the fact that *American Fiction* was not always Wright's ambition. He states that in fact his original idea for a bibliography would have been the eighteenth-century British novel, which could have included American editions, however, as Wright states, the idea was "'nipped in the bud' by a Mr. Block of England."<sup>9</sup> His first choice of subject seemingly unviable, Wright pitches the idea of a bibliography of American literature, but asks Vail whether or not anyone else is compiling a similar list, and, more importantly, how far into the nineteenth-century a bibliography of American novels should extend. At this point, Wright and Vail seemingly have no connection to each other, and it was likely just Vail's prestigious position that made him a good candidate for Wright's questions rather than any bond or previous relationship at this point.

Vail's June 29 response, however, is effusive and self-admittedly "rambling", as his reply is a dense two pages in which he states to Wright that "it is high time that someone tackled the fiction bibliography."<sup>10</sup> Vail points to Wright's predecessor in American Bibliography, Oscar Wegelin and his *Early American Fiction, 1774-1830*, commenting that the work is "so inadequate."<sup>11</sup> Vail theorizes that many graduate students must be "floundering" in an attempt to compile an American fiction bibliography, but claims that Wright is well-suited to the job since he has both bibliographic training and the Huntington Library and its resources to lend support. The final notes of the letter, however, offer practical advice as well, commanding Wright that should he take up the project, to publicize it and notify the major research libraries so as to stake his claim. In response to Wright's request for an adequate range of years for the bibliography, Vail responds,

I hope you will include everything in fiction form separately published, and would

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9. Lyle H. Wright, *Letter to Robert Vail*, Typed, June 1933. The work Wright alludes to would seem to be Andrew Block, *The English novel, 1740-1850 ; A Catalogue Including Prose Romances, Short Stories, and Translations of Foreign Fiction* (London: Grafton, 1939).

10. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*, Typed, June 1933.

11. Ibid.

almost think that it should go down to 1840 or 1850, certainly to the former date...there is a mass of early attempts at novels between 1830 and 1850 which are valuable as literary history and which should not be ignored. If you feel that the task is too large, and it certainly would be a huge one in any case, you might stop at 1830.<sup>12</sup>

Vail reveals his own bibliographical stance here, as he discusses what he believes Wright's bibliography could do. What Vail calls "early attempts at novels" he considers an important part of literary history regardless of their literary merit. It is the job of the bibliographer to account for and keep in scholarly consciousness these works because they are a part of the developing literary culture of early America. Vail's role as a librarian would dictate a concern for the quantity of works that exist and possess the ability to be described, listed, cataloged, and subsequently used by scholars. This is in opposition to the works of literary scholars such as Quinn and O'Neill who reduce the field to canonical names based on a metric of quality, self-admittedly making no attempt at endeavoring for a comprehensive bibliography of the subject.<sup>13</sup> Vail complements his ideal bibliography with the more practical suggestion of only covering up to 1830, which would do the main task of overwriting Wegelin's "inadequate" work that covered 1774 to 1830, replacing it with what Vail hopes is Wright's more comprehensive record of American fiction. Wright goes forward with the initial suggestion of covering up to 1850, and eventually pursuing more than even Vail idealized by extending *American Fiction* to three volumes and to the year 1900.

When Wright resumed the discussion of the bibliography with Vail in his 27 November 1936 letter, he provides Vail with some of the preliminary ideas for the format of the bibliography amidst some questions about the practicalities of traveling to Worcester, MA and navigating the materials housed at the AAS. Wright tells Vail that he would indeed take the bibliography up to 1850, in concordance with Vail's ideal and despite the warnings and challenge. Wright's model in this letter described titles simply and unadorned by trickier or more advanced bibliographic detail: "Author, title, imprint, format, collation, annotation, notes (only those absolutely necessary), census." This was in stark contrast to the norms of the time for bibliographers, especially in the midst of the New

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12. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*.

13. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*, Typed, December 1936.

Bibliography as discussed in the last chapter. While the description of books could be complicated and detailed, Wright's own model would hold back on advanced bibliographical details in favor of a more accessible form of description that gave those outside of the field of bibliography the information they needed more quickly. Wright did not anticipate including items such as the kind of type, differences in the title lines, the collation formulas, or description of the type ornaments.<sup>14</sup> These sorts of details were esoteric and readers outside of bibliography would not necessarily have the training needed to understand the information. Wright's more narrow descriptions would include only the relevant bibliographical information that he had decided upon after discussion with "several librarians and research men."<sup>15</sup> To this Vail adds his own advice at Wright's prompting, including a few interesting rationales for Wright's decisions:

Regarding the form of your bibliography I think it is admirable as you outline it. I think that it is unnecessary in these days of the use of the photostat to go into all the horrible details of minute bibliographical description. It is more important to give a brief author, title, imprint, size, and collation with locations of copies than to describe each item as though it were a piece of incunabula. However, when you find an absolutely unique item, it would naturally call for a more detailed description...I do not think that you can lay down a hard and fast set of rules for any bibliography. I think in general your format is splendid, but I would expect you to vary it for an occasional difficult entry.<sup>16</sup>

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14. These elements are common in advanced bibliographical descriptions of texts and attempt to give as replete an account of the physical properties of a text as possible. While detailed and give a precise account of the text helpful to understanding the circumstances of a text's printing, Wright did not foresee *American Fiction* as necessarily performing the same role as an intricate descriptive bibliography.

15. Lyle H. Wright, *Letter to Robert Vail*, Typed, November 1936.

16. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*, Typed, December 1936 Vail also includes in this section his distaste for the Library of Congress Union Catalog codes to reference libraries. The Union Catalog Code provided a standardized list of ways to refer to libraries when, for example, listing them in a census. The codes are sometimes not entirely intuitive. For example, the code for the American Antiquarian Society is MWA, referencing geographic location, Massachusetts-Worcester-American Antiquarian with its code, rather than AAS, which Wright and other bibliographers employ.



Vail agrees with Wright in terms of presenting a more simplified description than was usual at the time for bibliographic entries. Interestingly, the foundation of Vail's agreement is in the technological advancement of the photostat, which would allow, as Vail infers, the evaluation of the various items that Wright would be excluding from his descriptions (i.e. the kinds of types and ornaments) with more precision than they perhaps would for the incunabula that bibliographers whose concerns are focused on texts that precede American publishing practices. Vail's suggestion here is positive in its view of technology, proposing that a photocopy of a text is an adequate stand in for the text itself. This view would come to be criticized by G. Thomas Tanselle, who, noting the unstable nature of the text, argues that a photocopy of a text constitutes an entirely new text and so unsuitable as evidence in bibliographical description.<sup>17</sup> But Vail's point of view is directed towards the idea of an enumerative bibliography, whose aims are not that of an analytical or descriptive bibliography. Vail understands that the nature of Wright's list would be to aggregate and demonstrate the breadth of American fiction, not in attempting to describe the manufacture and construction of books, but of their existence in the first place, their accessibility (via the census), and to place them amongst each other without the weight of literary history's value judgments (such as Quinn prescribes in his work). On the other hand, Vail's approval of simplified description also suggests an acknowledgment of the labor involved in compiling a bibliography, which is understandable given his firsthand knowledge of this labor he himself had put into completing Sabin's *Bibliotheca Americana* and his other, smaller bibliographies. The exclusion of more advanced bibliographical details would involve more time and labor that would get in the way of the limited time that Wright would have to visit multiple libraries while still employed by the Huntington Library. What Vail sees in Wright's method, then, is the simplicity of his descriptions as they fit into the acknowledged standard of publishing and the bibliographical information that makes accessing and finding texts feasible, with the only allowances for variation from that standard being books that are "absolutely unique" and "difficult" to describe.

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17. See G. Thomas Tanselle, "Reproductions and Scholarship," *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989): 25–54, ISSN: 0081-7600, accessed January 1, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/stable/40371897>

Amusingly, however, these early communications also reveal that there was some misunderstanding between the two. At the time of Wright's tenure at the Huntington Library, there were in fact two L. Wrights employed by the library. The other Wright was Louis Booker Wright, a member of the Huntington Library's research staff, and who would eventually become the director of the Folger Library in 1948. Lyle Wright, however, was at the time of his writing to Vail one of the assistant bibliographers. After Vail had mentioned in a letter that Wright would meet Arthur Hobson Quinn at the Modern Language Association's 1937 annual meeting, Wright realized that Vail did not know who he was talking to.<sup>18</sup> The mention of the MLA meeting revealed to Lyle Wright that Vail believed he was corresponding with Louis B. Wright. Thus, Vail's apparent lauding of Wright's abilities is directed moreso towards the man whom he thought he was speaking to, more of a peer, than the (at the time) less impressive Lyle Wright. Yet, oddly, when Wright corrects the misunderstanding and reveals that he is a different Wright from Louis B. Wright, Vail does not retract his claims, and continues to support the idea of Lyle Wright's pursuit of American fiction.

Wright was by no means a novice to compiling a bibliography. Previous to *American Fiction*, Wright had compiled for the Huntington Library a bibliography of "sporting books", that is, titles that contained references to various sports.<sup>19</sup> This list was not limited to either American titles or fictional ones, though it did contain fiction. The work was the only published Wright bibliography before *American Fiction* and consisted of a more narrow scope in terms of its goals though it did still contain 1344 entries. One review particularly praises the work and Wright's bibliographical ability; written by Virgil Heltzel, the review says, "The care, the accuracy, the excellent bibliographical method employed, the printing, and the general appearance of this work make it worthy of the institution from which it has come."<sup>20</sup> While not publishing as widely as the eminent

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18. Lyle H. Wright, *Letter to Robert Vail*, Typed, December 1936.

19. Lyle Henry Wright, ed., *Sporting Books in the Huntington Library*, Huntington library lists, no. 2 (San Marino, Calif: Huntington Library, 1937).

20. Virgil B. Heltzel, "Review of Sporting Books in the Huntington Library," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 37, no. 1 (1938): 123–124, ISSN: 0363-6941, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/stable/27704369>.

bibliographers of his day (i.e. Bowers or Pollard), Wright's bibliographical skill was evident to Vail, given some of the early communication between them that did not concern American fiction. As assistant bibliographer, Wright provided Vail with several bibliographical descriptions, including collations, that Vail had requested as he was completing his work with Sabin. A letter from Wright to Vail dated 14 Oct. 1936 includes collations of the Huntington's two copies of *Zionitischer Weyrauch's Hagel, oder Myrrhen Berg*.<sup>21</sup> Included with the descriptions of the text, Wright notes that both copies should be classified as variants because the signature B was, in one copy, bound incorrectly, causing the pages to be out of order. The other copy had entirely reset the type in that signature to correct the mistake.<sup>22</sup> Wright's collations were included by Vail in the Sabin entry alongside Wright's conjectures as to the discrepancies between the two different Huntington copies of the text, pointing to the institution directly.<sup>23</sup> The *Zionitischer* collations are the most obvious examples of Wright's involvement and bibliographic contributions to Vail's completion of the *Bibliotheca Americana*, though in an 5 Oct. 1936, Wright provides six other collations for Vail's Sabin work.<sup>24</sup> Regardless of the case of mistaken identity, Wright had proved his expertise in the field to Vail before, and this is perhaps why Vail never retracted his support for *American Fiction*.

In a February 2, 1937 letter from Wright to Vail, Wright reveals where he is in the thought of titling the project that would become *American Fiction*:

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21. A 1739 German hymn book. Printed in Germantown, PA. Sabin no. 106364.

22. Lyle H. Wright, *Letter to Robert Vail*, Typed, October 1936.

23. Joseph Sabin and R. W. G. Vail, eds., *Bibliotheca America: Books Relating to America from Its Discovery to the Present Time.*, vol. 29, Bibliotheca Americana (New York: Bibliographical Society of America, 1936).

24. The six titles are 1. Los Imparicales [pseud.], *Examen del merito que puedan tener los fundamentos con que se ha declarado nulo el prestamo de ciento treinta mil libras esterlinas*, 1839 2. Young, Robert, *The Dying Criminal*, n.d. 3. Young, Robert, *The Last Words and Dying Speech*, n.d. 4. *Yndemnisacion Plena de Don Isidoro Palacio, en la Revolucion de la Guarnicion de Apan*, 1820 5. *Constution and Bye-Laws, of the York County Conference of Churches, as revised and presented to the Conference at its semi-annual meeting in Acton, Oct. 1, 1839*, 1840 6. *American Husbandry : Containing an Account of the Soil, Climate, Production and Agriculture, Of The British Colonies In North-America and the West-Indies ; With Observations on the Advantages and Disadvantages of settling in them, compared with Great Britain and Ireland*, 1775

I have been reading Professor Quinn's book. I do not agree with him on many points, but then, I am not a professor. The book has forced me to the conclusion that to avoid trouble with the purists I will have to call my work a bibliography of American fiction. This will handle nicely Amelia; or, the Faithless Britain, an original novel, 1787, even though "it is hardly that."<sup>25</sup>

The book in question is Arthur Hobson Quinn's *American Fiction: An Historical and Critical Survey* (1936). This brief paragraph is in a reply to Vail about Wright's upcoming visit to the AAS in the midst of composing what would become the first volume of *American Fiction*. Wright's reading of Quinn was the responsibility of Vail himself, who had written "Prof. Quinn?" in the margin of Wright's initial 27 November 1936 letter about his AAS visit and the work he had begun on the bibliography. In two replies to Wright, dated 4 Dec. and 12 Dec. of 1936, Vail makes mention of Quinn's recent work at the AAS, but more importantly he iterates how much more suited Wright would be to the job of compiling a bibliography of American Literature than Quinn, and his associate, Edward H. O'Neill:<sup>26</sup>

It would be a shame to have two of you working on the same project. I think you would do a very much better job of it than Mr. O'Neill, who has enthusiasm but not library training for the job. He has done a good deal of work here and though he seems to accomplish a great deal, I do not think he is very accurate and any digging he does would have to be verified. This, of course is between ourselves.<sup>27</sup>

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25. Lyle H. Wright, *Letter to Robert Vail*, Typed, February 1937.

26. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*; Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright* O'Neill is thanked in the credits of Quinn's *American Fiction*. O'Neill was a scholar of biography; in 1935 he published *A History of American Biography, 1800-1935*. See Edward Hayes O'Neill, *A History of American Biography, 1800-1935* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1935), <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001598321>. Shortly after the publication of Wright I, O'Neill contributed his own subject bibliography of American biographies: Edward H. O'Neill, *Biography by Americans, 1658-1936* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939), accessed August 10, 2017, <http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/1436.html>

27. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*. While damning of O'Neill's abilities, it seems Vail would be correct in his assertion. In a review of O'Neill's *Biography by Americans, 1658-1936* by Milton Halsey Thomas, he states that a bibliography of biographies by Americans could be valu-

The importance of these exchanges, including Wright's mistaken identity, the reading of Quinn's work, and Vail's praise is that it reveals how much of an effect the AAS and its members had on Wright and the composition of *American Fiction*. As stated, Vail's recommendation of Quinn's work to Wright became the deciding factor for the bibliography's final title. The choice of "fiction" over "novel" as Wright was initially intending demonstrates a few particular ideas about how both Wright was conceiving of his bibliography, and how he took the feedback and information given to him that helped form the sense and purpose of his work. Quinn represented to Wright the sort of "purist" idea of what a novel was, that is, for Quinn, the definition of a novel was a work that seemingly dealt with more than one series of incidents, rather than a single event. When Quinn declares that while a work such as *Amelie* has the word "novel" on its title page, "it is hardly that" because despite the estimated 7000 words Quinn notes, the story covers only a single event. Quinn's own decision to use "fiction" over "novel" in his title is justified by liminal cases such as *Amelie* that can neither be, under Quinn's definitions, a novel, but also not a short story due to its "lack of characterization."<sup>28</sup>

Wright's own notice of the way literary scholars defined genres at the time demonstrates the commitment to making an intervention as a bibliographer into literary historical discussions. It was Vail, however, who noted the possibility for Quinn's book to be effective for Wright. Not simply in terms of semantics, but the recommendation also revealed to Wright the incompleteness of one of the latest bibliographical contributions of American fiction. The recommendation of Quinn as a source of reading for Wright grounded the bibliographer in the current context of American literary scholarship, specifically in how a literary historian would approach the recording of American literary titles. Vail's mention of Wegelin's "inadequate" work as well leaves the same impression.

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able, but O'Neill's work is "neither complete nor indexed" and contains "astonishing" omissions. Milton Halsey Thomas, "Biography by Americans, 1658–1936: A Subject Bibliography. By Edward H. O'Neill. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 1939. Pp. x, 465. \$4.00.)," *The American Historical Review* 45, no. 4 (July 1940): 889–890, ISSN: 0002-8762, accessed August 10, 2017, doi:10.1093/ahr/45.4.889, <https://academic.oup.com/ahr/article/45/4/889/87957/Biography-by-Americans-1658-1936-A-Subject>

28. Arthur Hobson Quinn, *American Fiction ; An Historical and Critical Survey* (New York, London : D. Appleton Century company, incorporated, [1936], 1936), 5-6.

In both cases it becomes important to demonstrate to Wright the limited capacity of previous attempts, and why exactly it is "high time" that someone tackled American literary fiction.

The decision of Wright to visit the AAS would seem, at first, obvious. In the 1930s the AAS was the foremost archive of early American materials. As Wright was beginning to work on his first volume, Vail was finishing the final volume, 29, of Joseph Sabin's *Bibliotheca Americana*, as mentioned earlier, and would go on to work on finishing Charles Evans' *American Bibliography*.<sup>29</sup> When Wright was finally able to leave the Huntington to travel to other institutions in April of 1937, he tells Vail he intends on spending most of his time with the Society, a full two months out of his anticipated three month leave.<sup>30</sup> Vail insists that the AAS itself would fill out most of the bibliography, suggesting that Wright would find "more titles here than in any other collection."<sup>31</sup> The AAS did indeed supply Wright with many of his titles, as evidenced by a checklist sent to the AAS in the final proofing stages of the first edition of Wright I. On the checklist, the AAS marked itself as owning 737 of the 2239 titles listed in this preliminary document, or roughly 33 percent. Vail had predicted Wright would find approximately three-fourths of his pre-1820 titles at the AAS, and this estimate holds mostly true, with the gaps of the AAS mostly being after 1820.<sup>32</sup>

Wright's tone towards Vail turns significantly more casual after his travels in the east. He continues to stay in touch with Vail even after the visit and continues to receive information from Vail that would aid him in the compilation of Wright I.<sup>33</sup> In his first letter to Vail since arriving back

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29. Evans' *American Bibliography* is a fourteen-volume bibliography that focused on books, pamphlets, and periodicals published in the United States between 1639 and 1820. It has lost some prestige since its publication because of Evans' many omissions and his tendency to list titles that do not exist.

30. Lyle H. Wright, *Letter to Robert Vail*, Typed, February 1937; Lyle H. Wright, *Letter to Robert Vail*, Typed, November 1936.

31. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*, Typed, February 1937 In Vail's 29 June 1933 reply to Wright's initial broaching of the topic of an American fiction bibliography, Vail also boasts of the AAS' collections: "As our library probably contains three-fourths of all the titles published up to 1820 or later, you would doubtless make a good many discoveries here." Vail does temper this claim by revealing the uncertainty of the then uncatalogued collections beyond 1820, which he also in the same letter was suggesting that Wright go beyond, but Vail's certainty as to the importance of the AAS to Wright's project remained consistent over the course of the compiling and publishing of Wright I.

32. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*, Typed, June 1933.

33. While outside the scope of this chapter, Vail's help would continue after the publication of

in California, Wright begins the document with the informal "Back home and broke." This letter additionally contains more personal sentiments, as Wright, apparently responding to a situation that developed either in his time at the AAS or in the course of an earlier letter, writes, "I trust Mrs. Vail is well along the road to good health." These moments of congeniality between Wright and Vail temper the rigidity of the bibliographical information the two trade as Wright is finishing his first volume. Previous letters displayed a direct approach in discussing bibliographic matters, but the turn the letters take after Wright's visit to the AAS suggest a relationship that has moved beyond the strict formalities of business.

As Wright was sending out the initial checklist for various institutions to review, he sought help from Vail in finding titles for the prolific Osgood Bradbury, who had him "going in circles."<sup>34</sup> The phrasings shared between the two are informal and friendly as much as they are business; Vail responds to the request: "Did you ever read Mark Twain's 'Punch, Brother, Punch'? If so, you will realize what you have done to me in sicking me on Osgood Bradbury."<sup>35</sup> Vail writes of Bradbury, "We have not a thing in our Library by him and I can find no record of his writings outside of the LC Catalog and two entries in Williamson's Bibliography of Maine, Volume I, p. 186." Vail then lists Bradbury's *Metallak* (1844) and *The Four Elders of Maine* (1856) with a mention of possible title, "Empress of Beauty." What Vail can supply however is some biographical information instead of bibliographical, noting that Bradbury was a member of the Maine legislature in 1838-9, married Mary M. Dinmore, and died at "nearly 90" years old.<sup>36</sup> While Vail is remorseful that he could not supply more bibliographical information to Wright, the response he gets is both cheerful and the first volume of *American Fiction* and inevitably help Wright as he began to work on the second volume a decade later.

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34. Lyle H. Wright, *Letter to Robert Vail*, Typed, December 1937.

35. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*, Typed, December 1937 Vail omits an S in the title. The correct title is "Punch, Brothers, Punch" (1876) or alternatively titled "A Literary Nightmare." The story tells of a musical jingle that gets lodged into the mind of the tormented narrator until they are able to pass it to a friend, who in turn is tortured by the continuous presence of the song in his mind until he can unload it onto a group of "poor, unthinking students" at a university. Vail, by his description, had undergone a similar monomania. The piece originally appeared in the February issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. See item 3365 in Jacob Blanck, *Bibliography of American Literature.*, vol. 2 (New Haven : Yale University Press, 1955)

36. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*.

boastful.

Wright responds on Dec. 29, 1937, opening with a colloquial "Man, oh, Man! Did you hand me a nice present in your last letter." Here was Wright's time to show off his own bibliographical skills. Wright hinges on Vail's mention of the Bradbury titles recorded in Williamson's Maine bibliography (despite the fact that he was a "Massachusetts Man") and argues the case for the fact that the AAS possesses four of Wright's sixteen total record titles by Bradbury. Narrating a story of finding an old Library of Congress catalog card for a title "The Spanish Pirate" that had been attributed to Bradbury and subsequently then looking for the title page in the copyright offices in order to verify the attribution. The title page does not name Bradbury, but instead claims "by the author of "Helen Clarence, "Julia Bicknell, "Emily Mansfield, "The eastern belle" [sic]. Following the same "by the author" statement on the *The Eastern Belle* led Wright to the *Mysteries of Boston*, of which the AAS did hold a copy. Since the Maine bibliography provided Wright additional titles, and one of them possessing the same characters as *Mysteries of Boston*, Wright concludes from following the string of "by the author" statements on title pages a list of potential Bradbury titles, several being in the possession of the AAS.<sup>37</sup> Wright's thesis here assumes the fact that the two titles, *Mysteries of Boston* and *Louise Kempton*, share the same characters means they are by the same author. With this trail of evidence presented, Wright defers to Vail's judgment as to whether such an assumption is fallacious or viable.

Vail affirms Wright's conclusions, however, and with Vail's validation, Wright assigns the anonymous titles to Bradbury.<sup>38</sup> Within Wright I, Bradbury receives twenty-seven entries, all the ones included in the written list in Figure 2.1 being included aside from *Ellen, the Pride of Broadway* and *Julia Mansfield*, as they were published after 1850. What we can learn, however, from this is that the process and the labor by which these titles enter the bibliography come from a sustained conversation and relationship that has built up over time, rather than the isolated work of a bibliographer in an archive. The case of Bradbury, as the other decisions Wright has made in terms of composition of his work are rooted in the suggestions and advice of Vail, whom he not

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37. Lyle H. Wright, *Letter to Robert Vail*, Typed, December 1937.

38. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*, Typed, January 1938.



Fiction by Osgood Bradbury  
 (Lyle Wright has 16 titles by him)

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Spanish pirate - 1845  
 Helen Clarence  
 Julia Bicknell  
 Emily Mansfield  
 Eastern belle  
 AAS Mysteries of Boston 1844  
 AAS Belle of the Bowery - 1846  
 AAS Louise Kempton 1844  
 AAS Mysteries of Lowell 1844  
 Metallak  
 Empress of beauty

These  
2 have  
same  
characters

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Ellen. The pride of Broadway  
 N.Y. F.A. Brady, 1865. 8vo. paper  
 (Kelly, Supp. Amer. cat, 1866, p. 24)

Julia Mansfield; or, the fate of  
 ambitious mothers. N.Y.  
 Dick + Fitzgerald. 8vo. paper.  
 (Amer. cat. 1880)

Manita. Boston, 1848 - LC  
 Isabelle " " - LC

Figure 3.1: Writing on the back of Wright's 12 Dec. 1937 letter recording the names of titles and AAS' holdings of Osgood Bradbury titles.

only trusted but also actively sought advice from as both an individual and the head librarian of a major American materials archive. Both Vail's status as well as his own bibliographical ideologies suffused the Wright bibliography, affecting some of its basic premises in terms of its definition of fiction, scope, and exclusions. In the two revisions of Wright I (1948 and 1969), the Bradbury titles listed remain unmodified save the inclusion of numerical identifiers and the addition of more Bradbury titles; at no point are the original titles appended to Bradbury by Wright removed or ascribed to different authors.<sup>39</sup>

Wright's claims here are uncontested insofar as his attributions for Bradbury are concerned. Wright's inferential work concerning these anonymous titles is treated as an authoritative statement. Wright was helped to his conclusion by Vail and the AAS' resources, but the AAS benefited from this exchange. Currently, the AAS respects Wright's designations, and their own cataloging recognizes Bradbury as the author of these works, but does not note that many of the texts attributed to Bradbury are printed with the author's name absent. Thus, Wright's descriptions have, for the purposes of the AAS' cataloging, superseded the physical evidence of the texts themselves for both librarians and the researchers who locate these works, and are read as declarations, rather than arguments. The AAS' cataloging encodes in their records Wright's claims and thus subjects researchers to it when they happen upon the Bradbury titles and seek more information. These researchers, if relying upon the data provided by the AAS, are able to locate the source of the MARC record's information, as the Wright number for those listed in Wright I and II are provided for most entries. Should scholars wish to expand beyond the AAS' designation, however, they would still meet with Wright's influence, as his designations would be found in Gale Cengage's dataset "Crime, Punishment, and Popular Culture, 1790-1920," which the AAS records link to for

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39. Worth noting is that the foundation of Wright's argument involves assuming the presence of the same characters between *Louise Kempton* and *Mysteries of Boston*. In the first revision of Wright I, a second edition of *Louise Kempton* is noted as found in the collections of Yale's James T. Babb. Wright's description of this edition does not note that the edition is printed as anonymous, thereby possibly proving Wright's assumption correct should he have found a copy of *Louise* that listed Bradbury as author. However, based on Yale's MARC record for this particular edition (no. 385 in Wright I 1948) the edition is also anonymous and merely gives a "by the author of" statement in place of Bradbury's name despite what Wright's description would hint.

several Bradbury titles.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, attempting to find copies of such works beyond the AAS in a repository such as Hathitrust, would bring up facsimiles of editions of works such as *Louise Kempton* (1844) or the *Belle and the Bowery* (1846) that are anonymous, but attributed to Osgood Bradbury in their metadata and their search results despite the lack of the author's name on the pieces.<sup>41</sup> But while in the case of Bradbury, Vail serves as an identifiable source from which the explanation and verification of Wright's claims, and the subsequent adoption of those claims by institutions, he is not the lone actor in Wright's adoption and proliferation of his contributions to bibliography, and American literary history. The AAS formally worked with Wright's materials from the beginning as a means of incorporating his work into their own mission and means of framing their collections. Vail as one of the original supporters of Wright's work is instrumental in the creation of *American Fiction*, but the organization for which he spoke, was no less interested in his work.

### 3.3 Traces of Wright in the Reading Room

The AAS would remain involved in the production of Lyle Wright's work after he returned to the Huntington and began the process of composing *American Fiction*. Wright would rely on AAS librarians to help amend the first volume of *American Fiction* as he was revising and sorting through the wealth of titles and descriptions he had accumulated in his research travels. It was as Wright was composing the first volume that a shift in the relationship between Wright and the AAS occurred. Now that Wright had acquired the information he needed and was arranging it, the AAS was able to use his work as a resource for improving their cataloging and holdings. Similar to the

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40. See for the example the AAS online catalog for Bradbury's *Julia Bicknell; or, Love and Murder* (1845, Wright no. 381). The physical text is anonymous save for a "by the author of" statement. This text is, nevertheless, still attributed to Bradbury based on the logic supplied by Wright. The text is further shown to be in Gale's "Crime and Punishment" dataset and linked therein with the same bibliographical information as supplied by the AAS, thus proliferating Wright's designations beyond a singular institution. Catalog Record #189975, accessed October 18, 2017. <https://catalog.mwa.org/vwebv/holdingsInfo?bibId=189975>.

41. HathiTrust is an open access repository of digitized texts, mostly drawn from university library holdings. Hathitrust's images of *Louise Kempton* does includes Bradbury's name written in pencil at the top of the title page. See Osgood Bradbury, *Louise Kempton, or, Vice and virtue contrasted* / (Boston : 1844), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/osu.32435017916420>.

case of Bradbury Osgood as discussed in the last section, the AAS would continue to use Wright's work for their own benefit, just as Wright used the AAS for his. The AAS possesses several copies of *American Fiction*, one set of which is present in the AAS Reading Room alongside other notable bibliographies, such as the Sabin *Bibliotheca Americana* or Blanck's *Bibliography of American Literature*. The significance of Wright's presence in the Reading Room is in the fact that the books present there need not be "checked out", but instead may be picked up by scholars working there at will. Most of the works physically present in the Reading Room, instead of in the Society's stacks, are multi-volume bibliographies and reference guides that will help scholars locate works pertaining to the subject of interest to the scholar. Placing Wright in the Reading Room indicates his authority, as determined by the AAS, for scholars working in American literature. But outside of the volumes at hand to scholars, more copies of *American Fiction* exist within the building's interior stacks and those copies bear markings of the AAS, as an institution, reading the copies of Wright and making their own revisions, clarifications, and interpretations of Wright's work.

This section will discuss these copies of Wright that the AAS holds and their position within the Society as tools for both scholarly and institutional use that further cements Wright's contributions as fundamental to the development of American literary collections and, thus, scholarship. The AAS' adoption of Wright as an authority first took the shape of reviewing and using the bibliography as a tool that helped the AAS to navigate its own collections. *American Fiction* aided the AAS in terms of identifying texts the AAS possessed and the classification of those texts (i.e. as either fiction or not). However, Wright's work was also useful in showing how the AAS' collections could be improved and expanded by presenting a list of titles the AAS could pursue. This process began by assisting Wright shortly after he returned to the Huntington to begin compiling *American Fiction*. Beyond supplying Wright access to titles that would be listed in *American Fiction*, the AAS staff would also perform the role of peer-reviewing and editing *American Fiction*'s rough draft, a task that required a significant amount of labor and resources.

In 1938, after Wright had returned from his east coast tour of the various libraries, including Yale and the New York Public library—suggestions of Vail—he prepared a checklist to send to the

various libraries he had visited. Because Wright intended to provide a census of libraries that held a given title in his bibliography, he invited the libraries he had visited to report what titles they held. This checklist, a mimeograph of shortened titles (i.e. not full descriptions) that Wright was planning on adding to the first volume of *American Fiction*, provided a means of not only collecting the information for his census in a systematic way by deferring to the institutions surveyed rather than relying solely on his own notes, but also allowed for institutions to provide feedback for Wright in regards to the titles he intended to list. The checklist includes titles which would eventually be removed for the published version, including Edgar Allan Poe's "The Balloon Hoax" (1844). The checklist as a piece of physical evidence however, shows the ways of engaging with one of the initial drafts of the document that would become *American Fiction*, and demonstrates how much Wright relied upon the people that staffed the AAS in the direct composition of his list as much as he relied upon the texts held there.

The cover page of the document is not dissimilar from the preface of the published volumes of *American Fiction*. It states its purpose clearly though does ask for the information from the AAS staff more explicitly. Under the "Purpose" heading, Wright lays out his expectations for the bibliography:

The bibliography will contain novels and separately published short stories or collections of short stories. It is intended to omit: essays, annuals, folklore, juveniles, American editions of foreign works, jest books, those stories published by religious organizations and fictitious Indian captivities (Mr. Vail has in hand a bibliography of Indian captivities).

The prefaces of the published volumes add and clarify a few more categories of what is excluded in the list: giftbooks, "collections of anecdotes," periodicals, and extra numbers of periodicals are added to the list while the term "religious organizations" becomes the American Tract Society and the Sunday School Union. Wright additionally clarifies that the foreign-born authors included in the published bibliography are included because they "claimed the United States as their home."<sup>42</sup>

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42. Lyle Henry Wright, *American Fiction, 1774-1850: A Contribution Toward A Bibliography*.

The most important statement with regards to the AAS, however, refers to the absence of the fictitious captivity narratives that are excluded categorically from this checklist and subsequently in every volume and edition of *American Fiction*. Wright claims that Vail has "in hand a bibliography of Indian captivities." This claim is disingenuous if not false, as Vail's bibliography of captivity narratives would not be published until 1949 as *Voices of the Old Frontier*. Wright's reference to Vail, however, lends an explanation as to why *American Fiction* would exclude a genre of Early American literature that was immensely popular in its day. In Vail's June 29, 1933 letter to Wright, he explicitly mentions the desire to create such a bibliography after he finishes his work with Sabin and Evans bibliographies.<sup>43</sup> The parenthetical statement on the checklist suggests that Wright's avoidance of describing such a prolific and popular genre of the early Republic is because it would be redundant with Vail's work. The irony, however, is the status of Wright versus Vail's bibliography. While Wright's work has remained influential as a resource, Vail's work is less prevalent. This decision to exclude the captivity narrative outright comes across in the checklist preface as more personal than intellectual, given how close of friends Vail and Wright had become. The consequence of Wright's decision is that *American Fiction* possesses a significant gap in its coverage of titles that necessitates either a scholar's own work to fill in, or cross-referencing with Vail's bibliography (and in that, sorting through the nonfictional titles, poems, letters, and sermons) to fill out a more accurate list of American fiction than what Wright provides. The effect of this is that the holistic idea of American fiction and the bibliography are not coterminous and sometimes that is more for human reasons than soundly logical or objective ones. The absence of captivity narratives, given Wright's suggestion, is rooted in a desire to not make redundant the work of a friend and mentor, rather than an interpretive judgment about captivity narratives.

Beyond the purpose of the bibliography as Wright describes it on the cover to the checklist, he also expresses what it is that he desires of the AAS in this task of reviewing his list:

The compiler will welcome any suggestions, criticisms, or additional material. If an author is offered for an anonymous work, the compiler would appreciate the authority

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(San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Publications, 1939), ix.

43. Robert G. Vail, *Letter to Lyle Wright*.

for the attribution.

If a new title is furnished, information desired is, the author's name, if known, full title and imprint, pagination and format (by foliation).

The following mimeographed list is to be checked and returned to the compiler at the Huntington Library. Needless to say, the accuracy and usefulness of a bibliography containing a census is governed considerably by the cooperation of institutions and individuals. The compiler will appreciate and gratefully acknowledge all aid rendered in this project.

AAS librarians who reviewed this manuscript did what Wright asked of them, labeling each title listed with the easily discernible "AAS" marker in order to inform Wright of their holdings. Figure 2.2 shows a sample page of a copy of the checklist currently held still by the AAS. The copy accessible to Reading Room patrons is pragmatically labeled as a "Second Copy," the first obviously having been returned to Wright. Interestingly, however, this copy is still marked in pencil to annotate the document, rather than mimeographed or carbon copied. The labor originally conducted for the version returned to Wright is also performed, though perhaps not in a perfectly replicated way, on the copy retained by the AAS for its own use, indicating some personal investment on the AAS' part for recording their stake in the bibliography's composition.

From this copy, some instances of that revisions the occurred between the checklist copy and the first edition can be gleaned, several of them at the suggestions of the AAS staff. For a title by Maturin Murray Ballou, *Fanny Campbell; or, the Female Pirate Captain* (1845), the checklist originally includes only an 1845 edition. Penciled under it, however, is the shorthand notation to point the existence of an 1846 edition: — — ‘ ‘ 1846. This additional title is included in the first edition of Wright I with a more complete description that notes a change of publisher and the removal of a pseudonymous author on the title page. The two descriptions for the titles are shown below:

— Fanny Campbell, the Female Pirate Captain. A Tale of

- AAS French, James S. Elksawatawa; or, The prophet of the West. New York, 1836.  
 Friday Christian; or, The first born on Pitcairn's Island. Philadelphia, 1849.  
 Frink, Henry Clay. A low and aloft. Rochester, 1842.  
 AAS Furman, Garrit. Redfield; a Long-Island tale. New York, 1825.  
 Ganilh, Anthony. Ambrosio de Letinez; or, The first Texian. New York, 1842.  
 ---- Mexico versus Texas. Philadelphia, 1838. *with reprod. of title in Freeman auction June 1, 1938, no. 326*  
 AAS Gazer, Giles, pseud. Frederick de Algercy, the hero of Camden Plains. New York, 1825.  
 Gertrude, Mary. Philip Randolph: a tale of Virginia. New York, 1850.  
 Ghost-stories; collected with a particular view to counteract the vulgar belief in ghosts. Philadelphia, 1846.  
 Gibson, Capt. T. Ware. The priest of the Black cross. Cincinnati, 1848.  
 Gilman, Caroline (Howard). Love's progress. New York, 1840.  
 AAS ---- Recollections of a Southern matron. New York, 1838.  
 AAS ---- ---- New York, 1839.  
 ---- Tales and ballads. Boston, 1833.  
 AAS ---- ---- New York, 1839.  
 ---- ---- Boston, 1839.  
 Gilman, Chandler Robbins. Legends of a log cabin. New York, 1835.  
 AAS ---- Life on the lakes. New York, 1836.  
 Goodrich, Samuel Griswold. A home in the sea. Philadelphia, 1845.  
 ---- The rose bud. New York [c.1841]  
 ---- Short stories. New York [c.1840]  
 Gould Edward Sherman. The sleep-rider; or, The old boy in the omnibus. New York [c.1843]  
 Gould, John W. Forecastle yarns. Baltimore, 1845.  
 Grace, Pierce C. The unknown. St. Louis, 1849.  
 AAS Gray, Arthur. The neglected wife. Boston, 1847.  
 Gray, Thomas. The vestal; or, A tale of Pompeii. Boston, 1830.  
 Grayson, Eldred, pseud. See Hare, Robert.

Figure 3.2: Page 30 of a mimeograph of the checklist sent to the AAS for review and to take a census of the holdings of potential works to be listed. The note for Ganilh's *Mexico versus Texas* reads "with reprod. of title in Freeman auction June 1, 1938, no. 326." referring to the auction catalog of Freeman's in Philadelphia.



the Revolution, by Lieutenant Murray [pseud.] Boston: F.  
Gleason, 1845. 100 p., illus. 8vo H, LC, Y  
Printed in double columns.

— — Boston: United States Publishing Company,  
1846 100p., illus. 8vo BU, LC  
Printed in double columns.<sup>44</sup>

The entry written on the checklist does not note why it would appear as a separate entry, but the differing details—publisher and pseudonymous signature—address why it is listed separately as an entry. Wright, for the first volume of *American Fiction*, intended to list every possible edition of a work if he could locate it.<sup>45</sup> Neither title, however, is marked as owned by the AAS, suggesting either external reference by the librarians for additional titles, or that some of the notes were written after the publication of Wright I. Given the document is dated December 24, 1937, however, it would suggest the former—that the librarians consulted other sources of information, either other bibliographies or catalogs, to inform their approach to the checklist. In either case, the markings also suggest a means of reading the document anticipating what Wright himself would desire in terms of the information he lays out in the purpose. Wright makes no mention of the desire for only a single, earliest possible, edition to describe an individual title (a quality that would define Wright II and III), but the evidence of another version of *Fanny Campbell* would be welcome given Wright's goals of wanting a comprehensive listing of editions.

The AAS' reviewers of the checklist also made efforts to encourage removal of titles from the final bibliography. Such examples include two anonymous titles, *Rachel, a Tale* (1818) and *The Warlock, A Tale of the Sea* (1836), whose entries are struck through on the checklist. The advice was taken, as evidenced by these titles' absence in Wright I. Investigation into the titles,

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44. Wright, *American Fiction, 1774-1850: A Contribution Toward A Bibliography*, 16.

45. Wright abandoned this plan for the the second and third volume of *American Fiction* when he discovered how much the U.S. publishing industry had grown in the mid-1800s, making it nearly impossible to list every edition in a practical manner.

however, reveals the reason: *Rachel* was written by Jane Taylor (who also wrote the lyrics to “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star”) and *The Warlock* is attributed to Matthew Henry Barker, an author of nautical tales.<sup>46</sup> Both of these authors are British, not American. More than a simple suggestion of removal, what is revealing about these recommended (and ultimately adopted) changes to the bibliography is the labor required of the AAS staff to recommend these changes. Investigation of individual titles to reinforce the bibliographical accuracy, especially for a list of nearly 2000 titles, shows how much more than a catalog reference the review of this checklist was for Society’s librarians. In the case of *Rachel*, the AAS did possess a copy and marked themselves as owning it before striking it through to be deleted, but in the case of the *The Warlock*, the AAS does not indicate that it possessed a copy, and so its suggested removal points to even larger amount of work necessary to confirm it as an inappropriate entry for Wright’s bibliography. Their initial inclusion relies on the fact both texts were printed in Philadelphia, yet their authorial attributions, at the least, could have required research into British reference materials and bibliographical work to confirm the texts as not nascent American literature.

Further hints as to the forms of effort put in by the AAS staff in the review of the checklist can be seen more specifically in Figure 2.2, with the ways the annotations of the document illustrate a means of how the data presented is reviewed. For Anthony Ganilh’s *Mexico Versus Texas* (1838), an annotation is supplied that reads: "with reprod. of title in Freeman auction June 1, 1938, no. 326." in which a specific location for a reproduction of the title is reported. This information is subsequently not included in Wright, but is nonetheless recorded by AAS and validates the existence of the title and partially pointing to a text that could warrant an additional description in the bibliography. The specificity of the citation though indicates, again, how committed the AAS

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46. Taylor is named the author of *Rachel* by the University of California-Berkeley. *The Warlock* is attributed to Barker; the Hathitrust facsimile of the text has Barker’s named pencilled onto the title page, though not encoded into the catalog. The reasoning for the attribution seems to follow the same logic as Wright’s assignment of Bradbury titles—all works written by “An Old Sailor” are assumed to be the work of Barker. For *Rachel*, see Jane Taylor, *Rachel: A Tale* [in eng] (London : Printed for Taylor / Hessey, 1817), <http://archive.org/details/racheltale00taylrhc> For *The Warlock*, see Old Sailor, *The Warlock: A Tale of The Sea* (Philadelphia, 1836), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951001992501s>

staff at the time is to the verification of Wright's work, wherein the research takes the reviewer of the checklist to materials that are not necessarily meant as scholarly reference tools.<sup>47</sup>

Also seen in Figure 2.2 is the strike through of the interestingly titled *Ghost Stories; Collected with a Particular View to Counteract the Vulgar Belief in Ghosts* (1846). The title in question is anonymous but the edition described here contains engravings by American artist Felix O. C. Darley and was published in New York. Another edition of the text exists as *Curious Stories*, published by James Miller in New York in 1865 and 1867. The 1867 Miller edition reprints the text and engravings, but also includes advertisements at the end to a list of "New and Attractive Juveniles" (Figure 2.3).<sup>48</sup> The presence of the juvenile context gives a clue as to how the work *Ghost Stories* was read and considered in context of Wright and why it was recommended for exclusion. The tales themselves, as ghost stories, are clearly fictional, or at least fictionalized given that some feature real historical people (for instance, the French poet Antoinette du Ligier de la Garde Deshoulières is the primary character of the story "The Ghost of Larneville"). The introduction of the text asks "What is a ghost?" and proceeds to define but also critique the notion of ghosts in a didactic manner by continuing to ask questions such as why do ghosts appear in clothing, rather than naked, and declaring such things only "exist in the imagination of the beholder."<sup>49</sup> But the text of book does not offer any direct mention of its audience being children readers, and in fact, mentions statements that would put it at odds with a young audience: "The best way to dissipate the inbred horror of supernatural phantoms, which almost all persons derive from nursery tales or other sources of causeless terror in early life, is to show by example how possible it is to impress upon ignorant or credulous persons the firm belief that they behold a ghost, when in point of fact no ghost is there."<sup>50</sup> Such a statement distances itself from juvenile readers, and instead

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47. Though it should be noted, looking to auction and bookseller catalogs, though they are intended for commercial use rather than scholarly use is not an unheard of practice. Bookseller catalogs in general endeavor to describe books with a similar level of detail as bibliographers, though different standards of description exist between the two spheres.

48. *Curious Stories* [in eng] (New York, J. Miller, 1867), 222, <http://archive.org/details/curiousstories00darl>.

49. *Ghost Stories: Collected with a Particular View to Counteract the Vulgar Belief in Ghosts and ...* [in English] (Carey / Hart, 1846), 5, <http://archive.org/details/ghoststoriescol01darlgoog>.

50. *Ibid.*, 6.

seeks to undo the damage of juvenile superstition after the fact. The advertisements at the back of the Miller copy are the only real clue as to why the text of *Ghost Stories* was excluded from list. The description itself in the checklist is without any note from the AAS as to why they believe the item should be removed, only that they did indeed suggest it and Wright followed through, never reincorporating the text into Wright I. Given the previous effort of the AAS librarians for specific titles, their knowledge of the Miller edition that would lead them to the conclusion that the text was a "juvenile" seems probable. The AAS, at the least, became aware of the Miller edition by 1951, when in one of their annual reports they featured a discussion of titles illustrated by Felix O. C. Darley, wherein they note the change of title and publisher when the work moved from *Ghost Stories* to *Curious Stories*.<sup>51</sup>

The checklist represents a level of institutional engagement in Wright's project in the time before it is published. From the markings of the checklist, we can see the commitment of the librarians to the composition of *American Fiction* and to the parameters Wright set forth. Their suggestions of which titles to add or remove are based on their understanding of Wright's goals. But the AAS' commitment to Wright does not end with the publication of the first edition of *American Fiction*'s first volume. The AAS reads and annotates the published forms of the bibliography much in the same way they do the checklist. With the first volume, Wright revised it twice, once for a 1948 edition, and then for a 1969 edition. The AAS possesses copies of each edition, and used them, and marked them, continuing to improve the contents.

For Wright I, the AAS holds two copies of the 1939 edition, two copies of the 1948 edition, and one copy of the 1969 edition. One copy of the 1948 edition is placed in the reading room for easy access to patrons for reference. The other copies, however, are held in the stacks and bear traces of the AAS staff reading and referencing the titles. The most prevalent sorts of notes present in these various copies are the markings of AAS, or sometimes MWA (the Society's Union Catalog code), beside titles that are not printed by Wright as in the AAS' library, in a similar manner to

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51. Theodore Bolton, "The Book Illustrations of Felix Octavius Carr Darley," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 61 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1951), 147.

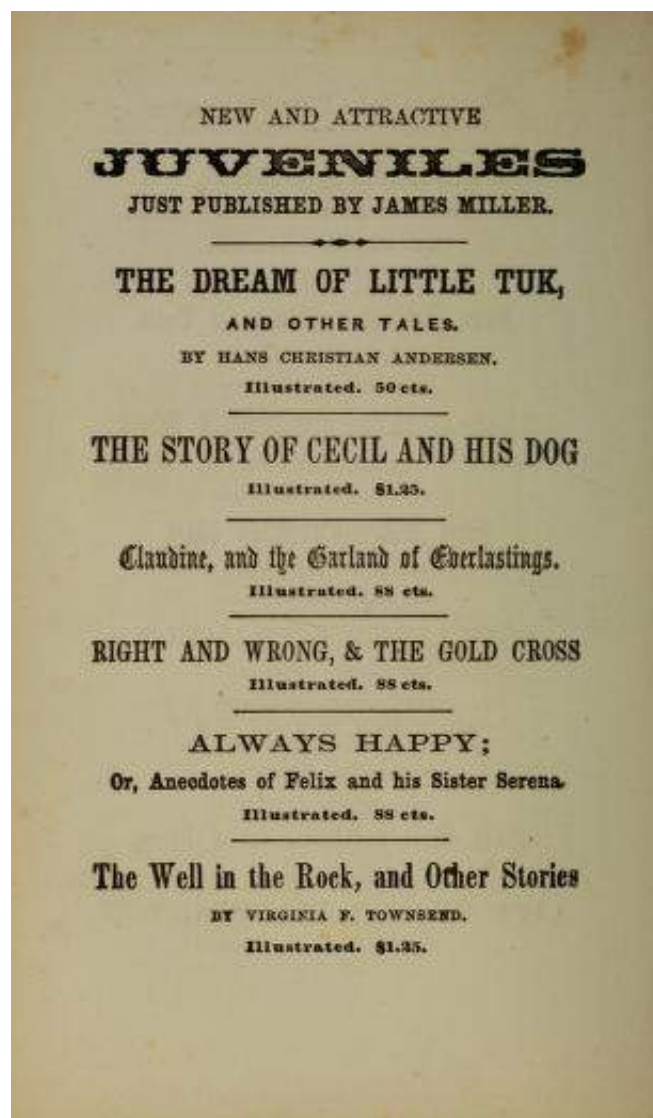


Figure 3.3: The end pages of the Miller edition of *Curious Stories*, also titled as *Ghost Stories* in the Wright checklist. Juveniles are advertised here suggest the work itself was read as juvenile and thus unsuitable for *American Fiction*. See note 43.

the checklist the AAS originally marked.<sup>52</sup> The continued marking of various editions of the titles with the idea of keeping the AAS' holdings in the context of Wright's American fiction shows the continued use of the bibliography to the AAS staff in order to determine the status of their own fiction collections. The collections of others are also noted at times, especially the holdings of Yale and the private collection of its head librarian, James T. Babb (who, coincidentally, was also a member of the AAS). These holdings too are marked in pencil in the document, comparing the developing collections of the chief rival of Wright holdings for the AAS.

AAS librarians were not necessarily interested in only treating the text as an authority for which to identify or reconcile their own collections and holdings, but also as a space for adding and considering other American fiction titles not listed. Appendix A lists within 3 different AAS copies of Wright I the substantial additions and recommendations written physically into the bibliography. In one of the 1939 copies (cataloged as Backlog 19C 1325), AAS staff write in 159 new titles to the document in addition to the printed entries. Some of these entries are not within the parameters set by Wright for the volume; titles such as Edward Zane Carroll Judson's *Clarence Rhett* (1866), Eliza Leslie's *Sketches* (1854), and Maria Jane McIntosh's *Violet* (1856) are all outside of the boundary of the years covered by Wright I, all having been published after 1850, but nonetheless have their descriptions written into the text. The additions as a whole are written into their proper places with regards to alphabetical ordering, but they do not wholly conform to Wright's parameters as he describes them in the preface. The three aforementioned titles have other titles by their authors listed or included by the AAS, and thus show the bibliography's parameters to not be a limiting feature of the bibliography by its readers. Instead, the AAS treated Wright's volumes as a space to organize more specific types of information, in this case, to easily see all titles discovered or noted by a specific author. Wright's work enabled the AAS in this sense to organize and understand the bibliographic information they discovered in a space that made to present American fiction titles.

In a second copy of the 1939 edition (cataloged as RefT Fiction 05a), the handwritten annota-

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52. The Union Catalog code is primarily used by libraries to identify holdings, especially when referencing other libraries or interlibrary loan. The MWA code is a reference to the location of the American Antiquarian Society—Massachusetts, Worcester, America.

tions continue, but this time incorporating 109 of the previous texts written into the Backlog 1939 copy. New titles are added as well, further enlarging the titles possible for Wright I as well as more entries that may do not fit within the parameters. This copy of Wright I also includes 87 new titles for both reference and possible inclusion in a revised edition. Some descriptions added by the readers of the bibliography include more in-depth bibliographical discussions beyond their entry descriptions. As an example, for an anonymous title, *Errors of Education* (1810), an annotation to the description attributes an author, Jesse L. Holman, based on another 1810 title *Prisoners of Niagara, Or Errors of Education*. Other descriptions perform acts of reinforcing the evidence available, such as for a title by Justin Jones, *The Doomed Ship* (Philadelphia, n.d.), which is included in the Appendix by Wright but are written into the context of the list by AAS staff, thereby suggesting the acquisition or location of a physical copy or a title page that attests to the text's existence.<sup>53</sup> This particular title is eventually moved from the appendix of Wright I to an entry of Wright II, *The Doomed Ship, or, Wreck of the Arctic Regions* (1964, Wright II no. 1384), with physical copies noted at the Boston Athenaeum (which lies in close proximity to the AAS) and the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>54</sup>

The third annotated copy of Wright I to be discussed is one of the 1948 revised editions (cataloged as RefT Fiction 05b), which features an additional 66 titles described by the AAS in addition to Wright's own extensive number of inclusions to the list (approximately 600 more, deletions notwithstanding). But this copy also features a shift in the tone of the annotations, as these annotations bring attention to entries Wright has *omitted*. Rather than simply "not listed," the use of omitted implies the active sense of Wright's process of composition. Why Wright has chosen to omit certain titles written back into the bibliography pertain to Wright's own parameters. Titles described as omitted here come from foreign authors, were originally published as serial extras, were Sunday School publications. In one case, the staff seems more quizzical than anything about

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53. Titles are placed in the Appendix by Wright when there were no copies located, but advertisements or other sorts of information may have alerted Wright to the existence of such a title.

54. Lyle Henry Wright, *American Fiction, 1851-1875 : A Contribution Toward A Bibliography*. (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library Publications, 1957), 186.

a choice of Wright; again Justin Jones is a point of contention where his 1849 title, *Osmond the Avenger*, is written into the list with the annotation "why omitted?" The inclusion of the title is apparently in defiance to Wright's own parameters, as if the writer of the annotation is simply confounded by the possibility of Wright making a mistake. In another case, the entry for the *Trapper's Bride* (1848), described as authored by Emerson Bennett, features annotations that point to an argument over the actual author; Charles Augustus Murray is also suggested as a possible author. This argument bleeds into the AAS' online catalog as well, which takes care to represent the argument in its records, under the "notes" heading:

Probably written by Emerson Bennett, author of the novella "Prairie flower." Sir Charles Augustus Murray is author of "The prairie bird" but unlikely to be the author of the present work. "Very doubtful if by Murray, issued probably to take advantage of the popularity of The Prairie Bird."—Library of Congress.

"This has been ascribed to Sir Charles Murray ... But the Cincinnati imprint points toward Mr. Bennett. This is written in Emerson Bennett's style, very unlike Murray's writings ..."—Henry R. Wagner, *The plains and the Rockies*, 3d. ed., rev. by C.L. Camp, 1953, no. 145.<sup>55</sup>

Again, it is important to highlight the amount of labor that was invested into annotating these copies of *American Fiction*. These copies, while cataloged as reference materials, were not necessarily in circulation or stored on the publicly-accessible shelves in the Society Reading Room. The copies of Wright there are clean of any markings by the AAS staff. It is those that are marked that are shelved in the stacks and are not necessarily intended for general use by patrons. These copies, instead, are meant to help the AAS staff and their collections. The data described by the ones annotating these copies of Wright eventually make their way to the researching scholar, as demonstrated by the case of the *Trapper's Bride*, wherein the bibliographic controversy becomes an inherent part of the metadata of the object. Annotating copies of Wright becomes an exercise

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55. Emerson Bennett, Charles Augustus Murray, and Horace C. Grosvenor, *The Trapper's Bride: or, Spirit of Adventure* (Cincinnati: Published by Stratton / Barnard. Cincinnati, Ohio, 1848).



not just in referencing the information contained therein, but in using that information to build a conception of American literature that can be useful for the institution and for the scholars it serves. By adding to the text of *American Fiction*, AAS librarians were trying to turn their copies of AAS (at the least) into as comprehensive a resource as possible. Over the course of the three editions, the AAS contributes a total of 312 annotations that added entirely new titles, corrected, or otherwise modified the existing entries. Each of those entries represents a task that recognizes the individual title and considers it against the whole of *American Fiction*, and the ways AAS wishes to use the text.

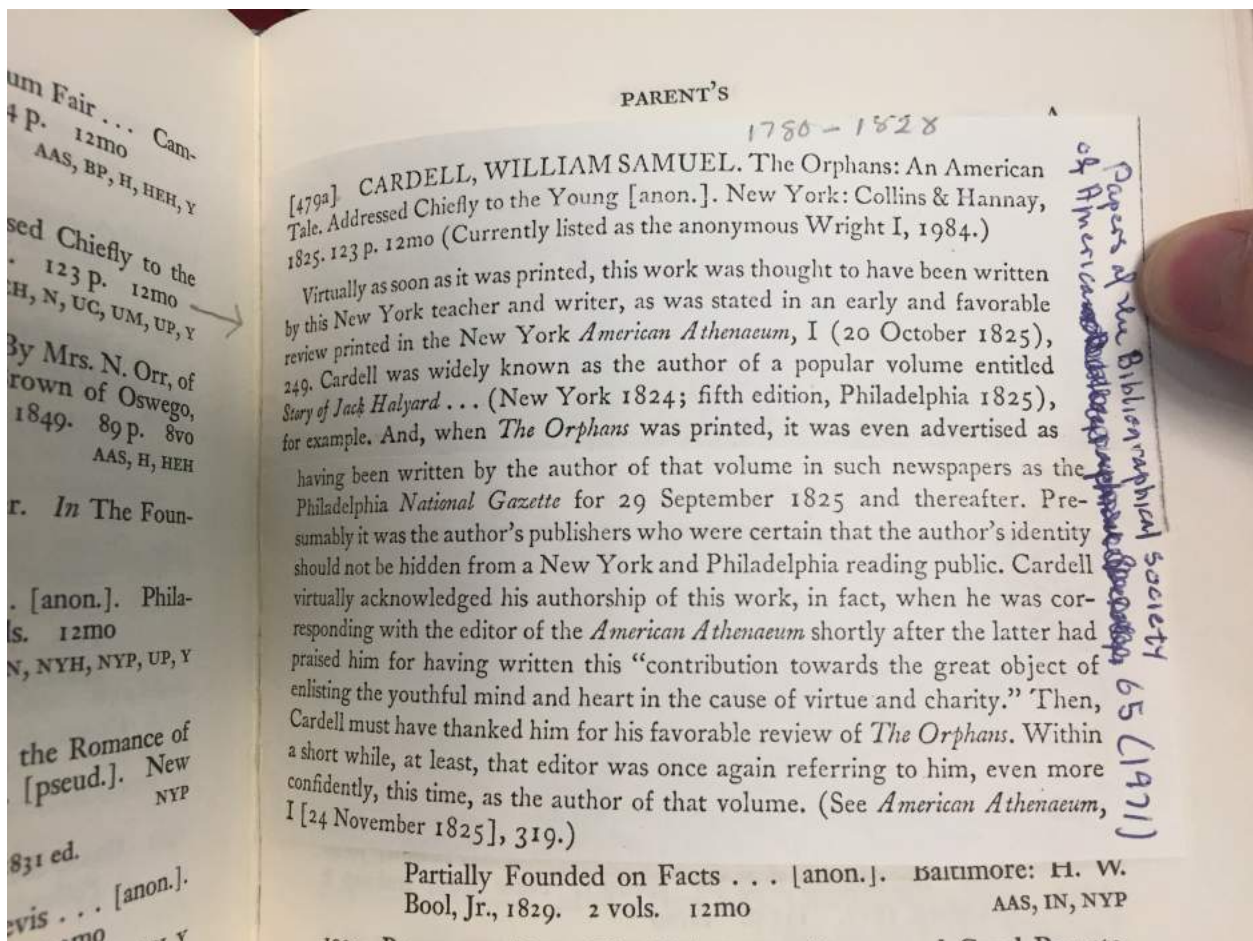


Figure 3.4: A portion of Smith's addenda physically grafted into the AAS' copy of Wright's 1969 edition of *American Fiction, 1774-1850*. See note 54.

The physical ways the labor of the librarians manifests in the reading of a bibliography can even extend beyond annotations. A copy of the 1969 edition of Wright I, the last revision to come

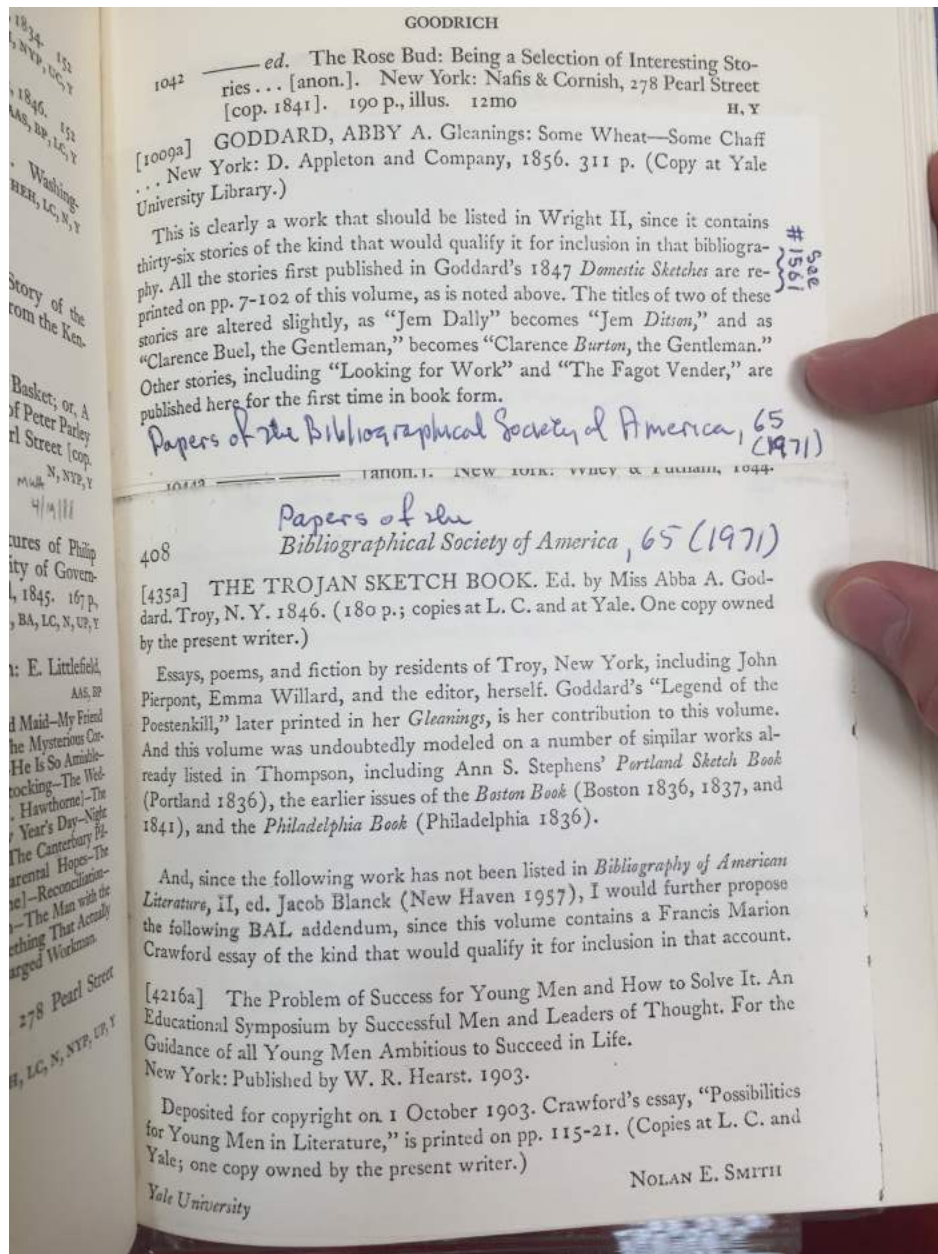


Figure 3.5: A portion of Smith's addenda physically grafted into the AAS' copy of Wright's 1969 edition of *American Fiction, 1774-1850*. See note 54.

out, is not simply just annotated, but also contains published addenda to Wright's work, including authorship attributions and suggested inclusions, that are physically grafted into the book itself (Figures 2.4 and 2.5). Both selections seen in the figures are drawn from Nolan E. Smith's addenda originally published in the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society* 65.4 (1971), but have been cut out of the journal and glued to the gutter of the book near where the original entry or the author would appear in Wright. Smith's other addenda are also found grafted into the book as well, the AAS staff taking his evidence and incorporating it to make the physical copy possess the same information as Smith argued for.

In Figure 2.4, Smith is arguing that entry 479a, *The Orphans*, described by Wright without an author should be attributed to William Samuel Cardell, alongside Smith's justification. Figure 2.5, however, is not a correction but an assertion of the need to include a title within the context of *American Fiction*; Smith claims of Abby Goddard's *Gleanings* (1856) is "clearly a work that should be included" in Wright (though, it would be Wright II rather than I where the AAS has grafted it). Smith's argument, however, is not robust, as he simply states the stories are of a kind "that would qualify it for inclusion" in Wright.<sup>56</sup> The AAS librarian who viewed Smith's notes here, however, seemingly agreed and committed the note to the text of Wright as a means of including the work with the full description and the justification. The AAS here has not even relied upon its own institutional holdings, knowledge, and research to further refine Wright's bibliography, but also the work of others, which they compile and reincorporate into the body of the bibliography as a whole to further build upon their referential knowledge. These graftings, though, create a document which attempts to allow for all of that knowledge to be found in a single place, much as the annotations do. The affordance of the physical bibliography at play here is further realized when the desire to see as many ideas of what constitutes "American fiction" are visible. That is, the ideas of American fiction espoused by Wright are shown to be a living concept that is susceptible to change, either clarifications or emendations. The physical bibliography itself does not easily allow

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56. Nolan E. Smith, "Author-identification For Six Anonymous or Pseudonymous Wright I titles, with Wright II, Thompson, and BAL Addenda: Cardell, Crawford, Fay, Goddard, Sleeper, and Stebbins," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 65, no. 4 (1971): 407.

for such modifications, except through the conventions of publishing revised editions as Wright does, but grafting, while not an insignificant task of labor, presents a physical revelation of the moments where those changes occur, and how often they occur at the hands of someone external to the composition of the bibliography itself.<sup>57</sup>

The grafted information of Figure 2.4 becomes encoded into AAS's MARC record entry for *The Orphans*, wherein the suggestion of William Samuel Cardell becomes fact by virtue of its designation in the author field and enabling searches of Cardell to return the title. However, *The Orphans* is a strange case when considered next to titles such as *Ghost Stories*. The full title itself denotes it as a juvenile: *The Orphans: An American Tale Addressed Chiefly to the Young*. The MARC record for the title validates the subtitles claims and complicates the nature of the physical grafting in Wright's bibliography. The field reserved to index genres (655) declares the title to be in the category of "juvenile fiction."<sup>58</sup> The concept of the juvenile emerges again as a way of disrupting *American Fiction*'s order. Wright, in order to keep within his own parameters that he set forth, should have never included, or at the least should have removed *The Orphans* from the list. The claims of the text's juvenile nature is irrelevant to the physical object which augments the original entry with more information about the title. In effect, Wright's parameters are ignored but the value of the list itself is retained and asserted. This is in contrast to the assertion in the mimeograph for the removal of *Ghost Stories*, where its juvenile aspect is the evidence of its suggested (and enacted) removal. After *American Fiction*'s publication, the authority of Wright and his list supercedes the evidence the text provides as to its nature, and the AAS, interested in expanding *American Fiction* follow Wright's lead.

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57. In Wright's favor, the revised editions of *American Fiction*'s first two volumes do provide evidence of the revisions themselves explicitly by announcing when a specific entry was deleted. Wright does this to preserve the numbering conventions of his list. Additions in the revised bibliographies as well are obvious because of this, as they do not take a number from another title, even if it has been deleted. Instead, they are given the same number as the preceding entry but with a letter added to the end to denote its more recent inclusion.

58. William S. Cardell, William B. Gilley, and Henry S. Hathaway, *The orphans: an American tale.: Addressed chiefly to the young* (New-York: Published by Collins & Hannay, E. Bliss & E. White, Collins & Co., / W.B. Gilley. J. & J. Harper, printers, 1825).

After the publication of the bibliography, the AAS was invested in Wright but not in a way that was entirely congruent to Wright's own desires for the bibliography's principles. Instead of an endorsement of a more complex list, a more fundamental idea that was simply attracted to a collection of American fiction titles is instead what informs the apparent actions of the AAS in terms of its participation with Wright's bibliography after publication. The discussion of Wright's continued effect and this focus on his collection as a organizing idea in itself that guides the AAS takes us beyond the Society's reading room.

### **3.4 Wright, Acquisitions, and Rivalries**

The cases that have been discussed thus far with Wright's association with the AAS have been in more private or little-circulated ways that depict the influence of *American Fiction* as subtle in nature. This is not to suggest, however, that Wright was unacknowledged publicly or was not noted to have a more overt influence on the Society after the publication of his bibliography. In this last section, I would like to discuss one of the largest overall effects Wright and *American Fiction* had on the AAS. Wright would eventually become the default point of reference for the AAS librarians to discuss their acquisitions in American fiction. These acquisitions would even become the foundation for comparison to other libraries. We have previously seen hints of comparison in the markings of the physical copies possessed by the AAS staff when they would record the holdings of other libraries in their physical copies of *American Fiction*. However, the AAS' comparisons to their rivals becomes more evident in the published annual proceedings of the AAS that circulate among the Society's members and beyond.<sup>59</sup> These more public documents make AAS' connection and reliance upon Wright more visible, but also reveal in direct terms how Wright's influence affects the AAS' collections and the way in which the institution perceives itself as a research institute providing a service.

*American Fiction* gets its first mention in the AAS proceedings shortly after its publication, in the 1941 proceedings, only two years after Wright's publication. The bibliography appears

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<sup>59</sup>. The AAS' annual proceedings are also available digitally and to the public on the Society's website.

in the "Report of the Librarian" section (where Wright will become a familiar sight), written by Clifford K. Shipton. Shipton discusses in his report the receipt of a novel titled *Emily Hamilton, a Novel, Founded on Incidents in Real Life. By a Young Lady of Worcester County* (1803), the first novel printed by Isaiah Thomas Jr., the son of the AAS' founder. Wright emerges in the context of the discussion as a site of an error in the novel's author attribution. As Shipton reports from his perusing of two letters included with the novel:

One of these letters was written to Isaiah Thomas, February 13, 1802, concerning Emily Hamilton and Miss Vickery's desire not to be known as its author. Dr. Charles L. Nichols in his Bibliography of Worcester attributed the novel *Emily Hamilton* to 'Eliza Vicery,' an error which was copied by Wegelin, Sabin, and Wright.<sup>60</sup>

That Wright made an error in attributing the author is not the primary reason to highlight this first mention of his bibliography in the AAS' records, but instead to note the company with which he becomes associated, that is, the Sabin and Wegelin bibliographies. As previously discussed, Wright's own contribution to bibliography emerged from a desire to expand the list of Wegelin, which had only covered to 1830, and was deemed too limited to be effective. The Sabin bibliography represented a major bibliographic milestone of describing American publishing and its completion was a significant achievement for former AAS librarian, Robert G. Vail. The mention of Wright in this context here immediately denotes its assignation to an eminent place in the minds of the AAS librarians, as well as his continuation and relationship to previous bibliographic works (even though it is represented by the proliferation of an error). At least for the AAS, Wright was quickly perceived of as an authority and put into use as a standard reference tool for investigating bibliographic questions.

The proceedings are more explicit about the status of the Wright bibliography in their institution as time goes on. By the mid 1960s and into the mid-70s, the AAS' proceedings, in reports from both the librarian and the council, would frame their American fiction accessions for the

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60. Clifford K. Shipton, "Report of the Librarian," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 51 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, October 1941), 270, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44807045.pdf>.

year explicitly in terms of their relationship to Wright. From these reports, it becomes evident that Wright's work gave to the Society not simply an academic resource, but an achievable and quantifiable goal to pursue. Marcus McCorison, who replaced Shipton as the author of the reports, writes,

This past year has been especially fruitful in rare and unrecorded books of fiction.

Those not appearing in Lyle Wright's list of American fiction were:

*The Female Land Pirate; or Awful, Mysterious, and Horrible Disclosures of Amanda Bannorris, wife and accomplice of Richard Bannorris, a leader of that terrible band of robbers and murderers, known far and wide as the Murrell men. Cincinnati: E. E. Barclay; 1847. 28p. illus.*

This marvelous story is pure humbug, but it fits in very nicely with the two Murrell books we obtained a year ago.<sup>61</sup>

McCorison similarly notes later in the same report that an additional twenty-nine titles were received that year, one of them being an unlocated Wright I no. 488 (Emma Carra's *Estelle*, 1848).<sup>62</sup> Similar statements are found throughout the proceedings. In 1967, McCorison notes that of the 268 titles of literature received by the AAS that year, forty were found in Wright.<sup>63</sup> The 1969-70 report of the librarian is more enumerative, stating,

It was an unusually good year for "Wright fiction"—that is, novels written by American authors and listed by Lyle Wright. They were in volume I—119, 120, 215, 241, 245, 311, 369, 414, 557, 1240, 1335a, 1535, 1701, 1731, 1905 1/2, 2063, 2093b, 2158, 2503, 2557a, 2608, 2710b, 2754; and in volume II—170, 202, 404, 487, 565, 586, 1221, 1306b, 1610, 1898, 1927.<sup>64</sup>

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61. Marcus A. McCorison, "Report of the Librarian," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 75.2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1965), 243.

62. *Ibid.*, 244.

63. Marcus A. McCorison, "Report of the Librarian," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 77.2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1967), 237.

64. Marcus A. McCorison, "Report of the Librarian," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 80.2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1970), 277.

Even for years when the AAS had lower volumes of literature accessions, Wright becomes a means of framing the collections; McCorison reports for the 1970-71 proceedings, a total of four different texts that were added to the AAS' catalog that year and were described by Wright in *American Fiction*.<sup>65</sup> In all of these cases, the proceedings use Wright's bibliography exclusively. Unlike the first mention of Wright by Shipton, which places *American Fiction* within the context of Sabin and Wegelin, Wright supercedes previous bibliographies as a reference tool and a framing mechanism to explain their acquisitions each year. As he is deployed in the proceedings, Wright's work serves as a checklist by which an easy comparison to other institutions and to itself becomes quickly understandable. By employing the bibliography as a checklist itself, the AAS is able to monitor its development in American fiction and report the advances it makes in its holdings when compared against the backdrop of a formidable collection of titles that both illustrates what the AAS *had* via the census of the institutions at the time of the bibliography's publication, and what more it can still do via the accessible list of titles that are not described by Wright as being own the Society.

The consistent use of Wright by the Society to describe its American fiction collection demonstrates a means of reading the bibliography against the institution's own mission of being a place where American writing, history, and materials are reliably housed and accessed. The Wright bibliography with its census shows the institution's failings, even without marking absences in an institutions records as such; what is not there becomes as markedly important as what is, and the task taken up by the AAS is to fill in the gaps. This way of reading the list, however, opens up a means of comparison for the AAS and the other institutions Wright surveyed. If the bibliography itself is read by an institution as a holistic collection to develop, or to aspire to, all other institutions become competitors in terms of both the cumulative number of titles they possess or the individual titles they hold but other institutions do not. It is unsurprising then that the AAS does exactly that, by imagining a rivalry with other institutions, most particularly, Yale and their head librarian,

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65. The texts were as follows: two works by Emerson Bennett, *Leni-Leoti* (1849, Wright I-300) and *The Prairie Flower* (1849, Wright I-304); *Morton: A Tale of the Reovlution* (1828, Wright I-1924); and George Wilkes' *The Lives of Helen Jewett, and Richard P. Robinson* (1849, Wright I-2714). Marcus A. McCorison, "Report of the Librarian," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 81.2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1971), 223



James T. Babb.

As early as 1953, the comparisons to Yale via Wright began; Clarence S. Brigham, in his report to the council in the annual proceedings, claims Yale as "virtually [the] only competitor" in collecting the Wright titles. This statement occurs amidst Brigham's announcement of Wright's intention to create the second volume of *American Fiction*, covering the years 1851 to 1875. Brigham claims in this announcement that Wright lists 2800 titles in his 1948 revision of Wright I of which the AAS possessed at that time.<sup>66</sup> As Shipton claims, the AAS collected Wright titles "energetically," though the impetus for this policy was Brigham himself, who saw collecting the materials as a competition with Yale.<sup>67</sup> Brigham offers a concession in his 1948 report to the council. In the context of recognizing the publication of Wright's revised edition of *American Fiction*'s first volume, Brigham discusses both the importance of the bibliography to the AAS' collection but also its status in comparison with Yale:

The field of early American fiction is one in which this Society's library has a highly important collection. Of the 2772 editions listed, the Antiquarian Society has a total of 1520, followed by Yale with 1218, Library of Congress with 1057, New York Public Library with 1016, and Harvard with 846. Although the Society for the moment leads Yale, it recognizes the fact that when the collection formed by James T. Babb, the Yale Librarian, with its 505 titles, is turned over to his Alma Mater, we will hold second place.<sup>68</sup>

While Brigham clarifies that his point in mentioning the rivalry is in demonstrating the capacity

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66. Clarence S. Brigham, "Report of the Council," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 63.1 (1953), 9.

67. See Clifford K. Shipton, "Report of the Council," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 70.2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1960), 364, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44807045.pdf> for the comment on the energetic acquisition of Wright titles. See Clifford K. Shipton, "Report of the Librarian," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 64.2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1954), 271, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44807045.pdf> for Shipton's designation of the project as Brigham's.

68. Clarence S. Brigham, "Report of the Council," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 58.2 (1948), 197.

for the Society to fill out its collection quickly, noting that fifteen years prior to the report the AAS possessed only a hundred of the titles, the sense is also clear that the effort put forth in amassing Wright fiction titles is also in an effort to be competitive with other institutions and their respective American fiction collections.

While the sentiment of Brigham in 1948 is more guarded and less explicit about the institutional rivalry, Shipton is more explicit. In Shipton's 1952 report, the discussion points directly to the cold war between the AAS and Yale. Shipton, discussing the idea of advertising the AAS' collections, mentions the American fiction holdings and the AAS' rivalry with Yale. What perhaps began as a suggestion about using the strength of the AAS' fiction holdings as a possible topic of outreach becomes a paragraph more focused on Yale versus the Society:

One of the commonest complaints of visitors is that we do not advertise widely enough to forestall their wasting their time pursuing their material through scattered libraries in ignorance of the fact that it is here gathered into one place and backed by unique bibliographical tools. So it is with the excuse of providing some useful data that I indulge in a little boasting about our holdings. Few people realize the strength of our collections of American literature. The new edition of Wright's *American Fiction* shows that we have 1818 items, Yale has 1535, and Mr. Babb has 442 not held by the University. The competition between Worcester and New Haven has been fierce, and we are content to accept second place. The bitterness of the rivalry may be judged by the fact that we have made a practice of offering Yale our duplicates, and Mr. Babb has given us some of his.<sup>69</sup>

The above quote relies on information provided by Brigham, referring to James T. Babb's personal library. Babb was the head librarian of Yale at the time of these AAS proceedings' publication, and he would indeed, as Brigham predicts, leave his collection to the Yale libraries.<sup>70</sup>

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69. Clifford K. Shipton, "Report of the Librarian," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 62.2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1952), 147, accessed November 15, 2017, <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44807045.pdf>.

70. Babb served the Yale libraries for much of his career. He was the leading librarian from 1943

In addition to working at Yale, Babb was also a member of the American Antiquarian Society, having been offered his membership in 1946, amid the AAS' "energetic" collection of Wright fiction titles. When Shipton mentions the "bitterness" of the rivalry, his tone is jocular, stating that the fierceness of the competitions is such that the two institutions mutually benefit each other in their race by donating their duplicate titles. On the one hand, it keeps the missions of the libraries as services in mind by reinforcing further each of their potential offerings to researchers, but to take Shipton's jest as a supplement to any actual hard feelings is to miss how serious the AAS was about acquiring Wright fiction titles.

Even though Shipton's statement concludes with a joke that diminishes any sense of ill will between the institutions, the rivalry continues to surface in arguably inappropriate places, such as in James T. Babb's own obituary in the 1968 AAS proceedings. The obituary is typical in that it memorializes Babb as a member of the Society, head of the Yale Libraries, an instrumental part of the establishment of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, among other achievements. It is in the second to last paragraph however, that a break occurs in the tone just before explaining the details of Babb's death. Here, the writer, only mysteriously signed as J.E.M., quotes Brigham's 1948 report to the council, with its concession that the AAS has taken second place in the race to collect Wright titles.<sup>71</sup> In the context of a memorial piece of writing, the mention of the AAS' falling behind in its collections due to a donation by the deceased Babb to the Society's competitor reads as an odd lament by J.E.M. that displaces Babb in his own obituary, opting instead to take a moment for the loss sustained by the AAS. That this lament appears in the official proceedings suggests the importance of the statement, even if it is irreverent, in informing the audience of the proceedings of the status of the AAS in its goal to develop the most formidable collection of Wright titles. While Shipton may joke about the bitterness between the two institutions, the fact that Babb's obituary bears a trace of the AAS' rivalry suggests more than a friendly rivalry between

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until 1965, serving as an emeritus librarian thereafter until his death in 1968.

71. J.E.M., "James Tinkham Babb," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 78.2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1968), 230, accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/proceedings/44497956.pdf>.

the Society and Yale, but actually a real anxiety felt by the AAS in maintaining its status as the central institute that affords the most comprehensive access to the titles listed by Wright.

Amongst the correspondences of Wright held at the AAS, there is a scrap of paper in cellophane that bears witness to the AAS' interest in their rivalry with Yale. The paper, seen in Figure 2.6, records on the left hand side a count of the number of Wright titles held by the AAS and Yale as well as James T. Babb (shortened to JTB), with the total for JTB being added to Yale. The writing records, as well, a few additional details about the comparisons between the two institutions; the writing on the right-hand side reads:

Just after publication

Yale had 1218 titles

JTB " 505 not in Yale

L.C. " 1057

NYPL " 1016

Harv. " 846.

The comparisons would seem to draw a distinction between two different points in time concerning the respective collections in question. Likely, the state of these institutions' American fiction collections around the time of Babb's death and the state at the point of the publication of the revision of Wright I in 1948.<sup>72</sup> The top right corner reads:

London omitted

jests not mentioned

Don't include doubles

Presumably, these notes are instructions or guidelines to the means of counting the titles that the AAS followed to arrive at its totals. The bottom right corner shows the AAS total from the

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<sup>72</sup> I arrive at the conclusion that the statement "Just after publication" refers to the revised Wright I rather than the initial 1939 publication, because this was before Babb was the head librarian for Yale.

	AAS	Yale	JTB
A	128	136	0
B	150	172	0
C	177	191	40
D	40	33	9
E	23	12	14
F	57	44	15
G	40	42	8
H	104	96	32
I	118	119	41
J	63	48	22
K	27	21	6
L	86	67	27
M	195	95	54
N	29	28	3
O	4	7	1
P	59	48	12
Q	0	0	0
R	118	68	49
S	255	183	61
T	74	55	22
U-V	7	4	3
W	73	60	23
X-Y-Z	4	2	0
app.		4	
	1781	1535	442
		492	
		1977	

*London omitted  
note not mentioned  
Do not include doubles*

*Just after publication  
Yale had 1218 titles  
JTB " 505 not in pl  
Z.C. " 1057  
NYPL " 1016  
Harr. " 846*

605 1791  
95  
100  
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2110

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Figure 3.6: A handwritten note, found amongst the correspondences of Wright at the AAS. This note counts the number of AAS, Yale, and Babb holdings of Wright titles and totals them in order to see the effect of Babb's donation of his personal collection to the Yale libraries.

left column (i.e. the 1781) with the addition of other numbers correspond to the tally marks that litter the bottom of the page. What these marks correspond to is unclear, though it is interesting in the context of a set of calculations that show AAS' shortcomings in Wright titles. The addition of the tallied numbers places the number of *American Fiction* titles above the count for Yale and the Babb donation by 133 titles. The inverse side of the paper includes more markings that contest Babb's claims and describe more specific information about certain titles. Written on this side is a statement of four titles possessed by Yale that appear in Wright's appendix: *Gentlemen's Daughter* (n.d.), *Kate in Search of a Husband* (n.d.), *The Orphan Stranger* (1839), and *Theresa* (1846). Additionally, it is written, "Babb say 2053 for Y & JTB. I say 1977," apparently contesting Babb's claim of the combined total of *American Fiction* titles held by him and Yale.

The annotated copies of Wright's bibliographies demonstrated a commitment to understanding the AAS' own collections against other institutions, but evidence such as the checklist and obituary statement elevate the status of Yale above other collecting institutions. Wright's bibliography was not simply a guiding principle of the AAS' collections, but also a means to place the AAS in competition with another institution. The means of their comparison here, however, is more macroscopic than those of the annotations. While the annotated bibliographies were focused on line-by-line attention to specific titles, the individual title is less interesting in the context of a holistic collection and the total number reigns. The texts that point to the Yale rivalry focus little on the quality or individual value of titles, and instead on the aggregate group as they compare to one another following a common foundation of understanding. That is, the Wright bibliography represents a holistic text, and the AAS, Yale, and Babb collections represent attempts at recreating that text itself with the bibliography as a manifesto of sorts for what to collect. In this way, the bibliography as a list of books is more egalitarian in concept, as per the AAS approach to collecting the titles does not presume any particular value to one text over another, but rather, that any text, insofar as it is listed, is of value to the AAS and its mission. This approach to collections via the bibliography as a guiding line is impersonal, but does represent a certain stance towards the AAS' as a site of research. This sort of macroscopic approach to the titles does not suppose

value because that is not the job of the AAS or its librarians, rather, it facilitates access, and the bibliography represents a means of knowing what to provide access to.

All of this information, however, revolves around the labor and work produced by Lyle Wright, whose initial visit and involvement with the AAS caused significant institutional change in the years following his first volume's publication. When Wright initially asked Vail of the holdings, Vail was confident Wright would find enough to admirably fill out his bibliography, however, the state of the collections shifted dramatically once the AAS saw the potential within Wright's work to fill out its own collections. In providing Wright with a space for research and a foundation for his own work, Wright provided the Society with a map to improving its own holdings. Wright moved from a mistaken identity asking a humble question about the viability of an American fiction bibliography to one of the formative voices of the AAS' collections of American fiction. Wright effected enough of a change within the Society that he garnered an admiring note in his obituary in the proceedings: "The consistency and accuracy of Wright's work has never been questioned, and items "not in Wright" occur so infrequently that they merely remind us of Wright's major achievement as a bibliographer."<sup>73</sup> The obituary is lauding but also sure to implicate the Society in Wright's success, mentioning his close friendships with Vail and Brigham as reasoning for why Worcester, MA was the "high point" of his research travels.<sup>74</sup> For the Society however, Wright's importance in fueling their own collections goes with only a slight nod, though it concludes the obituary, claiming that Wright contributed to the "life's blood of research–bibliography."<sup>75</sup>

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73. Roger E. Stoddard, "Lyle Henry Wright," in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, vol. 90.2 (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1981), 314-5.

74. *Ibid.*, 314.

75. *Ibid.*, 315.

## 4. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF HARRIET JACOBS

### 4.1 "No Slave Wrote That One"

On February 3, 1955, Clarence Brigham, the head librarian of the American Antiquarian Society (AAS) who succeeded Robert G. Vail, sent a letter to Lyle Wright inquiring as to whether or not several titles would be included in Wright's bibliography.<sup>1</sup> As an aside, Brigham requests a clarification of Wright on the subject of a book titled *Autobiography of a Female Slave* (1856), which had been described as authored by Mattie Browne. What Brigham needed clarified was whether or not this Mattie Browne was the "Mrs. Martha (Griffith) Browne" indexed in the Library of Congress Catalog. In this letter, Brigham seems to be asking about the nature of several texts that present themselves as nonfiction in their titles.<sup>2</sup> A title such as *Autobiography of a Female Slave* immediately suggests that it is, in fact, the opposite of a fictional tale. However, Wright determines that this is not the case. In his February 5 response to Brigham, his handwritten note responds quite indirectly to Brigham's question: "Mrs. Martha (Griffith) Browne's Autobiography of a Female Slave will be listed by me. No slave wrote that one."<sup>3</sup>

The wording is particularly odd, as stated before, because Brigham asks for a clarification about the author's name. He gets this answer, yes, but in addition he is told that Wright has deemed the *Autobiography* as fiction because "no slave" wrote it, thereby refuting the autobiographical claim. The identity of Mattie Browne, or sometimes Mattie Griffiths or Martha Griffiths, is not explained further other than this simple denotation that she was "no slave." Wright is not incorrect here; Browne was indeed a white woman who wrote the so-called *Autobiography* with its misleading claim of the text's genre.<sup>4</sup> The fact that Wright and Brigham had Griffiths' name on hand as

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1. Clarence S. Brigham, *Letter to Lyle Wright*, Typed, February 1955.

2. The six titles Brigham requests information on are as follows: C. Nodhoff, *Whaling & Fishing* (1856); Chas. L. Newhall, *Adventures of Jack* (1859); Frank Munsell, *Chips for the Chimney* (1871); Mary D. Wallis, *Life in Feejee* (1851); Ada Isaacs Menken, *Infelicia* (1868); and William N. Griggs, *The Celebrated "Moon Story"* (1852). *ibid.*

3. Lyle H. Wright, *Letter to Clarence S. Brigham*, Handwritten, February 1955.

4. Browne was born in Kentucky to a slave-owning family, and at one point Browne herself owned slaves. She however became an abolitionist, moved north, and eventually published both



a piece of bibliographical information suggests that the text was already being catalogued and acknowledged as fiction, even though the text was published anonymously. Griffith, in the year following the novel's publication, began to take ownership of it within the abolitionist circle she moved within, a circle that included Elizabeth Peabody and Lydia Marie Child.<sup>56</sup> The text is indeed a fictional work, but it is the odd "no slave" statement that deserves attention. This line can be read in several ways: it could be a poorly worded affirmation that Browne was white and that her race was at odds with the title of her work. In a more rhetorical sense, it acknowledges a set of standards for what an enslaved person could reasonably write, suggesting a reliance on some sort of cultural or educational benchmarks, derived either from historical probability at best and racist stereotypes at worst. Given the emphatic nature of Wright's wording here, rather than the declarative and direct response to Brigham that would have answered the initial question, I believe the latter is a more likely scenario.

What this letter reveals, however, is an acknowledgement of one of the more troubling aspects of the composition of Wright's *American Fiction*, that of the slave narratives, abolitionist writings, and black literary production that appear in Wright's work. Many noteworthy texts appear in the list, including Frederick Douglass' *The Heroic Slave* (1852) and William Wells Browns' *Clotelle* (1853).<sup>7</sup> Some texts do not appear, such as Martin Delany's *Blake, or the Huts of America* (1859-62), which had been published serially but incompletely in both the *Anglo-African Magazine* and *Anglo-African Weekly*, and remains an incomplete narrative even in modern published the *Autobiography* in addition to a few other abolitionist writings. She died in 1906. Martha Griffith Browne, *Autobiography of A Female Slave* [in English] (Jackson: Banner Books/University Press of Mississippi, 1998), ISBN: 978-1-57806-046-7 978-1-57806-047-4

5. Lydia Marie Child would likewise publish a few fictional antislavery tales in a collection titled *The Liberty Bell* (1842).

6. Martha Griffith Browne and Joe Lockard, "Afterword" [in English], in *Autobiography of A Female Slave* (Jackson: Banner Books/University Press of Mississippi, 1998), 403-418, ISBN: 978-1-57806-046-7 978-1-57806-047-4.

7. For Douglass, the Wright II no. is 1033; the text is given its own entry, but rather, this entry records the anthology *Autographs for Freedom*, edited by Julia Griffiths. The Wright II nos. for *Clotelle* are 390 and 391, where the London 1853 entry is recorded along with the significantly altered Boston 1867 edition.

editions.<sup>8</sup> What is more concerning, however, is the misguided inclusion of autobiographical narratives within the Wright *Fiction* list: Solomon Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* (1853) and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861).

Wright describes *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and *Twelve Years A Slave* in Wright II, covering years 1851-1875. This volume has both an original edition published in 1957, with a revised edition in 1965. In that time, the only changes that occur in the listings of these two nonfictional works is their numbering and the revision of the author name for *Incidents*, in which [Brent, Linda.] becomes [Jacobs, Mrs. Harriet (Brent)]. This revision shows the increasing knowledge that was being produced about a text such as a *Incidents*, as well as Wright's ability to find and record that knowledge in order to more faithfully describe the books he was listing. However, the fundamental quality of these two works, that is, their autobiographical nature which runs contrary to aims of the bibliography, has never been revised or updated. In this chapter, I wish to explore some questions pertaining to the inclusion of these two autobiographical narratives into the context of the Wright *American Fiction* bibliography:

1. How did the narratives of Jacobs and Northup end up being listed by Wright?
2. What are the consequences of these texts' placement within *American Fiction*?

My discussion will primarily privilege Harriet Jacobs and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, but Northup and *Twelve Years* should not remain out of sight, as they periodically emerge in context alongside *Incidents* as a narrative whose understanding as a fictional or nonfictional work was volatile and apparently necessary to authenticate. The goal of this chapter is to explore more directly the life of a single text and how the bibliographic record of it reflects on the nature of how this text has been read and positioned within literary history. The status of a text like *Incidents* is not stable, from its early reception to its presence (or absence) in literary scholarship at a time contemporaneous with Wright, and further then to the early recovery and authentication work of

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8. The absence of *Blake* in this case, may be because of both the lack of materials present in the libraries Wright visited, but also because it did not meet the criteria for inclusion. As the text was incomplete and not separately published, Wright may have been aware of it, but the work did not qualify for inclusion by Wright's standards.

literary scholars in the 1970s and 80s, which relied upon the bibliographical data that was available. As a work, *Incidents* straddles multiple genres and discourses, and at the same time, multiple modes of describing and cataloging the work exist or have existed, troubling the way Jacobs' work is enshrined within the context of nineteenth-century American literary scholarship. This is not surprising. Jacobs was a writer and published a work outside of the typical standards that book description and cataloging were designed to handle. The mistakes made in the construction of *Incidents'* data reflect upon how the text was subsequently read by scholars.

There are two things to be said about Wright's decision to describe *Incidents* in *American Fiction*. First, Wright's inclusion of the text amongst the other works by black writers in pre-1900 America represents a progressive testament to black literature. Part of the survival of Jacobs' text and its accessibility outside of archives is due to Wright's description of *Incidents*. Wright composed the second volume of *American Fiction* in the 1940s, amidst the heights of segregation and Jim Crow laws, and on the cusp of the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement. In this context, *American Fiction* may seem a small, scholarly protest against the larger cultural context of America.<sup>9</sup> However, for the second point, the argument made by *American Fiction* contradicts the historical accuracy of *Incidents* and removes some of the power of Jacobs's voice when her story is determined to be inauthentic as judged by a white bibliographer whose moment of encounter with the text is distant from Jacobs's own. This is further complicated by the contemporary methodologies of bibliography which would have approached Jacobs' document with assumptions and practices derived from Early Modern British publishing that would not anticipate the circumstances of a self-publishing black woman in ante-bellum Boston. *Incidents* stands now as a canonical text, warranting well-edited editions and a robust amount of scholarship that has graduated beyond defending and authenticating the text, though those moments were also generative and important. However, at the same time, the errors of the past have not completely eroded away and arguably

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9. It is worth reiterating here Wright's claim that there exists no book unworthy of description. This stance is egalitarian in concept, though in the context of this chapter also shows some problems that emerge when assumptions about texts, particularly a nonfictional text by a black woman, can affect the literary life and reception of a narrative despite good intentions.

may be more susceptible to revival as bibliographic data comes into focus within the realms of digital humanities work that relies on library records or datasets derived from bibliographies such as Wright's.

## 4.2 "Too Orderly": Early Discourse Surrounding *Incidents*

We should first understand the way *Incidents* has been recovered and the status of it as a text that straddles the boundary between fiction and nonfiction when scholars discuss it. The position of *Incidents* as a text that has had to transition from being considered fiction to nonfiction has produced several arguments that attempt to read its perceived fictional qualities as fundamental to the truth and strategy of the text. However, these discussions also tend to share a quality in their arguments that not only think about the rhetoric and style of the fictional works which *Incidents* were modeled from, but also how the physical form of the text necessarily informs the semantic contents and their reflection of the truth of Jacobs' narrative. The text's announcement of itself as an autobiography and a nonfictional work occurs just beyond the title-page; the first sentence of the preface by the author reads, "Reader, be assured this narrative is no fiction."<sup>10</sup> The editor's introduction which follows the author's similarly uses the term autobiography in the first sentence: "The author of the following autobiography is personally known to me, and her conversation and manners inspire me with confidence."<sup>11</sup> The appendix of the novel features a letter of endorsement from the abolitionist and Quaker Amy Post, with whom Jacobs was a close friend and communicated with while composing *Incidents*; this letter ends with a validation of the work as nonfiction as well: "Her story, as written by herself, cannot fail to interest the reader. It is a sad illustration of the condition of this country, which boasts of its civilization, while it sanctions laws and customs which make the experience of the present more strange than any fictions of the past."<sup>12</sup>

Yet these testimonies did not appear adequate to either literary historians and scholars, nor to the

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10. Linda Brent (Harriet Jacobs), *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Written by Herself*, ed. Lydia Marie Child (Boston Type Foundry, 1861), 5, accessed February 21, 2018, <http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/TEIgeneral/view?docId=wright/VAC6876.xml&brand=wright&doc.view=pagedImage&source=&image.id=VAC6876-00000003&query=#docView>.

11. *Ibid.*, 7.

12. *Ibid.*, 305.

bibliographers and catalogers of the libraries in the early twentieth century.

Historical catalog records of *Incidents* are not unanimous as to the status of the work, even though systems are in place to denote and clarify classificatory issues of genre. Autobiographies and fictional works warrant their own subject headings in the Library of Congress system, making clear a text's place within the system and to afford the locating of such texts. In the Schomburg collection at the New York Public Library, now under the umbrella of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, the cataloging record from of Griffith's *Autobiography of a Female Slave* is given the subject heading "Slavery - Kentucky - Fiction". The record correctly demarcates the work's genre, with additional remarks as to the content (in this case, it is about slavery, though does not prescribe anything more precise than that, and it is geographically centered on the state of Kentucky).<sup>13</sup> Similar designations are found in all the catalog cards for *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the Schomburg collection, which state "Slavery - U. S. - Fiction." The *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, on the other hand, which is comprised of research and nonfictional evidence that informed *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in addition to Stowe's moral philosophizing, bears only "Slavery - U.S." as a heading. The Schomburg's record for *Incidents* is similar to the *Key* in that it contains the subject heading "Slavery - U.S." as its primary heading, with a secondary heading: "Child, Mrs. Lydia Marie (Francis) 1802-1880, ed."

Without the "Fiction" marker, it would seem that the text was understood as nonfiction by the New York Public library, except this is complicated by the fact that other texts, such as Douglass' *The Heroic Slave* (1852), his lone fictional work, are also unmarked as belonging to any generic category outside of "Slavery - U.S.", "Slavery - Virginia", and "Slavery - U.S. - Fugitives." Douglass' narratives, however, do get the subject heading that would classify them as nonfiction, with the "Autobiography" heading crediting Douglass himself and denoting its status as a historical document and attestation of Douglass' experiences. This does not necessarily separate Douglass' narratives from literary precedent, but rather asserts one of the most significant claims about Douglass' writing that would keep it from being enumerated in, for example, a list of fiction, or un-

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13. It is worth pointing out however, the Schomburg catalog for *Autobiography* does incorrectly note Mattie Griffith as an "American Negro author", however.

derstood as fictional and thus the semantic value of the content of the text radically altered in its reception. That Jacobs is not treated with the same consideration suggests Jacobs' liminal state with less cohesive documents, such as the *Key*, and ultimately plays out in Jacobs being left out of either box, as a true narrative or a work of fiction.<sup>14</sup>

Literary scholars, whose readings of the text are more explicit and available, encounter some of the same problems in determining the place of *Incidents* in literary culture and its accuracy as a slave narrative. John Blassingame bears the most singular blame as the metonymic stand-in for scholars who have relegated Jacobs' work to the fiction category. In his book, *The Slave Community* (1972, revised edition 1979), Blassingame states the oft-cited comments that condemn Jacobs:

...in spite of Lydia Marie Child's insistence that she had only revised the manuscript of Harriet Jacobs "mainly for the purpose of condensation and orderly arrangement," the work is not credible. In the first place, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), is too orderly; too many of the major characters meet providentially after years of separation. Then, too, the story is too melodramatic: miscegenation and cruelty, outraged virtue, unrequited love, and planter licentiousness appear practically on every page. The virtuous Harriet sympathizes with her wretched mistress who has to look on all of the mulattoes fathered by her husband, she refuses to bow to the lascivious demands of her master, bears two children for another white man, and then runs away and hides in a garret in her grandmother's cabin for seven years until she is able to escape to New York. In the meantime, her white lover has acknowledged his paternity of her children, purchased their freedom, and been elected to Congress. In the end, all live happily ever after.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Modern online catalogs rectify this by assigning *Incidents* the "Biography" tag in their MARC records, which still understates Jacobs as the primary producer of her work and invites the spectre of Lydia Marie Child's editorship into the foreground, but at the least, the text is now categorized as a testament and witness of Jacobs' life. See the American Antiquarian Society's record for *Incidents* or the Library of Congress' record. <https://catalog.loc.gov/vwebv/search?searchCode=LCCN&searchArg=79170837&searchType=1&permalink=y>

15. John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* [in

Blassingame's conviction stems from the novelized form of *Incidents's* narrative. His complaints of its orderliness, and the overt presence of its themes—the licentiousness of male slave-owners and the struggle to obtain freedom—and the all-too-convenient nature of the ending with a Congressman lover who can provide a sentimental and satisfying ending to the story all bear the guise of fiction for Blassingame. Credibility here belies orderliness, despite the fact that Child indicates her own editing was to arrange and thereby codify a form of order to the text.

The scholarly response to Blassingame's statements looks upon his criticism as reasonable but flawed when one takes into account the nature of why a text such as *Incidents* could read as a novel. In essence, scholars such as William Andrews, Hazel V. Carby, Frances Smith Foster, Jacqueline Goldsby, and Jean Fagan Yellin have argued that the novelistic qualities of *Incidents* are added for the purpose of readability and as a rhetorical move employed in order to persuade the intended audience of the text, that is, white women, who were also largely considered to be the primary audience of the sentimental and seduction novels of the time, and, hence, why such overlap between abolitionist writing and sentimental writing exists.<sup>16</sup> Scholars who have discussed Jacobs then, while consistently citing Blassingame as the figure against whom they are arguing, use Blassingame as a way to explain why a text such as *Incidents* possesses sentimental and novelistic content while positioning itself as a work of nonfiction.

William Andrews centers his critique of Blassingame on the way Blassingame validates Northup's *Twelve Years a Slave* in the paragraph after his condemnation of *Incidents*. Andrews states: "...*Twelve Years a Slave* is likely to sound more convincing than *Incidents* because the fictionalizing of the former does not call attention to itself so much, nor does it make appeals to the kind of sentiment that often discomfits and annoys twentieth-century critics."<sup>17</sup> For Andrews, the fic-  

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English], Rev. and enl. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 373, ISBN: 978-0-19-502563-7 978-0-19-502562-0.

16. Notably, Joanne Braxton in *Black Women Writing Autobiography* does not frame her discussion of Jacobs and *Incidents* with Blassingame's infamous statement, instead taking as a matter of fact that *Incidents* is an autobiography that makes use of the forms of discourse found in popular nineteenth-century novels, without entertaining the discussion of credibility. Joanne M. Braxton, *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition Within A Tradition*. (Philadelphia : Temple University Press, 1989., 1989), ISBN: 978-0-87722-639-0

17. William L. Andrews, *To Tell A Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiog-*

tional elements of a text primarily center on the dialogue, an inherently unstable aspect of the text that attempts to recall moments from before the composition of the text and does so imperfectly, a point which he grounds in the theory of M. Bakhtin.<sup>18</sup> More importantly, however, Andrews applies the term "liminal autobiography" as a way to explain what appears in discourse as the strange case of *Incidents* and Jacobs. Andrews' conceptualization of liminality refers to the marginalization of figures, such as Douglass and Jacobs, that develop in slave narratives between 1850 and 1865. What Andrews refers to is a category of autobiography that is written between the stages of social development, i.e. from slavery to freedom, but may also refer within the text to such moments, or "crises", that cause one to undergo a transition between developmental stages. Though additionally, Andrews says the liminal autobiography may also allow the narrator to "pass over various thresholds into a new relationship with his or her reading audience."<sup>19</sup> Such thresholds suggest changes in genre or modes of writing, as *Incidents* does.

The idea of liminality, however, is taken up by others, overtly or covertly, as a way to address not just Andrews' sense of the word, but a broader definition that applies to *Incidents*. Jacqueline Goldsby cites Andrews' concept of liminality but does not rely on Andrews' definition of the term, as she is more concerned with how *Incidents* as a text exists in a liminal space between fact and fiction, which becomes the mechanism for her defense of Jacobs' work as an inherently literary work:

*Incidents* proposes that conventional methods of historical investigation are themselves inadequate measures by which to determine what is "authentic" and what is not. Since, according to Jacobs, "truth" can be discovered only if it is left "concealed," rules of documentary evidence may not resolve the dilemma that *Incidents*, as a slave narrative, confronts: how to preserve testimony of an experience that is itself beyond representation, 1769-1865. (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, [1986], 1986), 270, ISBN: 978-0-252-01222-8.

18. Andrews is reading here Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination* as translated by Caryl Emerson in 1981. Andrews, *To tell a free story*, 329

19. *Ibid.*, 178.



tation.<sup>20</sup>

Goldsby's view of the text considers the horrors of slavery as beyond representation, and thus, conveyed in ways that do not match standard discourse employed in an autobiographical work that deterministically documents, rather than narrates, a story.

Hazel Carby adopts a stance that attempts rather to define *Incidents's* liminality as revolutionary in developing a necessary and unique discourse for black women. Her contention with Blassingame lies in his consideration of a text such as Jacobs' within a patriarchal framework, rather than in one that evaluates the text as a narrative that is outside that framework:

"The criteria for judgment that Blassingame advances here leave no room for a consideration of the specificity and uniqueness of the black female experience. An analogy can be made between Blassingame's criticism of *Incidents* as melodrama and the frequency with which issues of miscegenation, unrequited love, outraged virtue, and planter licentiousness are found and foregrounded in diaries by Southern white women, while absent or in the background of the records of their planter husbands. Identifying such a difference should lead us to question and consider the significance of these issues in the lives of women as opposed to men, not to the conclusion that the diaries by women are not credible because they deviate from the conventions of male-authored texts."<sup>21</sup>

While invested in the semantics of the text, Carby mentions briefly the question that different forms of the text may exist in her construction of the man's documentary records, with their inherent authority, versus that of the woman's diary, seen as more superfluous, but as equally documentary as the records. Her argument is complemented by Goldsby's. Thinking about *Incidents* as a different

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20. Jacqueline Goldsby, "'I Disguised My Hand': Writing Versions of the Truth in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and John Jacobs's 'A True Tale of Slavery,'" in *Harriet Jacobs and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: New Critical Essays* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 12.

21. Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987., 1987), 46, ISBN: 978-0-19-504164-4.

mode of narration outside of that of the typical male-dominated modes of writing and representation, to both Carby and Goldsby, opens up readings that allow for the text to be both nonfictional as well as engaged with the sentimental styles of writing the intended audience would expect at the time. What Carby demonstrates is that there is a necessity in the material properties of a text that can inform how the reading manifests and works. While Carby is certainly speaking of the expected contents of the records versus those of diaries it is worth noting that diaries and financial or business records also look different, and structure their contents differently. Her construction of records versus diaries denotes a means of reading that allows for an understanding of how the physical nature of a text asserts or projects an authority that determines its reading. In this instance, as Carby describes, the forms of writing seen as feminine, such as diaries, or even more broadly, any form of writing that deviates from an understandably male standard, thereby lacks a sense of authority because it does not *appear* to be authoritative.

*Incidents* exists not just in a liminal area in terms of its reception and the content of the narrative, which has been the focus of those recovering Jacobs, but the bibliographical history of the text which reinforces much of the same problem. As Jacqueline Goldsby points out, Jacobs's narrative did not follow the traditional route to printing as many other narratives. Many slave narratives had their beginnings in the oral addressing of abolitionist groups before their printing. This is the story told by Douglass that precedes the publication of his first biography, and Douglass' career was built as much on the lecture circuit as it was on the page. Jacobs, however, took her story directly to print, subverting the traditional protocol giving space to slave voices. *Incidents* as a text existed solely as a manuscript, not a speech or address, before its printing. It was, in essence, designed to be printed.<sup>22</sup> This point resonates with the previous section, in which the question of the text's sentimentality, orderliness, and novel structure convinced some readers of the text's status as a fictional work. Many of these discussions by Foster, Yellin, and others ignore, or only tangentially touch upon, the bibliographical questions that form the other side of *Incidents*'s life, and in fact, as bibliographical work is meant to do, provides the foundation from which readings of the text

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22. Jacqueline Goldsby, "'I Disguised My Hand': Writing Versions of the Truth in Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and John Jacobs's 'A True Tale of Slavery'."

might occur. The confusion in regards to the factual nature of *Incidents* that surrounds the discrete moments of the text's acknowledgement and reception can find their basis in the confused nature of the way the text was rendered visible in the first place.

The liminality of *Incidents* as a work is not solely the premise of the recovery-driven scholars who were responding to Blassingame's critique of the narrative. Scholars closer in time to Wright had similar thoughts, and mentioned *Incidents*, though only in passing or minimal statements. In 1926, a decade before Wright, John Herbert Nelson, in *The Negro Character in American Fiction*, would comment on the liminal state of *Incidents* and, curiously, *Autobiography of a Female Slave* as similar texts, declaring both of fiction:

"This last work, edited by the story-writer Mrs. Child and suspiciously like a sentimental novel, suggests that there was, in fact, another group of these books not genuine narratives at all, but wholly fictitious—romances masquerading as authentic autobiographies—a group related, on the one hand, to antislavery verse and on the other to antislavery fiction. In narratives of this class the hero is usually sentimental, super-refined in manner and feeling, more like philosophizing slave of the versifiers than the red-blooded fugitive of real life. On the other hand, this hero has also an affinity with Uncle Tom, in that both are purely fictional creations and both heroes of elaborate stories."<sup>23</sup>

Nelson's insight into Jacobs' writing relies on both his understanding that *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, as the pinnacle of abolitionist writing, "overshadowed" all other works that came out in the same period.<sup>24</sup> His classification of *Incidents* suggests the text is more of a participant in a fad induced by the most popular American novel of the nineteenth-century rather than a true narrative. *Incidents* is a replication rather than an authentic narrative in itself that is trying to perform the same function as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. For Nelson, the "red-blooded fugitive" seems to be the only possibility for authenticating the narrative, without which, the text is more of a hero's journey whose bias is

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23. John Herbert Nelson, *The Negro Character in American Literature*. [in English], OCLC: 4942430 (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Department of Journalism Press, 1926), 66.

24. *Ibid.*, 67.

clearly abolitionist in nature, at odds with lived experience. Or rather, lived experience and the genuine status as a former or fugitive slave is incompatible with being able to create sentimental and philosophical anti-slavery discourse, and is instead only capable of documenting.

Nelson is not representative of a universal sentiment towards *Incidents*, however. Vernon Loggins, in his 1931 book, *The Negro Author: His Development in America to 1900*, mentions Harriet Jacobs and *Incidents* alongside *Twelve Years A Slave*.<sup>25</sup> His treatment of Jacobs and her work compares to Nelson's in that he too decides that there existed a category of slave narrative that, while presenting as autobiographical, was in fact fictional. Emblematic of this category is Griffiths' *Autobiography of a Female Slave*. The existence of this category of texts creates a problem for readers, as he claims, "It is impossible to draw the line between the true and the fictional in even the most honest of the biographies."<sup>26</sup> However, *Incidents* (and *Twelve Years*) are both outside of this classification, in contradiction to Nelson's hierarchy. Instead, Loggins does believe the texts to at the least be more factual than fictional, calling them biographies, and listing them as such in the bibliography at the end of his book. Loggins does not commit to a long or detailed discussion of *Incidents*, as he quickly moves on, though not before crediting the text's readability to Lydia Marie Child's editing. Loggins' brief mention of Jacobs shows an interpretive approach that differs from the one suggested by Nelson. Even though the two agree on the general frame of reference for how to classify slave narratives, (i.e. that there exist fictional slave narratives) they disagree as to *Incidents*' classification. What both scholars ultimately show, however, is that *Incidents* was, even in its earliest appearances of literary scholarship, outside the sphere of its recovery and authentication, a controversial text in terms of its generic designation.

Readings such as Nelson's indicate the frame of reference from which Wright and the various catalogers approaching *Incidents* may have informed their own approaches to slave narratives. Literary scholars who believed *Incidents* to be fiction classified it as such not on the basis of evidence

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25. Curiously, in both the text of discussion of *Twelve Years a Slave* and in the bibliography in the back of the book, Loggins claims the work as anonymous.

26. Vernon Loggins, *The Negro author, his development in America to 1900*, Columbia university studies in English and comparative literature (Port Washington, N.Y. : Kennikat Press, [1964], 1964), 229.

or bibliographical information, but instead on the narrative structure and the rhetoric employed. An early reading such as Nelson's mirrors Blassingame's and reveals why it was necessary in the case of recovery scholars to rely on the material conditions of the narrative to set their arguments and comparisons against the claim of fiction. Loggins' counter to Nelson's argument is found in his crediting of Child as an editor. In recognizing Child's role, Loggins demonstrates his similarity with scholars such as Foster, Andrews, and Goldsby, wherein the status of the text as a true narrative is seemingly found in the circumstance that surround it rather than a pure text-only reading of the narrative. If in the case of the literary scholar, the bibliographic details of a text are able to divide between fact and fiction in the reading of *Incidents*, why is it that catalogers and bibliographers were prone to categorizing the text as fictional instead, when their readings of the text were based on the bibliographical data they provided to those scholars? The answer would be in how little attention was paid to the conditions in which the text was published, and instead, on fitting the text of *Incidents* into the dominant schematic by which books were described. A work like *Incidents* was treated as fiction, because it was read as such, and the unique conditions of its publication that were marked by Harriet Jacobs' condition as a fugitive slave woman attempting to self-publish her story. These details were not ignored by scholars working to recover the text. The effect of this erasure of key details to the publishing of *Incidents* and the how it effects the life of this text will be the focus of the next section.

### **4.3 *Linda* and the Title-page**

One of the most interesting conundrums that is presented by *Incidents* is its title, or rather, the phrase that has become its title. *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is not necessarily the title of the text published in 1861, and it is not what is always claimed as the title by either contemporaries or early twentieth-century catalogs and lists. If one were to look at the spine of the first edition of the text, the title would read *Linda*, but the text's title-page reads "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl." Foster in her article, "Resisting *Incidents*" discusses this peculiar detail of the text, bemoaning the fact that the text is not widely called *Linda*. Because of the text's sentimental qualities, Foster notes, the title *Linda* would make Jacobs' work consistent with other notable

sentimental tales: *Pamela*, *Clotel*, *Ramona*, etc. What is even more troubling is how such a change in the naming practice is not concordant with those of other anti-slavery works; as Foster points out, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not referred to as *Life Among the Lowly* and yet for some reason the subtitle *Incidents* replaces what would seem to be the proper title.<sup>27</sup> But it is here that Foster gets closer to a bibliographical issue than anyone else, since her discussion, while still rooted in the attempt to understand the semantic content of the novel and its liminal place in literary history, takes notice of the discrepancies between the text's reception and its material properties. Foster's brief musing on the work's title relates to the concept of the data that has formed around *Incidents* and permeated the way in which we are able to talk about it. That is to say, to speak of the title of *Incidents* as data is to speak of the constructed and therefore already-interpreted information that has been assigned to it. It is necessary to mention that other scholars touch upon the data formed from or of the text when they engage in criticism of the work. For example, when scholars sometimes refer to Harriet Jacobs as Linda Brent (the name by which Jacobs herself signs the introduction) they are interpreting information placed in front of them by the text or out-of-date records that still retain Brent as the author. But literary scholars are not as affected by pseudonyms as by changes in titles, and for Foster, the ambiguity of the title represents a moment of resistance, or defiance of Jacobs and her story as it ignores Jacobs' voice in favor of modern critics, bibliographers, and readers.

If we are to take the spine of the book as a source of information equal in authority to the title-page, the book itself suggests a logical title such as *Linda; or, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. This would be Foster's way of composing the title as her discussion indicates. However, the fact that this does not happen and that the text has been deemed *Incidents* rather than *Linda* demonstrates an unequal authority between the two parts of the book. This is where bibliography has affected our outlook and codified a text as something that it is possibly not.<sup>28</sup> The purpose of this section will be to examine the way in which the title *Incidents in the Life of Slavery*, as

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27. Frances Smith Foster, "Resisting Incidents," in *Harriet Jacobs and Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: New Critical Essays* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 67.

28. It is here that I would like to acknowledge the fact that I myself have been calling the text *Incidents* here, because even though I will argue about the competing nature of the title *Linda* for this work, I must defer to the dominant discourse of Jacobs scholars for readability.

opposed to *Linda*, emerged and became the dominant way to refer to Jacobs' work. As seen with Foster, the title itself does weigh on readings of the text, but we can ask how a title is assigned and realize that it may be the work of another, or may change over time as a work is cataloged and recorded. This discussion will distance us from Wright somewhat as the discussion of Jacobs' title and the absence of "Linda" in descriptions does not rest solely in his hands, but reflect instead on the wider bibliographic context in which Wright is working.

The title-page of the 1861 *Incidents* is reprinted in many modern editions of *Incidents* including the *Norton Critical* edited by Foster, and the earliest critical editions by Harcourt Brace and Yellin's Harvard edition. This is far from uncommon in critical editions of works, where the original, or earliest available, title-page of the edited work is provided to readers. The practice carries with it an aura of historicity and a suggestion of fidelity to the text. The practice itself can be seen as a relatively simple feat, but also inherently privileges the title-page as a *de facto* source of information when compared to other possible sources such as the spine. The title-page can be easily reprinted in facsimile in a way that the spine cannot. Microfilm copies of a book's title-page are easily accessed and scanned for printing. As well, a title-page is easily re-printed because it is a product of printing; it has already fit and made to be presented on a page, and can easily appear in black and white. A spine, however, would necessitate a photograph, which is expensive to print, especially should it appear in color, and its transition to paper, especially anything other than A1 copy paper, would distort and degrade the image. That the spine is an odd shape for a page layout also works against it being presented. A digital presentation of the text would not necessarily run into this issue, as the affordances of the digital allow for the inclusion of images that are not a page. As the *Documenting the American South* (DAS) project shows on its page for *Incidents* an image of the spine, clearly presenting the lone "Linda" as a title sans author.<sup>29</sup> However, that a digital version represents the spine does not affect how the text's metadata is represented, and the authority of the title-page is maintained. The DAS copy of *Incidents*, as a digital copy, is encoded in XML, which appends additional information and supplies a taxonomy to the text. It is here that

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29. *Harriet Ann Jacobs. Incidents in the Life of A Slavegirl.*, accessed March 2, 2018, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html>.

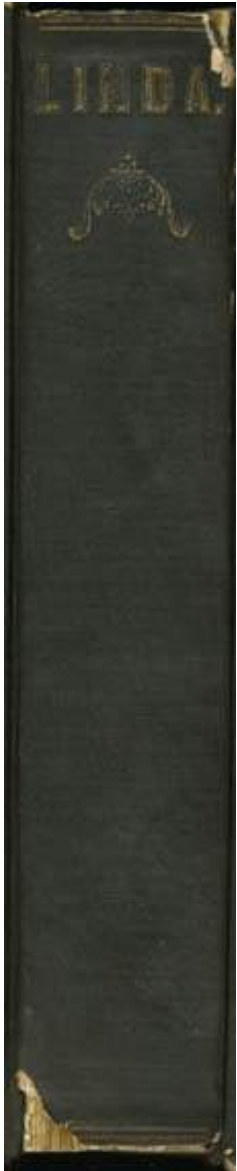


Figure 4.1: The spine of the first American edition of *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl*. See "Harriet Ann Jacobs. Incidents in the life of a slavegirl.," accessed March 2, 2018, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs.html>.



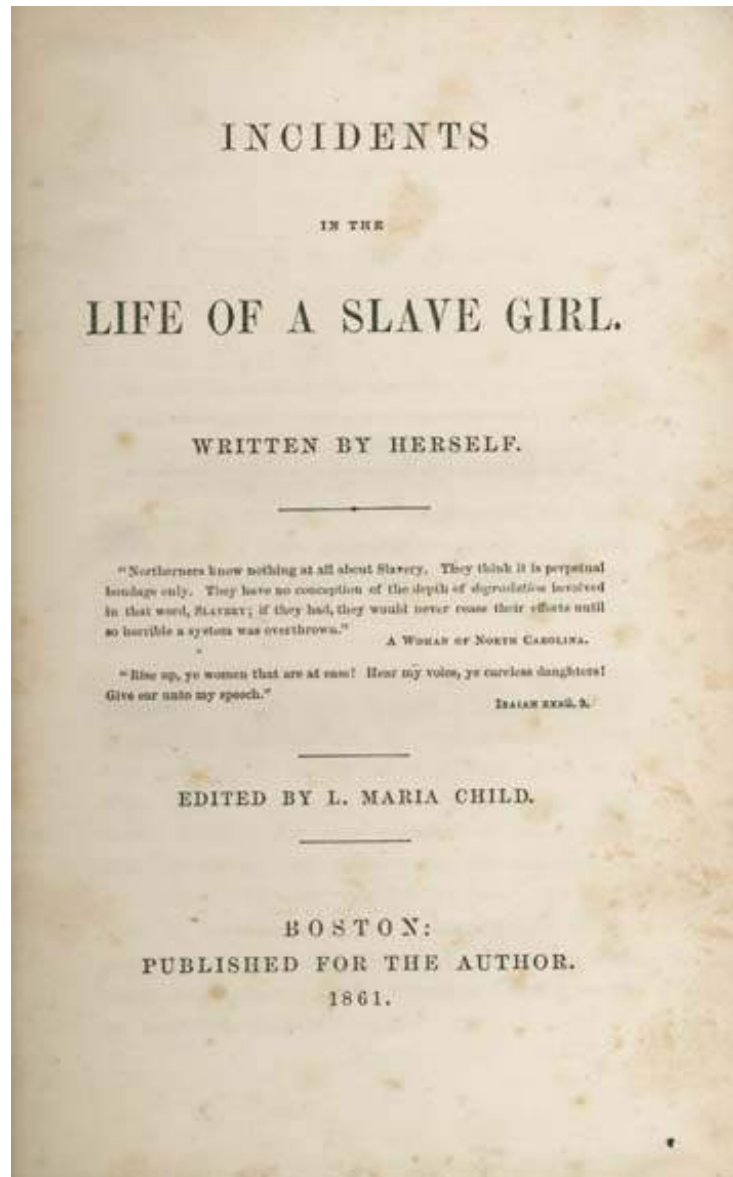


Figure 4.2: The title-page of the first American edition of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. See "Harriet Ann Jacobs. Incidents in the life of a slavegirl.," accessed March 2, 2018, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs.html>.

the same information seen in a catalog record could be found. Within the XML code, the title is still rendered as *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, however, ceding to the established standard of the text's name. The presence of the spine image, however, does attest to the peculiarities of the text's physical properties compared to the way it is discussed and read.

It is necessary to understand the significance of the title-page in bibliography, specifically in the early twentieth century and in Wright's own bibliographic work. At this moment, the title-page represents the *prima facie* of bibliographic description. The title-page could be expected to have much necessary information contained in a single space, including the title and author, as expected, but also the imprint, where the place and publisher would be located. Examples such as *Incidents* and its critical editions, show the continued reliance upon the aura of authority that surrounds the title-page. Facsimile reproductions of a text's title-page argue the authenticity and history of a text, but this is not necessarily relevant to what the bibliographer desires when looking at the title-page.

Wright's reliance on the title-page in the process of creating *American Fiction* is easily verifiable. In the preface of each volume, he explains his standards for his descriptions, including how he decided upon what the title of each entry will be. As Wright states:

Some titles have been shortened, and authors' names and quotations appearing on the title-page have been omitted. Omissions are indicated by ellipses. The use of abbreviation "anon." for anonymous, following a title, indicates that the author's name did not appear on the title-page. The abbreviation "pseud.," following a name that is on the title-page as the author, is self-explanatory. These two abbreviations are given only in the first described editions and do not necessarily apply to later editions.

Punctuation and capitalization have not followed the original titles."<sup>30</sup>

The information Wright has compiled then, is structured via reference almost universally to the title-page of the text from which that information is derived. All other possible sources of infor-

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30. See Wright, *American Fiction, 1774-1850: A Contribution Toward A Bibliography.*, ix. In Wright II, the volume in which Jacobs and *Incidents* are listed, Wright additionally notes the intention behind his regularization of capitalization and punctuation, saying it was to "avoid the eccentricities of nineteenth-century printing." See Wright, *American Fiction, 1851-1875*, x

mation are elided in deference to the title-page, including spine, running head, or other pre-existent modes of data, including catalogs (though, admittedly, in this case, most of these would have done little to change how *Incidents* was described). Wright's insistence on the title-page leads us into two different strands of discussion. First, we must consider why the title-page of *Incidents* does not align with the title printed on the spine of the text. The answer to this question necessitates discussion of the history and circumstances of *Incidents'* printing. Secondly, we must ask why Wright's use of the title-page produces this discrepancy between the title-page and spine of *Incidents*. The use of the title-page as the primary source of bibliographical information is standard, and in this way Wright's use of *Incidents* over *Linda* is not singular to him or *American Fiction*. Instead, it represents how Wright's composition of *American Fiction* is informed by the standards of bibliographical description, and how these standards do not always prescribe methods that work cleanly with every text. As a consequence, Wright's description of Jacobs' work demonstrates how bibliographical description can guide the way a text circulates and is read, and how the data is derived from the text described. Even when the purpose of the description is not meant to affect interpretation, the description may still inform a reader when considering how that information may hide key interpretive qualities, such as race and publication details, from the reader.

While the title-page can be expected to be a general guide to the text it describes, there exist a few issues that affect how a book is then viewed and described. These problems are present when one considers *Incidents*. First comes the tendency of early twentieth-century bibliographers to rely on the primacy of the title-page as the most authoritative source of information. This happens despite the fact that the title-page may not always be either in agreement with the other parts of the book (in this case the spine, in others the running head, etc.). The title-page itself may be the last page produced, and as such is the most susceptible to changes when a book is reprinted. These changes could be due to a new publisher, editor, resetting of the type, or other circumstances that may arise in the midst of publishing. These sorts of circumstances did not occur in the case of *Incidents*, but instead, something even more drastic impacted the printing process: Jacobs' publisher went bankrupt.

The original publishers of the manuscript of *Incidents*, Thayer and Eldridge, went bankrupt in 1860 before the text could be published.<sup>31</sup> Thayer and Eldridge had proceeded as far as making stereotyped plates of the book, an expensive process that showed their faith in the narrative. With their failing, Jacobs subsequently purchased the stereotyped plates and sought a way to have them printed. The title *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* was used by Thayer and Eldridge, as shown in a "coming soon" announcement that appeared in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, Nov. 3, 1860, two months before the company's closure.<sup>33</sup> At this point, it was likely that a title had been decided upon and was printed on the running head of the text's body. Thayer and Eldridge's bankruptcy gave Jacobs either control over the title that she did not have with a formal publisher or more time to revise and change the title. Knowing that the process of printing *Incidents* was disrupted by the failing of her intended publisher and left with the plates that held the text, we can know for certain that the first printed copies of *Incidents* were derived from molds and plates that pre-existed the title-page and the spine of the book, with their running head that read "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl." on the recto page sides and the chapter titles on the verso sides. The title is further complicated by the heading printed at the beginning of the narrative on the same page that begins the first chapter reads, "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, Seven Years Concealed." Both the running head and heading before the chapter pre-exist the actual printing of the text, and therefore represent a former version of the text. At the time of the creation of the stereotype plates, they may have represented an original title as intended by Jacobs, or perhaps due to the influence of Lydia Marie Child. The title-page, however, is produced after the fact and only represents the title as seen by the running

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31. Thayer and Eldridge were also the last in a line of publishers Jacobs dealt with in order to secure publication of *Incidents* according to Yellin, and they only agreed to the publication if the text came with a preface by Lydia Marie Child, who agreed to do so.<sup>32</sup> Another potential publisher, Philips and Samson in Boston wanted a preface by either Harriet Beecher Stowe or her employer, Nathaniel Parker Willis, who was an apologist for slavery. Her multiple attempts to find a publisher in England were also unsuccessful until after the American edition was printed. See Jean Fagan Yellin, *Harriet Jacobs: a life*, OCLC: ocm55073934 (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2004), 137-53, ISBN: 978-0-585-49978-9

33. Harriet A. Jacobs, John S. Jacobs, and Louisa Matilda Jacobs, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, ed. Jean Fagan Yellin, vol. 2, OCLC: ocn202544294 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 284, ISBN: 978-0-8078-3131-1.

head and not the title that a reader would first encounter on the binding and cover.<sup>34</sup>

The last title to be appended to the text, *Linda*, conflicts with the titles that result from the stereotype plates. Given that at the point of binding Jacobs' had more control over her narrative's published form, the difference between the binding title and the title-page printed from plates produced under the direction of her publishers suggests resistance to the original direction the text was headed. The time in between the production of the plates and the eventual printing of the narrative gave Jacobs time to further think about her narrative, though not change much of it. The binding title, therefore, represents an instance of Jacobs as author making a final assertion about how her work will be received, made at the last possible moment before the text would be circulated. The movement of the text *into* the hands of the author after the production of its plates is an atypical condition of many printed works that find their ways into bibliographies. The title on the binding, then, represents what is closest to the bibliographical ideal as proposed by the New Bibliography that emerged in the same period as Wright, the final intentions of the author. The process of relying on the title-page works against the authority of the writer of *Incidents* in this case, and instead places that authority into the hands of the bibliographer, who determines what data describes the text, regardless of the circumstances that surround its publication. Similarly, the standard of the title-page as authority shows the issues that may emerge from a process that is applied consistently to a collection of objects that are not consistent in their production. Instead, the result is an interpretive practice that prescribes information *en masse* and codifies that as truth. In an ironic turn, in the case of *Incidents*, what we can see then is that the process, devised to be accurate, actually perverts the accuracy of the information in the case of a text that does not conform to the expected standards of creation.

Returning to the wider idea of the title-page as the standard by which bibliographical description is derived, the circumstances that show the understanding of the title-page at the time of

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34. Of additional note, and of evidence of a publisher's power in regards to titles, when the book was finally published in England, the publisher, Frederick W. Chesson, changed the title from both *Linda* and *Incidents* to be instead *The Deeper Wrong*, the title by which it was known to any English reviewer.

Wright will help to contextualize the issues observed in regards to *Incidents*. As early as 1900, John Ferguson in *Some Aspects of Bibliography* explicitly mentions the bibliographical hierarchy of description: "There are now included in book description the title-page, the author's name in full, the place, the printer, the date, the size, the signatures, the number of leaves or pages, the collation, the illustrations—if any—the style of printing, and any peculiarity the book may display."<sup>35</sup> These standards resemble modern citations, with only small differences in what information is codified here. Most importantly, however, there is no ambiguity as to how the title of a work is obtained; there is no space given by Ferguson for alternate forms of deriving a title, but instead he notes that title-page as the source solely, as if it was an accurate stand-in for the title.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Berwick Sayers in 1918 explains his own definition of description, or annotation in his words: "A descriptive extension of the title-page of a book in which the qualifications of the author, and the scope, purpose and place of the book are indicated."<sup>37</sup> The method of describing a book is focused less on supplying the information of a title, rather than on a description of the physical object which may or may not identify that information; that the title of text matches what the title-page describes is, instead, incidental, and liable to be subsumed by the title-page's declaration. Lastly, Arundell Esdaile's *A Student's Manual of Bibliography* (1931), one of the formative guides for bibliography in the early twentieth-century, says the data for description the title is "as found on the title-page, with necessary abbreviations...".<sup>38</sup> At this point it is clear how standardized, throughout the early decades of the 1900s, the idea of the title-page as the primary source of information about a text was, and its significance comes, most importantly, at the exclusion of any other possible source. This sort of standard relies on an institutional framework of publishing and production of textual materials that a work such as *Incidents* deviated from.

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35. John Ferguson, *Some aspects of bibliography*; (Edinburgh, 1900), 10, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433069133373>.

36. Ferguson's work is also notable where he declares that the content of a text is of no interest to the bibliographer. See *ibid.*, 51-2

37. W. C. Berwick Sayers, *First Steps in Annotation in Catalogues* (Croydon, 1918), 2, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112064066506>.

38. Arundell Esdaile, *A Student's Manual of Bibliography* (London: George Allen / Unwin Ltd., 1931), 250.

Early bibliographers were not entirely blind to the problems such a standard could yield, however. In 1920, George Watson Cole discussed what he called "bibliographic ghosts," or editions of texts described by bibliographers that do not actually exist, but are derived from faulty information, errors sometimes passed from record to record. Cole suggests that these "ghosts" are the result of the over-reliance of bibliographers on the title-page for their information without considering the circumstances of their creation.<sup>39</sup> McKerrow mentions in his *Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (1927) that the use of the title-page for the creation of a bibliographic record requires some discretion, a warning Esdaile and others eschew. Particularly, he warns the difference in a title-page title and the running head of the body of the text may be different because they are created in different instances, and the header, coming first, represents the original author intention versus the input of the publisher. His primary point, however, even amongst others codifying the title-page as truth, is that various circumstances interrupt the process of book creation that may tamper with the set protocol of book description that underwrites what a reader may expect from a bibliographic description: an accurate portrayal not of the title-page but of the book's metadata, its title and author, and publisher, rather than what it presented within the text with its messy circumstances of printing.

The omission of the other facets of the physical text of *Incidents* and its publishing, and the assumption that the work, and mostly the title-page, fit within the standard procedures of publication yet erases the fact that the text was an attempt to recover a work from a failure to engage in that typical process, and instead had a significantly different sort of labor applied to its creation, including the purchasing of its plates to be printed by another, and the decisions of the previous publisher that were in held in place even after their bankruptcy. These details reveal the social layer of the text that bibliographers did not see when looking at the title-page, even when seeing

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39. In Cole's situation, he is speaking of title-pages that are reappropriated to monographs from original pamphlet copies, and thus were either cropped or cut and lacking an imprint. Subsequent problems with identifying and misrecording the dates of the monograph copies with cut pages then were based on the actions of bibliographers who did not consider the printing process in full and instead relied only on what was singularly in front of them, which sometimes may have been someone else's description rather than the text itself. See George Watson Cole, *Bibliographical Ghosts* (Chicago, 1920), 106-8, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015034575434>

the "published for the author" in place of a traditional publisher in the imprint. The inconsistencies between the title-page and spine or chapter header open a space to where the text can be read materially, and speaks to the unconventional nature of the text's production. In the case of Wright's fiction, not to say anything of the myriad other bibliographers and catalogers that have replicated the same issues, the traditional methodology of description glossed over those gaps in attempt to codify the text in accordance with other, more typically published titles.

Such a decision conflicts with how Harriet Jacobs chose to represent her text and how she even considered the work. As evidenced by her personal writings, Jacobs did not think of the work as *Incidents*, but instead as either "my Book" and *Linda*. During the process of composition, the narrative was mentioned often without a title, and usually just as "my Book", usually with a capital B.<sup>40</sup> After publication, it seems Jacobs does alter somewhat her manner in discussing it, at least formally, as indicated in a handwritten receipt for Francis Jackson, dated February 1, 1861, who purchased an unknown number of copies of "Linda" for one hundred dollars.<sup>41</sup> Lydia Marie Child also refers to the text as "Linda," exclusively when not simply referring to it as Jacobs's narrative, helping to keep the author and narrative closely related. Her writings to friends and abolitionist colleagues, including the Quaker poet John Greenleaf Whittier would call the text "Linda."<sup>42</sup> Whittier, along with several other reviewer for abolitionist papers would name it as "Linda" in their writings. William C. Nell, contributing to William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* would publicize it as "Linda: *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, seven years concealed in Slavery*" in the January 25, 1861 edition of the paper. Even the British publisher, Chesson, while he changed the title to the *Deeper Wrong* for the British publication, printed on the same plates as the American edition, would refer to the American copies as "Linda" over his title or *Incidents*.<sup>43</sup>

These firsthand accounts give us not only a record of how early readers of the text, particularly

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40. *Linda* as a possible title for the text of Jacobs's narrative has been so thoroughly obliterated in modern critical memory that the term does not even warrant an entry in the index of Yellin's collection of Jacobs's family letters, even though the text is referenced many times under that title.

41. Jacobs, Jacobs, and Jacobs, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 295.

42. *Ibid.*, 335, 341-3.

43. *Ibid.*, 719.



those influential and close to Jacobs, as well as Jacobs herself, conceived of the work now known as *Incidents*. A few early reviews of the American edition did refer to the text as *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, including the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, whose contributors were not associated closely with Jacobs or her circle.<sup>44</sup> But others such as the *Weekly Anglo-African* and the *Anti-Slavery Advocate* held to "Linda" as the designated title.<sup>45</sup> Confusingly, the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, with its close ties to Child and Garrison, recognized both titles, "Linda" and *Incidents* in their publicity for the work.<sup>46</sup> Reviewers who preferred *Incidents* over "Linda" may have done what the bibliographers and catalogers in the succeeding century did, in that they deferred to the evidence of the title-page over that other parts of the text. Or, given how freely the *Standard* would alternate the terms, it may also have not been important to note, as the book could be located, and seemed to be understood under both titles regardless, especially considering the name Linda Brent and Lydia Marie Child are so often mentioned so as to direct the work's seekers in the right direction regardless of the title.

But Jacobs's own chosen title was "Linda," a title that was omitted in favor of the authority established by the title-page and the publishers and stereotyped plates that interpreted that title. The erasure of "Linda" for *Incidents*, a subtitle that has taken the place of the main title, is, as Foster would say, a representation of a resistance to the text, in that the voice of Jacobs has been lost in this case. While her narrative itself remains and follows the title-page, the wrapper of that narrative has shown itself to be a more volatile object that determines the ways readers are able to, first, locate that text and then read it. What an instance such as Wright's description of Jacobs's work does is further enshrine and proliferate this particular reading of *Incidents*, in such a way as to preserve the dominant voice of the publishers, critics, and bibliographers rather than that of the author. It is no surprise, then, as the recovery of the text was underway, that scholars seeking what evidence they could find of the text would default to the title appended to the text by professionals. Whether approaching Wright, or other bibliographies including Sabin's *Americana* or Blanck's

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44. Jacobs, Jacobs, and Jacobs, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, 327 The *Bugle* had previously published the announcement of the book for Thayer and Eldridge under that title. See note 31.

45. *Ibid.*, 349,351-2.

46. *Ibid.*, 328-35.

*Bibliography of American Literature*, or any number of catalogs at a library or archive, scholars attempting to reference or pull Jacobs's narrative would find *Incidents* listed as the title, and build their citations as well as their entire readings upon that name while they tried to restore Jacobs's name and voice to the text.

Bibliography, as a field, has conceived of itself as dedicated to accuracy and precision in the recording of printed information. However, the methods and standards the field developed fall short when a book is produced that does not follow the conventions imagined and set by bibliographers. *Incidents* as a text, has its truth obscured by the practice of bibliography in an ironic attempt at preserving and disseminating awareness of the text's existence. A bibliographer such as Wright, who expresses good intentions in trying to include the diverse amount of work that comprises American fiction, also shows where his blind spots are. These blind spots are a result of the twentieth-century cultural assumptions and ideas that pertained to slave writing and publishing, and systematically deny authors who published under the conditions Jacobs did their ownership and control of the text. This is how the interpretive nature of data can manifest itself, by using the cultural values and judgments of the time as a filter through which the data must pass. The authority given to the bibliographer in these situations has consequences for both the texts that affected by bibliographic error, but as well for the research that looks upon these sources unquestionably. Modern resources that have utilized Wright's work in order to inform their own data adapt and organize Wright's work to suit their own needs, but they do not correct and revise Wright's work, even in such cases as Jacobs'. The chapter will cover this topic more in depth, but as closing note, it should be remembered that the case of Jacobs and *Incidents* is not confined to a single volume, resource, or time period, but has been carried forward into the digital age where the bibliographical work of the early twentieth century has found a new purpose in providing aid to researchers.

## 5. CONCLUSION: THE "TRANSMISSION" OF WRIGHT AND *AMERICAN FICTION*

In 1966, Lyle Wright completed the third volume of *American Fiction*, bringing the bibliography's range of coverage to 1900 and adding 6175 titles to *American Fiction*'s corpus. In 1972, a second printing of Wright III was issued. In between Wright went back to the first volume and produced another revised edition in 1969 for the 1775-1850 range. These were the last few milestones of Wright as he neared the completion of his career as a bibliographer. By 1972, *American Fiction* had amounted to three volumes with revised editions for the first two volumes: Wright I had three different editions (1938, 1948, and 1969), Wright II had two (1957 and 1965), and Wright III had two printings (1966 and 1972).<sup>1</sup> Over the course of these editions, Wright made substantial changes to the substance and arrangement of his bibliography. The revised editions, naturally, listed more titles as they were discovered, but also additional author attributions and emendations, or, in the case of Wright I, the assignment of numbers to each title for ease of reference.<sup>2</sup> For Wright, it seemed that *American Fiction* was never truly complete; in a talk delivered in 1966, after the publication of Wright III, Lyle Wright jokes that "retirement has provided a ready answer to any question of a volume four."<sup>3</sup> The acknowledgment that one could continue his work, as he indicates, and as he demonstrates through the revisions he made to previous volumes, shows how *American Fiction* is as much a text as the narratives it lists in that it is always susceptible to editorial changes that alter the data these volumes retained.

It is unsurprising, after having completed such a fundamental resource for the study of American literature, that Wright's bibliography became the basis for others to use in developing further tools and resources for the study American fiction. Several commercial and academic groups have

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1. For Wright II, the additions and corrections made were published separately as well in 1965.

2. The 1938 edition of Wright I was not enumerated, and thus relied purely on alphabetical order as its primary reference mechanism. The addition of enumeration for the revised edition carried over into Wright II and III's initial editions.

3. Lyle Henry Wright, "In Pursuit of American Fiction," in *Bibliography : Papers Read at A Clark Library Seminar, May 7, 1966*. Ed. Lawrence Clark Powell, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library seminar papers (Los Angeles : William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1966), 31.

used Wright as the basis for their own work and their use of him demonstrates the ways in which Wright has been read by those who further his work, and how that in turn affects the way his work is read by others. As a text that can be adopted by others and changed to fit their own initiatives and desires for what the data can do for researchers, *American Fiction* has been edited and its components either expanded upon, altered, or otherwise made different from the original way they were presented. Both commercial institutions such as Gale Cengage and Proquest, as well as academic ones including the University of Indiana Libraries and the University of Virginia, have taken up Wright as a guiding force in creating or curating collections of American fiction. Understanding the goals and interpretive claims made by these alterations to Wright's data reveals to us how data moves among people and institutions and the ways in which data are not only constructed but re-structured to fulfill a new purpose, even in cases where that purpose may be at odds with the ideals of the compositor.

This chapter explores the ways in which various adaptations of Wright have transmitted the data of *American Fiction*. The original way in which Wright captured and presented his titles, "parameterized" to use Drucker's term, has been acknowledged but is not immutable when it comes to designing a corpus of American fiction that is intended to serve researchers and readers in a way that is different from that of an enumerative bibliography. Looking at the ways both commercial and academic institutions have repurposed Wright, using his data as a fundamental building block of their initiative, can demonstrate to us the ways in which datasets are both read and edited by others as a holistic text.

Randall McLeod has argued that instances of transmission are always transformations as well, as that which contains and presents the text undergoes a change even if the text does not (though, of course, the text usually does as well). As McLeod says, "[a text's] structural redundancies are, crucially, both *of* its text and *about* it. Any lapse in them opens up contradiction at the heart of transmission" (emphasis McLeod's). McLeod coins the portmanteau "transformission" to encapsulate his idea.<sup>4</sup> Understanding transformission as a guiding framework, we can then understand

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4. Randall McLeod (published under Random Clod), "Information on Information," *Text 5* (1991): 246, ISSN: 0736-3974, accessed June 25, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library>.

that all attempts by others to use Wright's work inherently "transformits" the data, imbuing new meaning and contexts unto the data. McLeod's stance is embedded in the framework of the social text as pioneered by D. F. McKenzie and Jerome McGann, and the concept of "transformission" understands that individual actors upon the text will inform its transformation as these actors place the text into a new context and form. Bibliographies are no different than the dramatic and poetic texts McLeod analyzes, as a text such as a bibliography relies on a rigid structure to inform its arrangement, and therefore changes to that structure inherently affect the data itself and what can be taken from that data. Appending facsimiles of the enumerated texts or omitting a text for any reason suggests, at the least, a counterargument or desire for revision for the original work. The transformations that are undergone by the data of Wright's bibliography open up new readings of that data and make more clear the ways in which those who took *American Fiction* as a basis for the creation of new collections of data viewed a collection of American fiction differently from the way that Wright conceived of it in his list.

## 5.1 Wright on Wright

As a first step to understanding how the editing and adapting of Wright's work to other forms present interpretive judgments about texts, it is necessary to understand Wright's own approach to his work. Identifying the framework he employed in compiling his multiple volumes of American fiction helps to reveal some of the implicit arguments a work such as *American Fiction* presents to its readers. Wright was a full-time employee at the Huntington Library for most of his career; he did, however, publish a few pieces of scholarship that were informed by his research and production of *American Fiction*. His first essay, "A Statistical Survey of American Fiction, 1774-1850" displays a few key ideas the undergird the first volume of *American Fiction's* argument. The first of these ideas is the concern for contemporary taste that informs the population of his bibliography, rather than the designation of status and cultural value. As he begins in one section of his analysis: "The writings of many of the forgotten authors, true enough, may not be literary masterpieces, but

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[tamu.edu/stable/30234363](http://tamu.edu/stable/30234363).

the point so often overlooked is the contemporary taste for such literature".<sup>5</sup> Key early American writers, in Wright's terms, are Timothy Shay Arthur and Joseph Holt Ingraham, both of whom published prolifically between 1830 and 1850, with Arthur publishing 50 works in that time and Ingraham producing 79 works. These are not canonical authors, but authors who were successful in the marketplace, in producing, publishing, and seemingly in selling. What Wright recognizes is that their ability to fill out his list so substantially is a byproduct of that success and not their literary value.

The question of literary value is antithetical to *American Fiction*, and this stance dovetails into the second of Wright's ideals: the ability for a list of works to potentially (though not realistically) include everything. In his essays, Wright demonstrates concern for how those he calls "literary historians" treat the wider world of American publishing beyond the canon. At the conclusion of his discussion of Arthur and Ingraham, Wright asks, "How many literary histories even mention their names?"<sup>6</sup> This sort of subtle jab at literary scholars is characteristic of Wright in his other writings.<sup>7</sup> In an essay derived from his work on the second volume of *American Fiction*, Wright states, "Literary historians will say, I am sure, that some of these titles were better forgotten, but that is a bibliographical impossibility."<sup>8</sup> This statement erects a dividing line between Wright's conception of literary scholarship and bibliography. Bibliography is meant to compile and bear witness to all the print publishing that it can; to Wright, bibliography is perfectly egalitarian with its ideal of proclaiming everything worthy of being listed. Literary scholarship, on the other hand,

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5. Lyle H. Wright, "A Statistical Survey of American Fiction, 1774-1850," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 2, no. 3 (1939): 312, ISSN: 0018-7895, doi:10.2307/3815750, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.library.tamu.edu/stable/3815750>.

6. Ibid.

7. Wright's primary term to reference those who study literature is "literary historian" and he, to my knowledge, does not deviate from that term. I interpret his usage of the term as broadly applicable to not just those interested in literary history, but also literary criticism since his idea of their work includes not just historical scholarship but interpretive and analytic scholarship of literature.

8. Lyle H. Wright, "A Few Observations On American Fiction, 1851-1875," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 65, no. 1 (April 1955): 75, ISSN: 0044751X, <http://lib-ezproxy.tamu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=31h&AN=44539526&site=eds-live>.

is exclusionary.

One of the arguments we might then assume about the three volumes of *American Fiction* is then in the ability for the list to testify as to the abundance of American fiction in any capacity, rather than just the aesthetic and cultural value of the items listed. This appeals to the natural affordance of bibliographies and why they exist in the first place: they provide easy reference to a large amount of information. But we can also view this as an ideological principal that guides a reader's approach the subject of American fiction. Wright's view of the topic of American fiction is more aware of market success, contemporary taste, and those who numerically contributed to the total sum of the American literary tradition, rather than to the canonical figures whose presence fills out Wright's bibliography to a lesser degree than the noncanonical works. The information that *American Fiction* provides, as Wright implies, is useful not for the possible literary merit that could be discovered, but because of what it will provide access to the holistic knowledge of American culture. As Wright observes, the noncanonical works he presents are useful beyond the question of literary merit:

From these tales of varying degree of literary merit, and I do not consider all of them literary outcasts, a great deal can be learned about the way of life of the people, the clothes they wore, the food they ate, and their daily gossip.<sup>9</sup>

The culture of early America as displayed by its fiction is not necessarily congruent with the way that literary history has been constructed by scholars, but a reference work that makes more accessible the ability to see beyond the mainstay titles of American literature can help to alleviate that problem. Wright's position as the compiler of American fiction titles places him outside of the position of the literary historian who closely reads a small subset of those titles.

From his vantage point of being able to, by the end of his career, view over 10,000 titles of American fiction, Wright's readings of literature come from what could be referred to as a "distant" view.<sup>10</sup> As evident from the titles, "A Statistical Survey of American Fiction" and "A Few

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9. Wright, "A Few Observations On American Fiction, 1851-1875," 77.

10. To clarify, Wright's method and point of view here resonates with contemporary digital hu-

Observations on American Fiction," it is evident that Wright is interested in what his bibliography can holistically tell scholars about American fiction. In his "Statistical Survey," Wright catalogs the number of separately published titles per decade from 1770 to 1850, totaling 1377 individual titles. Wright then further classifies the texts based on a genre-designating term found on the title-page. In this he asserts the popularity of the term of "novel", "tale", and "romance" as they emerge in early America, encapsulating a full third of the 1377 titles Wright had counted.<sup>11</sup> This example is interesting in both the claim it makes, but also in how Wright has chosen to make his argument an extension of his bibliographic work, which necessitated the accumulation of a large quantity of data. Wright compares his own statistical work with that of the literary historian's narrow view of literary history, as the primary thesis of his statistical work claims: "An analysis of all the titles yields results that vary considerably from those obtained after an examination of a select few."<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, though less mathematically, Wright's "Observations" and "In Pursuit of American Fiction," both contribute to large, overarching judgments and generalizations about American literary culture based on his experience in compiling *American Fiction*. In "Observations" Wright holds a similar stance as he is explaining his work in compiling *American Fiction*'s second volume. With a resource such as *American Fiction* on hand, Wright explains, "the scholar has a much broader view of the literary activity in this field during the third quarter of the nineteenth century."<sup>13</sup> The subject of what is considered to have merit is irrelevant next to the cultural information that can be compiled; the trends and patterns that emerge can be, to Wright, just as informative and capable of expanding the purview of literary study. At the close of Wright's career, in his lecture "In Pursuit of American Fiction," he writes, "The study of literature is a study of the human mind, and the human mind is a study of the human mind." <sup>14</sup> manities scholars. Franco Moretti, in *Graphs, Maps, Trees* argues that distant reading brings awareness to a level of literary scholarship that was previously ignored or inaccessible; that is, the cycle, a temporary structure, smaller than the span of centuries but larger than the individual text, two chronological levels literary scholars are more familiar with. See Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* [in en] (New York: Verso, 2005), 13-4. Similarly, Matthew Jockers argues for a macroscopic, or distant, view via quantitative evidence to in turn help both understand the contexts literary texts emerge from and to better understand specific literary texts. See Matthew L. Jockers, *Macroanalysis: Digital Methods and Literary History* (Baltimore, MD: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 26-7.

11. Wright, "A Statistical Survey of American Fiction, 1774-1850," 309-11.

12. *Ibid.*, 309.

13. Wright, "A Few Observations On American Fiction, 1851-1875," 75.



of American Fiction," Wright finishes by saying that, even after the expansion of American literary study in the academy, and after this own extensive work in creating a three volume listing of titles, the field is "still far from exhausted." Wright explains, "...many of the novels of minor authors have yet to be examined, even superficially, for any share they may have contributed to the enrichment of our literature."<sup>14</sup>

Wright's insistence on the still-widening expanse of scholarly possibility in his published work gets to the heart of what it means to compile a bibliography. In Wright's own view, *American Fiction* is a tool from which insight can be gained, and it can improve the field. Part of the construction of the bibliography is designed around facilitating research and encouraging the expanding of American literary study that Wright speaks to. As a reference work, Wright's bibliography takes upon itself to not only list works and testify, via their descriptions, that these works exist but to also facilitate access to these texts. A significant part of the descriptions Wright includes is which libraries possess a title, based on the libraries Wright surveyed and visited while he was researching and compiling the volumes. In all three volumes, each description is appended with codes of libraries where Wright was able to physically locate the texts. The census of where the works are available lends both a provenance and argument as to the work that went into the compilation of the bibliography, but also works to help the reader. For an early to mid-twentieth work, this was the most a work could do in pointing researchers in the direction of the wealth of American fiction that exists, but still endeavored to aid in the access to rare or lesser-known texts. The presence of the census reinforces the overall trajectory of Wright's work in terms of its commitment to showing the broadest cultural context of American literary writing. Reading the entries in the census itself, however, provides an addendum to the data beyond the innately bibliographical information (i.e. title-page, year of publication, etc.) that speaks to the influence of certain titles in terms of their physical location in various academic libraries. Unsurprisingly, a first edition of a title such as *Moby-Dick* (1851) was found in thirteen of the nineteen collections Wright perused. Titles with less or even no cultural and institutional backing appear in sometimes only one library.

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14. Wright, "In Pursuit of American Fiction," 48.

The issue of access becomes central to the way that Wright's work is used and re-imagined in subsequent generations of scholarship and projects that use Wright's work as a foundation. Wright's own work was a significant undertaking that has yet to be replicated or redone, even with the expansion of multiple libraries and the arrival of digital repositories and databases that might turn up new discoveries that fit Wright's definition of "American Fiction." Rather than a vertical expansion of Wright's list to increase the number of titles between 1776 to 1900, the transmission of Wright instead relied on a more horizontal expansion, taking the titles and furthering the data and information associated with those already listed by Wright. The most obvious and primary way of doing this was to make more accessible the texts of the titles Wright enumerated, particularly by finding, scanning, and marketing a collection of images of the texts via microfilm in the 60s and 70s, and then in digital form by the twenty-first century. When the data that Wright had presented to the world moved from his hands into the hand of others interested in the possibilities *American Fiction* presented, Wright's data became the subject of the inevitable changes that occurs to any text in the process of transmission.

## **5.2 Research Publications and Microfilm**

It was not long after the publication of *American Fiction* that it was used to facilitate the process of creating research materials for scholars. As a bibliography, *American Fiction* was a reference tool that attested to the existence and location of titles, but did not provide the text of those titles. Libraries and archives, such as the *American Antiquarian Society* as discussed in a previous chapter, would use Wright as an aid in assembling materials and expanding their collections, but a formidable wall still existed that hindered access to some of the more rare materials Wright listed. A company known as Research Publications undertook the task of creating a microfilm collection of every title Wright listed.<sup>15</sup> By 1974, the task had been completed and a set of microfilms that provided facsimiles of 10,827 titles was available for purchase for institutions interested in having the texts listed by Wright for considerably less effort than acquiring physical copies of every text.

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15. Research Publications is now known as Primary Source Media and operates as a branch of Gale Cengage.

In addition to the microfilms, Research Publications published a cumulative index of the texts, "in keeping with [their] policy of providing the best possible bibliographic tools for use".<sup>16</sup>

Research Publications' project represents a significant textual moment for *American Fiction* because it demonstrates one of the first moments of transmission to a different format. This transmission of Wright's work from a bibliography to a microfilm collection incorporated Wright and American fiction into library settings in a way that had not been feasible before. The packaging of the entirety of the unique titles listed by Wright into a single product meant drastically improving a library's American fiction holdings upon acquisition of these microfilms, especially for libraries that could not obtain first editions or copies of rare titles. The process was not without its own modifications to Wright's work that affected the way one would approach the Wright titles. As a physical collection of microfilms, the medium afforded the ability to approach individual texts, but not to look holistically at the entire corpus without significant effort. Comparison among texts, even those by the same author, would involve changing multiple reels to view them, or at worst, using multiple machines.<sup>17</sup> While the microfilm collection gave scholars a means to access the texts they could not before, it did not as easily allow for the holistic view that Wright saw as potential in composing *American Fiction*. This fact is further complicated when it came to how Research Publications treated description and inclusion into their microfilm collection and the differences between their corpus and Wright's.

The microfilm project was not a complete replication of the bibliography in itself. The focus was on the facsimiles of the text rather than the descriptions. The microfilm did not need advanced bibliographical information to help scholars reference or locate the text, because they were supplying the text itself. The printed index to the microfilm (a monograph in itself) presented only the slimmest information in reference to the titles, rather than Wright's title-page descriptions or complete bibliographical descriptions. Any publication information available upon viewing the

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16. Lyle Henry Wright, *American Fiction, 1774-1900: Cumulative Author Index to the Microfilm Collection* (New Haven, CT: Research Publications, 1974), n.p.

17. It is common now for microfilm machines to have the ability to scan the microfilm images to save them as a .pdf or .jpeg file, but in the 60s and 70s, this ability would have been far more limited in allowing one to approach multiple images.

scanned page images that related to the bibliographic data was still available, but any information that required research beyond what was overtly visible (i.e. the census information, related publications, reprintings, etc.) was not included. As well the index did not follow Wright's structure for *American Fiction*, that is, the chronological organization. The concept of the distinct volumes, demarcated by time period, was discarded and instead the titles were arranged alphabetically as a whole, with their volumes and Wright number therein indicated. As an example, let us examine the below text, a representation of the index entry for Susanna Rowson's *Charlotte Temple* (1794):<sup>18</sup>

ROWSON, Susanna (Haswell). *Charlotte*. 2d ed. Philadelphia, Printed for M. Carey, 1794. I.2159, Reel R-5<sup>19</sup>

The codes at the end of the index reference represent, first, the Wright volume number and entry number (thus, *Charlotte Temple* is to be found in the first volume, as entry number 2159. This assumes the 2nd edition of Wright I, since the first was not enumerated. The second code refers to the microfilm collection's own reel. Any additional bibliographical information helpfully points to the exact place in Wright where a scholar could find it, and helps to locate the place in the microfilm for the scholar to find the text, but it is not a full description. This is not the chief point of interest in the microfilm's collection of texts versus Wright's bibliography, however. The instance of *Charlotte Temple* demonstrates an important condition of the microfilm collection's creation. The index only lists one instance of *Charlotte Temple*, and the microfilm contains only one facsimile for the text. That is, the second edition as it clearly denotes in the index. Wright I, however, enumerates 82 different editions of the *Charlotte Temple* published in America alone, all with unique bibliographical descriptions that point to the fact that the 82 entries are considered by Wright distinctly different texts.<sup>20</sup> These descriptions point to different years of publication,

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18. The microfilm's texts and the data associated with them were derived from the 1948 revised edition of Wright I, the 1965 revised edition of Wright II, and Wright III's 1966 copy.

19. Wright, *American fiction, 1774-1900*, 318. The second edition of *Charlotte Temple* was published with the more simple title *Charlotte*.

20. Lyle Henry Wright, *American Fiction, 1774-1850: A Contribution Toward A Bibliography*, First Revised Edition, Huntington Library Publications (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1948), 232-238.

publishers, printings, etc. of *Charlotte Temple* that distinguishes them from one another. The Research Publications' microfilm, however, omits all other entries in favor of simply supplying one text for reference. This choice suggests a reasoning that helps us understand what the goals and aims of the microfilm collection are in comparison with the Wright bibliography. The numerous editions of *Charlotte Temple* are of interest to collectors, librarians, editors, and bibliographers interested in knowing the publication history of the text, but the literary critic may not care or know to care about the importance. Instead, one copy of the text should suffice, lest it suddenly become an overbearing labor to wade through over a hundred different scans of the same novel. The cost of such work would also present an appealing incentive to discard the idea of scanning entries with multiple editions listed.<sup>21</sup>

This sort of change demonstrates where the most important additions to Wright's work could be made, and to whom the work was intended to help. Those interested in comparing editions of *Charlotte Temple* gain little, unless they had something other than the second edition available already and sought out the microfilm collection. The microfilm itself, while alluding to Wright, erases the work he (and others) have done in compiling the list, as well as hides the expansive publication history of the novel, barring access to one pivotal piece of information and the culture in which the text of *Charlotte Temple* is circulating—a culture which could not get enough of the novel for decades—while simultaneously attempting to enable access to the text in order to provide researchers and readers with a firsthand artifact that observed that same culture.

While the microfilm collection does cut what it sees as excess editions from Wright's list for the purpose of providing access, the collection does include some repetition. Such as Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, listed three times in the 1948 edition of Wright I (nos. 1146-8). Two editions of *The Scarlet Letter* were scanned for microfilm—the first and second edition, both printed in 1850, a rare moment when one work has multiple copies present in the collection. It is likely no mistake

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21. *Charlotte Temple* is not the only one to be treated this way. Other notable entries would include James Fenimore Cooper's various novels, which also have quite a few entries per novel. Other authors are not as widely reprinted as these two and may only have an additional one or two editions that Wright also lists.

CHARLOTTE.  
A TALE OF TRUTH.

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By Mrs. ROWSON,

OF THE NEW THEATRE PHILADELPHIA;  
AUTHOR OF VICTORIA, THE INQUISITOR, FILLE  
DE CHAMBRE, &c.

---

IN TWO VOLUMES.

---

She was her parents only joy :  
They had but one—one darling child.

ROMEO AND JULIET,

Her form was faultless, and her mind,  
Untainted yet by art,  
Was nobly, just, humane, and kind,  
And virtue warm'd her heart.  
But ah! the cruel spoiler came—

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VOL. I.

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*and II*

—SECOND PHILADELPHIA EDITION—

PRINTED FOR MATHEW CAREY,

NO. 113, MARKET-STREET.

OCT. 9—1794.

Figure 5.1: The cover page of the second edition of *Charlotte Temple* as found on the Research Publications "American Fiction" microfilms, reel R-5.

that one of American literature's most canonical novels received this treatment. Wright's own notes in his bibliography give away the fact that the *Scarlet Letter* has received closer attention than many other texts. Wright appends the following note under the first edition's description: "Page 21, line 20, 'reduplicate.' For other differences between this entry and the following one, see Cathcart."<sup>22</sup> For the second edition, he notes for page 21, line 20, "repudiate."<sup>23</sup> Noting the variants between the two texts, as well as the reference to the more in-depth work of Cathcart's work with Hawthorne, Wright signals to the wider context of Hawthorne's work, and declares there to be a literally noteworthy mention of the changes between the two *Scarlet Letters*. In addition to lexical variants, the second edition appends an introduction by Hawthorne to the text, which is viewable on the microfilm.

The presence of the two *Scarlet Letters* is redundant if the logic of the cases of *Charlotte Temple* and others are considered, as the extensive number of editions of *Charlotte Temple* would of course have variants just as Hawthorne's romance would.<sup>24</sup> But the decision as to why the space, labor, and resources would be spent on the two editions of the *Scarlet Letter* brings attention to the novel's canonicity, and implicitly argues that while multiple copies of *Charlotte Temple* may not be worth viewing, or worth the labor, two copies of the *Scarlet Letter* certainly are. Whether it is due to the the fact that there are significantly fewer editions of the *Scarlet Letter* than of *Charlotte Temple*, or the fact that Wright's notes directly draw attention to variations among the editions, whereas the notes for *Charlotte* do not, the microfilm collection does value Hawthorne's work more than that of Rowson's. By the 1970s, Rowson had become a woman writer in need of recovery, despite her popularity in early America. Cathy Davidson explains in her introduction to the Oxford University Press edition of the text: "After World War I, tastes changed and *Charlotte Temple* lost its popular appeal. And, later, academic reading habits shifted in response to the

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22. Wright refers here to W. H. Cathcart's *Bibliography of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, published in 1905*.

23. Wright, *American fiction, 1774-1850*, 122.

24. Robert G. Vail's descriptive bibliography of Susanna Rowson's works attests to this. See R. W. G. Vail, *Susanna Haswell Rowson, the Author of Charlotte Temple: A Bibliographical Study* (Worcester, Massachusetts, U.S.A: Published by the Society, 1933)

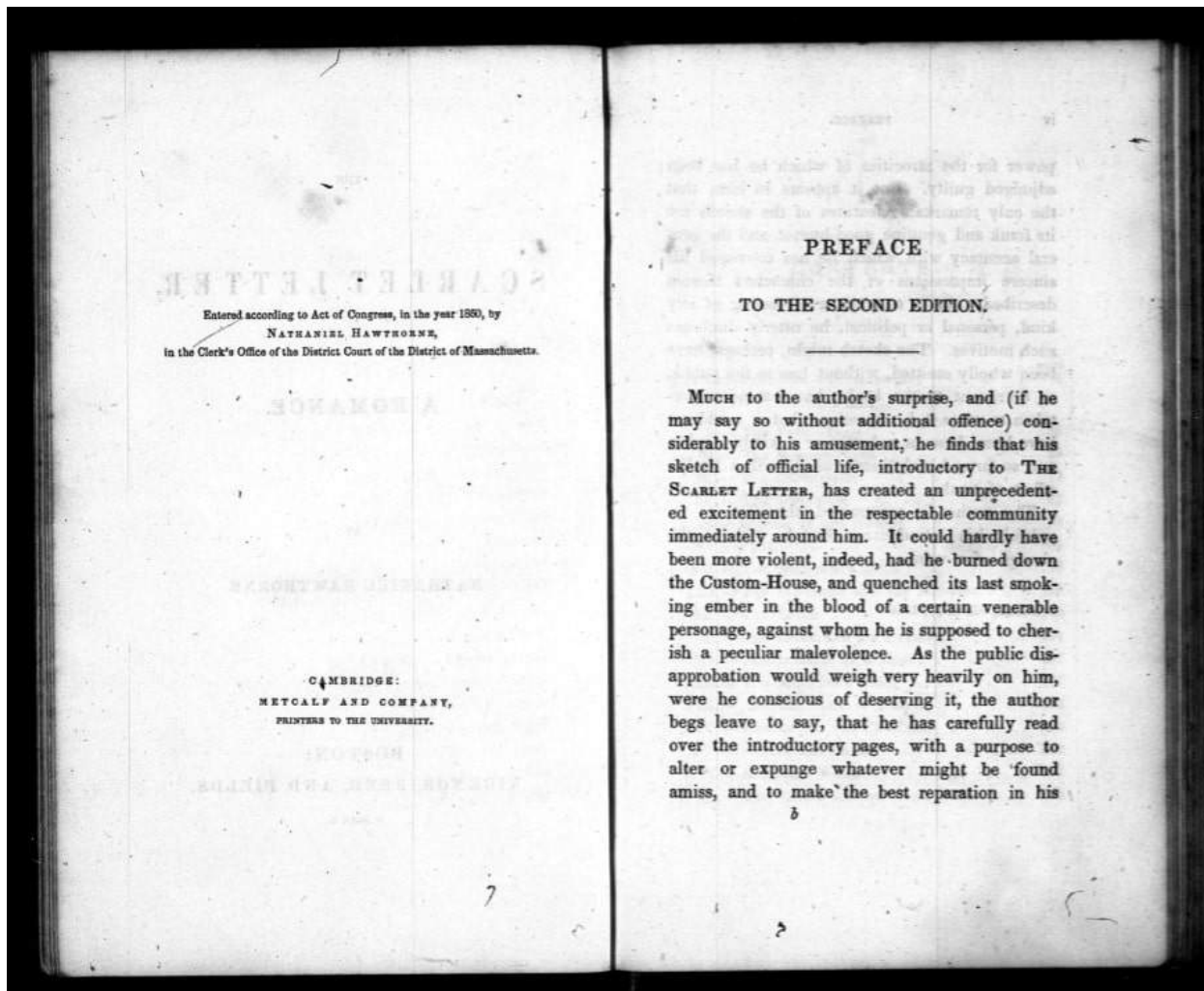


Figure 5.2: The back of the cover page and the first page of Hawthorne's preface found in the second edition of *The Scarlet Letter* as found on the Research Publications "American Fiction" microfilms, reel H-6.



emerging New Critics who focused on, say, the levels of ambiguity in *Moby Dick* or *The Scarlet Letter*..."<sup>25</sup> Davidson's point here provides another explanation for the curious composition of the microfilm collection in that it provides a means of understanding how the microfilms were scanned in response to academic trends. The microfilms were meant for research institutions and libraries, and since the culture of the academy was invested in New Critical work (though also in transition to post-structuralism by the time the scanning was complete), then the resources would be more marketable and conceivably useful if they responded to the increased focus on more often studied texts such as the *The Scarlet Letter*. Following this point, we can see further how Research Publications' aims with their microfilms differs from that of Wright's and his ideology. In pursuing access to the texts of Wright, the collection also considers what texts are most likely to be accessed, anticipating that *The Scarlet Letter* would be subject to more traffic than most of the other texts, and attempts to meet the increased demand with a perceived idea of what scholars may desire.

While Research Publications endeavored to scan and present every title that Wright listed, the status of a given text inflected the nature of the construction of the collection. In appearing to privilege specific texts above others, the microfilm collection reveals the way it has adapted Wright's bibliography to suit the purpose of its producers. Within the context of Wright I, all of the texts, whether or not they are a version of a single work, are worth including. A researcher looking at *The Scarlet Letter* on this microfilm collection is simply treated to more information than a researcher looking at *Charlotte Temple*, despite the fact that the publication history for the latter is more extensive. The logic of the corpus of American fiction as a whole, as represented in its scanned collection, demonstrates an understanding of the canon and the subjective and differential

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25. Mrs Rowson and Cathy N. Davidson, *Charlotte Temple. Susanna Haswell Rowson; edited with an introduction by Cathy N. Davidson*, Oxford paperbacks (New York : Oxford University Press, 1986., 1986), xxxii, ISBN: 978-0-19-504238-2. In 1964, Clara M. and Rudolf Kirk's edition with College and University Press was published in order to help bring *Charlotte Temple* back into classrooms. Davidson's 1986 edition was printed for Oxford University Press' Early American Women Writers series, which provided four titles in an effort to help recover and reincorporate several significant works: *Charlotte Temple*, Tabitha Gilman Tenney's *Female Quixotism* (1801), Hannah W. Foster's *The Coquette* (1797), and Catherine Maria Sedgwick's *A New-England Tale* (1822).

treatment texts within and outside of that canon. In attempting to translate a bibliography constructed with a sort of egalitarian logic in mind (at least in theory if not in practice) to a form for scholars to access the texts, the transmission has been affected by the exclusionary logic of literary history. Such a model for translating Wright's corpus to other forms beyond an enumerative bibliography inevitably come to similar conclusions in practice. Even after the substantial recovery work for marginalized and forgotten authors that began to occur in the 1970s, collections based on *American Fiction* would continue to privilege certain texts above others in the same collection.

### 5.3 The Wright American Fiction Project

Moving from microfilm to the emergence of the web and digital technologies, Wright's work saw continued use when Indiana University introduced the *Wright American Fiction Project*. The project gives scholars a repository of both .pdf facsimiles of the Wright titles found in volume two (1851-1875) as well as some XML-encoded text versions alongside some of the original metadata Wright initially described.<sup>26</sup> In one way, the project continues with some of the same ideals that Research Publication's microfilm collection did, but as well, the project updated the concept to fit with both modern scholars' expectations and the affordances of the digital environment. More so than the microfilm copies of the texts presented, the *Wright American Fiction Project* is a task of editing and demonstrates an interpretation of the items that compose the project as a whole by means of presenting texts in a way that the project's leads assume scholars will find useful.

To begin, the project was pushed with only the second volume of Wright viewable. While the other two volumes are labeled as eventual goals, the project is seemingly dormant, with no major updates since it released the digital texts of the Wright II titles. The choice of Wright II is significant as a first choice for providing digital records because it coincides with literary move-

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26. XML, or Extensible Markup Language, is a manner of appending information to digital text to inform machine learning or reading of the information. In the context of digitized texts, the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) is the institution that publishes the standards for encoding information. The TEI guidelines largely prescribe methods for marking bibliographic information (page numbers, chapters, paragraphs, etc. but some semantic guidelines are also present. XML is largely used to aid in searching texts and extracting or otherwise organizing textual information and is not commonly engaged with by typical readers.

ments and historical moments that emerged after Wright's time. Wright II encapsulates F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*, the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and its imitators and contractors, westward expansion and imperialism, and of course the Civil War. On the subject of F. O. Matthiessen, his concept of the American Renaissance defined much of the way American literary scholars conceptualized and taught American literary history; Matthiessen's *American Renaissance* is one of the primary influences for the centrality of Melville, Hawthorne, Emerson, and Thoreau in the American literary canon. Wright published Wright II in 1949, 8 years after *American Renaissance* was published (1841), but Wright does not make any explicit mention of Matthiessen in *American Fiction*, so it is indeterminate whether or not he was aware of or familiar with the Matthiessen's arguments therein. Given that Wright II follows naturally from Wright I, beginning in 1851, and ends in 1875, a date not particularly relevant to Matthiessen's thesis, the overlap is certainly coincidental from a composition perspective, but nonetheless significant from the perspective of readers and researchers. To prioritize Wright II is to prioritize the likes of Melville, Stowe, and Twain; the project is not shy about this as its website's home page shows portraits of the aforementioned authors alongside Bret Harte, William Dean Howells, and Nathaniel Hawthorne that are hyperlinked to search results of these authors' works. The project itself understands and anticipates who the most prominent members of its corpus are and what texts will be the biggest hits, so to speak. This is in direct conflict with Wright's ideal of the egalitarianism of bibliography. The issue is only further compounded when one looks at the state of more popular and canonical texts when compared to those that are virtually unknown.

The *Wright American Fiction Project* provides XML-encoded files of the texts enumerated by Wright II in addition to .pdf and plain-text formats. Details about the status of the collection's encoding can be found in the site's "Encoding Overview," which reveals a division in the way certain texts were treated:

The online collection of nearly 3,000 volumes consists of two different groups of texts. The larger group of approximately 1,800 electronic texts was created by Prime Recognition Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software. These texts are minimally en-

coded and largely unedited, and rely on the facsimile page images as the main access point. The other group of approximately 1,200 texts has been fully edited and encoded, and also includes facsimile page images. In addition to being corrected, these files allow for better document-centric navigation by identifying chapter or story divisions within each work and having a hypertext linked "Table of Contents." Both groups of texts are available for bibliographic and full-text searching as well as browsing.<sup>2728</sup>

The choices of which texts belong to the "largely unedited" texts and the group of edited and encoded is not entirely random. The selection process for the more robustly edited and encoded texts is largely opaque to the viewer, but some of the choices are obvious as to why they were chosen for advanced encoding. Again, familiar names pop up as to which texts are beneficiaries of the resources and labor required for electronic editing.

Let us compare *Moby-Dick* to the text that is found directly after it in *American Fiction*, Matthew Merchant's *How Bennie Did It* (1869). For this comparison, I would like to begin with the text of Merchant's work and the associated XML the *Wright American Fiction Project* presents to readers who may encounter this text. As the project's "Encoding Overview" states, the digital text was created via OCR, rather than transcription. This process, depending on various factors including how the software was trained, the quality of the print scanned, among other contingencies, can produce errors in the text files that are created. *How Bennie Did It* is no exception. Below is the opening paragraph of the body of the text and its XML encoding:

```
&#xD;<pb n="0" xml:id="VAC8367-00000005"/> HOW BENNIE DID IT. CHAP-  
TER L IT'S a singular story, think you will say, before having rea it through;. Sin-  
gular, however, though, it may be, we hope there are none who may read it but will  
do so with both pleasure and profit. The BENNIE STOUT Of the story was a youth,
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27. *Encoding Overview*, accessed August 13, 2018, <http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/TEIgeneral/projectinfo/encoding.do>.

28. In addition to these two collections, the encoding has changed, from the original SGML to the various iterations of the TEI guidelines P3 through P5 in order to keep in it in line with standards and best practices at the time.

the record of whose life, peculiarly interesting and eventful as it is, might well be accepted. as more of a study than a story: for, connectedly with, or in fact giving rise to, the very features of his history which will doubtless interest us most, there is something deeper than story, and more earnest than entertaining. It will not only be the youthful reader, he will stop, and wonder, and probably ask met twl o nyb teyuhu edr

&#xD;<pb n="8-9" xml:id="VAC8367-00000006"/><sup>29</sup>

What becomes apparent from this section is how minimal the "minimal encoding" is. The text here is lacking in more common elements found in even lightly encoded texts. Standard TEI markup of a text would include bibliographical information that demonstrates the structure of a page, i.e. the distinction between a chapter heading and the body of the text. This chunk of text, however, is only marked up to refer to a page break, i.e. the *<pb>* tag which simultaneously refers to the page image that is associated with the text. The rest of the text is largely unmarked, leading to a messy chunk of text that does not delineate between the body of the text and its paratext. The all-caps "HOW BENNIE DID IT" is seen after every *<pb>* tag in the XML, indicating the running head of the page being scanned and picked up by the OCR, but its physical location on the page and the meaning inherent to that being lost. A similar phenomena occurs with the "CHAPTER L," which is both an OCR error produced by reading an I with a full stop as an L, and a phrase that has been dissociated from its bibliographic function as what demarcates separate textual sections.<sup>30</sup> The end of the quoted passage additionally shows some of the difficulties that come with OCR. The final words of the page itself are "probably ask" before it continues the sentence on the next page. However, the OCR, and thus the XML file and text visible on the project's site, include the gibberish "met twl o nyb teyuhu edr." No words follow the "probably ask" of the page image, and so the machine has had text introduced to it that is not apparent in its source, and the project has pushed this text to the public with these additions.

29. Matthew Merchant, *How Bennie Did It*, accessed August 20, 2018, <http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/TEIgeneral/view?docId=wright/VAC8367.xml>.

30. XML and the TEI guidelines specifically makes space for these textual characteristics to be easily marked. Chapter headings and running heads for pages are both standard tags included in TEI's P5 guidelines.

*How Bennie Did It* has been updated or revised if the changelogs of the XML file are to be believed, but still the errors found within the first paragraph are present. The level of effort given to Merchant's text pales in comparison to that of *Moby-Dick*. Viewers of the *Wright American Fiction Project* version of *Moby-Dick* would find a document that is heavily encoded: its table of contents is hyperlinked to the body of the text, the initial "Etymologies" section is formatted as a table and presented in an organized fashion that resembles the same way it is presented in print, and the body of the work is arranged as much as one would expect a novel to be in XML. But of course what makes *Moby-Dick* a prime choice for comparison here is not just its canonicity, but the way it shifts into other modes of presentation periodically, such as the "Midnight, Forecastle" chapter, wherein the text is set as if it were a stageplay, or the "Cetology" chapter that replicates a genealogical catalog. These moments of the text reveal the effort required and given to this particular text in order to present a satisfactory digital edition of the work. In the "Midnight, Forecastle" chapter, the initial lines of the dramatic performance belong to the 1st Nantucket Sailor, whose words are not only presented as dialogue but also contain quoted verse.

<sp>

<speaker>1ST NANTUCKET SAILOR.</speaker>

<p>Oh, boys, don't be sentimental; it's bad for the digestion! Take a tonic, follow me!

<stage>(Sings, and all follow.)</stage>

<q>

<lg type="quotation">

<l>Our captain stood upon the deck,</l>

<l rend="ti-1">A spy-glass in his hand,</l>

<l>A viewing of those gallant whales</l>

<l rend="ti-1">That blew at every strand.</l>

<l>Oh, your tubs in your boats, my boys,</l>

<l rend="ti-1">And by your braces stand,</l>  
<l>And we'll have one of those fine whales,</l>  
<l rend="ti-1">Hand, boys, over hand!</l>  
<l>So, be cheery, my lads! may your hearts never fail!</l>  
<l>While the bold harpooneer is striking the whale!</l>  
</lg>  
</q>  
</p>  
</sp>  
<sp><sup>31</sup>

Compared to the encoding of *How Bennie Did It*, the words of the 1st Nantucket Sailor show more than just a minimal level of encoding, but, in fact, close attention to reading the text. This level of encoding goes beyond presenting just a page break, but the representation of lines, line groups, and the speaker, with both the text that signifies the subject and the words spoken marked with their own distinct tags. The text of *Moby-Dick* is much cleaner compared to *How Bennie Did It*. The readability of the text is improved both by the advanced markup applied to *Moby-Dick* as well as the proofreading the XML file reveals the text to have undergone.<sup>32</sup> This more significant level of attention given to the text of *Moby-Dick* marks the difference between the two groups of the text that the *Wright American Fiction Project* describes, and thus informs us how the approaches to Wright appear to differ from Wright's vision.

While the *Wright American Fiction Project* uses Wright's initial bibliographic work to populate its database, the extended services and means of accessing those documents troubles some of initial

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31. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick, or, The Whale*, accessed August 20, 2018, <http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/TEIgeneral/view?docId=wright/VAC7237.xml&doc.view=print>.

32. Specifically, the XML claims as a change that occurred July 31, 2003: "Finished final proof-reading." This was done by Maggie Hermes. The XML file of *How Bennie Did It* does not include a similar note.

ideals Wright had about the literary documents that composed his bibliography. The perspective that all the materials enumerated by a bibliography are equal by the virtue of their having been listed in the first place becomes more troubled when we begin to see how the steps beyond listing come into play, either through the limitation of resources or the decisions of the editor/s. For both Research Publications and the *Wright American Fiction Project*, the major move these two initiatives made in expanding Wright was in connecting the bibliographic data to the material texts that data pointed to and in providing the body of the text itself, that which made the texts American fiction to be listed in the first place. In neither case was this done without affecting the titles and materials of Wright's work and thus reconstituting the Wright bibliography as a holistic text and concept. In seeking to provide access to the texts of Wright's titles, both projects made decisions to either limit or restrict other texts, whether it be the multiple editions of *Charlotte Temple* or other reprinted works, or in the amount of effort put into editing and presented particular texts in digital reproductions.

#### **5.4 Wright as Dataset**

Wright's shift to the digital age is not located solely in the realm of public scholarship, but as the microfilm collection Research Publications suggests, commercial groups have taken notice of Wright's work as a viable resource from which to construct collections to be sold to academic institutions. This has continued to be true as digital collections have taken the place of media such as microfilms. In this section, I wish to discuss two digital collections created by commercial enterprises: Gale Cengage's *American Fiction, 1774-1920* and ProQuest's *Early American Fiction, 1789-1875* (EAF). These two different collections, which have each been informed by Wright, though to far different degrees, present a moment of comparison for how two collections of the same topic, presented in a similar mode, can vary widely in how they interpret their source. As a result, the overall effect on their collections is strongly inflected by that interpretive stance, and is not just a replication, nor even an attempt at replication, of Wright's bibliography.

To begin, I will discuss Gale Cengage's *American Fiction, 1774-1920* and the way in which they have used Wright as a guiding principle in developing a corpus of American fiction. This



collection contains over 17,500 titles including those found in Wright. Those who access this collection would find, as expected, facsimiles and page images of the texts available, but text files created via OCR and an interface that provides several visualization and search tools that enable access to the texts beyond the level of simply viewing the titles. Gale Cengage advertises the collection as a " landmark digital collection" that "is based on authoritative bibliographies including Lyle H. Wright's *American Fiction: A Contribution Toward a Bibliography*, widely considered the most comprehensive bibliography of American adult prose fiction of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Geoffrey D. Smith's *American Fiction, 1901-1925: A Bibliography*." Gale Cengage, the company that eventually gained control of Research Publications, can be seen as expanding upon and revising the microfilm collection discussed in a previous section. However, with the movement to a digital platform as a scholarly database, comes more affordances in terms of approaching Wright's corpus as a whole, rather than the more limited microfilm. However, as made obvious by the presence of Smith and the extension of the years of coverage to 1920, this database has also attempted to expand *American Fiction*'s coverage beyond its original parameters.

The corpus of Gale Cengage's collection is iterative, in that it continues the work done by Research Publications' original microform collection, yet it does not lose sight of Wright as its foundation for both the titles list and its organizing principles. Before the collection was extended to 1920, Gale Cengage's previous version of the collection spanned to 1910 and was available not as a digital repository for American fiction titles, but as a microform collection. Their subsidiary company, Primary Source Media, formerly Research Publications, expanded upon their previous work with the microfilms by adding the titles from the *Library of Congress Shelf List of American Adult Fiction* to cover the years from 1901 to 1910. Primary Source Media had a similar microform collection that spanned 1911 to 1920 that was created using the *William Charvat Collection of American Fiction* at the Ohio State Libraries. It was in the move to the digital that Smith's bibliography became incorporated into the collection and the range of Wright's *American Fiction* was associated with titles up to 1920.<sup>33</sup>

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33. *American Fiction: 1774-1910 - Gale*, accessed June 19, 2017, [http://www.cengage.com/search/productOverview.do?N=197+4294904141+4294904588&Ntk=P\\_EPI&Ntt=79550523613](http://www.cengage.com/search/productOverview.do?N=197+4294904141+4294904588&Ntk=P_EPI&Ntt=79550523613)

Smith's *American Fiction 1901-1925* (1997) is heavily influenced by and based on Wright. In his preface, Smith notes that his selection criteria and means of description were both modeled after Wright's, with a few exceptions. Like Wright, he excludes juveniles, folklore, periodicals and series, etc, with a preferences for "novels, novelettes, romances, short stories, tall tales, tract-like tales, allegories, and fictitious biographies and travels, in prose."<sup>34</sup> Smith does include more information in his descriptions in some cases, as he notes, to "accommodate current scholarly research." To that extent, Smith includes publisher and illustrator indices in response to the popularity of book history. Smith's bibliography, though, is imagined as a successor or continuation of Wright's work, though it remains distinguished from it through its changes to description and its choice of publisher (Cambridge instead of the Huntington Library). Gale Cengage made a calculated choice in combining the two bibliographies given Smith's proclivity for Wright's work, as this would ensure, for the most part, a cohesive set of standards for the types of fiction that would be included in the corpus. However, the process of expanding Wright is more complicated than simply adding Smith's titles to Wright's.

As explained on the web page information about Gale Cengage's *American Fiction, 1774-1920* database, the collection is more diverse in its source material. "Nearly all" of the works listed by Wright from 1774 to 1900 are included; the qualifier of "nearly" is telling but honest in that it does acknowledge where the data collection has come up short. The titles from 1901 to 1910, however, do not come from Smith's bibliography, as one may assume, however, but instead from "major American fiction collections" and the Library of Congress list of adult fiction that informed the microforms that preceded the digital version of this collection. The titles that fall between 1901 and 1910, Gale Cengage declares, adhere to Wright's parameters, but the provenance of the titles remains unclear. Only the years of 1911-1920 are drawn from Smith, whose work for the last five years that his bibliography covers are excluded for an also unstated reason, though the issues of copyright for texts published after 1920 provide a likely explanation.<sup>35</sup> While there 17,500

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0858962513309899891566982931&Ntx=mode%2Bmatchallpartial.

34. Geoffrey D. Smith, *American Fiction, 1901-1925 : A Bibliography*. (Cambridge, U.K. : Cambridge University Press, 1997., 1997), ix, ISBN: 978-0-521-43469-0.

35. *American Fiction: 1774-1910 - Gale*. Copyright laws in the U.S. have covered texts pub-

texts available for exploring within this corpus, the composition of these texts is less certain than previous iterations of the *American Fiction* corpus. Of note, however, is the fact that the statements about the text's composition, even when obfuscated, make sure to identify Wright as a guiding force of the collection, even for texts he did not himself list. The 1901-1910 texts are selected in accordance with Wright, or phrased another way, are an imagining of *what Wright would have listed* should he have endeavored to craft a fourth volume of *American Fiction*. At the same time, however, Gale Cengage implicitly acknowledges that Wright's work was limited in some capacity; by extending their available texts to 1920, they demonstrate that Wright's three volumes not only could, of course, be expanded upon, but that they should be in order to encapsulate and present a larger view of American fiction. Their rationale for the year 1920 is unclear, but the blurb on the page mentions World War I as a point of historical reference that provides some grounding that is seemingly less arbitrary than either Wright's 1900 or Smith's 1925 as endpoints for their bibliographies.

Gale Cengage's digital form comes with some improvements to one's ability to examine the texts in a comparative or aggregate manner than its previous microfilm incarnation did, and to an extent, allows these functionalities more easily than Indiana's *Wright American Fiction* project. In a 2016 press release about the digital *American Fiction*, the company says:

As a part of the *Gale Primary Sources* program, the content within *American Fiction, 1774-1920* is fueled by technology which gives researchers the ability to cross-search with other Gale digital archives, as well as analyze results using graphing and search visualization tools. In addition, all works included in the archive are fully-indexed and full-text searchable, and the metadata and data are available to support text and data mining and digital humanities research.<sup>36</sup>

The company advertises several features built into their own interface that allows for digital ana-

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lished in 1923 and afterwards. In 2019, works published in 1923 will enter the public domain.

36. *Gale Expands Gale Primary Sources Program with Launch of American Fiction Archive* [in en], May 2016, accessed September 27, 2018, <https://news.cengage.com/higher-education/gale-expands-gale-primary-sources-program-with-launch-of-american-fiction-archive/>.

lytic explorations of their *American Fiction* corpus. Listed as "Features and Tools" is the ability to find key terms and their frequencies, visualize clusters of terms that frequently co-occur, and, most simply, the ability to search and cross-reference the entire corpus. These functions demonstrate an awareness of the shift towards cultural analytics and distant reading, on the one hand, and, on the other, shows how *American Fiction* is transformed in yet another instance to fulfill a different function beyond its original role as a reference work. The collection and the interface associated with it are presented within the context of improving digital humanities work, bringing Wright's influence to bear on a field that had not been codified at the point of *American Fiction*'s composition. On the other hand, given Wright's own attempts at presenting statistical but general arguments about the nature of American fiction based on his research, the tools and functions enabled by Gale Cengage align with one of the original ideas Wright suggested about his work, that is, the ability to grant a broad view of early American writing over the individual, limited readings of literary scholars.

The Gale Cengage corpus still allows individual access to specific texts, and the advertisements still use the celebrity of individual authors to appeal to scholars. For example, "The Wright bibliography offers first and hard-to-find editions of major writers including Louisa May Alcott, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Stephen Crane, Mark Twain, Henry James, and other well-known authors."<sup>37</sup> Similar to Indiana's incarnation of Wright, Gale Cengage advertises these authors without offering the details, such as the absence of Alcott's most prominent works (i.e. *Little Women*, *Little Men*, and *Jo's Boys*) from Wright's bibliography. And like the projects that came before it, the errors persist, such as the continued inclusion of Jacobs and Northup's narratives. But Gale Cengage's platform encourages more intimate exploration of individual texts even while it allows for quantitative, distant approaches, and in this way it expands upon the original affordances of the microfilm collections that preceded the digital collection. Users of the database are able to tag and append their own metadata to individual texts, enabling specific scholarly knowledge that is not considered to be of general interest, but could be relevant to one's own project.

As a last example of Wright's continued circulation and transmission, I want to discuss one of

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37. *American Fiction: 1774-1910 - Gale*.

the last major projects that have used Wright, among others, as a basis for their data. ProQuest's *Early American Fiction, 1789-1875*(EAF) is a digital collection of texts created originally by the Chadwyck-Healey Group in partnership with the University of Virginia Libraries.<sup>38</sup> The original company, Chadwyck-Healey was acquired by ProQuest in 1999, and ProQuest is now the main provider of access to this collection. Like the Gale Cengage collections, users can access facsimiles of page images and a searchable text of the included titles. And also like the Gale Cengage collection, the creation of the EAF was an iterative process. The first version of the collection, created in 2000, was *Early American Fiction, 1789-1850*, twenty-five years short of its current accessible version. The newer EAF was made possible with grants by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation that allowed for the extension of the year range and the inclusion of more titles.<sup>39</sup>

Unlike Gale Cengage, however, Proquest's version of a digital collection based on Wright is far more limited. While Gale Cengage's corpus includes 17,500 titles, the Proquest version includes only around 730 (or about four percent of the total number found in Gale Cengage).<sup>40</sup> Even though Wright listed approximately 10,000 titles himself, ProQuest's stance on creating a collection of American fiction is to heavily limit what is considered worthwhile to scan, make searchable, and provide access to. The editorial policies of the project provide some insight into how they arrived as such a significantly smaller number of titles:

Two standard bibliographies describe classic American literature: Wright's *American Fiction 1774–1850* lists all works of fiction published from the first story up to 1850. *The Bibliography of American Literature* (BAL) lists the original editions of the most important authors of American literature, as chosen by a committee of the Modern Language Association of America. The University of Virginia Library is fortunate to have two of the world's major collections of rare first editions of American fiction in its

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38. The Chadwyck-Healey Group created several reference databases and scholarly resources. Scholars would likely be most familiar with their LION(Literature Online) database, which ProQuest continues to provide.

39. *Early American Fiction, 1789-1875 - Early American Fiction, 1789-1875* [in en], accessed September 27, 2018, [https://www.proquest.com/products-services/early\\_am\\_fiction.html](https://www.proquest.com/products-services/early_am_fiction.html).

40. *Early American Fiction 1789-1875 - Information Centre*, accessed September 27, 2018, [http://collections.chadwyck.com/infoCentre/products/about\\_ilc.jsp?collection=eaf2](http://collections.chadwyck.com/infoCentre/products/about_ilc.jsp?collection=eaf2).

Barrett and Taylor collections. In these collections most of the first editions in Wright and BAL are available. In some cases the University of Virginia Library has one of the few existing copies of the edition. In the EAF project, therefore, we are using first editions from the University of Virginia Library that meet the following criteria:

- the author is in BAL, or
- the edition is listed in Wright;
- the University of Virginia Library has a first edition of the work.<sup>41</sup>

The policy for inclusion is compounded not just with Wright's original parameters, but those of the BAL, and by Virginia's own collections.<sup>42</sup> As a result, we see a less replete collection of American fiction than we know to be possible. The editorial policy additionally frames the discussion of its titles as "masterpieces," with references to canonical figures, including Poe, Cooper, Melville, Twain, and Hawthorne. The writers of this blurb include some gestures to William Wells Brown's *Clotelle* (1853) and Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of Slave Girl*.<sup>43</sup>

By constraining the parameters of what fiction is to be included in the EAF, Wright's own voice and the stance of the "bibliographical impossibility" of a text not being worth listing, is irrelevant. Instead, Wright's work informs a bibliography that is less concerned with the ideology implicit in his bibliography, but instead concerned with a collection that highlights a single university's collections and their correspondence with two prominent bibliographies. This particular adaptation of Wright is contradictory to Gale Cengage's, in that its listings it has not sought to expand and to consider Wright as an authority to which all other additions to the collection must be informed, but instead Wright's own authority as a bibliography is subsidiary to another, and used as a means

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41. *Early American Fiction 1789-1875 - Information Centre*.

42. A bibliography of the titles available in the EAF can be found at *Early American Fiction 1789-1875 - Bibliography*, accessed September 27, 2018, <http://collections.chadwyck.com/bibliographies/eaf2.jsp>. Interestingly, the bibliographical information does include a description of the software and technology used to produce the facsimiles of the editions scanned.

43. The project includes the first U.S. edition of *Clotelle* published in 1864, rather than its first edition published in London in 1853. The text of the blurb makes no mention of the autobiographical nature of Jacobs' *Incidents*.

to provide credibility to a text, but not as the sole guiding principal for the EAF.

I do not suggest that Wright or *American Fiction* is somehow wronged in this manner, but that the case of ProQuest's EAF as compared to the case of Gale Cengage's *American Fiction* demonstrates that there are multiple ways in which data can be adapted and used to inform the construction of future datasets. In each case, there are different interpretive judgments being made as to how Wright's work can be used to provide scholars with resources they need to further literary study, as well as how Wright can be perhaps improved, expanded, or otherwise added to in order to help accomplish this goal. The same has been seen in the previous examples of the Research Publications' microfilm and the *Wright American Fiction* project at Indiana University. While all of these cases share a similarity in their seeming appreciation of Wright and acknowledgment of his contribution to bibliography and the study of American fiction, they do not receive Wright's data in the same ways, nor do they attempt to adapt or transmit it without change. Regardless of how objective and straightforward the data of *American Fiction* may seem, it has been shown to be productive of different ways of representing and providing data to readers. Every instance of Wright's work beyond the volumes of *American Fiction*, is instead transformitted as its handlers apply more information, more context, and more ways of reading that data than was initially provided.

## 5.5 Conclusion

In some ways Wright's work was inevitable. It was certain that someone would appear who had the skill and resources to create as expansive a list of American fiction as Wright did. As the study of American literature was emerging and formalizing in the early twentieth-century, the demand for such a resource as *American Fiction* was growing. Wright's work was not an inhuman feat, though it was difficult and time-consuming. It is not improbable that, had Wright not "staked his claim," as Vail had told him to, someone else would have endeavored to compile a bibliography of American fiction

But, the fact remains that what we have is Lyle H. Wright's *American Fiction*. The production of Wright's bibliography entailed a unique set of events that made his bibliography, its comprehensive coverage, its omissions, and its errors unique. Another bibliographer would have made

different decisions than Wright did, and thus, we would have a different set of titles in the list. Another bibliographer may have decided to include gift books, tracts, and annuals—texts that Wright excludes. They may have not had the friendship of Robert Vail, and so would have no reason to exclude the numerous captivity narratives Wright did. They may have chosen to be less critical about juvenile literature, and included *Little Women* under Alcott. They may even have decided, upon reading *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, that the text was nonfiction and thus not to be included. The effect of all these hypotheticals, then, would of course mean a difference in how those who adopted *American Fiction* would transmit the bibliography, and the texts they carry forward into the digital age.

Many of the current electronic resources we have available to us for the study of American literature are a product of Wright's work, and the decisions he made. Scholars are capable of accessing the texts within these resources because of unique events and decisions of the person who compiled the original list. Coming to understand this fact is what it means to research and examine the history and culture of data, to expose the personal, social, and cultural elements that inform the creation of a collection. In this light, a collection of data is little different from that of an individual work of literature. Textual scholars and critics have been aware of how such elements can affect the composition of a narrative, can affect its publication, its circulation. It is no surprise then that same can be said of a work that endeavors to present and organize literature for those same scholars.

As the digital humanities progress, and computational research on large numbers of digital texts becomes more commonplace, understanding the ways data has been shaped becomes an important part of refining the methods, questions, and results of such research. Knowing what we now do about Wright we can begin to further question how computational research using Wright's collection, or collections created using Wright, can be improved. Is a dataset based on Wright made objectively better by the removal of *Incidents* because it respects the authority of Jacobs? Does the removal of a single text amongst a collection of 10,000 make a statistical difference to results of large-scale computational analysis? Or, would such a decision simply mean fulfilling an



ethical responsibility to recognize Jacobs and ensure as much accuracy as possible in the dataset regardless of how insignificant its overall effect?

In the case of a single work, it may be a purely ethical consideration. But what of the hundreds of titles Wright excluded because they were printed in gift books, annuals, or serial extras? The same could be asked of the many captivity narratives Wright did not include because Vail was intending to place them in his bibliography. These entries would likely have larger effects on the possible results of computational analysis. Understanding the nature of the data one uses would show how ultimately human the process of constructing data is, and thus can always be revisited and revised to further refine the research that is produced using it. Data that is adequate for computational research is constructed with both ethical considerations in mind, but as well as acknowledges how historical instances of exclusion can have effects at scale. That our datasets are derived from historical moments that held certain ideas of what constituted American literature and fiction, more specifically, which are no longer defensible in contemporary scholarship presents to us a need to acknowledge how limited earlier attempts at aggregating data were, and thus, how much they can be improved to respond to current scholarly concerns. In this light, what I suggest here is little different from the work of scholarly editing. To borrow Peter Shillingsburg's definition, scholarly editing refers to "editorial efforts designed to make available for scholarly use works not ordinarily available or available only in corrupt or inadequate forms."<sup>44</sup> Shillingsburg's definition denotes that editing is focused on providing a scholastic resource in a form that is adequate. The issue, of course, is that the measure for adequacy requires interpretation, and thus is more personal than Shillingsburg describes here.

By way of conclusion, I wish to compare Shillingsburg's statement here with one of Johanna Drucker's, discussed in the first chapter. When Drucker mentions that data are already interpreted, and that they do not "pre-exist their parameterization," I believe we may also decide to understand Drucker's point in the context of textual editing.<sup>45</sup> The act of parameterizing itself necessitates

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44. Peter L. Shillingsburg, *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age : Theory and Practice.*, 3rd ed., Editorial Theory and Literary Criticism (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 2, ISBN: 978-0-472-09600-8.

45. Johanna Drucker, *Graphesis : Visual Forms of Knowledge Production.*, MetaLABprojects

making adequate for an audience the information one has found. Just as an editor takes up a text and reproduces it in a form to aid in research, education, and entertainment, the same is said of the bibliographer and the digital humanist. Wright took what was available to him in libraries and literary scholarship of his day in order to make it suitable for an audience that needed more resources to develop the field of American literature. In much the same way, computational work needs its data to be made "adequate." That in the case of American literature, Wright forms a connecting line between bibliography, data, literary study, and digital humanities work, is not an accident. Instead, it shows how interconnected the fields are, and how current research and work, while not the bibliography of the 1930s, is part of the same line of transmission.

Scholars will continue to make use of data for research as big data methods and questions become more commonplace. But just as the formalization of literary scholarship necessitated critical editions of works, there is an occasion for inquiry and interest for those who are already familiar with the ways in which data are constructed and presented. Because the case of Wright shows how collections of textual materials have a history that extends back beyond the emergence of digital collections, and touches into areas textual criticism knows well, scholars can take a critical look at the ways in which a collection may be changed, expanded upon, altered, or corrected. These tasks would serve to make the data accessed by other scholars more replete in information while also taking into account the idea of collections as substantive textual objects themselves. At the same time, knowing that the construction of data is itself similar to if not heavily informed by the methods of bibliography, what I have argued is not entirely new but a means of engaging with our intellectual ancestors. Those such as Greg, Pollard, etc. (and I would include Wright himself) whose systematic modes of enumeration and description have impacted the work of big data in the humanities because they formalized and disseminated the standards of bibliographical description and critical editing. Because data in the humanities has been gathered through a process of retrieval from library catalogs, collections, and bibliographies, textual scholars and editors are equipped to deal with the byproducts of data, because they are also likely familiar with the ideas that originally, (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 2014), 129.

to use Drucker's wording, "parameterized" the data in the first place.

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APPENDIX A

FIRST APPENDIX: NOTES MADE IN AAS WRIGHT EDITIONS

The table below represents the collection of notes found in the three copies of Wright I located at the American Antiquarian Society. When a title is repeated in a later copy, the term "added" is used. The titles are listed in alphabetical order irrespective of their columns.

Table A.1: Notes Made in AAS Wright Editions

<b>AAS Backlog 19C 1325</b>	<b>RefT Fiction 05a</b>	<b>RefT Fiction 05b</b>
<b>Wright I 1939</b>	<b>Wright I 1939</b>	<b>Wright I 1948</b>
		Abraham Vest. Boston, 1847 (maybe nonfiction)
	"Adelio" A Journey to Philadelphia; or, Memoirs of Charles Coleman Saunders, An Original Tale. By Adelio. Hartford: Printed by Lincoln & Gleason, 1804. 72p. 12mo	
Addison, Alvin. Evelyn Mandeville [1837]	added	added
	Abbot, Jacob. McDonner or... Boston, 1839	added (adds Crocker & Brewster as publisher and the 283p.)
	An Adventure in Newbury Park, 1813 (also contains note "omit revisions" on side)	

Table A.1 continued from previous page

AAS Backlog 19C 1325	RefT Fiction 05a	RefT Fiction 05b
		The Adventures of Count D'orveau, A Romance. Philadelphia: published by G.M. & W. Snider, 1832. 180p.
		Adventure in Vermont, 1813 (noted as omitted as it was a serial extra)
		Aesop Junior in America, NY 1834 ("purposely [sic] omitted")
		Albert and Eliza. NY 1802
Alden, Joseph. The Cardinal Flower and Other Tales. Boston Bejnj. Perkins + Co., 1845		
-. Alicia. Boston: Gleason, 1847. 8vo. 50pp. illus.		
-. Adelaide; or, The Rainy Evening. Boston, 1827	added	
-. The Dying Robin. NY 1848	added	added (noted omitted as a juvenile)
-. The Farmer's Daughter. NY [1847]		

**Table A.1 continued from previous page**

AAS Backlog 19C 1325	RefT Fiction 05a	RefT Fiction 05b
-. Lawyer's Daughter. NY [1847]	added	
		Alden, Joseph. The Old Stone House. NY 1848. 143p.
		Alice or the Victim of Indiscretion. NY 1844.
Allen, Elizabeth. Sketches of Green Mt. Life. Lowell Nathan Dayton 1846		
Amory, John. H. Almonuc. Boston 1837, 1838 2nd ed. 1840, 1841. 144pp.	added	
		Andover Husking. Boston: 1842. ("not included by Wright")
		Annette Warington, Sequel to Black Velvet Bracelet. Boston: 1832. p.231 (AAS attributes this to L.H.H. Cleveland in the online catalog)
Waterston-Arthur Lee + Tom Palmer. Boston 1839	added (as only Arthur Lee & Tom Palmer).	

**Table A.1 continued from previous page**

AAS Backlog 19C 1325	RefT Fiction 05a	RefT Fiction 05b
	Arthur, Timothy Shay. Advice to Young Men. Boston: N. C. Barton, 1849	
	-. Anna Milnor. NY: E. Ferret & Co. 1845. 92p.	
Arthur, Timothy Shay. The Banker's Wife. Philadelphia: Peterson [1851] 104pp.		
-. The Divorced Wife. Phila: Peterson [1850]. 96pp.	added	
	-. I Knew How It Would Be. Boston: 1849	
	-. Life Pictures	
-. Lucy Sandford. Phila: [1848] 131 pp. 8vo.		
-. Madeline; or, A Daughter's Love. P [1845]		
-. Mary Ellis. Phila [1850]	added	
	-. Mary Moreton. Phila: T. B. Peterson, [c.1849]. 100p.	
-. The Old Man's Bride	added	
-. Off-hand Sketches. Phila. 1851	added	

**Table A.1 continued from previous page**

AAS Backlog 19C 1325	RefT Fiction 05a	RefT Fiction 05b
	-. Random Recollections of an Old Doctor. [ed. by T.S. Arthur]. Baltimore, 1846	
		Arthur, Timothy Shay. Sons of Temperance, an offering for 1850.
		-. The Story Book. Philadelphia; New York: 1843 ("juvenile")
		-. Swearing Off and Other Tales. 2v in one. Phila. 1843. ("see The Ruined Family")
-. Tales of Domestic Life. Phila [1850]	added	
		-. Tales of Married Life. Phil 1850
-. The Two Husbands. Phila 1845.	added	
-. The Two Brides. Phila Peterson [1850]. 90pp.	added	
-. The Widow's Children in Farmingdale (part of the Village Doctors and Other Tales)		

**Table A.1 continued from previous page**

<b>AAS Backlog 19C 1325</b>	<b>RefT Fiction 05a</b>	<b>RefT Fiction 05b</b>
-. The Widow Morrison. Balto.:Knight & Colburn, 1841.	added	added
-. Young Lady at Home. Phila [1847]		
		Ashland, Aria. Dark Sybil. Boston: 1848. 100p.
Austin, Charles. Frank Marston, 1847.	added	
	Albert Simmons. Boston, 1849. 100p.	
		Ayer, I[saiah] Winslow. The Hungarian Refugee. Boston: 1850. 99p. ("see letter to L.H. Wright Sept. 14, 1949.")
	Baker, Mrs. F. M. Louisa Murray and Other Tales. NY 1846, 129p.	added