Beyond Darwin: Race, Sex, and Hereditarian Science in American Literary Naturalism

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ABSTRACT

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Beyond Darwin: Race, Sex, and Hereditarian Science in American Literary Naturalism

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"Beyond Darwin: Race, Sex, and Hereditarian Science in American Literary Naturalism" explores the intersections among science, race, and sex in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American literary naturalism. The project traces a cultural history of heredity—the means by which individual traits are acquired and passed to offspring—through turn-of-the-century literature. I contend that scientific and cultural debates surrounding heredity gave African American and women naturalists in particular a new conceptual framework with which to understand the effects of racism and sexism on raced and gendered bodies as well as to explore the extent of individual agency in the face of race- and gender-based oppression. Writers such as Paul Laurence Dunbar, Pauline E. Hopkins, Charles Chesnutt, and Edith Summers Kelley deploy concepts drawn from the science of heredity to show the lasting impact of racism and sexism on the body and on the psyche. These writers also challenge heredity as a deterministic force by refusing to reduce their characters to sex- or race-based biological traits and revealing that it is the use of these scientific theories in service of discrimination circumscribes their agency. I argue that a more rigorous examination of how writers engaged with hereditarian science yields a more nuanced discussion of determinism in naturalism and reworks the naturalist canon by recovering the centrality of women and African American writers.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION: TOWARD A NEW NATURALISM

In his 1902 book *The Negro in Africa and America*, Joseph Alexander Tillinghast explains that human character is "the product of two fundamental factors, *i.e.,* heredity and environment. The endowment of each generation at birth is dictated by heredity, but all that it acquires subsequently is the gift of environment. Matured character, then, is a subtle compound of the two elements" (407). A mere half-page after this recognition of the dual ability of heredity and environment to shape this character, Tillinghast stresses the ascendancy of heredity in determining human fate, since heredity is a nearly immutable force, immune from influence by man: "...[m]en cannot manipulate heredity. From generation to generation this mysterious force operates in isolated independence, and we cannot touch it" (408). Tillinghast's explanation for the differences in human behavior and character as being rooted primarily in biological difference captures the scientific and cultural conversation surrounding heredity and destiny in the decades surrounding 1900. Sparked in large part by the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and its theory of evolution through natural selection, as well as by influential works such as Francis Galton's *Hereditary Genius* (1869) and Cesare Lombroso's *Crime: Its Causes and Its Remedies* (1899), scientists and the public alike in the 1890s through the 1920s became increasingly interested in heredity and the extent to which it could explain human traits and behaviors. For scientists, writers, lawmakers, and the general public, this interest was spurred in part by heredity's promise for addressing some of the era's most pressing concerns, including immigration, race relations, changing roles and rights for women, and crime. By attempting to explain behavior, especially

criminal behavior, as well as to find "evidence" for women's and racial minorities' supposed physical and intellectual inferiority, scientific theories of heredity could be wielded as powerful tools for oppression due to their ability to offer seemingly incontrovertible proof that discrimination was not only justified, but necessary to maintain national health and power.

American literary naturalism is well known for incorporating these scientific theories and perspectives into its fiction, responding to the "explosive growth of science and social science" (Dudley 257) at the turn of the century. Because determinism and the amount of freedom individuals had in the face of social, biological, and environmental forces were central concerns of naturalism, theories of heredity in particular gave naturalist writers tools with which to explore the potentially limiting impacts of biology as well as environment on humans' agency. This was an especially pressing social and literary issue since the extent to which each of those forces governed human behavior and characteristics was still heavily contested in the decades surrounding 1900. Much "classic" naturalist fiction—that written by the four canonical naturalist writers, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, and Frank Norris—as well as critical assessments of that literature are based on the idea of an investment in biological determinism as a defining feature of naturalism, especially in its representations of race and criminality. Jeanne Campbell Reesman, for example, explains that "instead of treating race or criminality objectively, most naturalists went along with popular beliefs in hereditary

determinism that fueled both racism and racialism" (274).[1] Critics including Reesman, Lee Clark Mitchell, and John Conder, among others, have all read Crane, Dreiser, London, and Norris's fiction as affirming biological forms of determinism predicated upon their characters' inherited, biological traits. Norris's Stayne and Cresencia in "A Case for Lombroso" (1897) and Vandover in *Vandover and the Brute* (1914), Crane's collection of characters in "The Blue Hotel" (1898), and London's Black Leclere in "Batard" (1902), for example, have all offered grounds for critical assessments of a nearly totalizing determinism based in atavism, criminality, or race (and sometimes all three). For these and other critics, determinism, especially biological determinism, tends to operate in naturalism as an inescapable, monolithic force. An absolute biological determinism, then, comes to characterize naturalist fiction.

This view is captured by John J. Conder's analysis of a heredity-based biological determinism in Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899). In his 1984 book *Naturalism in American Fiction: The Classic Phase*, which analyzes naturalist literature from Crane to Faulkner, Conder argues that naturalism represents determinism through the Hobbesian paradox, which constructs man as simultaneously determined and free; as Conder puts it, "man is free but his acts of will are caused" (16). This includes forms of both environmental and biological determinisms, in addition to hard as well as soft

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[1] The distinction here is important. Racialism refers to a set of theories of race, especially those that are biologically derived, while racism is a "ubiquitous form of behavior" and attitudes (Reesman 275). While racialism has been widely discredited since the mid-twentieth century, racism, obviously, is still alive today.

determinism.[2] For Conder, even the presence of hard determinism, though, does not negate questions of morality and individual responsibility in these novels. Conder's analysis of Norris's *McTeague* represents the ways that scholarship has traditionally conceived of determinism in the fiction of the classic naturalists: as characters being straightforwardly biologically or socially determined, most often by innate characteristics based on racial, ethnic, or sexual "type." Conder reads *McTeague* as a "story of ethnics who are portrayed as the popular archetypes of the groups they are supposed to represent" (70).

For example, the behavior of Trina McTeague, and the events her behavior sets in motion, are specifically ascribed to her racial background. While it may be "circumstance [that] intensifies Trina's sense of insecurity and warps her sense of thrift into miserliness" after her husband loses his dentistry license and therefore threatens the family's financial security, Norris represents both her insecurity and her thrift as being "derived from her German-Swiss background" (83). These traits are already biologized, figured as inherited traits passed down via Trina's parents, but they are also "expression[s] of a background that becomes a fence isolating her from her husband because he does not share it and the trait in which it issues under these circumstances" (83). This fence triggers atavism, or an

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[2] Concepts first theorized by William James and as summarized by Eric Carl Link, hard vs. soft forms of determinism both can characterize naturalist fiction. Hard determinism posits that there is no free will or agency in the universe whatsoever, and "for the hard determinist, notions of personal responsibility, morality, and good and evil hold little or no value" (Link 109). Soft determinism still holds that humans' agency is limited by causal forces in the universe but "allows for moral responsibility and, potentially, degrees of free will within this deterministic framework" (111). Because Conder argues that even hard determinism allows for questions of morality to rise to the surface in naturalism, his distinction doesn't quite align with the distinction drawn by James.

evolutionary regression, transforming *both* characters into "savage beasts, though *of different kinds dictated by their backgrounds*" (83, emphasis mine). Thus, while circumstances beyond her control set the novel's events in motion, Trina's racial background and the traits she derives from it compound the effects of those circumstances, her "miserliness" deepening the rift between her and her husband that eventually leads to her death.

These racial characteristics are not the only form of biological determinism Conder locates in *McTeague*. He argues that the deterministic influence of Trina's German-Swiss heritage is linked to another form of biological determinism: a sexual determinism, embodied by both Trina and McTeague. Conder frames the two forces as the "central conditions inspiring the motives on which [the novel's] characters act" (70). The two determinisms—racial and sexual— are inseparable from one another, thus further biologizing the cultural traits derived from Trina's heritage. Throughout the novel, "sexual determinism triumphs" (71) over the characters' fates. This form of determinism—derived from the "major characters' struggle to observe social taboos (their moral standards) in the face of sexual temptation" (71)—is represented first in McTeague's kissing an unconscious Trina in his dentist's chair early in the novel, and later when Trina, along with McTeague after a picnic, finally accepts his advances because they awaken the "woman" in her and, as Norris writes, "whether she would or no, she was his now irrevocably" (Norris 53). This sexual determinism "common to all men and women" (Conder 72) not only brings Trina and McTeague together but also sets in motion their downfall. The conflict between social taboo and sexual desire is

temporarily resolved by their marriage, but when that conflict for Trina revives after the marriage, it takes a "specially virulent form because of her particular cultural background" (78): miserliness and hoarding. In response to her hoarding her money, McTeague turns to alcoholism—a trait inherited from his own father.

By the novel's end, biology is the overwhelmingly powerful deterministic force on the two characters, and it is to what their behavior is ultimately reducible. Conder reads *McTeague* as embodying a hard determinism based in the acting of social forces upon individuals' biologies to determine their actions, concluding that "the picture Norris paints is a grim one, depicting man as a mere pawn in the hands of Fate" (85)—a force that itself is conflated with inevitable biological processes. Conder explains that this form of determinism allows Norris to emphasize "the influence of culture on the behavior of the characters in the subplots" (Conder 70). While Conder classifies these traits as being adduced to culture, in Norris's novel as well as in Conder's analysis, cultural characteristics are actually conflated with biological, heritable traits—a common conflation in late nineteenth-century scientific as well as popular discourse. For Norris, racialized inherited biological traits are just as, if not more, responsible for outcomes, as social forces, and they place even more restrictions on individuals' freedom. Although in Conder's analysis naturalists—especially Crane—do typically interject a moral element into their novels, their works in the end espouse a deterministic vision, and this determinism is often located in biology, especially for racially or ethnically "Othered" characters.

Critics like Conder represent continuing scholarly attempts to further refine our understanding of the role of determinism in naturalism. However, as Conder's does, much critical work on the movement continues to rely upon a relatively monolithic understanding of what determinism and agency "look like" in naturalist fiction: as characters, especially non-white and non-male characters, lacking agency in the face of overwhelming biological and environmental forces. Conder's analysis of *McTeague's* overwhelming biological determinism is by and large persuasive, but it becomes problematic when it comes to characterize critical assessments of (especially race- and sex-based) determinism in naturalism more generally. More recent critics such as Eric Carl Link have moved away from critical notions of a free will/determinism dichotomy and a hard determinism in naturalism in order to posit a more nuanced understanding of how (both biological and social) determinism works simultaneously with and against individual will. In *The Vast and Terrible Drama: American Literary Naturalism in the Late Nineteenth Century,* Link argues that critical assessments of naturalism have traditionally found it lacking a coherent philosophy and a uniform aesthetic due to expectations that the texts not only adhere to the conventions of the realistic novel but also that they embody a hard philosophical determinism. Rather than using determinism as one of naturalism's defining characteristics and expecting naturalist novels to "preach determinism" (104), determinism in naturalist texts should be characterized and analyzed as "not a *statement,* but a *question*" (104). In other words, naturalist texts do not necessarily present a strictly deterministic world view but rather use the novel as a space to "engage in a struggle with determinism" (104). Further, Ian F. Roberts considers

critical readings of determinism and agency like Conder's as reductive and argues instead that in naturalism, "free will need not be incompatible with determinism" (124). Through the work of Roberts and Link, the relationship between agency and determinism becomes a productive tension, rather than a dichotomy.

Further, and more importantly, classic conceptualizations of a particularly *biological* determinism, whether racial, sexual, or criminal,[3] have remained largely unquestioned and thus have come to characterize the ways that scholars and teachers read naturalist fiction. In turn, readings of an absolute biological determinism have impacted how readers have traditionally thought about the relationship between race, sex, and determinism in naturalism—as race and sex being purely biologically determinant forces. It is not my contention that the readings like Conder's of race- and sex-based determinism in, for example, Norris's or Crane's fiction are incorrect, although they are perhaps simplistic. However, I *am* arguing that relying upon them to formulate definitions of naturalism's representation of biological determinism obscures the fact that the classic naturalists' representations were not, in fact, monolithic among naturalist writers—especially when non-canonical writers such as Paul Laurence Dunbar, Pauline Hopkins, and Edith Summers Kelley are considered. In other words, despite continued attempts to revise understandings of determinism and agency in naturalism by critics such as Conder, Link, and others, most critics continue to rely upon the same (overwhelmingly

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[3] For many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientists, including Cesare Lombroso, criminality was thought to be an inherited, biological trait. Lombroso argued that criminality was a manifestation of atavistic impulses. Norris's "A Case for Lombroso" and *Vandover and the Brute* both take up Lombroso's theory in their representations of atavism and criminality.

white and male) classic writers to think through determinism. For instance, despite his important work in rethinking naturalism's conventions for determinism and arguing for a more expansive definition of the concept, Link still relies primarily upon the stock four writers (Crane, Dreiser, London, and Norris). There has been little extended critical discussion of how *non-canonical* writers—who tend to be non-white and non-male—further nuance how we read and theorize determinism in naturalism.

Some scholars have made important interventions into the critical conversation to bring writers outside of what Donna Campbell has termed "classic naturalism"[4]—consisting primarily of Crane, Dreiser, London, and Norris—more fully into the naturalist canon as well as to analyze more closely naturalism's representation of race and gender. Scholars including Campbell, John Dudley, Jennifer Fleissner, Mary E. Papke, and Gina M. Rossetti have all worked to place writers such as Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow, Kate Chopin, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and James Weldon Johnson alongside the classic four to analyze how these non-canonical writers provide a more expansive, inclusive definition of American literary naturalism. Campbell, for example, has argued that naturalism

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[4] In *Bitter Tastes: Literary Naturalism and Early Cinema in American Women's Writing*, Campbell describes classic naturalism as "set[ting] the conventions of American naturalism: the period in which it was written; its practitioners, who were by and large white, male, and young; its settings, typically urban jungles or an unforgiving wilderness; its characters, often poor and ill educated, victims of primal forces that they could neither control nor understand; and its deterministic philosophy" (3). Against this classic naturalism, Campbell describes an "unruly naturalism," which offers a "counterpart to the rules of classic naturalism" and includes the work of writers like Paul Laurence Dunbar, Nella Larsen, Edith Wharton, and David Graham Phillips, whose fiction "expresses an interest less in philosophical consistency in its treatment of determinism than in the complex, sometimes uneven workings of social forces that operate on female characters constrained with the extra complications of women's biological and social functioning" (4). I find Campbell's differentiation between classic naturalism and unruly naturalism both useful and insightful. I will retain her usage of "classic naturalism" throughout this dissertation to refer primarily to the "Big Four" (Crane, Dreiser, London, and Norris) naturalist writers.

"grew in part as a gender-based countertradition not only to realism but to female-dominated local color writing" (*Resisting* 5), analyzing that response in *Resisting Regionalism: Gender and Naturalism in American Fiction, 1885-1915* and its implications for naturalism's representation of gender. She further points out that "the naturalists' anxieties about art and writing ... pivot on the issue of gender dominance and their encoding of realism and local color as feminine" (*Resisting* 6). Besides analyzing sex and gender in classic naturalism, Campbell has also worked to situate women writers more fully into the naturalist canon. Writers including Chopin, Wharton, Glasgow, and Willa Cather "adapted standard conventions of naturalism in their fiction, including a frank treatment of sexuality, the primacy of heredity, including race, as a motivating factor in characters' actions, and the power of natural and mechanical forces to determine the course of human lives" ("Women Writers" 227-28). Further, Fleissner has read gender as playing a crucial role in the development of naturalism, contending that while naturalism has traditionally been considered a hypermasculine genre, the modern woman and the cultural anxieties she provoked play a crucial rule in the movement. She explains that "naturalism's most characteristic plot ... is marked by neither the steep arc of decline nor that of triumph, but rather by an ongoing, nonlinear, repetitive motion—back and forth, around and around, on and on—that has the distinctive effect of seeming also like a stuckness in place" (9), especially for women writers. In the process of expanding and revising the naturalist canon, critics such as Campbell and Fleissner have decentered a strict determinism, especially biological determinism, in naturalism in favor of analyzing the interaction of social and biological forces on women's (and men's) agency. However,

none have given sustained attention to precisely how expanding our analysis of naturalism to include these writers shifts our understanding of determinism in naturalism more generally.

John Dudley, Lisa Long, Thomas L. Morgan, and others have also argued for a more expansive look at naturalism through analyses of African American naturalists, including Dunbar, Johnson, and W.E.B. Du Bois. As Dudley points out, African American writers had particular stakes in and uses for naturalism's primary concerns, including determinism and agency: "If naturalist fiction often chronicles the limitations and restrictions on individual freedom, there can be no stronger example of the denial of free will than that imposed by the system of chattel slavery in the United States and the concurrent linkage of a slave's ontological status with legal subservience and inferiority" (258). Dudley characterizes African American naturalism as a "diverse and fluid enterprise" (258) that captures issues of cultural authenticity, identity, and the historical trauma enacted upon black bodies.

These scholars, then, represent the important work done to expand critical conversations about and readings of naturalism, especially regarding who "counts" as a naturalist, what naturalism's conventions are, and how the movement took up the era's most pressing cultural concerns, including those of race and sex. However, while many of these critics do often bring up the issue of determinism in their analyses, there has yet to be sustained attention given to how the study of women writers and writers of color necessitates further revision of naturalism as a whole, especially its representations of determinism and agency. I would like to begin to do so by bridging the revisionary work

of Link and his reformulation of determinism with that of Campbell, Dudley, and others on women and African American naturalist writers. I contend that analyzing non-classic naturalists, including Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles W. Chesnutt, Pauline E. Hopkins, Edith Summers Kelley, and Evelyn Scott can nuance our definitions of a major convention of naturalism—determinism—and help to bring those writers from the margins to the center of the canon. The inclusion of these writers changes how scholars, teachers, and readers think about, read, and teach naturalism and its characteristics by dislodging assumptions of a uniform, absolute biological determinism characterizing all of naturalist literature and by interrogating the divide between biological and social forms of determinism and agency. The characters in the novels I analyze in this dissertation are, often, indeed determined, but not strictly by their biologies (i.e., their race, their sex, or a combination of both); rather, they are often determined by social or environmental forces that *reduce* them to those biological traits. While classic naturalist writers tended to use scientific theories to explore the deterministic influence of biology (especially inherited racial characteristics, criminality, and moral and physical degeneracy) and, often, to reinforce racial and sexual stereotypes, the writers whose fiction I analyze tended to use the same theories to show that it is actually social forces acting upon their protagonists' bodies that work to undermine their agency.

Despite this commonality, the degree to which those forces actually *do* determine the bodies and fates of the characters in the texts in this study is far from uniform. For example, Chesnutt's protagonist in his short story "The Doll" (1912) overcomes the racist stereotypes attributed to him by two white patrons of his barbershop, who assume that as

a black man he lacks the ability to control his emotions and to let rationality dictate his actions, and thus is able to retain agency over his own body and his livelihood. In contrast, each member of the Hamilton family in Dunbar's *The Sport of the Gods* (1902) ultimately succumbs to the overwhelming obstacles posed by the racism of both the North and the South. Examining these works alongside one another not only allows readers to see the different representational strategies non-classic naturalists used to explore questions of determinism in the face of cultural forces specifically aimed at limiting their freedom but also moves us closer to a more expansive, more inclusive theory of determinism in naturalism more broadly.

In this dissertation, I analyze the fiction of five non-classic naturalist writers—Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles W. Chesnutt, Pauline E. Hopkins, Edith Summers Kelley, and Evelyn Scott—and their representations of both biological and social determinism. I assert that each of these writers explored the limits of bodily freedom and the impact of racism and sexism on raced and gendered bodies and on individuals' agency primarily by adapting, adopting, and challenging scientific theories of race and sex rooted in hereditarian science. These theories were of particular use to women and African American naturalist writers, since racial and sexual science were often used as justification for oppression against them and their fictional subjects. It is for this reason that I have chosen to focus my analysis on women and African American women writers, although, as I discuss more below, these are certainly not the only social groups that hereditarian science and its theories of race and sex were wielded against, and the writers in the present study are not the only writers, or even the only naturalist writers, to

challenge them. To make apparent the unique ways that women and African American naturalists tended to adapt theories of race and sex to explore determinism, I also read each text alongside that of a more canonical naturalist writer, such as Dreiser, Norris, and Crane, and analyze that writer's representation of biological and social determinism on raced or gendered bodies. This is not to pit the writers against each other nor to posit that the forms of determinism in classic vs. non-classic naturalist fiction exist in opposition to one another. Rather, I wish to read the texts *together* in order to envision new possibilities for determinism and how definitions of it expand when these writers are considered alongside one another.

As I have indicated, crucial to understanding (especially biological) determinism in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century naturalism is an understanding of the science of the era, specifically that of heredity. Virtually all naturalist writers in this time period were influenced to some degree by these theories due to their pervasiveness in the cultural imagination.[5] The influx of immigrants into the country, the rapid growth of the sciences in educational and professional institutions, and continued interest in the theories of evolution sparked first by Darwin's *Origin* fueled the public's interest in theories of heredity and descent. Science also merged with and was often used as justification for social attitudes and legislative policies such as immigration quotas, anti-miscegenation laws, and sterilization legislation that restricted the rights of African Americans and

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[5] Frank Norris, for example, studied under Berkeley biologist Joseph LeConte, and Kate Chopin was an avid reader of Darwin. See Gina M. Rossetti's *Imagining the Primitive in Naturalist and Modernist Literature* and Bert Bender's *Evolution and the 'Sex Problem': American Narratives During the Eclipse of Darwinism* for more in-depth discussions of naturalism's engagement with science.

women as well as immigrants and ethnic minorities. Theories of heredity in particular caught the imagination of the naturalists, who saw them as useful ways of exploring the social problems of the age and chronicling the possible deterministic impacts of inherited traits.

In order to explore its implications for how we understand naturalism's negotiation of determinism, then, this study also traces a cultural history of heredity through late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century naturalist literature, mapping the new epistemic space that was opened by analyses of heredity—a space in which naturalist writers could explore questions of agency and determinism in radically different ways. This interest in the extent to which individuals are determined by their bodies and their environment is a concern shared by the science of heredity and by naturalist writers, and no analysis of determinism in naturalism—a concern that is a cornerstone of more than 150 years of scholarship on this body of literature—is complete without attention to concurrent hereditarian science. Developments in heredity and the dissemination of those ideas through culture via periodicals, novels, public addresses, and government documents thus afforded women and African American novelists in particular a new way to reconceptualize agency and determinism in a way that would have been impossible prior to those developments. Scientific debates about, for example, whether acquired characters could be transmitted to offspring and about the mechanisms of inherited traits were far from settled at the end of the nineteenth century, and my analysis will show that novelists such as Chesnutt, Dunbar, Kelley, and others used their fiction to intervene in this debate, not only responding to it but also attempting to shape

it. I argue that debates surrounding heredity and its mechanisms at the turn of the century also gave black naturalist writers, as well as women naturalists, a new conceptual framework to understand the effects of racism and sexism on raced and gendered bodies. In order to fully appreciate its influence, though, I will briefly delve into the history of hereditarian science in America and the ways in which that science was taken up in cultural debates surrounding sex and gender.

"Injustice ... Added to Inequality": Hereditarian Theories of Race and Sex

Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) was, as Randall Fuller has termed it, "the book that changed America," its theory of evolution rooted in natural selection setting in motion decades of scientific, cultural, and theological debates and monumental shifts in the ways that scientists and the public alike thought about their relation to their past, their future, and each other. Although evolution was certainly not a new concept in the mid-nineteenth century, Darwin's theory of natural selection set forth in *Origin* and later expanded in *The Descent of Man* (1871) "rephrased what it meant to be human" (Degler 6). Not only did his theory provide "the most convincing explanation as to how evolution worked [and] how plants and animals of the natural world had achieved their present forms," it also established "the framework within which American social scientists"—as well as biological scientists and the general public—"pursued their effort to understand human behavior and human nature" (6). In *Origin*, Darwin theorized that environmental changes caused the organisms best suited to adapt to those changes would have the best chance of producing offspring over those that were not as well

adapted. Over time, organisms with those adaptations would proliferate, eventually creating a new species.

In *Origin*, Darwin did not venture to apply his theory to humans (although many readers inevitably did). However, in *The Descent of Man* he did, arguing that humans, like all other animals and plants, undergo evolution through natural selection. *Descent* set out to prove humans' descent from animals and to "demonstrate the continuity not only of behavior and morality between animals and human beings but of emotions as well" (Degler 10). Significantly, in *Descent* Darwin rejected the contemporary theory of polygenesis, which maintained that the races were different species, because his own theory of natural selection did not allow for it. But his analysis was still predicated upon a hierarchy of human societies. By assuming this hierarchy was built upon how far up or down the evolutionary ladder societies were and by referring to "civilized" and "savage" societies that were farther from or closer to their animal ancestors, Darwin's theory allowed for, and even encouraged, subsequent racist theories built upon the idea that "one people might be superior to another because of differences in their biological natures" (15).

The openings that Darwin left in *Descent of Man* for racist ideas by reinforcing a hierarchical idea of human development was quickly filled by scientists who used Darwin's evolutionary theories to argue that the "lower"—i.e., non-white—races were inherently biologically inferior. English biologists Alfred Russel Wallace and Thomas Henry Huxley were two of these scientists who classified human races hierarchically, both suggesting that inherent biological differences between the races indicated lower

places on the evolutionary scale. Huxley, for example, used cranial capacities as evidence for these biological differences in his 1863 book *Man's Place in Nature* and argued in an 1865 essay that because of these differing capacities, "it is simply incredible that, when all [African Americans'] disabilities are removed ... he will be able to compete successfully with his bigger-brained and smaller-jawed rival, in a context which is to be carried out in thoughts and not by bites" (67). Similarly, Wallace used racial rankings to suggest that the "lower" races were less mentally evolved than the so-called higher ones, even implying "a sense in which those lower in the scale were not really 'men'" (Bannister 185). However, neither Wallace nor Huxley believed that the inferiority of the lower races was permanent, nor that their present inferiority was justification for discrimination. The lower races were for both scientists "capable of cultural development" (Bannister 186) and both mental and moral progress, and as Huxley pointed out, the duty of the higher races was to ensure that "injustice is not added to inequality" (70) until they reached that point.

As the nation moved closer to the twentieth century and biological, physical, and social sciences continued to develop, competing theories of heredity and of the mechanisms for evolution both clashed and merged. Although the fact of evolution put forth by Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* (1859) and elaborated later in his *The Descent of Man* (1871) was accepted doctrine among scientists and the public by the last decades of the nineteenth century, the means by which that evolution occurred was still heavily debated. While the theological objections to the materialism of his theory, which disallowed any form of supernatural control over evolution and in which "the adaptation

of each form to its environment [could be] interpreted as a sign of the Creator's benevolence" (Bowler 21), had largely waned, many scientists still objected to the place of humans in Darwin's evolutionary schema. Instead of being preordained as a superior species, humans were now simply another animal species, rather than the evolutionary goal toward which all species strove. Many of the anti-Darwinian theories in the decades after the publication of *On the Origin of Species* attempted to place humans in a more meaningful position in the evolutionary process.

Central to these debates during the "eclipse of Darwin" was the role that environment played in the evolutionary process, particularly the degree to and speed with which populations could pass on to their offspring habits they acquired as adaptations to their environment. One of the most influential proponents of this theory in the nineteenth-century was Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, whose *Philosophie Zoologique* (1809) forwarded the theory of acquired characters, which remained influential throughout the nineteenth century. Lamarck's theory contended that traits that parents acquired during their lifetime in response to environmental conditions could be inherited by their offspring. For example, Lamarck explained giraffes' long necks by positing that as giraffes stretched to reach the leaves on the tops of the tallest trees, they gradually lengthened their necks. That greater neck length, caused by the stretching over the parents' lifetime, would be inherited by the giraffes' offspring, suggesting that individuals' physical environments could engender changes in heredity over the course of their lifetimes. This principle would later be applied to humans, including by social reformers such as Charles Loring Brace, who argued both that unsanitary and dangerous urban living conditions

engendered (heritable) crime and poverty and that reform of living conditions could reform criminals and draw people up out of pauperism. Additionally, Darwin's own theory of evolution actually allowed for a "Lamarckian component in addition to natural selection" (Bowler 41), in which individuals could inherit characteristics that their parents had acquired as environmental adaptations.

In 1889, however, "devoted Darwinist" (Degler 22) August Weismann, an embryologist, disproved the Lamarckian theory of acquired characters, showing that, "no matter what changes occurred in an animal's body or behavior in its lifetime, none of them appeared in its offspring" (22).[6] No habits, bodily changes, or other characteristics acquired during the lifetime of the parents, then, could be passed on to offspring—only changes to the hereditary material, which was housed in the germ plasm. According to Weismann, the germ plasm contained all the hereditary material that individuals could transfer to their offspring; the body is only a "host" for that material, and bodily changes or adaptations could not impact the germ plasm. Weismann was a key figure, then, in the reformulation of Darwinism in the late 1880s and 1890s known as neo-Darwinism, which adhered to Weismann's "dogmatic selectionism" (Bowler 41) and retained little of the flexibility of Darwin's original theory. Those scientists who adhered to a neo-Darwinian philosophy posited a hard break between heredity and environment and supported natural selection as the sole mechanism for evolutionary change. Neo-Darwinist theories of heredity were also often used as evidence for claims that certain races (including

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[6] Weismann came to this conclusion through his experiments with mice, which involved cutting off their tails over five generations to ascertain whether their offspring would be born with shorter tails. They, of course, were not, and these experiments were key to proving his germ plasm theory.

Africans, and by extension African Americans) were positioned lower on the evolutionary scale than Caucasians—a positioning made evident by clearly defined, both visible and latent race-based characteristics—and, further, for the immutability of racial characteristics. Because environmental and social factors, including education, social equity through legislative reform, and living conditions apparently had no influence on individuals' and races' already established biological characteristics, many neo-Darwinists concluded that racial traits (and thus racial hierarchies) were permanent and not subject to change. Because for the neo-Darwinists, original Darwinism was "purged ... of all its Lamarckian connections" (Bowler 41) and natural selection became the only means of evolution, any change in the races that did take place would take many generations. As we will see in Chapter 2, these theories were often wielded in arguments that the "lower races" were not and would never be fit for citizenship and were thus used as justification for discriminatory policies and practices.

Despite Weismann's discovery, not a few scientists (as well as social reformers and policymakers) challenged his theory, still touting the viability of Lamarck's principle of acquired characters. In opposition to the neo-Darwinism that had developed out of Weismann's theory, a new form of Lamarckism arose (aptly and predictably referred to as neo-Lamarckism) to challenge Weismann's germ plasm theory and to reassert the influence of characteristics acquired during the lifetime of the parent. Constructed purposefully as an alternative to neo-Darwinism, neo-Lamarckism not only upheld the viability of the inheritance of acquired characters and thus the direct impact of environment on individuals but also "postulat[ed] will and purpose as the agencies

bringing about evolutionary change" (Degler 23). Rather than Darwin's materialistic theory of evolution as being non-linear and directed by long-term natural selection, neo-Lamarckians, particularly the American school, claimed that evolution could be internally directed. According to Peter Bowler, the distinguishing feature of this American version of neo-Lamarckism was "its vision of evolution advancing step-by-step along a regular pattern of development mirrored by the embryological growth of the individual organism" (119). For the neo-Lamarckians, evolution proceeded along a linear path, and while the environment could prompt evolutionary changes, they were largely caused by "an internal tendency predisposing the organisms to vary in a particular direction" (Bowler 119). This theory not only allowed animals (including humans) to retain more agency in the evolutionary process but also reopened a space for theological agency, as scientists like American paleontologist Edward Drinker Cope postulated that God had gifted animals the ability to direct their own evolution.

As Bowler points out, the concern of this American neo-Lamarckian school "with expounding the regularity of evolution inevitably predisposed them to look for internal directing mechanisms—physiological or behavioral—that would explain the consistency of variation" (119-20)—including looking to behavioral, biological explanations for differences among races. It is important to point out that the belief in acquired characters had direct implications for the "Negro question" at the turn of the century, and the scientific theories of heredity, whether neo-Lamarckian, neo-Darwinian, or somewhere in between, during this time were quickly deployed in and adapted by that cultural debate. Moreover, scientists themselves used their authority to intervene in those debates,

sometimes adapting their own arguments in order to accommodate a certain position on the place of African Americans in the American social landscape. Bowler explains that although the American school of neo-Lamarckism did, on its face, support the "optimistic version" of Lamarckism in which human progress (including the progress of so-called "lower species") could be directed and advanced by changes to social environment, "its origin in [Louis] Agassiz's hierarchical view of development[7] ensured that it could also be used to defend harsher social policies" (127). For example, despite his belief in acquired characters and the ability of evolution to be thus self-directed and adaptable to environmental conditions, Cope believed that this principle didn't apply to African Americans—demonstrating the plasticity of these theories and scientists' readiness to mold them to fit their social beliefs. They simply could not overcome their low position on the ladder of evolutionary development. Instead of arguing the Lamarckian belief that changes to environment (for instance, education or greater socioeconomic opportunities) could overcome this supposed inferiority, in this new neo-Lamarckism Cope "insisted that the inferior races were permanently trapped at their lower level of development" (Bowler 127).

For others, particularly social scientists and reformers, a continued belief in acquired characteristics meant hope for social reform of so-called inferior populations.

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[7] Agassiz was a Swiss naturalist who was a proponent of polygenesis, the theory that the human races were separate species with "differential, innate value" (Gould 78) and specific, immutable characteristics based on their race. In an 1850 article, he wrote that the fact of these "different physical characters ... presses upon us the obligation to settle the relative rank among these races, the relative value of the characters peculiar to each, in a scientific point of view" (33). Predictably, Caucasians were at the top of this hierarchy, and Africans were at the bottom.

For these reformers, if social conditions could be changed, so too could the degeneracy of these populations—particularly urban populations—could be corrected. As I will discuss further in Chapter 1, social reformers such as Charles Loring Brace and William Graham Sumner utilized neo-Lamarckian ideas of the viability of environmental changes to engender changes in heredity and thus both social and racial progress. At the turn of the century, then, theories of heredity were used to both encourage reform among both urban working-class and ethnic minorities and to argue for the inability of reform to change the social situations of those same populations, demonstrating simultaneously the continued scientific debates over theories of heredity and the flexibility of those theories when put to social use. It is this flexibility that lent hereditarian science so well to naturalists' varied use.

The science of racial difference in nineteenth-century anthropology, biology, psychology, and social sciences accompanied a concurrent rise in the science of sexual difference. These scientific theories, which included "sexual selection, the biogenetic law ('ontology recapitulates phylogeny'), and the physiological division of labor" were "utilized and adapted to explain how and why men and women differed from each other, and, often enough, what these differences signified for social policy" (Russett 10). For nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientists, including Charles Darwin, Havelock Ellis, and James McGrigor Allan, differences between men and women were rooted in nature, not environment, and it was these immutable biological traits that separated the sexes and solidified gender roles. Much as in racial science, sexual science was impacted by the loss of favor for theories of acquired characters, and arguments about

environmental influences on gender-based behavior became less convincing toward the end of the nineteenth century. These developments in biological and social sciences merged with, and can even be seen in many ways as a response to the debate surrounding the "woman question" at the turn of the century—a moment in which "social and scientific developments converged to create the possibility and urgency of a science of male and female nature and of the differences between them" (Russett 2). As (white, middle-class) women began to demand the right to vote, to work in increasing numbers outside the home, and to delay or even forgo wifehood and motherhood, the conservative backlash against these social phenomena required seemingly incontrovertible proof of their "unnaturalness" and danger, and science readily supplied it with theories that maintained men's and women's social roles as based in biological differences. Diverse scientific fields, from sociology to biology to psychology to anthropology, developed theories in support of these differences, and the "overwhelming consensus was that women were inherently different from men in their anatomy, physiology, temperament, and intellect" (11).

These differences were largely based in women's reproductive functions. It was thought that women lagged behind men developmentally and evolutionarily, and

> the reason for woman's arrested development was the need to preserve her energies for reproduction; she suffered a foreshortened maturation, but the race gained. And her weaknesses were actually strengths: Darwinian sexual selection

> explained physical and behavioral differences between the sexes[8] as advantageous in finding mates. ... Nature had decreed a secondary role for women. The great principle of division of labor was here brought to bear: men produced, women reproduced. (Russett 11-12)

As I will examine further in Chapter 4, concerns over the "woman question" and scientific efforts to address it centered on women's reproductive role. This concern, backed by hereditarian science, was fueled not only by anxieties over the "New Woman" delaying or rejecting altogether her reproductive "duties" but also by fears that the "wrong kind" of woman was reproducing in her stead. Such fears, in turn, were linked to fears that the racial health and purity of the nation was declining, full of physically and intellectually inferior citizens who, through reproduction and the inheritance of less-than-desirable traits, would threaten America's power and newly emergent place on the world stage.

Theodore Roosevelt's 1905 address to the National Congress of Mothers exemplifies these cultural anxieties over women's reproductive power and the hereditarian theories that undergirded the scientific and cultural response to them. The simple fact of his address, delivered in the fifth year of his tenure as president, marks the nation's investment in women's reproduction, but his speech itself underscores the essential role they played in its future. Roosevelt reminds his audience that America's "wealth," "material growth," and even "artistic development" will not prevail unless "the

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[8] Darwin attributed differences among races to sexual selection, as well.

average woman is a good wife, a good mother, able and willing to perform the first and greatest duty of womanhood, able and willing to bear, and to bring up as they should be brought up, healthy children, sound in body, mind, and character, and numerous enough so that the race shall increase and not decrease" ("On American Motherhood"). It is women's primary and most important responsibility to reproduce, creating sound, healthy environmental and biological conditions under which to ensure "the destiny of the generations to come after us" ("On American Motherhood"). The woman who shirks this duty not only "forms one of the most unpleasant and unwholesome features of modern life" but also brings about "race suicide," the race decreasing rapidly in population to such an extent that it would "very deservedly" go extinct and "show that it was unfit to exist, and that it had better give place to the people who had not forgotten the primary laws of their being" ("On American Motherhood"). It was thus up to women—but only women who would ensure Anglo-Saxon, middle-class superiority—and the characteristics they passed to their offspring to safekeep the future of the nation and allow it to fulfill its destiny.

This meant not only making sure that the "right" women reproduced but also that the "wrong" women did *not* reproduce. The eugenics movement of the early twentieth century attempted to do just that. Backed by developments in hereditarian science, eugenicists sought to both encourage the reproduction of white, middle-class women and to limit that of primarily immigrant, working class, and "feebleminded" women in order to remove their "inferior" traits from the national gene pool. As Wendy Kline explains, "by regulating the sexuality of working-class and immigrant women," eugenics would

limit the procreation of the "less 'civilized' races," and by encouraging the middle-class new woman back into her destined role as mother, it would "ensure that the white race once again would be healthy and prolific" (14). Womanhood, then, "contained the potential not only for racial progress but also for racial destruction" (16), and it was the job of eugenics to manage that potential. I will return to a more in-depth look at eugenics and the ways that women writers negotiated its ideas in Chapters 3 and 4.

Naturalism's Engagement with Heredity, Race, and Sex

These developments in racial and sexual science, fueled by advances in heredity, had tremendous impacts on the American cultural imagination, pervading debates, as we have seen, about such seemingly disparate issues as the "woman question" and Jim Crow. Writers were, of course, part of this cultural engagement with hereditarian science, and African American and women writers often had the most at stake in the discourse surrounding such ideas and the social policies that relied upon them. As my dissertation will show, the writers whose fiction I analyze use developments in heredity to both legitimate and critically examine social stereotypes and to explore their often deterministic impact on raced and gendered bodies. Heredity provided African American and women naturalists the tools with which they could dismantle those stereotypes and critique the science that was used to support them. As a result, their engagement with hereditarian science provides us with a new lens through which to view determinism in naturalism. It is my contention that no analysis of determinism in naturalist literature is complete without attention to concurrent hereditarian science. Reading these novels within the context of their concurrent scientific ideas, then, can not only deepen our

understanding of how writers negotiated determinism but also reveal the extent to which science and literature are often intertwined.

The dissertation begins by placing Paul Laurence Dunbar's 1902 novel *The Sport of the Gods* squarely within the context of the scientific debate between neo-Lamarckism and neo-Darwinism in Chapter 1. *The Sport of the Gods* tells the story of the Hamilton family, who must flee their Southern home after the family patriarch is accused of and jailed for robbery and the ruin of their reputation, and their lack of success in the urban North. Dunbar's novel examines the dual impact of social environment and of the biological changes it produces on the agency of the family, especially its youngest members Joe and Kit. I argue that in his representation of Joe and Kit's (in)ability to adapt to the city environment and the physical degeneration that accompanies that failure, Dunbar adapts neo-Lamarckian theories of heredity in order to show racism's impact on African American bodies. It is not an innate degeneracy or lack of morality that engenders their fall, as many social scientific and biological theories of race purported, but rather rampant racism in both the South and the North that undermines Joe and Kit's agency and leads to their moral fall. In doing so, Dunbar illustrates the consequences, both moral and biological, of continued racism upon black bodies and psyches.

Charles Chesnutt also takes up hereditarian theories of race in his 1912 short story "The Doll," but envisions more expansive possibilities for challenging those theories and thus for his protagonist's ability to assert agency. Chapter 2 reads "The Doll" alongside Stephen Crane's *The Monster* in order to examine how Chesnutt and Crane imagine different capacities for agency for their African American characters in the face of the

racialism that sought to limit it. Both texts explore the deterministic impact of biological theories of race on black men. However, whereas in *The Monster*, Crane illustrates the hopelessness of African Americans overcoming those theories in order to achieve bodily and social agency—his protagonist's identity is literally stripped away—Chesnutt posits that African Americans can pose overt challenges to their deterministic impact by practicing restraint and self-control. In this chapter, I also compare "The Doll" to Chesnutt's 1901 novel *The Marrow of Tradition*, which contains a much more ambivalent representation of the viability of that strategy for overcoming racism and its deterministic impacts. Through these analyses, I examine Chesnutt's engagement with neo-Darwinist hereditarian science and the biologically essentialist theories of race it produced as well as his critique of its use as grounds for discrimination in the Jim Crow era.

Chapter 3 turns to Pauline E. Hopkins's novel *Of One Blood* (1902) and her adaptation of hereditarian racial science. While, like Dunbar and Chesnutt, Hopkins uses her novel to challenge biological explanations for so-called racial behavior and traits and to argue instead for the social determinism of racism, she also adopts their central ideas to a much greater extent than either. Rather than simply challenging the theories, she adapts them in order to both critique their deterministic impact and create a celebrated racial past for African Americans. *Of One Blood* uses ideas from biological, psychological, and anthropological sciences to represent this racial history. I argue, though, that is Hopkins's representation of her female characters—Dianthe, Mira, and Candace—through which she illustrates both the consequences and possibilities of hereditarian science for African

American women, particularly through reproduction. In her use of this science, though, Hopkins also at times embraces the same biological essentialism that she simultaneously critiques. In order to make clear Hopkins's innovative representational strategies, I also read *Of One Blood* alongside Gertrude Stein's "Melanctha," which represents many of the same race- and gender-based stereotypes rooted in science that Hopkins worked against in her novel but, unlike Hopkins, leaves the validity of those stereotypes untroubled.

Chapter 4 extends these concerns with women's reproduction and its fraught relationship with science in its analysis of Edith Summers Kelley's *Weeds* (1923). Like Hopkins's novel, *Weeds* adapts hereditarian science to critique its impact on women's reproductive agency; both novels also rely to varying extents on ideas of the importance of women's reproduction to the future of the nation espoused by the early twentieth-century eugenics movement. Unlike *Of One Blood*, though, Kelley's novel applies these ideas not to African American women but rather to white, rural working-class women. *Weeds* follows the life of Judith Pippinger Blackford, a young woman raised on a Kentucky farm who becomes caught in the grueling demands of tenant-farming, wifehood, and motherhood. I situate the novel in early twentieth-century scientific debates surrounding heredity, reproduction, and the white working class in order to argue that Kelley merges economic with biological inferiority—a conflation characteristic of the eugenics movement—to leverage her message about working-class women's need for reproductive autonomy. In fashioning the novel's argument for the necessity of reproductive autonomy, accomplished primarily through birth control, Kelley relies on

racialized eugenic ideas in her representation of working-class Kentucky farmers being of unsound mind and unhealthy body. In other words, Kelley's challenge to reproductive determinism ends up reifying other forms of biological essentialism through its use of eugenic arguments.

The dissertation's final chapter, Chapter 5, also centers on the theme of women's reproductive agency as a primary concern of naturalism, turning to Evelyn Scott's 1921 *The Narrow House*. I analyze Scott's depiction of biological, reproduction-based determinism, setting the novel alongside Norris's *McTeague* in order to argue that Scott deconstructs the biologically deterministic scientific and public discourse that sought to limit women's agency. I situate *The Narrow House* in the context of the New Woman debate and the cultural and scientific concerns regarding her fertility (or lack thereof) in the early twentieth century. In this discourse, as is reflected in the novel, neither reproductive nor non-reproductive women can escape the determinism of social and scientific control over their bodies. Perhaps even more so than any other writer I study here, Scott does recognize the ability of women's biologically-based reproductive potential to circumscribe their agency, but she ultimately argues that the primary deterministic force on women's bodies is not that biology but, rather, the interaction of cultural expectations for women with scientific authority over their bodies.

Each of these writers, then, thinks through, takes up, and adapts scientific theories of heredity to critique their deterministic impact on the bodies on their protagonists. While these scientific ideas, and the uses to which they were put in cultural discourse and social policy, sought to ascribe apparent race- and sex-based inferiority to innate,

inherited characteristics, the writers in this study posed bold challenges to that determinism in their fiction. They reveal that it is the intersection of scientific ideas and social attitudes that limits African Americans' and women's agency—not biology. Although each writer takes up those ideas, responds to their impact, and poses the challenges to them in different ways, Dunbar, Chesnutt, Hopkins, Kelley, and Scott each trouble an easy critical assumption of a straightforward, absolute biological determinism in naturalist fiction. Examining their work, especially alongside that of classic naturalist writers, can yield productive and important insights into the diversity of ways that naturalism engages with science and its implications for determinism.

While my project focuses primarily on African American and naturalist writers, I believe that the utility of a close analysis of heredity to move us closer to more inclusive definitions of determinism in the naturalist canon also applies to the study of other non-canonical naturalist writers. I read African American and women naturalists in part because they represent a large portion of the "forgotten" canon of naturalist writers. In this way, I am following in the path already forged by critics such as Campbell and Dudley, who have done important work to recover the work of such writers. Further, women and African Americans were some of the most "visible" figures in the scientific and cultural debates about heredity and the turn of the century, and, as I have explained, many of those debates were preoccupied with hereditarian science's implications for the "Negro question" and the "woman question" of the era. Women and African Americans had quite a bit at stake in challenging and adapting these theories for their own purposes—although, as I have tried to make clear in the chapters that follow, there were

important differences in addition to the similarities in the ways that these novelists took up scientific ideas to explore determinism. By no means, though, were they the only groups who were impacted by hereditarian science, nor were they the only ones to take them up in their fiction, a point to which I will return in the conclusion.

Ultimately, my goal in this dissertation is to make the canon of naturalism, and the study of the ways it engages with determinism, more expansive, unsettling the monolith that is the "Big Four." Instead, I would like to, as Donna Campbell as put it, "complicate if not erase the exclusionary boundaries that have separated the two groups [of canonical and non-canonical writers] ... in ways that provide a clearer sense of naturalism as a whole" ("Women Writers" 223-24). This work can only make our study of naturalism more inclusive and our reading of it more gratifying.

CHAPTER 2: "THERE IS A GREAT DEAL IN HEREDITY": NEO-LAMARCKISM, DETERMINISM, AND AGENCY IN PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR'S *THE SPORT OF THE GODS*

In his 1898 editorial "The Negroes of the Tenderloin," a critique of African Americans who leave their "small towns of the South" to become a part of the "crowds of idle, shiftless Negroes that throng" ("Negroes" 364) the Tenderloin district of New York City, Paul Laurence Dunbar poses a series of questions that are meant to convey the utmost urgency with which the "vice and degradation" ("Negroes" 365) of the city must be overcome. After stating that it is "natural to suppose that these poor people will produce offspring," Dunbar asks, "Of what kind will they be? How can they run in the race of life when they are hampered from the start by the degradation of their parents? What course is open to them save one of shame and crime?" ("Negroes" 265). In these questions, Dunbar's editorial captures the scientific and cultural debate surrounding heredity, environment, and the interactions between the two, especially in what many scientists deemed the "lower races," at the turn of the century. The extent to which cultural and geographic environment could impact populations and improve their position on the evolutionary ladder was debated by those in diverse disciplinary fields, from biologists to social reformers to legislators. This debate inevitably carried over into conversations about the "Negro question" at the turn of the century, ostensibly to evaluate whether African Americans possessed the capability for citizenship but often in actuality to find justification for retaining social and political power over black Americans. Writers, scientists and public figures alike, from W.E.B. Du Bois to Joseph LeConte to

Theodore Roosevelt[9] intervened in this debate, using, challenging, and adapting it to serve different, sometimes even contradictory, social purposes.

Paul Laurence Dunbar thus wrote in the midst of a pervasive cultural interest in how environmental conditions affect moral character and in how social and physiological processes interact. In his essays as well as his fiction, Dunbar also tapped into this interest, using the tensions between neo-Lamarckism and neo-Darwinism and their theories of heredity to emphasize the pervasive effects of racism on African Americans' bodies and psyches. Neo-Lamarckism, which posited that changes in individuals' habits and behaviors as responses to their environments could be inherited by their offspring in particular suffuses Dunbar's 1902 novel *The Sport of the Gods*. Forced to leave the South after Berry is falsely accused of and imprisoned for stealing from his white employer, the remaining members of the Hamilton family flee to the city, where the urban environment quickly erodes not only their family relationship but also their morality and, for Joe and Kit, their bodies. The novel charts the decline of Joe and Kit—a decline exacerbated by their migration from the South to New York City and seemingly falling victim to the moral corruption of their new urban environment. Yet Dunbar is careful to show that it is

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[9] W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Philadelphia Negro* (1899), for example, utilizes the burgeoning field of social science and the statistical methods that were beginning to characterize it to explore social problems in the Philadelphia African American community. The book attributes poverty in the city primarily to socioeconomic barriers (especially in employment and housing) and rejects inherent, race-based characteristics as being its source. Du Bois continually rebutted biologically essentialist views of race in print and in public speeches throughout his career, including by writing a rebuttal of Joseph Alexander Tillinghast's *The Negro in Africa and America*. See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of Tillinghast's book. Joseph LeConte, a biologist under whom Frank Norris studied at Berkeley, was another figure that espoused evolutionary science as a means of understanding racial difference (i.e., white racial superiority and African American inferiority) in his works *The Race Problem in the South* (1892) and *Evolution and Its Relation to Religious Thought* (1888). I discuss LeConte at greater length in Chapter 2.

ultimately not the corrupting influence of the city nor the biological inferiority of his characters but rather the racism upon which the social structures of both the Southern and the Northern environments are built that leads to the moral and biological decline of his two young protagonists. In order to show racism's deterministic impact on black bodies, Dunbar adapts neo-Lamarckian understandings of heredity and theories of general human physiology, including the means by which social phenomena could spark internal physiological processes.

Unlike many African American writers, including Charles Chesnutt and Pauline Hopkins, who work in their fiction to decouple biology from oppressive social structures, Dunbar adapts neo-Lamarckian theories in order to represent the biological—whether physiological or anatomical[10]—effects of racism on African Americans' bodies. His characters do indeed go through a process of biological decline, but not due to an inherent biological inferiority attributable to their race. Rather, their biological decline is caused by the inescapability of the racism that confronts the Hamiltons no matter where they go. Traditional neo-Lamarckian theories of heredity attempted to understand the impact of individuals' biological adaptations to their physical environment and the transmission of those adaptations to offspring. Dunbar uses ideas based in Neo-Lamarckian understandings of environment's effects on biology in his novel, emphasizing that racism, when it is so pervasive that it becomes an inescapable hallmark of African Americans' social environment, has detrimental effects on African Americans' bodies,

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[10] While "physiological" denotes internal processes of the body, such as functions of the organs and their effects, "anatomical" is typically used to refer to the structure or physical, external composition of an organism.

their hereditary material, and thus their agency. Thus, Dunbar utilizes these theories of heredity in *The Sport of the Gods* to not only reveal that northern migration is not a panacea for racism but also to show the dangers of that racism becoming written onto the bodies of African Americans, warning of the moral and biological consequences if racism continues to limit their possibilities for agency.

My analysis of Dunbar's novel draws from Thomas L. Morgan's concept of white determinism in Dunbar's fiction. In "Black Naturalism, White Determinism: Paul Laurence Dunbar's Naturalist Strategies," Morgan argues that in *Sport*, Dunbar "presents white social control as a deterministic influence on black life" ("Black Naturalism" 8) in Dunbar's formulation of naturalism. This black naturalism "focuses on the discrepancy between white and black social agency" and "functions as the overarching 'natural' law" and the primary deterministic force that controls black characters' lives ("Black Naturalism" 8-9). Further, Dunbar's black naturalism is distinctly different from the determinism often found in white naturalists' fiction. Morgan writes that "while whites believe that black cultural and racial difference is based on biological difference, that difference [in black naturalism] is a product of the systemic discrepancies that exist between whites and blacks, including but not limited to white agency and autonomy, entrenched white political power, and white economic control" ("Black Naturalism" 8). This is exemplified perhaps most clearly in Berry's false conviction for robbery by his white employers, which is the driving force behind the remaining Hamiltons' migration northward and their subsequent moral fall; as Morgan writes, "not only does Maurice Oakley get to dictate Hamilton's criminal charges—they are, after all, the ones 'preferred

by his employer'—but the story in the paper [covering the conviction] presumes Hamilton's guilt by describing him as a 'prisoner' and through asserting the 'very likely' stereotypical assumptions of criminality to explain his accumulation of wealth" ("Black Naturalism" 24). Dunbar's naturalism in *The Sport of the Gods* therefore disrupts the biological determinism often found in white-authored naturalist literature and in white cultural discourse at large.

I would add that Dunbar maps white determinism onto the bodies of his characters—his characters do, in fact, become determined by their bodies, not because of an inherent, inherited biological inferiority but because their bodies are physical manifestations of white determinism. Morgan points out that in *The Sport of the Gods*, "white determinism reveals the manner in which sociological belief masks itself as biological truth" ("Black Naturalism" 9), but I argue that sociological belief *becomes* biological truth for Dunbar's characters, particularly Joe and Kit. This move is risky for Dunbar, as it threatens to reify the same beliefs about biological determination that he is trying to deconstruct. However, it serves to emphasize the overwhelming material and psychological impacts of white determinism on African American agency. For Dunbar, agency is nearly impossible to achieve while racism remains so detrimental to black bodies and minds.

Turn-of-the-Century Neo-Lamarckism, Environmental Influence, and the Viability of Reform

Understanding the developments in scientific thinking that undergirded Dunbar's unique figuration of white determinism and his adaptation of neo-Lamarckism to expose

the effects of racism is crucial for a comprehensive reading of the novel. As discussed in the introduction despite Weismann's disproving of Lamarck's theory of acquired characters, scientists as well as social reformers continued to believe in the power of the environment to shape humans' biological traits and social characteristics. Neo-Lamarckism not only upheld the viability of the inheritance of acquired characters and thus the direct impact of environment on individuals but also "postulat[ed] will and purpose as the agencies bringing about evolutionary change" (Degler 23). For some social scientists and reformers, a continued belief in acquired characteristics meant hope for social reform of so-called inferior populations. For these reformers, if social conditions could be changed, so too could the degeneracy of these populations—particularly urban populations—could be corrected.

Philanthropist Charles Loring Brace was one of these reformers. Brace's 1872 book, *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years Among Them,* detailed his work with immigrants, orphans, and "criminals" in New York City as part of an effort to prevent poverty and to promote education and industry among the "destitute youth of our large towns" (Brace ii). Brace demonstrates a clear concern with improving the social environment of this population, including using the "influences of education and discipline and religion," changing their "material circumstances," and "draw[ing] them under the influence of the moral and fortunate classes" (ii). Contemporary hereditarian ideas continually inform that concern and are most evident in his forewarnings about the long-term dangers of crime and poverty. Brace warns that individuals' criminal behavior can become hereditary if left unchecked; indeed, a central feature of his argument for

reform of urban living conditions is that it offsets the tendency for criminal behavior to become heritable and to spread through the population. Luckily, Brace points out, the "crime and pauperism of New York are not so deeply stamped in the blood of the population" as they are on the population of European cities (27). Despite this fact, New York's dangerous classes are "more dangerous" than those of Europe, due to the "intensity of the American temperament" as well as the fact that it is mostly the American-born children of Irish and German immigrants who make up this class, who are "far more brutal than the peasantry from whom they descend" (27). Brace assumes an automatic, inherited inferiority among his "dangerous classes," children of immigrants, and buys into the same hierarchical evolutionary schema as did physical scientists like Cope.

Brace also argues that inheritance is a "most powerful and continual source of crime with the young" (42), emphasizing his investment in biological, heredity-based explanations for the behavior of the lower classes. "Certain appetites or indulgences," including prostitution, alcoholism, and laziness, "if indulged abnormally and excessively through two or more generations, come to have an almost irresistible force, and, no doubt, modify the brain so as to constitute almost an insane condition" (43). Here, Brace demonstrates his investment in Lamarckism; these qualities have the almost assured ability to become transmitted from parents to offspring, thus creating a new population of "confirmed paupers" (42). Brace engages these ideas in service of his desire to demonstrate the urgency of reforming the cities' dangerous classes. However, this strategy is two-pronged, as he also invokes neo-Darwinian mechanisms of natural

selection in his assurances to his readers that these traits cannot be perpetuated indefinitely:

> The action of the great law of "Natural Selection," in regard to the human race, is always towards temperance and virtue. That is, vice and extreme indulgence … impair the faculties by which man struggles with adverse conditions and gets beyond the reach of poverty and want. The vicious and sensual and drunken die earlier, or they have fewer children, or their children are carried off by diseases more frequently, or they themselves are unable to resist or prevent poverty and suffering. As a consequence, in the lowest class, the more self-controlled and virtuous tend constantly to survive, and to prevail in "the struggle for existence," over the vicious and ungoverned, and to transmit their progeny. The natural drift among the poor is towards virtue. Probably no vicious organization with very extreme and abnormal tendencies is transmitted beyond the fourth generation; it ends in insanity or cretinism or the wildest crime. (44)

Thus, while vice can only be passed on for a few generations, the inherent virtue that resides in all individuals is the stronger hereditary force; for even the "worst endowed families," the "latent tendencies to do good" (45) that lay hidden will eventually surface and prevail.

In order for these "latent tendencies" toward virtue to be allowed to return to the fore, Brace returns to a neo-Lamarckian argument—that education, mentorship, and other means of social reform will "arouse and develop" (45) the virtuous tendencies. Brace uses the heritability of virtue to explain why reform is so effective; changes in

individuals' environment can indeed cause change in outward behavior as well as in in their biological constitutions, ensuring the health and morality of the individual and of the urban population and guaranteeing that these traits will not be transmitted further to offspring. Brace's argument clearly dips into the discourses of both neo-Darwinism and neo-Lamarckism, which has several important implications for understanding how scientific discourses of heredity operated in the larger culture at the turn of the century. First, it demonstrates the flexible, fluid nature of scientific ideas both in the cultural imagination and in the science itself. Heredity was far from being a settled scientific idea—certainly in the 1870s when Brace was writing and into the early years of the twentieth century—and the divisions between the various scientific and cultural understandings of it were not as hard and fast as one may initially believe. Second, Brace's use of these ideas in service of his larger mission of urban reform exemplifies the social purposes that theories of heredity served. Brace combines neo-Darwinian and neo-Lamarckian ideas to illustrate the long-term dangers of the crime and poverty he observed in working with disadvantaged populations in New York City as well as to demonstrate the need for and the viability of reform efforts in those populations. Brace, as well as other late nineteenth-century social reformers, clearly believed that changes in individuals' environments had the ability to do good and, further, that those changes could be reflected on a hereditary level in as few as three or four generations. Thus, changes in environment and social uplift were viable means for elevating individuals who were considered inferior either morally or biologically (or, often, both) to what reformers considered to be an acceptable level of civilization. However, it also meant that

environment had the capability to negatively affect individuals' as well as populations' evolutionary progress, indeed sending them further down the evolutionary ladder and entrenching already present notions of biological inferiority—an implication of the theory that Dunbar explores in *Sport*.

Brace's commitment to transforming individuals' social environments in order to improve their moral character is a part of a larger cultural and scientific belief in the ability of external social processes to cause internal physiological processes. In the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the beginning of the twentieth, Mendelian genetics still did not enjoy widespread acceptance, and the continued prevalence of neo-Lamarckism informed this interest in the interaction between environment and biology. Brace's theories—and, as we will see, Dunbar's novel—also reflected the period's medicalization of social phenomena, a scientific concept that often joined up with cultural discourses of race and gender. Gail Bederman's *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* offers a classic example in its discussion of neurasthenia and the cultural anxiety surrounding "over-civilized" men. Neurasthenia, defined by late nineteenth-century physician George M. Beard as "nervelessness—a lack of nerve force" (Bederman 87), was thought to be caused by the excesses of "civilized" environments. The disease was also a racialized one, affecting only men who were actually capable of civilization—white, middle-class men.

Neurasthenia and the cultural anxieties about race and gender that were wrapped up in the scientific and cultural discourse surrounding it exemplifies the contemporary

belief in the ability of social and environmental conditions—such as education, leisure, and a culture of consumption—to initiate physiological changes like excess nervousness and sexual dysfunction. Environmental and social conditions, then, were thought to have real, discernible impacts on individuals and, eventually, entire races. These anxieties were exacerbated by simultaneous rapid industrialization and the resulting influx of people to cities, which caused massive problems with sanitation, overcrowding, and poverty. It also overlapped with increasing concerns over the health of the "race" and of the nation (spurred by these conditions inside the cities but also by the influx of immigrants at the turn of the century) and with advances in statistical measuring techniques that were beginning to be applied to human populations.

Dunbar's 1898 editorial "The Negroes of the Tenderloin" expresses a similar concern over the impacts that environment had on individuals' as well as populations' morality and physiology. Published in *The Columbus Dispatch* four years before the publication of *The Sport of the Gods*, the editorial warns of the dangers of the "dark crowds of the Tenderloin District" of New York City, an entertainment district in Manhattan. Dunbar argues that the "crowds of idle, shiftless Negroes" that populate the Tenderloin District are not only a danger to themselves but also a "terrible menace to our institutions" ("Negroes" 264). "Everything in their environment," he writes, "tends to the blotting of the moral sense, everything to the engendering of crime" ("Negroes" 264). Dunbar laments the damage that this city environment does to the "civilization"[11] as well

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[11] By using this term, Dunbar also calls attention to the dangers of African Americans' moral and physiological decline to the *white* population. Bederman points out that, according to turn-of-the-century Americans' understanding and usage of the term, it evoked attributes of both race and

as the race. The city erodes the "simple, joyous natures with which God had endowed them," their "capacity for simple enjoyment," and their "gentleness, their hospitality, their fidelity" ("Negroes" 265), causing them to become "cynical" and lacking in the morality that distinguished their lives in the South.

Importantly, the changes that are produced by city living are not only framed in terms of behavioral effects on individuals; those behavioral changes also become heritable traits that are transmitted to the children of these new city dwellers, having direct implications for the progress of the race as a whole. Several times throughout the editorial, Dunbar expresses concern over the offspring of the "careless, guffawing crowds" ("Negroes" 264) of the Tenderloin. He speculates "of what kind" the children of this population will be, wondering "How can they run in the race of life when they are hampered from the start by the degradation of their parents? What course is open to them save one of shame and crime?" ("Negroes" 265). The moral degradation isn't the only trait passed on to the children of such individuals; the physiological and mental traits engendered by a life of poverty and crime are also heritable: "They are perpetuating and increasing all of [the Negro's] deformities, both of mind and body. The next generation of Negroes should be a better-looking one than this; they should have better brains and better souls. But is this possible with what the blacks of the Tenderloin are bequeathing to posterity?" ("Negroes" 266). The editorial demonstrates Dunbar's investment in and

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gender (23): "On the one hand, middle- and upper-class white men effectively mobilized 'civilization' in order to maintain their class, gender, and racial authority, whether they invoked primitive masculinity or civilized manliness" (23). However, it was also adapted by both feminist advocates and African Americans, who "cited civilization to prove the necessity of racial egalitarianism" (23).

contribution to the scientific and cultural debate over the power of environment to shape individuals' behavior as well as their physiologies—changes that could then become heritable traits. "Negroes of the Tenderloin" echoes the same concerns that social and biological scientists espoused at the turn of the century over the effects that environment had on the national health—what Dunbar refers to in his editorial as "civilization"—that would later characterize the eugenics movement, which would target minorities in their efforts aimed at improving the (racial) health of the nation.

"All the Evil of His Nature Flourished": Environment, Racism, and Biological Decline in *The Sport of the Gods*

Dunbar explored these same concerns, but came to a different conclusion regarding the source of the lack of success in the urban environment, in *The Sport of the Gods*. In *The Sport of the Gods,* Dunbar, much like early twentieth-century scientists and social reformers, interrogates the ways in which the conditions of the urban social and geographic environment bring about both physiological and anatomical changes. However, it is not, as many critics have argued, the physical space of the city, coupled with an inherent biological or moral inferiority (as many reformers and scientists, including Brace, would have suggested), that causes the Hamiltons' downfall, but rather the racism that is at the root of the social conditions of the environment, and and herein lies Dunbar's critique. While the racist social environmental initiates physiological and anatomical changes for both men and women in the novel, those changes are especially harmful to men. As evidenced by Kit's character, Dunbar envisions a greater possibility for agency for women, namely through work. Therefore, in *The Sport of the Gods*,

Dunbar does not challenge the fact that social and environmental conditions alter the biological constitutions of individuals, but it is not shortcomings rooted in biological inferiority nor essentialized racial characteristics that precipitate the resulting decline. Through his representation of the links between social environment, racism as a deterministic force, and both moral and physical degradation, Dunbar engages contemporary neo-Lamarckian theories of heredity to critique the racism that engenders the fall of his African American protagonists and to reveal the ways in which racism limits African Americans' economic opportunities, social interactions, and physiological and psychological well-being.

My own argument is aligned with those of critics like Morgan and Nancy von Rosk and their contention that it is the white determinism of the city and the lack of viable options for subjectivity for African Americans in it that limits the Hamiltons' success in the North. I, too, believe that the racism of both the rural Southern and the urban Northern environments is the overwhelming determining force that constrains the Hamiltons' agency, not the inherent corruption of the city or the pride or arrogance of the family itself. When analyzing Dunbar's novel and the impact of the "environment" on the Hamiltons' fall, readers must look to the geographic space of the city as well as to the social and cultural surroundings in which individuals—especially black individuals—exist and move; no analysis of the novel is complete without this holistic approach to environmental determinism. Further, I would like to build on the discussions of Morgan and von Rosk regarding the impact of white racism on the characters' fates in the city. Morgan, von Rosk, and other critics including Jillmarie Murphy and Michael P. Moreno

thoroughly explore the social environment that limits the Hamiltons' agency and erodes their morality, but often do not sufficiently discuss the biological changes that the social environment creates in the characters. These biological changes must be fully situated in the scientific context of the early twentieth century in order for readers to understand their significance within the context of the novel. While the moral decline of Joe and Kit may appear to be the most prevalent impact of their social environment, it is my contention that the evidence of physiological and anatomical degeneration that accompany it, while seemingly fleeting and unimportant, is of equal, if not greater, significance when considered alongside contemporary scientific and cultural ideas. These biological implications are thus undertheorized, as is a sustained discussion of the agency that African Americans have under these coupled social and biological pressures and what it means for our understanding of agency in naturalist literature. My analysis will show the ways in which the racist conditions of both the Southern and the Northern social and geographic environments become written onto the bodies of Joe and Kit, demonstrating that racism can lead to physiological (in the case of Joe) and anatomical (in the case of Kit) degeneration when coupled with a moral decline. In *The Sport of the Gods*, social determinism is merged with biological determinism, and these twin forces are detrimental to the agency of African Americans.

Before turning to an analysis of Dunbar's novel, however, a brief discussion of another "city novel"—Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, published two years before *The Sport of the Gods*—will help to make clear Dunbar's innovative strategies of adapting scientific discourses of race in order to explore the effects of white determinism. *The*

Sport of the Gods can be easily compared to *Sister Carrie* (1900) as an example of Naturalist novel that traces its protagonist's fate as a newcomer in an urban environment; however, Dreiser's Carrie Meeber confronts much different deterministic forces than do either of the Hamilton children. Both *Sister Carrie* and Dunbar's *The Sport of the Gods* explore the toll that the city takes on the morality of their protagonists, following their rises and falls as they learn to navigate the urban environment and its social milieu. But for Dunbar's African American characters, there is a deterministic force that circumscribes his characters' agency that is not present for Dreiser's Carrie—racism. While Dreiser depicts the city as both a "privileged site for the 'American dream' of self-reinvention and social mobility" and as a site of "class conflict, poverty, despair, and downward mobility" (Davies 380-81), in Dunbar's representation of his characters' urban environment, the city does not offer a site for the realization of the American dream nor of its attendant promise of social mobility or individualism for his African American characters. The "democratic individualism" (381) of Dreiser's Chicago and New York City allows for Carrie to accumulate wealth and status, but institutionalized racism makes it impossible for African Americans like Dunbar's Joe and even Kit to fully attain the same status. Unlike Carrie, who works in one of the city's most prominent theaters, Kit is relegated because of her race to the "coon shows" at second-rate theaters, which offered both less social status and likely less pay. In other words, white determinism disallows the Hamiltons' capability for social mobility that the city promises Dreiser's Carrie. Further, while Carrie does experience a moral decline as a result of her work as an actress, her relationships with men outside of marriage, and her obsession with material

goods, she is able to escape the attendant physical decline that Joe and Kit both experience because of her status as a white woman who does not experience the overwhelmingly deleterious effects of racism and is not subject to the same racist scientific theories of biological inferiority and evolutionary decline that inhere in white determinism.

Both the city itself and Carrie's desire to be a part of it drive her actions almost immediately upon her arrival in Chicago from a small town in Wisconsin. The city is described as a force that has equal power as human agency, its "cunning wiles" having "no less than the infinitely smaller and more human temper. There are large forces which allure with all the soulfulness of expression possible in the most cultured human" (Dreiser 1). Carrie's drive for material goods such as clothing and with "fortune's superficialities" (75) that would put her on the same social level as the well-dressed, ostensibly wealthy women she sees on the street also compels her to act, acting as agential forces themselves: "Fine clothes to her were a vast persuasion; they spoke tenderly and Jesuitically for themselves. When she came within earshot of their pleading, desire in her bent a willing ear" (75). This desire for fine clothes—a signifier of her overwhelming desire for social status and the wealth that would allow her to access it—is one of the primary deterministic forces that sets in motion both Carrie's moral decline and her professional success. Despite these forces, however, the city remains a potentially liberatory space for Carrie as a site of social mobility—a mobility that she soon realizes. Carrie's desire for wealth, good clothing, and fame, as well as the allure of the city itself, steer her toward her (both emotional and financial) relationships with two older,

financially well-established men and eventually toward her career as an actress, from which she derives the wealth and power she seeks. While Dreiser is careful to point out the dangers that come with the independence that allow for Carrie's success, including loneliness and potential moral decline, the individualism that Carrie experiences and the upward trajectory of social and economic mobility upon which she travels as a privilege of that individualism is not accessible to characters like Joe or even Kit Hamilton. Carrie's experience, in other words, is direct and to some degree limited by social forces, particularly those tied to her gender, but her social position as a white, working-class (and eventually upper-class) woman allows her the social mobility that racism often disallowed for African Americans. As we will see, the stakes for African Americans living in the North and experiencing the effects of their social environments is also much higher than for Dreiser's Carrie.

Ultimately, Dreiser is more concerned in *Sister Carrie* with the urban environment's possibilities for both supporting and undermining social mobility and individuality, while Dunbar's novel's primary concern lay with showing how that mobility is nearly impossible without dire moral and biological consequences when African Americans' agency is limited by white determinism. Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* thus makes evident the unique ways that black writers used the city as a space in which to depict the pervasiveness of racism as no less of a deterministic force as the physical environment, consumer culture, and even biological forces. Further, any erosion of Carrie's morality remains precisely that: an erosion of morality. The biological consequences that accompany Joe's and Kit's moral decline are not present for Carrie. As

a white woman, she does not face the same environmental and material effects of racism as the Hamiltons and therefore the social environment does not engender the same physiological or anatomical effects. As we will see, examining the two novels together also has implications for understanding how white and African American writers differently conceptualized agency and environmental determinism. For example, as Donald Pizer has pointed out, Carrie's fate is "not determined by her surroundings" (581), even though her surroundings are an important part of what drives her will to wealth and fame. Conversely, as I discuss below, the white determinism in the Hamiltons' geographic, social, and cultural environment in Dunbar's *The Sport of the Gods* is so encompassing, so inescapable, that there is little escape from it without grave consequences—consequences which include, for both Joe and Kit, moral as well as biological decline.

While the Hamilton family's migration North and their immersion in the urban environment has clear effects on them, particularly the moral fall of Joe and Kit, it continues a process of decline that was initiated in the South. At the start of the novel, the Hamilton family is working in the employ and living on the property of Maurice Oakley. Berry Hamilton and his wife Fannie work as butler and housekeeper, respectively, for the Oakleys, and live in the former slave quarters of the property with their son Joe and daughter Kit. At the beginning of the novel, Maurice is giving a farewell dinner for his brother Frank, an artist and a "dilettante" (*Sport* 317) who is preparing to leave for Paris. When Frank finds some money missing from his bureau, Maurice almost immediately accuses Berry of the theft. When Frank protests that Berry is "beyond suspicion" (*Sport*

322), Maurice explains that the character of African Americans has changed since slavery: "[W]e must remember that we are not in the old days now. The Negroes are becoming less faithful and less contented, and more's the pity, and a deal more ambitious[.] … [A]s soon as a Negro like Hamilton learns the value of money and begins to earn it, at the same time he begins to covet some easy and rapid way of securing it" (*Sport* 322). Maurice's reasoning reflects the ideas of racial degeneration after slavery espoused by scientists like R.W. Shufedlt and statisticians like Frederick Hoffman, who attempted to justify racist social and business policies by proving African Americans' physical and moral decline following Emancipation. For example, Hoffman's *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* (1896) employed social science and statistical analysis to justify insurance companies from across the nation refusing to sell policies to African Americans. Hoffman cited, among other things, African Americans' supposed predisposition to certain crimes like arson and their shorter life expectancies due to "weak" physical constitutions as evidence for this denial. These essentialist ideas were often used to validate segregation and other Jim Crow laws but also to "make an example of" (*Sport* 324) individual African Americans who, for whites, overstepped the bounds of their already constrained social positions in the South.

Dunbar reiterates the impact of these racialist ideas in a conversation among several white townspeople after Berry's arrest. Significantly, the debate is not whether he is innocent but rather what the source of his criminality is. Because of the theories' assumptions of African American "irresponsibility" and "depravity" (*Sport* 332), Berry is automatically presumed to be guilty the moment of his accusation; for the participants of

the conversation, it is simply in Berry's nature. Horace Talbot, a white resident of the town who is ironically "noted for his kindliness towards people of color" (*Sport* 331), contends that it is African Americans' irresponsibility that leads them to crime; the fault lay with the North for "turning these people loose upon the country the way they did, without knowledge of what the first principle of liberty was" (*Sport* 331). Irresponsibility is the "natural result" of Emancipation, as African Americans had been "unacquainted with the ways of [whites'] higher civilization, and it'll take them a long time to learn" (*Sport* 331). Talbot anticipates that "these people themselves shall come to us Southerners of their own accord and ask to be re-enslaved until such time as they shall be fit for freedom" (*Sport* 332). While Talbot assumes an inherent lack of civilization and mental preparedness whose source is merely childish naiveté, another white man, who serves as a mouthpiece for biologically essentialist assumptions about racial inferiority, Beachfield Davis, assumes that it is "simply total depravity" (*Sport* 332) as the source of Berry's behavior. "All niggers are alike," he maintains, "and there's no use trying to do anything with them" (*Sport* 332).

The men's conversation illustrates that the popular deployment of scientific ideas placed limits on African Americans' subjectivity and agency by assuming not only a lack of control over their own actions but also an inherent standard of behavior that placed them below Caucasians on the evolutionary scale. Because of their acceptance of these ideas, both Talbot and Davis, who are depicted as mouthpieces for white society more broadly, each assume Berry's guilt and foreclose any possibility for his innocence, effectively stripping him of his agency on both a literal (through his eventual conviction

and jailing) and figurative (by disallowing him voice in and control over the judiciary process) level. Importantly, a third participant in the conversation, a Colonel Sauders, ventures to problematize Talbot's and Davis's presumption of Berry's criminality, asking the two if there is "any doubt of the darky's guilt" (*Sport* 332). The two men "turn on him as if he [were] some strange, unnatural animal" (*Sport* 332) and quickly dismiss the colonel's standpoint. Their reaction illustrates the lack of space available for dissenting ideas regarding African Americans' inherent inferiority in the Jim Crow South. These interactions demonstrate that the racism that rules African American life in the South, then, is the initial mechanism of constraint of the Hamiltons' agency and the initiator of their fall.

The black community's reaction to Berry's conviction and to his family as a result of their association with his criminality doubles the constraining force of racism. Already having fallen from the white community's favor because of the Oakleys' accusation, Fannie, Joe, and Kit are also spurned by the town's black residents out of fear as well as a sense of righteousness. Because of their envy of the Hamiltons' former circumstances, the "less fortunate Negroes of the community" (316) used the family's financial and social fall to get revenge, especially when the three remaining Hamiltons attempt to find work after Berry's conviction: "'I knowed it, I knowed it," mumbled one old crone, rolling her bleared and jealous eyes with glee. "W'enevah you see niggahs gittin' so high dat dey own folks ain' good enough fu' 'em, look out" (331). When Joe in particular tries to get hired at a black barbershop, its proprietor immediately rejects him, and not without a degree of smugness: "I think ... that I hyeahed you say you wasn't fond o' grape

pickin'. Well, Josy, my son, I wouldn't begin it now, 'especially as anothah kin' o' pickin' seems to run in yo' fambly" (335).

Jealousy clearly plays a role in the black community's rejection of the Hamiltons. But fear and the "still present influence of slavery" (330) equally, if not more so, determine their ostracizing the family. Many of the African American residents recognize the danger present for them if they were to welcome a family that had been the objects of an influential white family's scorn:

> If they had sympathy, they dared not show it. Their own interests, the safety of their own positions and firesides, demanded that they stand aloof from the criminal. Not then, not now, nor has it even been true, although it has been claimed, that Negroes either harbor or sympathize with the criminal of their kind. They did not dare to do it before the sixties. They do not dare to do it now. They have *brought down as heritage* from the days of their bondage both fear and disloyalty. So Berry was unbefriended while the storm raged around him. (330, emphasis mine)

Fear for their own safety and well-being, then, is an important motivating factor in how the black residents treat the Hamiltons. The racism that has plagued African Americans' existences since slavery engenders fear of welcoming and harboring members of their own community. By associating with a criminal and his family, the black residents know that they will be tainted with criminality themselves, forcing them to sever ties with the Hamiltons. Significantly, Dunbar represents this fear as the product of the hereditary trauma of slavery, passed down among families and determining their actions 40 years

after its end. Racism becomes deterministic both in terms of social environment and in terms of biological, hereditary material.

Many critics, including Addison Gayle, Robert Bone, Lawrence R. Rodgers, and Myles Hurd have discussed the Hamiltons' ruin as being prompted primarily by their migration North. For example, Gayle has argued that it is the moral corruption of the city itself that causes the Hamiltons', especially Joe's and Kit's, decline. Bone also contends that *The Sport of the Gods* "reiterates the plantation-school thesis that the rural Negro becomes demoralized in the urban north" (42) and emphasizes, much as "Negroes of the Tenderloin" did, that African Americans ought to remain in the South "where they could provide a disciplined labor force for the new plantation economy" (42). Others have pointed to the Hamiltons' own moral failings as cause for their fall. Rodgers finds that Dunbar critiques the Hamiltons' desire for plantation ideals and that their adherence to them both in the South and in their migration north is the catalyst for their decline.

However, I contend that Joe's fall in particular is precipitated by the *Southern* environment—particularly racism and its associated economic costs—evidenced by the pervasiveness of the racism illustrated above. Social determinism and its effects on Joe's biology, actually begin in the South, not the North. Joe is especially affected by his father's false imprisonment and its impact on the family. He knows of his father's innocence, and his "very helplessness" at being unable to do anything about it "ma[kes] a fever in his soul" (*Sport* 333). This helplessness couples with the sense of shame he feels for his inability to support his mother and sister financially and emotionally. After Berry's imprisonment and conviction, Joe's inability to provide for his family in his new

position as "the man of the family" (*Sport* 339) is an affront to his sense of self, especially his sense of manhood. The results of this shame are injurious, and with the realization of his helplessness to aid his father and support his mother and sister, "something rose within him that had it been given play might have made a man of him, but, being crushed, died and rotted, and in the compost it made[,] all the evil of his nature flourished" (*Sport* 333). It is this moment that marks the beginning of Joe's moral decline, not the move to New York City, as many critics contend; the move continues a process that has begun in and been initiated by the impact of Southern racism on Joe's agency, his subjectivity, and his masculinity.

The changes in Joe's character are not only figured in moral terms; the transformation of Joe's "nature" in this passage also suggests a biological corollary. It is important to note that in scientific and social scientific discourse at this time, "nature" was often used as shorthand for innate, immutable, and often race-based characteristics. While its significance may not be immediately apparent to contemporary readers, Dunbar's audience would have recognized the biological connotations of the word. Further, according to Cathy Boeckmann, racial characteristics (i.e., innate tendencies based on one's race) and individual characteristics (i.e., moral and ethical traits) largely overlapped in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although individual character could be culturally influenced, it was also thought to be, at least to some degree, inherited, and the growth of character was both "analogous to, and evidence for, the evolution of the human race" (43). A higher moral character was therefore linked to the evolutionary superiority of certain races by natural scientists like Charles Darwin as well

as social scientists like Franklin Giddings. While Dunbar makes a similar argument in *Sport* regarding the relationship between morality ("evil") and biology ("nature"), he adapts it in order to critique racism and its effects on African Americans' character. The passage suggests that the element of Joe's nature—potentially his self-discipline or sense of obligation to his family—that arises in the midst of his family's turmoil *could* have made a "man of him" if allowed to flourish, but the constraints placed upon it by racism do not allow it. This places the blame for the "evil" squarely on racism and its determination of African Americans', especially men's, agency. These constraints are what leads to moral and physiological degeneration, rather than an inherent inferiority.

The racism that the Hamiltons experience in the South and that precipitates Joe's moral and physiological transformation is also what spurs their move North to seek greater social and economic opportunities and to escape both the racism of the white community and their ostracization from the black community. However, the North offers no reprieve from the same racist conditions that circumscribe their lives in the South. Once Joe, Kit, and Fannie realize that they will not be able to find work in their community and that the Oakleys will no longer allow them to reside on their property, the remaining three Hamiltons flee to New York City, allured by their perception of it as the "center of all the glory, all the wealth, and all the freedom of the world" (*Sport* 338). In New York, environmental conditions again both cause and exacerbate biological changes in both of the Hamilton children. These conditions are, too, linked with the deterministic force of white racism, although they look different than in the South. For Dunbar, though, the city is not a viable space for African American subjectivity either, as it is also ruled

by racism. As Thomas L. Morgan puts it, "The ideal space of hope that New York initially offers as an alternative location for black representation is just as unavailable as the space of the pastoral South. While the city is marked as categorically distinct from the country, it presents an equally troubled place for blacks, even as it is marked as different" ("City as Refuge" 220). The theater—especially the "coon shows" that Joe and Kit frequent and in which Kit later stars—the limited availability of decent housing for (especially poor) African Americans, and the Banner Club, a bar "reeking with the stench of decayed and rotten moralities" where black "youths for [whom] the home life is lacking" congregate, represent the white determinism of the urban environment. Nancy Von Rosk argues that the Hamiltons cannot move away from the plantation ideals of the South—not necessarily because of their moral failings, but rather because the "'genteel' white culture that betrays them knows no geographical bounds" (147). Although Dunbar "shows [readers] the liberating potential of the new urban culture for the African American," in the end he "concludes that, like the southern genteel culture the Hamiltons left behind, the newer northern urban culture is also determined by the overwhelming power of white culture to define what it means to be an African American" (166).

While the moral decline of Joe and Kit may appear to be the most prevalent impact of their social environment, the evidence of physiological and anatomical degeneration that accompanies it, while seemingly fleeting and unimportant, is of equal if not greater significance when considered alongside contemporary scientific and cultural ideas of race and heredity. These biological implications are undertheorized in criticism of the novel, as is a sustained discussion of the agency that African Americans have

under these coupled social and biological pressures. Physiological and anatomical processes alike and environment converge to constrain the agency of the Hamiltons from the moment of their arrival in the city and to determine their behavior, making clear that African Americans' migration North does not guarantee an escape from racism—not because of their inability to withstand the urban environment itself, but because racism acts as just as much of a determining force there as it did in the South, and its deterministic force has both biological and moral consequences. The racist conditions of both the Southern and the Northern social and geographic environments become written onto the bodies of Joe and Kit, demonstrating the ways that racism can lead to physiological (in the case of Joe) and anatomical (in the case of Kit) degeneration when coupled with a moral decline.

Joe is immediately entranced by the city, "wild with enthusiasm and with a desire to be a part of all that the metropolis meant" (*Sport* 341). He is determined to lose his "greenhorn" (342) status as quickly as possible and sets about immersing himself in the culture of the city. The effects on his character are almost instantaneous—effecs that are described as being characteristic of the "demoralization" of all "provincial[s]" who arrive in New York: "First, he begins to scoff, and there is no truth in his views nor depth in his laugh. But by and by, from mere pretending, it becomes real. He grows callous. After that he goes to the devil very cheerfully" (342). The mere presence of a "provincial" like Joe in the city, then, triggers an almost instantaneous erosion of morality. The erosion is worsened by his introduction to the Banner Club, an "institution for the lower education of Negro youth" (350), and by his newfound friend William Thomas, who takes Joe to

the club not out of genuine friendship but rather because Thomas realizes that as a greenhorn Joe could be made money off of. The Club is the "place of assembly for a number of really bright men, who after days of hard and often unrewarded work came there and drunk themselves drunk in each other's company" (350) as well as a "substitute—poor, it must be confessed—to many youths for the home life which is so lacking among certain classes in New York" (350). Joe is drawn to the club for its sense of inclusion, charmed by the men in it, attracted by the sense of inclusion he feels there, and blinded by his social ambition to the advantage that its proprietors wish to take of him. The Club is a "social *cesspool*, generating a poisonous *miasma* and reeking with the stench of decayed and rotten moralities" (351, emphasis mine), and Joe slides quickly and inescapably into it.

This pathological language of the effects of the Banner Club recalls Brace's late nineteenth-century concern with the long-term effects of social environment on individual character as well as Bederman's discussion of the medicalization of social phenomena, again pointing to the period's (and Sunbar's) pervasive cultural and scientific interest in the relationships among both social environment, physical environment, and physiology. The word "miasma," or a "noxious vapor rising from putrescent organic matter … which pollutes the atmosphere" that was believed to be "the carrier of various infections" ("miasma," *OED*), is especially suggestive of moral decay as a biological contagion. Much as "over-civilization" eroded the nervous systems of white middle-class men, the "rotten moralities" of the Club's social environment sparks physiological processes, including, eventually, alcoholism and criminality. This language

of the dangerous physical effects of the club's "decayed and rotten" morality (*Sport 351)*, especially on Joe but also on the dozens of young African American men who frequent the club, makes clear the danger of its social environment and the detrimental physiological effects on the men, especially if those effects were to spread through the larger population of African American city dwellers. The club's moral environment is not, though, necessarily due to its inhabitants' racial characters, but rather because of the social conditions engendered by the racism that the young men face, including their "hard" work that goes "unrewarded" in the face of likely unequal pay and menial labor and their lack of "home life," likely as a result of their families' hard and unrewarded work.

As Joe spends more time at the Club, the effects of its social environment, coupled with the copious amounts of drinking he does there, begin to take their toll on him both physically and morally. This further illustrates Dunbar's employment of the neo-Lamarckian theory of the power of environment to shape behavior and biology in order to document the effects of racism. Five years pass, enough time that "good natures may be made into bad ones" (*Sport* 375), and during that time both Joe and Kit undergo "an entire metamorphosis of their characters" (375). Joe has clearly experienced a downward moral fall, leaving his job in order to spend his waking hours drinking at the Club. As we have seen, the concept of character also suggests a biological component to Joe's degeneration. Because, as Boeckmann suggests, individual moral character was often considered to be inextricable from innate, racialized characteristics, the metamorphosis of Joe's "character" is figured in both moral *and* biological terms—his

moral fall and his physical degeneration go hand in hand. His physiological decline as exacerbated by his alcoholism is once again characteristic of the contemporary linkage of moral, biological, and environmental processes and demonstrates Dunbar's familiarity with hereditarian theories and their implications for African Americans. Many social reformers, including Brace, blamed alcohol for the majority of the nation's crime; Brace speculated that "probably two-thirds of the crimes of every city (and a very large portion of its poverty) come from an over-indulgence of this appetite" (50). Both alcoholism and criminality took on a distinctly racial character in the writings of those like William Hannibal Thomas, who, although not trained as a scientist, ascribed (especially Northern) African Americans' overuse of alcohol as evidence that "physical excitation is the chief and foremost craving of the freedman's nature" (189). Thomas went on to point out that "all grades of negro society … seem to vie with each other in the use of intoxicating liquors" (190). The use of alcohol is linked for Thomas with moral licentiousness among black men and women alike as well as with an innate drive for physical gratification. When these ideas link up with the concomitant discourse surrounding the relationship between alcohol and crime, the figure of the African American male "monster" is produced.

Joe's eventual criminality underscores the fact that moral and biological decline are inextricable from one another and from the erosion of agency that racialist ideas engender. In a drunken rage, he murders his lover, Hattie, blaming her for his "foulness and degradation" (*Sport* 378). Hattie has broken off their relationship due to Joe's continual drunkenness and his financial insolvency, but Joe cannot take responsibility for

his actions. He has transformed into a "terrible, terrible man, or a monster" (*Sport* 378), but he places the blame with her rather than with himself or with the environmental and social conditions that surround him: "You made me what I am. ... You made me what I am, and then you sent me away" (378). Hattie's murder is clearly the culmination of Joe's moral decline, but given the discourse surrounding criminality during the time period, in which criminality was thought to be a heritable trait, it also illustrates the ways in which Joe's social environment has wrought biological changes. As I have already discussed, the early twentieth century brought greater advances in and reliance upon statistical measuring techniques, especially for measuring human populations as well as individuals within those populations. This interest extended to the burgeoning field of criminal anthropology, in which scientists and physicians sought to find biological explanations for criminal behavior. Italian physician Cesare Lombroso is considered the father of criminal anthropology and, as Stephen Jay Gould has written, his theory of "*l'uomo delinquente*—the criminal man—[is] probably the most influential doctrine ever to emerge from the anthropometric tradition" (152). In his theory, Lombroso suggested that criminal behavior is an evolutionary throwback; the criminal is an "atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and inferior animals" (Lombroso 26). Criminality, then, is both a signal of evolutionary primitivism and a heritable trait: "Germs of an ancestral past lie dormant in our heredity. In some unfortunate individuals, the past comes to life again" (Gould 153). Criminals could also be identified by common physical characteristics—what Lombroso referred to as "stigmata"—including a flat nose, tattoos, and an inability to blush.

Later science linked Lombroso's theory to African Americans, another convenient tool for those who sought to restrict their rights and to emphasize their biological inferiority. For example, Charles H. Otken in his 1894 tract *The Ills of the South: Related Causes Hostile to the Prosperity of the Southern People*, writes that "we must face the painful facts, and write the melancholy truth that, in spite of the ennobling agencies and of the social and civil incentives, crime among the sons of Ham is on the increase" and that for this population, "passion and license are stronger than reason" (218). Otken attributes the increase in crime to an essential "difference between the Anglo-Saxon people and the negro race," arguing that "character, exhibiting itself in honor, … in rational obedience to law and constituted legal authority, characterizes the white race in a far higher degree than the black race" and that "the black man is far more disposed to construe liberty into license than a white man. … To this quality of his character is to be traced the increase in crime" (222). The specific nature of Joe's crime recalls Otken's theory of the source of African Americans' apparent inclination for crime as their strength "passion and license." The specific nature of Hattie's murder—Joe strangles her while she lay in her bed, her throat having been left "temptingly bare" by the falling away of her gown (378)—suggests both the sexualized passion and an unrestrained criminality that was common in accounts of supposed African American criminality such as Otken's as well Lombroso's.

Lombroso's theory of criminals exhibiting the normal behavior of inferior, primitive, or evolutionarily regressive peoples joined with the racist attempts of those like Otken to explain apparently racial predisposition toward crime as well as with the racial

crime statistics of the 1890 census to create what Thomas Alan Dichter has called the "discourse of black criminality." In his analysis of criminal stigmatization in *The Sport of the Gods*, Dichter explains that these statistics were marshalled in the twin discourses of the individual black "monster" and the sociology of the degenerating African American population as a whole, with "white race-relations writers" and scientists alike "interpret[ing] African Americans' disproportionate rates of incarceration, illness, and mortality was a demonstration of the race's moral and physical disintegration outside the ostensibly salutary conditions of enslavement" (75). Criminality, then, was not just considered to be common to African Americans but built into their hereditary material—hereditary material that was rapidly degenerating.

It is this context—the discourse of criminality as inherent and inherited—within which Dunbar's representation of Joe must be situated. Dichter suggests that Joe's representation shows how criminal stigma is "a fundamental condition of social existence for African Americans" (70). Joe's descent into criminality taps into the era's ideas of the individual black monster figure as well as of its larger sociological narrative of the linked biological and moral degeneration of African Americans. Dichter points out that the novel's depiction of Joe "embodies not a possibility of degradation but an ineluctable criminal stigma to be confronted" (80). Dichter's analysis therefore shows that Dunbar's representation of Joe's criminal behavior illuminates how African Americans, particularly men, cannot escape the stigma of criminality that follows them in either the South or the North. I agree with Dichter that Joe's criminality is framed by racist ideas about African American biological inferiority, but this criminality is not merely socially

constructed in the novel. Dunbar does not stop at mapping the system of beliefs that created the sigma of criminality. He actually shows that while criminality is indeed socially constructed, it has real physiological effects, as evidenced by the deterioration of Joe's "character"—which, as we have seen, has both moral and physiological connotations—and by the theories posited by criminal anthropologists such as Lombroso that remained part of the public imagination in the early twentieth century. Joe realizes this possibility of physiological degradation, not because he is inherently criminal or inferior, but rather because of the overwhelming effects of white racism on African Americans' material bodies.

A conversation among the men of the Banner Club after Joe's arrest for Hattie's murder echoes many of the sentiments found in this scientific discourse as well as those that Dunbar expressed in "Negroes of the Tenderloin," including the lack of preparedness of African American migrants for city life and the erosion of morality in the midst of its environment. For these men, Joe is "another example of the pernicious influence of the city on untrained Negroes" (*Sport* 379), and they wonder if there is "no way to keep these people from rushing away from the small villages and country districts of the South up to the cities, where they cannot battle with the terrible force of a strange and unusual environment" (*Sport* 379). Although the South "has its faults," it is far better than what African Americans endure in the urban North: "Down there, the bodies were restrained, and they chafed; but here the soul would fester, and they would be content" (*Sport* 380). This attitude is again indicative of cultural interest in the interaction among environment, morality, and physiology and in what happens to moral character in the face of the

North's "strange and unusual environment" (*Sport* 379). Yet Dunbar also stresses that the men fail to recognize that the environmental conditions of the South have just as pernicious an influence on African Americans than in the North, as demonstrated by the fact that the South is the site of Berry's false conviction as well as Joe's initial moral and physiological decline. Joe's descent into alcoholism and criminality make evident that black bodies *are* restrained by racism in the North as well as in the South; the effects on those bodies simply look different. The staging of this conversation suggests an almost satiric troubling of the perspectives of the men in it. The men's conversation is referred to as a "sermon," sparked by a desire to "preach to these people" the benefits of "woolen-shirted, brown-jeaned simplicity" (*Sport* 379). The sermon lasts only an hour, until the men resign themselves to the fact that there is no stopping the "stream of Negro life" that flowed North and move on to discussing more lighthearted matters (*Sport* 380). While the language of this passage is highly reflective of that in "The Negroes of the Tenderloin," it is also permeated by a shadow of ambivalence (even a critique) of its assumptions that suggests an insincerity behind the ideas the speakers express. This, again, shifts the blame from the migrants to the white society that constrains their agency and causes their "soul[s] to fester" (*Sport* 380) and critiques the assumption that inherent character flaws dictate African Americans' failure to thrive in the North.

The coupling of Joe's moral and physiological changes underscores the all-encompassing power of institutionalized racism as a deterministic force on African Americans, particularly men. White determinism in both the North and the South limits Joe's ability to thrive economically, socially, and physiologically in both of those

environments, but these restrictions on his agency don't just have psychological and moral effects. The novel's criminalization of Joe, coupled with the changes in his "character" produced by the environment, reveals that the erosion of agency and subjectivity goes deeper to create physiological, and thus heritable, changes, as well. Dunbar's transformation of Joe into a "monster" was certainly a risk given the contemporary discourse of African American (especially male) monstrosity and biological inferiority. Dunbar risked reifying those beliefs, especially in his representation of Joe's murder of Hattie, which would have evoked the contemporary anxiety over African American men's supposed predilection for violence toward women. In addition, on the surface, Dunbar's representation of Joe's monstrosity evokes more contemporary critical accusations of capitulating to white audiences and white expectations in his work. However, as my analysis has demonstrated, a closer look reveals that Dunbar's depiction of Joe does not reinforce racial stereotypes but rather challenges them by revealing the deterministic effects of white racism on Joe's body and his morality. He does create a true monster, but—similar to Stephen Crane's representation of his "monster," Henry Johnson—he also demonstrates that the blame for that monstrosity lay with white racism, not with an inherent inferiority or criminality in African Americans.

Women's Agency, Women's Work, and Anatomical Degeneration

At the end of the novel, Joe is serving a life sentence in prison and is "as one whose soul is dead, and perhaps it was" (*Sport* 379). Kit, however, arrives at a different fate, although she is not unscathed by the influence of the city; in fact, she is the only

member of the Hamilton family that finds a modicum of success in the city and is able to assert agency by the novel's end. Whereas Joe's fall was linked to the Banner Club, his alcoholism, and his inability to keep a steady job and thus attain economic security, Kit *is* ultimately able to provide for herself financially through her work as an actress, which affords her the opportunity for the agency that eludes the other three Hamiltons. In fact, she is the only member of the family who does thrive in New York; Joe, of course, ends up in jail, while Fannie and the newly freed Berry return back to their cottage on the Oakleys' farm. This may signify that Dunbar envisions a possibility for agency within the confines of a racist society for women that he cannot imagine for young men like Joe or older African Americans like Fannie and Berry, who, as made evident by their return South, too easily fall back into master-slave relations in their interactions with white society. However, this representation is not without ambivalence; Kit's agency comes with a high moral and biological price, although this biological price is, unlike for Joe, anatomical rather than physiological, and therefore perhaps less severe.

When the Hamiltons first arrive in New York, Kit is able to resist the enchantment with the city that immediately captures Joe. After settling in their new boarding house, Kit looks out the window onto the people on the street below with a "sort of complacent calm" (342). She is not enraptured by their manner or their clothing as Joe is, for there is a "sound quality in the girl's make-up that helped her to see through the glamour of mere place and recognize worth for itself" (*Sport* 342). The "sound quality" in Kit has clearly not been eroded by the Hamiltons' experiences in the South as it has for Joe. She, at least for the present, has left the South with it intact and with no damage to

her character, having a "certain self-respect which made her value herself and her own traditions higher than her brother did his" (*Sport* 342). Kit's clear vision is muddled, however, when the family joins Will Thomas at the theater for an evening out. Kit is "enchanted" by the "glare of the footlights" on the stage and looks at it "with the fascination that one always experiences for what either brings near or withholds the unknown" (*Sport* 345). The effect of the theater on Kit mirrors the effect of the city as a whole on Joe; both spaces cause the brother and sister to become "afflicted with a sort of moral and mental astigmatism that made [them] see everything wrong" (*Sport* 345).

Kit maintains her interest in the theater throughout the novel and eventually makes a career as an actress out of it, spurred by the need to financially support her family. Although Fannie expresses concerns over the respectability of Kit's new job as an actress, Kit assures her that "nowadays everybody thinks stage people respectable up here" (*Sport* 365). According to Jennifer Costello Brezina, many early twentieth-century actresses were considered to be "powerful figures, both culturally and financially, and often received intangible benefits from their time onstage" in addition to economic benefits (232). "Not only were these women," Brezina contends, "able to successfully finance their private, family lives, they also had access to the public world of cultural power and influence that had seemed an exclusively masculine province" (233). Indeed, Kit's work in the theater does allow her both financial autonomy, which is important for Dunbar's conceptualization of agency, and geographic mobility. Kit's career allows her to support herself as well as her family, paying the board for the rented room she shares with Fannie and, later, giving money to Joe during his "frequent lapses from industry"

(Dunbar, *Sport* 380). Her entrance onto the stage marks the beginning of "her own life" (380); while the "chief aim" of this life is "the possession of good clothes and the ability to attract the attention which she had learned to crave" (380), it is nevertheless her own. The theater also offers Kit opportunities for travel both within and out of New York City, allowing her a mobility that was out of reach for many of those who were counted among the "lower classes" of New York and certainly not afforded to her other family members. This geographic autonomy also allows Kit to escape the taint of being associated with her brother's conviction for murder as well as his continued financial demands on her.

Kit's autonomy does come at a price. She undergoes the same "entire metamorphosis of ... character" (375) as Joe does as a result of their city living, and Kit's metamorphosis is directly tied to her work in the theater. Through her work, Kit has "had experiences"—the text hints at those of a sexual nature—suggesting that perhaps Fannie's concerns over the "respectability" of actresses was not unfounded. The theater is, of course, a site for the visual consumption of the female body and, according to Brezina, many turn-of-the-century novels "warn ... of the dangers for 'proper women' in the world of the theater" (228), made even more dangerous by the racialized representations of that body in the "coon" shows in which Kit acts.[12] There is a

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[12] In the early twentieth century, stage representations of African Americans still relied heavily on the racist images and stereotypes that characterized nineteenth-century entertainment like vaudeville and minstrel shows. These shows led by the end of the nineteenth century to the so-called "coon craze"--the high demand for songs that, as Karen Sotiropoulos has described it, "used some amount of dialect, syncopation, and reference to black stereotype" (90). The popularity of these songs, which "brought minstrel stereotypes in musical form [from second-class burlesque houses] to Broadway audiences" (Woll 2), was linked to the growth in entertainment such as vaudeville theater and the publishing of sheet music—"culture industries," as Sotiropoulos points out, "that fed white America's craving for caricature and stereotype" (92). Despite the inherent racism of the songs, African Americans did participate in the "coon craze" through song and performance in their own onstage productions. However, many artists were also able to subvert and subtly

suggestion, then, that Kit undergoes a similar, although less extreme, moral decline as Joe; her decline leads not to criminality but rather to the erosion of her sexual "respectability." This moral decline, like Joe's, is coupled with biological changes, although they are figured in anatomical, rather than physiological, terms, suggesting less severe consequences of racism for women. As a result of her "experiences," Kit's singing voice is "not as good as it used to be, and her beauty had to be aided by cosmetics" (Dunbar, *Sport* 381). This emphasis on the *anatomical* effects of the erosion of Kit's morality—the focus on the erosion of her appearance, rather than of internal bodily systems and processes—may signify what is apparently most valuable in women: their looks.[13]

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critique the genre's conventions by avoiding "the use of the most vicious and violent stereotypes in their work," and even when deploying stereotypes, "approached the images differently than did white authors, often shifting the structure of their compositions in ways that allowed them to include commentary on black life" (94).

[13] Dunbar's short fiction shows a similar ambivalence toward the possibilities that the urban North presented for women's autonomy and agency. His story "Jimsella," published in 1898 in the collection *Folks from Dixie*, features a female protagonist, Mandy Mason, who makes a life for herself and her infant daughter in the North after being deserted by her husband, Jim. After he abandons her, citing her "shiftlessness" and her lack of attention to her appearance, Mandy "sets to work to struggle on by herself" (39), creating a life and a home for herself and for her daughter (although Jim eventually returns home). Another of Dunbar's stories, "Buss Jinkins Up Nawth: A Human Nature Sketch of Real Darkey Life in New York," is less optimistic for women's fates in the city. Published a year previously to "Jimsella," "Buss Jinkins" (fragments of which are missing, as illustrated by the brackets below) tells the story of a young woman named Mat who migrates North to "go [whar] colo'ed peo[ple k]in be free an' [comfort]able, same ez [white] folks" (401). Although she almost immediately secures "good" employment as a "servant" (401) to a string of white women, after two years, she begins stealing money from her employers. One of her employers eventually brings legal charges against her and, while in court, Mat admits that she has been stealing to fund her return trip home to the South. This story appears to illustrate the negative effects that city life has on African American women, positioning it not as a site of autonomy and empowerment but rather of unhappiness and moral erosion. Yet Dunbar's subtitle, "A Human Nature Sketch of Real Darkey Life in New York," may suggest either a playful or a cynical wink at his readers, implying a satirical perspective that shifts the meaning of the story. From his poetry to his fiction, Dunbar has been known for veiled subversion of racist tropes that were often expected by his white audiences, and "Buss Jinkins" could well be another example of that strategy.

While this may appear to be a passing reference, it has important implications for the relationship between physical environment and its impact on moral and biological health. For both Joe and Kit, the physical environment, whether the Banner Club, the theater, or the city itself, has a direct, negative effect on their moral characters, echoing early twentieth-century social reformers like Brace and social scientists like Giddings who believed that urban environments led to social decline and the erosion of the moral health of the nation, particularly among immigrant and non-white populations. Dunbar also represents these moral changes as being inextricably linked with biological decline; the physical and moral degradation go hand in hand, threatening not only the moral but also the physical health of the nation (and for Dunbar, the African American population specifically). Dunbar's use of neo-Lamarckian theories of heredity is most clear in his linkage of these two ideas.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that Kit is the only member of the Hamilton family who finds a degree of success and is able to attain locate agency in the city. Her financial independence, her geographic mobility, and her ability to escape either total moral decline (as is the case with Joe) or a forced to return to the South like Berry and Fannie may suggest that Dunbar envisions greater possibilities for young women's autonomy and agency, at least in the urban North. Because for Dunbar the ability to achieve agency in the city is tied to financial independence and stability, women like Kit may in fact have greater access to agency because the barriers to employment and subsequent economic gain are actually less than for men. In addition, Dunbar would have seen successful, financially independent actresses firsthand through his work in black musical theater.

Dunbar himself worked in musical theater in his collaborations with musician and composer Will Marion Cook on Cook's musical comedy sketch *Clorindy, The Origin of the Cakewalk.*[14] Dunbar continued his collaborative work with Cook in the 1902 musical farce *In Dahomey*, starring the well-known duo Bert Williams and George Walker as well as Walker's wife, Aida Overton Walker. It is unclear whether Dunbar ever met Overton Walker, but his work in theater would have given him access and exposure to similarly successful, financially independent actresses, who worked to make the theater a respectable space for black women to work and to promote it as a "viable site of economic prosperity and political intervention" for them (Brooks 282).[15] Figures such as Overton Walker show precedents for women like Kit in *Sport of the Gods*, illustrating the agency that economic independence and influence that women can attain through work.

Despite this small glimmer of hope, the novel ends with the Hamilton family broken apart, their fates still overwhelmingly determined by the racism that plagues them no matter where they go. Joe is in prison, likely for life, and physically and emotionally broken; Fannie and Berry return to the Oakley's plantation in a reproduction of pre-war relations with whites; and Kit, while retaining the most agency out of all the Hamilton family, remains morally and biologically "compromised." In this bleak picture of the fate of these African American migrants, Dunbar underscores the immense material, moral,

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[14] In this first all-black show to play at a major Broadway theater, Dunbar composed most of the show's lyrics as well as an unused libretto. Jonathan Daigle refers to *Clorindy* as a "landmark show" both in terms of its historical significance and the ways it "satirize[d] ideas of racial authenticity" (Daigle 639).

[15] In so doing, Walker and other actresses refashioned the stage as a site not for moral corruption and racist stereotype but rather a space to promote racial uplift and an outlet for artistry. Walker also championed acting as having more practical benefits for women, such as the opportunity to travel and, as she wrote, of meeting "a number of people of different classes" (qtd. in Brooks 283).

and psychological effects of racism on African Americans' bodies and minds. The deterministic forces of economic, political, and social racism overpower each of his characters, who are ultimately unable to escape their overwhelming reach. While each of Dunbar's characters experience moral decline, it is especially significant that it is Joe and Kit, rather than Fannie and Berry, who experience an attendant biological decline—as the two members of the family of childbearing age, they are the ones who would presumably have the ability to pass on the physical traits they acquire as a result of racism to future offspring. In this representation of the coupled moral and physical changes that Joe and Kit experience, Dunbar sends a dire warning about the deterministic consequences of continued racism. Racism, as his novel shows, has real biological consequences, and if it is not stopped, it will cause the biological degradation that scientific theories of race espoused—not because of an evolutionary inferiority characteristic to African Americans but rather because of the material consequences of racism.

As we will see in Chapter 2, Dunbar's use and adaptation of the scientific theories of heredity that characterized the debate surrounding African Americans' place in the American social fabric was not unique. Other black naturalist writers such as Charles Chesnutt and even white naturalists like Stephen Crane also tapped into late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century hereditarian science in order to challenge scientific theories of race that stripped African Americans of their subjectivity and their agency. However, Dunbar's skillfulness in adapting those scientific ideas, as well as his willingness to explore the reality of the material effects of racism on African Americans' bodies, characterizes his contribution to the canon of black naturalism, particularly to its

conceptualizations of agency and determinism. In *The Sport of the Gods*, Dunbar makes clear that the human agency that inheres in white racism acts as a deterministic force on African Americans—the agency of one group of individuals by its very nature compromises the agency of another group. In this representation of white determinism and its erosion of the agency—and the very bodies—of African Americans, *The Sport of the Gods* challenges notions of determinism derived solely from white-authored Naturalist texts and posits that human agency can just as powerfully limit the agency of other humans as more nebulous environmental or biological forces.

CHAPTER 3: "CIVILIZATION AGAINST PRIMITIVE INSTINCT": THE SUBVERSION OF NEO-DARWINIAN HEREDITY IN CHARLES CHESNUTT'S "THE DOLL" AND STEPHEN CRANE'S *THE MONSTER*

In a 1905 address to the Boston Literary and Historical Association, Charles Chesnutt prefaced his remarks on the "causes and cures" of race prejudice with an unequivocal challenge to the prevailing scientific beliefs about race. "I do not believe the current notion of race has any logical or scientific ground," he stated, emphasizing that "the deep-seated, essential, almost geological differences of which we hear so much" are, rather, "superficial" and "inconstant" ("Race Prejudice" 216). More than 100 years after this speech, Chesnutt's statement is taken as fact by a vast majority of readers today. However, its ideas were not uniformly accepted as fact in 1905; in fact, Joseph McElrath explains that, according to a correspondent present at the speech, Chesnutt wryly noted before the speech that "an ambulance might be required to take his remains from the building after his utterances" (qtd. in "Essay and Speeches" 236).[16] In this statement, Chesnutt seems to recognize both the powerful hold biologically essentialist theories of race had over the American public at the turn of the century and the dangers of challenging those theories. Chesnutt's engagement with and deft use of early twentieth-century scientific theories of race and their use as justification for discrimination was not limited to his public addresses; his Boston speech anticipates his deployment of similar themes in his 1912 short story "The Doll."[17] As we have seen in Chapter 1, this

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[16] The ambulance, thankfully, did not turn out to be necessary.

[17] Chesnutt first sent the story to the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1904, along with three other stories (including "Baxter's Procrustes," which was immediately accepted and published). "The Doll"

engagement with science was not uncommon among Naturalist writers. What is unique about African American naturalist writers, and about Chesnutt's story in particular, is the ways in which they deployed those themes to "chronicle and critique the historical legacy of slavery and the effects of racism" (Dudley 258).

Much like Dunbar's *The Sport of the Gods*, Chesnutt's "The Doll" responded to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century developments in the science of heredity, particularly how that science was deployed in debates about racial equality and policy toward African Americans. Rather than examining the ways in which these developments shaped public health discourse and sociologists' concern over the impact of urban environments on racial degradation, as in Dunbar's novel, Chesnutt's story responds to the increasing use of hereditarian science to explain "racial" behavior and to justify oppression. By 1912, neo-Lamarckism had largely fallen out of scientific favor, soon to be supplanted by the dominance of Mendelian genetics. Due to Weismann's disproval of the theory of acquired characters and new applications of heredity to social "problems," appeals to heredity rooted in Neo-Darwinist ideas had taken firmer hold. As a result, biologically determinant theories of both race and sex became more convincing to scientists and to the public to reify supposedly racial characteristics and stereotypes.

In his story of Tom Taylor, a black barber in the North who has a chance encounter with the Southern colonel who murdered his father when the colonel walks into Taylor's shop for a shave, Chesnutt invokes these racialized stereotypes in order to

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was rejected and went unpublished until 1912, when it found a home in W.E.B. Du Bois's magazine *The Crisis*.

deconstruct them. At the same time as he engages many of the concerns shared by scientific theorists of race as well as naturalist writers, including themes of the struggle of "society against self, civilization against primitive instinct" (Chesnutt, "Doll" 115), Chesnutt later uses that same language to indict the use of hereditarian concepts to reinforce stereotypes of African Americans as driven by instinct and biologically inferior. Rather than reducing his protagonist's drive for revenge to purely biological impulse, Chesnutt instead emphasizes the interaction between nature and culture and the way that the two come together to impact African Americans' agency in a world structured by racist ideas. Unlike Dunbar, though, who adapts neo-Lamarckian theories of heredity to show the impacts of a racist social environment on African American bodies and agency, Chesnutt deploys, then refutes, neo-Darwinian arguments to demonstrate that African American bodies are *not* subject to their deterministic force and that they *can* retain agency in a society ruled by scientifically based racist ideas. Instead of being overruled by his deep-seated (and justifiable) desire to enact revenge upon the colonel, Tom Taylor's hand is stayed by reason, not only exposing the fallacy of biologically based theories of racial behavior but also suggesting that African Americans can reclaim the agency and control over their own lives that those theories deny them by following reason and practicing restraint, rather than by enacting revenge. For Chesnutt, African Americans like Tom can work against the determinism of white scientific racism through reason and self-control. "The Doll" thus reveals that while both discourses about and bodily markers of race can and do have limiting effects on agency and subjectivity, they are "significantly less determinate" than traditionally thought (Hames-Garcia 324).

In "The Doll," Chesnutt deconstructs the idea that "race classes" are, as biologist Joseph LeConte put it, founded on "real natural difference—i.e., a difference in the grade of evolution" (300) in order to declare agency for his protagonist. The story, as well as his 1898 novel *The Marrow of Tradition*, reveal Chesnutt's engagement with science in his work and, more specifically, the extent to which the racist ideas it engenders impacts African Americans' agency, *The Marrow of Tradition* offers a different perspective on questions of agency and revenge than is found in "The Doll" and reveals Chesnutt's ambivalence toward strategies for reclaiming agency in a society bent on a denial of that agency. Before turning to a closer reading of Chesnutt's texts, however, a discussion of a story written by one of Chesnutt's contemporaries will make clear Chesnutt's innovative strategies in "The Doll" and the ways that they diverge from the engagement of similar ideas in white-authored naturalist texts. Stephen Crane's novella *The Monster* also engages with concepts of essentialized racial behavior, including themes of African American monstrosity and degenerative black bodies. Due to his white fellow townspeople's racism in the wake of a horrifying accident that leaves him disfigured, *The Monster's* protagonist Henry becomes determined by his body to a much greater degree than Chesnutt's Tom Taylor. Reading these two stories side by side, then, makes evident the divergent ways that both white and African American naturalist writers utilized the contemporary science of heredity to interrogate African American agency at the turn of the century.

"Not Really Men": Neo-Darwinist Theories of Race at the Turn of the Century

Both Chesnutt and Crane tapped into turn-of-the-century neo-Darwinist theories of heredity to represent their impact on African Americans. As discussed in the introduction, the openings that Darwin left in *Descent of Man* for racist ideas by reinforcing a hierarchical idea of human development was quickly filled by scientists who used Darwin's evolutionary theories to argue that the "lower"—i.e., non-white—races were inherently biologically inferior. Biologists Alfred Russel Wallace and Thomas Henry Huxley were two of these scientists who classified human races hierarchically, both suggesting that inherent biological differences between the races indicated lower places on the evolutionary scale. Huxley, for example, used cranial capacities as evidence for these differences in his 1863 book *Man's Place in Nature* and argued in an 1865 essay that because of these differing capacities, "it is simply incredible that, when all [African Americans'] disabilities are removed ... he will be able to compete successfully with his bigger-brained and smaller-jawed rival, in a context which is to be carried out in thoughts and not by bites" ("Emancipation" 67). Similarly, Wallace used racial rankings to suggest that the "lower" races were less mentally evolved than the so-called higher ones, even implying "a sense in which those lower in the scale were not really 'men'" (Bannister 185). However, neither Wallace nor Huxley believed that the inferiority of the lower races was permanent, nor that their present inferiority was justification for discrimination. The lower races were for both scientists "capable of cultural development" (Bannister 186) and mental as well as moral progress, and as Huxley

pointed out, the duty of the higher races was to ensure that "injustice is not added to inequality" (70) until they reached that point.

With the end of the belief in the Lamarckian theory of acquired characters toward the end of the nineteenth century, biologically essentialist theories of race, as well as their use as justification for discrimination and segregation, became more convincing. Since the principle of acquired characters promoted the idea that races could be improved by changes in individuals' environment or by education, which were then transmitted to offspring, its end fostered the belief that natural selection was the only hope for "permanent improvement" (Degler 24) of a race. As Carl Degler explains in his discussion of the impact of the abandonment of acquired characteristics on racialist ideas, "by showing that environment could not change behavior based upon race or biology, [the end of acquired characters and the emerging Mendelian] genetics had given racism a scientific basis it had lacked" (24). Joseph LeConte, a Berkeley biologist, was one of the first to discuss the application of this new principle to social issues, including race. He wrote in *Evolution and Its Relation to Human Thought* (1891) that even though "against such a course we instinctively revolt with horror," the fact that "the *whole* improvement of one generation is not carried over by inheritance into the next" (98) meant that improvement thus must be directed by natural selection gradually over the course of centuries. As such, the "dreadful law of pitiless destruction of the weak, the helpless, the sick, the old, must with Spartan firmness be voluntarily and deliberately carried out" (98) in order to preserve the fitness and ensure the continuation of the higher race.

Sociologist William Giddings applied this belief about racial progress more directly to African Americans. In addition to drawing stark contrasts between the "savage" and "barbaric" societies and the "civilized" ones and using the same hierarchical classifications of races that characterized almost 50 years of evolutionary accounts prior to his writing, Giddings wrote in *The Principles of Sociology* (1896) that the differences in social and economic equality between African Americans and Caucasians resulted from biological inferiority rather than differences in opportunity and privilege. He acknowledges that some may argue that "we ought not to assert that the lower races have not the capacity for social evolution, because we do not know what they could do if they had the opportunity" (328). Giddings counters this idea by pointing out that the lower races have been in existence for much longer than the "European races" but have accomplished much less and uses this as the basis for his claim that "we are not, therefore, warranted in saying that they have the same inherent abilities" (328). Giddings also recognizes that despite their supposed lower place on the racial hierarchy, African Americans have, because of their proximity to whites, adapted to their "new conditions" due to whites' civilizing influence; however, when this support is taken away, African Americans will "relapse into savagery" (328). Giddings' theory not only posits, as Gina M. Rossetti points out, that "a race's longevity rests on its biological superiority, which, in turn, gives rise to its economic and moral accomplishments" (9) but also assumes that racialized characteristics are inherent, with the innate savagery of the lower races imperfectly suppressed and simmering underneath the surface of a veneer of civilization.

Huxley's and Giddings's ideas are representative of American culture's use of biological and social science as justification for systemic racism. Their theories served to undermine African Americans' agency by ascribing behavior and actions to purely biological, and thus heritable, characteristics and drives. According to these theories and, especially, the ways in which they were taken up (and often exaggerated and distorted) in popular discourse, many African Americans' ability to determine their own actions and their futures were severely undermined both conceptually and materially. Despite the prevalence of such ideas, there were also scientists who used developments in heredity as evidence that there were not, in fact, purely biological explanations for racial difference. As historian Diane Paul notes, historically as well as contemporarily, scientific theories can be "socially plastic; they can be and frequently are turned to contradictory purposes" (44-45). For example, American anthropologist Franz Boas showed that racial difference was not rooted in simple biological traits; instead, his work showed that "the present distribution of cultural artifacts, linguistic particularities, and physical characteristics was the result of historical processes of circulation among cultures rather than their evolution among cultures" (Rheinberger and Muller-Wille 113).

Scientists like Boas were not the only ones who worked against the determinism of hereditarian theories of race. Both Chesnutt and Crane engaged with and responded to the biological determinism that inhered in scientists' use of hereditarian concepts to support racial arguments. As evidenced by their deft use of the scientific concepts in "The Doll" and *The Monster* as well as in other writing, both writers were familiar with the theories of race espoused by scientists like LeConte, Giddings, and others. Both

writers, through their depictions of their African American protagonists, evoke themes of primitivism, atavism, and instinct; however, they also reveal the damaging nature of those theories to African Americans' subjectivity and agency. While Crane deconstructs biologically essentialist theories of race in order to forward his argument about the influence of social and cultural forces on human behavior and characteristics, Chesnutt uses those theories to illustrate how individuals can overcome the racial stereotypes that structure American society through rationality and self-control. The different uses to which Crane and Chesnutt put hereditarian science ultimately allow divergent capacities for agency for their African American protagonists in, and for the African American readers of, each of their texts.

The Loss of Agency through Science in *The Monster*

Crane wrote *The Monster* in his England home Ravensbrook in 1897, but the story was inspired by an incident that took place in the spring of 1892 much closer to home. Crane had been staying at his brother William's house in Port Jervis, New Jersey, that spring but left for his home at Asbury Park a mere five days before an event that shook both the small town and Crane himself. On June 2, a black man who had been wrongfully accused of raping a white woman was lynched by a mob of as many as two thousand (Sorrentino 92). Stephen heard about the incident from William, who was among those who tried unsuccessfully to stop the mob, and five years later, "transformed the prejudice, fear, and violence of Port Jervis into his story *The Monster*" (264). The story, which Paul Sorrentino has characterized as Crane's "most complex attempt to reconcile a personal and ancestral past with his own psyche" (264), is the first of Crane's

Whilomville stories and evokes the racially charged atmosphere of the lynching and of the 1890s more broadly—particularly the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision the year before he wrote the story.

The Monster tells the story of the inhabitants of a small town, Whilomville (inspired by Port Jervis) and their reaction when an African American hostler, Henry Johnson, is disfigured by an accident. Henry works for prominent town physician Ned Trescott, and, when the Trescott house catches fire, rescues Dr. Trescott's son Jimmie from the flames, almost perishing in the process. Although both Henry and Jimmie survive, Henry is burned beyond recognition; as Crane bluntly puts it, "he now had no face" (471). Although the inhabitants of Whilomville celebrate his bravery and praise his selflessness immediately after the accident (when a false report circulates that Henry is in fact dead), after learning of his survival and his disfigurement, they turn against both Henry and Dr. Trescott, who has been caring for him. Out of fear of his "monstrosity," the residents of the town push Henry out, ostracizing the Trescott family in the process.

The Monster depicts how the racist ideas of the Whilomville residents become scripted onto Henry's body and how these bodily effects of scientific racism impact his agency. The disfigurement of Henry's body makes evident the material effects of racist discourse as his body becomes damaged and his agency becomes compromised by the deterministic impact of racist ideas. This understanding of the body is key to understanding the story and its treatment of race, particularly the amount of agency it allows for its African American protagonist. *The Monster,* like Chesnutt's "The Doll," shows the "intra-actions of raced bodies and social ideologies of race" (Hames-Garcia

325-26), and tracing these intra-actions reveals how Henry's body is determined not by an inherent, biologically based inferiority but rather by the racist ideas that these theories promulgate. The story illustrates that African American "monstrosity" is not a "natural" condition but rather one that is engendered by racist ideas and showing the material effects of the interaction between social ideology and scientific thought. In doing so, however, the story fails to dislodge the idea of black monstrosity and suggests a pessimistic outlook on the capacity for African Americans' agency within a society structured by racist ideas.

In the beginning of *The Monster*, Henry is represented as nonthreatening and benign, due to his position as an employee of Dr. Trescott and his love for ostentatious clothing choices. Henry is "pals" with young Jimmie Trescott, the intellect of the boy and the adult Henry paralleled; regarding "almost everything in life they seemed to have minds precisely alike" (Crane 451). For both Jimmie and Henry, Dr. Trescott is their "moon" (451), regarding whom the two "were in complete but unexpressed understanding" (451). Just like the child Jimmie, Henry is in complete deference to his employer, reproducing elements of the (idealized) master-slave relationship. Not only is Henry portrayed as of simple intellect; when he walks through the town in his way to see his sweetheart, Bella Farragut, dressed in lavender trousers and a hat with a "bright silk band" (453), the white townspeople refer to him as a "daisy" and "the biggest dude in town" (456).[18] Despite these assessments by the white townspeople, however, Henry's

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[18] These terms have important implications for how the townspeople view Henry, particularly his masculinity. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a "daisy" (whose first usage appeared in 1886) was used to refer to a "first-rate person or thing" or someone who is "charming"

agency—his ability to move freely through space—remains largely unaffected. Henry takes note of the "wake of wondering ejaculation that streamed out behind him" (456) and gains satisfaction and even joy from being the center of attention. As a "daisy" and a "dude," he poses no threat to the residents of Whilomville. Even when white residents heckle him directly, comparing his walk down the street to a cakewalk and urging him to "throw out [his] chest a little more" (454), Henry does not retaliate, engage them, or even seem to mind; he is "not ruffled in any way by these quiet admonitions and compliments" and instead laughs "a supremely good-natured, chuckling laugh, which nevertheless expressed an underground complacency of superior metal" (455). In this way, Henry invokes characters like Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom, whose masculinity is diminished, even erased, with the threat that it often posed along with it. The bodily autonomy that Henry has, then, is predicated upon the erasure of his masculinity. His agency is not limited by his white neighbors' treatment, because he still occupies his proper place in society.

However, in rescuing Jimmie, Henry not only overcomes what is presented by "instinctive racial behavior" (Cleman 128) but also undermines the efforts of the white townspeople to contain his masculinity. Upon realizing that the Trescotts' house is on fire and that Jimmie is trapped inside, Henry runs without hesitation into the house and up the stairs to retrieve him. On his way back down with Jimmie in his arms, he realizes that the

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("Daisy" n5). This definition does not appear gendered, but many of the examples listed refer to women, rather than men. In addition, the *OED* defines "dude" in 1877 as "a man who shows an ostentatious regard for fashion and style in regard to dress or appearance; a dandy, a fop" ("Dude" n1). Both these terms, then, refer not only to Henry's appearance but to at attempt to *feminize* that appearance—to neutralize the threat his masculinity poses.

lower floor—his way out of the house—has been consumed by flames. Henry's reaction to this realization is figured in terms of a reversion to racial instinct; he is overcome by fear and verges on succumbing to it, "submitting, submitting because of his fathers, bending his mind in a most perfect slavery to this conflagration" (Crane 464). This atavistic language echoes similarly racially essentializing language elsewhere in the passage, with Henry crying out "a negro wail that had in it the language of the swamps" in his despair and "duck[ing] in the manner of his race in fights" as he negotiates the fire-filled room (464). The language here suggests that stereotypical cowardice, figured as natural or instinctive, motivates Henry's actions and feelings and, as John Cleman points out, Crane "utiliz[es] the sort of negative racial stereotyping common to minstrel shows and pro-slavery accounts of the Old South" (120). It is this, along with the representation of the other residents of Watermelon Alley, that has led some critics to find "The Doll," as Lee Clark Mitchell has characterized it, an "overtly racist text" (180). For Mitchell, the racism evident in *The Monster* is a "paradoxical, unintended means to racial insight" (Cleman 121). Elaine Marshall also acknowledges racial stereotyping in the story but ascribes it to the "racial prejudices of [Crane's] time" (223). She argues that the text both engenders sympathy for Henry by humanizing him and forwards a critique of the white townspeople who fail to see Henry as "a man." Further, Cleman points out that the story does contain an attitude of sympathy and of critique in its symbolization of the "unjust situation of African Americans generally in the 1890s" (120), but also finds an attitude of blatant racism in Crane's representation of Henry and other black characters. Cleman

examines Crane's own attitudes toward race and racism in order to argue that "race is ultimately irrelevant to his main concerns" (132).

I would add that this racial stereotyping also characterized many evolutionary and sociobiological accounts of race in the late nineteenth century, which are key to understanding Crane's depiction of Henry and of race more generally in *The Monster*. Crane's representation of Henry's instinctive cowardice calls up both Sumner's and Brace's ideas about biologically determined forces that consign certain social and racial groups toward a natural primitivism and LeContian theories of racialized "natural difference" based on evolutionary differences. By ascribing behavior to inherent racial characteristics, these theories also denied African Americans agency over their own actions; rather than being based in reason and thought, behavior is figured as being controlled primarily by natural biological characteristics that determine action. What most critical assessments of the story do not sufficiently discuss is the fact that Henry overcomes his supposedly racial "instinct" mitigates this racialized language, which demonstrates the hollow nature of these stereotyped racial traits. After his moment of paralyzing despair, Henry remembers "a little private staircase" that would provide him an escape, and with this recollection, "the submission to the blaze depart[s] instantly" (464). In this moment of rationality overcoming instinct, Henry "violates his 'racial' identity as a coward by acting heroically" (Reesman 281) and reclaims the agency and bodily autonomy that racialized scientific thinking denies him. In doing so, Crane deconstructs the validity of these racist ideas and the essentialist idea of African Americans as determined by their bodies.

Almost as soon as the text grants this agency to Henry, though, it is revoked—not by biologically essentialist theories themselves, but by their misuse by whites, made evident by the way that Henry becomes a "monster." The stairway that Henry recalls once he rouses himself out of his momentary paralysis leads to "an apartment which the doctor had fitted up as a laboratory and work-house, where he used some of his leisure, and also hours when he might have been sleeping, in devoting himself to experiments which came in the way of his study and interest" (464). Henry's only means of escape is through this site of scientific inquiry and experiment—a site that was used to justify discrimination and to constrain African Americans' rights. The imagery in the description of the room reinforces the violence of these ideas; as Henry runs with Jimmie down the stairs and into the laboratory, "all manner of odors *assailed* him," odors that "seemed to be alive with *envy, hatred,* and *malice*" (464, emphasis mine). As Henry runs across the room, an "orange-colored flame leaped like a panther" and "bit deeply into him" (465), and he falls underneath a desk that holds a "row of jars" filled with unnamed chemicals. As Henry lay unmoving on the floor, a jar breaks, and the "molten" liquid, figured as a "ruby-red snakelike thing" (465), pours out onto his face. Disfigured, without a face, and described later as a "thing," Henry's identity is literally erased by science; he loses his subjectivity because he is determined not by inherent bodily characteristics, but rather by science itself. In other words, what turns Henry into a "thing," what constrains his agency in the aftermath of the fire, is not racialized bodily characteristics, but scientific discourse—"monstrosity," such as it is, is man-made, not inherent. This science becomes

quite literally written onto Henry's body, so that he becomes determined by it by the story's end.

By revealing the man-made nature of African American "monstrosity," Crane debunks the validity of the biological and sociological theories promoted by LeConte and Giddings that declared African Americans as evolutionarily inferior and as atavistic and instead evokes a Boasian argument about culture's shaping of human traits and characteristics. As Gregory Laski has persuasively argued in his analysis of the way that *The Monster* takes up questions of how to address the wrongs of slavery well after its abolition, the story reflects Crane's recognition of the racial issues plaguing the 1890s. For Laski, "in both its manifest content and formal structures, *The Monster* gives imaginative shape to the process, if not necessarily the end, of accounting for slavery's endurance through time" (39). However, Laski does not give sufficient attention to how the scientific context of the 1890s informs this representation, as evidenced by Henry's literal loss of identity through science. It is Dr. Trescott's devotion to science—the chemicals he uses for his experiments—that disfigures Henry and ultimately erases his identity and his agency, not the biology that science purported to explain. However, despite Crane's apparent recognition of the emptiness of that science and its use to justify discrimination, the story ultimately erases the possibility for Henry's agency within a social context where they still hold sway. The agency that he has in the story's beginning, before the fire, is predicated upon his nonthreatening nature, his ability to be controlled and to be fit into a "safe" role as a daisy and a dude. After the fire, however, Henry can no longer be controlled, having "'run away' from his colored place, and like a runaway

slave, [cannot be] tolerated" (Reesman 283), his very presence a perceived threat. It is important to note that after the fire, Henry is increasingly referred to as "the monster" or "the thing," rather than by his name, and the story becomes much more about the townspeople's reactions to Henry, rather than Henry himself. Further, the citizens of Whilomville both white and black ostracize Henry and, increasingly, the Trescott family. Both Henry (by his uncontrollable and illegible body and behavior) and Dr. Trescott (by his refusal to cast Henry aside and capitulate to the racial logic to which the rest of the town subscribes) fail to adhere to social and institutional conventions and in so doing challenge their legitimacy—a challenge that Whilomville does not allow. The social alienation of Henry and the Trescotts after the fire illustrates the punishment that a racist society enacts on those who allow African Americans agency simply by treating them as humans.

The institutional pressures placed on Trescott to refuse to grant Henry this agency and to keep him in his monster role are perhaps most evident in the ideological rift between Trescott and Judge Hagenthorpe, who tries to dissuade Trescott from preserving Henry's life and continuing to care for him after his recovery. Crane's Judge Hagenthorpe represents the injustice enshrined in the law as well as the varying institutional responses to (and responsibility for) race relations in America. The judge admits to Trescott that "somehow I think the poor fellow ought to die," believing that Trescott is "performing a questionable charity in preserving this negro's life" (Crane 473). Significantly, Trescott recognizes in these statements an "old problem" (473). While not explicitly described, this "old problem" likely alludes to the social Darwinism

developed by Herbert Spencer and championed specifically in regard to social policy toward African Americans by sociologist Franklin Giddings.

This disagreement between the two figures, one representing medicine, the other representing the law, has several important implications. First, the incongruity between the laissez-faire attitude of Judge Hagenthorpe and the empathetic action of Trescott "serves as the origin of Whilomville's subsequently failed search for a unifying narrative and course of action through which to respond to [Henry]" (Morgan 78). Second, the rift acts as a microcosm for race relations in America more generally, representing two different responses to the "Negro question" at the turn of the century. Judge Hagenthorpe follows scientists like Spencer and LeConte who promoted a "survival of the fittest" approach, letting the "weak" or "less fit" populations (including African Americans as well as the poor, immigrants, and the "feebleminded") struggle on their own for existence and refusing them public or private assistance. Trescott, on the other hand, represents a more reform-based approach and more closely follows the attitude of earlier biological scientists like Wallace and Huxley and social reformers like Charles Loring Brace, who believed that with education and continued exposure to civilized white society, less developed populations could and would progress. The story as a whole, including the residents of Whilomville's responses to Henry's monstrosity, therefore illustrates "the divided feelings, both the loathing and the regret, at the heart of white relations with African Americans" (Morgan 78).

It is these reactions of the Whilomville community, rather than Henry's inherent traits, that circumscribe his agency, so much so that he is eventually driven out of the

community. So, even though Crane demonstrates the constructed nature of popular scientific theories of race and reveals the damage that they do to African American agency, he still cannot envision a space for that agency in a society that still ascribes to and is arranged by those theories. Significantly, Crane also makes clear the damage that they do to whites' agency, as well, in his representation of Trescott's social alienation as a result of his challenging social convention. The institutional pressures, from the law to medicine to social convention, that both Dr. Trescott and Henry face are too great; as long as (white) society simultaneously bends to and supports those pressures, the agency of both African Americans as well as whites will be circumscribed.

The Triumph of "Love ... over Hate" in Chesnutt's "The Doll" and *The Marrow of Tradition*

Crane's representation of Henry Johnson does not offer much hope for the possibility of African Americans' agency within the confines of these popular racial theories; however, not all naturalist writers ascribed to this pessimistic view. Four years after Crane published *The Monster,* Charles Chesnutt offered a different perspective on science-based, racially essentialist notions in "The Doll." In his story, Chesnutt shows a similar interest in scientific ideas of biologically based racial traits and, like Crane, deconstructs these ideas. However, Chesnutt imagines a greater possibility of agency for his protagonist, Tom Taylor, in the midst of a white population that uses these ideas to justify discrimination and prejudice. Chesnutt borrows from similar ideas about racial inferiority from neo-Darwinian figures such as Thomas Henry Huxley and Joseph LeConte, but uses those ideas for a radical purpose—to reveal how reason, forbearance,

and love can combat racist ideas and their limiting effects on African Americans' agency. Tom is able to resist the urge to enact revenge upon the man who murdered his father not only through reason, but also through a remembrance of his commitments to his race and to his family. However, despite Tom's ability to retain his agency through his (lack of) action, the colonel's racist ideas about inherent African American inferiority remain untouched, raising questions about the ability of "love triumph[ing] over hate" (Chesnutt, "Doll" 116) to overcome racism. Chesnutt's representation of this question can be illuminated further through a reading of an alternative representation ways to effectively combat racism as represented by a character in another of Chesnutt's works: *The Marrow of Tradition*'s Josh Green, who offers a portrait of a man who eschews forbearance and enacts the revenge that Tom Taylor resists.

Much of the small body of criticism on "The Doll" analyzes it as a portrait of the challenges posed to upwardly mobile black business owners in the face of the virulent racism of the turn of the century. For Charles Duncan, the story "emphasizes, both dramatically and subtly, the public interactions of a new class of African Americans: the business professional" (200). In this depiction, Duncan argues, Chesnutt "takes pains to disclose the specific ways in which African Americans ... were enacting the freedoms conferred upon them by the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments" (201). Tom's resistance to revenge is thus figured as a "commitment to live in the present and for the future" (201), focusing on the future possibilities afforded by the laws rather than the past trauma of slavery. Similarly, Michelle Taylor has argued that the story underscores the importance of responsibility and respectability in the project of uplift for African

Americans in the early twentieth century. "The Doll," then, reveals the "possibilities available to black men who are willing to forego the tragedies of a Southern Jim Crow past in exchange for a Northern identity made new by freedom and opportunity" (209). William L. Andrews echoes this figuration of Tom Taylor as an exemplar of black upward mobility, who in *The Literary Career of Charles W. Chesnutt* reads Tom's "moral victory" in his choice of love over hate as proof of "the new Negro's demonstrably civilized nature" and of the "Afro-American 'talented tenth' [as] morally superior to the southern aristocracy" (84). What these persuasive analyses have not discussed, however, is how Chesnutt simultaneously engages with and challenges hereditarian concepts of race of the representation of his upwardly mobile black protagonist. More attention to this work would help to illuminate the stereotypes Tom is working against in this context, especially considering Chesnutt's original intended white audience of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

As discussed above, Chesnutt's familiarity with Darwinian and neo-Darwinian ideas is clear in "The Doll," as well as in other fiction and nonfiction works. Besides his Boston address, "Race Prejudice: Its Causes and Cures," Chesnutt's three-part article series "The Future American" also engages with contemporary race science. Published in the *Boston Evening Transcript* over a three-week period in 1900, the series makes the case for the likelihood of the future American citizen as a racial amalgam. According to Chesnutt, contemporary science and "historical parallel" support his argument that "the future American race—the future American ethnic type—will be formed of a mingling, in a yet to be ascertained proportion, of the various racial varieties which make up the

present population of the United States" ("Future American" 122). This theory depends on the fact that, as Chesnutt stresses, "recent scientific research has swept away many hoary anthropological fallacies" (122) that locate racial difference in biological differences. Echoing the work of Boas, Chesnutt emphasizes that

> it has been demonstrated that the shape or size of the head has little or nothing to do with the civilization or average intelligence of a race; that language, so recently lauded as an infallible test of racial origin is of absolutely no value in this connection, its distribution being dependent upon other conditions than race. Even [skin] color, upon which the social structure of the United States is so largely based, has been proved no test of race.[19] The conception of a pure Aryan, Indo-European race has been abandoned in scientific circles, and the secret of the progress of Europe has been found in racial heterogeneity, rather than in racial purity. (122)

After debunking the theory of biology-based racial traits, Chesnutt confidently asserts that "by modern research the unity of the human race has been proved (if it needed any proof to the careful or fair-minded observer), and the differentiation of races by selection and environment has been so stated as to prove itself" (122).[20]

Chesnutt's confidence in the larger acceptance of this "modern research" may, however, have been overstated. Dean McWilliams has explained that Chesnutt's white

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[19] Light enough to pass for white, Chesnutt's own complexion is an example of this.

[20] Although August Weismann had disproved the Lamarckian concept of acquired characters by this time, drawing a sharp distinction between environment and heredity, Lamarckism remained a popular and influential concept into the twentieth century among both scientists and the popular imagination, as evident in Chesnutt's remarks.

audience likely would not have taken the idea of racial difference being rooted in social and economic, rather than biological, sources as given; further, the idea that the "unity of the human race has been [scientifically] proved" (Chesnutt 122) was not actual scientific consensus at the time. McWilliams also finds clear Spencerian influence on Chesnutt's article series, which picks up on the same themes and language of progress and America's (racial) future found in Spencer's work and "enters the debate on America's future from the optimistic end" (McWilliams 45). "The Future American," then, clearly shows Chesnutt's familiarity with turn-of-the-century science and its application to the "race question" in America. Perhaps even more importantly, it reveals Chesnutt's ability to use scientific debates and ideas to intervene in and bolster a larger argument, distancing racial difference from biological characteristics while simultaneously underscoring the social implications of scientific ideas.[21]

In "The Doll," Colonel Forsyth's language when discussing the "race question" (Chesnutt, "Doll" 112) echoes the racist ideas that turn-of-the-century scientists like LeConte and Giddings forwarded. As he and the northern Judge Beeman enter Tom

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[21]Other scholars have analyzed Chesnutt's use of scientific ideas—primarily the Darwinian theory of sexual selection and its implication for racial mixing—in his fiction. For example, Bert Bender has discussed in *The Descent of Love: Darwin and the Theory of Sexual Selection in American Fiction, 1871-1926*. His reading of *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900) reveals Chesnutt's "bent in the debate over racial evolution and ... his use of the Darwinian terms in that debate" (Bender 290). Bender contends that, even prior to the publication of the novel, Chesnutt "was already quite adept at using the Darwinian materials to advance his own interests" (292). *The House Behind the Cedars*, however, represents one of Chesnutt's most sustained engagements with Darwinian and neo-Darwinian theory, specifically that of sexual selection and its intersections with race. As Bender points out, in this book, "realizing that his central problem would be to undercut the white supremacists' efforts to justify their [anti-miscegenation] cause with racial 'science,' Chesnutt was determined to defeat them on their own terms" (300), combatting LeContian ideas of racial mixing producing weak strains in his representation of the book's racially mixed characters.

Taylor's barbershop, they debate the platforms of the two presidential candidates in the upcoming election. The colonel argues that the Republican party will be mistaken if it "injects the negro question into its platform" (110), as it is an issue that should be decided locally. "The negro's place is defined by nature," the judge declares, "and in the South he knows it and gives us no trouble" (110), promoting the LeContian belief that the "race classes" are "founded on a real natural difference—i.e., a difference in the grade of evolution" (qtd. in Bender 300). The colonel reiterates these ideas as he continues to debate with the judge, arguing, at various points, that African Americans' endurance of slavery showed that they are "born to serve and to submit" (110), that they are "creature[s] of instinct" (111), and that "the best thing about a negro is that, with all his limitations, he can recognize a finality. It is the secret of his persistence among us. He has acquired the faculty of evolution, suh—by the law of survival of the fittest" (111). Even the northern judge buys into these ideas, having found during his time as judge of a police court "colored people prone to sudden rages, when under the influence of strong emotion, handy with edged tools, and apt to cut thick and deep, nor always careful about the color of the cuticle" (114). In addition to showing the pervasiveness of these racist ideas in American thought, the two white characters' use of the language of popular evolutionary biology and sociology shows Chesnutt's familiarity with and deft use of their main concepts. In the space of a couple of pages, Chesnutt evokes the LeContian ideas described above as well as those of Darwin (in his evocation of evolution) and Herbert Spencer, the chief proponent of "social Darwinism."

Chesnutt uses these ideas not to promote their validity but rather to intervene in the debate surrounding racial evolution, adapting them in order to expose their racism and to refute their ideas. He does this through his representation of Tom, who overcomes the "homicidal impulse" (115) that overtakes him upon realizing that the colonel was the man who murdered his father. The colonel, seeking to prove his essentialist theory that African Americans "have no proper self-respect; they will neither resent an insult, nor defend a right, nor avenge a wrong" (110), tells the judge the story of killing a black man, who Tom soon realizes was his father, "to teach him his place" (111) while sitting in Tom's chair for a shave. As soon as Tom recognizes the colonel as his father's murderer, the desire for revenge sweeps over him, realizing that all it would take is "one stroke of the keen blade [of his razor], a deflection of half an inch in its course, and a murder would be avenged, an enemy destroyed!" (114).[22] Despite this impulse for revenge, however, Tom's hand does "not even tremble" (114), refuting the judge's essentialist belief that African Americans lack the ability to control their emotions.

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[22] This scene recalls the similar shaving scene in Herman Melville's 1855 short story "Benito Cereno," in which the leader of a slave revolt, Babo, shaves the deposed captain Benito Cereno. Marta Puxan-Oliva has analyzed the parallels between the shaving motifs in "The Doll" and "Benito Cereno," arguing that the shaving scene in each text acts as a "racial motif" that has "striking effects on [the] narrative form" of each text (30). While Puxan-Oliva's reading of the narrative strategies that the shaving scene provides is not immediately relevant to my argument, her discussion of the symbolism of the act of shaving highlights the larger cultural framework in which it operates. As Puxan-Oliva points out, the "interracial interactions" in the act of black barbers shaving white customers "provide an opportunity to portray ... climactic moments of the highest racial tension" as well as "expose the complexity of race relations" (31). Thus, the interaction between Tom and the colonel in "The Doll" acts as a metaphor for relations between African Americans and whites in America more generally.

Chesnutt's figures Tom's interior battle between the "homicidal impulse" and his control over his emotions as a battle between instinct and reason, again recalling scientific debates about the capacity for reason by the so-called "lower races." The impulse is countered by Tom's remembrance that he is a "representative man" in his community, "by whose failure or success his race would be tested" (115). He recognizes that the fates of the other African American barbers in his shop are "all, in a measure, dependent upon the proprietor of the shop," and, "[s]hould he yield to the impulse which was swaying him, their livelihood would be placed in jeopardy" (115). However, a strong urge for revenge almost eclipses his realization; these considerations

> had presented themselves to the barber's mind in a vague, remote, detached manner, while the dominant idea was present and compelling, clutching at his heart, drawing his arm, guiding his fingers. It was by their mass rather than by their clearness that these restraining forces held the barber's arm so long in check—it was society against self, civilization against primitive instinct, typifying, more fully than the barber could realize, the great social problem involved in the future of his race. (115)

This back and forth between reason and instinct parallels the debate over the "race question" in the early twentieth century and demonstrates Chesnutt's keen awareness of how it shaped African Americans' agency on both a theoretical and a material level.

Despite wrestling with the instinct for revenge, reason, figured through the remembrance of his daughter's doll hanging in the corner of the stop, ultimately stays Tom's hand and prevents him from enacting revenge upon the colonel. As Tom's hand is

"beg[inning] its downward movement" to the barber's throat, the dropping of a shaving cup causes Tom to glance up, and he spots Daisy's doll, hanging on the "gilded spike" on the wall where he had left it (116). Tom realizes that "if the razor went to its goal he would not be able to fulfill his promise" to repair the doll, and that if he killed the colonel, "he himself would hardly escape, for he was black and not white, and this was North and not South, and personal vengeance was not accepted by the courts as a justification for murder" (116). He must live to protect his daughter, and vengeance belongs to God, and "it must be left to him to repay!" (116). Tom uses rationality to overcome instinct, subverting the beliefs of the story's white characters (and of scientific thought more generally) that, on the one hand, African Americans were ruled by instinct and "strong emotion"—as the judge believes—and, on the other, they "have no proper self-respect"—as the colonel believes. In the end, "whether society had conquered self or not may be an open question, but it had stayed the barber's hand until love could triumph over hate" (116).[23]

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[23] Paul Laurence Dunbar also depicts a black character resisting revenge upon a white man who had wronged him in "Nelse Hatton's Vengeance." In this short story, which is set in the North during Reconstruction, a bedraggled white man arrives at the door of Nelse Hatton, a former slave, asking for money and food. Nelse invites him inside, and the two share a meal together before realizing that the white man is his former master, Tom. Nelse's wife reminds him that he had previously sworn to kill his master if he ever met him again, and Nelse momentarily, like Tom, vacillates between revenge and restraint. However, Nelse's anger "melts" (Dunbar 164) when Tom expresses remorse for his treatment of Nelse and describes how he's suffered in poverty after the war. Dunbar's story offers an additional example of a black character being presented with the opportunity for revenge against a white man and the abuses he enacted during slavery. Similar to Tom Taylor, Nelse resists the desire for revenge, but not because of a remembrance of his commitments to his family and community; it is forgiveness that keeps Nelse from revenge. This may be seen as capitulation to the plantation tradition that was popularized in the later years of the nineteenth century, as some have characterized much of Dunbar's work more generally; however, the title of the story belies the tone of benevolent forgiveness on which

However, although Tom subverts the stereotypes that the colonel and the judge buy into, the colonel's beliefs remain untouched; he sees Tom's (lack of) reaction not as offering proof against racialized scientific beliefs but rather of confirmation of them. "I never had a better shave in my life," he tells the judge, "and I proved my theory. The barber is the son of the nigger I shot" (117). Although the judge is less convinced that the colonel's theory is indeed correct, "and was less so after he had talked, a week later, with the barber" (117), the colonel's beliefs are unchanged. Tom affirms his agency in the story's end, but the racist ideas that work to constrain it remain untouched. The judge (and the reader) know better, but the text raises the question, is this enough to dislodge the racist discourse that seeks to constrain African Americans' agency and to limit their bodily autonomy? Is embracing love over hate the best way to combat racism?[24]

The lynching imagery in the story suggests that it may not be merely love that overcomes Tom's desire for revenge but also a recognition of the bodily consequences of meeting violence with violence. The image of the doll figures as a reminder of Tom's love for and obligation to his daughter as well as a visible reminder of the material risks of enacting revenge. In the story's beginning, Daisy tells Tom that the doll needs repaired because "her arms won't work, and her legs won't work, and she can't hold her head up" (109)—

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the story appears to end—Nelse's vengeance may not be physical harm, but rather economic and social superiority over his former master.

[24] Charles Duncan points out that as a "professionally well qualified man" who "projects an aura of impartiality," Judge Beeman is a "proxy for [Chesnutt's] turn-of-the-century audience" (113). The judge does not buy into the colonel's theory and even "seems to endorse, albeit tepidly, Taylor's position" (114). Duncan suggests that this "tentative comprehension of the black man's behavior" may signify the effect that Chesnutt wanted to have on the story's white audience, having by 1904 "resigned himself to a certain pragmatism on race matters" (114).

a grim reminder of the danger to black bodies inherent in a society structured by racism. This description is recalled near the story's end; just as Tom is swaying toward bringing the razor blade down to the colonel's throat, he recalls a newspaper account of a "ghastly lynching in a Southern state" (116) that had killed eight black men and one of the men's wives. It is not this recollection but rather catching a glimpse of the doll hanging on the "gilded spike" where he had left it that ultimately stops Tom's from enacting violent revenge. The doll may serve as a reminder of Tom's responsibility to his daughter and what allows "love [to] triumph over hate" (116), but it also acts to remind him of the violence that is likely to be enacted on his and his loved ones' bodies if he goes through with his revenge. "The Doll," then, forwards the message that African Americans must resist revenge if they wish to retain their bodily agency.

The choice between violent revenge and restraint is prefigured in Chesnutt's 1898 novel, *The Marrow of Tradition*. The characters of Dr. William Miller, the novel's protagonist, and Josh Green represent these two divergent responses to white supremacy. Whereas throughout the novel, Dr. Miller urges peace and forgiveness in the face of racial injustice, Josh advocates and eventually enacts violent resistance as a means of defense. Therefore, Josh provides an alternate model for both Dr. Miller and Tom Taylor of "The Doll." In the midst of increasing threats of racial violence in the novel, Dr. Miller repeatedly encourages Josh and others in the fictional Wellington[25] that they had "better

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[25] The fictional town of Wellington, as well as the main events of the novel, is based on the town of Wilmington, North Carolina and the race riot that broke out there in November 1898. On November 8, a group of white men associated with the Democratic Party used both voter intimidation and rigging of the election in an attempt to regain control over the state from Republicans. On November 10, this group "fomented a violent mass assault" (Sollors xv) on the

be peaceable and endure a little injustice, rather than run the risk of a sudden and violent death" (Chesnutt, *Marrow* 69) at the hands of Wellington's whites. Josh, who has a reputation for fighting, tells Dr. Miller that he expects to die in a violent quarrel with a white man (whom the reader later learns is Captain McBane, one of the chief orchestrators of the Wellington riot) in taking revenge for his father's murder by the Ku Klux Klan. While Dr. Miller respects Josh's willingness to die for a cause, he "could not approve Josh's application of the Mosaic law of revenge" (71). Because of this, as well as considerations of his own family, Dr. Miller refuses Josh's pleas to act as a leader for the group of men gathered to defend their lives and their community, urging the group to "keep quiet, boys, and trust in God" and stressing that they "won't accomplish anything by resistance" (169). Josh counters by saying, "God he'ps dem dat he'ps demselves" (169) and himself takes charge of the group. Although Josh ultimately loses his life to the mob—specifically, Captain McBane—he is able to enact his revenge by killing McBane. Even though Dr. Miller does not support this violent act of vengeance, Josh's final act is depicted as heroic, illustrating, as John Dudley has pointed out, "the appeal of the violent transgressive hero" (151).

Analyzing these two characters in Chesnutt's earlier novel provides a useful lens through which to view Tom Taylor in "The Doll." Tom is similar in *thought* to Josh Green; Chesnutt's descriptions of his wrestling with vengeful feelings echoes Josh's

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town's black residents, first torching a black-owned newspaper and then turning their guns on black community members. Estimates for African American casualties vary wildly between six and one hundred (Sollors xvii). According to Wernor Sollors, Chesnutt modeled Carteret, Captain McBane, and General Belmont after prominent figures in the riot.

descriptions in *Marrow*. In addition, Tom's and Josh's circumstances are almost identical; both men's fathers have been murdered by white men, and both have the opportunity to avenge their father's killer. Further, Tom's thoughts while he vacillates between vengeful impulses and self-control have parallels in Josh's words in support of violent resistance in self-defense. However, Tom, in his ultimate decision not to enact violence on his white agitator, is more clearly aligned in *action* with Dr. Miller. Both men recognize the appeal of violent resistance and revenge; however, each also realizes that the commitment to his family and to his race necessitates restraint and that vengeance is ultimately up to God. Just as Dr. Miller's "concern for the fate of Josh and his friends occupied only a secondary place in his mind" (Chesnutt, *Marrow* 176) after his concern for his wife and child, Tom's daughter, of whom he is reminded when he glances up to see the doll hanging on the wall just as he is about to bring the razor down onto the colonel's throat, keeps him from his revenge.

In addition, both men recognize that they have a responsibility to their race and also that their actions are likely to be misunderstood and used as provocation for violence by whites. Tom remembers that "personal vengeance was not accepted by the courts as a justification for murder," recalling a newspaper account from the day before of a "ghastly lynching in a Southern state, where, to avenge a single provoked murder, eight negroes had bit the dust and a woman had been burned at the stake for no other crime than that she was her husband's wife" (Chesnutt, "Doll" 116). Similarly, Dr. Miller recognizes that "every such crime [of violence against whites], committed by a colored man, would be imputed to the race" (Chesnutt, *Marrow* 72). Importantly, in a passage that recognizes the

same biologically essentialist scientific theories of race with which "The Doll" engages, Dr. Miller also grimly realizes that if African Americans were to fight back against the white mob,

> the qualities which in a white man would win the applause of the world would in a negro be taken as the marks of savagery. So thoroughly diseased was public opinion in matters of race that the negro who died for the common rights of humanity might look for no meed of admiration or glory. At such a time, in the white man's eyes, a negro's courage would be mere desperation; his love of liberty, a mere animal dislike of restraint. Every finer instinct would be interpreted in terms of savagery. (176)

Because of these realizations of the dire consequences of revenge, which include consequences not only for the bodily safety and integrity of African Americans but also for the ways in which common scientific thought impacts that bodily integrity, Tom Taylor and Dr. Miller ultimately do not endorse violent resistance as means for overcoming racism and reclaiming agency.

Nevertheless, this confirmation is not without ambivalence in either "The Doll" or *The Marrow of Tradition*, as both texts reveal a tension between their protagonists' refusal to take revenge and its potential consequences. Dr. Miller as well as his wife, Janet, do reject revenge even after their son is killed in the Wellington riot. As the riot is winding to a close, Major Carteret (whose newspaper was integral to starting the riot and whose wife is Janet's estranged half-sister) returns home to discover that his son, Dodie, has taken deathly ill. Carteret cannot find a white doctor in the midst of the chaos and

finally resorts to pleading Dr. Miller to perform a life-saving operation on his son. Dr. Miller initially refuses, pointing to his dead son and directly implicating Carteret in his death: “There lies my only child, laid low by a stray bullet in this riot which you and your paper have fomented; struck down as much by your hand as though you had held the weapon with which his life was taken!” (190). Dr. Miller’s refusal to save Dodie’s life is not framed in terms of revenge, but rather in a refusal to leave his wife: “My duty calls me here, by the side of my dead child and my suffering wife. I cannot go with you” (190). Dr. Miller repeats this reasoning—but with an important addition—to Carteret’s wife Olivia, telling her that she “asks too much of human nature” and that “love, duty, sorrow, *justice*, call me here” (192, emphasis in original). By adding “justice” to his litany of reasons not to attend to Dodie, Dr. Miller reveals at least a recognition that a refusal to save Carteret’s son in order to ensure justice for his own son’s death is an option that he has.

Shortly after raising this possibility, though, Dr. Miller rejects it, finally agreeing to go with Olivia to her house and attempt to save Dodie. This is not, though, out of an outright, conscious overcoming of an impulse for revenge nor out of fear for his family or his community, as Tom Taylor, but rather out of recognition of his and Mrs. Carteret’s common humanity. Olivia, Dr. Miller realizes, “[is] a fellow creature, too, and in distress” (193). Janet, too, follows this reasoning, after Dr. Miller agrees to operate on Dodie on the condition that Janet gives her permission. While she spurns Olivia’s offer of “[their] father’s wealth, [and Olivia’s] sisterly recognition,” Janet also agrees to the Carterets’ request on the grounds of sympathy and humanity: “...you may know that a

woman may be foully wronged, and yet may have a heart to feel, even for one who has injured her, you may have your child's life, if my husband can save it" (195). The Millers not only realize the common humanity that unites all humans—a clear lesson intended for white readers—but also rise above white discrimination and injustice. Their rejection of revenge is not out of fear but out of empathy. Chesnutt fashions this refusal as one of dignity and of compassion, echoing Miller's position throughout the novel of declining to meet violence with violence.

Yet, significantly, the fact remains that the Millers' child is dead at the novel's end, which begs the question of whether Dr. Miller's refusal to condone or enact vengeance and his rational thinking are implicated in the child's death. Despite his adherence to this philosophy throughout the novel, the novel makes clear that passivity and restraint do not always lead to a guarantee of safety for one's self or one's child in a society in which the violence of racism is so pervasive. The Millers' son still ends up dead at the hands of the white mob, and Miller's hospital, "the fruit of [his father's] industry, the monument of his son's philanthropy, a promise of good things for the future of the city" (184), burns to the ground. Despite Dr. Miller agreeing to save the life of the Carterets' son, *Marrow*, like "The Doll," does not contain a wholehearted endorsement of either revenge or restraint, indicating an ambivalence about the efficacy of either approach to combat racism. That fact also emphasizes the inescapability of the violence of white racism and its ability to circumscribe African Americans' control over their own lives.

This points to a similar ambivalence toward responses to racism in "The Doll" that, as many scholars have noted, also characterizes *The Marrow of Tradition*. Gordon Fraser has pointed out that in critical discussion of the novel, a debate has emerged about whether Josh's death signals an "affirmation of black resistance" or a "rejection of this violence" (363). John Dudley has also explained that "Josh Green's ultimate failure to stop the white rioters confirms the futility behind violence that Miller expresses, but Chesnutt also makes clear the appeal of the violent transgressive hero" (151) in his representation of Josh. The power of Josh as a "badman" figure[26], whose ability to "distress and dismantle white supremacy rests with his ability to meet force with force" (152), holds clear appeal and is reproduced in Tom's wrestling with his impulse for revenge throughout much of "The Doll." However, despite Chesnutt moving Tom Taylor in "The Doll" closer to Josh's character, he ultimately reaffirms Dr. Miller's stance. Both the short story and the novel warn that "the danger ... is that such victories come at a tremendous price" (Dudley 152)—a price that neither Dr. Miller nor Tom Taylor, due to their responsibilities to their families and to the larger African American community, is willing to pay.

Therefore, "The Doll," especially when considered alongside *The Marrow of Tradition*, seems to suggest that those impacts can be mitigated by restraint and the embrace of love over hate, even while recognizing the impacts that race as a set of ideas, particularly when undergirded by the authority of science, has on African Americans'

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[26] According to John Dudley, the badman figure, a "sadistic outlaw whose violent rejection of laws and social norms seems largely unmotivated," offered a "heroic counterforce to the stifling effects of white racism" (267).

material bodies and day-to-day existence. Chesnutt positions this strategy of working against the determinism of racist ideas as an effective one toward reclaiming agency, but as not one without costs, as neither text allows the potential violence that necessitates it to go unnoticed. While the violence, exemplified by the lynching imagery at the end of "The Doll," may have escaped the attention of Chesnutt's originally intended white audience, it would likely have been glaringly evident to the readers of *The Crisis*. What differentiates this latent violence from the violence that racism does to Crane's Henry Johnson is that for Chesnutt, the violence is not inevitable and therefore not deterministic. While the racism perpetuated by science and its violent effects has inescapable consequences for the agency of Crane's protagonist, suggesting a pessimism toward the ability of African Americans to move and live freely in a racist society, the fate of Chesnutt's Tom Taylor echoes a degree of the optimism of his "The Future American" series about the future of race relations, while retaining a warning to his readers about the still-present dangers of being black in America.

Chesnutt's and Crane's texts thus illustrate the ways that African American and white Naturalist writers envisioned bodily autonomy in the face of scientific theories of race and the viability of agency in a society ruled by racist ideas. Much like *The Sport of the Gods,* "The Doll" and *The Monster* exemplify that hereditarian science and its use as justification for discrimination and violence opened up new possibilities for imagining the (male) African American body, race relations, and cultural determinism at the turn of the century. While science could be and was often used to reduce minorities to supposedly inherent racial behavior and to transform bodies into manageable and

predictable objects of study, Chesnutt and Crane challenged those efforts in their depictions of the power of cultural, rather than biological, forces and their limiting effects on the agency of their black protagonists. While the futures they imagine for their characters differs, each text is remarkable for its engagement with hereditarian science in order to critique a racist society for the limitations it places on African American self-determination.

CHAPTER 3: "GOD AND SCIENCE HELPING ME, I WILL GIVE HER ... WIFEHOOD AND MATERNITY AND PERFECT HEALTH": REPRODUCTION, BODILY AUTONOMY, AND RACIAL UPLIFT IN PAULINE E. HOPKINS'S *OF ONE BLOOD*

As we have seen in Dunbar's and Chesnutt's representations of the power of racial science to circumscribe African Americans' agency, contentions over biological arguments as justification for Jim Crow impacted many elements of black life well into the twentieth century. The previous two chapters have shown that African American writers did not shy away from engaging and challenging biologically determinant theories of race, especially those that considered violent or aggressive behavior evidence of a "lower" place on the evolutionary scale. Whether appropriating, revising, or offering an outright challenge to racial science, writers directly challenged its ideas and their use in discriminatory social policy and attitudes through their representations of their African American characters. Their written work allowed them to critique the racism perpetuated by scientific ideas and to assert an interiority that those ideas often denied them. For writers like Dunbar and Chesnutt, fiction made space for the agency that racialized science, Jim Crow social policies, and the traumatic history of slavery attempted to revoke.

For Dunbar and Chesnutt as well as for other African American writers and public intellectuals such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, these representations of agency often either minimized or ignored the gendered elements of racial science, thus forwarding a male-centered negotiation of agency out of that science. Novelist, journalist,

and activist Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins was among the most prominent African American artists and intellectuals at of this era to not only contest racial science and its application to African American rights but also clarify the distinct ways in which they bound African American women's agency specifically. Like Dunbar and Chesnutt, Hopkins utilized hereditarian and evolutionary science to show that the social attitudes and practices that they were used to support circumscribed African Americans' agency. Perhaps even more so than either of those writers, Hopkins' familiarity with these scientific theories is made evident through her use of their logic to critique oppressive social structures. Hopkins reveals their limiting impact on African American *women's* agency, calling readers' attention to the unique ways that women were impacted by the double bind presented by the convergence of racial *and* sexual science on their bodies. The scientific spirit of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries encompassed race *as well as* sex—often in conjunction with one another. As Cynthia Russett succinctly puts it, "race and gender, not infrequently linked, are two of the great themes of nineteenth-century science" (7). The ascendance of neo-Darwinism and the waning of acquired characters as a theory of heredity impacted women nearly as greatly as they did African Americans, and the effects were similarly damaging for women's agency and bodily autonomy.

In her novels as well as her nonfiction, Hopkins combatted this science and the portrait of black women that it painted through her representations of the "New Negro." Henry Louis Gates has described the New Negro as serving as "the race's greatest opportunity to represent itself in the court of racist public opinion. [Through the New Negro], black Americans sought to re-present their public image in order to reconstruct

their public, reproducible images" (129).[27] Hopkins's novel *Of One Blood*, serialized in the *Colored American Magazine* in 1902-1903, exemplifies her use of the New Negro figure to combat the stereotypes perpetuated by early twentieth-century racial science. Hopkins's novel opens in Boston with a focus on Harvard medical student Reuel Briggs, and his rather mysterious mystical abilities. These abilities are soon tested, when a young woman, Dianthe, comes into his care after a train accident. Dianthe—an African American woman who is traveling with the Fisk Jubilee Singers but light-skinned enough for those in the hospital to mistake her for white—is unconscious, but Reuel diagnoses her case as being "one of suspended animation" due to having been "long and persistently subjected to mesmeric forces" (Hopkins 29) and uses his own skill in "magnetism" (33) to revive her. Suffering from amnesia, Dianthe's memory is gone, but Reuel, having fallen in love with her, takes her under his care and eventually marries her.

Because Reuel, who is himself passing for white, cannot obtain a job in the medical field he embarks on an expedition to Africa in order to make his fortune, leaving Dianthe in the care of Aubrey. While the expedition's primary objective is to "unearth buried cities and treasure which the shifting sands of Sahara have buried for centuries" (58), a secondary goal, at least of the expedition's leader Professor Stone, is to "establish the primal existence of the Negro as the most ancient source of all that [we] value in modern life," biologically, technologically, and culturally. Professor Stone is eventually

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[27]The New Negro was in no small part a reaction to the racist representations of African Americans that pervaded turn-of-the-century literature and public discourse, which drew from biological theories of race. Much African American-authored literature of the early twentieth century "devote[d] many pages to the near perfection of these representative black American men," and their "female counterparts [were] similarly possessed of unassailable virtues" (Kassanoff 161).

backed up by the discovery of treasure and ancient ruins when the expedition lands in Africa. Upon arriving in Africa on the ancient, abandoned island of Meroe, Reuel discovers Stone's theory to be true and finds himself in the hidden city of Telassar, which is peopled by the "direct descendants of the inhabitants of Meroe" who await "the coming of [their] king who shall restore to the Ethiopian race its ancient glory" (114). Reuel and the leaders of Telassar soon realize that it is he who is this king, Ergamenes, proven by a lotus-shaped birthmark on his chest that signifies his ancient royalty, passed down on his mother's side.

While Reuel is discovering his true heritage, Dianthe is back in the United States, suffering at the hands of Aubrey Livingston, who is determined to steal her from Reuel. Dianthe tries to resist his advances, but Aubrey kidnaps her, marries her, and removes her to his ancestral plantation. While there, Dianthe meets an elderly woman living on the outskirts of the plantation, who is revealed to be her grandmother, Hannah. In the novel's climax, Hannah reveals Dianthe's true history: that not only Dianthe, but also Reuel and Aubrey, are the children of the same slave woman, Mira, and her white master. Dianthe, Aubrey, and Reuel are thus "all of one blood" (177), each having the lotus-lily birthmark on their chest as a mark of having been "claim[ed] for de great Osiris, mighty god" (177) and destined for royalty. Their past obscured by slavery and its trauma, the three were separated at a young age, with Reuel and Dianthe having no knowledge of their heritage or their relationship to one another. Made desperate by this knowledge and by her continued confinement, Dianthe attempts to poison Aubrey, but he catches her in the act and forces her to drink the poison herself. Reuel, who had previously believed Dianthe

was dead as per a letter Aubrey had sent him that she had perished in a boating accident, is already on his journey back to the United States, having seen in a vision that Dianthe was still alive; however, he does not arrive in time to save her, and she dies in his arms. Reuel returns to Telassar, taking Hannah with him, to rule over its people and to teach them "all that he has learned in years of contact with modern culture" (193). However, his contentment in his rightful role is colored by the death of Dianthe as well as by the threat of imperialism looming over the continent.

Through her representations of the New Negro figure primarily through Reuel and Dianthe, Hopkins fuses her concerns with the effects of biological arguments of race vis-à-vis blood with those of sex. The novel's characters, especially its male protagonist Reuel Briggs and its representation of Africa, are meant to combat the evolutionary and hereditarian science that relegated Africans and African Americans to the bottom of the evolutionary ladder and used a supposed lack of cultured refinement and historical accomplishments as evidence of that position. Reuel's representation as a doctor, a spiritualist, and a man of refined tastes unsettles this discourse and its assumptions of African (American) inferiority as well as of the connection between that inferiority and visible markers of race difference. Yet it is Hopkins's representation of her female characters that most fully captures, simultaneously, the unique consequences of evolutionary and hereditary science for black women's agency and the possibilities for that agency when science is reappropriated for racial uplift. The women of the novel are positioned as loci for the future of the race largely through their reproductive capabilities, as carriers of (what were thought to be) hereditary traits such as morality. But at the same

time, African American women's bodies are also positioned as sites of reproductive violence both within and in the aftermath of slavery; therefore, racial progress and women's agency are made impossible while black women remain subject to the traumas engendered by slavery and Jim Crow. Thus, through her representation of Dianthe Lusk, Dianthe's mother Mira, and their kinswoman Candace, Hopkins illustrates that the lack of bodily autonomy engendered by the history of slavery, Jim Crow, and the convergence of scientific theories of race and sex are detrimental to the progress of the race. Yet in documenting this lack of agency and its (primarily reproductive) consequences, Hopkins ends up embracing some of the same biological essentialism of the racial and sexual science that she critiques.

Hopkins's adaptations of racial science and challenges to the stereotypes of African American women it was often used to support is even more evident when considered alongside the work of contemporary white writers. Reading Gertrude Stein's 1913 story "Melanctha" can illuminate the literary context in which Hopkins wrote and the stereotypes of black women revised. Rather than deconstructing those stereotypes—including those of the oversexualized single woman and the neglectful mother—"Melanctha" deploys them, by and large, unproblematically in order to explore the nature of identity for African American women. In this representation, Stein employs much of the same science as Hopkins, including eugenics discourse and the hereditarian science behind it. However, the representation of her title character, as well as Melanctha's friend Rose, reifies, rather than challenges, stereotypes of black women and the cultural and scientific anxieties toward their reproduction. Reading these two texts together makes

clear that white and African American naturalist writers tended to deploy contemporary science in their fiction for divergent purposes and that they used different representational strategies to explore agency and determinism for their African American protagonists.

Before turning to a focus on Hopkins's negotiation of racial and sexual science in *Of One Blood*, it is important to briefly note that any cursory reading of Hopkins's novel will mark it as a departure from the other novels that this project analyzes. As many critics, including Melissa Asher Daniels, Mandy A. Reid, and Eric Sundquist, have discussed, the novel is a mix of genres, containing elements of, depending on whom you ask, realism, melodrama, (utopian) fantasy, adventure narrative, and romance. Sundquist, for example, describes the novel as "patently escapist fiction" (569) with an "awkward but beautiful compression of popular metaphysics, black history ... and contemporary psychology" (570). Asher Daniels has taken a more forgiving approach to the novel's generic fluidity, arguing that Hopkins uses a blend of realism (mainly the novel's America plot) and romanticism (primarily in the Africa plot) in order to "advance her views on the limitations of literary realism and [to put] her ideas about the aesthetic virtues of romantic fiction into practice" (158). Utilizing both genres, rather than one exclusively, allows Hopkins to not only disrupt genre conventions but also "destabilize race" (159). "Exploiting the tension" between the two genres, in turn, allows Hopkins to "envision a world beyond the racially inflected contours of the United States" (159) and to disrupt essentialist notions of race. Additionally, Mandy A. Reid has added utopian fantasy to the list of genres from which Hopkins draws in *Of One Blood*. Reid points out that Hopkins "employ[s] the discourse of racial science" (92) to construct a racial utopia

in her vision of Africa. Hopkins uses this genre to forward her "opposition to 'real world' racial politics and prejudice" (92) and to envision a future beyond that prejudice.

These elements of fantasy, romance, and utopia seemingly set the novel rather far apart from the texts of Dunbar, Crane, Dreiser, and Chesnutt that I have read thus far, although I agree with Daniels that Hopkins clearly utilizes (as Dunbar and Chesnutt do) conventions of realism in the novel, especially in depicting race relations in America. These elements do not, however, make *Of One Blood* a departure from naturalist fiction. Although many critical assessments of naturalism tend to classify it as a subgenre of realism and thus to expect it to adhere entirely to its conventions, naturalist fiction often contains strains of various forms of romanticism and even of the supernatural—consider, for example, the Vanamee plot in Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901). In Eric Carl Link's (re)assessment of American literary naturalism's conventions and boundaries in *A Vast and Terrible Drama*, the American naturalists of the 1890s and early 1900s severed "direct ties" with the more scientifically oriented and strictly realist forms of naturalism exemplified most fully by writers like Emile Zola. These writers instead "created a form of literature that owes as much to the renewed interest in the romance in the 1890s as it does to the legacies handed down from the heyday of literary realism" (17). Naturalist novelists "incorporate at the *thematic* (as opposed to generic, philosophical, or methodological) level scientific or philosophical concepts arising from the work of the loose affiliation of nineteenth-century philosophical and scientific naturalists" (18). In other words, the American literary naturalists did use their fiction to explore the scientific

and philosophical concepts of the day without needing to adhere to a strictly realist, strictly deterministic, or strictly objective world view.

Hopkins's *Of One Blood* fits directly into this definition of naturalism in its engagement with scientific concepts of race, heredity, and evolution to depict, and revise, the past and present of race in America and to reinvent the possibility of an alternative racial future—evidence of Link's engagement with late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific and philosophical concepts at the *thematic* level. But, as the critics I have summarized above demonstrate, Hopkins also utilizes elements of romance to explore that possibility at the generic and methodological levels, which provided her a wider possibility of generic avenues through which to depict her novel's central concerns, and which it shares with the work of other literary naturalists—including (both biological and social) determinism, cause-and-effect, and individuals' operation within a deterministic universe. Hopkins's novel does not merely fit into the genre of naturalist literature alongside more evidently "naturalist" (i.e., "realistic") texts like *The Sport of the Gods* and "The Doll"; it also benefits from a reading as a naturalist novel and expands the naturalist canon by extending its generic bounds.

"Women, Awake to Your Responsibilities and Privileges": Reproductive Agency and Heredity in the Early Twentieth Century

The convergence of racial science with sexual science informs Hopkins's representation of her female characters in *Of One Blood.* She engages turn-of-the-century scientific theories of and cultural rhetoric surrounding heredity to demonstrate the importance of black women's bodily autonomy—theories and discourse that were

increasingly intertwined with eugenics discourse as the nation moved into the twentieth century. Through her representation of her female characters in her fiction, Hopkins as well as many other turn-of-the-century African American women writers, worked to combat the stereotypes of black women endemic to much racial and sexual science. The converging scientific theories of race and sex, and the public attitudes shaped by them, created a double bind for black women, circumscribed by essentialist theories of both their race and their sex. Images of African American women were often tied to their sexuality, represented as hypersexualized and thus lacking in moral discernment; further, in science as well as in literature, they were considered less developed evolutionary because of both their race and their sex. Scientists such as J.J. Virey, for example, published accounts of African women as hypersexualized, evidenced by biological difference between them and white women; Virey wrote in 1819 that African women's sexuality was "developed to such a degree of lascivity unknown in our [European] climate, for their sexual organs are much more developed than those of whites" (Gilman, "Black Bodies" 212-13). Virey's words took on even greater relevance in the white public imagination with the tour of African women like Sarah Baartman, a South African woman who was exhibited in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century as a freak show attraction. Virey used Baartman as an example of his claims of biologically based sexual differences between African and European women. Accounts like Virey's and exhibitions like those to which Baartman were subjected indelibly marked both white and black cultural psyches and social landscapes.

Science, and its deployment in service of oppression, compounded these already existing stereotypes for African American women both within and after slavery. These stereotypes were used to explain and to justify, for example, the rape of slave women by white masters, to define "true" white womanhood, and to continue to withhold rights from black women long after Emancipation. Black women were often depicted in literature, advertising, and other forms of discourse as hypersexualized, immoral, and lacking in "civilization" due to their African heritage, which consigned them automatically to a lower place on the evolutionary ladder. For example, Beverly Guy-Sheftall has explained in a discussion on Virginia historian Phillip Bruce that these stereotypes persisted into the twentieth century and writers like Bruce believed that "black women did not live up to the standard of morality" (43).

In the opening years of the twentieth century, the burgeoning black clubswomen's movement was one of the most influential and the most vocal sites of resistance to these images of black women in science and in the cultural imagination, envisioning as part of their work the need to "bring to light the virtuous black woman" (Kaiser 101) to combat these dominant images. Through organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and branches of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WTCU), clubswomen—often middle-class, urban African Americans whose numbers included Hopkins as well as Frances Harper, Margaret Murray Washington, and Ida B. Wells—saw themselves as playing a unique role in the period's project of racial uplift. Shirley Wilson Logan has pointed out in her study of the club movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that "while concerned with the improvement of

conditions for both women and men, these 'race women' viewed racial uplift as having a great deal to do with educating black women to assume the traditional roles defined by the cult of true womanhood" (154). This work would also allow women to "inspire white Americans to recognize [African Americans'] fitness for inclusion in ... national rhetorics of progress" (Patterson 51). Therefore, much of the language found in clubswomen's speeches and written work at the time focused on how women could improve home life, including sanitation and health as well as morality inside the home.[28] Motherhood was positioned as essential to the project of racial uplift, and women's authority was drawn from that role.

This authority, granted to women because of their maternal functions, was evident in much clubswomen's rhetoric at the turn of the century, as is, significantly, its reliance on and reappropriation of the sciences of heredity and public health to underscore the importance of the reproductive role. Several addresses given by African American clubswomen at the 1897 Atlanta Conference for the Study of Problems Concerning Negro City Life, just five years prior to the publication of Hopkins's *Of One Blood*, illustrate this. Lucy C. Laney, for example, focuses her short address to the conference's women's meeting on motherhood as essential for uplift. She does not directly reference science, but her speech echoes sexual science's emphasis on gender roles based in

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[28] Even though they often prioritized women's work in the home as wives and mothers, African American clubswomen also recognized that for many women this relegation to the private sphere was neither a reality nor a possibility and therefore also addressed the need to improve black women's material working conditions. However, while many women were working outside the home at the end of the century, in much black women's public discourse of uplift, the domestic space was often still privileged as the site where women could do their most valuable work of uplifting the race.

biological difference as well as hereditarian science's, and later the eugenics movement's, emphasis on the physical and mental traits transmitted by heredity. Laney stresses that "while no person is responsible for his ancestors" or their actions, "every woman can see to it that she gives to her progeny a good mother and an honorable ancestry" (Laney 209). This is women's chief responsibility in order to raise racially responsible children. Motherhood is "the crown of womanhood," and it is women's duty to "help develop into a noble man or woman the young life committed to her care" (209). Laney ends her speech by beseeching women to "awake to [their] responsibilities and privileges" (201) of motherhood. Maternity becomes where women derive their cultural authority and enact their responsibility to the race, molding children into virtuous and "noble" men and women who can act as representatives.

Georgia Swift King and Adella Hunt Logan also stressed the importance of women's maternal roles to racial uplift but framed their pleas more explicitly in terms of late nineteenth-century science. Swift King merges environmental with biological arguments in her call for an increase in the frequency and availability of "mother's meetings" as a "most excellent medium for effectual instruction of the masses" (Swift King 207). "If it is true," she contends, "that of the three main factors in the make-up of the individual—the home, the school, and the church—the greatest is the home, and since it is true that the home is what the parents make it, the mother by nature having the larger share in the making, then it follows that the destiny of the Negro race is largely in the hands of its mothers" (206). Mothers' influence is the primary site of responsibility for the future of the race, she points out, but both "poverty and ignorance of the laws of

health—an ignorance not confined to the illiterate" (206) have led to the "general decrease in the birthrate" and a growing death rate of both infants and, due to "inherited tendencies and defective education" (206), adults, which echoes similar concerns of population scientists and sociologists regarding the decrease in the (white) birthrate and the impact of cities on public and moral health more generally. In other words, both environment and heredity are responsible for the problems that plague the "Negro population of the United States" (206), especially in urban environments. Swift's solution is encouraging women to attend "mother's meetings," where women could become educated on "all questions of human interest" (207) but especially sanitation, public health, cooking, infant care, and child rearing. Swift King stresses that "the science of health and heredity and prenatal influences, and all that pertains to household morality and economy, may be handled with such simplicity in these meetings, that not only the mothers but the whole people may receive real benefit" (207).

For Swift King as for Hunt Logan, public health and the study of heredity, rather than being wielded as a weapon against African Americans (especially women), can be tools for racial uplift and progress. Hunt Logan's address, "Prenatal and Hereditary Influences," explicitly engages these sciences in order to underscore the responsibility of women and men alike to maintain moral uprightness and physical health so that they might produce the "best" offspring possible—again in the service of racial uplift. Both men and women are largely ignorant of the "silent, but powerful, thing known as heredity" (Hunt Logan 212), Hunt Logan points out, but its influences are some of the most powerful on the future of the race. "There can be no suspending of the influences of

heredity until the human soul has had sufficient development to appreciate responsibilities; until it wills to be shaped by this or by that influence," Hunt Logan contends. Therefore, women in particular, due to the fact that "no one source more than the conditions attendant upon pregnant women can the cause of physical or moral evil be traced" (213), have a responsibility to keep themselves morally and physically healthy in order to ensure the moral and physical health of their children and of the race. While Hunt Logan emphasizes that both mothers and fathers have this responsibility, it is mothers whose influence is the most immediate and the most important in creating a sound biological as well as social environment for their offspring. Like Swift King, Hunt Logan advocates for education about the science of heredity in both women's and men's meetings, which should teach that "the prenatal development of a child depends largely upon whatever affects the mother" (214).

These three speeches reveal the extent to which the science of heredity and its intersections with public health pervaded the cultural imagination at the turn of the century. It also demonstrates that African Americans co-opted and adapted it to promote ideas of racial progress and racial responsibility. Hunt Logan's, Swift King's, and Laney's speeches are remarkable for their reappropriation of a discourse that was typically used to circumscribe and even enact violence upon women's bodies. The activists used the concepts and discourse traditionally used as weapons against them and refashioned them for racial uplift—specifically, to argue for (middle-class) African American women's fitness for motherhood and, in turn, for African Americans' inclusion in the national project. This invested women with a tremendous amount of responsibility

and authority over the future of the race and its position within larger American society. Wielded by women, heredity becomes a powerful tool for agency and racial progress.

However, this rhetoric also risked reifying women's biological roles as purely reproductive ones. Despite their acknowledgment of the reality of women working outside the home, women's most important responsibilities, and their duties to the race, were framed as mainly maternal. Both within eugenics discourse and New Negro discourse, black women were faced with attempts to "set an agenda for black reproduction and thus to establish control over modern black women's fertility" (English, *Unnatural Selections*, 132). Further, framing women's agency as primarily maternal and stressing that motherhood is the "crown of womanhood" and the "greatest joy, a crown more costly than pearls of royalty" (Laney 209) may also jeopardize women's agency in other arenas outside of the reproductive sphere. If women's primary responsibilities are maternal ones, any responsibilities outside of the reproductive sphere run the risk of being considered detrimental to the race. Perhaps most importantly, defining women by functions of their bodies, and attempting to control those bodies, reproduces the same control and power that slavery and continuing violence and oppression during Jim Crow enacted upon black women's bodies. Paradoxically, investing of women with a form of agency that depends on their bodies threatens to circumscribe the very agency of those bodies when women attempt to expand the possibilities available to them within this larger discourse.

Hopkins's own utilization of heredity and biological sciences for racial uplift works in much of the same way as that of African American women activists like Laney

and Hunt Logan, but it also relies on the same logic that, at times, essentializes women's roles and reproductive value. *Of One Blood* emphasizes women's ability to "move the race forward" (Kassanoff 163) and to act as representatives for the race; this ability is predicated on the imperative to reproduce and to mother good racial and national citizens. The novel's representation of Mira and Candace emphasizes the importance of the mother for racial progress by depicting a royal, noble heritage being a heritable trait transmitted maternally. This serves several important purposes. First, it combats racist, biologically essentialist Jim Crow arguments of racial inferiority used to discriminate against African Americans by swapping this inferiority for genetic and cultural ascendency. Second, it moves both literary representation and history away from envisioning African American women's bodies as sites of exploitation and violence and reinvests women with bodily authority and with autonomy, albeit a narrowly defined autonomy. Yet Hopkins also makes clear through her representation of Dianthe that women's reproductive power and the authority that they derive from it are foreclosed by the effects of continuing racism and the attendant exploitation of women's bodies, seen most clearly through Aubrey Livingston's kidnapping but also through Reuel's manipulation of her. Despite Reuel's assertion that by calling on both God and science, he will give her "life and love and wifehood and maternity and perfect health" (44), he is unable to save Dianthe from being determined by the exploitative, violence forces of white patriarchal control. According to the novel, women cannot realize their reproductive potential under these conditions, and the race as a whole suffers because of it.

Finally, it is important to point out that this emphasis on women's maternal powers and their consequences for the future of the race contains traces of ideas originating in the burgeoning eugenics movement of the early twentieth century. Although the more established eugenics movement, as scholars generally consider it, would not begin in full force for another ten to fifteen years, ideas of improving racial stock and of the relationship between racial "health," progress, and heredity, were certainly in scientific circulation and public imagination in 1902. Indeed, Daylanne English points out that "eugenics found a ready partner in the [early twentieth century's] class-based, intraracial improvement project for African Americans—that is, uplift," especially as the period's "notions of racial improvement (for both white and black people) became ever more tightly intertwined with the emerging science of eugenics" (*Unnatural Selections* 36-37). English also argues that African American women were "far more likely to resist [eugenics's] allure" (*Unnatural Selections* 122) than were African American men, but Hopkins, as well as some turn-of-the-century female activists, clearly saw some utility for its early ideas. Hopkins's arguments for the importance of hereditary "fitness" for racial progress, especially mothers' fitness, and her novel's emphasis on mothers' unique reproductive capabilities in service of the race, echoes much of this early eugenic thinking. Despite these echoes, I would not go as far as to say that the novel contains a "eugenic agenda" or even promotes a "eugenic vision," as John Nickel has described Hopkins's fiction (48).[29] The ideas found in the later

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[29] Nickel argues that for Hopkins, "genetic improvement was necessary for racial advancement and dependent on [African Americans'] marital choices" (47), a point with which I would not disagree. However, my analysis diverges from Nickel's in his framing Hopkins's reasons and solutions for

mainstream eugenics movement, particularly those that promoted negative eugenics but also those that advocated for racial purity, are not present in *Of One Blood*. The novel does, though, as I point out above, place a similar emphasis on women's functions being defined largely in terms of what their reproduction could do for larger racial progress and national health, and this is largely on what Hopkins's critique of the continued physical and psychological violence against African American women depends.

Linking the Racial Past with the Biological Present

Of One Blood, in its vast geographic, scientific, and narrative scope, provides a wide-ranging look at the early twentieth century social and political landscape for African Americans, deploying everything from psychology to Egyptology in order to critique the United States's continued oppression of those of African descent after slavery and to paint a portrait of their celebrated history. Throughout its convoluted plot that spans time and space, the novel's narrative is unified in part by Hopkins's use of evolutionary and hereditarian science. Specifically, Hopkins uses references to each of these discourses in order to challenge their inherent racism, to combat ideas of African (American) biological inferiority, and to represent a celebrated racial past for African Americans. Reuel's character is one of the primary means by which Hopkins challenges evolutionary science and its implications for African Americans. Reuel is a doctor and a man of

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genetic improvement. Nickel claims that Hopkins advocates for racial amalgamation as the primary means for genetic improvement in order to "produce a genetically superior race": "By eliminating racial differences, biological race assimilation would overcome deep-seated prejudices between the races and put an end to racist practices such as segregation" (48). In my reading of the novel, I do not see compelling evidence for Hopkins's advocacy of racial assimilation as the primary or most viable means of racial improvement or racial uplift.

introspection, refined taste, intelligence—a representation that works against the depiction of African Americans (and those of African descent more generally) in many literary and press representations in the midst of Jim Crow. Despite the fact that Reuel is not yet established as a doctor, he is already a "recognized power in the medical profession," with particular authority in "brain diseases" (27). He exercises this authority, and is deferred to by others in the profession, especially in the aftermath of Dianthe's accident. After successfully treating her, the best scientific journals and by the medical community celebrate his accomplishments. Reuel's intelligence and his capability as a doctor, then, are recognized by a respected (predominantly white) professional community, which acts as a direct challenge to the prevailing "wisdom" of the time that granted African Americans less mental capacity and cultural refinement than whites.

The novel mounts another challenge to this prevailing wisdom, especially as it pertained to those of mixed-race descent, with its descriptions of Reuel's physical appearance. These descriptions echo evolutionary science as well as physiognomy, a science popular in the nineteenth century that attempted to analyze a person's facial features, including their skull, in order to draw conclusions about their racial origin and accompanying moral characteristics. Hopkins devotes a long paragraph in the novel's opening pages to a detailed description of Reuel, whom "Mother Nature ha[s] blessed ... with superior physical endowments" (3). He has a "vast breadth of shoulder" and a "strong throat that upheld a plain face," with his head "that of an athlete" (3). These attractive physical characteristics are accentuated by a nose of an "aristocratic feature, although nearly spoiled by broad nostrils," skin that is "white, but of a tint suggesting

olive," and "very bright and piercing gray, courageous, keen, and shrewd" eyes" (3-4). With this detailed description, Hopkins borrows the ideas and some of the language from physiognomy that posited that physical characteristics correlated with moral ones and that moral character could be discerned simply by looking closely at an individual's physical features. Because Reuel is "physically superior," with features that suggest aristocracy and intelligence, readers can infer that he has a superior moral character, as well. This is important for challenging accounts supported by physiognomy that equated African Americans with both physical and moral shortcomings. Further, because readers later learn that Reuel is of mixed race (which is also suggested in this passage by Hopkins's description of his nose and his skin color), representing him as physically strong and attractive is important for deconstructing stereotypes of racially mixed individuals as biologically inferior and weak.

Biological superiority, indicated by physical, observable traits, is also suggested by descriptions of Dianthe's character by an emphasis on her physical form. Dianthe is "not in any way the preconceived idea of a Negro" (14), either in appearance or in the moral and intellectual characteristics that, according to stereotypes rampant in the early twentieth-century, would make her unintelligent, lacking in moral discernment, or sexually suspect. Like Reuel, Dianthe is fair-skinned, with "wavy bands of chestnut hair, and great, melting eyes of brown, soft as those of childhood [and] a willowy figure of exquisite mould" (14). Her face is a "study in its delicate, quickly changing tints, its sparkle of smiles running from the sweet, pure tremor of the lovely mouth to the swift laughter of eyes and voice" (56). Not only, then, is Dianthe physically beautiful, but she

also has the innocence of a child; in fact, that innocence is repeatedly emphasized throughout the novel through such comparisons. Especially after her accident and with her resulting amnesia, she is "like a child" (34) in her trust and her moral innocence, emphasizing her innocence and thus her moral virtue.

These descriptions of Reuel and Dianthe, particularly those that center on their physical superiority, simultaneously evoke and revise notions of African Americans' supposedly debased physical and moral characteristics as evidence of their lower placement on the evolutionary ladder, including their lack of conventional European beauty, intelligence, and cultural and professional accomplishments—ideas that were rooted in evolutionary science. Hopkins deftly adapts scientific ideas that were traditionally used against African Americans in order to represent Dianthe and Reuel's superior physical and intellectual characteristics and to challenge notions of a biology-based inferiority. Further, Susan Gillman points out that Reuel's gifts in the mesmeric sciences—especially since, as readers later find out, they are inherited from his mother Mira—are signs of advanced racial evolution:

> The novel represents the unconscious, operating through both Reuel's 'blood' inheritance and the occult sciences he studies in Meroe and Cambridge, as *racially* evolutive, that is, the means of the restoration of the formerly great Ethiopian 'race.' As such a tool of evolutionary progress for the race, Hopkins's unconscious may be read as a response to the debate within evolutionary theory over so-called black degeneracy, the view that postbellum blacks and especially

> mulattoes would not survive the Darwinian social struggle but would revert to African savagery and eventually die out as a race. (74)

If superior mental powers, including the occult are, then, hereditary, Reuel's abilities are evidence of a great racial past, posing a direct challenge both to allegations of racial degeneration in a Darwinian model of evolution and to common conceptions of Africa as lacking "civilization" and advancement.

In addition, the descriptions of Dianthe were meant to combat stereotypes of African American women as being morally lax and sexually promiscuous, which were supposedly traits that resulted from being evolutionarily primitive. As Sander Gilman has explained, images of women of African descent as sexually licentious were rooted in science but perpetuated by art, including literature, as well as by public exhibitions and resulting media coverage of women like Sarah Baartman. The eighteenth-century French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, for example, concluded that black women were characterized by a "lascivious, apelike sexual appetite" (Gilman, *Difference* 83)—a characterization by which black women "came to serve as an icon for black sexuality in general" and which served as evidence for "the black's position on the scale of humanity [as] antithetical to the whites'" (83). These stereotypes remained influential well into the twentieth century, especially in the United States, fueling the fire of systemic discrimination toward and prejudice against African Americans, particularly women. Hopkins's representation of her African American characters, especially her women characters, are intended to challenge that dominant discourse by proving that

African Americans were capable of intellectual and social—and, because of the scientific equation of physical and social characteristics, also biological—refinement.

It is important to note, however, that the descriptions of Reuel and Dianthe, especially those that link their physical with their moral and intellectual traits, do depend at least in part on whiteness. This does signify a problematic investment in the apparent superiority of "white" traits, including fair skin and straight hair and in equating physical whiteness with virtue and intelligence. It also points to the shifting meanings and functions of whiteness throughout the novel, a point to which I will return in my discussion of Aubrey below. Dianthe and Reuel's fair skin also, of course, indicates their mixed-race status and thus further Hopkins's monogenist doctrine. Her depiction of the novel's mulatto characters destabilizes the (racist) nineteenth-century use of the term "blood" to imply racial purity (i.e., the "one-drop rule") as well as scientifically-backed assumptions of "so-called black degeneracy" (Gillman 74). Susan Gillman points out that Hopkins adapts the scientific language of blood, "as articulated by both Egyptology and ethnology, in the service of her Ethiopianism," utilizing the burgeoning sciences of psychology and archaeology to support the novel's argument of Africans,' and thus African Americans,' advancement in civilization (63). It also serves to challenge the "racial hysteria" that arose surrounding the mulatto figure at the turn of the century, debunking the line of thought summarized by sociologist Henry Hughes that "hybridism is heinous. Impurity of the races is against the law of nature. Mulattoes are monsters" (Hughes 239-40). One of the primary, but certainly not the only, functions of Hopkins's mixed-race protagonists, then, is to destabilize the very meanings of "blood" and of

"race" and to mount a challenge to prevailing scientific belief in the detrimental biological consequences of racial amalgamation.

The representation of Telassar, the ancient, hidden African city of which Reuel becomes ruler, also challenges popular theories of Africa's (and Africans') primitiveness, mainly justified by a supposed lack of technological and cultural accomplishments. These theories, propagated by scientists, sociologists, and even economists like Joseph Alexander Tillinghast, pervaded the early twentieth-century cultural imagination, entering into literary representations, periodical accounts, and popular discourse of Africa and its descendants. For example, in his 1902 book *The Negro in Africa and in America*, Tillinghast traces the history of Africa in order to provide a comprehensive look at African Americans and their African ancestors. Tillinghast cites written accounts of explorers such as journalist and linguist A.H. Keane and sociologist and ethnologist Mary Henrietta Kingsley in his argument that the fact that "negroes living along the western verge of the continent at any given period have not been the best specimens of their race" (428) may explain the lack of civilization of the African Americans who descended from them as a result of the West African slave trade. Tillinghast explains that there is "very little evidence of [the] progress" of West African civilization, which seems to have suffered from "arrested development" for thousands of years (431). Their culture is "on a very low level, and very unprogressive," having "no letters, art, or science," little developed industry, and language in an "agglutinative state" (431-32),[30] implying that

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[30] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "aggluginative" is defined as being characterized by agglutination, or "the morphological process of successively adding affixes to a root in order to form a

their less complex system of language is further evidence of their lack of civilization. The "psychic nature" of African Americans' West African ancestors is childlike and intellectually and emotionally immature, with "fitful, passionate, and cruel" temperaments (432). They are also "sensuous ... [and] possess little sense of dignity and little self-consciousness" (433). For Tillinghast, Keane, Kingsley, and others, these characteristics are signs of Africans' evolutionary primitiveness, as well as evidence of "mysterious force" of heredity (408) on African Americans' primitiveness, since, according to Tillinghast, "no ethnic group, with its inborn nature moulded for ages in an undisturbed environment, can be radically transformed for twenty or thirty generations" (408).

In *Of One Blood*, the primary means by which Hopkins defies accounts of Africa by those such as Tillinghast is her representation of Telassar, which is as a resplendent, technologically and biologically advanced civilization. It is more advanced, in fact, than America. Contrary to nineteenth-century beliefs in polygenesis as well as beliefs in Europe as the seat of civilization, the Africa expedition's leader, Professor Stone, contends that "black was the original color of man in prehistoric times" and even that the "Ethiopian is the primal race" as well as the font of all "arts, sciences, and knowledge" (Hopkins 88). Locating the origin of all people in Ethiopia and therefore promoting the idea that all people are, quite literally, "of one blood" poses a bold challenge to polygenesis—the belief that the different races originated from different sources—as well

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compound, contrasted as a mode of word-formation or of the expression of complex ideas with inflection or the use of isolated elements."

as to the very idea of (white) racial purity on which miscegenation laws, de facto and de jure segregation, and, later, the eugenics movement, depended. Additionally, Professor Stone's story of Ethiopia's past gave Hopkins's African American readers a usable, illustrious past on which they could pride themselves. Stone points out that although common belief is that the modern Western world is "indebted for its advancement to the Romans, Greeks, Hebrews, Germans, and Anglo-Saxons," Egypt and Babylon were in actuality the "pioneers of mankind in the untrodden fields of knowledge" (98). Ethiopians were known for their cultural and technological accomplishments in astronomy, philosophy, and city planning throughout the world, and it is from these people that modern African Americans descended. Meroe, Telassar's predecessor, was the "queenly city" of these great Ethiopians (101). When a listener challenges Stone's theory on the basis of the current "abjectness of the American Negro," the professor acknowledges this fall from greatness, but points out that "from what a depth does history [also] show that the Anglo-Saxon has climbed to the position of the first people of the earth today" (101). In this short but significant exchange, Hopkins simultaneously points the reader back to African Americans' magnificent racial heritage in Africa as evidence that their current position in American society is unjust; suggests that they, like the "Anglo-Saxon," can again reach their former greatness; and locates Anglo-Saxon history not in the "civilized" past it has claimed for itself but rather lower on the ladder of accomplishment and therefore of civilization.

The city of Telassar, which lay hidden until its king Ergamenes (who, of course, turns out to be Reuel) returns to "restore the former glory of the race" (102), reflects

ancient Africa's greatness, and modern Africa's potential to return to that greatness. The city is marked by what early twentieth-century readers would have recognized as luxury and abundance, from its food to its treasure to its people themselves. Telassar's inhabitants are physically perfect, again suggesting Hopkin's utilization of physiognomy to suggest cultural advancement; their faces are "perfect in the cut an outline of every feature; the forms hidden by soft white drapery [of the chamber in which Reuel stood], Grecian in effect, were athletic and beautifully molded" (113). Ai, Telassar's prime minister, has an especially "patriarchal bearing" in both physical form, which "combin[es] force, sweetness, and dignity in every feature" (114), and intelligence. Further, Reuel soon realizes that Telassar is more "accomplished" than even the United States. "Here in Telassar," Ai tells Reuel, "are preserved specimens of the highest attainments the world knew in ancient days. They tell me that in many things your modern world is yet in its infancy" (119). For example, Telassar uses a process "handed down from the earliest days of Ethiopian greatness" to preserve both flowers for decorating the halls of its great temple and the bodies of its "most beautiful women" (131), and Ai gently mocks the "modern world" for not having "solved this simple process" (131).

Telassar's abundance of evidence of civilization poses a challenge to scientific and imperialist allegations of Africans' biological and evolutionary inferiority. Its inhabitants, its riches, and its abundance of technology clearly do not fit the "primitive" portrait of Africa painted by white historians, ethnographers, and scientists alike, from Darwin to Tillinghast. Through the novel's depiction of Telassar, coupled with her

representations of Reuel and Dianthe, Hopkins puts a final nail in the coffin of evolutionary biology's conceptualizations of Africans and African Americans as primitive, lacking in intelligence, and biologically weak. It is also important to point out, however, that Hopkins makes this argument through a reliance on the same Darwinist logic that she is attempting to undercut. Martin Japtok refers to this as falling into the "Darwinist trap"; by emphasizing ancient Ethiopia's and Telassar's technological advancement, its high culture, and its residents' physical perfection, Hopkins allows "technology and pseudo-racism to come together as a world view" (Japtok 403), using the same logic as nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imperialists, who believed (or justified their exploits with the belief) that the worth of a people depends on their accomplishments. The Western world could point to its accomplishments in art, technology, and culture (defined by Western standards, of course) as evidence for its evolutionary superiority and its right to colonize and to "civilize" other, less racially evolved nations. As Japtok points out, in order to challenge this thinking, *Of One Blood* actually utilizes its logic but reverses its use, establishing a revised racial hierarchy based on notions of "'race development' measured on the scale of civilization" (405). In so doing, the novel also reinforces in the same biologically essentialist notions it attempts to destabilize. By depicting Telassar's citizens as physically perfect, beautiful, and intelligent, Hopkins continues to equate biological worth with biological perfection. The narrative is flipped, but the hierarchy of racial development remains untouched. While Hopkins' use of evolutionary science to challenge racist ideas of African (American) cultural and biological inferiority and to promote a cultural past worthy of celebration is

skillful, her reliance upon the same logic as the theories she was contesting risks undermining the power of the novel's argument.

Reproduction, Uplift, and Bodily Autonomy

Hopkins relies on this same biological essentialism in order to position her women characters as the locus for racial progress and as ensurers of racial destiny both in Africa and in the United States. Through her representation of Dianthe, Mira and Candace as physically beautiful and morally pure, Hopkins proves their fitness for reproduction and for producing the future children of the race. As stated above, the novel's female characters' physical perfection and virtuous natures combat popular images of African Americans as physically degenerate, morally suspect, and, for women especially, sexually licentious. Hopkins also positions Dianthe as important for continuing Telassar's royal bloodline in America. This bloodline passed down, significantly, through her mother, Mira, privileging black women's unique abilities to reproduce and connects those abilities with women's unique contribution to racial uplift. In doing so, Hopkins signifies not only the "insurgent potential of the mother" (Kassanoff 175) but also the imperative to safeguard women's bodily and moral integrity in order to preserve the future of the race. While Mira and Candace both demonstrate this "insurgent potential" through their resistance to racial oppression and their reproduction, Dianthe cannot fulfill her reproductive destiny while she continues to be subject to white patriarchal control. In other words, her reproductive autonomy, is foreclosed by the continued control of and violence upon black women's bodies. For Hopkins, in order to achieve racial progress, women must be liberated from this control, given autonomy over

their own bodies, and allowed to fulfill their reproductive destinies. While Hopkins's argument for the necessity of racial uplift in *Of One Blood*, especially through the representation of Mira, Candace, and Dianthe, centers on this liberation, it also relies in part on early eugenics discourse that equated women's value with their reproductive functions and that positioned those reproductive functions as detrimental to the future of the race.

Both sexuality and reproduction, especially for women, were closely intertwined in the discourse of racial uplift and its related concept of racial destiny in the opening decades of the twentieth century in order to challenge prevailing stereotypes of African Americans and to disprove charges of biological inferiority based in biological and social sciences. Michele Mitchell has described the linkage of racial destiny and sexuality as resulting from late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century sexual terrorism, including lynching and interracial rape: "Indeed, sexuality—in the richness of its expression, the complexity of its dynamics, the pervasiveness of its racial stereotypes—was particularly fraught for African Americans" (11). Despite this fraught relationship, activists, authors, and other influential African Americans in early twentieth century "explore[d] the ways in which sex could bolster the literal reproduction of the race, secure a healthy presence in the national body politic, and strengthen the collective integrity of Americans with African heritage" (79).

Guiding reproduction, including mothering practices and marriage choices, therefore became important means of racial uplift, especially when that guidance was filtered through the politics of respectability. The emphasis on women (and men) making

the "right" reproductive choices linked up with a wider shift in the rhetoric of racial uplift more generally in the early twentieth century. After combatting science-based biologically determinist ideas on logical grounds failed, many reformers and intellectuals turned to adapting them for racial improvement. According to Marouf Arif Hasian, Jr., these figures realized that "if racists were going to employ the weapons of science, then they had to be countered with scientific as well as moral arguments" (62). As the century progressed, arguments were increasingly made through the utilization of eugenic concepts and discourse. As Mitchell suggests, eugenics

> implied that an ethnically, racially, or nationally configured people could ensure their vitality via concerted efforts to impose boundaries and order upon the sexual collective. Thus, whereas African Americans had to contend with a legion of theory that implied that all people of color sprung from degenerate stock, they could actually subvert racism within eugenic thought through the guise of uplift. (81)

We have seen this adaptation of eugenic ideas already in black clubswomen's rhetoric, in its emphasis on improving environmental conditions for black women and their children as well as on improving so-called "hereditary influences," especially those that came from the mother. Such improvements were positioned as essential to the future health and social success of the race.

In doing so, such figures called upon popular scientific theories of heredity and reproduction to inform their arguments, as eugenics discourse generally did. Eugenics suggested that in order to achieve racial progress, the race needed the "right" children,

from the "right" parents. Some African American intellectuals, activists, and writers, primarily from the burgeoning black middle class, therefore "used arguments regarding how heredity bolstered group vitality; they advocated eugenic solutions and sex regulation as viable means of lowering black morbidity" (Mitchell 86). These arguments didn't just employ and reappropriate a discourse that had roots in, and often was used as evidence for, racist ideas. They also tended to reduce women and their bodily autonomy to primarily reproductive roles; to reinforce class difference; to paternalize poor and rural black women and men; and to chastise those who wished not to live by middle-class standards of (sexual) respectability or become primarily defined by their reproductive value.

Each of Hopkins's main female characters, but perhaps most especially Mira, emphasize the importance of the mother to racial progress. Mira is perhaps one of the most powerful sites of maternal power and maternal resistance in the novel, despite her slave status and the foreclosure of bodily agency attendant upon it. Through Mira's subversiveness in spite of that status as well as the power she holds through her ability to pass down her royal heritage to her three children, Hopkins establishes the power of women, and of mothers specifically, to African Americans' realization of their racial destiny. The power of Mira's resistance in spite of the bodily coercions endemic to slavery is perhaps most clearly illustrated in Aubrey's retelling of her experience as a slave in his father's household early in the novel. Mira is the subject of the elder Livingston's mesmeric practices; he used these powers often to have her "perform tricks of mind-reading for the amusement of visitors" (Hopkins 50). Her mind and body are

literally controlled by Livingston, providing a literalization of the wholesale control of women's bodies in slavery and "problematiz[ing] the racial and gendered dynamics of compulsion that emerge out of science, psychology, and racism in the U.S." (Lam 485). According to Joshua Lam, automatism, as practiced by Reuel Briggs as well as by his slaveholding father, is used in the novel to represent ambiguous agencies and "competing determinisms" and explore the relationship between individual will and "historical and scientific modernity" (474). Hopkins uses automatism as a trope for the coercion and violence endemic to slavery and Jim Crow as well as a site of limited resistance (485). Lam is largely pessimistic about automatism's implications for women's agency in the novel, but I argue that Mira is able to resist this totalizing control by prophesying the Civil War and Livingston's demise in it. When Livingston commands her, in front of a room full of guests, to "tell the company what you see" while in one of her mesmeric states, she tells him, "You will not like it, captain; but if I must, I must. All the women will be widows and the men shall sleep in early graves. ... Your houses shall burn, your fields be laid waste, and a downtrodden race shall rule in your land. For you, captain, a prison cell and a pauper's grave" (Hopkins 51). The prophecy, of course, comes true; the Civil War broke out soon afterward, and Livingston died in a prison camp in Boston Harbor. Through this prophecy of the destruction of the South, the death of Aubrey's father, and the liberation of African Americans, Mira asserts a degree of agency despite the coercions of slavery that are literalized by Livingston's mesmeric control.

Mira also displays agency through her own occult power, even from beyond the grave, by appearing to Reuel and to Dianthe in order to reveal their true heritage; she is

therefore one of the novel's primary sources of knowledge and the power of racial destiny. Once Dianthe falls under Aubrey's control in Reuel's absence, Mira appears to her in a vision, opening her Bible to reveal a quotation from the book of Luke: "For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed" (73). The passage is signed with Mira's name. Although Dianthe does not know at this moment how to interpret the passage, it foreshadows her later discovery of her sibling relationship with Reuel and Aubrey and of her royal racial bloodline. Mira is also instrumental in causing Reuel to realize Aubrey's deception and to journey home in an (ultimately failed) attempt to save Dianthe from him. Up to this point, based on a letter that Aubrey had written him, Reuel has believed Dianthe to be dead; however, while Reuel is in Telassar, Mira awakens him from his sleep, beckoning him to follow her and leading him to the place where Jim Titus, Aubrey's co-conspirator in Africa, has been captured. Titus finally admits to Reuel that Dianthe is not only alive, but also his "own sister, the half-sister of Aubrey Livingston, who is [his] half-brother" (163). Aubrey's scheme is revealed, and Reuel leaves the following day to go back to America to reunite with Dianthe. Mira thus acts as a source of knowledge and racial heritage for her children. Even though she clearly illustrates, particularly through the trope of mesmerism, the lack of volition and bodily autonomy that women faced under slavery, she also acts as a figure of (limited) resistance—resistance located not only in her prophecy but also, significantly, in her relationship to her children after her death. Her power to reveal the trauma and violence of slavery, the losses of family relations engendered by it, and the loss of agency of women even in its aftermath, demonstrates the power of women more generally in the novel.

Mira's relationship to her children does not just hold this revelatory power after her death; it also, more importantly, has the power of transmitting an inherited royalty through blood. The royal inheritance is marked by a birthmark in the shape of a lotus-lily on the breast of each of her children. This is the most powerful legacy Mira gives to her children, which is passed through "blood" as a hereditary trait. The lotus-lily is "God's mark to prove [their] race and descent" (123); every descendant of Ergamenes, the descendant of "that Ergamenes who lived in the reign of the second Ptolemy," with this mark is destined to "return and restore the former glory of the race" (101-102). Because Mira is in this line of descendants, she passes her royal blood on to each of her children. The hereditary transmission of royalty and racial nobility marks the power of the mother to realize and bring forth the destiny of the race, indicating that women's roles are integral to the future of the race, especially to realizing the power of their noble heritage and bringing that heritage to bear on future generations. Despite the sexual violence done to her body and her loss of autonomy over it, Mira's celebrated racial past, and her ability to impact African Americans' racial future, cannot be touched. This representation also allows women, both in slavery and in its aftermath, to regain their bodily autonomy through reproduction, specifically through the power of heredity, echoing New Negro discourse that utilized sexual science and heredity in order to promote women's importance to racial progress.

In addition to Mira, Candace also underscores Hopkins's identification of the "revived Ethiopian royalty with a woman's blood" (Kassanoff 172) and of the power of women in achieving racial destiny. Candace is the virgin queen of Telassar who "waits

the coming of Ergamenes to inaugurate a dynasty of kings" (Hopkins 130); she and Reuel, as the descendant of Ergamenes, will unite to "give to the world a dynasty of dark-skinned rulers, whose destiny it should be to restore the prestige of an ancient people" (139). Like Mira, reproduction is an essential part of her role and her power to revive the race and to bring its destiny to fruition; the revival of Ethiopian power will come through her reproductive power. Predictably, Candace is also described as physically perfect in another moment that recalls eugenic discourse of women's reproduction, which is key for achieving biological racial progress through the novel's emphasis on physical perfection being united with biological, social, and reproductive value. Candace has a "subtle grace of form and feature," and her "loveliness [is] absolutely and ideally perfect" (137). Importantly, she also acts as a model for female behavior, especially in her interaction with Reuel. She not only is the "embodiment of all chastity" (137), but she immediately defers to Reuel, laying herself at his feet "in token of [her] submission" and swearing him "eternal fealty" (138). While Reuel does "pledge [his] faith" to her as well, swearing to "fulfil [his] destiny and to "cleave to [her] until the end" (138-39), their relationship acts as a model for male-female relationships, filtered through each party's reproductive potential; women are to defer to men, while retaining their reproductive power.

Additionally, the parallels that Hopkins draws between Candace and Dianthe are especially significant for drawing attention to women's reproductive power and to the stakes of the foreclosure of reproductive agency. Dianthe and Candace are physically and behaviorally similar. When Reuel first hears Candace's voice, it is as if "Dianthe's own voice was breathing in his ears" (136). Candace also reminds Reuel of Dianthe in

appearance and comportment. Candace is the "same height as Dianthe, had the same well-developed shoulders and the same admirable bust" (137) and shares her "grace" and "strength" (137). In addition to indicating Dianthe's own royalty and her racial heritage, united to Candace by blood, these similarities highlight Hopkins's adaptation of blood discourse to meet her own purposes in emphasizing African Americans' noble past. By merging the two women, Hopkins also merges Dianthe with the racial future that Candace and Reuel will engender and with women's critical roles in it.

Dianthe, of course, cannot and does not fulfill this reproductive role, due to the control and violence enacted upon her by Aubrey Livingston. Lois Brown suggests that that despite the similarities between their characters, Dianthe and Candace are intended to "explore the deeply contrasting American and African cultural responses to women" (397). I would add that Hopkins emphasizes that Dianthe's inability to realize her reproductive destiny is the result of women's bodies being subject not to their own control but to that of white men—or, at least, of men who operate under and are granted benefits by white patriarchal systems of control. After Reuel's departure to Africa and the death of Molly Vance, Dianthe is kidnapped by Aubrey and forced to live under his control at his family's old plantation in a symbolic reproduction of slave relations—especially after he forces her to marry him in the ultimate foreclosure of her agency, which also signifies the sexual violation inherent in master-slave relations. Dianthe's agency is stripped completely away as a result. In Reuel's absence, she has already lost her willpower, becoming a "puppet" (69) as a result; after her marriage to Aubrey, her agency is erased even completely, especially after she falls under his own mesmeric

powers, which he uses to "render her quiescent in his hands, and not too curious as to circumstances of time and place" (166). Aubrey's power over Dianthe as a result of the privilege granted him by white patriarchy and her inability to withstand the effects of that privilege signifies the damage done by white social control to African American women's subjectivity even in the aftermath of slavery.

It has dire consequences for Aubrey, as well. His ignorance of his "black blood" not only causes him to enter into an incestuous relationship with Dianthe, his sister, but also results in his eventual suicide. Kassanoff points out that Aubrey represents most forcefully the "dilemma of passing" (168), showing the "inconsequence of actual skin color" (168) in addition to the costs of ignoring or being unaware of racial history. Slavery, especially the power dynamic and its resulting sexual violence between white men and their female slaves, tended to obscure family relations, leading to the possibility of incest among the offspring that the sexual violence produced. Aubrey and Dianthe's incestuous relationship, then, makes clear the consequences of lost racial heritage for both men and women. Additionally, Aubrey's behavior as a result of his unawareness of his racial identity and of the privileges his resulting apparent whiteness allows him prevents him from "reap[ing] [the] royal benefits" of his African blood (Kassanoff 168) in Telassar and also results in his eventual (forced) suicide, again representing the shifting meanings of whiteness throughout the novel. Whiteness, especially when it depends on false ideals of "racial purity" and on denying black history and racial identity, is ultimately equated with death.

As a result of Aubrey's control over her, Dianthe's autonomy continues to deteriorate until the novel's climax results in the ultimate loss of volition. When Dianthe is at her wit's end and attempts to assert a degree of agency in poisoning Aubrey, Aubrey uses mesmerism to force *her* to drink the poison, which results in her death. Dianthe's agency in his act is totally lost, especially as the scene is cast in terms of the loss of *bodily* agency; Aubrey literally forces the cup to her lips and causes her to drink in an act that symbolizes the "accumulation of years of foulest wrongs heaped upon the innocent and defenseless women of a race" (164). Through this act and her resulting death, Dianthe does not simply lose her bodily agency but also is unable to enact the reproductive role that is her destiny, as signified by her lotus-lily birthmark. She cannot return to Telassar with Reuel, except in spirit; the royal Ethiopian line cannot be continued, at least by her, either in Africa or in America, signifying not only the lack of agency black women continue to face in America but also the resulting inability to realize their reproductive as well as racial destinies. Molly Godfrey argues that it is Dianthe's passivity that makes clear that black women's exploitation lay at the intersection of white and patriarchal abuse. Similarly, Jennie Kassanoff argues that while Hopkins identifies the "genesis of revived Ethiopian royalty with women's blood" (172) through her representation of Mira as well as of Candace, Dianthe's passivity problematizes this model. However, these assessments do not consider Hopkins's representation of the loss of Dianthe's reproductive potential through the parallels between her and Candace and through Hopkins's echoing of eugenic arguments to decry consequences of the loss of that potential. These gaps in the critical conversation about the novel demonstrate the

importance of analyzing Hopkins's investment in hereditarian science, including eugenics, in order to fully understand her representation of Dianthe.

Therefore, throughout *Of One Blood* Hopkins celebrates the authority of African American women by investing them with reproductive autonomy, but also argues that this authority is nearly impossible to achieve while black women are still subject to coercion and white patriarchal control. Such control reinscribes violence of slavery on the bodies of its women descendants, who continue to be stripped of their agency long after Emancipation. Hopkins makes clear, especially through Dianthe's fate, that black women's reproductive potential cannot be realized while their bodies are still be subject to the control of others. In her representation of Mira and Candace, though, Hopkins points toward the power of women to assert agency through their reproduction, either in spite of or outside of the determining force of racism. Although the novel ends with the death of Dianthe and her reproductive potential, Hopkins retains hope in a future where women and their maternal potential cannot be touched by racism's influence.

Hopkins, Stein, and Medical Determinism

Hopkins's innovative strategies in using scientific and medical concepts of race and sex are made even more evident when considered alongside the work of her white contemporaries, who tended to deploy those same concepts unproblematically in their explorations of human nature and of the relationship between free well and determinism. Gertrude Stein's "Melanctha" exemplifies these differences. "Melanctha" (1909) is a productive lens through which to view Hopkins's *Of One Blood* for several important reasons. First, both Stein and Hopkins are women writers of the early twentieth century

who navigated simultaneously the male-dominated literary and scientific landscapes, a navigation that is apparent in both women's writing. Second, both were influenced by William James and his study of psychology. Hopkins was intrigued by James and by the burgeoning field of psychology. As Joshua Lam as well as other critics have pointed out, the book that Reuel is reading in the opening scene of *Of One Blood,* not only references but quotes at length James's essay "The Hidden Self." Stein, having been a student of James during her time in medical school at Johns Hopkins, not only read James's essay and his book *The Principles of Psychology* (1890), but published her own articles that delved into the field of psychology: "Normal Motor Automatism" (1896) and "Cultivated Motor Automatism: A Study of Character in Its Relation to Attention" (1898). Finally, and most importantly, both Hopkins and Stein engage with sex- and race-based stereotypes found in and perpetuated by science and medicine in *Of One Blood* and "Melanctha." However, whereas Hopkins uses those discourses and the stereotypes they engender in order to undermine them, Stein largely affirms the medicalized discourse of the black female body (and the black body more generally). In "Melanctha," Stein's exploration of the intersections of women's bodies, medicine, and heredity depends through her mixed-race protagonist depends on stereotypes of African American women's oversexualized natures as well as theories of mixed-race individuals as biologically and psychologically degenerate. The stereotypes of the mulatta woman consequently allow Stein to explore how identities are constructed and bodies are determined both by medicine and by heredity. This comparative reading throws into stark

relief Hopkins's critical treatment of that discourse and her inventive use of it for racial uplift.

"Melanctha" tells the story of a mixed-race woman who, unable to find fulfillment and contentment in her life among her family and friends, "wanders" the streets of a fictionalized Baltimore in search of "wisdom." These euphemisms refer to her sexual encounters with both African American and white men. When Melanctha meets the "serious, earnest, good young joyous" Dr. Jefferson Campbell (Stein 63), who is her mother's doctor, the two soon enter into a romantic relationship. However, their different natures—Melantha's "complex, desiring" and "blue" (48) nature always in search of wisdom and Jeff's desire to be "regular in all [his] life" (67)—eventually cause them to part. Afteward, Melanctha spends much of her time caring for her friend Rose Johnson and continuing to "wander," until Rose spurns her due to fear of Melanctha's relationship with her husband. Melanctha leaves Rose and soon afterward contracts tuberculosis, dying alone in a sanitorium.

William Carlos Williams described "Melanctha" as a "thrilling clinical record" (Williams 548), an apt description for its use of repetitive, descriptive detailing of Melanctha's life as well as, according to Yeonsik Jung, its parallels to a "medical record of the deceased" (427) in which the medical practitioner works backward from the patient's death to surmise the cause of death. This "clinical record," much like early twentieth-century science and medicine, used racialized thinking in order to discern reasons for behavior and psychology. The racial stereotypes that Stein engages in "Melanctha" allow her to explore the psychology of her mixed-race protagonist and to

explore the effects of heredity on individuals, particularly African Americans. The first of these stereotypes involves mixed-race individuals as physically and psychologically inferior, doomed to dying out because of their inability to withstand the pressures of evolution. Melanctha is repeatedly described as emotionally "complex," indicating a psychological ambivalence due to her mixed-race identity—an ambivalence that determines her relationships with others, her navigation of the world around her, and her ultimate fate. Melanctha, "half made with real white blood," is "subtle, intelligent, [and] attractive" (Stein 48) and has an "inborn intense wisdom" (53), but she is also melancholy, as her name suggests: "Sometimes the thought of how all her world was made, filled the complex, desiring Melanctha with despair. She wondered, often, how she could go on living when she was so blue" (48).

Like Hopkins's mixed-race characters, Melanctha is granted special insights and power as a result of her liminal identity; however, Melanctha's "hybrid identity" (English, "Gertrude Stein," 195) is not a source of empowerment, but rather one of crisis and angst. Melanctha's "desiring, complex" nature is juxtaposed to the "earth-born, boundless joy of negroes" (47) who are not of mixed race, suggesting that her identity is the reason for her being "so blue" (48). Melanctha also repeatedly threatens to kill herself, believing that it is "the best thing for her herself to do" (48). Further, Stein indicates that her hybrid identity is the reason for her "wandering" in search of "wisdom." Melanctha is repeatedly sexualized through the story's emphasis on these wanderings, again playing into stereotypes of African American women as hypersexualized. She realizes "very early how to use her power as a woman" (53); at a

young age, she "really ... begin[s] as a woman" and starts to "search in the streets and in dark corners to discover men and to learn their natures and their various ways of working" (54). Rose's character is similarly oversexualized, but, importantly, not because of a lack of fulfillment or a crisis of identity, but rather because of a simple "promiscuous" nature (48). Whereas Hopkins refuses to endorse stereotypes of black women as oversexualized (or, really, sexualized at all), Stein accepts them largely without question, writing them into her protagonist's quest for knowledge and fulfillment and using them to explore larger questions of the nature of identity for mixed-race women.

Although Stein represents Melanctha's complexity as linked to her mixed-race identity and the liminal space that she occupies because of it, the story also suggests another element of hereditary influence as being responsible for Melanctha's nature: the influence of her "black father" (50). Here again, Stein deploys racialized images of the violent, uncontrollable "black brute," certainly not originating in but made even more culturally pervasive by literary accounts such as Thomas Dixon's *The Clansman* (1905). The "real power" of Melanctha's nature comes not from her "pale yellow" mother but her "robust and unpleasant and very unendurable black father" (50). Her father is variously referred to as "black and coarse," a "big black virile negro," and a "powerful, loose built, hard-handed, black angry negro" (51); always his blackness is emphasized, as is his physicality and his potential for violence, fulfilling many of the stereotypes of African American men that those like Chesnutt were explicitly writing against. Like Melanctha, her father is also sexualized, with Stein's emphasis on his virility. She also derives at

least a part of her melancholy nature from her father; both she and her father "always made a hard forced laugh" and lack the "joyous" nature and "abandoned laughter that gives the broad glow to negro sunshine" (51). The "bad" parts of Melanctha's nature are derived from her father's hereditary influence, while her emotional complexity is derived from her whiteness. This emotional complexity, as I have argued above, is what makes Melanctha unhappy and constantly searching for psychological fulfillment. It gives Melanctha her thinking nature, thus making her, in the evolutionary thought of the early twentieth century, more racially "advanced." However, her "black" traits, coupled with the fact that she cannot reap the benefits of that whiteness (indicated by her despair at the "thought of how all her world was made"), keep her from achieving that racial advancement.

Stein also employs racial stereotypes of African American women in her representation of Rose Johnson, which allows her to further probe the nature of (black) hereditary influences. Rose is a "tall, well-built, sullen, stupid, childlike, good looking negress" (47) and is "promiscuous" as well (48). Stein explicitly attributes these traits to her "nature" (i.e., her blackness) rather than her environment. Rose was raised by a white family, who treated her "like their own child" (47), but her "white training had only made for habits, not for nature," made especially evident in Rose's having the "simple, promiscuous unmorality of the black people" (48). Here, then, like in her study of Melanctha's character, Stein suggests the inviolability of biology, taking an almost scientific approach in her characterization of Rose based on racial categories and the stereotypes that inhered in them and, unlike Hopkins, deploying those stereotypes

unproblematically in order to highlight Rose's differences as a "real black" (47) with Melanctha and to establish the primacy of hereditary influence. Additionally, also like Hopkins, Stein engages eugenic ideas about black motherhood through Rose's character; however, for Stein, these ideas are not used to celebrate the future progress of the race. Rose gives birth to a child, aided by Melanctha, but because Rose is "careless and negligent and selfish" (47), the baby soon dies from neglect. Further, Rose was at first "very sorry" but soon forgot about her baby's death entirely, as "these things came so often in the negro world in Bridgepoint" (47). Here, Stein echoes concerns about mothers' caretaking of infants and of black mothers' supposed ignorance of childrearing as detrimental to the race as a whole found in the clubswomen's rhetoric described above as well as in eugenic rhetoric about the degeneracy and eventual dying out of the African American race, reflecting similar concerns about black women's fertility. The "inability" to take care of their children, which is figured as a result of biological shortcomings rather than environmental conditions fueled by racism, was evidence that both positive and negative eugenic measures needed to be taken to manage the procreation of African American women. Stein does not critically examine the medicalized and racialized discourse that fuels the assumptions that underlie her representation of Rose; rather, she uses that discourse in service of the story's larger project of documenting the lives of black working-class women.

Therefore, whereas both Stein's and Hopkins's anxieties over African Americans women's reproduction are evident, the two writers work through that anxiety, specifically through early twentieth-century scientific and medical discourse, in radically different

ways. Like Dianthe, Melanctha cannot fulfill her reproductive role; Melanctha finds it impossible to settle down and marry. However, for Melanctha, it is not because of race- and sex-based oppression itself, but rather because of inherent, biological obstacles that cause her to constantly search for "wisdom" and fulfillment and to be "blue," attributed to her hybrid identity. This echoes historical anxieties over mixed race individuals and their biological and social viability in the American cultural landscape. Whereas Dianthe is purely socially determined in her fate, Melanctha ends up being determined "not by medical intervention, but by her own pathological, hybrid identity" (English, "Gertrude Stein," 195). Ultimately, in "Melanctha," Stein, unlike Hopkins, relies upon, rather than destabilizes, racial categories in order to make her argument.

Situating Hopkins's *Of One Blood* alongside Stein's "Melanctha" reveals the social and scientific conditions in which Hopkins wrote her generically and thematically innovative novel as well as the difficulties in navigating a literary landscape that often relied upon stereotypes rampant within the American cultural milieu. It also makes clear that while *Of One Blood* clearly relies upon the race- and sex-based essentialism endemic to the early twentieth century—essentialism that characterizes Stein's depiction of her African American characters in "Melanctha"—Hopkins also deployed inventive and even radical literary strategies for deconstructing that essentialism and for opening a space for agency for black women. Hopkins's novel taps into the same concerns over reproduction, heredity, and their relationship with racial identity and racial progress that characterized much scientific and cultural discourse in the opening years of the twentieth century, but

Hopkins adapts them in order to reclaim the subjectivity and the moral authority of black women in the face of rampant racism and sexism.

As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, some white women did also successfully reappropriate science-based biologically essentialist discourse in their writing. Writers like Edith Summers Kelley reworked eugenics discourse and the sexual categories on which it depended in order to critique male determinism's constraining influence on women's agency. However, as male authors often ignored the gender-based elements of racial science and discourse, so too did white female writers ignore or underplay the racial elements of sexual science. Like Hopkins, we will also find that Kelley, as well as other white women writers, did not wholly undermine sexual science's logic in their critiques and often used that same logic to carve out autonomy for their female protagonists—an illustration of how difficult the early twentieth-century social and scientific landscape was to navigate for those who were often determined by it.

CHAPTER 4: "A LONG TORTURE TO BEAR": MOTHERHOOD, HEREDITY, AND EUGENICS IN EDITH SUMMERS KELLEY'S *WEEDS*

As the previous chapter demonstrated, women's reproduction was considered by scientists, activists, and novelists alike as a key site for fostering racial progress. Theories of heredity, especially after the loss of favor of the principle of acquired characters, were of particular importance for understanding women's unique power to shape racial and national futures. Pauline Hopkins coopted these theories and the rhetoric of the eugenics movement that depended on them to reveal African Americans women's potential for achieving racial destiny through reproduction. Yet African American writers were not the only ones who saw literary value in hereditarian theories nor in their implications for exploring women's reproductive potential. Although the aims of their critique and the strategies they adopted were necessarily different for African American and white writers, white women naturalists also seized upon the opportunities that scientific theories of heredity, race, and sex offered to analyze women's social conditions in the early twentieth century and to critique their use as tools for oppression.

Edith Summers Kelley is one of these writers. Both Hopkins and Kelley use their fiction to decry women's lack of agency over their reproductive bodies and to show the consequences of scientific and social control of those bodies. For both writers, the continued denial of autonomy women faced as a result of sexist (and for Hopkins racist) social forces has dire physical and psychological consequences. Hopkins ultimately affirms the liberatory potential of reproduction outside of white patriarchal control by arguing that women need the freedom *to* reproduce to achieve racial destiny. Kelley,

though, argues in her 1923 novel *Weeds* that women need freedom *from* reproduction; when outside of women's own control, it acts as a limiting force on their agency. For Kelley, women can reclaim agency through *limiting* reproduction, namely through access to contraception. While, like Hopkins, Kelley taps into the logic of the eugenics movement's arguments regarding fertility and racial progress, the dependency of this argument on limiting fertility through contraception also depends both on the time period in which Kelley wrote and her own racial and class status.

Kelley's *Weeds* depicts the physical and psychological impact of repeated childbearing on a rural Kentucky woman. The novel demonstrates that early twentieth-century women's agency was limited not inherently by their reproduction (i.e., their biology) but rather the social conditions, including strict gender-based expectations for women as well as the poverty engendered by the tenant farming system, that cause women to be reduced culturally to their biological functions. Judith Pippinger Blackford, the novel's protagonist, begins the novel as a vivacious, vibrant child but after marrying and bearing three children amidst the poor socioeconomic conditions of her family's struggling farm, deteriorates in both body and soul. Exhausted by the demands of tenant farming and of almost constant bearing and raising children, Judith begins to view her children, over whose conceptions and births she has no control, as parasitic, constantly requiring her attention and draining the life out of her. Rather than being fulfilled by her role as a mother and a wife, Judith becomes entrapped by those roles and by her own maternal body, not only failing to find fulfillment in them but also realizing that they have compromised her agency.

Thus, Kelley's *Weeds* depicts the working-class woman's lack of reproductive agency and the extent to which it, coupled with cultural constructions of women's reproduction and the socioeconomic "inferiority" that the feudal tenant farming system engendered, determines working class women's lives. In its representation of Judith and the physical, psychological, and economic effects of too-frequent and involuntary maternity, the novel argues that women need control over their own reproduction in order to reclaim the agency that cultural ideals of motherhood and the economic burden of both children and the tenant farming system have taken away, particularly through advocating for limiting family size. In doing so, Kelley evokes much of the language and ideas of the early twentieth-century birth control movement, including that of limiting family size and its ability to improve rural working-class women's lives. At the same time, the novel utilizes the same logic that underpinned the eugenic leanings in that movement, including limiting family size in particular among the economically and biologically disadvantaged and the fear over the heritability of certain "degenerate" traits. Even though Kelley critiques the cultural and economic forces that reduce women to their biological, reproductive functions, the novel contains echoes of eugenic thought that casts the rural working class as degenerate and suggests that these heritable traits should not be passed on to offspring. At moments in the novel, economic inferiority becomes conflated with biological inferiority, the effects of economic inferiority becoming mapped onto the bodies of the working-class Kentucky community—a conflation that Kelley uses to bolster the novel's argument for the need for reproductive autonomy. While the novel challenges the cultural and scientific ideas surrounding women's reproduction that limit

women's agency and argues for the necessity of reproductive autonomy to reclaim that agency, it simultaneously relies on deterministic biological and sociological ideas to pose that challenge.

Although it has long been a "neglected classic" (Campbell, "Where Are the Ladies?" 162), *Weeds* has recently been revived by critics such as Charlotte Margolis Goodman, Donna Campbell, and B.W. Capo. Goodman has called the novel a "quintessential example of female literary naturalism" (365) in its representation of the life of Judith Pippinger Blackford, which is circumscribed not only by her role as a mother but also by the poverty with which she is surrounded while living on a Kentucky tenant farm. Goodman has done important work in recovering the novel; in addition to writing the afterword to the 1996 Feminist Press reissue of the novel, she has also discussed Judith as a figure of the *artist manqué* that emphasizes the ways in which her artistic talent is limited by both social and economic conditions. Campbell has also discussed *Weeds* as a naturalist novel that "presses hard on Darwinian themes" ("Where Are the Ladies?" 162). Campbell points out that the novel "presents a world of Darwinian profligacy in which reproduction and labor of all sorts yield only more organisms to struggle and die" (165). This presentation is figured in its representation of maternity as nature "working its will on the woman's body without her consent" (164) and in its depiction of the dull routine and poverty of rural farm life. Campbell reads Kelley's novel alongside those of Ellen Glasgow, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, and Edith Wharton in order to trace the genealogy of women naturalist writers in the early twentieth century and to show how both women's work and women's maternity are "represented through a

naturalist lens in which the creation of life is as futile and dehumanizing as is factory or farm work" (153).

While Goodman and Campbell have focused more broadly on the naturalistic elements of *Weeds*, other critics have centered their attention specifically on how the novel represents the experience of motherhood. B.W. Capo and Allison Berg both explore the influence of the early birth control movement on the novel. In an essay on birth control and marriage in twentieth-century American literature, Capo examines how fiction "entered the public debate over contraception" (32) through novels by Kelley, Djuna Barnes, Nella Larsen, and others. Capo argues that Kelley "makes an implicit argument for birth control in her rejection of sentimental images of marriage and motherhood" throughout the novel (34) in its suggestion that maternity and marriage are not fulfilling for every woman. Similarly, Allison Berg discusses the intersections of birth control and eugenics in *Weeds*, contending that Kelley "reveals the limitations of the white middle-class birth control movement, as well as the distance between the ideals of scientific motherhood and the experience of working-class mothers" (80). In the chapter on *Weeds* in her book *Mothering the Race: Women's Narratives of Reproduction, 1890-1930*, Berg discusses Kelley's depiction of motherhood and how the relationship between (biological) reproduction and (economic) production circumscribes rural women's lives in the novel. Berg argues that Kelley rejects "a eugenic view of mothers as evolutionary vehicles" in her exploration of "the material conditions under which reproduction becomes a form of bodily colonization" (80). Berg's chapter situates *Weeds* in early twentieth century discourse about motherhood and contraception in the work of feminist

reformers like Margaret Sanger as well as in popular magazines like *Good Housekeeping* to explore how the novel challenges the idea of reproductive destiny and the social conditions that make it so.

I would like to extend Capo's and Berg's discussions of the impact of the early twentieth-century birth control and eugenics movements on *Weeds*, further contextualizing the novel in its historical moment through a focus not only on the discourse of the birth control movement but also more fully on eugenic thought and the scientific ideas that undergirded it. This work will allow me to argue that, rather than fully rejecting the eugenic underpinnings of the birth control movement, Kelley's novel actually reproduces eugenic fears about the "degeneracy" of working class populations in order to make its argument about the necessity of women's reproductive autonomy. While I find Berg's analysis of the influence of the birth control movement on the novel and the critique of the language of white middle-class motherhood persuasive, I would like to argue that greater attention to Kelley's representation of Judith's fellow townspeople in her rural Kentucky community actually reveals an anxiety over the "heritability of health" (Klausen and Bashford 109), specifically in poor rural populations. Analyses of the novel have typically focused on Judith's character, neglecting study of the characters with whom she is surrounded. Analyzing Judith's experience of motherhood alongside these other characters reveals that although Kelley critiques the cultural and economic conditions that cause women to be determined by their reproduction, she relies on racialized eugenic ideas in her depiction of the community members as being of unsound mind and unhealthy body in her argument for

the necessity of reproductive autonomy to combat biological determinism. For the novel's women characters, including Judith, social determinism caused by poverty and by gender-based social norms for motherhood leads to biological determinism only when women do not have the ability to control their reproduction and to limit family size; only then do the effects of social determinism become written onto the physically deteriorating bodies of women. Situating the novel in early twentieth-century hereditarian science and the related eugenics and country life movements, especially the ways that the emerging science of genetics shaped efforts to control working class women's fertility and to improve farm life, shows that economic inferiority merges with biological inferiority in *Weeds* in support of its argument for women's reproductive autonomy.

Heredity, Evolutionary Progress, and Reproduction: Another Naturalistic Representation

Hamlin Garland's 1895 novel *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly* not only provides insight into Kelley's inventive employment and subversion of early twentieth-century science to illustrate women's social conditions but also maps out a historical and literary trajectory of how naturalist writers adapted heredity to do so. Like Kelley's novel, *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly* buys into turn-of-the-century scientific ideas rooted in the biological sciences. Garland, though, uses those ideas not for critique of existing social structures and their deterministic impact on women's bodies but rather to illustrate how the human species was working toward evolutionary perfection through his female protagonist. Published nearly thirty years before *Weeds*, Garland's novel shows his investment in Spencerian ideas of evolutionary progress in his depiction of Rose's social and educational success. While Kelley's representation of Judith's physical and psychological

deterioration was impacted in part by the eugenics movement and the burgeoning science of genetics, Garland's portrait of Rose's progress toward social, financial, and intellectual independence shows the impact of the continued popularity of Herbert Spencer's theory of evolution as progressing toward perfection and the still-influential concept of acquired characters on which it depended. Garland's novel, then, illustrates the ways that fiction engaged with the changing scientific ideas of sex, gender, and evolution as well as how those ideas impacted writers' conceptualizations of agency for rural women. Reading *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly* alongside *Weeds* reveals that the abandonment of acquired characters, the advance of Mendelian genetics, and the eugenics movement which arose out of it gave naturalist writers simultaneously a narrower space in which to contend with women's (reproductive) agency and a new toolkit for interrogating that agency in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Garland's novel provides another portrait of an impoverished rural woman; however, Garland traces a different trajectory for his young protagonist than Kelley does for Judith, providing a more optimistic fate for women who are able to escape their insulated rural communities. Garland's Rose Dutcher comes from similar circumstances as Kelley's Judith Pippinger Blackford. Like Judith, Rose grows up on a farm in a small rural community (Tyre, Wisconsin, rather than Judith's Scott County, Kentucky), raised primarily by her father after her mother's early death. Strong in body and mind, Rose is also set apart from the other children in the community; she is highly intelligent, and she also subverts gendered norms for girls' behavior in her interest in the outdoors and animals. However, whereas Judith remains entrapped in Scott County, Rose escapes the

Wisconsin coulee in order to further her education, first at a university in Madison and then in Chicago. Urged by her mentors to delay marriage and motherhood until she has allowed herself time to develop intellectually and socially, Rose is able to escape the relentless cycle of too-early marriage and too-frequent maternity within which Judith becomes caught. Garland's novel thus provides a different perspective on how rural women can gain reproductive autonomy and claim their agency; for Rose, this is made possible through education and access to both financial and social resources.

Like Judith, Rose's self-assurance, her "innate strength and purity of soul" (Garland 11), and her physical vigor distinguish her from the other children in her small rural community. She, too, is at home in the outdoors, going barefoot in the summer, not minding getting dirty, and even running through cornfields naked. Garland is careful to point out that Rose's strength does not come at the expense of her femininity. Although her "hands smelled of the barn yard as well as ... flowers" (25) and her feet are "brown as toads" (19), they are also "graceful and small" (19). She is, as Keith Newlin points out, "no big-footed, mannish girl—only a tall, strong, healthy adolescent who contrasts markedly with the clean, pale, and sickly girls who faint at the sight of insects" (xviii). Whereas Kelley's representation of Judith as physically strong and intellectually distinct serves to emphasize the tragic nature of her deterioration and the extreme tolls that marriage and motherhood take on her, Rose's strength, intellectual superiority, and artistic sensibility set her up as a symbol of evolutionary progress. With her "glad, free, wholesome life" and her "blood [that is] sweet and clean" (23), Rose is the physical and intellectual ideal that will carry forward the species.

The similarities between Judith and Rose end with their childhoods, as the two young women take divergent paths—the former into marriage and motherhood, and the latter into education and socialization. As a teenager, Rose has an experience that sparks her desire to seek a different fate than that of her peers and to further her intellectual growth. When Rose is fourteen, a circus comes into town, and she becomes enraptured by a male performer who becomes her "ideal." The "naked majesty" of the man, an acrobat, "appeal[s] to her pure wholesome awakening womanhood, with the power of beauty and strength combined, with sex and art both included" (59). Rose's performer inspires not only her sexual awakening but her intellectual awakening as well, stirring "vast ambitions" in her and motivating her to "be a great scholar" (61) in order to be worthy of him. Most importantly, this ideal, by "lift[ing] and develop[ing] her," also allows Rose to "escape the clutch of mere brute passion which seizes so many boys at girls at [her] age, and leads to destructive early marriages" (62).

The performer is the first in a line of figures who enter Rose's life and cultivate her intellect and her education, steering her away from the path of early marriage and motherhood that her peers are already beginning to walk down. A wealthy physician, Dr. Thatcher, "discovers" Rose in her one-room schoolhouse soon after the circus, recognizing her talent and as a writer. He encourages her to extend her studies in Madison at the university, offers her a place to stay when she arrives, and writes her letters of introduction when she decides to move to Chicago after graduating. In addition, on the train on her way to Madison, Rose also meets a rather mysterious older woman, a "famous woman lawyer" (94), who advises her, "Don't marry until you are thirty. Choose

a profession and work for it. Marry only when you want to be a mother" (95). Rose thrives in Madison, taking full advantage not only of the intellectual opportunities that the university affords her but also of her father's ability to fund her stay and of the network of social contacts to which Dr. Thatcher's mentorship allows her access. These social and intellectual resources that distinguish Rose from her peers back home are accentuated by physical differences as well; as Dr. Thatcher observes to his wife, "The girl's physical perfection is wonderful. Most farmers' girls are round in the shoulders and flat in the hips, but Rose has grown up like a young colt" (107). Thus, the opportunities provided her by education, as well as by her father's financial resources that allow her access to that education, save Rose from the physical deterioration and the intellectual stultification that would have awaited her had she stayed in the coulee and married young. Although Rose does eventually marry Mr. Mason, a Chicago newspaper man, it is a marriage of intellectual and social equals, and a marriage that only happens after she has obtained her education and intellectual development.

One of the most obvious reasons that the fates of Garland's Rose Dutcher and Kelley's Judith Pippinger Blackford diverge so radically despite their similar upbringings and qualities is the financial and social resources to which at each young woman had access. Rose's initial meeting with Dr. Thatcher was mere coincidence, but that meeting allowed her opportunities to come into contact with other influential mentors in his social network. Further, Rose could not have attended university or live in Chicago without needing employment without her father's financial support, however meager it was. Judith, on the other hand, had none of these social or financial resources. She did not

have mentors from outside her insulated Scott County community that would allow her to envision a future outside of rural Kentucky, nor did her family have the money to send her away to cultivate her artistic and intellectual talents; indeed, Judith does not even envision the possibility of a life outside of Scott County. Allowed the same resources to which Rose had access and able to divest herself of the responsibilities that her socioeconomic conditions required, Judith may have been better able to avoid the physical and psychological impacts of too-early and too-frequent maternity that prove so detrimental to her agency.

However, it is not simply access to resources that explains why Rose and Judith arrive at such different fates. Different scientific and cultural ideas about evolutionary progress, heredity, and genetics at the time in which Garland and Kelley wrote also yield important insights into the possibilities for agency that each writer allows their protagonist. In 1895, the year of *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*'s publication, Herbert Spencer's influence was still prevalent in the United States, principally his investment in evolution as inevitably marching toward progress, in which the idea of equilibrium was at the core. According to Spencer, the material world is subject to physical forces that always strive toward this equilibrium, and the striving toward it was what drove the progress of the species. This progress occurred through the movement from "incoherent homogeneity to coherent heterogeneity," from the "large and diffuse" into the "specialized and complex" (Pizer 233). Although Spencer moved away from this belief in evolution as progressing toward a state of perfect equilibrium by the 1870s (Bannister 48), the idea remained influential through the end of the nineteenth century, including for

Garland. Michael Clark explains that Spencer's philosophy extremely influential for Garland, writing that Garland was "unequivocal in seeing Spencer as the catalyst in his own intellectual development" (203). Donald Pizer has also argued that Spencer's theory of evolution impacted Garland's thinking about *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly* itself, using Spencer to "explain the growing complexity of the novel and to equate this growing complexity with progress" (234-35).

Spencer's theory of evolutionary progress and its impact on Garland's thinking can also help readers to understand Garland's representation of Rose, who demonstrates that allowing the most physically and intellectually 'fit' women the opportunity to delay marriage and motherhood and to instead cultivate their intellect ensures the progress of the human species. Like Kelley, Garland makes the case in his novel that women's autonomy, especially reproductive autonomy, is essential for evolutionary progress. Much like in *Weeds*, the women in Garland's Wisconsin coulee who enter into early marriage and motherhood are depicted as physical inferior to Rose. Whereas the young women who are married at seventeen and mothers at eighteen are "thin and bent in the shoulders, and flat and stiff in the hips, sallow and querulous wives of slovenly, careless husbands" (Garland 83), Rose is repeatedly described as physically perfect, having "strong elastic feet," walking with a "powerful swing which was worth going miles to see" and, being "fresh and strong," making "a goodly figure to look at" (215-16). Rose is able to maintain this physical strength and beauty by avoiding early motherhood and instead developing her mind; contrary to popular opinion, education improves her physical constitution, rather than eroding it.

Further, Rose's education and her subsequent desire to relocate permanently to Chicago to attain her goal of becoming a writer is explicitly figured as an expression of progress. Although her father, with whom she has a close relationship, desires for her to stay in the coulee as his companion, he realizes that Rose no longer belongs there. After resenting himself for allowing her to attend university and realizing that he "educated his daughter out of his world" (177), her father finally realizes that he can no longer contain her there:

> So he rose to a conception which had never come to him before, and even now it was formlessly vast; he felt the power of the outside world, and reached to a divination of the fatality of it all. It had to be, for it was a part of progress. He was old and bent and dull. She was young, gloriously young. The old must give way to the young, while she was the one to be bowed down to. (178)

Rose, as an educated, independent woman, is the future, and her father realizes the futility of trying to stop inevitable progress. Further, Garland's construction of education and socialization as having an important, positive impact on women's intellectual (and, it is implied, racial) development demonstrates the continued promise of the principle of acquired characters. As we saw in Chapter 1, the ability of environment to affect individuals' social, moral, and even biological characters had important implications for whether certain populations, including both African Americans and women, could achieve progress. While Dunbar uses the environment of both the South and the urban North to demonstrate the *deleterious* impact of social forces on his novel's characters,

Garland uses the social and physical environments to show their *positive* influence on humans', especially women's, social and biological progress.

Such progress is not solely figured in terms of women's independence. The possibility of motherhood is never questioned—only its delay until Rose's intellectual and social development is complete. The fact that Rose will eventually become a mother is, in fact, crucial for the evolutionary progress that Garland envisions. Isabel Herrick, a physician who becomes another of Rose's mentors, tells her that she is "fitted by nature" (328) to be a wife and mother. When Rose questions if becoming a mother will "take away [Isabel's] power as a physician" (330), Isabel responds, "No, that's the best of it these days. If a woman has brains and a good man for a husband, it broadens her powers" (330). As Clark points out, readers are clearly meant to see Isabel, Rose, and women like them as women who have "'evolved' into a condition that strongly contrasts with that of the rather pitiful country girls whom Rose had just left behind in the coulee" (205). This condition is crucial for evolutionary progress, as the strong bodies and strong minds that women's intellectual development and the delay of marriage cultivate, it is assumed, will be passed down to offspring.

Garland's representation of evolutionary progress through women's progress, and the Spencerian ideas from which it was derived, depended on the idea of acquired characteristics. Acquired characters, however, that began to fall out of scientific favor by the beginning of the twentieth century. Garland's argument that women's education would allow for evolutionary progress by passing the physical and intellectual characteristics it engendered on to their offspring would have been scientifically valid in

the later years of the nineteenth century, but by the 1920s, the principle of acquired characteristics was more universally challenged in favor of scientific theories of heredity based upon the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics. Thus, whereas Garland highlights in *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly* how women's education and intellectual development, which must occur before marriage and motherhood, are essential for progress, Kelley's novel almost thirty years later shows the impact of these new understandings of heredity and genetics in its depiction of the inevitability of biological decline can happen without that development—a development that is curtailed by early marriage.

Birth Control and Eugenics in the Early Twentieth-Century United States

By the 1920s, although the Comstock Law had outlawed the dissemination of birth control information about contraceptives,[31] birth control advocates like Margaret Sanger had already long been promoting contraception. In her 1920 treatise *Woman and the New Race*, birth control advocate Margaret Sanger calls for the necessity of "voluntary motherhood," an approach to marriage and maternity that sought to promote women's right to choose if and when they became mothers. Birth control, Sanger points out, is essential for the success of the practice of voluntary motherhood. Although she acknowledges that it is "often denounced as a violation of natural law," Sanger argues that birth control is in actuality "nothing more or less than the facilitation of the process of weeding out the unfit, of preventing the birth of defectives or of those who will

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[31] The Comstock Law, enacted in 1873, "equated birth control with pornography and prohibited all contraceptive devices from being sent via the U.S. mail" (May 16). Even though the law restricted information about birth control, it did not prevent women from obtaining and using contraceptives.

become defectives" (229). Contraception allows women to "full[y] develop" their womanhood before becoming mothers; this development is not only essential for individual women but also important for national (racial) progress. Evoking ideas rooted both in evolutionary biology and in the early twentieth century eugenics movement, Sanger contends that "if we are to make racial progress, this development of womanhood must precede motherhood in every individual woman. ... Only then can she transmit to her sons and daughters the qualities which make strong individuals and, collectively, a strong race" (229). Not only, then, does women's access to contraception benefit the woman; it benefits the entire (white) race.

This passage, as well as *Woman and the New Race* more generally, demonstrates that the early twentieth-century birth control movement was often couched in eugenic arguments. Although in the later twentieth century, arguments for birth control largely centered on its power to liberate women both reproductively and sexually, Sanger and other early promoters of birth control emphasized its benefit for families by touting its ability to allow married women to plan the spacing of their children as well as for women to choose whether they wanted to have children at all. Arguments for birth control also, however, took another form. Sanger used the belief that women are "the expression and the conveyer of racial efficiency" (229) to undergird her argument for access to contraception; only by allowing women the ability to choose when and to how many children they became mothers would the nation ensure racial advancement. While middle-class white women were encouraged to use information on contraception to become better mothers, women outside that demographic, including working class

women, were encouraged to use it to limit or even eliminate their fertility, again for the sake of their physical health as well as the health of the race. Women were especially important to the advancement of the race for Albert Edward Wiggam, who wrote in *The Fruit of the Family Tree* that the nation looked to women to reach this eugenic goal: "She is the natural conservator of the race, the guardian of its blood. Eugenics means the improvement of life, and if we can improve life, produce better human beings, they will themselves improve everything else" (421). For both scientists and birth control advocates, contraceptives were meant to make women better mothers, which in turn benefitted the race.

As Allison Berg points out, Sanger's "profoundly conflicted rhetoric insisted on women's right to birth control—drawing on the particularly moving stories of poor women worn out by maternity—and justified this right in terms of the middle-class imperatives of race progress and national advancement" (80). This rhetoric, along with that of many early twentieth-century eugenicists, had particular implications for women outside the white middle class. According to Sanger, working class women were in unique need of contraception for both economic and racial reasons. Whereas middle-class women needed birth control in order to promote their own development and to become better mothers, which would benefit the integrity of the race, working class women (as well as non-white women) needed birth control in order to limit the possibility of "defective" offspring entering into the genetic pool. The influence of hereditarian science is, then, clear in such discourse surrounding women's reproductive autonomy, and even more so in burgeoning eugenics movement. The eugenics movement rose to prominence

in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and remained influential in scientific and medical communities well into the mid-twentieth century. Philippa Levine and Alison Bashford explain that its broad aim was to "affect reproductive practice through the application of theories of heredity" (3), resting on the assumption that certain groups' and individuals' lives were more valuable than others. Eugenics, then, sought to improve the "race"[32] by either limiting the reproduction of the economically, racially, or intellectually "unfit" (referred to as negative eugenics) or by encouraging the reproduction of the most "fit," who were usually white and middle-class (known as positive eugenics). Early twentieth century eugenics "seized upon the possibility of transferring genetic theories from experimental laboratories to human society" (Turda 69). Proponents of eugenics used heredity to further their aims of limiting the reproduction of those with undesired characteristics that could be passed on to offspring and cause the race to deteriorate. Reflecting and attempting to address fears of race suicide and societal degeneration engendered in part by the growing immigrant population, the debate over African American rights after the end of Reconstruction, and changing gender norms, eugenics sought to define "a dominant ethnic group as the repository of the nation's racial qualities and pursued biological, social, and political means to assess and eliminate the factors seen as contributing to its degeneration" (67).

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[32] Carole R. McCann points out that "race" was a "highly flexible term" in the early twentieth century. Most often, when used in the "discourse of dominant white culture," it referred simultaneously to "native-born Americans of Western European descent and to the nation as a whole" (14).

Situated within this context, birth control became a tool for racial betterment. By allowing women to space their pregnancies and to potentially limit the number of children they had, contraceptives would theoretically allow women to become better mothers, giving them more time and resources to devote to raising better citizens. Contraceptives would also help to reduce the risk of maternal death from too-frequent pregnancies and from complications from botched abortions, in turn reducing the danger of children growing up without the influence of a mother. This emphasis on the influence of the mother—and the "correct" kind of mother—was strongly tied to the health of the nation, and these links underlay the discourse of the birth control movement as well as that of the eugenics movement. Using the scientifically legitimate framework of eugenics allowed the birth control movement to not only piggyback on the legitimacy of eugenics but also upheld contraceptives as essential to the future of the race. As McCann points out, "if, as eugenics represented it, the American race was deteriorating because of inefficient breeding, birth control's application of 'reason' and intelligence to reproduction could regenerate the race and ensure public health and the national welfare" (99). This inefficient breeding, which included poor women having more children than their economic resources allowed as well as white middle-class women not having as many children as they should, could be controlled with contraceptives.

Sanger accepted the eugenics movement's idea of racial deterioration, but she did not believe that its cause was due to biological inferiority; rather, she located its cause in "economic environmentalism and conventional morality" (McCann 101). However, Sanger's own rhetoric reveals an ambivalence toward the extent to which economic and

biological forces could explain racial deterioration and how contraceptives could help to control each of those forces—an ambivalence that reflected much scientific and popular opinion in the early twentieth century, as well. Sanger argued that women could fulfill their "racial duty" by limiting their fertility according to their economic resources, writing in a 1916 pamphlet, *Family Limitation,* that

> women of the working class, especially wage workers, should not have more than two children at most. The average working man can support no more and the average working woman can take care of no more in decent fashion. It has been my experience that more children are not really wanted, but that the women are compelled to have them either from lack of foresight or through ignorance of the hygiene of preventing contraception. (3)

The reasons for limiting women's reproduction appear to be primarily economic. However, in the very next paragraph, Sanger suggests that the offspring of poor women, if they have more than for which they can afford to care, are more likely to end up in "jails and hospitals, factories and mills, insane asylums and premature graves" (3). Sanger implies that these children will not only be worse off by being forced into work prematurely but also be more prone to mental illness, physical weakness, or disease.

This conflation of economic and biological inferiority was not uncommon among mainstream eugenicists, for whom "[racial] inferiority was demonstrated by poverty and economic dependency" (McCann 108). The poor were poor not because their circumstances and institutional inequality inhibited their financial prosperity but rather because "they did not have the biological wherewithal to prosper" (108). Sanger, too,

argues for working class women's need for birth control not only because their lack of financial resources would make large numbers of children an economic strain but also because of their "physical inferiority, applying to class differences a version of the biological determinism invoked in contemporary discussions of race" (Berg 83). It is through this belief that Sanger can promote birth control as facilitating, as she wrote in *Woman and the New Race*, the "process of weeding out the unfit, of preventing the birth of defectives or of those who will become defectives" (229). The entanglement of heredity and environment in the discourse of the eugenic and birth control movements is important for understanding how working-class women were targeted specifically for birth control advocacy. Working class women, including working class women in rural communities, needed birth control not only because of their lack of financial resources but also because of the heritable traits, including feeblemindedness and physical weakness, that were either caused by or responsible for poverty, which constructed rural working-class women both economically and biologically determined.

"A Tool No More ... Of Nature's Cunning:" Determinism, Agency, and Reproductive Autonomy

Kelley's *Weeds* takes up this focus on the intersections between economic and biological determinism, particularly in its representation of Judith. Through Judith, Kelley critiques the social conditions, including cultural constructions of womanhood and motherhood as well as the economic inequality engendered by the tenant farming system, that cause women to be biologically determined. Much like Evelyn Scott, whose work I will discuss in the next chapter, Kelley subverts traditional naturalistic depictions of its

characters as lacking agency in the face of biological drives to reveal how the *interaction* between biology, culture, and capitalism determines rural working-class women's lives. Judith's agency throughout the novel is not strictly determined by her reproduction; rather, it is constrained by cultural ideals that define women solely as wives and mothers as well as by the poor socioeconomic conditions that give her neither the time nor the resources to move outside the drudgery of daily life on the farm. Thus, Kelley plays with classic naturalistic tropes of biological determinism, specifically in regard to women's reproduction, not to reify biologically essentialist conceptualizations of women's reproductive "destiny" but rather to reveal how that apparent destiny is a culturally constructed fiction brought about by poverty.

Kelley's critique is most evident in the novel's representation of the effects of childbearing on its heroine, Judith, who begins the novel as a vibrant, vivacious child but begins to show the deleterious physical and psychological effects of near-constant childbearing almost immediately after marrying. As a child, Judith is different from her community members in both body and spirit. She is a "lithe, active, slim little creature," with "something wild and evasive about her swift, sinuous little body, alive with quick, unexpected movements, like those of a young animal" (Kelley 12). Judith is clearly set apart physically, intellectually, and even racially from her community. Although the rural Kentucky "backwoods" has declined economically and, for its residents, biologically as a result of its isolation and its economic hardship, Judith has escaped this decline, which makes the eventual effects of her childbearing and her environment even more tragic. Judith is also figured as being close to nature in childhood, "absorbed in all the small life

that fluttered and hopped and crawled about the farm" (16) and often compared to an animal herself—parallels that directly work both to challenge gender norms and to decouple nature from reproduction. For Judith, the language of the outdoors, represented by her family's farm, is "an expression of something that was real, vital and fluid, ... [and] of natural and spontaneous growth"; she sees it as "a part of the life that offered itself to her" (57). This naturalness is in direct contrast with the "prim niceness" of her twin sisters Luella and Lizzie May, which is for Judith a "deadening negation of life" (57). The housework and the gossip in which her sisters engage are akin to being "forced to sit motionless on a straight-backed chair in the front room when [Judith] was consumed with a longing to run and jump and whoop and chase the dog and play 'Hide and Seek' around the barn" (57). The gendered behavior that Judith refuses to enact contrasts with the nature in which she feels at home; gender roles thus become unnatural, in direct odds with nature's message to "Live, grow, be happy, and obey my promptings" (22).

In the early days of her marriage to Jerry Blackford, Judith remains able to escape many of the constricting gender-based labor that she rejected as a child. She spurns housework and is uncomfortable and stifled inside houses, admitting that she is "no good of a housekeeper" (116) and also that she doesn't even care to be a good one. Judith dislikes the "gloom of little-windowed rooms, the dead chill or the heavy heat of the fire that smouldered or blazed, the prim, set look of tables and cupboards ... these things stifled and depressed her" (116). She is "glad to escape into the open where there was light, life, and motion" (116), and so she works in the corn and tobacco fields alongside

her husband, and is, despite the exhausting nature of the work, is "joyous and radiant" (123). Judith is happy in this life, satisfied with her work and the success of their crops and imagining herself as "a plant that had sucked in the life-giving rain and was preparing to raise its blossom to the sun (125). These parallels make clear that Judith's nature is "ill matched to the life of a tenant woman" (Berg 92); in contrast to the restrictiveness of the household, nature offers for Judith the freedom and independence she craves.

Judith's freedom to work outdoors and to escape the drudgery of the household does not last long. Soon after the successful harvest of their first tobacco crop, Judith becomes pregnant, which marks the beginning of the decline of her vitality as well as her loss of agency brought on by motherhood. The effects of her pregnancy mark a contrast between the life she feels in nature and what is constructed as the epitome of "naturalness" for women: reproduction and motherhood. For Judith, reproduction is nearly at odds with nature, underscoring Kelley's effort to move away from biologically essentialist ideas of women's reproductive "destiny." The pregnancy, unplanned and undesired, catches her unawares; she only discovers that she is pregnant because her neighbor, Hat Wolfe, recognizes the symptoms and tells her so. Once pregnant, Judith seems "like a different person," with "no trace left of her usual animation" (Kelley 143), signaling an almost immediate shift in autonomy and agency brought on by maternity. The vitality that previously had set Judith apart from the others in her community is zapped, especially after the birth of her baby, when she realizes that she can no longer work with Jerry tending to the fields because the baby needs constant attention. Although

Judith recognizes that the baby is now "the most important thing in her life" (159), she quickly finds the monotonous existence that motherhood on a tenant farm engenders stifling. Especially in the winter, she repeats

> the dismal daily round of dish-washing, clothes-washing, cooking, sweeping, nursing, and diaper changing. Each day was exactly like the one before it. Each day the demands of the baby and the rest of the household were precisely the same. Even the cooking allowed of no variation. ... [S]he found herself continually longing for something new, something different to eat, not so much from starvation of body as starvation of spirit. (160)

The drudgery of the routine that motherhood requires drains Judith's spirit, signifying the psychological burden of motherhood and connecting it with restraints on women's agency. It is not only her child that circumscribes her agency; it is the conditions of farm life that trap her in the house in an endless cycle of deadening responsibility.

The psychological burden has physical effects on Judith's body, as well, as her once-strong body begins to suffer the effects of childbirth coupled with the economic hardships that she and Jerry eventually face. Judith's body loses its "elasticity, her eyes their light and sparkle," as if "the life spirit in the still young body had grown tired" (197). As the birth of her second child nears, her body feels "heavy with a great lethargy, as if the life within her, in its determination to persist, were slowly and steadily draining her, leaving her body with nothing but a shell, a limp, nerveless, irritable, collapsing shell" (208). Judith begins to see her two children, one born and one unborn, as "two greedy little vampires working on her incessantly ... bent upon drinking her last drop of

blood" (208). In this depiction of Judith's children as vampires draining her life from her, Kelley revises the common naturalistic trope of nature "working its will" (Campbell, "Where Are the Ladies?" 164) on humans in order to reveal the effects of involuntary motherhood on women's subjectivity. Judith's physical and psychological deterioration, which only worsens as she has more children, acts as a manifestation of the limitations that women's reproduction places on their agency.

However, it is not biology alone, but rather the convergence of biological, cultural, and economic forces, that circumscribes women's agency and consigns them to a "reproductive destiny." Kelley's linkage of the material conditions of Judith's life, including the economic inequality of the tenant farming system, and women's "maternal work," allows her to interrogate "the means of reproduction as well as production" (Berg 91) and, I would add, to critique the socio-cultural attitudes that define women primarily by their reproductive functions. Caring for her children confines Judith to the house against her will and distances her from the nature that gives her life. It also prohibits her from working with Jerry in the fields and keeps her from contributing her labor to the economic success of the farm. Although she tries to convince Jerry to allow her to leave the baby in the house "for an hour or two so that she could give [him] a little help when work was pressing" (Kelley 158), he refuses out of fear that "sumpin might happen to him" and because Judith has "plenty nuf to do" in taking care of him and of the house (158). Because Judith can no longer help him, Jerry has to hire help, a financial strain that is doubled when tobacco prices fall just as Jerry is hauling his crop to market. The Blackfords' economic struggles eventually force them into a smaller house, leaving

Judith no psychological or physical space to escape from the demands of her children and causing her and Jerry to abandon their dream of a farm of their own. Judith has neither the time nor the financial resources to allow for any activities that are not in direct service of her children or her household, not even her art—a talent that she has had since childhood but that lay undeveloped and out of reach once she enters motherhood.

Frustrated by her confined existence as a farm wife and mother, Judith does attempt to reclaim agency over her own reproduction and to circumvent the determinism her social and economic situation imposes by refusing to have additional children. She resolves to herself that she is "through forever" (299) with having children and with "running any risk" of having children, presumably by refusing to engage in sex with her husband. Recognizing the economic and physical drain that children bring, Judith wants "no more children that she could not clothe, that she could hardly feed, that were a long torture to bear and a daily fret and anxiety after they were born" (299). She decides that she will now be "mistress of her own body ... order[ing] her future life as seemed best to herself" (300). She and Jerry, whose relationship had already been deteriorating, grow farther apart, and Judith takes to sleeping separately from him. Struggling against what she believes is her biological and economic destiny, Judith recognizes that abstinence is the only way that she can take control over her reproduction and her body. Eventually, however, she realizes the futility of this strategy. It will not give her the independence from the monotony of the farm life and motherhood that she yearns for. Instead of bringing her relief and independence, Judith's resolution drives a further wedge between she and Jerry and causes her to further resent her children. She reconciles with Jerry after

the near-death illness of their daughter, Annie, realizing "the uselessness of struggle" (330) against her fate and asking herself "what hope was there in rebellion for her or hers?" (330). She accepts that her fate will be the fate of every other woman of Scott County, bearing children until she no longer could and then going back to the field to tend crops. At the novel's close, Judith is resigned to her role and wife and mother, ready to answer the "invisible summons" (333) of that role and allow it to define her existence. Without a reliable way to prevent additional pregnancies and without any other options for leaving her life on the farm, Judith's fate is, in the end, determined by the same reproductive and economic forces that circumscribe the lives of the other women of Scott County.

Judith's resignation to the tediousness and circularity of her life on the farm at the end of the novel is even more tragic given the vivaciousness and strength with which she was born. Tracing her physical and psychological decline as a result of involuntary motherhood and the economic strain of her rural Kentucky community through the novel makes evident Kelley's critique of the economic, cultural, and biological circumstances that led to that decline. Judith's agency is circumscribed by her biology, but Kelley makes clear that it is not reproduction in and of itself that limits rural working-class women's lives. Judith does find the life that child rearing necessitates monotonous, but its monotony is underscored both by the financial strain that she and Jerry experience and by cultural expectations that define women solely by their roles as wives and mothers. It is not only that "babies must be fed and washed and dressed and 'changed' and rocked when they cried and watched and kept out of mischief and danger" (195), but also that

the household must be kept up, fires kept lighted, cows milked, and hens fed; it is these activities, "with the occasional variation of Sunday visiting, made up the life of the women [of Scott County], a life that was virtually the same every day of the year" (195) that limit her agency. Unlike her sister Lizzie May, who finds peace and happiness in her maternal and wifely duties, character is such that she does not find this routine fulfilling. The limited economic and cultural resources offered by her life as the wife of a tenant farmer in rural Kentucky do not allow her any other options for fulfillment, and it is these circumstances that Kelley critiques as relegating women to their biological, reproductive roles.

In the novel, reproductive autonomy is essential for escaping the limitations on women's agency that these forces present. The physical and psychological toll that childbearing, coupled with her socioeconomic conditions, takes on Judith almost literally drain her life, particularly her third child, Annie, who is explicitly described as "unwelcome" (245). In addition, Kelley herself was aware of Sanger's advocacy for birth control and was familiar with Sanger's work; in an early draft of the novel, Kelley wrote on the top of a page, "Mrs. Sanger should send an apostle into these wilds" (qtd. in Berg 90)—an ironic observation that was eventually redacted from the final published manuscript, either by Kelley or by her editors. While *Weeds* does not make explicit references to birth control, the same emphasis on the agency that reproductive autonomy would afford women, especially economically burdened rural women, that underlay the birth control movement appears in Kelley's representation of Judith and of her fellow "skinny, dried up" (Kelley 91) women of Scott County.

The character of Hat Wolfe, Judith's childless neighbor, especially exemplifies the central role that reproductive autonomy plays in providing the possibility of independence and agency for women. Either by accident or, more likely, by some knowledge of how to prevent pregnancy, Hat does not get pregnant despite being married and, as Judith discovers, having an affair with Jerry. Capo suggests that Hat's childlessness "hint[s] at a secret knowledge" (35) of means of preventing pregnancy, which historically would not have been out of the question. Hat subscribes to women's magazines, particularly those for farm wives, and reads them voraciously. She especially loves the "sentimental love stories describing doings of people in high life" (Kelley 131), which offer a reprieve from the life that she and Judith live, and the "useful hints" that the magazines offer about farm life, which include advice about everything from "how to remain always a mystery to your husband" to "how to keep little chicks from getting head lice" (131). Her most well-loved and read book is one called *Old Secrets and New Discoveries*; Hat considers the book "especially precious" because of the "secret" and "universal" knowledge it contains (134). This secret knowledge may possibly allude to information about contraception. As Capo has explained, women's popular literature, especially magazines, sometimes offered coded information about birth control methods. For example, she cites a 1933 advertisement in *McCall's* magazine that veiled its promotion of contraceptive methods through references to "hygiene" (referring to contraception) and "irregularity" (referring to pregnancy). Hat's book and in her well-loved magazines, then, could have possibly offered such coded information as the source of her knowledge about how to prevent pregnancy.

Although Hat is characterized as in abject poverty for most of the novel, she eventually finds financial success and, as a result, a degree of independence from her husband, with whom she has a fraught relationship. The novel suggests that this independence is directly correlated with her freedom from children. As Judith's resolve to have no more children weakens, "leaving her listless and slack" (306), Hat "blossom[s] ... in new dresses, frilled aprons and sunbonnets" (307). Judith notices this blossoming, being unable to help "sensing a change in the bold, dark, *childless* woman" (307, emphasis mine). She learns that Hat has sold her horse, her "rightful property" (307), without her husband's knowledge and had opened her own bank account with the profits. Hat's newfound "excess vitality" stands in contrast to Judith's "languor and listlessness" (307) in a reversal of the two women's circumstances at the beginning of the novel. Amanda J. Zink has suggested that Hat "purchases her economic independence ... with childlessness" (216); her financial autonomy, in other words, is only made possible by remaining childfree. Judith envies Hat, but not for this financial independence; Judith's jealousy stems primarily from the fact that Hat seems "especially well satisfied with life and with herself" (307). This self-satisfaction and contentment is out of reach for Judith because of her own precarious economic position and, more importantly, because her status as a mother makes it more difficult to rise out of it; her children are financial burdens as well as obstacles to Judith's ability to provide productive labor by working outside of the home. It is not simply biological, reproductive forces, then, but also its convergence with the economic conditions of her life that keep Judith from reclaiming her agency. Through Hat's character, Kelley underscores the necessity of working class

women's ability to control their own reproduction to achieving both bodily autonomy and financial independence.

Degeneration, Heredity, and the Rural Community

Despite Kelley's critique of the social and economic forces that constrain women's agency, *Weeds* buys into biologically essentialist ideas about the degeneracy of the rural working class and the danger of passing that degeneracy to offspring that were rooted in hereditarian science and in the eugenics movement. In making its argument for the necessity of reproductive autonomy, the novel implies that women's reproductive agency will not only ensure their individual autonomy but also help to preserve the integrity of the (white) race; Kelley argues that without reproductive autonomy, the American population is danger of the physical, mental, and moral degradation that results from too-frequent maternity and economic strain. In her representation of the physical and moral degeneracy of the inhabitants of Scott County, Kelley echoes much of the racialized language of the early twentieth century country life and conservation movements—movements that colluded with and relied on the same racialized beliefs as the eugenic movement. Consequently, while *Weeds* exposes the fictions of women being socially reduced to their biological functions, its critique borrows from the same biologically essentialist logic that it was attempting to disrupt.

The early twentieth-century country life and conservation movements were concerned with improving and conserving rural America, including preserving the racial characteristics that inhered in that landscape. During his presidency, Theodore Roosevelt was especially concerned with the quality of life in rural communities, which he

considered to be the heart of the nation. He saw the farmer as the "typical American and the exemplar of American racial character" (Lovett 113), a belief that was connected with a cultural and personal preoccupation with the American frontier as a site of progress and racial destiny. Roosevelt's continued dedication to the Lamarckian principle of acquired characters informed that belief and his agenda of social reform. The social and economic environment of the country was thus crucial to the integrity of the American "race." Conserving these rural communities and the land on which they lived became essential for racial progress and a central focus of Roosevelt's Progressive agenda.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, country life was plagued with problems, including economic hardship, lack of education, and poor health and sanitation. These conditions were causing younger generations to leave the country for the cities, and Roosevelt considered this flight to be of utmost concern, not least because it risked "hav[ing] our farms occupied by a lower type of people than the hard-working, self-respecting, independent, and essentially manly and womanly men and women who have hitherto constituted the most typically American, and on the whole the most valuable, element in our entire nation" (Roosevelt 524). In order to remedy these threats to the American racial character, Roosevelt appointed the National Conservation Commission and the Country Life Commission to study farm life and to promote better rural conditions through education, improvement of the social and economic conditions on farms, and advances in agricultural practices. The conservation movement was particularly concerned with "issues of national health and vitality" (Lovett 123); the 1909 Report of the National Conservation Commission included a report on national vitality by

political economist Irving Fisher, who advocated "a eugenic program to improve the nation's heredity" (123) through the study of environmental, economic, and hereditary reasons for the degeneracy of the rural population.

This combination of environmental, economic, and hereditary factors' responsibility for the racial deterioration of the rural population is also apparent in Kelley's representation of Judith's Scott County, Kentucky, community in *Weeds*. The characterization of Judith's "clear features and strong, straight body" as a child being a reminder of "earlier pioneer days when clear features and strong, straight bodies were the rule rather than the exception" (Kelley 13) echoes Roosevelt's belief in the "old stocks" as the pillar of the American race, epitomized in the farmer. In contrast to the majority of her community members in the "backwoods corners of America, where the people have been poor and benighted for several generations and where for as many generations no new blood has entered ... [and] the children are mostly dull of mind and scrawny of body" (13), Judith has sprung up "like a poppy among weeds" and has, at least momentarily, "escaped the curse of the soil" (88) to which her fellow Scott County peers have succumbed.

However, Judith eventually becomes victim to this curse of the soil, as well, as her vitality cannot flourish in the rural poverty that circumscribes her life. Although she represents the strong "stock" that Roosevelt and other members of the conservation movement celebrated, the conditions of rural life suppress those racial characteristics. Fisher, the eugenicist and political economist of the Conservation Commission, as well as other members of the eugenics movement, considered economic poverty to have

correlations with biological poverty; Laura A. Lovett describes Fisher as "concerned with issues of race degeneracy as a cause of poverty" (123). Margaret Sanger shared this concern, considering economic pressure one of the primary contributing factors to racial decay (McCann 106). In *Weeds*, a life of hard farm labor and financial strain takes a physical toll on the bodies of both men and women. Those who are in their thirties and forties and "should have been in the full flower of their lives" are already "grotesque in their deformities" and represent a "scarecrow array of bent limbs, bowed shoulders, sunken chests, twisted contortions, and jagged articulations" (Kelley 91). A look of "vague, mild blankness" (172) characterizes these "country people of Kentucky" (172), suggesting that the effects of poverty have become written not only on their bodies but also on their minds.

Poverty's effects, then, are evident on all those in Judith's rural community, but they are especially dire for Scott County's women. These effects are signified by Judith's deterioration throughout the novel as well as through her recognition that her daughter, Annie, is doomed to share her fate. Responsible for the running of the household and the bearing and raising of children, women share the brunt of the economic and physical burden of economically disadvantaged farm life. The women of Scott County are "skinny" and "dried-up" (91), their lives isolated and colorless. The times of hardship are particularly hard on them; when drought hits, their lives in their "isolated shanties" is made even more "disagreeable and difficult" by the "heat and the scarcity of water" (194). Days are endlessly spent caring for their children and for their households, and the physical and mental toll of their struggle for existence not only wears on the bodies of the

women but also influences the health and intellect of their offspring. Although Judith begins the novel in contrast to these women in her physical strength and her spirit, as she continues to have more children and experience more financial strain, she follows their fate—as will, she realizes, her daughter, Annie. Annie, like "the kind of little girl one sees often in country places and very rarely in towns," has a "puny, colorless, young-old face, drab hair thin and fine ... and blank, slate-colored eyes" with neither "depth nor clearness" in them" (280)—characteristics that are linked to her economic and social environment. Judith recognizes that Annie, just like the other "skimpy little young-old girls, with blank eyes and expressionless faces" of her neighbors and her family, will grow "into a prim, gawky, old-maidish girlhood and pass quickly from that into dull spinsterhood as [Judith's sister] Luella had done, or to the sordid burdens of too frequent maternity" (321). Annie's fate is circumscribed not only by her inherited characteristics but also by the economic and social conditions that engendered them, making apparent the need for women's control over their reproduction in order to avoid perpetuating these inferior traits.

It is here that Kelley most forcefully makes her argument that in addition to improving economic and social conditions, as Roosevelt's commissions sought to do through their rural eugenics programs, women's ability to control their reproduction is also crucial for preserving the integrity of the race. Having too many children to care for impacted the physical characteristics of the mother as well as the physical and mental characteristics of the child. "Children who are underfed, undernourished, ... and chronically hungry cannot," as Sanger wrote, "be expected to attain the mental

development of children upon whom every advantage of intelligent and scientific care is bestowed" (*Woman* 112). If "the rural family was the foundation of the race or the nation, [and] the farm wife was the foundation of the rural family" (Lovett 121), then rural women's reproductive autonomy and bodily agency was key to bolstering the race. Yet in doing so, *Weeds* relies heavily on the racialized language of the eugenics movement that equates economic inferiority with biological inferiority in order to illustrate the effects of women's lack of agency over their reproductive and economic circumstances. The men and, especially, women of rural Scott County are represented as physically and, in some cases, mentally degenerate, and the novel plays on the anxieties surrounding the transmission of those qualities in order to leverage its argument for reproductive autonomy.

In the novel, Aunt Sally Whitmarsh's "insanity" and its inheritance by her daughter, Bessie Maud, highlights this danger of the transmission of undesirable qualities, specifically mental illness. Judith recalls rumors that Sally, an older woman of Scott County, had "sown the seed of insanity" in her children, particularly Bessie Maud, but others of Sally's children show "traces of the taint" (167), as well. This "insanity" has been passed down through Sally's side of the family; her father "had been 'queer,' and so had several of her other relatives on the father's side" (167). It is Bessie Maud, though, who most apparently shows its signs. Her temper is "so uncertain and her habit of mind so strongly anti-social that few even of the near neighbors ever went near her home" (166). Bessie Maud is eventually taken away to "the insane asylum" (308) after her

illness worsens and she destroys their home, burning their furniture and clothes and almost throwing her infant into the fire, before her husband stops her.

This act of destruction of the home and nearly of the family illustrates the danger that the hereditary transmission of "insanity" poses to the family on an individual as well as a racial level. Mothers who are "insane" cannot properly mother their children. After Bessie Maud is removed to an asylum, her eleven-year-old daughter is left to step into her role as the woman of the house. The anxiety in the novel over how Bessie Maud's insanity is transmitted through her mother and her grandfather mirrors concerns over feeblemindedness in the early twentieth century and the suitability of the feebleminded to reproduce. The eugenics movement sought to stop the spread of feeblemindedness through, at first, segregation of those deemed feebleminded (usually working-class women) and then, when that did not prevent it, sterilization. Feebleminded women were not considered to be appropriate candidates for motherhood, as their feeblemindedness could be passed on to their offspring and thus degrade the entire race. Bessie Maud's condition in *Weeds* is linked to her maternity through her choice to destroy her household and, almost literally, her family, emphasizing the connection between the suppression of "maternal power" (Berg 100) and its mental effects. While the novel's representation of Bessie Maud's demise is not an unsympathetic one, it evokes the dangers both to her immediate family and to her racial and national family as a result of the transmission of these supposedly dangerous hereditary traits.

While *Weeds* does evoke such racialized arguments, calling attention to them does not deny the novel's important work to nuance traditional naturalist representations of

biological determinism and women's reproductive agency. In its depiction of a rural working-class woman whose fate is determined not solely by her reproduction but rather by the convergence of biological, economic, and cultural forces, the novel illustrates the way that women naturalist writers used the interaction of social and biological forms of determinism to call for expanded reproductive agency and challenged biologically essentialist representations of sex as a purely deterministic force. *Weeds* offers an important glimpse into the ways in which women writers negotiated complex ideas about and attitudes toward women's bodies in the early twentieth century—ideas that were inextricably linked to race and nation. *Weeds* engages with the complicated nature of these ideas while leveling an incising critique of the social power structures that deny women subjectivity and agency over their own maternal bodies.

CHAPTER 5: THE FAILED NEW WOMAN IN EVELYN SCOTT'S *THE NARROW HOUSE*

As we have seen in the previous two chapters, women responded in their fiction to hereditarian science as a way to grapple with the biological and social imperatives to reproduce as well as to envision a more positive future. Kelley's *Weeds*, in particular, illustrates that eugenics was one way that women writers interrogated the intersections of biological and social determinisms and argued for the need for reproductive agency and bodily autonomy. Women writers' willingness to adopt and adapt eugenics discourse was likely due at least in part to its core concerns with heredity and its implications for racial and national progress, as well as those concerns' embeddedness in the cultural and scientific landscapes of the early twentieth century. Whereas Hopkins adapted eugenics and the hereditarian science from which it drew in order to represent both the stakes of and possibilities for women's reproduction to the future of the African American race, Kelley did so to demonstrate the bodily impacts of the erosion of agency engendered by the lack of reproductive autonomy and to make the case for the need for birth control for poor, rural white women. These texts reveal that interest in women's reproduction was shared by novelists and scientists of this era alike, making motherhood central to ideas about progress and, often, resulting in an even more pervasive policing of women's bodies.

However, although the links between eugenics and reproduction were quite firm in fiction and in cultural and scientific discourse, eugenics was not the only arena in which women's sexuality and reproductive potential were contested, and the use of its

ideas was not the only way that women naturalist writers protested their lack of reproductive agency. Like *Weeds*, Evelyn Scott's 1921 novel *The Narrow House*, published only one year after the passage of the 19th Amendment gave women legal access to the vote, captures the costs of the continued denial of bodily autonomy women faced in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Both novels document the effects of that denial on individual women, primarily through childbearing. Rather than focusing as Kelley does on the need for birth control as the primary means of achieving agency, though, Scott turns her attention to broader examination of the relationship between biological and social determinisms and how the two converge to limit women's agency.

The Narrow House depicts societal, familial, and psychological tensions across three generations of the Farley family living together in a house that is literally and metaphorically confining as well as "old-fashioned," "grimy," and "disheveled" (Scott 1). The house represents the crumbling Victorian ideals to which its inhabitants must adhere, and nowhere are the stakes of the constant striving and failing to fulfill these ideals more apparent than in its women who, by virtue of cultural assumptions regarding their biology, are either mothers or future mothers. The dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships throughout the novel reveal that motherhood becomes unfulfilling, even fatal, when restricted by gender norms regarding appropriate behaviors and feelings for mothers, including complete self-effacement, passive sexuality, and the primacy of women's "duties" as mothers. No two characters represent the deterministic impact of social expectations of motherhood on women's bodies better than Winnie and Alice Farley. Winnie, a mother of two who is trapped in a loveless marriage with the eldest

Farley child, Laurence, is characterized as weak-willed, dependent on others for care and affirmation of their love for her, and constantly searching for the subjectivity she lacks. She is also continually in ill health, likely due to the physical toll childbearing has taken on her body. Alice, on the other hand, is not a mother. In fact, she is not only childless, but single and working outside the home, representing the prototypical early twentieth-century New Woman. No less than Winnie, though, can Alice escape the era's cultural and scientific imperatives to reproduce; she is just as bodily and socially determined by these calls as Winnie.

Through these characters and their relationship to motherhood, *The Narrow House* reveals that the promise of the New Woman and, as Alice bitterly puts it, the "emancipation of women" (Scott 139) that the 19th Amendment was supposed to usher in, both failed because they did not dislodge cultural, medical, and scientific authority over women's bodies, especially regarding reproduction. The novel shows that while this authority remains entrenched, expectations for women's roles as defined primarily through motherhood will also prevail and, in the end, limit women's agency. Scott makes this argument through her documentation of the convergence of biological and social forms of determinism on her two young women protagonists, Winnie and Alice, both of whom illustrate the psychological and physical costs of social and scientific control over women's bodies. Both women are subject to the management of their bodies by cultural and scientific norms and ideas that linked women's reproduction and their hereditary potential to the future of the nation—ideas that necessitated the policing of both mothers' and non-mothers' bodies. Scott illustrates the costs of cultural and scientific control over

women's bodies for mothers most clearly through Winnie's experience of childbirth, where social norms and medical practices converge to strip her entirely of her agency and, ultimately, her life. Their costs for *non*-maternal bodies are revealed through Scott's representation of Alice and the psychological toll that the still-pervasive imperatives for motherhood take on her. Through her representation of these characters, Scott—perhaps even more so than Hopkins and Kelley—recognizes the ability of women's unique reproductive capabilities to circumscribe their agency; like Dunbar, she does not shy away from acknowledging the degrading material consequences of social forces supported by scientific ideas on the bodies of her protagonists. However, *The Narrow House* ultimately makes clear that the primary deterministic force on women's bodies is the interaction of cultural expectations with scientific authority on those bodies. The emancipation of women cannot be realized until that authority is disrupted.

Naturalism's Ambivalence toward the New Woman

Scott's depiction of the working New Woman illustrates naturalism's preoccupation with the figure at the turn of the century. The New Woman can be found in the pages of more canonical naturalist writers, from Trina McTeague in Frank Norris's *McTeague* to Dede Mason in Jack London's *Burning Daylight* to Carrie in Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, all of whom took varying stances on the figure and her relation to American society. Norris's *McTeague* (1899) in particular offers one of the clearest explorations of the turn-of-the-century "modern woman" and her uncertain reproductive and social future. Trina McTeague, due to her status as a working, nonmaternal woman, offers a useful lens through which to view Scott's representation of Alice and,

specifically, how that representation diverges from more conventionally naturalist accounts of the New Woman. Whereas Scott ascribes her New Woman protagonist's fate—including her reproductive fate—to social forces, the accounts of these more canonical writers tend to be more biologically determinist (although not always wholly so).

Frank Norris's *McTeague* (1899) exemplifies a naturalist depiction of the New Woman as a threatening, biologically determined figure. As a working woman who is bent on keeping her own money to the point of miserliness, Norris's Trina represents the risks that the modern woman poses to traditional family structures and domestic life. In the novel, while Trina's work is not the sole cause of her crumbling marriage and household and her eventual death, it is a main contributor. Norris depicts her work and the money she earns from it as a subversion of gender roles that ends up costing Trina her marriage, her physical health, and her life. Modernity, figured through McTeague's loss of his job due to changing professional standards and, more significantly, through Trina's work and her status as breadwinner, flips the script of traditional gender roles. This leads to dire consequences for both the family structure and for Trina's bodily integrity, resulting in the breakup of their marriage, Trina's biological degeneration, and her death at the hands of her husband. The working woman in *McTeague* is, in the end, at best an ambivalent, and at worst a threatening, figure, antithetical to American ideals of domesticity and of progress.

McTeague explores both men's and women's relationship to the future amidst late nineteenth-century industrialization, urbanization, and changing gender roles. McTeague

and his wife, Trina, both grapple with how to fit in within this new social landscape. McTeague, a dentist, struggles and eventually fails to keep up with his changing professional landscape and with gender-based expectations for men. The novel is an examination of "an era in which the old stories—of cozy villages where all are friends, of women who have four children as a matter of course, of men who succeed through bodily strength alone—are breaking down, but it is far from clear what sorts of narratives are replacing them" (Fleissner 217). McTeague lacks a diploma and therefore must cease his dentistry practice due to transforming professionalization standards, and, further, his "physical strength unfits him for life in the twentieth century" (218), which is placing decreasing value on such qualities.

Conversely, his wife, Trina, is a modern figure, capturing the simultaneous cultural fascination with and repudiation of the financially independent working woman. Before her marriage to McTeague, she was employed by her uncle carving and painting wooden figurines for replicas of Noah's ark, and, in addition to the small fortune she won playing the lottery, she continues to derive income "her own little trade" (Norris 78) after their union. Trina is "very proud" of her work (78), presumably enjoying it and the sense of financial security it gives her. After she marries McTeague, she continues this work not out of financial necessity per se, since McTeague is still employed and doing relatively well in his dentistry practice at that point. Rather, she works partially out of a sense of pride, and partially out of a growing hoarding impulse, which had begun with her lottery winnings and continues after her marriage. Significantly, in addition to growing out of Trina's desire for her own financial security, her hoarding impulse is also

linked to racialized traits. Her "economy" and her hoarding of money are attributed to the "good deal of peasant blood [that] still ran undiluted in her veins," which gave her "all the instinct of a hardy and penurious mountain race—the instinct which saves without any thought, without idea of consequence—saving for the sake of saving, hoarding without knowing why" (79). Trina's desire for financial security and independence, and her ability to attain it without the help of her husband couples with the deterministic force of her racial heritage to drive her obsession with money.

If Trina acts as one of the novel's central figures of modernity, in the connection of her racial characteristics to her hoarding habits (which ultimately prove to be destructive) as well as through their consequences for her marriage, she also captures the cultural and scientific anxieties surrounding the New Woman. These anxieties are figured most clearly through the impact of her work and her obsession with money on her domestic life. Her substantial earnings and savings flip traditional gender roles, which eventually leads to the destruction of her marriage. Trina is the one who (begrudgingly) furnishes the McTeagues' house upon their marriage in one of the novel's first instances of the subversion of gender-based expectations for who makes and spends the money of the household. Money is also the source of the couple's first major fight, as well as the source of most of their subsequent arguments. Trina sees her money as hers and only hers, telling her husband, "You won't touch it; you won't touch my money, I tell you. ... Every penny of it is mine" (117). McTeague's loss of his dentistry practice and his income, and Trina subsequently becoming the primary income earner of the household, deepens this tension. Although McTeague takes a job manufacturing surgical equipment,

it does not pay well, and he soon gets laid off, making Trina the family's *sole* earner. As a result, the two must move into a series of smaller, more dilapidated homes, signaling a nearly literal deterioration of the home. Because Trina now spends so much time working, she is "not quite so scrupulously tidy now as in the old days" (160), neglecting to properly clean their home and letting paint and shavings from her carved animals accumulate in layers upon the floors and walls. Trina's neglect of the home in pursuit of her work and her money implies that "the decline of the McTeagues' domestic life cannot be separated from Trina's transformation of the home into a kind of factory or from her refusal to share her savings" (Fleissner 204). The novel therefore draws clear parallels between women's work, the subversion of gender roles that results from modernity, and the destruction of the family.

In addition to its impact on the McTeagues' domestic life, Trina's work also has biological consequences. I have already pointed out that Trina's hoarding is figured as a biologically deterministic racial and "instinct[ive]" (Norris 78) cause of her work, but her work itself also *becomes* a form of biological determinism, suggesting that the novel promotes a "clear disjunction between work and femininity" (Fleissner 227). The effects of Trina's work, especially after she becomes breadwinner, begin to show on her body. In addition to neglecting her household duties, she also neglects her appearance; although she "still [takes] pride in neatly combing and coiling her wonderful black hair," eventually she finds it "more and more comfortable to work in her blue flannel wrapper" (Norris 160). Trina eventually loses completely her "pretty ways and good looks"; her

charming little figure grew coarse, stunted, and dumpy. She who had once been of cat-like neatness, now slovened all day about the room in a dirty flannel wrapper, her slippers clap-clapping after her as she walked. At least she even neglected her hair, the wonderful swarthy tiara, the coiffure of a queen, that shaded her little pale forehead. ... It came down half a dozen times a day; by evening it was an unkempt, tangled mass, a veritable rat's nest. (184)

Trina's physical degeneration culminates in the amputation of her fingers—the effect of both her work and the deterioration of her marriage. McTeague had begun biting her fingers as revenge for her withholding money from him, and the resulting injuries, coupled with the supposedly "'non-poisonous' paint" (193) she uses to paint her Noah's ark animals, leaves her with only "two good fingers and the stumps of two others" on each hand (193). She can no longer work for her uncle carving and painting animals and takes a job cleaning a kindergarten classroom. The classroom becomes the eventual site of her death after McTeague takes his ultimate revenge upon her for her refusal to give up her money to him.

So, the specter of modernity, figured largely through Trina's wage work, is figured throughout the novel as linked closely to her failed marriage, her physical degeneration, and her death. Jennifer Fleissner also suggested that because women's participation in wage work was linked to the declining birthrate as well as to mechanization, which was "felt to render physical differences between male and female workers obsolete," Trina is figured in the novel as a "failing machine" (204). This figuration is evidenced in part by the fact that she and McTeague remain childless

throughout the novel, linking women's work to a decline in their reproductive viability and value. Through Trina, Norris represents the figure of the modern woman as working woman—especially when coupled with a biologically degenerate form of "peasant blood"—as a potential threat to ideals of family and domesticity that supposedly provided America's foundation. Norris's text aligns the subversion of gender roles that modernity, especially working women, brings with detrimental effects on women's biology and on domestic life. However, for later women writers like Evelyn Scott, the apparent incompatibility of work with reproduction is figured as a consequence of social forces; the relationship between women's work and their biology is much less of a direct cause-and-effect relationship than it is for Norris. Norris's depiction of the working modern woman is in the end a means of interrogating women's uncertain relationship to the future, while for Scott, it is a means of critiquing the social expectations that *set up* work as being incompatible with maternity, as well as the scientific theories supporting those norms. While both writers use the working New Woman to examine determinism, they come to different conclusions regarding the source of that determinism and what it means for turn-of-the-century women.

"A Threat to the Human Race": The New Woman in the Cultural Imagination

The Narrow House, in terms of time and of literary form, oscillates between Modernism and naturalism. Scott's style, with her laser focus on her characters' interiority and her incorporation of stream-of-consciousness technique places her solidly in the Modernist tradition. In *theme,* though, the novel is quite firmly rooted in naturalism. As Tim Edwards observes, *The Narrow House* yields "a surprisingly complex

and disturbing naturalism in the familiar and deceptively innocuous setting of the domestic sphere, a naturalism that critiques the shallow moral conventionalities and domestic ideologies Evelyn Scott observed around her" (290). In addition to the deconstruction of the idealized domestic sphere, Scott's naturalism is particularly evident in the novel's deep interest in how social and biological forms of determinism converge to create the (often tormented) realities the novel's characters face.

It is the acknowledgment of the power of biology as a deterministic force for women that makes Scott in some ways the most traditionally naturalist writer in the present study—at least, the form of naturalism typically conceived of by critics such as Lee Clark Mitchell and Derek Walcutt. What makes Scott's novel distinct from those of the other women naturalists I have discussed thus far is her acknowledgment of a form of biological determinism that is unique to women—more precisely, that women *do* have biological forces that may cause them to be determined in certain ways. This stems partially, I think, from Scott's investment in granting women a viable sexuality, both within and outside of marriage. *Weeds* invests in the representation of this sexuality somewhat as well, but to a lesser extent; in Kelley's novel, women's agency is foreclosed *due to* social structures that disallow them control over their own bodies, whereas Scott grants the possibility of biologically determinant forces existing, at least in part, independent from these social structures. However, what makes *The Narrow House* just as distinct from the work of more canonical naturalist writers like Norris and Crane is that this determinism is not the exclusive or even the primary force that circumscribes women's agency; it is, rather, the social forces that dictate narrowly defined reproductive

roles for women that cause them to be reduced to their biology. For Scott, then, while she does acknowledge forms of determinism that are unique to women due to their biology, it is ultimately the social forces acting on the maternal (and nonmaternal) bodies of her female protagonists that limit their agency by denying them bodily autonomy.

As evidenced by Scott's critique of the figure, while the New Woman was most pervasive in cultural discourse, especially in periodicals, during the 1880s and 1890s, her influence remained prevalent in the public and literary imagination into the postwar period. More an abstract figure than an actual woman or group of women, the New Woman—a term coined in a debate between Sarah Grand and Ouida in the *North American Review* in 1894—was largely a discursive phenomenon debated in and by the press. Over the span of the two decades, the New Woman was characterized by contradictory associations depending on whom was writing about her. For her detractors, she was unfeminine, "mannish," and an "unattractive, browbeating usurper of traditionally masculine roles" (Patterson 2). For her sympathizers, she was an "independent, college-educated, American girl devoted to suffrage, progressive reform, and sexual freedom" (2). These representations indicate that the New Woman was also a site of contested viewpoints of gender and sexuality at the turn of the century; according to Sally Ledger, "gender was an unstable concept at the *fin de siècle*, and it was the force of gender as a site of conflict which drew such virulent attacks upon the figure of the New Woman" (2). The New Woman "overtly challenged the dominant sexual codes of the Victorian era" (Ledger 5) by remaining single or delaying marriage and motherhood, by working outside the home, and by (supposedly) being more sexually liberal. Many of

the anxieties surrounding the figure, especially into the twentieth century, involved her reproductive potential (or lack thereof).

The New Woman's challenges to sexual norms led many in the press as well as in the medical and scientific communities to speculate on her impacts on the very future of the nation and of the human race itself. Critics claimed that because of her refusal to enact traditional gender roles, especially those regarding motherhood, she was a "threat to the human race, [or] was probably an infanticidal mother, and at the very least sexually 'abnormal'" (Ledger 10). These critiques reflected concerns about the fitness of the New Woman to reproduce and what her refusal to do so might cost the nation in terms of its future citizens. Science writer Grant Allen's essay "Plain Words on the Woman Question," published in *Popular Science Monthly* in 1889, exemplifies this widespread concern. Allen begins his essay by immediately connecting reproduction with progress from an evolutionary standpoint: "If any species or race desires a continued existence," he writes, "then above all things it is necessary that that species or race should go on reproducing itself" (170). Allen claims to be a great sympathizer with and "enthusiast" for the "Woman Question," but stresses that emancipation for women should not interfere with their "natural" imperative to reproduce, arguing that "the vast majority of women must become wives and mothers, and must bear at least four children apiece" (171) in order to propagate the race. If women reject this necessity, dire consequences will result; Allen contends that "to the end of all time, it is mathematically demonstrable that most

women must become the mothers of at least four children, or else the race[33] must cease to exist. Any supposed solution of the woman problem, therefore, which fails to look this fact straight in the face, is a false solution" (173). It is this problem, not voting rights or sexual freedom, that women should be working to address.

As indicated by Allen's concern for the future of the nation, the modern woman's reproductive imperative, and the national security that the New Woman threatened by (supposedly) rejecting it, were cast in overwhelmingly racialized and class-based terms. Albert Edward Wiggam's book-length tract *The Fruit of the Family Tree* (1924) even more clearly than Allen's illustrates the relationship between women's reproduction and the future of the nation as framed in racialized terms. Echoing the concerns of many other eugenicists, Wiggam's book is an extended rumination on the almost surety of national decline if the birth rates of white, middle- and upper-class Americans were to continue to decline and to be overtaken by those of immigrants, the poor, and the "feebleminded." Wiggam directly and repeatedly frames his calls for women to "see that parenthood among the abler and more successful members of society is made of the thing of highest social honor, the most delightful human duty and the most remunerative reward of life" (314) in simultaneously national and racial terms. Wiggam points out—like Allen, citing the statistic that women must have at least four children in order to avoid "the race going backward in actual numbers and ... decreasing in quality" (293)—that "through their

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[33] In the early twentieth century, the term "race" was more expansive than what we typically conceive of today. Allen likely here refers to race in terms of national identity—although wrapped up in notions of national identity were connotations of (white) racial identity, as well.

healthy, well-born children [women] can control almost the whole future social destiny of man" (297) and help to guarantee American perpetuity and power.

Reproduction and national power are therefore inextricably linked. As Wiggam postulates, "If America does not produce a great race what else matters? ... *The production of a great race* shall become the sum and meaning of all politics, the one living purpose of the state" (280, emphasis in original). While Wiggam's use of "race" may initially appear to be shorthand for "nation," the four-page litany of questions that he poses to women, imploring them to consider the stakes of *not* reproducing in sufficient numbers for the replenishment of the national stock, reveals that he desires only white, middle- and upper-class women to increase their reproduction. He asks his reader to consider while making reproductive decisions and in the voting booth:

> What is the birth-rate among day laborers, skilled workmen, college graduates, college professors, millionaires, paupers, hoboes, imbeciles, the tubercular, insane, and epileptic? [...]
>
> Does charity really cure or does it increase human misery through keeping alive the unfit and enabling them to reproduce a larger horde of the unfit? [...]
>
> What are the effects of race crossings? Do children of race crossings live longer or shorter lives, make better or worse citizens than children of pure races?
>
> Does a mixed population with differing racial inheritances, different minds and blood make for the stability or instability of a nation? [...]
>
> Have past civilizations, as some maintain, gone to pieces when they mixed their breeds? (Wiggam 285-86)

While presumably rhetorical questions meant to provoke thought, Wiggam clearly equates racial "mixing," poverty, and social status with inferior heredity and with the danger they pose to the nation's future. His call for women to reproduce is targeted toward white, educated, socioeconomically well-off women—the demographic that the New Woman of the early twentieth century represented—who have the "right" hereditary material to direct America's future. As Wiggam stresses, it is "imperative that the young women of the higher social strata, who tend the most to forego this responsibility, should be inspired by a proper education, with a new and deeper patriotism that sees motherhood once more as woman's noblest duty, her most precious privilege as well as the role in life which brings her the richest honors and social esteem" (310-311).

For science writers like Allen and eugenicists like Wiggam, as well as policymakers like Theodore Roosevelt, as we saw in Chapter 4, women had both an evolutionary imperative and a social duty to reproduce, making the New Woman a biologically and socially dangerous obstacle to racial and national progress. In their literary representations, women writers worked to challenge these fears surrounding and attacks upon the New Woman, including those that criticized her sexuality and its supposed costs to the nation. Such attacks actually opened up "a discursive space for her" (Ledger 9) in periodicals and in literature by writers ranging from Edith Wharton to Zitkala-Sa to Pauline Hopkins. In the hands of these writers, according to Martha H. Patterson, the New Woman "both promised and threatened to effect sociopolitical change as a consumer, as an instigator of evolutionary and economic development, as a harbinger of modern technologies, as an icon of successful assimilation into dominant Anglo-

American culture, and as a leader in progressive political causes" (4). Many (although certainly not all) women writers who adopted and adapted the New Woman in their fiction in the decades surrounding 1900 challenged concerns about her reproductive and hereditary value by arguing that "the appearance of the New Woman was a definitive sign of racial progress" (Patterson 12), not racial decay: "Less a sudden apparition than a logical product of improved family and social conditions, this 'stronger and healthier' New Woman reflected a largely positive vision of technological change and social reform at the turn of the century" (12). By depicting their New Woman protagonists as racially evolved and as the prototype for the modern woman, these writers responded forcefully to the hysteria evoked by writers like Allen regarding the nation's racial future.

Noting these general commonalities among women writers who adapted the New Woman, though, is not to say that their literary response to her was monolithic. Although much earlier historical and literary work on the New Woman often constructed her, and the literary response to her, in this way, critics like Patterson as well as Elizabeth Ammons and Jennifer Fleissner, among others,[34] have worked to account for the "regional, ethnic, and political differences of the American New Woman trope" (Patterson 16). Not all women responded to the New Woman in the same way; for example, the sexual liberation found in some periodical and literary depictions presented obstacles for writers like Pauline Hopkins and Margaret Murray Washington, who, as I

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[34] See, for example, Patterson's *Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915* (2005), Ammons's *Conflicting Stories: American Women Writers at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (1991) and Fleissner's *Women, Compulsion, Modernity: The Moment of American Literary Naturalism* (2004), as well as Charlotte J. Rich's *Transcending the New Woman: Multiethnic Narratives in the Progressive Era* (2009).

have already discussed, had to combat decades of representations of African American women as already sexually licentious and thus morally compromised. Writers used the New Woman to serve different political, social, and literary purposes. For many women writers, however, the New Woman generally served as a site through which to call attention to the social problems of the present while representing the promise of women's future.

Maternity, Medical Authority, and Bodily Autonomy in *The Narrow House*

However, by the 1920s, the promise of the New Woman and her associations with the social and political emancipation of women was not looking as bright. Scott's *The Narrow House* reflects a growing strain of pessimism toward the New Woman figure, and of the women's rights movement, among some feminists and writers after the passage of the 19th Amendment. Some of these women in the 1920s and into the 1930s cited the New Woman and the women's suffrage movement as having ushered in only superficial changes in women's social and political status. Women's voting rights, the (marginal) greater acceptance of women's sexual freedom and the small uptick in women's employment outside the home did not lead to widespread changes in societal—and individual women's—perceptions of their social roles as being located primarily in the home. For example, historian Sophonisba Breckenridge concluded in her 1933 volume *Women in the Twentieth Century* that women's employment remained restricted to relatively narrow employment types and that they still lagged far behind men in both voting records and political office, despite the passage of the 20th Amendment and the greater visibility of working women in cultural depictions of the New Woman. The lack

of gains for women in the social as well as the political spheres despite their new legal rights was set against continued anxieties about equality's implications for the decline of the family and of marriage. In addition to these anxieties, women's new political power was even co-opted by eugenicists like Wiggam, who urged them to use their newfound voting power and increasing access to education to study heredity so that they might choose the most "fit" mate and to advocate for eugenics social measures and legislation. As he wrote in *Fruit of the Family Tree*, "the thing of prime importance is that woman is now a free political agent and her natural instincts are those which minister to race conservation and race improvement" (301), including by working to establish state boards of heredity and eugenics across the country. Together with the disillusionment summarized by Breckenridge with the lack of social and political progress for women, Wiggam's hijacking of women's new political power to consign them back to primarily reproductive roles demonstrates a larger failure of the New Woman and her promise to emancipate women from the narrowly defined gender roles of the nineteenth century.

The Narrow House further illustrates how earlier, more optimistic literary and cultural representations of the New Woman failed to free women from fears generated by the scientific and medical communities as well as by the popular press regarding their hereditary value and to offer viable alternatives to women for roles outside of those of wife and mother. As long as those cultural expectations remained firmly in place, women would be unable to access the bodily and social agency promised by so-called "emancipation for women" and, just as importantly, to find satisfaction in that agency. Pat Tyrer has characterized both Winnie and Alice as New Women in her 2005 essay "'A

Bird Alive in a Snake's Body': The New Woman of Evelyn Scott's 'The Narrow House.'" Like the New Woman, Winnie and Alice are both "caught between the desire for freedom and the fear of aloneness" (49). Tyrer argues Winnie and Alice allow Scott to examine the condition of women in the wake of the pervasive New Woman discourse at the turn of the century and to illustrate the ambivalent, liminal place they occupy in society. Winnie and Alice do not merely allow Scott to reflect upon the position of the New Woman in early twentieth century America, though; I argue that in its representation of Winnie and Alice, the novel also makes clear that the New Woman and its emancipatory promises failed because of its inability to address the interaction of biological and social forces that work to determine women's lives. Winnie's inability to reconcile her sexuality and her role as a mother, as well as her lack of reproductive agency at the hands of a male-centered medical establishment, illustrate the near impossibility of bodily autonomy for mothers in the early twentieth century. Alice, on the other hand, is the novel's supposedly emancipated, nonmaternal New Woman figure, but she, too, cannot find fulfillment in that role while still subject to social norms that require her to be reproductive. Alice, in other words, has a degree of social agency as a single working woman, but she has internalized the strict gender expectations based in science and the hysteria over the New Woman's (lack of) reproduction, with severe psychic consequences. Through these two characters, Scott represents the psychological and physical stakes of gender-based norms rooted in scientific assumptions about women's biology and the New Woman's failure to dismantle them.

Winnie represents perhaps most forcefully the lack of bodily autonomy that women, particularly mothers, continued to face in the 1920s. Rather than rejecting her reproductive "duty," as those like Allen feared, Winnie has at least attempted to embrace it. Winnie is in a strained marriage with Laurence Farley and is the mother of two young children, May and Bobby. Her relationship with her children, as the parent-child and especially mother-daughter relationships in the novel more generally, is fraught with complication, even dysfunctional, signifying that motherhood becomes unfulfilling when restricted by rigid social expectations. Winnie represents the nonviability of the cultural myth of the idealized mother. Winnie has a possessive, uneven love for her children; she only loves them in their ability to reflect back onto herself. She looks upon the face of her daughter, May, with "soft, hostile possessiveness" (Scott 9), far from the unconditional, unobstructed love that mothers are "supposed" to have for their children. Further, Winnie's obsession with mirrors at once reflects her search for an independent identity that exists outside that of a wife and a mother and her attempt at performing that motherly identity; she almost compulsively seeks out her own reflection, her "rapt, tragic face [becoming] even more voluptuously tragic as it contemplated itself" (13). This narcissistic gesture illustrates Winnie's search for assurance of her bodily self. The mirror also stands in for larger cultural expectations for women as mothers, as she attempts to posture and pose in front of the mirror in an attempt to "produce a reflection that appears to embody her impression of an ideal mother figure" (Jenkins 84). Her performance in front of the mirror reflects her performance as a mother as she "tries on" different poses that she considers fitting for a mother.

Despite these performances, Winnie's constant entreaties to her husband and to her children to declare their love for her reveals at once the dependency of her subjectivity upon her role as a wife and mother and the failure of those roles to lead to fulfillment and agency. Throughout the novel, Winnie asks Laurence, May, and Bobby, "Do you love me?" Even when they attempt to assure her that they do, she remains unsatisfied with their responses. Because Winnie cannot find subjectivity in herself, she must search for it in her prescribed roles. Winnie's tortured, ambivalent relationship with herself and with her family signal a larger search for subjectivity that, the novel posits, twentieth-century women face when subject to strict social control. Even though she attempts to answer scientific and political calls for women to do their reproductive duties to the nation and to the race, she struggles to find the contentment those calls promise.

The missive of Winnie's doctor that she forego having more children intensifies that lack of contentment. The novel alludes to an unnamed illness caused by Winnie's previous pregnancies and the births of her children, and her doctor states outright that more children will result in a worsening of that illness and, most likely, death. The illness itself may well have been caused by physician interference in Winnie's previous births, symbolizing medical (i.e., patriarchal) control over women's bodies. Because the doctor advises her not to risk having more children, he further limits the only form of subjectivity she has—that derived from her role as a wife and a mother. Her only path to subjectivity is foreclosed because she cannot "properly" enact her role as a wife through a sexual relationship with her husband nor as a mother through further childbearing and

heeding the social, scientific and political calls to refrain from limiting her reproductive potential.

Therefore, the doctor's medical injunction against having additional children doesn't only conflict with the limited possibility for agency Winnie has; it also clashes with the cultural imperative for women to not only *have* children but to have a sufficient number of children to replenish the population and furnish the nation with citizens of the "right sort"—in Allen's and Wiggam's estimations, at least four. Winnie's illness, especially as it conflicts with both her desire for subjectivity through proper wifehood and motherhood and to fulfill cultural norms, has psychological, as we have seen, as well as physical consequences, especially after she ignores her doctor's advice, seduces Laurence, and, as she later finds out, becomes pregnant with her third child. Her attempt to persuade him to have sex with her is driven by her desire to be convinced of his love of and acceptance of her. She implores him, "'I want you to love me. Oh, Laurie, you do love me!' She groped up his arms, his check, until she had found his mouth. She covered it up with her hand. She did not want it to speak against her. ... 'Love me!' she entreated" (Scott 90-91). When she is finally successful, her "triumph" (95) is only momentary; Laurence's assurance of his love for her and the subjectivity she believes she will be able to find in the physical "evidence" of that love eludes her once again. She realizes almost immediately that she is likely pregnant, and with that knowledge, she realizes "how much she hate[s] him" (98).

In addition to Winnie's ultimately unsuccessful search for social subjectivity in the labels of "wife" and "mother," the danger associated with this new pregnancy, and

her eventual death as a result of it, illustrate the lack of bodily agency Winnie has, especially in terms of reproduction. On her maternal body, then, biological and social forms of control merge to limit her agency and ultimately result in her death. Andrea Powell Jenkins has contended that Winnie's relationship with motherhood allows the novel to "bravely form what Julia Kristeva labels a 'herethics' discourse on maternity and motherhood, a discourse that is based on individual experience and that focuses on the sensual nature of pregnancy, birth, and mothering" (81). However, because her body is not under her control, but rather subject to social and medical policing, Winnie cannot realize the liberatory potential of the motherhood Jenkins finds in Kristeva's herethics discourse. Through Winnie's relationship with her husband and children, coupled with her pregnancy and childbirth, the novel illustrates the psychological and the physical impacts of continued social and scientific control over women's bodies, specifically in reproduction. On her body, social norms surrounding motherhood combine with medical authority rooted in patriarchal systems of control to deny her control over her own body. Her resulting death in childbirth represents the ultimate failure of subjectivity that women, especially mothers, face at the hands of those systems of control. It is therefore not biology per se that determines her, although it does act as an agential force. It is science rooted in social perceptions that leads to the failure of agency.

Winnie's illness and her death in childbirth, likely due to complications from interventions in her previous pregnancies, exemplify the gradual decrease in control women had over the labor process that accompanied the shift to overwhelmingly male physician-assisted births in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Up through

the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the majority of women's births were attended by midwives, who were mostly women. These midwives tended to practice a non-interventionist approach to childbirth, letting "as much as possible ... nature take its course" (Leavitt 38). However, toward the closing of the nineteenth century, the pervasive cultural fear of childbirth among American women[35] combined with perceptions of gender-based scientific knowledge and authority, led increasing numbers of women to invite physicians, alongside and eventually instead of, midwives to attend their births in search of "safer and less painful childbirths" (38). Such invitations were largely dependent on income in the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth centuries, making physician-assisted births less common in women with lower incomes. However, toward the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth, greater numbers of women had financial and geographic access to physicians and therefore began inviting them to attend their births in increasing numbers.

Due either to their medical training or to the (real or perceived) expectations of the families of the birthing women, physicians tended to take much more of an interventionist approach to childbirth than did midwives. As a result of these techniques, "for those women who chose physicians instead of or in addition to midwives, birth

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[35] This fear was quite justified. According to Judith Walzer Leavitt in *Brought to Bed: Childbearing in America, 1750-1950*, "early in the twentieth century, by which time statistics had improved considerably over nineteenth-century standards, approximately one mother died for each 154 living births" (25). The risk compounds for each individual woman when considering that women often had more than one child. If a woman had five children, which was average for early twentieth century, her risk over those five pregnancies would be one in 30 (26). "Put this way," Leavitt writes, "it is possible to understand women's fears for themselves in a more dramatic and realistic way" (26).

became less a natural, immutable process and more an event that could be altered and influenced by a wide selection of interventions" (49). One of the most common interventions was the use of forceps to pull the baby from the birth canal. Forceps were thought to make labor faster, with fewer complications, but in reality they caused a greater potential for harm and did not increase women's chances of survival in childbirth. Winnie's unnamed, unspecified illness could well be a result of a previous birth injury caused by a physician's intervention such as forceps. By the turn of the twentieth century, physicians delivered about half of U.S. babies (Leavitt 61), and this number only increased as the century progressed. The use of forceps, which many physicians promoted, therefore became more common. *The Narrow House* even alludes to them in Winnie's birth scene; as she labors and her strength begins to lag, she sees the "bright things in the doctor's bag. Then long claws of steel" (Scott 174). Winnie "want[s] to scream" (174), to protest their use, but she is unable to speak.

Due to the commonness of their use among physicians by 1921, the forceps would likely have been used in Winnie's previous births as well, especially if she had a prolonged or difficult labor. The use of forceps often resulted in mild to severe injuries to both the mother and the child, including, on the part of the mother, "severe perineal lacerations" (Leavitt 46), the effects of which could linger for years. Physicians also carried puerperal fever, which was "potentially disastrous to birthing women" (57). Winnie could well be suffering from one of these injuries and its effects years later. The damage they would cause to her reproductive system would indeed make carrying and delivering additional children dangerous, even deadly. This physical damage also

symbolizes the costs to women's agency that male-dominated systems of power, including medicine, enacted by encroaching on women's bodily volition, making the maternal body a site of entrapment and loss of agency. Winnie's reaction to the physician, Dr. Beach, reiterates that he and his practices are at odds with her sense of control over her own body. When he puts his hands on her, she feels "her body harshen to his touch," and it is "at that moment when his hand touched her that the child became hers. It was not that she wanted the child, but that she wanted the thing the man could not touch" (Scott 151). Despite Winnie's resolution that the doctor not have power over her, she is in the end unable to deny it; while in labor, she is subject to his control.

The increasing prevalence of anesthetic drugs like chloroform further reduced women's agency over their bodies in childbirth in the hands of the male-dominated medical community. Anesthesia was a "symbol of what science had to offer" women as well as a "means of enhanc[ing] the place and role of physicians in birthing rooms across America" (Leavitt 122). Many physicians had adopted the use of chloroform by the end of the nineteenth century, and by the opening decades of the twentieth century, it was in common use. Many physicians touted the benefits of the drug, and many women requested and accepted it for its power to alleviate the pain and fear that accompanied childbirth. However, like forceps, anesthesia too came with significant side effects, in large part due to its lack of regulation in the early twentieth century. Side effects included increased risk of hemorrhaging, prolonged labor, and decreased uterine contractions, along with breathing problems for the baby; chloroform also had a muscle-suppressing function, making women struggle to or unable to move about freely during labor (125)

and thus further eroding their control over their bodies. Although many women saw drugs like chloroform as a benefit, its use, along with the forceps, put most power during childbirth in the hands of the physician. Additionally, as is at times the case today, women may have felt pressure by their physician or by family members to allow interventions that they did not necessarily want—further degrading their agency over their own laboring bodies and putting it, quite literally, in the hands of the male physician.

In *The Narrow House*, Winnie is also given chloroform during labor. The language of the scene emphasizes the disconnect from her body as a result of the intervention. When Winnie goes into labor, Mrs. Farley calls Dr. Beach immediately. Winnie's lack of agency in childbirth while in the care of the physician is nearly total. She attempts to relish the "new and fierce aliveness" and the "knowledge" (Scott 171) she finds in the pain of labor, but Dr. Beach disrupts it. When he touches her, Winnie "shudder[s] to his touch"; she "hate[s] the assertive hand on her, demanding her back out of pain" (172). His hand "weigh[s] down her glory, and she [sinks] back, dimmed" (172). The use of chloroform eliminates the final possibility for bodily autonomy in the act of childbirth that Winnie seeks, signified in her estrangement with her body: when the nurse puts the "chloroform cap over Winnie's face," Winnie's head "detache[s] itself frpm her body and float[s] over the bed" (173). Her hands and feet feel "strange" to her, and in the bed on which she lays, "so far from one end to the other, she had lost her feet" (173).[36]

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[36] This moment vividly recalls an early scene in the novel where Mrs. Farley goes to the butcher and observes a row of dead hens whose feet were "a sickly bluish yellow, and the toes, cramped together

Like her illness, Winnie's pain and her control over her own labor are something that are only hers to experience, but the doctor's presence strips her of even that small piece of agency.

After birth, Winnie's "tongue and lips [are] wool" (174); she literally cannot speak against the influence of the doctor. Her child has "emerged from the blackness in which she was still caught" (174)—a blackness out of which she will not herself emerge. Although her child is born healthy, Winnie dies, likely as a result of her unnamed disease, symbolizing the ultimately erasure of agency that maternity brings while under the control of others. Although she does become, to an extent, biologically determined by her reproductive body as well as by her sexuality, Scott makes the case through the presence and intervention of the physician that it is not women's bodies themselves that cause them to be determined, but rather the scientific, medical, and social control to which women are subjected that results in the foreclosure of agency. Winnie's fate also symbolizes the historic and the present (for Scott) circumstances for women in the early twentieth century. As Leavitt points out,

> the biological capacity to bear children itself was not what determined the course of women's lives, but rather the cultural use to which that capacity was put during most of American history. Because women found themselves repeatedly pregnant and because this condition involved certain physical risks, women found themselves bound by what appeared to be their biology. In fact, they were bound

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yet flaccid, still suggested the fatigue that follows agony" (9)—both a foreshadowing of Winnie's fate and a parallel Scott draws between the conditions shared by both women and female chickens.

> equally by ideology, an ideology of domesticity and nurturance, which the women as well as the men in society accepted as the proper order of things. (35)

Even though Winnie is an apparently "modern woman" who *should* have been able to benefit from the supposed "emancipation of women" brought about by the 19th Amendment and by decades of the New Woman's presence in the public imagination, she remains subject to medical as social control over her own (maternal) body. The novel suggests that while they are still subject to this control, women cannot claim authority over their bodies, either sexually or socially.

"A Bird Alive in a Snake's Body": Naturalistic Deconstructions of the (Nonmaternal) New Woman

Maternal bodies are not the only ones that are subject to scientific and social control. Nonmaternal bodies are just as scientifically and socially policed, and the physical and psychological toll is just as heavy, a point made through Scott's representation of Winnie's sister-in-law Alice. Alice, at least on the surface, typifies the New Woman. Single and working outside the home as a copyist for a writer with whom she is in love, Alice, according to her proponents in New Woman discourse, should be empowered, agential, and confident. However, Alice represents, as Pat Tyrer puts it, "the reality of life for the modern woman," in the 1920s, a woman who has "the outward demeanor of the times, but an inward ambivalence" (44). Despite greater acceptance of working women in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the psychological torment and ambivalence toward motherhood Alice experiences throughout the novel indicates that twentieth-century women were still under immense pressure to fulfill

traditional gender roles largely centered on reproduction. She is an apparently "modern" woman with an income of her own, but she has internalized the cultural and scientific anxieties about the dangers of the nonreproductive New Woman. Alice exemplifies the ambivalence engendered by the convergence of New Woman discourse, social expectations for women grounded in scientific ideas, and her own biological drives. Through Alice, Scott reveals that women's bodies become deterministic forces only when subject to social surveillance and control and demonstrates the severe psychic consequences that result from that control.

As evidenced by Grant Allen's plea to women to return to their reproductive duties, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were filled with similar anxieties over women's childbearing futures. This anxiety was fueled and informed by the period's interest in social Darwinism, evolutionary theory, and heredity and their evocation of the "progress of the human race and the benefits of specialization (women's specialty being, of course, childbearing)" (MacPike 373). It was also exacerbated by advances in women's formal education, which were accompanied by medical experts' linkage of education and working outside the home with "a panoply of childbearing-related physical and emotional disorders" (373-74). These emotional disorders often specifically linked unmarried women and mental illness—a link to which Mrs. Farley alludes in *The Narrow House*. After May tells Mrs. Farley that Alice "talks to herself" (Scott 215), Mrs. Farley tells Laurence, "You know there was insanity in your father's family" (216). Somewhat surprisingly, Laurence comes to Alice's defense, snapping at his mother, "You must remember that all old maids don't go mad" (217). Despite this reminder, the link between

single women and mental illness, which surmised that single women must have a mental illness if they spurn their maternal natures, remained entrenched, both in Mrs. Farley's thinking and in early twentieth century American society.

Loralee MacPike also explains that, in addition to (and fueled by) the period's "worship of evolution," the science of sexology added to the equation of women with their reproduction abilities and to the subsequent social ostracizing of childless women. Physician and eugenics supporter Havelock Ellis, for example, constructed the childless woman, as well as the woman who "defined her sexuality outside of childbearing" (MacPike 375) as biologically or mentally unnatural through his belief that the "real aim of heterosexuality was procreation" (375). Similarly, Edward Carpenter, who was not a scientist but rather an influential philosopher who studied and wrote about human sexuality, also remained convinced that "New Woman activities and childbearing were mutually exclusive and that childbearing was the preferable choice for women" (MacPike 377). He wrote in his 1912 book *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* that "a sane maternity is the indispensable condition of [woman's] future advance; not meaning of course that her functions should be in any way narrowed down to that of maternity, nor suggesting that maternity itself when properly fulfilled, does not really involve the broadest and largest culture—but simply taking perfect motherhood as the necessary and obvious start-point of any adequate new conception in the matter" (Carpenter 24).

Sexology was not the only scientific discipline that argued for the necessity of women's reproduction. As we have already seen, the eugenics movement also solidified

the scientific and cultural imperative for reproduction and transformed it to make childbearing essential for racial progress. Now it was not only women's biological imperative, but their national and racial duty, to reproduce, and to reproduce physically and intellectually sound children. This line of argument was also fueled by evolutionary and hereditary science in its logic that the best potential mothers were not New Women, but rather women who realized that their duty was motherhood and enthusiastically sought to fulfill it. The hereditary theories of Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin and early eugenicist, supported this discourse by serving to "uphold the disassociation of the New Woman from childbearing" (MacPike 393) and by emphasizing the importance of transmitting special traits and abilities to offspring—which the childless woman clearly could not and did not do. Such discourse served to consign women to a narrowly circumscribed set of roles and to define their social value as primarily biological.

It is this scientific and cultural atmosphere in which Alice lives. As a single, childless woman, Alice is not considered by scientific nor by cultural norms to be fulfilling her biological or her social functions. Alice is a single, working New Woman of the kind that Ellis and Carpenter deplored. She has regular employment as a copyist, working closely with an older writer named Horace Ridge. Her work takes her out of the house more than either of the novel's other two woman characters and even more than its men. She is described early in the novel as often being "the last to reach home for dinner" (Scott 24). She is also seen as autonomous and competent by her family, at least in the public sphere. For example, when she is buying her weekly groceries, Mrs. Farley finds herself wishing "she had asked Alice to buy the meat before she went to work. ... [W]hat

she got was sure to be nice and the diners were certain to praise it" (10). In addition to successfully navigating the public sphere, Alice is also one of the family's primary sources of income; Mrs. Farley uses the "five dollars which Alice had turned over to her that morning" (11) to buy the family's food. At least respecting her position as a working, financially independent woman, Alice represents the positive image of the New Woman depicted by her advocates in the late nineteenth century. She does not want the life of a housewife, as her mother and Winnie represent, having "no place within the narrow confines of the home" (Tyrer 49).

However, Alice does not find fulfillment in her role as a working woman, either, having internalized cultural expectations for womanhood centered around both her looks and her maternal status. Her internalization of societal expectations that equate happiness with marriage and motherhood, which are rendered most clearly in the stream-of-consciousness passages that describe her thoughts in her room when she is alone, act as a form of social determinism. Continued social expectations that define women primarily by their reproductive value become mapped upon her body. She realizes that her body, with her "coarse, sallow skin" and the "tramp of her feet ... like a man's" (Scott 24-25) does not fit within standards of femininity. She has tried in the past to make herself "into something men would like" (32), based upon these standards; however, her brother's "ridiculing eyes" (32), symbolic of society's critical gaze upon her body, drives her back to her previous habits. After this moment, she "did not want to realize what she was," and retreats into her work (32).

Alice's body, especially her breasts, is a constant source of shame, further indicating the alienation engendered by her failure to enact societal ideals for women's bodies—especially those centered on reproduction. In the space of one page, Alice's body is described as producing a deep sense of shame. As she contemplates her body, "shame mount[s] hot over her as though it were swallowing her" (35). She sees her breast and "shiver[s]," and a "horror of herself crept over her body, *shameful because of no use*" (35, emphasis mine). Her body is useless, shameful, because it is not reproductive in a cultural environment where women's value is defined primarily *by* reproduction. Alice clearly feels psychological torment over her body over her body's failure to meet these standards; however, these standards are not merely self-imposed. The word "shame," and the text's emphasis on it, indicates that her thoughts are the internal manifestation of the external force of societal expectations and therefore a form of social determinism. Sandra Bartky describes shame as "not so much a particular feeling or emotion ... as a pervasive affective attunement to the social environment" (226). Further, she points out that the shame of women in particular is more than merely an effect of subordination" but rather lay "within the larger universe of patriarchal social relations" (226). Drawing from Jean-Paul Satre's *Being and Nothingness*, Bartky characterizes the feeling of shame, the "distressed apprehension of self as inadequate or diminished" (227) as being predicated upon an audience, an Other who passes judgment on the individual's character or attributes. For Alice, this Other is the social force of cultural expectations, backed by scientists' urgent calls for women to reproduce in order to save the nation from impending race suicide, for women. She knows that her nonmaternal body, lacking in

femininity both through its appearance and its reproductive "uselessness," does not fit these expectations, which make her "ugly, because unmeaning" (197). Therefore, her alienation from her body and her tortured relationship with it act as products of the deterministic force of cultural expectations.

What results is an ambivalence toward her body, especially her (non)maternal body, which is produced when her body's failure to meet cultural expectations meets her own biological drives and desires—demonstrating the deterministic potential of biology only when subject to limiting social forces. Alice does have a maternal impulse and sees herself, at least in some ways, as a mother. She wants her unrequited lover Horace Ridge to recognize the fact that "clothes made her a virgin when she was a mother. If she could undress herself he would know that she was a mother" (37). Because the external trappings of her body, signified by the clothes she wears, do not conform to cultural expectations for femininity, neither Horace nor society more generally can recognize her maternal desire. Although Alice finds there to be "something secret and awful in maternity—some desecration" (34), she also cannot entirely suppress a desire to become a mother. After Winnie's death as she is tucking the children into bed, she holds May to her chest in a "fierce, unkind, smothering hug," laying May's hand on her breast in the hope that May will "help her to understand her breasts" (194). This symbolic gesture is amplified as Alice is feeding Winnie's new baby his bottle. She has the impulse to "put its hands to her breast, its lips in her breast" (195) in act that mimics breastfeeding. However, she almost immediately recognizes that "the baby could not take her. It could not show her herself" (196). She wishes for the children to lend meaning to her

nonmaternal body but also realizes that they cannot lend her subjectivity. Scott grants the presence of biological maternal impulses but at the same time makes clear that children cannot lend women subjectivity, whether they are actual mothers (as with Winnie) or not (as with Alice). It is here that Alice's maternal desire, figured in biological terms, and the value that social standards place on women only in their roles as mothers conflicts most clearly with her position as a New Woman, leading to an ambivalence toward maternity that results in internal conflict and psychic unease. Alice asks herself, "what did she want?" (196), but she cannot find the answer while subject to the dual forces of biological and social determinism.

Alice's psychological torment and the ambivalence she feels toward her position in society as a nonmaternal woman illustrates the consequences of the convergence of New Woman discourse, social expectations for women as supported by hereditarian science, and her own biological drives. As they do for Winnie, these forces work together to circumscribe women's agency. Scott's depiction of Alice, along with Winnie, captures the lack of options truly available to women in a society still governed by traditional gender norms, even while under the guise of progressiveness—a society which sought to police women's sexuality, their reproduction, and ultimately their psyches. Both Alice's and Winnie's bodies act as deterministic forces, but the novel argues that women's bodies only become limiting when subject to social expectations which are undergirded by the scientific imperative to reproduce. *The Narrow House* shows us yet another strategy that naturalist writers existing on social margins used for challenging the scientific theories and social norms that sought to circumscribe their agency.

Especially when considering *The Narrow House* alongside *Of One Blood* and *Weeds*, it is important to note that Scott's ability to represent the internalization of cultural and scientific discourses pushing women to reproduce depends on her protagonists' racial and class status. As we have seen in Grant Allen's and Albert Edward Wiggam's texts, which specify that only the most "fit" women—i.e., white, middle-class women—ought to be responsible for the nation's reproductive future, these calls were targeted toward a quite narrow population of women—a population of which Winnie and Alice would have been a part. Paradoxically, the internalization of these discourses, and the physical and psychological ambivalence that results, is a product of privilege, although, as Scott suggests, clearly not one that brings many benefits. While Pauline Hopkins, Edith Summers Kelley, and Evelyn Scott all represent the impacts of social expectations as supported by scientific theories surrounding women's reproduction, their novels also make clear that the stakes for certain groups of women—whether women of color, socioeconomically underprivileged women, or middle-class women—are quite different. Overall, though, each writer emphasizes the grave deterministic impact of scientific theories of heredity on women, and reading their novels together reveals just how wide-ranging, and potentially deadly, that impact can be.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

If, as Donna Campbell writes, the "true subject of naturalistic fiction is the human body, the battleground for the clash between external and internal forces" (*Bitter Tastes* 9), there are few better sites through which to study that clash than hereditarian science. While American literary naturalists engaged with that science in ways that aligned with their individual literary goals and representational needs, its sheer pervasiveness in the cultural imagination at the turn of the century nearly guaranteed its common presence among their work. While some writers, such as Gertrude Stein and Frank Norris, deployed scientific theories of heredity straightforwardly and unproblematically in their fiction, women and African American writers tended to coopt and adapt them in order to undercut the biological determinism that threatened to undermine their agency by reducing them to functions of their biology. These writers also challenged the social application of science for discriminatory purposes, critiquing the legislative efforts like Jim Crow as well as the racist and sexist social attitudes that simultaneously informed and relied upon them. As this dissertation has shown, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Charles Chesnutt, Pauline Hopkins, Edith Summers Kelley, and Evelyn Scott challenged not just the science itself but also the literary representations that used it to reinforce stereotypes. These writers offered alternative representations of African Americans and women that dismantled race- and sex-based stereotypes and revealed their socially, rather than biologically, constructed nature.

An examination of these writers together has revealed that women and African American writers used the fluidity of hereditarian science at the turn of the century to

their advantage representationally. Each writer whose fiction I have analyzed here takes up the science of heredity in diverse ways in order to contest its deterministic impact on the bodies of their protagonists. Some, such as Chesnutt, challenged its applications to the "race question" by contending through his representation of Tom Taylor that African Americans' agency was *not*, in fact, circumscribed by biology. Chesnutt's "The Doll" pushes against racist ideas of supposed African American brutality and atavism based in heredity by showing that they can overcome the determinism of those ideas through self-control. Other writers like Dunbar and Scott engaged with hereditarian science in a different way: by illustrating the impact of social forces on their protagonists' bodies. In their novels, neither Dunbar nor Scott envision the same optimism for agency in the face of the deterministic forces of racism and sexism as Chesnutt. For their characters, racist and sexist belief, engendered and supported by science, doesn't just limit their social agency; it also produces biological degeneration, so that racism and sexism lead to both social *and* biological forms of determinism and therefore work together to limit the agency of African Americans and women alike almost completely.

Still other naturalists utilized hereditarian science to explore determinism through a cooptation of its theories' logic for subversive purposes. Hopkins and Kelley each tapped into the rhetoric and the ideas of eugenics movement and its attendant theories of heredity to protest women's social and political positions in the early twentieth century. While my analysis has presented the potential danger in adopting and adapting this logic—that it risks undermining the writers' subversive messages through reinforcing some of the same biological determinism in the theories that they were writing against—

it has also shown that Hopkins and Kelley skillfully used hereditarian science to reveal both the lack of and the necessity for reproductive agency for their women protagonists. From a suburban African American barber to a poor white Appalachian woman, each of these writers' protagonists functioned as spaces in which to dispute racist and sexist scientific theories, to challenge the literary representations that relied upon them, and to declare an agency denied them by those discursive forces.

Despite acknowledging these similarities, it is equally important to recognize the differences in how each writer took up hereditarian science and envisioned the extent of its deterministic impact on his or her protagonists. It is also necessary to understand the different social and scientific forces to which their work responded. The particularities of African Americans' and women's experience in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America, in addition to the particularities of experience among each individual writer, dictated the specific theories to which they responded and the ways that they used, challenged, and critiqued the science and its implications for human agency. The class, gender, race, and socioeconomic statuses of each writer and their protagonists required different ways of approaching racial and sexual science and their representations of human agency in the face of it. For instance, racial as well as gender-based differences dictated the extent to which these naturalists could represent the material, biological effects of social oppression on their characters' bodies. Evelyn Scott and Edith Summers Kelley could depict the biological effects of white women's lack of agency with less cultural and scientific baggage—and lower stakes—than could a writer such as Pauline Hopkins. Hopkins had to consider centuries of cultural and scientific assumptions of

African American women's inherent biological inferiority that Scott and Kelley simply did not have to. Hopkins also had to contend with the not-so-distant past of slavery, the coercion endemic to it, and the circumscription of reproductive agency inherent in it. These considerations necessarily impacted Hopkins's representation of her female protagonists, the scientific theories with which she engaged, and the possibilities that she saw for her characters' agency.

Further, attention to the time periods in which each author wrote and the scientific theories that were popular in the time they were writing is also necessary for a complete examination of science and determinism. Changing ideas of race, sex, and heredity influenced their negotiation of agency, and the amount of space that they saw for agency, in the face of scientific and social ideas. For example, the differences between Dunbar's and Chesnutt's optimism for African Americans' retention of agency in the midst of social, scientific, and biological forces is due in part to the time periods in which they were writing as well as, perhaps, the differences in their ages and even places in their own literary trajectories at the time in which they wrote. *The Sport of the Gods* and "The Doll" also show the impact of the abandonment of Lamarck's theory of acquired characters, responding, then, to not only the different social situations but also the different scientific landscapes of the era in which Dunbar and Chesnutt wrote. Therefore, without careful attention to the subject-positions of naturalist writers and their characters, an analysis of science, race, gender, and both biological and social determinism in naturalism is not complete. While each writer considered here used the broad strategy of engaging with the hereditarian science of their time to explore agency

and determinism, attention to the differences among them is crucial for fully understanding how their subject-positions and the daily, material realities of their protagonists impacted the capacity for agency they saw for their protagonists and the different literary strategies they used to show it. If readers do not acknowledge those differences, as well as the differences between these writers and the classic naturalists I have also analyzed, we risk reproducing the same oversights that have characterized much of the critical history of naturalism by viewing non-classic naturalists' negotiation of determinism as a monolithic, uniform response or by lumping them together and subjecting them to a reductive set of defining characteristics.

Such analysis has the power to reveal the ways in which understandings of determinism, especially biological determinism, shift and expand when we more fully consider naturalist writers outside the so-called Big Four. A closer study of Dunbar's, Chesnutt's, Hopkins', Kelley's, and Scott's engagement with hereditarian science has proven that readers and scholars of naturalism need more expansive definitions of determinism in order to accommodate these writers' unique strategies for challenging a strict biological determinism. This approach provides nuance and depth to theories of determinism as well as to conceptualizations of what (and who) characterizes naturalism more generally. It also brings together two significant conversations in current naturalist scholarship, both of which attempt to refine prior critical assessments of American literary naturalism. Critics like Eric Carl Link have been invested in reformulating conceptualizations of determinism, doing important work to shift the conversation away from definitions of determinism in naturalism as strict, pessimistic, and monolithic. This

work has paved the way for my own reconsideration of determinism and agency, as has the work of Donna Campbell, John Dudley, Mary Papke, and others who have worked to bring non-classic writers, including African American and women writers but also other minority naturalists, more fully into the canon as well as into scholarly and pedagogical conversations about naturalism. By incorporating African American and women writers into the critical discussion and by widening the scope the conventions of naturalism, we can see how determinism becomes reinvented, nuanced, and generally improved by this more inclusive approach.

While greater attention to the work of Chesnutt, Dunbar, Hopkins, Kelley, and Scott is an important first step toward inclusivity, the critical framework I have laid out in this project could be further expanded to include other African American and women writers than the ones I have studied here, especially ones who lay outside the roughly three-decade time period on which this project focuses. The fiction of Ann Petry, W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary Hunter Austin, Nella Larsen, James Weldon Johnson, and Alice Dunbar Nelson could all benefit from reading it through this lens. An engagement with their work would further extend the concerns with the interaction between scientific theories of race and sex and literary engagement with determinism across time, lengthening its trajectory past the historical and cultural period I treat here. Nella Larsen's *Passing* (1929), for example, extends Hopkins' concerns with mixed-race characters, hereditarian science, and identity, as does her 1928 novella *Quicksand*, which offers a deterministic representation of maternity and motherhood much more akin to Kelley's *Weeds* than Hopkins's *Of One Blood*.

The intersections of science and naturalism could also be traced into the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries by studying, for example, the work of Cormac McCarthy. McCarthy's novels *Blood Meridian* (1985) and *No Country for Old Men* (2005) feature Darwinistic themes and, like Frank Norris's *Vandover and the Brute,* feature protagonists with atavistic characteristics, as does *Child of God* (1973), which evokes themes of the biologically degenerative effects of a rural, poverty-stricken life in Appalachia similar to Kelley's *Weeds*. Mapping naturalism's engagement with the changing science of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and with how scientific advancements have impacted naturalism's representations of agency would be a productive way to extend the concerns of this project past its immediate scope.

Additionally, this critical framework can also be used to analyze the work of other non-classic naturalists whose work takes up similar scientific theories and their impact on the agency of other social groups besides African Americans and women. The work of Sui Sin Far, for instance, could be productively analyzed through a consideration of its scientific themes, including the (hereditary) transmission of race- and culture-based traits. Her short stories "In the Land of the Free" (1909) and "Sugar Cane Baby" (1910) explore the transmission of cultural traits through children and the appropriation of that culture through the theme of child theft. As Donna Campbell writes, the figure of the stolen child "rewrites one of the key questions of naturalism," shifting the question of "who controls the body of the woman?" to one of "who controls the body of the child with it the transmission of cultural heritage?" (*Bitter Tastes* 20). Additionally, the fiction of immigrant authors such as Abraham Cahan, whose *The Rise of David Levinsky*

contains naturalistic themes of urban environmental determinism and moral decline, could also be productively studied through this framework. Analyzing the work of non-classic naturalist writers besides the African American and women authors that this project studies would help to further expand the scope of determinism and provide a more complete portrait of the diverse ways that naturalist literature took up scientific theories of heredity. Such theories did not impact the agency of only African Americans and (white) women at the turn of the century, and exploring the work of authors such as Sin Far and Cahan would reveal not only hereditarian science's effects on the agency of other social groups but also how naturalist writers reappropriated and reinvented it for subversive purposes.

Finally, the approach to determinism through science also allows readers of naturalism to more fully understand and appreciate the cultural impact of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century science. A close examination of the science of heredity in naturalist literature provides insight into how that science was understood, engaged, and even shaped by the cultural imagination in which it was situated. Just as significantly, it illustrates that science does not happen in a vacuum, that it is not held apart from or immune from culture, but is, in fact a part of it—a truth that is just as relevant today as it was for the naturalists at the turn of the nineteenth century. Bringing science and literature together in critical and classroom discussions of both naturalism and literature more generally can help scholars to provide a richer discussion of how the cultural landscape—a landscape that includes science—shapes literary worlds and representations and illuminate how the two work together to form cultural understandings of race, sex,

and gender across time. This framework benefits the fields of both literature and science: science for how its theories are thought about, appropriated, and distorted for various social purposes, and literature for how its strategies and representations draw from all corners of the cultural and epistemological landscape in which it was written. Perhaps even more importantly, it can help our students from across disciplines connect with literature; to see how our past and current ideas about race and sex in America have formed, changed, and stayed the same over the past 150 years; and to understand how (changing) scientific ideas *and* social attitudes come converge to influence them.

Science remains an underexplored lens through which to analyze literature, and there is no better place to a begin more rigorous engagement with it than naturalism. Naturalism's deftness in adopting and appropriating its theories to explore the extent to which individuals are determined in a universe governed by scientific principles, social attitudes, and environmental pressures demonstrates its fitness as a starting point for this work. But it cannot be done without inclusivity in terms of who and what we consider to be naturalism. This project has shown the possibilities for reconceptualizing naturalism in terms of its canon and its conventions through the analysis of African American and women writers' engagement with hereditarian science, but it represents only the beginning of potential re-envisionings of naturalism when our critical and pedagogical attention is focused on inclusivity, expansion, and interdisciplinarity.

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APPENDIX A: HEREDITARIAN SCIENCE: MAJOR THEORISTS AND IMPACTS

- **Jean-Baptiste Lamarck: theory of acquired characters in *Philosophie Zoologique* (1809)**
  - Major contribution: Further articulated theory of *acquired characters*, which stated that traits that parents acquired during their lifetime in response to environmental conditions could be inherited by their offspring. According to the theory of acquired characters, changed environmental conditions lead to altered habits, and the new traits produced by these habits are passed to offspring. Environment, then, plays an important role in the evolutionary process by having the power to influence hereditary material.
  - Impact: Lamarck did not apply these theories to humans, but later scientists as well as social reformers such as Charles Loring Brace did (see Chapter 1). The theory of acquired characters suggested that parents' behavior (such as alcoholism, pauperism, immorality) as well as conditions of their physical and social environments (such as poor sanitation) could manifest themselves in children and produce moral and physical shortcomings. This also meant, however, that changing environments for the better, including by providing more education and lifting individuals out of poverty, could produce "better" offspring and thus raise them from those shortcomings.

- **Charles Darwin: theory of natural selection in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871)**
  - Neither text forwarded an explicit of heredity, but did set up heredity as the "central problem of [biology]" (Muller-Wille and Rheinberger 74)
  - Major contribution: Theories of *natural selection* (*Origin*) and *sexual selection* (*Descent*).
    - Natural selection theorized that evolution occurs through variations in organisms that give them an advantage in the competition for resources and therefore ensure survival and reproduction. These variations are passed to offspring and, over time, change the population and eventually the species. The theory did not discount environmental influences on organisms.
    - Sexual selection states that the opposite sex chooses traits for attractiveness, not for survival. Darwin posited that the different races are a result of different aesthetic preferences (thereby linking sexuality and race); therefore, sexual reproduction becomes key to racial character.

- Impact: The influence of Darwin set up a fascination with as well as developments in hereditarian theories in the late nineteenth century. Did not apply theory of natural selection to humans in *Origin,* but readers did, sounding the alarm that civilized societies were in danger of evolutionary regression because they interfered with natural selection through reform and welfare measures, which protected the weak members of society who would normally die off without reproducing. This led to fears that society would become overrun by these weak members and would place checks on the benefits of natural selection.

- **Francis Galton: developed a theory of the hereditary *process* as autonomous in *Hereditary Genius***
  - Major contribution: Galton argued that we are "no more than passive transmitters of a nature we have received, and which we have no power to modify" (qtd. in Muller-Wille and Rheinberger 79). He coined the term "eugenics" and was detrimental to the development of the movement's ideas – defined as "the science of improving stock." "Hereditary Talent and Character" (1865) suggested that intelligence and high achievement are heritable, and *Hereditary Genius* (1869) argued that character and personality are deterministic and theorized a sharp divide between heredity and environment. For Galton, heredity was the prime influencer of character
  - Impact: Not only did this mean that "intellectual and moral struggles were fruitless" but also that "there were no grounds for assigning personal responsibility" (Paul 33) to individuals for behavior or traits. This line of thinking also challenges bootstraps ideology, which was—along with Galton's contestation of the belief that humans have souls and that their nature is imperfect not because of a fall from grace but because as a product of evolution—unpopular at the time. Galton's ideas about heredity were, however, crucial for the later eugenics movement in the early twentieth century.

- **August Weismann: disproval of acquired characters and forwarding of germ plasm theory (1899)**
  - Major contribution: Weismann's *theory of the germ plasm* disproved the theory of acquired characters. Weismann believed that the germ line "was passed on continually and in its totality through the generations" (Muller-Wille and Rheinberger 88) and could not be affected by the environment; thus, the germ cells, and the hereditary units in them, were passed unaltered from generation to generation. Heredity becomes fixed and stable, not subject to outside influence.

- Impact: Could be (and was) applied to humans in order to "prove" the unalterability of biology and biological determinism: individuals are stuck with the traits that were given to them by their ancestors. Education nor moral improvement could affect their path in life.

- **Gregor Mendel: pioneer of genetics (work rediscovered after around 1900)**
  - Major contribution: Experiments with peas showed that heredity is governed by discrete factors (later called "genes") that "maintained their integrity and did not become altered by blending" (Paul 46). Hereditary material is transmitted unaltered from parent to offspring.
  - Impact: Mendel's theories solidified the view of heredity as fixed and stable. They strengthened Weismann's arguments and continued to weaken Lamarckism, and also appeared to "establish that traits for making social success and failure were heritable" (Paul 48).

Summary of impact

The continued relevance and scientific validity of Lamarckism in the nineteenth- and even into the early twentieth century allowed for reformist arguments regarding the ability of apparently less evolutionarily progressive populations (which, at the time, would have included those of African descent as well as women) to remain convincing. At least in theory, if environment were responsible for "bad" heredity, then changes to the environment could encourage "good" heredity: individuals (and races, to a lesser extent) could be improved by changes to their physical and social environments. However, Weismann's disproval of theory of acquired characters and the ascendancy of what's commonly referred to as "hard" heredity promoted by Weismann's and, later, Mendel's theories made reform arguments less convincing by suggesting that heredity is impervious to environmental changes and, is, therefore, destiny. If, as was commonly

believed, African Americans and women were evolutionarily inferior to men of European ancestry, they were consigned there. This was also used as justification for the social status quo and for gender and racial roles as they currently stood. As I discuss in Chapters 3 and 4, the effects of these new ideas of heredity on human reproduction is especially apparent, particularly when we look at the development of the eugenics movement in the early years of the twentieth century, when human inheritance became a matter of national health and progress. Eugenics became a way to remedy the social ills (including crime and poverty) that were believed to result from hereditary defects.

APPENDIX B: TEXTS AND CONTEXTS

Texts	Contexts
	1809: Jean-Baptiste Lamarck publishes *Philosophie Zoologique,* in which he theorized that traits parents acquire during their lifetime in response to environmental conditions could be inherited by their offspring (theory of acquired characters). **1859**: Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species*, which advanced his groundbreaking theory of natural selection **1865**: Gregor Mendel publishes his paper "Experiments on Plant Hybridization" describing his experiments on pea plants, which was virtually ignored at the time. Mendel's work was rediscovered by scientists around 1900 and used to establish modern genetics. **1869**: Francis Galton, who coined the term "eugenics" and was detrimental to the later eugenics movement's ideas, writes *Hereditary Genius*, which posits that heredity was the prime influencer of character and was thus deterministic **1871**: Charles Darwin argues in *The Descent of Man* that humans, like all other animals and plants, undergo evolution through natural selection. **1872**: Charles Loring Brace's *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years Among Them* details his work with immigrants, orphans, and "criminals" in New York City as part of an effort to prevent poverty and to

	promote education and industry among the city's immigrant and poor populations
	1892: William Crane witnesses a lynching in Port Jervis, New Jersey, which later inspires his brother, Stephen Crane, to write *The Monster*
1895: Hamlin Garland, *Rose of Dutcher's Coolly*	**1896**: Frederick Hoffman publishes *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro,* which uses statistics and social science to justify insurance companies from across the nation refusing to sell policies to African Americans by citing their supposed biological predisposition to crime and disease
	1896: *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision upholds legalized segregation in public facilities
	1896: William Giddings theorizes in *Principles of Sociology* that the differences in social and economic equality between African Americans and Caucasians results from biological inferiority rather than differences in opportunity and privilege
	1897: Atlanta Conference for the Study of Problems Concerning Negro City Life, which features addresses to the women's meeting by African American clubswomen Lucy C. Laney, Georgia Swift King and Adella Hunt Logan, who stress the importance of women's maternal roles to racial uplift in pleas framed by hereditarian science
1898: Paul Laurence Dunbar, "Negroes of the Tenderloin"	
1898: Stephen Crane, *The Monster*	
	1898: A race riot breaks out in early November in Wilmington, NC, on which Chesnutt's fictional town of Wellington is based in *The Marrow of Tradition*
1899: Frank Norris, *McTeague*	
	1899: August Weismann disproves theory of acquired characters through
1900: Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*	

1901: Charles Chesnutt, *The Marrow of Tradition*	experiments cutting off mice's tails and forwards germ plasm theory.
1902: Paul Laurence Dunbar, *The Sport of the Gods*	
1902-1903: Pauline E. Hopkins's is serialized in *Of One Blood* in the *Colored American Magazine*	**1902**: Joseph Alexander Tillinghast writes *The Negro in Africa and America*, which traces the history of Africa in order to explain Africans' and African Americans' supposed lack of civilization and accomplishments—a lack that proved their supposed biological and cultural inferiority to those of European descent
1904: Charles Chesnutt's "The Doll" is rejected for publication in *Atlantic Monthly*	
	1905: Theodore Roosevelt's address to the National Congress of Mothers ("On American Motherhood") urges the nation's women to be reminded of their duty to the nation as mothers and calls upon them to create sound, healthy offspring in order to ensure national and racial superiority
1912: Charles Chesnutt, "The Doll" (published in *The Crisis* magazine)	
1913: Gertrude Stein, "Melanctha" (in *Three Lives)*	
	1916: Margaret Sanger opens the nation's first birth control clinic in Brooklyn, New York
	1920: Margaret Sanger publishes *Woman and the New Race*, which calls for the necessity of "voluntary motherhood" and

1921: Evelyn Scott, *The Narrow House* **1923**: Edith Summers Kelley, *Weeds*	argues that birth control is essential for the success of its practice. In formulating this argument, Sanger deploys ideas couched in eugenic terms about women's "fitness" to reproduce and argues that voluntary motherhood is necessary to ensure "racial progress." **1924**: Albert Edward Wiggam publishes *Fruit of the Family Tree*, emphasizing women's role in the eugenics movement and arguing that they are crucial to the nation's (racial) health.

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