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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Sentimental Science and the Literary Cultures of Proto-Eugenics

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor
of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Kyla C. Schuller

Committee in Charge:

Professor Shelley Streeby, Chair
Professor Michael Davidson
Professor Lisa Lowe
Professor Rosaura Sánchez
Professor Nayan Shah

2009

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The dissertation of Kyla C. Schuller is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2009

DEDICATION

In loving memory of Fred Schuller (1918-2006), Chester Eschen, Jr. (1916-2007), and
Mary Eschen (1920-2008)

“[Children’s] plastic nature will receive and retain every impression you make; [and] will transmit what they receive from you to their children, to pass again to the next generation, and then the next, until a *whole nation* may possibly receive its character and destiny from your hands!”

– Catharine Beecher, *Miss Beecher’s Housekeeper and Healthkeeper* (1876)

“There exists to-day a widespread and fatuous belief in the power of environment . . . to alter heredity . . . Such beliefs have done much damage in the past and if allowed to go uncontradicted, may even do more serious damage in the future. Thus the view that the Negro slave was an unfortunate cousin of the white man, deeply tanned by the tropic sun and denied the blessings of Christianity and civilization, played no small part with the sentimentalists of the Civil War period and it has taken us fifty years to learn that speaking English, wearing good clothes and going to school and church does not transform a Negro into a white man.

– Madison Grant, *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916)

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is an undeniable pleasure to thank the many people and institutions who have helped bring this project to completion. I thank Dawn Blessman and Ana Minvielle for admirably transforming the university's bureaucracy into offices that are always a pleasure to enter. I warmly extend my gratitude to my teachers and advisers at UCSD, who have been exceptional models of what it means to be an ethical, political scholar committed to public education and its accompanying advantages and challenges. Winnie Woodhull has been incredibly supportive, warm, and inviting throughout my seven years here. I have been very lucky to have a committee who are all as committed to their students (and their never-ending requests for last-minute letters) as they are their own path breaking and politically grounded scholarship. For all these demands, each of my committee members made me feel that my work was worthwhile and important and I am sure not a word of this project could have been completed without my constant awareness of the depth of their support and interest. I thank Rosaura Sánchez for her detailed and helpful suggestions for further research, her generosity with her time and expertise, and for introducing me to entirely new ways to think of the nineteenth century. Michael Davidson has also been an exceptional teacher and a tremendously reliable and forthcoming mentor and I thank him in particular for his efforts to help me make important contacts with the wider profession. It is always a pleasure to speak with Nayan Shah and I thank him for encouragement and advice ranging from the abstract, such as "what is social history?" to the specific, including, "I have 500 pages of photocopies, now what do I do with them?" I have been fortunate to have experienced first-hand why

so many good books open with warm thanks for Lisa Lowe, whose intellect, kindness, and ability to polish a seemingly unpolishable thought is as human as it is downright supernatural. If one day this becomes a book, it will be in large part due to her support. Above all, I am happy to express my gratitude for the mentorship of Shelley Streeby, who has not only revitalized nineteenth-century U.S. studies but has also trained half of the Literature Department over the past decade. Shelley has consistently made me feel that there was a place for me in the profession and I thank her for this boundless commitment to my work.

For invaluable funding that enabled me to dig into primary sources, I thank the Literature Department and California Cultures in Comparative Perspective Program at the University of California, San Diego, and the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College. Mark Katz and Barbara Mathé at the American Museum of Natural History helped me to locate a number of important sources while surrounded by enormous flying dinosaurs. I have been very fortunate to have been able to stay with my closest friends while doing research for this project, and I thank Brad Borevitz and Joe Clement in San Francisco and Brooklyn and Benita Brahmhatt and Denise Khor in Northampton for making archive trips feel like vacations. It is my pleasure to thank Barbara and Henrik Bull and Nina and Dave Bailey for their beautiful Berkeley homes during the past three summers that provided much-needed library access and sanctuary.

I have immeasurably benefited from the advice and feedback of Donna Haraway, Shari Huhndorf, Laura Pérez, and Lynn Wardley. My writing group with Aimee Bhang, Elizabeth Steeby, and Neel Ahuja helped to clarify my thinking and writing considerably as well as provided much-needed levity. My friends have been an enormous gift

throughout this process, and I thank Elizabeth in particular for making San Diego home for so many years. In addition to the above, I thank Brandon Best, Jinah Kim, Peter Holderness, Allegra McLeod, Brian Fuentes, Douglas Jenkins, Vladimir, Joe Bunik, Tania Triana, Maggie Levantovskaya, Lauren Berliner, Aaron Norton, and many others for providing support and inspiration.

I am deeply sorry that my maternal grandparents, Chester and Mary Eschen, did not live to see this project completed. Their unique combination of outright hostility toward women's education and endless pride in me and emotional and material support fueled me in more ways than they will ever know. I have been very fortunate to have the support of my tireless grandmother, Eleanor Schuller. My Oakland and Alameda family ensures that the Bay Area is always the place I want to be. If it weren't for my parents' support I would never have made it this far, beginning with my mother's patience with me as a toddler when my favorite book was a dictionary. Most of all, I thank L. Chase Smith for being my rock, even when I was nothing but a wet blanket.

Chapter 2, in part, has been accepted for publication as "Specious Bedfellows: Ethnicity, Animality, and the Intimacy of Slaughter in *Moby-Dick*," *Leviathan*, forthcoming. The dissertation author was the primary investigator and author of this paper.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Sentimental Science and the Literary Cultures of Proto-Eugenics

by

Kyla C. Schuller

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2009

Professor Shelley Streeby, Chair

Literary and historical scholarship generally position scientific thinking and the genre of sentimentalism as polar opposites according to nearly every meaningful category of distinction. In contrast, “Sentimental Science and the Literary Cultures of Proto-Eugenics” seeks to historicize their common ground in the nineteenth-century United States. I reveal how sentimentalism, or the recognition of individual emotion as both an embodied state and a construct of language, functioned as one of the last intellectual traditions to forge an increasingly fraught link among scientific practice,

imaginative writing, and political work. Sentimentalism underwrote a widely held theory of evolution that argued a child's habitual emotions and behaviors make impressions on the body that not only persist throughout the individual's lifespan, but also are transmitted to descendants. I demonstrate how sentimental evolutionary thinking in the realms of literature, social welfare, and the biological sciences played a formative role in both shaping nineteenth-century ideas of racial difference and in making better breeding a national priority.

To tell this literary and cultural history of proto-eugenics, I draw from a range of primary sources, including popular and canonical fiction by authors such as Herman Melville, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lydia Maria Child, Harriet Wilson, Alice Wellington Rollins, and W.E.B. Du Bois; visual culture such as photographs of Red Cloud and scientific illustrations of dinosaurs; personal correspondence; articles and monographs in the fields of evolution, ethnology, paleontology, and the philosophy of science by figures including Charles Loring Brace, Edward Drinker Cope, and Joseph Le Conte; published records of the Children's Aid Society and archival materials from Planned Parenthood. The dissertation's emphasis on sentimentalism's constitutive role in developing the discourses of race and evolutionary thinking opens the door to a textured account that highlights the participation of figures typically marginal to the history of nineteenth-century science. I also point to some of the ways that "unfit" subjects played a complex role in developing, appropriating, and resisting better breeding projects. This interdisciplinary project contributes to recent revisions of the politics of sentimentalism and dramatically adjusts the accepted timeline of eugenics in the United States.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Literary and historical scholarship generally position scientific thinking and the genre of sentimentalism as polar opposites according to nearly every meaningful category of distinction.¹ While a contemporary commonplace, the pervasiveness of this bifurcation would have come as a surprise to nineteenth-century sentimental proponents such as Catharine Beecher, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Sarah Josepha Hale. Each of these key figures took extensive measures to facilitate their readers' interest in and knowledge of scientific and mathematical concepts as well as to publicize "how many branches of science and training are included in woman's profession."² Sarah Hale, for example, went to great pains as the editor of *Godey's Ladies Book* to educate her largely elite white female readership in contemporary developments in natural history because she felt the study was one of the "best and most sure means of *permanently* elevating the

¹ Scholarship that explores a connection, albeit sometimes a fraught one, between sentimentalism and science includes: Caroline F. Levander, "The Science of Sentiment: The Evolution of the Bourgeois Child in Nineteenth-Century American Narrative," *Modern Language Studies* 30, no.1 (2000): 27-44; Dana Nelson, "'No Cold or Empty Heart': Polygenesis, Scientific Professionalization, and the Unfinished Business of Male Sentimentalism," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3 (1999): 29-56; Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992); and Lynn Wardley, "American Fiction and Civilizing House: 1850-1925" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1988). For example, Pratt argues that science and sentiment functioned as mirror opposites in eighteenth-century European travel writing. In contrast, my study finds that the sentimentalism structures evolutionary doctrine of the mid-to-late nineteenth-century United States.

² Catharine E. Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The New Housekeeper's Manual: . . . Together with the Handy Cook Book by Catharine Beecher* (New York: Fords, Howard, and Hubert, 1873), 13-22, quoted in Frances B. Cogan, *All-American Girl: The Ideal of Real Womanhood in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), 86.

female mind.”³ For Hale in “Science and Sentiment” (1833) as for mid-century naturalists more generally, scientific study constituted the learned appreciation of God’s creation and brought moral and mental improvement to its practitioners. Indeed, contemporary historians of science still often dismiss mid-century naturalists as “sentimental amateurs” who befriended their animal specimens at the expense of developing allegedly neutral quantitative and qualitative research methods.⁴ While this charge seemingly acknowledges the historical presence of sentimentalism in the practice of science, more often such thinking serves as an epistemological break that distinguishes an objective, “authentic” postbellum science from its emotional and therefore idiosyncratic predecessor. By this logic, science became science the moment it ceased to be sentimental.

In this study, I contextualize the work of figures like Hale, the Beechers, and naturalists with feathered friends by investigating the engagement of sentimental print culture with thinking about the natural world. Taking as a point of departure the hypothesis that late nineteenth-century science achieved its status as an objective and privileged mode of inquiry in part through seemingly excising any trace of emotionality or feeling from its purview, I pose the question: what may we learn about both nineteenth-century sentimentalism and science by ceasing to invest in their opposition? For example, sentimentalism in contemporary scholarship has often come to connote a political ideology based on mutual sympathy with precisely the potential to erode the

³ Sarah J. Hale, “Science and Sentiment,” *Ladies’ Magazine and Literary Gazette* 6, no. 6 (1833): 273. For an exploration of Hale’s interest in science, including her extensive coverage of natural history in the periodicals she edited, see Nina Baym, *American Women of Letters and the Nineteenth-Century Sciences: Styles of Affiliation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 36-53.

⁴ See, for example, Lynn Barber, *The Heyday of Natural History, 1820-1870* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 28.

hierarchies of biological difference science was busy institutionalizing.⁵ Building on the work of scholars who characterize sentimentalism as a foundational intellectual tradition of the middle classes, how might acknowledging the fertile exchange between these fields uncover new insights into the ways that sentimentalism played an active role in developing ideas of human difference? How might an examination of the sentimental strategies of scientific thinking reveal overlooked aspects of nineteenth-century scientific discourse as well as the participation of individuals and groups typically left out of the history of science?

In addressing these questions, “Sentimental Science and the Literary Cultures of Proto-Eugenics” seeks to historicize the common ground between nineteenth-century sentimentalism and science. Specifically, I focus on a mutual topic of study in which their convergence is perhaps most visible and, not coincidentally, generated some of the liveliest public debate of the nineteenth century: evolutionary change. The attempt to disrupt contemporary research methodologies that produce modern science as objective by virtue of its shunning of the sentimental reveals a much more complicated history of the cultural politics of evolution than is usually available to scholars, especially in the fields of literary and cultural studies.⁶ Unreconstructed versions of the history of science, which often receive wide reception in English departments, declare that Darwin’s publication of *Origin of the Species* in 1859 fomented a revolution. According to this

⁵ For prominent examples, see Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty: Abolition, Feminism, and the Politics of the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) and Shirley Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁶ Bert Bender’s recent exploration of canonical U.S. literature during the “eclipse of Darwinism,” nonetheless predominantly focuses on the impact of Darwin’s theory of sexual selection. See his *Evolution and “the Sex Problem”: American Narratives During the Eclipse of Darwinism* (Kent, Oh.: Kent State University Press, 2004).

narrative, all but sentimentalists hopelessly attached to the romance of divine origin immediately recognized the theory of natural selection as the monumental and unique achievement of one of history's greatest scientific intellects. However, rather than instantaneously accepted verbatim, Darwin's work was put up for debate for decades among a host of other explanations of species change, some of which pre-dated natural selection. So tenuous was Darwinism's hold by the end of the century that theologian and evolutionary thinker Lyman Abbott was able to declare in 1897 that Darwinian evolution by struggle was "no longer by any one regarded as a complete summary of the process."⁷ I build on the work of revisionist historians who point to the numerous and competing versions of evolution in circulation until the synthesis of Darwinism with Mendelian genetics around 1940 to explore how evolutionary thinking was in fact a broad and varied discourse throughout the nineteenth-century United States.⁸ I show how evolutionary thinking linked fictional writers, reform leaders, theologians, naturalists, paleontologists, embryologists, comparative anatomists and others in shared conversation in which each group had some claim to authority and expertise. I investigate a wide range of writers of scientific documents, literary texts, and reform movement publicity who blended Darwin's work with other scientific theories, especially the writings of the early nineteenth-century French naturalist Jean Baptiste Lamarck and English philosopher Herbert Spencer, to develop evolutionary models that

⁷ Lyman Abbott, *The Theology of an Evolutionist* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1897), 7. Among other activities, Abbott served as an editor of *Harper's Magazine* and in 1888 succeeded Henry Ward Beecher at the helm of Brooklyn's Plymouth Church.

⁸ See Peter Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1988); Robert Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979); John S. Haller, Jr. *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), and Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

emphasized the role of human intervention in species change. That some authors, such as Charles Loring Brace, Edward Drinker Cope, Frederick Douglass, and Lydia Fowler, published in two or more of these three genres underscores the degree to which these pursuits were still perceived as a somewhat related enterprise despite their accelerating specialization.

An analytical focus on the conjunction of sentimentalism and science uncovers a vibrant tradition of evolutionary thinking that sharply contrasts with modern interpretations of natural selection. While contemporary analysis understands Darwinism to diagnose an unfeeling world subjected to competition and chance, nineteenth-century enthusiasts of Darwinism and other evolutionary theories conceptualized a process of species change governed by individual feelings and actions.⁹ According to these earlier models, an individual organism's habitual emotions and behaviors make impressions on the body. An individual's sensibility was argued to be especially high during youth, which in fact was defined as the stage of "susceptibility and impressibility."¹⁰ Structural adaptations made during childhood and beyond not only persist throughout the individual's lifespan, but also are transmitted to descendants for perpetuity. Many middle-class U.S. Americans adopted and adapted what Cynthia Russett has aptly referred to as Spencer's wildly popular "breeder's model of human evolution . . . which was analogous to a process of domestication, whereby small individual differences in

⁹ Nineteenth-century interpretations of Darwin's writings often saw evolution as a progressivist, teleological process of development. In contrast, contemporary understandings of natural selection emphasize that evolution simply signifies change, not necessarily improvement.

¹⁰ E.D. Cope, *The Origin of the Fittest: Essays on Evolution* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1886), 235.

populations might be nudged and encouraged in certain directions to make change.”¹¹ When Sarah Hale speaks of “*permanently* elevating the female mind” through the study of natural history, for example, she thus contributes to the pervasive notion that repeated conduct shapes evolutionary development. Children born to a woman educated in the science of botany, this line of thinking concludes, would inherit an increased aptitude for the study of plant life. These theories thus emphasized the ability of European Americans, and to a lesser degree other races, to direct evolutionary change to their own advantage through controlling their environments, individual actions, and feelings. I show how the theory of sentimental bodily impressibility codified the idea that different family lines inherit distinct physical and emotional capacities. I work to demonstrate how sentimentalism, through the guise of an incompletely differentiated literature and science, thus played a central role in shaping nineteenth-century ideas of racial difference.

Throughout the dissertation, I argue that the intertwining of nineteenth-century literary sentimentalism and evolutionary science played a formative role in making better breeding a national priority. I reveal how literary texts, scientific writing, and reform tracts together sought to perpetuate advantageous characteristics and eliminate detrimental qualities from the national population through their ideas about human’s role in evolution. I also point to some of the ways that “unfit primitives” played a complex role in developing, appropriating, and resisting better breeding projects. To tell this literary and cultural history of proto-eugenics, I draw from a range of primary sources,

¹¹ Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 87.

including over thirty novels by authors such as Catharine Maria Sedgwick, Herman Melville, Lydia Maria Child, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Harriet Wilson, Alice Wellington Rollins, and W.E.B. Du Bois; autobiographical writing, oral histories, and journalistic accounts; visual culture such as photographs of the Lakota leader Red Cloud and Charles Knight's scientific illustrations of dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures; personal correspondence; articles and monographs in the fields of evolution, ethnology, paleontology, and the philosophy of science by Frederick Douglass, Edward Drinker Cope, Joseph Le Conte, Alpheus Hyatt, Charles Loring Brace, and others; and organizational records from Brace and his Children's Aid Society of New York and Planned Parenthood.

This project suggests that the ideologies and practices of nineteenth-century sentimentalism and evolutionary thinking evoke a logic of human breeding that anticipates yet differs from the hereditarian approaches to eugenics that dominated the United States after 1900. In the earlier period, reformers emphasized their ability to "improve" the national population by manipulating the environments of growing children. However, there was a gradual erosion of support for the theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics by the turn of the century. August Weismann's efforts in the early 1880s to show that truncating the tails of lizards failed to propagate a tailless generation initiated this shift, which was catapulted ahead by the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics in 1900. Following these dislocations, scientific, literary, and reform communities emphasized the overarching role of heredity, rather than environment, in shaping the growth of the species and the individual. As a consequence, twentieth-century reformers' efforts to minimize "inferior" offspring and promote the reproduction

of “superior” women tended to regulate which women should become pregnant in the first place, rather than manipulate the conditions of children already conceived and born.¹² In constructing this shift from proto-eugenics to eugenics, this dissertation seeks especially to contribute to recent re-assessments of the politics of sentimentalism and to adjust the accepted timeline of eugenics in the United States.

Throughout this project, I adopt June Howard’s definition of sentimentalism as the intellectual tradition that recognizes individual emotion as a physiological and discursive event. For Howard, sentimentalism names “a moment when emotion is *recognized* as socially constructed.”¹³ Drawing on the work of literary scholars, anthropologists, neuroscientists, sociologists, writers, film directors and others, Howard thoroughly excavates the multiple scholarly and vernacular meanings of sentimentality. She overturns assumptions of sentiment and emotion as purely mental expressions of individual feeling, persuasively suggesting that sentiment is at once embodied and packaged within discursive structures. Sentiment – which she finds ultimately indistinguishable from emotion – links corporal responses with mental states. For Howard, the term “sentimentalism” marks an instance in which “the discursive processes which construct emotion become visible,” typically when a “clash” occurs between “different attitudes about what sensations are appropriate in a given situation.”¹⁴ In other words, Howard usefully clarifies that *all* emotion is socially constructed, yet it is

¹² Some nineteenth-century discourses of pregnancy emphasized women’s ability to improve their fetuses through manipulating the impressions they received. For this reason, I stress that the key plane of intervention followed conception.

¹³ June Howard, *Publishing the Family* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 242.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 245-6.

primarily when these strictures become apparent that the label of sentimentalism is applied, often in a derogatory sense. As Howard instructs, the task for literary historians is not to adjudicate an expression of sentimentality as “authentic” or “inauthentic” or even progressive or conservative, but rather to historicize how the acknowledgement of the social construction of embodied emotion came to be central to middle-class literature and other fields over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Sentimentalism is charged with inauthenticity; but to follow Howard’s clarification is to understand sentimentalism as a discourse that acknowledges the dependence of the individual experience of feeling on commonly held conventions, rendering inauthenticity/authenticity a meaningless scholarly paradigm. Sentimentalism is an ideology that unabashedly obscures any difference between the subjective and the objective, the individual and the social, the psychological and the somatic, the emotional and the rational, the private and the public, and the original and the mass-produced.

From this perspective, the tendency of historians of science to trace the genesis of modern science to the moment when naturalists freed themselves from the acknowledgement that the subjective and the objective are confounded becomes self-evident. To explore the imbrication of nineteenth-century science and sentimentalism is to investigate an era when scientific practice still recognized both its dependence on the subjective experiences of the individual practitioner as well as its embeddedness within the social relations of knowledge production. For example, early nineteenth-century naturalists often embraced their study as cultivating a dynamic relationship with nature that would yield personal insights that could be extrapolated into disciplinary principles. As sociologists of knowledge and others in the field of science studies have been

illuminating at least since Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), twentieth- and twenty-first-century science has above all come to signify the dispassionate and disinterested study of natural phenomena. The fierce anger with which many practicing scientists have greeted the work of Bruno Latour, Steven Shapin, Donna Haraway, and others underscores the extent to which much of the scientific community stakes the validity of its enterprise precisely on the disciplines' allegedly unique access to objective truth. In this view, science is uniquely capable of escaping the epistemological muddiness in which sentimentalism wallows.

To perpetuate this division is thus to disregard the extensive work of science studies scholars to historicize the processes through which science has come to connote objectivity and value-free investigation. Like sentimentalism, science is an intellectual practice and political ideology that is neither objective nor subjective, authentic nor counterfeit. Rather, it is a changing and contingent set of conventions that can be dispatched in a variety of ways.¹⁵ As Latour has usefully suggested, science studies scholars would do well to cease investigating how science is situated in its social context, for such a question presupposes their division in the first place. Instead, he advises, critical studies might explore how the categories of "science" – which he denotes as the representation of things – and "politics" – the representation of people – came to be distinct.¹⁶

¹⁵ For a particularly useful elaboration of the adaptability of science in the case of the multiple forms eugenic thinking has taken, see Nancy Leys Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹⁶ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*. Trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 3.

This project attempts to take up this task by examining how nineteenth-century sentimentalism functioned as one of the last intellectual traditions to forge the increasingly fraught link among scientific practice, imaginative writing, and political work. That this occurred during the era of the rapid development of modern disciplinary specialization is no coincidence, for the gradual splitting of the sentimental from the scientific played a large role in crafting the separate spheres of the literary and the systematic. In this study, I take “sentimental science” to mean three interrelated yet distinct things. Primarily, it is an intellectual tradition that takes feeling and emotion to be structural forces of physical growth. Second, it signifies a study of the natural world that emphasizes a dynamic relationship between the observer and her objects of study. Finally, sentimental science also characterizes the work of scientists who attempted to co-opt the intellectual legacy of sentimentalism as a means to consolidate their power against rising claims for the expansion of social and civil rights in the latter third of the nineteenth century.

Much of sentimentalism’s remarkably broad purview in the nineteenth century is due to its antecedents in Enlightenment thought. Most work in U.S. literary studies exploring the eighteenth-century origins of sentimentalism has focused on the Scottish Common Sense school, and especially the work of Adam Smith.¹⁷ To Smith and his cohort, including Lord Kames, David Hume, and John Millar, sympathy and “sensibility” function as the basis of human civilization, for they serve as emotional

¹⁷ For example, see Elizabeth Barnes, *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Lori Merish, *Sentimental Materialism: Gender, Commodity Culture, and Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000); and Julie Ellison, *Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Sentiment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

exchange-value that enables an individual to imaginatively place herself in the embodied position of another. Feeling and sensibility, the latter of which signified both physical “animation” and “emotional sensitivity,” thus enabled the relations of capitalism, individual moral values, interpersonal intimacies, and “civil subjectivity.”¹⁸ Similarly, while the role of the French Enlightenment is less examined (with the exception of Rousseau’s contributions), Denis Diderot and others also developed a notion of sensibility that denotes a process in which the mind and body are linked. Jessica Riskin explains that for Diderot, sensibility denotes “the capacity ‘to perceive impressions of external objects,’” and the immediate emotional response to this impression is “‘sentiment.’”¹⁹ Stemming from its origins in sensibility, sentimentalism similarly describes the state in which physicality and emotionality are linked. Riskin has recently illuminated what she calls the “sentimental empiricism” of eighteenth-century French science, or the tradition that “knowledge grew not from sensory experience alone, but from a combination of sensation and sentiment.”²⁰ This agenda shaped the remarkably fluid overlap between the physical and moral sciences in the period, as scientists embraced their own emotional response as a crucial aspect of their scientific method. In the French context, Riskin argues, scientific methods narrowed by the start of the nineteenth century and emotion came to function primarily as an object of study, rather than as a style of scientific research itself.²¹

¹⁸ Merish, *Sentimental Materialism*, 50, 40

¹⁹ Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4

²¹ On the role of suffering as a key method in nineteenth-century empirical research, see Rebecca Herzig, *Suffering for Science: Reason and Sacrifice in Modern America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

In the U.S. context, researchers' physical and emotional impressions continued to shape scientific practice in both object and method during the nineteenth century. This was due in part to their overarching investment in ideas of racial difference, the interrelated social relations of slavery and capitalism, and the multiple discourses comprising racial science and evolutionary thought in the Americas, including sentimentalism itself. For example, one of the most infamous anecdotes in the historiography of race science recounts the union of emotional sentiment and physical response that compelled Louis Agassiz, the most respected U.S.-based scientist of the century, to throw his considerable weight behind the theory of polygenesis in the mid-1840s. Staying in a Philadelphia hotel soon after emigrating from Austria, Agassiz wrote to his mother that he had made his first "prolonged contact with negroes," an event that inspired him to reverse his commitment to the unity of human origin. Despite his "pity" and "compassion" at observing "this degraded and degenerate race," Agassiz "can scarcely express . . . the painful *impression* that I received" on account of the "feeling" the hotel's staff "inspired in [him]." Proclaiming the necessity of holding "truth before all," Agassiz imparts that it was "impossible for me to *repress the feeling* that they are not the same blood as us." This feeling provokes a physical paralysis that renders him unable to "take my eyes off their face in order to tell them to stay far away."²² Relating his horror at being served by African American waiters, Agassiz uses sentimentalism's vocabulary of the embodied nature of knowledge to narrate the method through which he formulated a new scientific agenda. From the moment of his visceral emotional reaction

²² Agassiz to his mother, December 1846, quoted in Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), 44-45, emphasis added.

in Philadelphia, Agassiz started on his path to becoming the world's foremost scientist promoting the theory that individual "races" are in fact separate species with distinct origins.

In this project, I show how the sentimental doctrine of bodily impressibility connected the work of race scientists, such as Agassiz's disciples in the self-titled American School of Evolution, to the writings of sentimental fiction writers and social reformers like Charles Loring Brace.²³ As we have seen, the eighteenth-century doctrine of sensibility proposes that an initial physical impression produces an emotional response. As in Agassiz's brutal account of the origins of his commitment to polygenesis, U.S. sentimentalism retains this commitment to the interdependence between feeling and physicality, though it tends to blend physicality and emotionality into the same phenomenological experience.²⁴ Unlike Agassiz, however, sentimental fiction writers and some of the evolutionists explored here underscored the importance of sympathy in mediating the impact of outward stimuli on individual embodied emotion. Sympathy and self-control play an intercessory role, ensuring that an internal commitment to "feel[ing] right" guides an individual's development, rather than the whims of the environment.²⁵ Sarah Hale, for example, defined sentiment as a doctrine that enables "the happiness and moral and mental *elevation* of the race," thereby describing a program of feeling that enables evolutionary progress (273, emphasis added). The plastic body of the child, however, may have yet to develop an appropriate

²³ To clarify, Agassiz was the last leading U.S. naturalist who opposed the theory of evolution, despite his role as mentor to those who went on to form the neo-Lamarckian school.

²⁴ The term "feeling" today retains this double sense of a physiological and mental impression.

²⁵ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly* (New York: Signet, 1998), 480.

arsenal of self-control to channel feeling into elevation. The horrors of slavery “sink into my heart,” sentimentalism’s most famous child warns her parents in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, as her extreme youth and enormous capacity for sympathy provoke a rapid physical disintegration that culminates in the death bed (256).

As I show in the final chapter, the neo-Lamarckians of the American School transformed bodily impressibility into the basic theory of species change between 1870 and 1900. “[S]ensibility is the condition of development,” Cope proclaimed, outlining evolution as a teleological progression toward civilization through an organisms’ capacity to transmit their acquired physical impressions.²⁶ Nevertheless, Cope and other evolutionists proclaimed that their work was objective and rational. As the scientists’ outward disavowal of sentimentality as a scientific method suggests, the divide between scientific practice and literary pursuit was accelerating throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. Writers studying “things” began to use distinct vocabularies, research techniques, and subjects.²⁷ Increasingly, that which embraced the theory that linked the body and mind and the subjective and objective came to be called literature, and popular women’s literature at that.²⁸ In fact, I demonstrate how Cope and his cohort claimed ownership of the objective as part of an attempt to take control of the legacy of

²⁶ Cope, *Origin*, 235.

²⁷ On the shared strategies of nineteenth-century literature and science, see especially Laura Otis, ed., *Literature and Science in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), xvii-xxviii and Gillian Beer, *Darwin’s Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). For a good overview of the gradual splitting of the literary and the scientific, especially in relation to uses of science by marginalized subjects to contest inequality, see Nancy Leys Stepan and Sander L. Gilman, “Appropriating the Idioms of Science: The Rejection of Scientific Racism,” in *The ‘Racial’ Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*, ed. Sandra Harding (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 170-193.

²⁸ Lora Romero clarifies that nineteenth-century and contemporary portrayals of women-authored sentimental literature as a teeming force that dominated the literary marketplace are based more on rhetorical positioning than a demonstrable market phenomenon. See Romero, *Home Fronts: Domesticity and Its Critics in the Antebellum United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 12.

sentimentalism and sensibility to consolidate the power of elite white men in light of the rising democratic claims of the Gilded Age.

Compound Inheritance

In tracing how sentimentalism remained a tenuous yet tenacious thread suturing scientific and literary enterprise throughout the nineteenth century, I suggest that novelists, reformers, and evolutionists committed to the impressibility of the body were laying the groundwork for a theory of racial perfection predicated on the possibility of better breeding. In short, the plasticity of youth seemed to afford great opportunities for social engineering, so much so that the child's body itself became a key site of liberal reform.²⁹ I call this multi-pronged approach "proto-eugenics" to signal how nineteenth-century better breeding anticipated its successor, differing from dominant U.S. eugenics in method, but not in intent.³⁰ Proto-eugenic notions of heredity were rooted in the sentimental and Lamarckian impressibility of the body. While proto-eugenics helped to articulate the eugenic worldview that saw the child as the figure of national progress, their more malleable notion of heredity compelled nineteenth-century U.S. enthusiasts to primarily intercede in the lives of families *after* the moments of conception and birth. U.S. eugenics, by contrast, was overwhelmingly an application of Galtonian, Weismannic, and Mendelian ideas of heredity that ruled out the possibility of modifications to hereditary material. "Eugenics" was coined by Sir Francis Galton in

²⁹ On the emergence of child as the figure of the nation over the long nineteenth century, see Caroline F. Levander, *Cradle of Liberty: Race, the Child, and National Belonging from Thomas Jefferson to W.E.B. Du Bois* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

³⁰ I thank Christoph Irmscher and Maren Lorenz, organizers of the September 2008 workshop "Human Breeding: Proto-Eugenic Thinking Before Galton," for the use of this term. Jenny Davidson also employs "proto-eugenic"; see *Breeding: A Partial History of the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 5.

1883 and defined by one of its leading U.S. practitioners as “the science of improvement of the human race by better breeding.”³¹ Tenable flashpoints to mark the debut of eugenics movements in the United States include John Harvey Kellogg’s organization of the Race Betterment Foundation in Battle Creek, Michigan in 1906, the 1907 passage of the nation’s first sterilization law in Indiana, and the opening of the well-funded Eugenics Record Office at New York’s Cold Spring Harbor in 1910.³² In the U.S. context, eugenics tended to emphasize the overarching role of heredity in controlling destiny. As a consequence, eugenic activists and scientists saw their plane of intervention to be the regulation of women’s rates of conception, including the sterilization of those deemed “unfit” and the promotion of a higher birth rate among elite and middle-class white women. Eugenic activists were highly involved in anti-miscegenation campaigns, anti-immigration legislation, and other campaigns to ensure the purity of European American heredity.

It is important to note, however, the permeability and contingency of these differing theories of heredity. Eugenics in Latin America, for example, was based on the possibility of the neo-Lamarckian inheritance of acquired characteristics. As a consequence, eugenic strongholds in Mexico, were located in public health departments, pronatalist organizations, publishing houses circulating maternal manuals, and other venues stressing the modification of hereditary material into the 1940s. Meanwhile, eugenicists were virtually absent from the ranks of anti-immigration campaigns and

³¹ Charles B. Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1911), 1, quoted in Alexandra Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 11.

³² Stern, *Eugenic Nation*, 5.

Mexico passed only one sterilization law, in the state of Veracruz.³³ Furthermore, as I show in the final chapter, twentieth-century African American reformers such as W.E.B. Du Bois developed theories of eugenic better breeding based more heavily in Lamarckian rather than Mendelian ideas of heredity. His work emphasizes the fluidity between eugenics and its predecessor. For this reason, I wish to stress that my terminology of “proto-eugenics” does not describe a universal timeline during which Lamarckism unilaterally modernized into Mendelism. Rather, it roughly categorizes competing U.S. better breeding schemes that had significant temporal and thematic overlap.

I am particularly interested in the impact of sentimental proto-eugenics on nineteenth-century ideas of race. Many have observed that ideas of race were in flux between the American Revolution and World War I.³⁴ The nineteenth-century tradition of the body’s impressibility might be usefully thought of as a moment of transition between eighteenth-century beliefs in the dominant role of environment in shaping racial

³³ On Latin American eugenics, see Stepan, *Hour of Eugenics* and Alexandra Minna Stern, “Eugenics Beyond Borders: Science and Medicalization in Mexico and the U.S. West, 1900-1950” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1999).

³⁴ On the shifting discourses of race throughout the nineteenth century, see especially Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1981); Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Cathy Boeckmann, *A Question of Character: Scientific Racism and the Genres of American Fiction, 1892-1912* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000); Audrey Smedley, *Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview*, 3rd ed. (Boulder: Westview, 2007); Nancy Leys Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960* (London: MacMillan, 1982); Louise Michele Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); David Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness: Essays on Race, Politics, and Working-Class History* (New York: Verso, 1994); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1995); Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); and George Stocking, Jr., “The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race,” *Modernism/Modernity* 1, no. 1 (1994): 4-16.

differences among humans and the twentieth-century endorsement of heredity's overdetermining role.³⁵ The first U.S. ethnologist, for example, wrote in the late eighteenth century that it was "useless labor" to try and categorize different races on the basis of physicality, for travel and habit made dramatic changes to the body within a single lifetime.³⁶ In the nineteenth century, an increasing attraction to the possibility that these individual changes were passed on to future generations was manifest, a shift that gave physical characteristics a greater degree of permanency over time. In the context of Lamarck's renewal of the age-old interest in the idea that acquired traits might be transmitted, the theory of bodily impressibility and the social construction of physiological emotion played a large role in occasioning this gradual shift toward heredity.³⁷ However, it is important to note that this intermediary period as yet made little distinction between the categories we now call culture and biology. Theories like Herbert Spencer's, which conceived of human culture as a massive organic body, helped to inspire "an understanding of society [wherein] the transmission of culture could only be construed as a physical process, a question of human heredity."³⁸ I suggest that sentimentalism's emphasis on the evolutionary impact of cultural and emotional expression helped to articulate an increasingly durable notion of racial difference, often in the guise of civilizationist discourse.

³⁵ On race in the eighteenth century, see Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

³⁶ Samuel Stanhope Smith, *Essay on the Causes of the Variety of Complexion and Figure . . .* (New Brunswick, N.H., 1810), 95, quoted in William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 11.

³⁷ Stephen Jay Gould explores the long-standing interest in the inheritance of acquired characteristics and its peak in the nineteenth-century United States in Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*.

³⁸ Russett, *Sexual Science*, 86.

Nineteenth-century civilizationism functioned as a multidisciplinary conversation where theories of bodily impressibility and species change were articulated in relation to the development of human races.³⁹ Civilizationism, which received its fullest treatment in sentimental texts by authors such as the Beecher sisters and anthropological writing by Lewis Henry Morgan and others, codified the embodied feelings and habitual actions of emerging middle-class culture into the method and goal of evolution. According to its paradigm, the cultivation of surplus crops, binary gender differentiation, monogamous heterosexuality, domesticity, language and literature, Protestant Christianity, democratic governmentality, and private property marked the function and destination of racial development.⁴⁰ The mastery of each category had occasioned middle-class European Americans' climb from animality, to savagery, through barbarism, and finally to civilization, a rise that triggered and was triggered by some degree of physical change at each stage of the process. Native Americans, African Americans, poor whites, and others deemed primitive were thought to be the first races that ascended from the beast kingdom. They functioned as the sacrificial infancy of civilization, born so that later races could recapitulate their meager advances and thereby accelerate their own evolution. In recapitulation theory's elaboration of this process, the embryos and infants of the civilized rapidly retrace the evolutionary ascendance of these primitive ancestors, so that by the end of their childhood they are caught up to the position of their parents.

³⁹ On theories of civilization, see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) and George Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

⁴⁰ In the U.S. context, these criteria received their fullest elaboration in the work of Lewis Henry Morgan. See his *Ancient Society* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985). In the British context, see E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (New York: Harper, 1958).

The malleable constitution of civilized youth – an ontology that received its first full elaboration in the discourses of sentimentalism – ensured that they would make plenty of advances during their childhood that, in turn, their offspring would inherit.⁴¹

Civilization rests on a tautology; an individual inherits a plastic constitution capable of rapid upward development only if born of generations that had already enjoyed material conditions deemed ameliorating. For this reason, opinions varied widely as to the present capacity for the primitive – who by definition lacked this compound inheritance – to upwardly evolve. Those whose theories of impressibility were conditioned by sympathy, such as multiethnic abolitionists and Indian reformers, celebrated the bio-cultural transition that a Native American family abandoning the blanket for a wood frame house would spur. Others, such as the members of the American School of Evolution, had a much more pessimistic view. They suspected that the worn-out primitive races had already exhausted their potential and would remain mired in savagery until they gradually disappeared altogether. In Chapter Two, I show how sentimental fiction throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century conceptualized civilized girlhood as a highly plastic stage in part through opposing representations of the stolidity of the poor of European, African, and/or Middle Eastern heritage. Though this literature advocates sympathy on the part of the blooming maiden for her less malleable domestic and outsourced servants, perhaps its most lasting intellectual contribution is in helping to create the contrasting images of the flexible,

⁴¹ The male child became an important figure of late nineteenth-century evolutionary science, in large part because of their assumed malleability. See Levander, “The Science of Sentiment.”

“natural” body of the civilized child and the static or at best imitative forms of the household servants.

Civilizationism received its fullest treatment in the second half of the nineteenth century. As Gail Bederman notes, it was rooted in a much longer tradition of Protestant millennialism that saw human history as a struggle against evil. This tradition promised that, through the work of God, Christians would vanquish evil and enjoy a resulting one thousand years of perfect peace and harmony on earth.⁴² To refer one last time to Sarah Hale’s 1833 article “Science and Sentiment,” in this piece she eagerly anticipates a day in which the “blessed days of peace, plenty and intercourse among all nations shall have arrived, science and sentiment will be found compatible with each other, and refined taste and [C]hristian morality [will have] become synonymous terms” (276). She articulates a millenarian view of future peace and prosperity, one delivered by Christian conquest paired with the reversal of the gradual dissolution of sentimental and scientific methods. In the context of the wide interest in theories of species change in the second half of the century, what Hale called “science and sentiment” was now comprised within evolution. Species change through impressibility became the mechanism through which God would vanquish the evil (now represented by the primitive), and the civilized would achieve racial perfection.⁴³ Jane Tompkins summarizes the science of domesticity Beecher articulates in *American Woman’s Home* as “the prerequisite of world conquest – defined as the reformation of the human race through proper care and nurturing of its

⁴² Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 25-6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 26.

young.”⁴⁴ The figures examined here and many others – especially Charles Loring Brace and Edward Drinker Cope, but also Pauline Hopkins and Charlotte Perkins Gilman – were working toward a cosmic future through the compounding inheritance of the civilized races. Theirs was a millennial better breeding, in which the mastery of evolution, depending on one’s political outlook, promised either a global genocide or a millennial assimilation.

In the chapters that follow, I use nineteenth-century terms where appropriate to describe the racial categories these authors helped to consolidate. Accordingly, I predominantly describe the protagonists of sentimental literature as “civilized” girls rather than “white,” “European American,” or some other locution. This adoption of the language of my primary sources – without quotation marks – seeks not to endorse their views, but to point to their work to develop a language of race that is distinct from later categories such as “white.” Furthermore, “civilization” was a tremendously rich concept that over the course of the twentieth-century split off into the separate discourses of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and culture. To speak of the position of the “primitive” or “civilized” functions as both an economical and evocative means of noting the matrix of ideas of biocultural difference occasioned by the intersections of sentimentalism and evolutionary thinking.

Method and Rationale

“Sentimental Science and the Literary Cultures of Proto-Eugenics” demonstrates how sentimentalism maintained its ongoing hold on both literature and scientific practice

⁴⁴ Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 143.

in part through its engagement with the multidisciplinary discourse of evolution. In particular, I show how sentimentalism contributed to civilizationism, which later came to full flower in late nineteenth-century anthropology. As I suggested above, civilization was a complex set of physical, cultural, political, and material qualities realized by a small elite. This rarefied sphere depended on a contrast with the largely undifferentiated, parallelized mass that comprised the stages of savagery and barbarism. In each of the four chapters and the Epilogue, I focus on discrete yet overlapping constituents of primitivity: the animal, the child, the Irish immigrant, the indigent, the woman, the Native American, and the African American. Not coincidentally, this taxonomy of the uncivilized mirrors many of the principle subjects of the sentimental novel.⁴⁵

Some explanation is perhaps in order. Namely, the multidisciplinary conversation of civilizationism was a battleground with extraordinarily high political stakes. Each of the above categories had defenders for their claims to civilization, especially members of the group trained in social science methodologies (except in the cases of children and animals, of course), and each was simultaneously subjected to fierce denials of their claims to fully evolved personhood.⁴⁶ Sentimental literature, as I have suggested, played a large role in constructing the notion of inherited physiological and emotional difference upon which nineteenth-century racial categories depended. The mode urged that sympathy and self-control could mediate bodily impressions, which provided some

⁴⁵ This list covers many components of the primitive, with the notable exceptions of the slave, the insane, and the prisoner. For a discussion of this list (that excludes the woman) in relation strictly to sentimental literature, see Philip Fisher, *Hard Facts: Setting and Form in the American Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 94-99. For a good reading of the intersections of gender and sexuality in the construction of the non-civilized, see Laura Briggs, "The Race of Hysteria: 'Overcivilization; and the 'Savage' in Late Nineteenth-Century Obstetrics and Gynecology," *American Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (June 2000): 246-273.

⁴⁶ As I show in chapter one, animals had their defenders as well.

measure of optimism about the course of development. As a consequence, multiethnic writers marginalized by a political and cultural order that overwhelmingly favored European American men of property found sentimentalism an available structure to advocate for the capacity of enslaved and free African Americans, white women, Native Americans, and others to master the behaviors of civilization. As I show in chapter three, white women used the sentimental adoption trope to portray civilized girlhood as a blooming state of potential. I point to Native American uses of sentimentalism in chapter five in both textual and pictorial forms by analyzing the photographs Red Cloud made with a number of scientific and political figures in the larger context of Native American writing and artistic production. Important writers who made use of this genre to advocate for African Americans as subjects capable of civilization include Frederick Douglass, Harriet Wilson, William Wells Brown, Harriet Jacobs, Lydia Maria Child, and Frances Harper.⁴⁷ On the other hand, scientific civilizationism, an outgrowth of sentimentalism, had little sympathy for the primitive. Scientists such as those in the American School of Evolution explicitly raided sentimentalism for its theory of growth and turned it against its principle promoters as a means to consolidate social power. Edward Drinker Cope, for example, used the theory of bodily impressibility to cast white women's suffrage and the presence of African Americans in the United States as the "two perils of the Indo-

⁴⁷ On African American sentimental writing, see especially Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), P. Gabrielle Foreman, "Sentimental Subversions: Reading, Race, and Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1992) and Joycelyn Moody, *Sentimental Confessions: Spiritual Narratives of Nineteenth-Century African American Women* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

European.”⁴⁸ As I show in the final chapter, Du Bois was committed to expanding the social scientific discourse of civilization at the turn of the century to include some role for African American men, largely by displacing primitivity onto black women. Roughly at the same time, Charlotte Perkins Gilman drew on economic and political theory to rewrite evolutionary change as a process wherein white women could escape the burden of femininity by surmounting any trace of racialization.⁴⁹

In an effort to address sentimentalism’s expansive purview, I have attempted several research methods in this project. Generally, I combine literary close readings of written and visual culture with contextual analyses of multiple primary sources. More specifically, my strategies of fictional analysis range from a chapter-length exposition of a single novel – in the case of *Moby-Dick* – to an overview of the adoption trope in sentimental fiction based on thirty texts. In the second half of the project, I employ an intellectual history approach to reconstruct the thought of Charles Loring Brace as well as Edward Drinker Cope and his neo-Lamarckian school from their extensive writings. In exploring the dependence of evolutionary theory on the U.S. conquest of Native land in the northern Midwest, I also draw on some techniques of social history to recount Red Cloud’s strategic use of the paleontologists mining his tribe’s land for the fossilized and human evidence of species change. Chapter six draws on discursive analysis as well as

⁴⁸ Edward Drinker Cope, “Two Perils of the Indo-European,” parts 1 and 2, *Open Court* III, no. 126 (1889): 2052-54; no. 127 (1889): 2070-71.

⁴⁹ On Gilman’s substitution of gender difference for racial difference, see Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, 121-169; Newman, *White Women’s Rights*, 132-157; and Dana Seitler, “Unnatural Selection: Mothers, Eugenic Feminism, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s Regeneration Narratives,” *American Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (March 2003): 61-88. For a much less critical view of Gilman that commends her efforts to resist the gendered hierarchies of civilization, see Russett, *Sexual Science*, 84-86, 151-154.

archived project records in order to illuminate the range of Du Bois' work on better breeding.

This project emphasizes the literary and scientific dimensions of the theory of sentimental bodily impressibility. This focus allows for some degree of specificity, but does not aim to suggest that print culture was the only major arena in which sentimentalism helped to bring about a culture of proto-eugenics. Chapter four, for example, points to the dramatic impact of sentimental better breeding on the lives of hundreds of thousands of tenement youth. Major developments in sentimental material culture important to the emergent culture of better breeding that are at most only tangentially explored here include: the efforts of leading phrenologists Lorenzo, Orson, and Lydia Fowler to market a middle-class hobby of phrenology that conceptualized the brain as a malleable entity shaped by such influences as domestic architecture, child care, healthy habits, and attitude; the fashionableness of ferns and aquariums in middle-class drawing rooms of the 1850s and 1860s; Frederick Law Olmsted's efforts to civilize New York and other cities through landscape and university architecture; the popularity of the convention of the child's portrait; and the efforts of world's fairs such as the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition to "civilize" colonized people installed in living displays on fairgrounds.⁵⁰ These projects' integral role in nineteenth-century popular culture suggests sentimentalism's broad purview in textual, visual, and material culture.

⁵⁰ On the Fowler family, see Madeleine B. Stern, *Heads & Head-Lines; The Phrenological Fowlers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971). On the popularity of miniature ecosystems in Victorian parlors, see Barber, *Heyday of Natural History*, 110-125. Shawn Michelle Smith compellingly links the emergent trope of the baby photograph with the rise of eugenics in *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 113-135. On Olmsted's civilizing designs with respect to Central Park, see Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 101-139. For a good overview of the

Contributions

The topic of sentimentalism has generated a large secondary literature since Ann Douglas published *The Feminization of American Culture* in 1977. The first twenty years of scholarship were dominated by what Laura Wexler has aptly termed “the Douglas-Tompkins debate,” a flourishing discussion about the political effects of sentimental ideology in which Douglas and Jane Tompkins have served as something like team captains. Douglas infamously accuses sentimentalism of functioning as an enervating force that sapped the strength from an “authentic,” thoughtful, and masculine public culture by helping to bring about “the exaltation of the average which is the trademark of mass culture.”⁵¹ Tompkins, in contrast, commends sentimental mass literature for serving as an enlivening tradition whose very “familiarity and typicality . . . are the basis of their effectiveness,” particularly in formulating a feminine politics that understands submission as power.⁵² Like Douglas, Tompkins restricts her objects of study to civilized women, with the result that she sees the millennial aims of sentimental literature as the final proof of the genre’s admirable cultural power. A similarly uncritical, if not downright celebratory, perspective on the racial logic of sentimentalism is characteristic of much of the first two decades of feminist sentimental scholarship. This work tends to praise sentimental authors for a resistant gender and racial politics. Some critics commend what they see as a politics of sympathy that wields a unique ability to transgress the brutal hierarchies of nineteenth-century slavery, domestic and

evolutionary designs of world’s fairs see Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s A Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

⁵¹ Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 4.

⁵² Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, xvi.

industrial labor relations, and imperialism. Other critics emphasize authors' efforts to expand the restricted sphere available to nineteenth-century women, a priority that often mistakes the particular mobility of women of the affluent classes as representative of the conditions of all nineteenth-century women.⁵³

More recently, Lora Romero, Susan Pearson, Bruce Burgett, and June Howard have issued calls for the cessation of evaluative claims about the political effects of sentimental literature. Rather than arguing that authors oppose hierarchies external to their works, these scholars examine how sentimentalism is itself a political discourse that is productive of political, social, and economic relations, a move that has significantly expanded our understanding of the terrain of the sentimental into visual culture, artistic practice, political theory, racial thought, business culture, and legal practice, among other arenas.⁵⁴ This shift has also helped to put the final nail into the coffin of Barbara Welter's "separate spheres" analysis as the operative descriptor of nineteenth-century middle-class gender relations in literary studies.⁵⁵ Conceptualizing sentimentalism as an intellectual and cultural tradition rather than a discrete literary genre dramatically changes the political tenor of the discourse, as it is no longer positioned "outside" of politics but as constitutive of nineteenth-century racial relations, individual subjectivity,

⁵³ See for example Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Annette Kolodny, *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); Cogan, *All-American Girl*; and Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁵⁴ For particularly rich collections about the many genres of sentimental thought, see Glenn Hendler and Mary Chapman, eds., *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) and Samuels, ed., *The Culture of Sentiment*.

⁵⁵ For a key text that helped to overturn the separate spheres blueprint, see Cathy N. Davidson, ed., "No More Separate Spheres!" *American Literature* 70 (1998). Welter's theory had considerably longer staying power in literary studies than in history. For a brief overview of the theory's contested status in historiography, see Anne M. Boylan, review of *All-American Girl*, by Frances B. Cogan, *History of Education Quarterly* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 257-259.

civil liberties, and other aspects of political culture. This perspective is especially helpful in revealing the considerable non-electoral political power of white women of the middle and upper classes.⁵⁶ “Sentimental Science and the Literary Cultures of Proto-Eugenics” attempts to respond to these priorities in scholarship by pointing to sentimentalism’s important yet generally overlooked role as a foundational discourse of the biological and racial sciences in the nineteenth-century United States.

In particular, I build on the work of several scholars who have explored sentimentalism’s engagement with organic themes. As with so many other aspects of the discourse, Ann Douglas perceptively identifies the recurring biological themes throughout sentimental fiction, though she finds that this engagement renders femininity “superfluous.” As Douglas notes, many popular sentimental authors adopted floral pseudonyms, including Fanny Fern, Grace Greenwood, Fanny Forrester, and Lily Larkspur. For this critic, “[b]y such self-baptism, feminine authors become characters in their own sentimental effusions: hothouse products, they are self-announced refugees from history.” Women writing in the popular genre of ministerial biography, she continues, replaced the analysis of significant events with an “almost biological consciousness” of the subject’s capacity for feeling and omitted relevant historical flashpoints in favor of “organic markers” like births, deaths, and periods of illness.⁵⁷ What Douglas acknowledges only to dismiss is that these substitutions represent the increasing biologization of social relations themselves. These writers’ turn toward the

⁵⁶ See in particular Newman, *White Women’s Rights* and Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵⁷ Douglas, *Feminization of American Culture*, 186, 193, 195.

languages of naturalism was part of a deep investment in conceptualizing the social body as an organic body. Within this framework, championed most explicitly by Herbert Spencer but brought about in part by the writers under discussion here, the body itself became a key site of political subjectivity and action. The context of slavery and subsequent Jim Crow segregation made the quotidian applications of government by physicality brutally apparent. The subjects of this dissertation approached the body, not the state, as the arena in which long-term political change could be wrought. As Shirley Samuels argues, “in nineteenth-century America sentimentality appears as a national project: in particular, a project about imagining the nation’s bodies and the national body.”⁵⁸ While such a move was not a retreat from politics per se, it was nonetheless an atomizing repositioning that shifted structural inequalities onto the realm of the individual in a manner consistent with nineteenth-century liberalism in general. My project thus hopes to contribute to the wide interest in the politics of the body in the scholarship on sentimentalism by pointing to the tradition’s role in figuring the child’s body as the agent of racial and national progress. One result of this transference of political subjectivity onto the body, and the child’s body in particular, was the flourishing eugenics movements of the twentieth century in which national progress was predicated on the fertility of civilized women.⁵⁹

A perspective informed by the intricacies of nineteenth-century evolutionary thinking helps clarify ongoing debates about the politics of bodies in nineteenth-century

⁵⁸ Samuels, ed., *Culture of Sentiment*, 3.

⁵⁹ In this argument, I seek to build on Caroline Levander’s *Cradle of Liberty*, which traces how nineteenth-century literature came to depend on the figure of the child to imagine national belonging. While she investigates the link between sentimentalism and evolutionary attitudes toward children in the 1880s and 1890s, her focus on representation leads her to attend to sympathy as an object of scientific study rather than to explore how evolutionists conceptualized sentiment as the basis of species change itself.

sentimental literature. Karen Sanchez-Eppler, for example, has argued that the body functions in antebellum sentimentalism as the main structure for meaning, as it is the physical body that obstructs the claims of women and the enslaved to personhood. The sentimental politics of the body, she argues, functions as a rupture in a political discourse that governs on the basis of bodily difference articulated nonetheless through a “language of political disembodiment.”⁶⁰ In contrast, Elizabeth Barnes revises Sanchez-Eppler to suggest that sentimental fiction does not rely on the material body, but rather erases the material with the perceptive function. In her reading, sentimentalism conceptualizes affective connections between individuals as transcending their material differences. With regards to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, for example, she argues that “[i]n a novel ostensibly concerned with the emancipation of human bodies, bodies are treated as primarily affective rather than material.”⁶¹ This debate, however, depends on the presentist assumption that the material and the perceptive are necessarily opposed. According to the nineteenth-century phenomenology of sentiment, however, the political and social order revolves around the body precisely because organic growth depends on the materialization of affective relations and vice versa. The most profound impact of the body in sentimentalism was not its function as an outsider discourse that effectively critiqued racial hierarchies, as many critics have claimed. Rather, the affective body of sentimentality was intimately tied to the discourse of race. I thus suggest that a lack of attention to nineteenth-century thinking about the physiological impact of affect has sidetracked the debate about the role of the body in sentimental culture. Instead of

⁶⁰ Sánchez-Eppler, *Touching Liberty*, 1.

⁶¹ Barnes, *States of Sympathy*, 96.

debating the way that bodies are represented in sentimentalism, we should examine how sentimentalism was productive of nineteenth-century ideas of embodiment. To this end, for example, I show how sentimental fiction propounded upon the elastic bodies and spirits of their child heroines and played a significant role in conceptualizing whiteness as a state of mobility and perfectibility.

Ezra Tawil has recently argued that frontier romances of the 1820s by Lydia Maria Child, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, and James Fenimore Cooper helped to articulate “racial sentiment,” or the theory that the “realm of feeling as the most important locus of racial difference.”⁶² Whereas the eighteenth century located human difference in the body, these writers, Tawil contends, shifted the location of difference to the sphere of interiority. As with the case of Barnes and Sanchez-Eppler, the impact of Tawil’s important study is limited by his exclusive focus on literary texts and the methodology of close reading. As a consequence, his argument that 1820s romance writing anticipates the work of 1840s race scientists both fails to acknowledge the still-fertile exchange between the literary and scientific in the period as well as conceives of feeling as a purely discursive entity. My own interdisciplinary study of sentimental fiction and evolutionary science of the 1840-1900 period builds on Tawil’s important insights while also clarifying that the enterprises’ shared conceptualization of the body’s ontology as at once a physiological and cultural product is precisely the legacy of race which sentimental literature and science imparted.

⁶² Ezra Tawil, *The Making of Racial Sentiment: Slavery and the Birth of the Frontier Romance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2.

Finally, this project also seeks to respond to recent priorities in the history of eugenics. Scholars have shown that eugenics, far from an extremist movement championed by a few, were firmly rooted within such well-documented milestones of North American modernity as the Harlem Renaissance, U.S. Literary Modernism, U.S. Reform-minded liberalism, and the rise of women's sexual independence.⁶³ In the words of Frank Dikötter, “[e]ugenics was a fundamental aspect of some of the most important cultural and social movements of the [global] twentieth century.”⁶⁴ Recent investigations have overturned the established periodization of eugenics scholarship, finding that large-scale eugenics projects in the United States, Mexico and elsewhere continued well beyond the interwar years.⁶⁵ Several recent conferences, in turn, have worked to dislodge Francis Galton’s status as the originator of eugenic thinking, suggesting that a logic of heredity existed decades if not centuries before his mid-to-late-nineteenth century work.⁶⁶ By revealing how the logic of better breeding received significant formulation in sentimentalism’s key genres of literary writing and scientific practice, I aim to show how eugenics was not a twentieth-century aberration. Instead, eugenics was a central component of U.S. reform-minded liberalism that was articulated in part by the very

⁶³ See, for example, Daylanne English, *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Nancy Ordover, *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics*; and Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁶⁴ Frank Dikötter, “Race Culture: Recent Perspectives on the History of Eugenics (Review Essay),” *American Historical Review* 103, no. 2 (1998): 467.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Alexandra Stern’s claim that the 1940s was the most active period for California’s eugenics movement as well as her work on biotypology and hereditarianism in Mexico in the same decade in “Eugenics Beyond Borders.”

⁶⁶ See Hans-Jörg Rheinberger and Staffan Müller-Wille, *A Cultural History of Heredity I: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, preprint 222 (2002) and German Historical Institute, *Human Breeding: Proto-Eugenic Thinking Before Galton*, http://www.ghi-dc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=399&Itemid=233.

figures scholars often uphold as their era's champions of anti-racist and anti-essentialist thinking. It is my hope that projects revealing these long roots of the discourse of racial progress might shape our attempts to combat human breeding in the twenty-first century.

The dissertation introduces sentimentalism's theory of bodily impressibility by revealing how this perspective illuminates new insights into one of the most widely studied texts in U.S. literature. Chapter Two, "Specious Bedfellows: Ethnicity, Animality, and the Intimacy of Slaughter in *Moby-Dick*," demonstrates how Herman Melville animates a key trope of sentimentalism in its shared manifestations in literature and nineteenth-century evolutionary science – the feeling animal. Drawing on pre-Darwinian ideas of species change, *Moby-Dick* portrays sperm whales and the famously multi-ethnic crew of the *Pequod* adapting the characteristics of the other species through the intimacy of the hunt and then transmitting these acquired traits to descendents. I underscore the representativeness of Melville's tale by reading contemporary popular and scientific narratives that detail the profoundly rich relationships the lucrative sperm oil industry engenders between whales and whalers. I argue that this sentimental structure of interspecies intimacy enables Melville to shed critical light on the contradictions between the virtuous emotional ideals and compromising material demands of the emerging middle classes. Melville shows how the mid-century demand for oil compel the whalers to disavow the affective relationships with whales that the intimacy of the hunt has conditioned them to cultivate. In Melville's caustic vision, sentimental sympathy emphasizes the progress of the emergent middle class at the expense of primitive subjects, both human and animal, who are deemed expendable. However, I show that Melville's critique of sentimentalism's self-serving sympathy

participates in the mid-century parallelism between racialized subjects and animals, a practice that reveals further links between literary and scientific representation of the period and both enables and limits the egalitarianism of his novel.

I then explore the theme of bodily impressibility in the best-selling genre of sentimental fiction. Chapter Three, “Sentimental Adoption Fiction and the Biologization of Affect” draws on over thirty novels by authors including Susan Warner, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Maria Cummins, and especially Lydia Maria Child and Alice Wellington Rollins to suggest that orphan heroines were a popular trope on account of the opportunities these characters provided to narrate the physical effects of emotional states. I reveal how these novels articulate a theory of evolutionary impressibility in which individual feelings produce physical changes that will be inherited by the next generation. Furthermore, the novelists’ recurring equation of femininity with flowers serves as a principle synecdoche of their larger project to construct civilized girlhood as a state of physical, emotional, and mental malleability that, in the right environment, was capable of perfection. In contrast, this fiction characterizes the children of the poor as primitive subjects in desperate need of tending by the middle class. In so doing, novelists as well as authors of housekeeping and childcare manuals demonstrated their ongoing participation in the fields of natural history, botany, and the racial and evolutionary sciences in the decades prior to and during the professionalization of science as a rarefied discourse whose methods were accessible to only a few. In narrating the growth of the child, novelists joined scientists and naturalists in promoting the role of both nature and nurture in conditioning growth. They positioned the civilized child as the

preeminent subject of development and the child of the poor as a deserving target of interventionist better breeding that advocated removing children from their families.

Chapter Four, “Orphans of Progress: Child Migrants and Bodily Impressibility in New York Tenement Reform” explores how Brace and his Children’s Aid Society (CAS) put the sentimental trope of the malleable orphan to work. Between 1854 and 1929, CAS removed nearly 100,000 tenement children from their families and neighborhoods in New York City and installed them as laborers in rural homes in order to impress upon them the appropriate domestic habits, feelings, and labors the organization deemed appropriate for working-class Christian youth. Whereas some felt that the poor were incapable of amelioration, Brace argued, in common with the novelists explored in chapter three, that orphaning poor children from their parents could interrupt their biocultural inheritance. The Children’s Aid Society promised the physical and moral transformation of its clients through instilling in children the main qualities thought to be the cause and effects of civilization: Protestant faith, familial sympathy, a dedication to domestic life, appropriately gendered behavior, and a love of private property and resource accumulation. Brace’s goal was to evolve Irish immigrant youth into future generations of hardworking Protestant Americans who would be assets, rather than “poison,” to the nation’s progress. This motivation is best understood through close readings of Brace’s work in ethnology, evolution, theology, and domesticity, which have been overlooked by scholars. Brace is often recognized as the father of U.S. foster care; in this chapter, I argue that the origins of large-scale better breeding campaigns also lie in his child welfare work built on the sentimental theory of bodily impressibility.

In Chapter Five, “Stricken from the Fossil Record: The Sentimental Origins of the American School of Evolution and Red Cloud’s Struggle for Lakota Sovereignty,” I explore the full flowering of sentimental evolution in the years between 1870 and 1900. I show how the neo-Lamarckians, including Edward Drinker Cope, Alpheus Hyatt, and Joseph Le Conte, codified species change by the bodily impressibility of youth into an evolutionary law challenging Darwinian natural selection. The vitriolic rhetoric of these racial scientists, including assailing women’s sympathy and emotionality in the midst of their theories’ reliance on sentimentalism, reveals how scientists professionalized their discipline in the late nineteenth century in part by disguising their own indebtedness to the tradition of sentimentalism. In addition to this intellectual history, I point to the material proof on which their theories of evolution by sentiment rested. Drawing on scientific texts, photographs, illustrations of prehistoric creatures, memoirs, newspaper accounts, speeches, pamphlets, and other materials, I show how paleontologists searched for prehistoric fossils in Native land that would provide the evidence of a species change that progressed from the mosasaur to Indo-European civilization. I trace this history in particular through uncovering the multifaceted ways that Oglala Lakota leader Red Cloud negotiated attempts to remove the fossil remains buried in Lakota lands.

In the final chapter, “Eugenics and the Color Line,” I trace how the proto-eugenic template persisted after the appearance of formal eugenics at the dawn of the twentieth century. I suggest that W.E.B. Du Bois deployed the nineteenth-century environmental model of better breeding to contest the growing power of hereditarian thinking. Hereditarianism condemned racialized subjects to a fixed place at the nadir of civilization and promoted evolutionary change through the regulation of childbirth,

rather than the management of childrearing. Many scholars have interpreted Du Bois' opposition to eugenicists' sterilization, anti-immigration, and anti-miscegenation campaigns as evidence of his resistance to better breeding. I argue that Du Bois objected to dominant versions of eugenic thinking, but in part through retaining a commitment to sentimental bodily impressibility and the inheritance of acquired characteristics. I briefly examine his fictional, sociological, and journalistic writings to illuminate how he drew on sentimentalism's founding role in the racial discourse of civilization to fashion the uplift of African American youth as an evolutionary strategy to better their physical and moral material. I also analyze his work with Planned Parenthood's notorious Negro Project, drawing on the organization's archives, in order to show how Du Bois embraced eugenic applications of birth control. I thus demonstrate the lasting appeal for better breeding by bodily impressibility by noting the fluidity between twentieth-century eugenics and its predecessor.

Finally, in a brief Epilogue, I point to the efforts of reformers to institutionalize Native American youth in off-reservation boarding schools as indicative of the material effects of sentimental impressibility on nineteenth-century peoples. By emphasizing sentimentalism as a specific yet pervasive approach to embodiment, rather than a literary genre or a discrete political practice, this project uncovers the shared crystallization of the logic of race in figures as seemingly diverse as administrators of Native boarding schools, abolitionist writers advocating sympathy for the enslaved, and racial scientists who devoted themselves to cataloging the evidence of biological difference. I highlight my efforts to show that sentimental thinking in literature, science, and reform was productive of nineteenth-century ideas of race.

“Sentimental Science and the Literary Cultures of Proto-Eugenics” illuminates how sentimentalism brokered a fertile exchange between literature and evolutionary theory throughout the nineteenth century. In sum, this project argues that sentimentalism’s role in structuring nineteenth-century racial discourse helped to usher in better breeding as a national agenda.

CHAPTER TWO

Specious Bedfellows: Ethnicity, Animality, and the Intimacy of Slaughter in *Moby-Dick*

“The earth becomes to [the amateur marine scientist] transparent; everywhere he sees significances, harmonies, laws, chains of cause and effect endlessly interlinked, which draw him out of the narrow sphere of self-interest and self-pleasing.”

-- Charles Kingsley, *Glaucus; Or, the Wonders of the Shore*

Anxious to “make [his] Self an man,” Maine youth Joseph Loring swore off the lure of the California goldfields and shipped out on a New Bedford whaling vessel a month prior to *Moby-Dick*’s publication in the fall of 1851. A year and a half later, he proudly wrote to his mother that he had “struck 5 whales and ha[d] not gotten [his] head smashed yet.” In fact, he was now so much less “green” that he could as readily “go on to a whale as go over the hill of an evening or escort a school marm to her place of abode.” Assuring her that his labors on board were equally serene, he gladly reported that his ship “is scelibrated for the harmony in which here officers and aftergard live [and] there has not bin a hard word be twine the officers or the Stewers the 14 months that wee have bin to gather.” Yet such sentimental scenes of domestic bliss appear as a cover for his unavoidable worry that, “Still an unlucky blow may make Sauce Pans out of me.” Torn between portraying his struggle with whales as manly graciousness and non-hierarchical camaraderie or as brutally dangerous sport against a worthy adversary, Loring hastily

states the inescapable fact of his utter dependence on sperm whales in an aphorism worthy of Ishmael: “Yet by them I live or by them I die.”⁶⁷

In regaling his family with news of his voyage, Joseph Loring suggests that an apparatus of affect and domestic bliss mitigates his overwhelming dependence on creatures of the sea for his existence and earnings. His emphasis on the sympathetic feeling between crewmembers and his own vulnerability to sperm whales runs counter to dominant characterizations of the harvesting of whales as well as challenges accepted interpretations of the industry’s most famous literary tribute, *Moby-Dick*. Nineteenth-century whaling has been praised as the paradigmatic enterprise of masculinist vigor, built of “exposure, privation, and danger, in comparison with which other field-sports are tame, safe, and effeminate.”⁶⁸ Similarly, many critics, perhaps most famously Ann Douglas, have characterized *Moby-Dick* as a shining beacon of masculine aesthetic accomplishment amidst a decade awash in feminine, sentimental drivel.⁶⁹ In contrast to the proposition that Melville’s literary rigor managed to surmount the stultifying mid-century cultural climate of saccharine literature espousing domestic maudlin sentimentality, I propose that Melville’s novel is a fully developed exploration of the deeply affective relationships pre-industrial whaling ironically nurtured between whales and whalers through the very intimacy of the hunt. I would like to suggest that the multi-

⁶⁷ Joseph Loring, Joseph Loring Letters. MSS 188. Mandeville Special Collections Library, UC San Diego.

⁶⁸ William M. Davis, *Nimrod of the Sea, or, the American Whaleman* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1874), 156.

⁶⁹ Critics who note the novel’s engagement with sentimentalism include Tara Penry, “Sentimental Masculinities in *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*,” in *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture*, ed. Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 226-243; Vincent Bertolini, “Fireside Chastity: The Erotics of Sentimental Bachelorhood in the 1850s” in *Sentimental Men*, 19-42; Gillian Silverman, “Incest and Authorship in Melville’s *Pierre*,” *American Literature* 74, no. 2 (2004): 345-372; and Elizabeth Schultz, “The Sentimental Subtext of *Moby-Dick*: Melville’s Response to the ‘World of Woe,’” *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 42, no.1 (1996): 29-49.

faceted discourse of sentimentalism saturates and in fact structures *Moby-Dick*.

Nineteenth-century sentimentalism, when understood as a middle-class discourse that links private feelings with the social constructedness of emotion itself as well as a theory of bodily impressibility, served a key strategy to shuttle between individual response and social structures. Building on recent studies of sentimentality that illuminate its influence across political, cultural, and literary spheres, I demonstrate Melville's indebtedness to sentimentalism despite the absence of weeping women in *Moby-Dick*.

I argue that Melville animates a key trope of sentimentalism in its manifestations in mid-century natural history research and domestic ideology—the feeling animal—in order to reveal the self-serving relations at the heart of the industrializing economy. He represents both whales and whalers as affective, emotional subjects deserving of empathy from the emerging middle classes who had voracious appetites for sperm whale oil. For Melville, the increased productivity of the hunt at mid-century threatens to imperil the familial feeling achieved between workers, an intimacy that Queequeg and Ishmael nurture in their “married” (54) bed at the Spouter Inn and that inspired Loring to report to his mother that he “felt [his] boat was a happy home.”⁷⁰ More generally, the industrialization of the northeastern states underway in the 1840s and 1850s provided the consumer economy with the goods, wealth, and gendered labor market necessary for the idealized construction of the domestic sphere as a safe harbor from the market pressures of the public world.⁷¹ As the principal market for sperm oil was in heavy industry (it was

⁷⁰ Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick or The Whale*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1988), 54.

⁷¹ This is not to suggest that the home was in fact a private space protected from the unpleasantness of the marketplace. The antebellum middle-class home was, of course, the site of paid, unpaid, and enslaved employment for a number of workers.

a superior lubricant for large-scale machinery), Melville chose an animal whose body lay at the very heart of industrialization. Antebellum naturalists relied heavily on the discourses of sentimentalism and recognized animals as capable of a wide variety of emotional and mental expression, attitudes matched by the increasing prominence of pet-keeping as an affective relation that “came to stand as a reliable indicator of good moral character and, in particular, a person’s ability to care well for others.”⁷² Melville capitalized on these testaments to animal sentience through portraying Moby Dick and the other sperm whales as thinking, feeling subjects with the capacity for affective relations with each other and their hunters. I argue that this sentimental structure of interspecies intimacy enables Melville to shed critical light on the contradictions between the virtuous emotional ideals and compromising material demands of the emerging middle classes. His animals reveal the ways in which domestic feeling both depended on using animal bodies and was increasingly dependent on the exploitative, unsympathetic labor practices facilitating the accumulation of whale oil. He shows how the mid-century demand for oil compels the whalers to disavow the affective relationships with whales that the intimacy of the hunt has conditioned them to cultivate. In Melville’s caustic vision, sentimental sympathy emphasizes the progress of the emergent middle class at the expense of primitive subjects, both human and animal, who are deemed expendable.

In order to shore up the readers’ support for the novel’s critique of the rapid increase in production underway in the fishery during the 1840s and 1850s, Melville also enlists a paradigm that often served as a resource for male authors to escape the strictures

⁷² Jennifer Mason, *Civilized Creatures: Urban Animals, Sentimental Culture, and American Literature, 1850-1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 13.

of domesticity in the era: the literary language of Orientalism.⁷³ Melville turns to the genre that David Reynolds has called the “Oriental tale,” a language of mild reform that upset received notions of the naturalness and universality of Anglo-Christian norms through portraying “exotic” Eastern cultures as irredeemably other, to create the sperm whales, Ahab, and Fedallah and his crew.⁷⁴ This characterization enables Melville to elicit his readers’ willingness to identify changing relations of production on the whaleship as an abuse of authority by casting Ahab and Fedallah as fatalistic Islamic despots. It also provides him with the means to cast both the sperm whales and Fedallah and his crew as sensuous, cunning, and ultimately unfathomable creatures, a portrayal that at once anthropomorphizes the leviathans and further distances Western Asian peoples from the self-determination allegedly characteristic of American culture. On the one hand, Fedallah and his boatmen’s inscrutable, murderous instincts that spur Ahab’s suicidal quest to slaughter Moby Dick signal their alien fatalism, while on the other hand, the whales’ racialized sexuality is identified by the whalers as evidence of their common capacities for sentiment and sympathy. As such, Orientalism both enables and limits the egalitarianism of Melville’s strategic animation of sentimentalism to show the costs of the industrializing fishery. Melville’s critique of sentimentalism’s self-serving sympathy participates in the mid-century parallelism between racialized subjects and animals and reveals further links between literary and scientific representation of the period.

⁷³ Timothy Marr, *The Cultural Roots of American Islamicism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 231.

⁷⁴ David Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 41-52.

Sentimental Science

As I will show, the gendered language of Orientalism enables Melville to critique sentimental culture's voracious appetite for oil by both endowing a commodity animal with subjectivity and heightening the murderous elements of the industry through Fedallah's fatalism. To a contemporary reader, the notion that whales could have a developed faculty for feeling and sympathy (and that Easterners might have less developed emotional traits than those from Northern Europe) would seem entirely plausible. While many qualities ascribed to animals by the popular classes during the Enlightenment were gradually stripped away over the course of the century, animals were nonetheless still widely considered capable of cogitation and emotional expression.⁷⁵ Indeed, Jennifer Mason has recently shown that the belief in the moral and intellectual capabilities of those animals whose companionship shaped many U.S. middle-class urban and rural lives—such as dogs, cats, and horses—actually increased in the postbellum period. For example, animal menageries showcasing canines proficient in arithmetic and spelling and other attractions had been a prevalent form of public entertainment since the late eighteenth century. Likewise, zoological gardens drew vast crowds (London's saw Melville as a patron in 1849, according to Richard Dean Smith), while scientific publications wondered aloud, "Is Man the Highest Animal?"⁷⁶ Zoologists generally found that animals manifested a broad range of mental and emotional experience, including "imagination, memory, homesickness, self-consciousness, joy, rage, terror, compassion,

⁷⁵ Harriet Ritvo, *Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987); Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon, 1983); and Mason, *Civilized Creatures*.

⁷⁶ Richard Dean Smith, *Melville's Science: 'Devilish Tantalization of the Gods!'* (New York: Garland, 1993), 105 and C.S. Minot, "Is Man the Highest Animal?" *American Naturalist* 16.6 (1882): 511-512. The answer was a definitive "no."

envy, cruelty, fidelity, and attachment.”⁷⁷ This breadth of expression, in turn, was both symptom and cause of the belief that animals were capable of affective relationships.

Mid-century understandings of animal sentience were a key result of the intersections between sentimentalism and natural history. The near absence of studies of sentimentalism’s relationship to the physical and life sciences is in large part due to the presentist understanding among literary scholars that objectivity is an essential quality of research into the natural world. Antebellum practitioners, however, nurtured a sympathetic relationship with their objects of study; for them, natural history was a means to improve one’s Christian character through the learned appreciation of God’s creation. So pervasive was the association between natural history and sentiment that the professionalization of the sciences at the century’s close required a careful distancing from long-standing schools of thought in which the study of natural life implied intimacy. Devotees of methods such as experimentation developed neologisms such as “biologist” precisely to signify this break with students of natural history who insisted on the emotional and morally uplifting elements of their investigations. In the words of historian Lynn Barber, the moniker “naturalist” “bec[ame] the hallmark of the sort of sentimental amateur who referred to birds as his feathered friends.”⁷⁸

Sentimental amateurs, however, had transformed the study of natural history into a major market phenomenon, not least in contemporary print culture. Nina Baym, for example, has demonstrated the wide appeal of scientific practices to nineteenth-century women of letters, noting how sentimental ideologues like Sarah Josepha Hale took pains

⁷⁷ Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, 36.

⁷⁸ Lynn Barber, *The Heyday of Natural History, 1820-1870* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 25.

to incorporate the life and physical sciences in nearly every edition of *Godey's Ladies Book*.⁷⁹ Popular science texts from mid-century often betray feelings of unease with the widespread appeal of natural history and its structural relationships with the sentimental and sensational genres of the literary marketplace. Sentimentality – the very admission of the social construction of emotion – often acquired meanings of florid emotionality that the largely male world of naturalists was quick to denigrate. In fact, naturalists often disavowed the very sentimental and sensational structures of meaning that enabled antebellum scientific practice and secured its popularity. We might take the Reverend Charles Kingsley's *Glaucus; Or, the Wonders of the Shore* (1855), a text that appeared in at least eight editions before the turn of the century, as exemplary in this regard.⁸⁰ The British novelist and popular science writer is repelled by the very strategies he uses to lure readers into the study of marine life as a genteel pastime. He at once asserts that “books which treat of [sea animals] carry with them a certain charm of romance, and feed the play of fancy, and that love of the marvelous which is inherent in man” and expounds that marine natural histories “read like any novel” (8). Yet he promises readers that teaching children to read natural history will instruct them “to despise French novels, and that sugared slough of sentimental poetry” (8, 45). Similarly, he advocates the keeping of “Ward's cases” of living ferns by women – like aquariums, a mid-century fad in Britain and United States enabled by new understandings of the life cycles of plants and the cheapness of glass – that take their place among other honored domestic objects. Women “find an enjoyment in it, and are more active, more cheerful, more self-forgetful over it,

⁷⁹ Nina Baym, *American Women of Letters and the Nineteenth-Century Sciences: Styles of Affiliation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 36.

⁸⁰ Charles Kingsley, *Glaucus; Or, the Wonders of the Shore* (Cambridge: Macmillan & Co., 1855).

than they would have been over novels and gossip, crochet and Berlin-wool,” he opines, attempting at once to argue for natural history as a “genuine” practice of proper feeling and to reject other staples of white women’s idealized role in the middle-class home as dangerous and foreign pastimes (4).

Precisely some of the most visible ways that science and the culture of sentiment were epistemic associates can be traced in the valences attributed to the category “animal” during the nineteenth century. The scientific study of animal sentiment and sentimental culture’s belief in the sentience and morality of domesticated animals converged in the rapidly accelerating practice of keeping household pets. The middle classes forming in the wake of commercial capitalism found that developments in science and industry afforded a new comfort and pleasure in their relations with animals, for advances in urbanization and livestock raising, among other changes, had improved the technologies of animal control.⁸¹ As the historian Harriet Ritvo explains, “animals became significant primarily as the objects of human manipulation,” and those creatures that knew their place as servants and companions in an anthropocentric world were praised as emotionally and mentally advanced.⁸² In this view, an animal’s worth as a thinking and feeling subject was dependent on its ability to serve as a foil that stimulated the emotional development thought proper to the domestic sphere. Household pets became a fixture of the middle-class home, as, in the words of Jennifer Mason, “the proper keeping of companion animals came to stand as a reliable indicator of good moral

⁸¹ Ritvo, *Animal Estate*.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 2

character and, in particular, a person's ability to care well for others."⁸³ In one contemporary manifestation, the tender care that the angry, unfeminine orphan in Maria Cummins' sentimental classic *The Lamplighter* (1854) provides her kitten is an early indication that her case is not a helpless one. Certain that the cat's life is worth as least as much as Gertie's, the novel applauds the five-year-old girl's sacrifice of her own health to share her meager rations of bread and milk with her feline charge, thereby modeling to female readers the proper subjugation of one's self inside the middle-class home. Conversely, zoology regarded large animals, which the middle and elite classes generally found difficult to control, as unruly creatures prone to wickedness and thus the natural enemies of mankind.⁸⁴

⁸³ Mason, *Civilized Creatures*, 13. Mason importantly argues against dominant interpretations of mid-to-late-nineteenth-century culture that see the significant role played by animal life in literary productions of the period, such as the wilderness novel, as a compensatory move for wild animals' increasing capitulation to the demands of the urbanizing, industrializing nation. The disappearance of the grand beasts of the American landscape, the argument goes, enabled and necessitated their ascension to the realm of symbol in cultural life. Mason, on the other hand, compellingly demonstrates that the widespread interest in non-human creatures in the second half of the nineteenth century is due instead to the burgeoning modes of interaction between humans and tamed animals in domestic and urban spaces. Middle-class sentimental culture nurtured "multiple, species-specific" (1) relationships with domestic pets, bolstered by the "notion that individuals' everyday encounters with nonhuman life could offer valuable moral lessons and cultivate the virtues – such as discipline and benevolence – valued by the middle class" (12). Her attention to domestic animals as a structural presence in Victorian America, a lived reality of intimacy that helped prepare the public to accept the radically materialist notions of evolutionism that animals are not only our kin, but our heritage, provides the necessary historical context for my attempts to historicize Melville's characterization of emoting, reasoning sperm whales in relation to the politics of evolutionary science. However, while Mason inventories some of the cultural and intellectual arenas that shaped and were shaped by newly close relations with animals, including zoological parks, natural history, and transcendentalist philosophy, her analysis focuses solely on how human relations with animals are central to "contests for power in the human social order played out in literary texts" (1). In contrast, I submit that an attention to the economic uses of animals and the cultural politics of zoological and evolutionary practice in the period – both of which may be traced in fictional work – challenge several of her core arguments about the politics of representational animality. Curiously, the animals who played the most immediate role in structuring sentimental culture – the commercial animals ranging from domestic livestock to the mighty leviathans – are absent from her view. An examination of how the Victorian age understood the domesticated and untamed beasts of burden that their means of production and consumption depended on necessarily complicates a celebration of its ability to imagine fellowship with other animal life.

⁸⁴ Ritvo, *Animal Estate*.

This asymmetrical endowment echoes what Elizabeth Barnes has characterized as the “sentimental scheme of sympathy, [wherein] others are made real – and thus cared for – to the extent that they can be shown in *relation* to the reader.”⁸⁵ In other words, the feeling (human) observer occupies the privileged role in the sentimental relation, and her interests are privileged accordingly. Sentimental ideologues from Adam Smith to Maria Cummins conceptualize feeling and sympathy for another as the incorporation of another’s perspective into the self, a tension that “affords sympathy its disciplinary function.”⁸⁶ Sympathy, according to sentimentalism, is a force that spurs the emotional and intellectual development of the person producing fellow-feeling through one’s ability to project one’s own feelings into the body of another. Self-development is thus the central object of sentimental sympathy.

Melville uses this phenomenology of sentiment to criticize middle-class culture’s self-serving relations with animals through the graphic example of their reliance on sperm whale oil. Specifically, he combines understandings of the sentience of domesticated and wild animals in order to portray huge thinking, feeling leviathans in intimate combat with human hunters. In accordance with popular and scientific opinion, and in particular with many of the natural histories of sperm whales that Melville relied upon in the writing of *Moby-Dick*, Melville insists upon the rational and emotional capabilities of cetaceans. Unlike these sources, however, Melville delights in showing how his unruly animal subjects confound human needs. “The Sperm Whale is in some cases,” Ishmael maintains, “sufficiently powerful, knowing, and judiciously malicious, as

⁸⁵ Barnes, *States of Sympathy*, 4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

with direct forethought to stave in, utterly destroy, and sink a large ship; and what is more, the Sperm Whale *has* done it” (206). The whales’ property- and life-destroying acts are done “not so often with blind rage, as with willful, deliberate designs of destruction to his pursuers” (209). Marine naturalists’ less enthusiastic tales of vengeful whales inspired Melville’s own portrayal. Frederick Bennett’s *Narrative of a Whaling Voyage Round the Globe From the Year 1833-1836*, one of the sources Ishmael cites as his most reliable, describes the whales as willful, individualized creatures, capable of the defensive actions of being “watchful and timid,” prone to “the act of listening,” and to “gazing up at the boats, in a manner which expressed an equal share of curiosity and suspicion.”⁸⁷ In the offensive mode, these powers of reason and forethought spell terrifying destruction to their pursuers: “he rather sought to attack them, whenever they approached him for the purpose of lancing . . . with much sagacity . . . approaching impetuously from a distance of about forty yards, he turned upon his back, raising his lower jaw to grasp the boat from above . . . [then] he struck the boat with a force that nearly overturned it” (265-266). Even the staid Thomas Beale, in his *Natural History of the Sperm Whale* (1839), admits that “[l]arge whales’ are however sometimes, but rarely, met with [that are] remarkably cunning and full of courage, when they will commit dreadful havoc with their jaws and tail.”⁸⁸

A series of whaling voyages throughout mid-century met disaster at the jaws of powerful sperm like Mocha Dick, who alone destroyed 14 boats. Reports of these voyages no doubt also prepared the understanding of whales and other large marine life

⁸⁷ Frederick Bennett, *Narrative of a Whaling Voyage Round the Globe From the Year 1833-1836*, Vol.1 (New York: Da Capo, 1970), 6, 265.

⁸⁸ Thomas Beale, *The Natural History of the Sperm Whale* (London: Holland Press, 1973), 51-2.

as willful creatures. The trope of the marine monster in mid-century fiction bears the record of this animosity. Tales such as J.N. Reynolds' "Mocha Dick: Or the White Whale of the Pacific" (1839) and Owen Chase's *Narrative of the Most Extraordinary and Distressing Shipwreck of the Whaleship Essex, of Nantucket* (1821) broadcast the exploits of whales purported to be Mocha Dick to an eager reading public, famously including Melville himself. Furthermore, partially inspired by numerous sightings of "sea serpents" off the coast of Massachusetts in the late 1810s and early 1820s, an entire subgenre of ocean monster stories emerged for the mass market, many of which attributed a variety of cognitive abilities to their leading marine monsters and delighted in their propensity to wield mass destruction.⁸⁹ As David Reynolds has shown, *Moby-Dick* had a kind of precedent in Eugene Batchelder's *A Romance of the Sea Serpent, or The Ichthyosaurus* (1849), a dime novel forged at the intersection of scientific study, romantic adventure, and historical analysis.⁹⁰ Issued in four editions within a year of its debut, the narrator of the *Romance* addresses his story to those who have profit to gain upon the sea: "To the merchant, the sailor, and every one who goes on the deep, or has business to do upon the great waters" in a clever warning that suggests an appeal of the popular sea monster genre was precisely the ways it was articulated as a revenge fantasy against the merchant class (albeit a fantasy in which workers themselves are made victims).⁹¹ The text recounts in

⁸⁹ David Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Knopf, 1988), 195-6 and Howard P. Vincent, *The Trying-Out of Moby-Dick* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), 174.

⁹⁰ Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance*, 196.

⁹¹ Batchelder, *A Romance of the Sea Serpent, or the Ichthyosaurus. Also, a Collection of the Ancient and Modern Authorities, with Letters from Distinguished Merchants and Men of Science* (Cambridge: John Bartlett, 1850), 5. For an analysis of the complex critiques of nation, capital, and labor integral to the dime novel genre see Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (London: Verso, 1998) and Streeby, *American Sensations*.

rhyming verse “some of the peculiar traits in the character” of its title character, purported to be the animal that had recently terrorized the Massachusetts shore (preface). “His Snakeship” mocks, threatens, and brutalizes the elite of Northeastern Atlantic coast sea-towns and genteel sea-faring parties with his clever verbal harangues and enormously powerful body (4 and *passim*). The monster (and his relations) take particular delight in devouring skeptical citizens, and “always feels stronger and stouter, after eating the most inveterate doubter” (51).⁹² One of the most dramatic scenes finds the serpent visiting the scholars at Cambridge, where he hopes to pick up a degree for his “knowledge of Ichthyology” (66). Indeed, pre-eminent Harvard scientist and polygenist Louis Agassiz has a meta-presence in the text, both as object of the serpent’s curiosity and in providing scientific opprobrium of the novel through attached correspondence with Batchelder. A transcript of an 1849 lecture Agassiz delivered in Philadelphia is also appended, wherein he asserts “I can no longer doubt the existence of some large marine reptile allied to Ichthyosaurus and Plesiosaurus, yet unknown to naturalists” (135), for “it has been seen by so many on whom we may rely, that it is wrong to doubt any longer” (137). Forty pages of testimony on the existence of sea serpents, culled from journalistic, scientific, political, and biblical sources, accompany Agassiz’s support.

In other words, Melville’s exploration of marine zoology is part of a mid-century print culture tradition of scientific publications, sketches in literary magazines, and dime novel paperbacks that emplot zoological knowledge of marine creatures and their

⁹² Interestingly, the sea monsters’ use of the skulls of human doubters as “a ladle for [their] chowder” (58) at their ocean-lair banquet provides a nice visual reversal of naturalists’ nineteenth-century U.S. and European tradition of hosting lavish dinner parties inside the half-completed reconstructions of saurian skeletons. On the New Year’s Eve dinner party inside Waterhouse Hawkins’ iguanodon to inaugurate the opening of the Crystal Palace in 1853, see Virginia Zimmerman, *Excavating Victorians* (Albany: State University of New York, 2008), 53-55.

viciousness within the narrative structure of a sea adventure. These fictional and cetological narratives both subvert and legitimate dominant trends in sentimental culture. On the one hand, their endowment of whales and marine monsters with a certain degree of independent thought was an accepted practice, but on the other, the narratives, and none more than *Moby-Dick*, represent the whales in an affective, emotional, and intellectual exchange with whalers that challenges common conceptions of large animals as incapable of meaningful relationships with humans. The history and context these narratives provide for the creatures' resistance to slaughter betrays a respect for their unwillingness to submit to human needs that challenge the typically asymmetrical relations of domestic culture's relations with animals.

These scientific and fictional texts behold both a horror and respect for the ability of sperm whales to act collectively in order antagonize human cultures. For example, rather than operating by blind instinct, sperm whales in *Moby-Dick* adapt their migratory patterns and social relations as defensive measures against the zealotry of the fishery: “[O]wing to the unwearied activity with which of late they have been hunted over all four oceans, the sperm Whales, instead of almost invariably sailing in small detached companies, as in former times, are now frequently met with in extensive herds, sometimes embracing so great a multitude, that it would almost seem as if numerous nations of them had sworn solemn league and covenant for mutual assistance and protection” (382). Melville's whales rapidly and dramatically change their behavior to better resist entrapment. To *Moby-Dick's* narrator, sperm whales are not dumb brutes, but rather akin to colonized subjects who form “nations” for self-protection from the reaches of a whaling industry bent on resource extraction. “Loose-fish,” or whales that are yet

unclaimed by a whaling vessel, are directly compared to native land prior to its seizure by colonial powers, solidifying cetaceans as both fellow combatants and the rich source of profitable commodities: “What was America in 1492 but a Loose-Fish . . . What was India to England? What at last will Mexico be to the United States? All Loose-Fish” (398). Moreover, the whales’ collective resistance to the fishery is matched by the spectacular individual resistance of the victorious Moby Dick and other sperm whales who “ac[t], not so often with blind rage, as with willful, deliberate designs of destruction to [their] pursuers” (209). *Moby-Dick* manipulates the figure of the domesticated pet useful for developing its human owners’ capacity for feeling and turns it against itself to situate whales in intimate and affective relations with one another in order to resist slaughter.

Specious Bedfellows

While domestic pet-keeping and scientific practice nurtured self-serving intimate relations with animals, Ishmael makes it clear that whaling far exceeded either enterprise in its fleshy, sensual, and profitable communion with another species. Beale, for example, was unique among cetologists in having spent a brief stint on a whaling voyage in order to observe his specimen.⁹³ To Melville’s narrator, even a naturalist with some experience on whaling ships had rather incomplete knowledge of whales, in comparison to the lifelong promiscuous relations nurtured by whalers who “are by all odds the most directly brought into contact with whatever is appallingly astonishing in the sea; face to face they not only eye its greatest marvels, but, hand to jaw, give battle to them” (180). While

⁹³ Vincent, *Trying Out of Moby-Dick*, 166.

phrenologists study the skulls of humans, “horses, birds, serpents, and fish” to ascertain the animals’ emotional and mental qualities through alleged mappings on the skull, Tashtego himself falls inside a whale’s brain (345). Furthermore, the whale, in fact, “has no face,” rendering the phrenological study of whales “an entire delusion,” as are the scientists’ efforts to understand whales through dissection and classification: “Dissect him how I may, then, I but go skin deep” (379, 349). In contrast, drawing one of many ironic allusions to whalers’ sexual familiarity with whales, Ishmael boasts that nowhere “is the pre-eminent tremendousness of the great Sperm Whale anywhere more feelingly comprehended, than on board of those prows which stem him” (181).

Ahab quickly and successfully wins over the majority of the ship in his single-minded pursuit in part because the *Pequod’s* crew shares Ahab’s intimate relationship with whales. To the bulk of the sailors, who regularly give life-threatening hand-to-fin combat to leviathans, the serious reckoning of a solitary whale is legitimate behavior. “A wild, mystical, sympathetical feeling was in me; Ahab’s quenchless feud seemed mine,” Ishmael proclaims in words that rewrite Ahab’s monomania in terms of an affective bond between whaler and captain (179). To whalers, sperm whales are fellow combatants in years-long battles. Throughout, this knowledge of whales trumps respected scientists’ study of bones, skin, teeth, and tail. As Samuel Otter argues, “Melville suggests an epistemology of the body based not on visual penetration but on contact between individuals, the caress and the squeeze that take place in the dark.”⁹⁴ Throughout the text, the bodies of whales and whalers interpenetrate one another, as whales chew human legs

⁹⁴ Samuel Otter, *Melville’s Anatomies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 101.

and humans chew whales for supper, humans wear whale-bone prosthetics and whales carry lances embedded in their flesh for decades, and whalers thrust harpoons into the rolling backs of leviathans from the “crotches” of their boats and later find themselves enveloped in the foreskin of the whale (289). In short, *Moby-Dick* represents the whalers in deeply emotional and physical relations with whales, a characterization that comments ironically on popular forms of scientific practice that encouraged self-fulfilling relations with the natural world. Using the discourse of bodily impressibility to portray intimacy, Melville represents whales and whalers and making their mark on one another.

At their best, workers on Melville’s whale-ship develop relationships with their resource and with each other in a homoerotic, artisanal mode of production that enables them to enjoy the fruits of their own labors. Ishmael ironically fêtes this self-serving intimacy in the chapter “A Squeeze of the Hand”:

I squeezed that sperm till I myself almost melted into it; . . . and I found myself unwittingly squeezing my co-laborers’ hands in it, mistaking their hands for the gentle globules. Such an abounding, affectionate, friendly, loving feeling did this avocation beget; that at last I was continually squeezing their hands, and looking up into their eyes sentimentally; as much as to say,—Oh! my dear fellow beings, why should we longer cherish any social acerbities, or know the slightest ill-humor or envy! Come let us squeeze hands all round; nay, let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness. (416)

Ishmael’s physical, emotional, and social feelings are so stimulated by sensual contact with whalers and whales that it matters not whether the joyous flesh between his fingers is a co-worker’s living hand or the lumpy contents of a leviathan’s corpse. Indeed, over the course of the novel, the harvesting of the whale body is often indistinguishable from sexual relations. Lest the bestial promiscuity of these relations escape the reader’s notice, the carpenter enters to hammer it home: “Stubb always says [Ahab’s] queer; says nothing

but that one sufficient little word queer; he's queer, says Stubb; he's queer — queer, queer; . . . queer, queer, very queer. And here's his leg! Yes, now that I think of it, here's his bedfellow! has a stick of whale's jaw-bone for a wife!" (472). To the carpenter, Ahab's all-absorbing feeling for Moby Dick is so overpowering that Ahab is wedded to his sentiments for the whale, a relation that has found Ahab eager to possess a whale in his body. Through the taxing hunting and rendering of dead whales the animals have lost their bodily boundaries. Whalers become their agents of (re)production through a laborious exchange that climaxes as the whaler and whale penis dissolve into one another when the mincer dons the foreskin to protect his soft, human flesh from the fires of the try-works. The result is a masculine system of sexuality and production that supercedes any need for either the reproductive capabilities of human women or living whales. In *Moby-Dick's* aqueous world without women, dead whales provide generative seeds.

The *Pequod's* crew maintains sentimental affections with the whales that enable physical and emotional relations to develop over generations that primarily benefit the whalers' emotional development and their cut of the voyage's profits. However, the increased demand for oil at mid-century industry triggered shifts in the condition of labor and the dynamic of the hunt. Both of these factors threatened affiliative relations during Melville's tenure on board ship and are reflected in the pages of *Moby-Dick*. The harvesting of sperm oil increased rapidly during the four years Melville was at sea in the early 1840s, and between 1855 and 1859 production multiplied fivefold.⁹⁵ The numbers

⁹⁵ Lance E. Davis, Robert E. Gallman, and Karin Gleiter, *In Pursuit of Leviathan: Technology, Institutions, Productivity, and Profits in American Whaling, 1816-1906* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 17. This heyday of U.S. whaling productivity soon came to an end, however, and by the end of Reconstruction whaling a combination of the availability of petroleum, interruptions waged by the Civil War, several high-profile disasters, the increasing difficulty of finding whales at sea, and competition from

of whales killed reached extraordinarily high levels; one nineteenth-century chronicler estimated that U.S. whalships destroyed 292,714 cetaceans between 1834 and 1872.⁹⁶ Economic historians Lance Davis, Robert E. Gallman, and Karin Gleiter have shown that this so-called golden era of U.S. whaling did not represent a financial boon to sailors. During the highly productive 1840-1843 and 1855-58 periods, the real wages of U.S. whalemen actually fell as a result of new technology on board that enabled agents to turn to unskilled Americans and international workers. In fact, the drop in the value of this kind of labor was actually steeper than the simultaneous depreciation of onshore work.⁹⁷ (38). Davis, Gallman, and Gleiter argue that “[q]ualitative sources suggest that the decline was the result of a conscious decision by agents, aimed at reducing labor turnover and thus increasing profits.”⁹⁸ This context illuminates why Melville might have chosen to portray an increasingly profitable hunt. Despite Joseph Loring’s experience to the contrary, Melville charges that changing relations of production on the mid-century whale-ship made it a less rewarding place to produce the materials that literally greased the machinery of capitalism. Ishmael thus indulges in a bit of nostalgia for earlier forms of the harvest when he opts to ship from Nantucket, which by the early 1820s had ceded its status to New Bedford as the world’s chief whaling port.⁹⁹ What he is symbolically rejecting is made clear in a famous passage in which he charges that whaling, like other U.S. industries, turns to the global labor force to supply the “muscles” of the operation,

more industrialized fleets from Norway reduced the industry to a relic of its former self. See Eric Jay Dolin, *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 335-369.

⁹⁶ Charles M. Scammon, *The Marine Mammals of the Northwestern Coast of North America, Together with an Account of the American Whale Fishery* (New York: Dover Publications, 1968), 244, quoted in Dolin 420 n. 2. The Scammon text was originally printed in 1874.

⁹⁷ Davis, Gallman, and Gleiter, *Pursuit of Leviathan*, 38

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

while reserving the well-paid positions requiring “brains” for native-born sons (121).

Among its many functions, *Moby-Dick* is an index of the anxieties surrounding the shift toward increased production in whaling.

Melville registers both the human and animal costs of this increased pursuit of the leviathan through the language of sentimentalism’s discourses of embodied emotion and physical impressibility. In Ishmael’s vision, the process by which “a living part of nature is transformed into an object of human consumption” is an intimate relation achieved through the very physicality of the hunt (118). Whalers observe, participate in, and thwart all stages of whale life, from interrupting the “submarine bridal-chambers and nurseries” where whale calves are spawned to killing sick, aged whales whose eye sockets “protruded blind bulbs, horribly pitiable to see” at the close of their long lives (389, 357). The *Pequod* even meets young, innocent sperm whales who are so frightened as to be “suddenly domesticated” and to assume the ideal position of the sentimental animal, the honored pet of hearth and home: “Like household dogs they came snuffing round us, right up to our gunwales, and touching them . . . Queequeg patted their foreheads; Starbuck scratched their backs with his lance” (387). Starbuck’s use of the harpoon, the prime apparatus of the hunt, to treat the animals as domestic pets highlights the irony of their intimacy. Fastening a hempen cord to a whale during the hunt, sailors are attached to the whales’ while they are “writhing and wrenching in agony” through the same rope that once “wedded” Ishmael and Queequeg as the harpooneer inserted the hook into the freshly killed whale’s back (356, 402). Seizing the era’s recognition of animal sentience, Melville creates sensational death scenes that find crews’ bodies “bespatter[ed] . . . with showers of gore” exploding from the wounded and panicking animals (358). Using the

vocabulary of sentimentalism that recognizes animals as feeling, thinking subjects, Melville portrays sperm whales both in great pain and in the poses of cherished domesticated pets. He thus employs the language developed to reward animals obedient to the needs of the human elite as a means to bring to life the cruel intimacy of sperm whale hunting, a dualism that would challenge most readers of contemporary fiction in his era. In such a manner, Melville effectively uses images of sentimental literature to portray affective relations that elicit the reader's sympathy in order to critique an economic basis of mid-century prosperity.

Evolving Sympathy

In *Moby-Dick*, Melville shows how the economic imperative for heightened production of sperm oil at mid-century contradicted the emotional virtues of sentimentalism, a critique accomplished through turning sentimentalism's trope of the feeling animal against itself. Instead of a submissive puppy that domestic culture employs for the psychological development of its children, Melville gives us monstrous leviathans who form affectionate bonds with one another for survival. These whales also maintain unsettling, sensual relations with whalers, relations in which the industry struggles to maintain the upper hand required for increased sperm oil hauls. While the fishery requests machine-like precision, the whalers are engaged in intimate relations of reproduction and exchange that result in the *Pequod's* whalers and the whales evolving into a kind of kinship. The often-overlooked theories of Lamarckian evolution, an important site of the convergence of scientific and literary manifestations of sentimentalism, enable this portrayal of familial feeling between whale and whaler that

extends across generational lines. Based in part on the environmentalist evolutionism of the French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Lamarckism proposed that all organisms possess a desire, sympathy, and will that enables them to direct their own growth and then pass on the mental and physical results of their habitual experiences to the next generation. As a consequence of their reliance of sentience and sentiment, self-titled neo-Lamarckians such as Edward Drinker Cope and others in the American School of Evolution were some of the strongest champions of animals' capacity for feeling during the last four decades of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, the pages of the neo-Lamarckian organ the *American Naturalist* were filled with reports of friendly snails, sensitive horses, sympathetic bulls, highly cognizant cats, and lesbian geese. The classic (albeit oversimplified) illustration of Lamarckism's principle of the inheritance of acquired characteristics is the assertion that a giraffe possesses a long neck from centuries of stretching upward to tall treetops for food. For Ishmael, the paradigmatic example of the ability to inherit the experience of one's ancestors is an apple dumpling: "hell is an idea first born on an undigested apple-dumpling," he informs Queequeg; "and since then perpetuated through the hereditary dyspepsia nurtured by Ramadans" (85). In Orientalist language, habit shapes the body and its hereditary material as one's experience is passed to descendents, who similarly merge habit and inheritance in a textbook example of Lamarckian evolutionary thinking.

In his next novel, the only text of his corpus in which critics have widely documented the influence of sentimentalism, evolutionism provides Melville with the language to characterize the eponymous Pierre as an elite child who had "the choice fate" of "*being born and bred in the country*," a bucolic paradise possessing "scenery whose

uncommon loveliness was the perfect mould of a delicate and poetic mind.”¹⁰⁰ The land that had been shaped by his noble relations in turn spurs his further development, following the logic of a Lamarckian incorporation of external conditions so complete that the evolutionary result is the close relation between the hero and his horses: “The two colts were [Pierre’s] particular and confidential friends; born on the same land with him, and fed with the same corn, which, in the form of Indian-cakes, Pierre himself was wont to eat for breakfast . . . They were a sort of family cousins to Pierre, those horses; and they were splendid young cousins” (21).

Just as fellow feeling between horse and human stimulate their evolution into familial relations in *Pierre*, in *Moby-Dick*, men’s affiliation with whales produce bodily changes that are transmitted to future generations of “whalemen” (180). Key players on the *Pequod* have been hereditarily fitted for the role of whale-hunting by the experiences of their ancestors: Flask, “a native of Tisbury, in Martha’s Vineyard . . . somehow seemed to think that the great Leviathans had personally and hereditarily affronted him”; “Tashtego’s long, lean, sable hair, his high cheek bones, and black rounding eyes . . . all this sufficiently proclaimed him an inheritor of the unvitiated blood of those proud warrior hunters, who, in quest of the great New England moose, had scoured, bow in hand, the aboriginal forests of the main” (119, 120). Captain Ahab, too, is the legacy of Nantucket whaling incarnate. Furthermore, generations have prepared the special fear that the whiteness of Moby Dick inspires in the crew, for the “hereditary experience of all mankind [has not] fail[ed] to bear witness to the supernaturalness of this hue” (192).

¹⁰⁰ Herman Melville, *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1971), 13, 5.

Ahab and Moby-Dick's dedication to one another has evolved into a physical transformation, a familial resemblance between the captain's "ribbed and dented brow" and the "wrinkled brow" of the whale, between the "ghastly whiteness" of the whale's skin and Ahab's stark white whalebone leg (160, 162, 189). On account of this physical replication, Ahab comes to berate his compulsion to murder Moby Dick as the degenerate desires of "cannibal old me" (545). Furthermore, the others onboard have similarly co-evolved with the whales. "Oh, God! to sail with such a heathen crew that have small touch of human mothers in them!" Starbuck laments, "whelped somewhere by the sharkish sea" (169). That the crew is in majority non-Western and/or non-white subjects makes their humanity especially provisional, easily destabilized by their bestial relations in the open sea that erode their biological descent from "human mothers."

Melville's whale-ship functions as a kind of domestic space that physically transforms its workers. This bears striking resemblance to the sentimental view of the physiological impact of individual desire and cultural beliefs. For the Nantucketer, on board, "*there* is his home; *there* lies his business, which a Noah's flood would not interrupt, though it overwhelmed all the millions in China" (64). The dynamic intimacy of the floating home is underscored in comparison to the nameless hordes of Chinese and, elsewhere, to the unfathomability of Near Eastern cultures, those "unchanging . . . insulated, immemorial, unalterable countries" whose allegedly static peoples and traditions signified fatalism to many nineteenth-century Westerners (231). In contrast, for Ishmael and Queequeg, the ship is the home they occupy after their "hearts' honeymoon" at the Spouter Inn (52). Similarly, while Ahab, for his part, left "but one dent in [his] marriage pillow," he has not been lacking a sleeping companion: "at nightfall, the

Nantucketer, out of sight of land, furls his sails, and lays him to his rest, while under his very pillow rush herds of walruses and whales” (544, 64). Pierre inherited the legacies of conquered pastoral scenes and equine cousins jointly descended from noble stock, but Ahab has been nurtured by the stalking of sperm whales in the “man-like sea” (542). “Born of earth, yet suckled by the sea,” he cries; “though hill and valley mothered me, ye billows are my foster-brothers” (497). Similarly, the star whale-hunter of Reynolds’ “Mocha Dick,” who ultimately fells the mighty leviathan (at least in this telling—stories of the whale surfaced for another two decades), transforms into a hybrid of human and whale: “Indeed, so completely were all his propensities, thoughts, and feelings, identified with his occupation; so intimately did he seem acquainted with the habits and instincts of the objects of his pursuit, and so little conversant with the ordinary affairs of life; that one felt less inclined to class him in the genus *homo*, than as a sort of intermediate something between man and the cetaceous tribe.”¹⁰¹ Habitual “feelings” and “intimate” relations with Mocha Dick, far removed from the influences of shore life, have rapidly unseated the hunter’s humanity in this tale that inspired Melville’s own. Ahab, it seems, was not alone amongst fictional whale hunters in finding himself a hybrid cannibal.

The “Dark Hindoo Half of Nature”

Charges of hybridity that destabilized one’s claims to the “genus *homo*” had particular purchase at the time Melville’s novel appeared. By the latter half of the 1840s, the polygenist claims by the American School of Ethnology that individuals of different “races” were actually different species descending from a separate creation were reaching

¹⁰¹ J.N. Reynolds, “Mocha Dick: Or the White Whale of the Pacific,” *The Knickerbocker* 13, no. 3 (1839): 377-392.

a fever pitch.¹⁰² When world-renowned scientific practitioners like Samuel Morton, Louis Agassiz, and Paul Broca began to consider the terms race and species as interchangeable categories, and to place this formulation at the methodological center of their work, they brought contested terms to their ideological limits.¹⁰³ The concept of species was in flux throughout the nineteenth century. As one particularly sharp-eyed contemporary scientist put it, “the zoologist sometimes . . . will class two animals as of different species, when they only differ in colour . . . [while] at other times he will class animals as belonging to the same species, although they differ in size, colour, shape, instincts, [and] habits . . . the reason is that the *thing* species does not exist.”¹⁰⁴ Ritvo has shown that the majority of naturalists were not so skeptical, however, and she concludes that in using the term “species,” most scientists were confident that they “were identifying an entity that had an existence independent of that naming process.”¹⁰⁵ The “naturalness” of the category

¹⁰² While there is substantial debate about the numbers of U.S. scientists who accepted polygenesis, it is clear that the theory was of widespread interest at mid-century, and if we follow George Stocking, into the twentieth. For the poles of the debate see Reginald Horsman, who argues for the near universality of polygenesis, and Mark Haller, who proposes that only a minority of scientists accepted the view. Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981) and Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution: Scientific Attitudes of Racial Inferiority, 1859-1900* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971). Scholars somewhere between these positions who argue for its wide-ranging influence include William Stanton, *The Leopard's Spots: Scientific Attitudes Toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) and George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971). George Stocking makes the most useful contribution by avoiding the quantification of its avowed supporters in favor of an examination of its uses in the physical and social sciences, making a compelling case for its influence through focusing on its longevity decades after the emergence of Darwinian evolution. Showing how the work of Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace were shaped by polygenesis, and tracing its influence up through Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), he argues that its legacy is perhaps best seen in the ways it was fully imbricated in the complex of nineteenth-century racial thinking, regardless of the intention of the practitioner. See Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 42- 68.

¹⁰³ There were earlier, though less popular, British and stateside formulations of polygenesis, such as the eighteenth-century work of Lord Kames and Samuel Stanhope Smith.

¹⁰⁴ George Henry Lewes, *Studies in Animal Life* (London: Smith Elder, 1862), 128-129, quoted in Harriet Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid and Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 86.

¹⁰⁵ Ritvo, *Platypus and the Mermaid*, 86.

paradoxically secured its status as contested ground, as naturalists and ethnologists struggled to compose definitions of “species” that suited their own needs. Charles Lyell, the leading British geologist, commented on “the difficulty of defining . . . the terms ‘species’ and ‘race,’ . . . [and to] the surprise of the unlearned . . . when they discover how wide is the difference of opinion” in his follow-up to Darwin’s *Origin of the Species*. Polygenists capitalized on this ontological multiplicity and collapsed the terms species and race, a move that provided the white scientific establishment with a powerful tool to deny the humanity of non-white groups and to consolidate its own political authority.¹⁰⁶ The monumental text produced from that moment, *Types of Mankind* (1854), seizes the category of species as its ideological battleground: “SPECIES -a type, or organic form, that is permanent; or which has remained unchanged under opposite climatic influences for ages. The Arab, the Egyptian, and the Negro; the greyhound, the turnspit, and the common wild dog-all of which are represented on monuments of Egypt 4000 years old, precisely as they now exist in humani and canine nature - may be cited as examples.”¹⁰⁷ Through a “full assault on environmentalism” that rejected any kind of species change (such as Lamarckian evolution), Josiah Nott and his co-authors assert a stability of species type that grants “Caucasians” status as the sole progenitors of the human.¹⁰⁸ As Dana Nelson explains, the polygenesis debates had a lasting impact on U.S. scientific practice and racial formation. The theory not only provided a ready defense for slavery’s

¹⁰⁶ See Dana Nelson, *National Manhood: Capitalist Citizenship and the Imagined Fraternity of White Men* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 102-134.

¹⁰⁷ Josiah Nott, *Types of Mankind* (London, Trübner & Co., 1855), 375.

¹⁰⁸ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 73.

apologists in the north and south, but it “did much to consolidate whiteness as a natural identity category and an exclusionary political and social logic.”¹⁰⁹

As if manipulating the contemporary collapse of “species” and “race,” Melville racializes the whales and Fedallah’s crewmembers according to contemporary tropes of Orientalism. The discourse of Orientalism was widely influential at mid-century, and as critics including Timothy Marr and Dorothee Finkelstein have analyzed, Melville’s literary adaptations of knowledge of the Near Eastern and Islamic world were some of the most complex of the period.¹¹⁰ Melville sketches received notions of Eastern mores and character as a means to critique Western middle-class culture and its modes of production through a vernacular language of mystery, sensuousness, and diabolism that both structures and undermines his critique.

Orientalism’s rich repository of sexualized and gendered thinking paradoxically enables Melville to bestow his whales with the capacity for feeling and sympathy. Ishmael repeatedly associates Moby Dick and the rest of “his race” with metaphors, similes, and allusions to Asia and the Middle East to construct gendered characterizations of leviathans as idols of pantheistic devotion, brandishers of barbarous cruelty, and epicures of sensuous pleasures (201). Gendered “Eastern” bodies become capable of heroism, pain, and sympathetic feeling. Male sperm whales are “Grand Turks,” “luxurious Ottoman” and “Bashaw” who when not “lazily undulating” in the open sea are surrounded “by all the solaces and endearments of the harem” (392, 391, 283). Female

¹⁰⁹ Nelson, *National Manhood*, 103. Other polygenists, however, relied on Lamarckian evolution. See Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution*, 74-79.

¹¹⁰ Dorothee Metlitsky Finkelstein, *Melville’s Orienda* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); Marr, *Cultural Roots of American Islamicism*, 249.

whales are passive, “characteristically timid,” and “comparatively delicate . . . concubines” who “are not one third of the bulk of an average-sized male” and know their domestic roles in “submarine bridal-chambers and nurseries” (393, 391, 327). Most famously, leviathan females would do Harriet Beecher Stowe proud for their mastery of sympathy: “strike a member of the harem school, and her companions swim around her with every token of concern, sometimes lingering so near her and so long, as themselves to fall prey” (394). Young male sperm whales are excused for their individualist tendency to flee for their own lives, for they are distinguished by their physical strength that makes them “capable of individual recognition from his hunter, even as a white-bearded Mufti in the thronged thoroughfares of Constantinople” (201). Marr notes that Turks, in Melville’s corpus, are represented as dualistic figures, both cruel and despotic rulers and leisurely and sensual lovers.¹¹¹ The sperm whales, predominantly portrayed through metaphors and similes aligning them with Turkish peoples, embody these complexities. They are sublime creatures, both desiring and sensuous, and unfathomably cruel. This characterization at once renders the whales epic, overwhelming, and ultimately incomprehensible foes while endowing them with the capacity for desire, pleasure, and sexual feeling in ways that challenge their status as commodities.

Just as the whales are made formidable enemies through the racialist language of Orientalism, Fedallah and his “gamboge ghost[s]” are cast as untrustworthy figures entirely submissive to their fate through tropes of Eastern passivity, degeneracy, and decay (325). Their composite “Oriental” bodies come to symbolize the haunted, hunted, and colonized elements of the trade, a doomed inertness in contrast to the active

¹¹¹ Marr, *Cultural Roots of American Islamicism*, 221.

relationships the other whalers engage with each other and their prey. Melville leaves no visual cliché of pan-Asian comportment untouched to introduce Fedallah to the reader: he is “swart, with one white tooth evilly protruding from its steel-like lips,” wearing a “rumpled Chinese jacket” and “wide trowsers” (217). Moreover, “crowning this ebonness was a glistening white plaited turban” (217). Like the sperm whales, whose essence will always escape even the most careful observer, the “yellow boys” are shadowy, mysterious figures unknowable to Western eyes, an ontological lack so totalizing that the rest of the crew find themselves “half uncertain, as it seemed, whether indeed [Fedallah] were a mortal substance, or else a tremulous shadow cast upon the deck” (219, 537). By portraying Ahab’s tormentors through composite images of contemporary U.S. ideas of Islamic, Parsee, and other Near Eastern religious traditions—including fire worship and the use of hemp as an agent of intoxication that makes assassination possible— Melville casts Fedallah and his crew as diabolic enemies of Christian culture.¹¹²

Many critics have noted that Fedallah functions as Ahab’s double, driving himself and the captain toward their death united “as one man” (499). But Fedallah is also the twin of Moby Dick, solidifying a familial resemblance between the leviathans and his crew that the best arbiters of whale-meat are quick to identify: “whether it was that Ahab’s crew were all such tiger-yellow barbarians, and therefore their flesh more musky to the senses of the sharks,—a matter sometimes well known to affect them,—however it was, they seemed to follow that one boat without molesting the others” (566). Cagily, Melville leaves his sentence unfinished, prompting his reader to provide the alternative—that his crew are themselves cetaceous. One of the novel’s final images does complete

¹¹² Finkelstein, *Melville’s Orienda*, 224-34.

Melville's sentence, however, as Ahab's hempen rope ties Fedallah and Moby Dick into one fleshy abomination. Orientalism works to simultaneously endow the whales with racialized gender and sexual traits that enable the non-Asian whalers to further recognize the whales' emotional depths while casting Fedallah and his crew as doubles of the whales through their shared qualities of mysteriousness and cunning.

Fedallah is thus a corporal double of Moby Dick and part of a triad of familial resemblance between himself, the white whale, and Ahab. Nevertheless, Melville maintains important differences between Ahab and Fedallah. As Marr notes, many of Melville's sea novels cast captains as Oriental despots to enable his call for workers' rights on board through the rhetorical strategy of analogy. Ahab is similarly called "Old Mogul" and characterized with other allusions to powerful personages in the Near East as well as with reference to Ottomans, Mughals, Tartars, Bedouins, and pre-Islamic eastern populations.¹¹³ Yet in this novel, the captain is not omniscient, but is himself subjected to a higher authority that threatens to overpower his capacity for feeling and sympathy for his crew. Indeed, Melville "spares some of Ahab's 'humanities' by displacing the captain's perverse destiny and haunted fatalism onto Fedallah's spectral body."¹¹⁴ Finkelstein usefully proposes that "Fedallah" can be traced to the Arabic word "fedai," meaning a person who is submissive to a higher power, an idea that attracted significant attention at the time Melville was writing *Moby-Dick*.¹¹⁵ In contrast to the unfeeling, dangerously passive subject many Westerners interpreted the fedai figure to threaten, Ahab at moments struggles to free himself from his fate of pursuing the white whale. In

¹¹³ Marr, *Cultural Roots of American Islamicism*, 224-29.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 231.

¹¹⁵ Finkelstein, *Melville's Orienda*, 239.

these moments, Melville enlists sentimentalism's emphasis on self-development noted by critics like Elizabeth Barnes to humanize Ahab in contrast to the self-resignation he incarnates through Fedallah. Ahab tortures himself with his intense attachment to Moby Dick, lamenting that he "never thinks; he only feels, feels, feels," a capacity for self-reflection that Melville spares Fedallah (563). Furthermore, Ahab indulges in the classic image of sentimental manhood—shedding a tear for his whaler's life that "admits but small entrance to any sympathy from the green country" of his Nantucket home (544). In contrast, unsentimental Fedallah drives him ever closer to the kill, spurring the captain on in his pursuit that willingly endangers the lives of his entire crew. Through the language of Orientalism, Melville sketches brutal hierarchies that have displaced his idealized notion of associative labor relations: "Ahab seemed an independent lord; the Parsee but his slave" (538). Fedallah, at once slave and master, bears the weight of both the mysterious and mechanistic elements of the hunt that violate "all natural lovings and longings" between whalers and whales and crewmembers and their captain (544).

In this use of Orientalism that sets up the captain as himself both a representative and a victim of despotism, Melville enlists the sympathy of the reader, as well as unsentimental Starbuck, for Ahab. He thus elicits from the reader the fellow feeling he endorses on board, a staple technique of sentimental fiction. Furthermore, through the language of race and religion, the problems on the *Pequod* are rendered larger than the license of a captain to abuse his crew or the relentlessness of the drive for profits. Instead, the events become a larger, mythic battle between the capacity for mutual feeling allegedly represented by sentimental culture and the propensity for slaughter characterized through Orientalist tropes of Western Asia. Like sentimental literature more

generally, he connects individual feelings to larger social structures in order to frame his critique of whaling in terms at once personal and epic.

In the years following his monumental whaling tale, Melville returned to the themes of race and animality as a means to critique the contemporary relations between labor and capital at sea. An under-read story Melville published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1856 finds Melville satirizing processes of racial formation that animalize peoples of color and generate profit for owners of whaling ships.¹¹⁶ “The ‘Gees,” a brief, three-page sketch, relies on ethnology itself to provide the language of its own undoing, a clarity of form that escapes the contradictory impulses of the multitude of generic tropes Melville puts to work in *Moby-Dick*. The story purports to be an ethnological account of a “race” of peoples indigenous to a Cape Verdean island, named by sailors as ‘Gees, “the corrupt form of *Portuguese*,” who allegedly are frequent employees of American whalers (507). The ‘Gees are desirable recruits because a resident of the island “never asks for wages. He comes for biscuit. He does not know what other wages mean, unless cuffs and buffets be wages, of which sort he receives a liberal allowance, paid with great punctuality, besides perquisites of punches thrown in now and then” (508). Melville presents race as a complex accretion of discourses of nationality, philology, physicality, animality, scientific study, and the needs of the whaling industry for cheap labor.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Herman Melville, “The ‘Gees,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* 12 (March 1856): 507-509.

¹¹⁷ For a reading of the story as a critique of philological notions of race, see Gavin Jones, “Dusky Comments of Silence: Language, Race, and Herman Melville's 'Benito Cereno,’” *Studies in Short Fiction* 32, no.1 (1995): 46-48.

Melville portrays the racial sciences as treating animality as one of its constitutive discourses, resulting in a field of study that is rather more inventive than descriptive. Carolyn Karcher suggests that one of the many puns the term “Gees” connotes is its aural parallel with “geese,” a similarity Melville seems to underscore in this ornithological passage: “Like the negro, the ‘Gee has a particular savor, but a different one – a sort of wild, marine, gamy savor, as in the sea-bird called haglet. Like venison, his flesh is firm and lean” (508).¹¹⁸ Fowl and game are only one aspect of the ‘Gees animality, however, as sailors interchange the term “monkey-jacket” for “Gee-jacket” and “[i]n fact, it is not unsurmised, that only when extraordinary stimulus is needed, only when an extra strain is to be got out of them, are these hapless ‘Gees ennobled with the human name” (509). Perhaps the most incisive quality of the story’s critique is Melville’s insistence that ethnology creates, rather than diagnoses, their objects of study. “To know ‘Gees – to be a sound judge of ‘Gees – one must study them,” the narrator opines, “just as to know and be a judge of horses one must study horses. Simple as for the most part are both horse and ‘Gee, in neither case can knowledge of the creature come by intuition” (508). Ethnologists have hardly been lacking partners in crime, however, as the whaling industry both participates in the language of racialization and puts it to profitable use. Passages rendering a captain’s recruiting process identical to both a slave trader’s auction-block appraisal as well as the physiognomic measurement on which the racial sciences were based reveal the extent to which the fallacy of race structures both labor and scientific practice. Even after demanding scrutiny – in which one humorously must

¹¹⁸ Carolyn Karcher, *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville’s America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 164.

“put the center of the pupil of your eye . . . right into the ‘Gees eye,” – still, “[a]ll this and much more must be done; and yet after all, the best judge may be deceived” (508-509).

The result, as the narrator lays bare in the story’s conclusion, is that a ‘Gee, like any ethnic identity, is made, not borne: “Many a Chinaman, in new coat and pantaloons, his long queue coiled out of sight in one of Genin’s hats, has promenaded Broadway, and been taken merely for an eccentric Georgia planter. The same with ‘Gees; a stranger need have a sharp eye to know a ‘Gee, even if he see him” (509). Melville satirizes the work of race scientists with respect to African-origin peoples as developing elaborate methods to produce the very difference they describe. He mocks the very slippage between animality and race that five years prior had structured his epic tale of the struggle between affective Ahab and his enlisted crew and the turgid, shadowy despot Fedallah.

Remunerative Death

In “The ‘Gees,” Melville portrays ship owners as no different from slave traders in relying on the dehumanizing language of race to minimize labor expenses. He thus shows the intimate relation between far-off labor practices set in the Cape Verde islands and the immense ocean with domestic conditions. Similarly, in *Moby-Dick* Melville shows how the high seas are connected to the hearth, just as Joseph Loring’s tendency to link whale hunting with New England mores and manners suggests. Increased levels of production and the specter of the unfree laborer, such as seen on the *Pequod*, were material conditions that enabled the middle-class home to emerge as a site of psychological and emotional development rather than productive labor for its owning family. Domestic ideology developed various strategies of containment to manage the

unpleasant knowledge of the social relations the lives of the middle class depended on, even those taking place in their own kitchens and laundry rooms. Its selective refusal to see the material conditions that made it possible is precisely a reason for Melville's mocking attitude toward domestic culture, a tone achieved through irony and the Oriental tales motif. He signals the paradox of the middle class reliance on animal death through associating the hunt with its alleged opposite, fated Oriental depravity. He seizes the discourse's association of Eastern religious traditions with passive, unthinking fatality to emphasize the death in which whaling voyages traffic. The try-works, for example, where the remains of the whale's body are incinerated, is the novel's most developed vision of "industrial hell."¹¹⁹ It is a machinery haunted by "an unspeakable, wild, Hindoo odor about it, such as may lurk in the vicinity of funereal pyres" (422). This classic image of Anglophone Orientalism, one that brings to mind the murder of wives in particular, serves to underscore the discontinuity between domestic culture and its modes of production. Furthermore, all the deaths in *Moby-Dick* save Bulkington's on-shore passing take place in the prime hunting grounds of the "uncivilized seas" off the eastern coast of Asia, sacrifices to what Ahab calls the "dark Hindoo half of nature" that compels him on his singular quest for the white whale (179, 497).¹²⁰

Melville turns the rhetoric of sentiment against itself to pose the worth of an animal useful to the white middle class not as an esteemed pet, but as a source of cash in the form of quality fuel and as capital as a pure lubricant for industrial machinery.

¹¹⁹ Robert K. Martin, *Hero, Captain, and Stranger: Male Friendship, Social Critique, and Literary Form in the Sea Novels of Herman Melville* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 84.

¹²⁰ Russell Reising and Peter J. Kvidera, "Fast Fish and Raw Fish: *Moby-Dick*, Japan, and Melville's Thematics of Geography," *The New England Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (1997): 291.

Merging the language of reform with the cultural relativism of the “Oriental tale,” Ishmael interrogates, “who is not a cannibal?” and weighs the dependence of domestic culture on the corpses of animals: “Look at your knife-handle, there, my civilized and enlightened gourmand dining off that roast beef, what is that handle made of?—what but the bones of the brother of the very ox you are eating? . . . And with what quill did the Secretary of the Society for the Suppression of Cruelty to Ganders formally indite his circulars? It is only within the last month or two that that society passed a resolution to patronize nothing but steel pens” (300). Melville’s narrator delights in the irony that domestic comforts rely on animal death. Yet the importance of goose-derived commodities to mid-century refinement is negligible in relation to the role of the sperm whale and its valued oil, a contradiction Melville relishes in during one of several scenes that fill readers with sympathy for the suffering, expiring whale. “For all his old age, and his one arm, and his blind eyes,” Ishmael narrates of Flask’s injured leviathan, “he must die the death and be murdered, in order to light the gay bridals and other merry-makings of men, and also to illuminate the solemn churches that preach unconditional inoffensiveness by all to all” (357). To be sure, scenes of heroic death were a mainstay of the sentimental literature publishers and readers were buying in droves. However, those scenes were also moments of divine transcendence, in which young angelic children or doting fathers traded in their temporary mortality for eternal bliss and left behind tokens of remembrance to sturdy the faith of their loved ones. For the whales, however, whose bloody, blubbery bodies before, during, and after death take up the majority of the novel, death is remunerative rather than redemptive, their bodies themselves distilled into a valuable token.

Understood in its historical context, *Moby-Dick* is part of a tradition of scientific and popular writing that was willing to grant whales the powers of sympathetic identification, a quality seen as both magnificent and terrifying. Melville deploys the scientific and sentimental trope of the feeling animal in order to demonstrate the asymmetrical relations of sympathy; instead of a child who cares for a kitten in order to develop her capacity for feeling, Melville relates how whalers evolve over generations alongside their suboceanic prey. Their intimate, fleshy encounters with whales at once uphold the ideals of sentimental feeling while demonstrating middle-class domestic culture's refusal to acknowledge the working conditions that made their mores and manners possible. The ideologies of sympathy and sentiment, he shows, precisely relied upon an emergent mode of production that incurred high human and animal losses—a price that his middle-class readership should not be willing to pay. The rapidly increasing production of the fishery at mid-century that helped to fuel the emergence of the middle class itself, furthermore, only increases the human and animal death the industry requires. However, the language of Orientalism provides Melville with the negative referent that structures his call to conscience. He frames the *Pequod's* registered crew in sentimental relations with whales and to some degree each other that, however self-serving, are based on an ethos of self-development. Their strivings are represented as a far cry from the fatalistic self-resignation allegedly characteristic of adherents of Eastern religions, an allusion compounded by the Orientalist association between the Eastern world and death. Challenging the collectivity of Melville's remarkable efforts to give a commodity an embodied history and an offshore labor force an epic narration, ethnicity, species, and

sentimentalism become specious bedfellows bound around the neck of *Moby Dick* like Fedallah's twisted and torn body.

A wider look at mid-century fiction illuminates the pervasiveness of the theme of sentimental bodily impressibility that Melville enlists to portray the intimacy of the whale hunt. In the next chapter, I turn to sentimental fiction to show how literary representations of the malleable body of civilized youth promoted the physiological impact of habitual actions and desires. Like *Moby-Dick*, these novels engage in debates about the nature of species change and the nature of racialization. Whereas Melville incorporates the plasticity of the body to criticize the self-serving economic demands of middle-class culture, however, sentimental novelists wholeheartedly embraced their power over the poor. The physiology of sentiment structures their characterizations of civilized girls as the seed of racial progress and, in contrast, the children of the poor as rootless plants in need of tending by the middle classes

CHAPTER THREE

Sentimental Adoption Fiction and the Biologization of Affect

“I wonder how many times one may be adopted?”

– Susan Warner, *The Wide, Wide World*

“The Past, like minerals, with their fixed forms of gorgeous but unchanging beauty; the Present, like flowers, growing and ever changing – bud, blossom, and seed-vessel – seed, bud, and blossom, in endless progression”

– Lydia Maria Child, “Letter XXVI”

Ellen Montgomery is arguably sentimental fiction’s paradigmatic protagonist.¹²¹

As Susan Warner’s orphan heroine learns throughout the course of her 500+-page ordeal, a sentimental character can indeed be adopted for as long as her youth and its assumed flexibility remain. “Ellen was a child, and of most buoyant and elastic spirit naturally,” Warner asserts, neatly positing and simultaneously naturalizing the inherent goodness and adaptability of European American childhood in one declarative character introduction.¹²² Yet as the remaining pages of the novel illuminate, the equation of civilized childhood with a lighthearted adaptability capable of keeping one’s spirits afloat in the midst of a sea of deaths, abandonment, impudent pursuits, and other tribulations was hardly a foregone conclusion when Warner’s volume created a market sensation in 1850. Rather, *The Wide, Wide, World* represents one of many novels, sermons, domestic manuals, and scientific tracts that collectively overthrew the Calvinist belief in the inborn

¹²¹ A number of studies focus on *The Wide, Wide World* on account of the belief that the text, in Jane Tompkins’ memorable if questionable words, represents the genre “in its purest form.” Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 147. See also, for example, Brodhead, “Sparing the Rod”; G.M. Goshgarian, *To Kiss the Chastening Rod: Domestic Fiction and Sexual Ideology in the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Mason, *Civilized Creatures*, 29-51; and Marianne Noble, *The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

¹²² Susan Warner, *The Wide, Wide World* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, n.d.), 20.

depravity of infancy and promoted in its place a youthfulness that was elastic, flexible, and above all, *natural*. While once the germ of Satan was thought to dwell in the newborn's breast, the infant was now thought to be the site where the seed of Christian goodness sprouted. Such a theology not only eroded the logic of original sin, but was also instrumental in dissolving the binaristic relationship between the mind and the body often embraced by Enlightenment thinkers.¹²³ In its place, as I argue throughout this dissertation, emerged a taxonomy of feeling in which one's capacity for expressing the qualities of civilization was tied in a near-endless feedback loop to one's physical bearing.¹²⁴ A civilized child was thought to inherit a body and mind that was both innocent and perfectible. Christian nurture, physical health and exercise, and individual self-discipline could domesticate those trace wild impulses that lurked within the civilized races, producing a child that was, like Ellen, akin to "a white camellia . . . the emblem of a sinless pure spirit" (327).

Indeed, Warner characterizes flowers as "friends to Ellen . . . and [she] seemed to purify herself in the pure companionship. Even Mr. Van Brunt," the novel's docile and unrefined agrarian farmer, "came to have an indistinct notion that Ellen and flowers were made to be together" (340). In this best-selling genre, the presence or absence of flowers in girls' lives is a recurring indicator of their likelihood to attain civilization. Flowers, or more specifically, a leisured appreciation of the natural world, are key to the formation of middle-class habits and desires. Ellen's next family with the local parson nurtures this

¹²³ Recent scholarship has substantially troubled the alleged split between emotion and rationality, body and mind enshrined as characteristic of Western intellect in the eighteenth century. For examples especially pertinent to this study, see Davidson, *Breeding* and Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility*.

¹²⁴ Goshgarian, *To Kiss the Chastening Rod*, 44.

development by filling her rooms with flowers, gifting her with a horse who is forbidden to be ridden in any capacity save from pleasure, and providing her with endless books, companionship, and other material and emotional comforts. Such conditions cause Ellen to blossom into a hale and hearty womanhood. The novel lovingly details her extensive physical exercise and the blooming cheeks, upright posture, and other physical effects of her leisured existence. Ellen thrives out of doors, rambling through a countryside that envelops her in fresh air “with health in its touch” and a nurturing embrace of her body and spirit all the more significant given her orphan’s trials (106). Another’s embrace soon awakens her capacity for a rather more provoking feeling, and this new foster brother who subsequently takes charge of her moral, physical, and mental development inspires a fierce yet patient love in Ellen. Under the guidance of John and his sister Alice, Ellen reads Christian theology, becomes an equestrian, and studies natural history to best appreciate the wonder of God’s creation. Yet it is she herself who most represents the beauty of natural creation in the novel, for Alice and John had fastidiously ensured that “[t]he seed so early sown in little Ellen’s mind,” had with “careful tend[ing],” developed a strong and hardy “root” (574). Far from sheltering an original sin, Ellen’s body attests to the potential of the cultivation of grace and innocence that awaits only the final fertilization by her brother turned fiancé to complete its bloom into sentimental womanhood.

In this chapter, I explore the pervasive yet generally overlooked emphasis on breeding and the biologization of affect in sentimental fiction by drawing on thirty novels about adoption. This extremely popular genre expanded sentimentalism’s tradition of viewing the body as a malleable entity inseparable from an individual’s emotions into

lengthy narratives of female development. The genre's overwhelming trope of the young female child born of parents of the emergent middle-class who typically perish by the close of the first twenty pages enabled novelists to show how biological families could be created through emotional affiliation. Taken en masse, the texts develop an extensive rationale for the ways that the emotional, social, political, and economic characteristics of one's environment write themselves into the body, as I discuss with particular regard to Lydia Maria Child's *The Romance of the Republic* (1867) and Alice Wellington Rollins' *Uncle Tom's Tenement* (1888). While some critics have praised the sentimental adoption trope as a feminist articulation of women's self-determination, I argue that adoption in fact functions as a plot device through which novelists elaborated an evolutionary theory in which the patriarchal family wields wide influence over the body and character of its adopted youth.

Domesticity and affect produce the bodies of sentimental heroines. According to these writers, a healthful childhood could initiate dramatic progress throughout the individual's lifetime. Sentimental literature, in particular, advanced a notion of childhood suited to a bourgeois literary form invested in stripping away the lingering power of aristocratic inheritance and promoting a model of growth fit for the rising middle class's lingering Jeffersonian agrarian ideals.¹²⁵ In G.M. Goshgarian's words, the period witnessed a "luxurious flowering of moral discourses of the physiological," in which "health reform, moral hygiene, and heaven were increasingly intertwined." In the process, writers updated the women's role from preparing future citizens and

¹²⁵ On the political work of the English domestic novel to replace aristocratic ideals with an emergent bourgeois ideology, see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

homemakers to working as the master gardener who tends to the germination and breeding of her plot, perhaps one originally born of another. “This is the crop I like best,” the now-married Jo March boasts of the youthful residents of her reform boarding school whose bodies and souls she set out to elevate, “as she pinched the once thin cheeks now getting plump and ruddy, or stroked the best shoulders that were slowly straightening up with healthful work, good food, and the absence of that heavy burden, poverty.”¹²⁶

Sentimental guardianship replaced Republican Motherhood as advice writers promoted women’s ability to cultivate the nation by managing children’s impressibility throughout their youth. Catharine Beecher, for example, enthused that children’s “plastic nature will receive and retain every impression you make; who will transmit what they receive from you to their children, to pass again to the next generation, and then the next, until a *whole nation* may possibly receive its character and destiny from your hands!”¹²⁷ Yet it is primarily the female child, rather than the mother, who takes center stage in the wildly popular genre of nineteenth-century sentimental fiction.

In these novels, nature and nurture are thoroughly confounded. Sentimental fiction theorizes evolution by affect and as such, anticipates naturalist writers’ interest in evolutionary change by over four decades. I suggest that critics have overlooked this contribution on account of the novels’ participation in Lamarckian thinking, a doctrine often dismissed as a pseudoscientific imposter from the era of science’s too-intimate relations with sentimentalism. Yet the theory of the body articulated in sentimental

¹²⁶ Louisa May Alcott, *Little Men* (New York: Penguin, 1996), 52.

¹²⁷ Catharine Beecher, *Miss Beecher’s Housekeeper and Healthkeeper* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1876), 462, quoted in Lynn Wardley, “American Fiction and the Civilizing House,” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1988), 45-6.

fiction is far from egalitarian, as Lamarckism dictates that acquired physical changes are then transmitted to descendants. As I show, sentimental novelists detail the embodied feelings characters inherit from their ancestors. Their constitutive role in the theory of bodily impressibility helped to create the new notion of heredity, which superseded the eighteenth-century belief in the utter malleability of each generation. Sentimental evolution dictates that the cultural and emotional experiences of one's ancestors become a physical inheritance. I thus reveal the ways the discourse functions as an account of biocultural difference and played an important part in creating nineteenth-century ideas of race.

Like Ellen, sentimental orphan heroines are ubiquitously compared to flowers who thrive in the process of domestication. I demonstrate that the novelists' recurring equation of femininity with flowers functions as a controlling metaphor in their texts' productive role in the formation of nineteenth-century racial discourse. Wildflowers whose beauty and goodness attested to divine power and provided models and affective objects for the pious behavior of civilized girls abound in nineteenth-century domestic fiction, sentimental flower books, and botanical textbooks authored by women and men. As God allegedly tends to the nation's flora, sentimental writers worked to demonstrate that civilized young girls could bloom into womanhood themselves as long as they had a healthful and nurturing environment. In their view, a girl born of civilized parents was divinely blessed with the capacity for growth and development on account of her ancestors' experiences. Sentimental novels construct civilized girlhood as an inherited state of physical, emotional, and mental malleability that, in the right environment, was capable of perfection.

In contrast, reform-minded sentimental fiction proposed that the bodies of the children of the poor and other primitives carried pestilence, rather than piety. By definition, the primitive lacked the inherited potential for independent growth. Many sentimental authors promised that these youth could, to some degree, be cultivated. Some authors promoted the bodies of the poor and the enslaved as wonderfully imitative, thereby promising the capacity to absorb the improvements impressed upon them by the wealthier classes. To this end, the children of the poor are characterized as plants needing roots rather than flowers blooming into maturity. Other novelists relied on characters of color, and especially, as Melville did, Middle Eastern characters, to represent a contrasting physical immutability by which civilized malleability could transpire. On account of the structural dependence of this best-selling genre on inherited difference, I argue that sentimental fiction played a significant role in creating the nineteenth-century racial categories of the civilized and the primitive. Furthermore, in narrating the growth of the child, novelists joined scientists and naturalists in positioning the civilized child as the preeminent subject of development and the child of the European poor as a deserving target of better breeding.

Adoption and Adaptation

Sentimental literature portrays the family in a remarkable state of crisis and disintegration given the genre's emphasis on the importance of domestic relations.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ For important analyses of this theme, see Nina Baym, *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Cindy Weinstein, *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Glenn Hendler, "The Limits of Sympathy: Louisa May Alcott and the Sentimental Novel," *American Literary History* 3, no. 4 (1991): 685-706; Romero, *Home Fronts*; and Carol J. Singley, "Building a Nation, Building a Family: Adoption in Nineteenth-Century American Children's Literature,"

Indeed, the young girl orphaned by maternal death and paternal abandonment is every bit as characteristic of the genre as are tears of sympathy and touching scenes of children's death. While filled with trials, however, the orphan's plight is rarely a tragic Dickensian one. Invariably, she ultimately finds and selects an appropriate family and masters the arts of self-control, sympathetic identification, and domestic feeling the novels promote as key criteria of civilization.¹²⁹ As *The Lamplighter's* (1854) Gertrude Flint attests, her adoption provides "additional proof of the fact that the tie of kindred blood is not always needed to bind heart to heart in the closest bonds of sympathy and affection."¹³⁰ Scholars, in fact, often cite the novels' emphasis on the heroines' ability to seize their destiny by choosing their own kinship relations as evidence of the novels' feminist agenda to confront aristocratic notions of inheritance and promote women's independence.¹³¹ Cindy Weinstein, for example, has recently argued that many sentimental novels "fiercely challenge the patriarchal regime of the biological family by calling attention to the frequency with which fathers neglect the economic as well as emotional obligations owed to their children," and work to replace the duties of consanguinity with the elective ties of the social contract.¹³² In contrast, my study of thirty sentimental novels featuring orphans seeks to illuminate the degree to which the novels' construction of female domestic independence was in fact thoroughly structured by the authors' contributions to

in *Adoption in America: Historical Perspectives*, ed. E. Wayne Carp (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 51-81.

¹²⁹ Sentimental novels typically end before the heroine consummates her marriage, but her future domestic reproductivity is presumed.

¹³⁰ Maria S. Cummins, *The Lamplighter; or, An Orphan Girl's Struggles and Triumphs* (Chicago: W.B. Conkey Co, n.d.), 152.

¹³¹ Baym, *Woman's Fiction* and Weinstein, *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy*. Tompkins makes a related point in emphasizing the power of sentimental heroines to choose their own domestic relations and refuse patriarchal power through self-control. Tompkins, *Sensational Designs*, 160-172.

¹³² Weinstein, *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy*, 9-10.

contemporary discourses of race, breeding, biological relations, and familial inheritance.¹³³ The patriarchal family was less destabilized by sentimental fiction than it was modernized according to a burgeoning belief in the physiological imprints of sentimental and contractual kinship. In the nineteenth-century, the family was thought to produce the bodies of its inhabitants and shaped a hereditary legacy that would affect future generations. In other words, the fleeting “freedom” of orphanhood is trivial compared to the temporal scale across which the family, whether created by birth or adoption, could now shape its children through the medium of heredity.

In one respect, the sentimental adoption trope seemingly provides “a laboratory . . . for the study of cultural and biological differences,” that allows both novelist and reader to assess the relative effects of heredity versus environment and biology versus culture in shaping character.¹³⁴ However, sentimental novelists were full-fledged participants in constructing the era’s strongly held belief in the inheritance of acquired characteristics, which holds that the effects of culture quickly become indistinguishable from the qualities of blood in both the current generation and in descendents to come. The notion of “heredity versus environment” would have been unrecognizable to these novelists, for they and their contemporaries made little distinction between these two means of character formation. The adoption trope enabled sentimental novelists to explore their belief that emotional affiliations form the backbone

¹³³ The figure of the orphan served a number of critical functions in nineteenth-century U.S. literature in addition to those outlined here, including symbolizing the “unnatural” social relations inherent to slavery and U.S. imperialism.

¹³⁴ Singley, “Building a Nation,” 53. Similarly, Claudia Nelson suggests that the trope of adoption functions democratically as “one way of detaching [orphaned children] from the suspicion of hereditary moral taint.” See *Little Strangers: Portrayals of Adoption and Foster Care in America, 1850-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 3.

of bourgeois domesticity precisely because of their conceptualization of the biological effects of these ties. Taking emotional and biological states to be endlessly reciprocal relations, where inheritance dictates the capacity for emotional expression, which in turn produces an inheritable physiological adaptation, the narrative structure of the sentimental genre pivoted around the biological impact of affect.

Numerous critics have analyzed the degree to which sentimental discourses of education, economic development, commerce, domestic and familial relations, and other topics sought not just to shape individual behavior, but to produce the modern subject itself.¹³⁵ Sentimental feeling, in fact, often denotes the simultaneous penetration and production of the subject. I wish to clarify that the nineteenth-century evolutionary logic of the physical impact of habits and behavior structured these fields of knowledge. For example, the internalization of discipline critics such as Richard Brodhead and Lora Romero discern as a key function of sentimental parenting in fact maintains a specific physiological cast, in which the parent or guardian is charged to tenderly yet firmly work a character deeply into the child's absorptive body.¹³⁶ That sentimental heroines are capable of such adaptation is always assured by their own highborn ancestry, which itself acquired and transmitted the impressions it received from the possessions, habits, and values of well-bred society. Gerty, for example, possesses both "the aristocracy of true refinement, knowledge, grace, and beauty" as a result of her careful cultivation by several sets of foster parents and a faithful sibling, yet she is capable of such change precisely on

¹³⁵ For example, see Romero, *Home Fronts*; Brodhead, "Sparing the Rod"; Merish, *Sentimental Materialism*; Burgett, *Sentimental Bodies*; Lauren Berlant, *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

¹³⁶ Gillian Brown suggests that the absorptive, playful child in nineteenth-century sentimental fiction and scientific writing functions as a figure of the absorption of modern commercial life. "Child's Play," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 11, no. 3 (1999/2000): 76-106.

account of the intricate link between her emotional capacities and her physical inheritance: “the blood that courses in her veins would never disgrace the race from which she sprung, and every throb of her unselfish heart allies her to all that is noble” (379). The sentimental heart produces both affective feeling and the blood in which it is carried.

Like Gerty Flint and Ellen Montgomery, sentimental orphan heroines regularly marry their adopted brother, who has usually been both a constant companion and a father figure to the young charge. This familial climax of the adoption narrative underscores how the orphan’s desires are a direct outgrowth of her environment, for she has been nurtured into the perfect helpmeet for her sibling. Importantly, the success of this cultural influence is marked in these novels by an impending marriage, which suggests that the orphan and her brother/father/fiancé will transmit these qualities to their offspring. The adoption trope in this sense is revealed as a poignant metaphor, for it is the process of immersing a child in an environment meant to condition her growth and prepare her to consecrate her biological tie with her adoptive family through her reproduction with her new brother. While family romance plots in nineteenth-century Latin American fiction, for example, tend to unite two characters from disparate regions, colonial histories, and/or ethnic affiliations, the nineteenth-century U.S. domestic romance plot is often precisely domestic.¹³⁷ Like their eighteenth-century antecedents, these novels tend to represent the consolidation of the national family, though it was now

¹³⁷ The domestic patterns of sentimental fiction are thus quite distinct from what Shelley Streeby calls the transnational family romance genre of mid-century U.S. dime novels. According to Streeby, these plots pair a feminized Mexico with a virile United States in an attempt to narrate conquest as willing romance. See Streeby, *American Sensations*, 102-138. On Latin American literature’s work to unite disparate parts of the nation through heterogeneous coupling, see Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

achieved less by the cautionary seduction tale than by the promotion of endogamous relations that guarantee the civilized will be the seed of the nation. As Elizabeth Barnes aptly notes, incest becomes the “cultural cost” of modeling the nation on the family.¹³⁸ Gillian Silverman summarizes that “[i]ncest stood at the heart of the sentimental family . . . because it promised a continuity of [racial] lineage as well as feeling.”¹³⁹ In fact, the channeling of sexual desire into fraternal feeling demonstrates the success of these heroines’ internalization of affect in which feeling and lineage are part and parcel of the same phenomenon. Instead of following the licentious and animalistic impulses of the body, their sexual feelings stem from self-control and a familial intimacy so absorbed by the heroine that adoption frequently culminates with copulation, the most physical of expressions of intimacy. Quasi-incest, as the culture of sentiment would have it, is a mark of civilization.

The Elasticity of Civilization

U.S. sentimental fiction is preeminently concerned with heroines’ development of self-control that channels their physical and emotional impressions into productive feeling. This literature helped to inaugurate the idea that such progress, while presenting numerous pitfalls, would be possible through its large role in conceptualizing the civilized child as the embodiment of growth, change, and progress. Catharine Sedgwick’s *A New England Tale* (1822) arguably inaugurated the nineteenth-century sentimental novel through its series of vignettes about a young orphan and her path to develop self-

¹³⁸ Barnes, *States of Sympathy*, 19.

¹³⁹ Gillian Silverman, “Incest and Authorship in Melville’s *Pierre*,” *American Literature* 74, no. 2 (2004): 355. In a Freudian reading, Goshgarian provocatively argues that incest functions as the enabling yet disavowed discourse of sentimental literature. See *To Kiss the Chastening Rod*.

control and affective feeling. While the novel doesn't demonstrate the sustained interest in natural history and biological growth manifest in fiction a decade later, protagonist Jane Elton's capacity for biological and emotional change functions as a striking kernel of the later emphasis on physiological growth. "Such is the elastic nature of childhood," the narrator opines; "its moral, like its physical constitution, is subject to the most sudden changes."¹⁴⁰ Phrases praising the elasticity of their child heroines are a sentimental commonplace. I would like to suggest that this asseveration played a formative role in articulating civilization as a state in which one's physical and cultural inheritance and development were twinned processes. Originating in the physical sciences, "elastic" describes the ability of gaseous substances to regain shape after slight or significant expansion. When applied to humans, "elastic" denotes light-heartedness, emotional buoyancy and a springiness of motion.¹⁴¹ The term thus connotes an emotional and physical state at once expansive and stable. Such a physicality and continually cheery temperament allow the heroine to make judicious adaptations guided by an apt amount of feeling and neatly sum up the sentimental literary project I am describing. Elasticity represents the naturalization of progress and emphasizes a capacity for movement that is preordained to guarantee that what is new will also be reassuringly familiar. Writers of parenting manuals and evolutionary scientists referred to the "plastic" nature of civilized childhood to emphasize its capacity for growth and progress. Both terms are intimately connected and were central components of the transformation of the white child from a carrier of original sin to a seed of progress during the middle of the nineteenth century.

¹⁴⁰ Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *A New-England Tale; or, Sketches of New-England Character and Manners* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 20.

¹⁴¹ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Elastic."

Scientists were certain that the children of the civilized, and the civilized alone, were highly capable of adaptation and thus progress, as is widely accepted in literary and historical scholarship. What is less prominent, however, is the extent to which sentimental authors participated in this formulation. Their novels chart tales of development in which heroines' self-control ensures that their uniquely adaptable yet resilient bodies carefully absorb the conditions of their environment uniquely available to those of their class and culture. "[T]he enlightened and accurate observer of human nature, will admit that the difference of character among the various races of the earth, arises mainly from difference of condition," Sedgwick asserts in her 1827 historical romance, *Hope Leslie*.¹⁴² In other words, Sedgwick articulates the eighteenth-century belief that environmental variance triggers difference among humans, a theory that persisted into the nineteenth-century in large part because of the attachment of sentimental reformers, authors, and others to the role of culture in dictating difference. While this explanation of difference is free of the biological determinism promoted by polygenists beginning in the 1840s, who declared that races were in fact separate species, environmentalism of this kind is also a theory of racial difference. In this view, cultural difference creates biological divergence. Over time, as thousands of years of cultural influence create physically distinct anatomies, temporal and spatial distance becomes all but indistinguishable. As Ezra Tawil has recently clarified, sentimental fiction produced during the 1820s played a formative role in articulating what he calls "racial sentiment,"

¹⁴² Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie, or, the Early Times in the Massachusetts* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 6. For an analysis of Sedgwick's use of the sciences as an important interpretive framework in this novel, see Shelley R. Block and Etta M. Madden, "Science in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie*," *Legacy* 20, nos. 1 & 2 (2003): 22-37.

or the theory that the realm of feeling is a key locus of racial difference. Tawil explains that this discourse produced “the notion that members of different races both feel different things, and feel things differently,” in arguing that the capacity for sympathy is inherited from one’s ancestors and is consequently unique to each racial group.¹⁴³ As feeling is central to notions of physical growth in this period, such a difference becomes tantamount to radical inequality and, as Tawil argues, helped pave the way for full-fledged mid-century theories of fundamental human difference such as polygenesis. Furthermore, racial feeling, a cultural state, results in heroines’ expressions of sympathy and culture remaking their bodily capacities. “Our new country develops faculties that young ladies, in England, were not conscious of possessing” Sedgwick’s character Hope Leslie informs a British friend, promising a national exceptionalism that produces at once a physical and mental change for colonists as well as a unique condition of feeling that enables women to recognize their transformation (98).

The trope of adoption enabled portrayals of civilized girls who, like wildflowers, possess constitutions that enable them to flourish in a variety of spaces ranging from forbidding to hospitable. As Gillian Brown notes, sentimental heroines often “maintain and manifest their virtues absolutely independently of their parents.”¹⁴⁴ The trope of the orphan wildflower suited a settler colonial nation that elite authors opportunistically and frequently portrayed as an orphan of the civilized world.¹⁴⁵ As Anna Brickhouse has

¹⁴³ Tawil, *Making of Racial Sentiment*, 2.

¹⁴⁴ Brown, “Child’s Play,” 82.

¹⁴⁵ For examples of the trope of the United States as an orphan of Europe, see Nathaniel Hawthorne “My Kinsman, Major Molineux” (1832) and Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses” (1850). In Melville’s essay, he famously exhorts the nation to take care of its literary “foundlings” as “good kith and kin of her own, to take to her bosom” and warns against extending the maternal “embrace upon the household of an alien. For believe it or not England, after all, is, in many things, an alien to us.” For

pointed out, the recurring figuration of the United States as an orphan of Europe in American Renaissance writing not only ignored the extent to which U.S. cultural producers were involved in extensive networks with Caribbean and Latin American writers, but also served as a metaphor for the political investment in U.S. exceptionalism that denied the nation's reliance on ongoing imperial interventions.¹⁴⁶ In the case of popular sentimental writing, the recurring parallel to wildflowers further suggested a fertile and thriving girlhood with firm roots in the North American continent.¹⁴⁷ Unlike the hothouse flower imported from the colonies for display in the greenhouse of a British baronage, the trope of European American girl as a wildflower seemingly attested to whites' autochthonous relationship to the rapidly expanding territory of the United States.¹⁴⁸ The image of U.S. girls as thriving blooms – the reproductive part of the plant –

Melville, extended kinship networks should foster a parentless U.S. literature and raise a hale national tradition that willfully ignores European antecedents.

¹⁴⁶ Anna Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 33-34. Traditionalist interpretations of U.S. literature celebrate the orphan figure as an individual hero free from social and institutional pressures. See, for example, Richard Chase, *The American Novel and its Tradition* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957). Feminist attempts to read the sentimental orphan heroine as a narrative account of women's self-determination somewhat echo this logic. Interestingly, the orphan trope is also a popular metaphor in nineteenth-century writing critical of U.S. imperialism. In these texts, children's parentless status stands in for the larger "unnatural" breaking of cultural, political, economic, kinship, and ethnic in order to portray the violence and massive dispossession at the core of U.S. expansion. See, for example, Helen Hunt Jackson, *Ramona* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1912); George Washington Cable, *The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life* (New York: Penguin, 1988); and María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, *Who Would Have Thought It?* (Houston: Arte Público Press, 1995).

¹⁴⁷ Earlier feminist accounts of the floral trope in women's writing of this period embraced their imperial logic. For example, Annette Kolodny interprets garden metaphors in women's writing about the U.S. West as evidence of women's "claiming the frontiers as a potential sanctuary for an idealized domesticity" in ways that sharply contrasted with the genocidal policies of their husbands and male associates. See Kolodny, *The Land Before Her*, xiii.

¹⁴⁸ Thanks to Elizabeth Steeby for helping me make this point. Botany itself has played an important role in empire. Plant breeders developed plants to help "tame" the U.S. West and other conquered territories, just as plant resources from colonial lands are crucial to territories' profitability to the mainland. See, for example, Patricia Fara, *Sex, Botany, and Empire: The Story of Carl Linnaeus and Joseph Banks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); N. Jardine, J.A. Secord, and E.C. Spary, eds., *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Philip J. Pauly, *Biologists and the Promise of American Life: From Meriwether Lewis to Alfred Kinsey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); and

covering the newly conquered prairies evoked an imperialism that prided itself on its supposed civility and its future fertility.

As the decades wore on, the physical and racial effects of a heroine's physical inheritance and contemporary cultural context became an increasingly prominent element of sentimental novels. The physical inheritance of these heroines, both a result of their own actions and of their ancestors, repeatedly marks them as distinguished characters whose bodies are "naturally" exceptional. Gertrude Flint, for example, possesses "a fairy lightness of step, a grace of movement, and a dignity of bearing which impressed them all with the conviction that she was no beggar in spirit, whatever might be her birth or fortune" (117). Her ladylike mobility is a physical expression of her moral virtue, a self-control that has admirably enabled her to move through the world as a living doll. Yet despite such phrases professing a willful ignorance of Gerty's ancestry, Gerty's mobility is precisely predicated on her highborn status. The novel foreshadows her lineage through such essentialisms as "[g]ood taste is inborn, and Gerty had it in her" (52) and ultimately reveals that the gentleman of her close acquaintance whom she had thought must be "a botanist by profession" on account of his "intimate" connection with "mother earth" is, in fact, her father (291). In other words, Gerty was born of a sentimental gentleman, as appreciative of flowers and, by association, divine authority, as he was of his long-estranged daughter. Gertrude, furthermore, possesses a sentimental physiognomy, a "telltale fac[e] that speak[s] the truth and proclaim[s] the sentiment within" (138). Like other sentimental heroines, the thoroughness of the link between Gertude's physicality and

interiority result in a performative face that at once proclaims her racial feeling and produces it through the very iteration of these emotions.

The sentimental heroine is endowed with an emotional interiority twinned with a responsive body.¹⁴⁹ Sentimentalism is the genre responsible for the debut of the child in popular culture. Its emphasis on the qualities of its heroines' growth produces the civilized child as the modern figure of racial progress. While some critics insist that nineteenth-century childhood was largely "a status or idea associated with innocence and dependency rather than as a specific developmental or biological period," such a view discounts that the progress embodied by the child is at once physiological and psychological.¹⁵⁰ To be sure, the developmental stage then labeled "childhood" bears little resemblance to its twenty-first century manifestations, for it stipulated a state of primitivism rather than a formative period through which all humans reaching adulthood transcended. Accordingly, evolutionists beginning in the 1860s designated the non-civilized races as stuck in the infancy of the white race, a developmental stage which white males, and to some degree white females, would surpass at puberty. Nineteenth-century childhood was indeed a biological period when understood according to the dictates of contemporary life sciences. Claudia Castañeda, for example, draws on sociology, psychology, and evolutionary science to argue that the notion of the developing child and of childhood itself as a stage of development is a product of nineteenth-century thought and social practice. My analysis seeks to build on the work of

¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 204 quoted in Levander, *Cradle of Liberty*, 78.

¹⁵⁰ Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), xxi.

Nancy Armstrong and subsequent scholars who have emphasized the role of domestic fiction in producing the notion of women's psychological interiority that was central to the rise of the middle class in the nineteenth century and its claims to modern subjectivity. Domestic fiction's similar emphasis on the capacity of civilized children to progress emotionally and physically played a significant role, along with the evolutionary sciences, in producing whiteness as the embodiment of mobility and modernity.

Yet this flexibility, twinned as it is with environmental conditions, also poses its own risk. Of all orphan heroines in the sentimental mode, E.D.E.N. Southworth's are perhaps the most mobile and point to the attendant dangers of this plasticity. The liberty Southworth takes in her characterization is facilitated by her use of sensationalism, sentimentalism's complementary discourse. She blends a domestic setting that emphasizes curtailed emotional expression with tales of pursuit, disguise, and capture, extreme bodily states, and suspenseful plot twists more often associated with a working-class readership. This collusion enables her to create tales of radical physical change.¹⁵¹ Following her removal to a neglected cottage in the forest, the orphan Garnet Seabright, for example, is so at one with her wild surroundings that she ceases to be fully human. Perched "in the highest branches of the trees," Garnet sat as if her "hands and feet [were] furnished with claws," greeting a stranger's arrival with "chattering, gibing, laughing, and screaming."¹⁵² Whereas Ellen Montgomery names her horse "Brownie," or a benevolent goblin, Miss Joe at first mistakes Garnet herself for a Brownie. In the

¹⁵¹ On the complementary relationship between sensationalism and sentimentalism, see Jonathan Elmer, "Terminate or Liquidate? Poe, Sensationalism, and the Sentimental Tradition," in *The American Face of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Shawn Rosenheim and Stephen Rachman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 91-120. On sensationalism, see especially Streeby, *American Sensations*.

¹⁵² E.D.E.N. Southworth, *The Discarded Daughter; or, the Children of the Isle* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1900), 61, 62, 61.

conclusion of *The Discarded Daughter* (1852), however, new environments make their physical impact on Garnet's malleable body, and the once "elfin girl" submits to duty and relinquishes her father's plantation estate to atone for her family's crimes of inheritance (61).

Until recently, scholars have frequently asserted that Lamarckian flexibility necessarily expresses an anti-racist viewpoint on account of its lack of attachment to fixed racial hierarchies.¹⁵³ Southworth, arguably one of the most politically conservative sentimental authors frequently analyzed by feminist critics, illuminates the ahistorical nature of this argument through her structural dependence on static characters of color to portray, by contrast, the malleability of civilization. For example, Southworth's best-remembered heroine today, Capitola Black, begins *The Hidden Hand* (1859) as a newsboy.¹⁵⁴ She pluckily assumes the masquerade in order to support herself on the streets of New York's tenement districts. Her metamorphosis is so complete that the novel's authority figures – her incredibly wealthy, slave-owning benefactor, the court system, police, and shopkeepers – can hardly believe their eyes when this "handsome boy" professes to be a girl (33). Her benefactor, Old Hurricane, later attests that he had "picked [her] up," a "miserable little vagrant" and "tried to make a lady of [her]; but an

¹⁵³ This viewpoint has not disappeared entirely. For one recent example, see Mason, *Civilized Creatures*. In Mason's analysis, mid-century endorsements of Lamarckian evolutionary change that posited the inheritance of acquired characteristics prioritized bodily change and transformation, and thus "can hardly be said to support the contemporary project of translating non-Anglo-Saxon people's cultural difference into permanent racial or genetic [sic] inferiority."¹⁵³ In contrast, one of the central claims of this dissertation is that Lamarckian thinking in the United States was enlisted to bolster, rather than challenge, new ideas of race as inheritable physiological traits that helped to form and legitimate strict racial and class hierarchies. Indeed, sentiment and Lamarckian evolutionary science were widely fashioned as intertwined strategies for racial progress that would find whites inheritors of the earth and "savages" uplifted not into positions of equality, but as maxing out their potential upon reaching a fixed rank of wage labor productive for the ruling class.

¹⁵⁴ E.D.E.N. Southworth, *The Hidden Hand; or, Capitola the Madcap* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988).

old proverb says – ‘You can’t make a silken purse out of a pig’s ear!’” (121). Old Hurricane’s aristocratic attachment to lineage and descent is not so much destabilized by Capitola’s remarkable elasticity throughout the novel, which enables her to combine the street smarts sensational literature regularly assigned to newsboys as a result of her being “inured from infancy to danger” with the emotional skill of a sentimental heroine, as it is substantiated (114). Capitola herself is revealed to be Hurricane’s niece and sole heir to his large plantation, affirming that her malleability was due to her highborn status and that she indeed had not transformed herself into a “silken purse.” Rather, it was her physical, cultural, and economic inheritance itself that enabled her to pose successfully as a street seller and to outwit the region’s greatest villain, Black Donald. “[B]lack with crime,” (389) yet in fact Hurricane’s brother, Donald Le Noir easily tricks Capitola’s stolid slaves and housekeeper throughout the novel, who simply are no match for the adaptability (for good or evil) of the plantation aristocracy. In fact, Capitola’s daring is dependent upon her slaves’ inability to learn and incredible inattentiveness that creates perilous situations designed to showcase Capitola’s ingenuity that is at once masculine and feminine. Whereas Capitola’s youth enabled her to flirt with masculine self-presentation and benefit from these lasting impressions, her child slave Pitapat is a “poor little wretch” whose physiognomically “stupid head” continually places Capitola in danger (193). Furthermore, both *The Hidden Hand* and *The Discarded Daughter* restore all characters to their biological and financial inheritance at the conclusions of plots that are as simultaneously expansive and resilient as their heroines and accordingly usefully snap back into place at their denouements. Southworth’s novels point to the extremes of

plasticity and underscore how civilized women ought to be bred in environments that facilitate their growth in communion with God.

Some African American authors confronted the racialization of whiteness as mobility and blackness as paralysis head-on by refuting these characterizations in a variety of genres. For example, Harriet Wilson's remarkable text *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859) narrates the life of Frado, an unfree worker in the North, in part through showing how the sentimental language of biological inheritance structured her life and labor. Widely read as a combination of a sentimental novel and slave narrative, *Our Nig* emplots the consequences for those called "primitive" of the view that ancestral behavior becomes inescapable racial inheritance. Frado's mother is a European American orphan who fails to develop the self-control advocated by domestic writers and succumbs to seduction and abandonment. Wilson's narrator dwells on the impact of this origin for the resulting baby. "How many pure, innocent children not only inherit a wicked heart of their own, claiming life-long scrutiny and restraint," she asks, "but are heirs also of parental disgrace and calumny, from which only long years of patient endurance in paths of rectitude can disencumber them[?]."¹⁵⁵ The interrogative poignantly asks her readers to consider the physical and emotional trials of inheritance for those who are assigned to the constitutive outside of civilization. The tension in the passage between the "pure, innocent" child and its "wicked heart" desperately in need of "scrutiny and restraint" disrupts a fictional genre going to great lengths to characterize childhood as precisely a stage of blooming development. In constructing a primitive baby

¹⁵⁵ Harriet Wilson, *Our Nig; or, Sketches from the Life of a Free Black*, 3rd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 6-7.

as by definition unable to claim the innocence and potential that was the birthright of the civilized, Wilson casts her protagonist as a youngster without a youth. In so doing, she encapsulates her tale of childhood enslavement in the free north in the biological language of the period. The offspring of her mother's subsequent union with an African American man, Frado is soon herself abandoned at a young age by her parents to work for an infamously cruel local family (7). In other words, her physiological development is twinned with her material circumstances, and she is denied both her childhood and her freedom. Unlike a civilized sentimental protagonist, Frado's adoptive home sees her as a workhorse, not a delicate flower. Though she falls in love with a son of her enslaving family, who is also something of a father figure, such sentimental unions are meant to be endogamous. Frado is not raised to be James' companion, but rather is an experiment of his mother to "train up in my way" a servant "from a child" in hopes that she would "be able to keep them awhile" (26). Accordingly, Frado's father/brother/lover marries another and dies, having failed to deliver her to freedom. Wilson's tale is a powerful reworking of the sentimental adoption plot to illuminate the allegedly onerous inheritance of the poor and to expose the tremendous profitability of the fiction of primitivity for the ruling classes.

The Sciences of Cultivation

Sentimental fiction such as Southworth's and Wilson's maintains an extensive engagement with the multiple languages of breeding, a concept that neatly combines biological inheritance with cultural transmission. Yet from what sources did these authors and their audience, largely women from the ruling class who had limited access to formal

education and personal experience compared to their male counterparts, learn the naturalist discourse of cultivation? The answer lies overwhelmingly in the fields of botany and the informal study of flowers. The contemplation of flowers was a wildly popular amusement in the early to mid nineteenth-century United States, as in France and England somewhat earlier.¹⁵⁶ Sentimental flower books, including flower poems, literary studies of flowers, floral dictionaries, botanies emphasizing the spiritual aspects of flowers, and texts professing to transcribe the language “spoken” by flowers were wildly popular in the United States, reaching an apex in the 1840s and 1850s.¹⁵⁷ Figures now considered integral to sentimental culture, including Sarah Josepha Hale, Louisa May Alcott, and Lydia Maria Child, published in these genres, and other writers, such as Sedgwick, took up the theme of botanical study in their fiction.¹⁵⁸ Novelists as well as authors of housekeeping and childcare manuals demonstrated their ongoing participation in the intersecting fields of natural history, botany, and the racial and evolutionary sciences in the decades prior to and during the professionalization of science as a rarefied discourse whose methods were accessible to only a few.

Girls wealthy enough to be enrolled in seminaries had a high likelihood of receiving formal instruction in botany, as an estimated 82% of women’s schools offered

¹⁵⁶ For the role of British and French writers in developing U.S. botanical and flower language discourse, see Vera Norwood, *Made From This Earth: American Women and Nature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 1-24.

¹⁵⁷ Beverly Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995), 87.

¹⁵⁸ See, for example, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, “Cacoethes Scribendi” (1830), in *Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers: An Anthology*, edited by Karen Kilcup (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 25-33, quoted in Tina Gianquitto, “*Good Observers of Nature*”: *American Women and the Scientific Study of the Natural World, 1820-1885* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 18.

instruction in this field between 1830 and 1870.¹⁵⁹ The explosion of the discipline as required study was due in large part to the overwhelming success of Almira Phelps' 1829 text *Familiar Lectures on Botany*, which sought to both reform and capitalize on the popularity of botanical texts that disregarded the rigid taxonomy of Linnaean botany in favor of narratives of flowers that talk to children and dictionaries decoding the nonverbal language of flowers.¹⁶⁰ Phelps' work encouraged botanical study (as opposed to an untrained romance with flowers) as a means of nurturing an intimate relationship with God's creation, and throughout the nineteenth-century the discipline was the primary area of natural history schoolchildren studied.¹⁶¹ In other words, botany became women's ticket to the life sciences. Phelps and others encouraged young women to pursue botany, which required extensive rambling throughout the countryside, as an engaged hobby that would in turn make the observer a healthier, more spiritual, happier, and more intelligent individual.¹⁶² Botany in this sense functions as paradigmatic of one version of sentimental science, an intimate communion with God that evolves the observer's mental and physical characteristics in the process. Among other reasons, this aspect of botanical study rendered it the only appropriate scientific study for women in

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Woody, *History of Women's Education in the United States*, vol. 1 (New York: Science Press, 1929), 58 quoted in Baym, *American Women of Letters*, 19.

¹⁶⁰ On the talking flower genre of children's literature, see Maude Hines, "'He Made Us Very Much Like the Flowers': Human/Nature in Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Children's Literature," in *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism*, ed. Sidney I. Dobrin and Kenneth B. Kidd (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), 16-30.

¹⁶¹ Baym, *American Women of Letters*, 19

¹⁶² Gianquitto, "Good Observers," 15-56.

nineteenth-century eyes, so much so that it became “known as the feminine science *par excellence*.”¹⁶³

Yet botany was an acceptable study for civilized women not only because of the effects of its study on the practitioner, but on account of the gendering and sexualization of flowers themselves. As Londa Schiebinger has shown, Carl Linnaeus standardized the cacophony of competing floral classificatory systems in the mid-eighteenth century in large part through relying on binary structures of gender and monogamous, heterosexual human sexuality to characterize plant function and reproduction. Linnaean botany turned the analogy between women and flowers into science itself.¹⁶⁴ Its adherents, such as Almira Phelps, encouraged women to study flowers for they provided pious and innocent models for the behavior of human women. Sentimental flower culture “considered flower study the primary means to accomplish both religious and romantic devotion,” and Phelps’ botanical science also promoted the field as a means to learn the function and duties of femininity. Tina Ginaquitto observes that in Phelps’ description of the “‘perfect flower,’” one that unites female and male reproductive parts, “she is also reminding readers of the ideal domestic arrangement.” Botanical science codified the association between women and flowers, turning blooming plants into pious models for women to emulate. Furthermore, not only are flowers “the plant kingdom’s version of a woman” in the Linnaean scheme articulated by Phelps, but “flowers constitute the ideal mother.”¹⁶⁵ Flowers are of course the reproductive organ of the plant, and eighteenth- and early-

¹⁶³ Londa Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 36.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 11-39.

¹⁶⁵ Gianquitto, “*Good Observers*,” 25, 43, 46.

nineteenth-century botanical writing (especially that authored by men such as Linnaeus and Erasmus Darwin) did not shy away from applying graphic language of human sexuality to the functions of the plant kingdom.¹⁶⁶ Phelps, for her part, minimized the erotic language of a poem like Darwin's *The Loves of the Plants* and instead instructed that the function of flowers is not to provide "short-lived admiration," but to "produc[e] and nourish . . . the fruit."¹⁶⁷ Like flowers, educators advised, the young should "improve the bloom of life" for it is their "business" to "nurture and mature" so as to "perfect the fruit."¹⁶⁸ The study of botany improves women's piety and development by providing an example of sacrificial better breeding, as the flower wilts so that the seed may prosper. A central element of sentimental culture, the popular and scientific languages of flowers encouraged women to maintain communion with flowers that was at once innocent and sexual, pious and reproductive. Furthermore, this dialogue would develop the body of the civilized woman herself through its active pursuit. As time went on, Linnaean botany was replaced by structural botany developed by figures such as Asa Gray that emphasized the dynamic physiologies of plants and categorized them according to the relationships between plants (as opposed to the earlier model's reliance on a static sexual system pertaining to individual flowers).¹⁶⁹ This new classificatory scheme was better suited to the reality that botanical study was one of the primary arenas in which humans could directly manipulate the growth of species. Hybridizing techniques such as grafting

¹⁶⁶ On this point, see especially Schiebinger, *Nature's Body*, 28-37.

¹⁶⁷ Almira Phelps, *Familiar Lectures on Botany* (New York: Huntington, 1839), 66, quoted in Gianquitto, "Good Observers," 47.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid; Emma Willard, *A Plan for Improving Female Education* (Middlebury, Middlebury College, 1918), 14-15, quoted in *ibid.*, 48.

¹⁶⁹ Gianquitto, "Good Observers," 55, 61.

rendered the discipline all the more suggestive for the reproductive duties of nineteenth-century women, as Lydia Maria Child was eager to explore.

A Romance of the Republic and the Physical Transmission of Culture

In an essay Lydia Maria Child published in her *National Anti-Slavery Standard* and later collected as part of her popular book *Letters from New-York* (1843), she attempted to express how “flowers have spoken to me more than I can tell in written words.” She recalls her habit, beginning in her youth, to uproot wild flowers from “their shady birthplace” and install them in her domicile. Conflicted by this impulse to endanger the object of her affections, Child justifies that “flowers ever seemed to thrive with me, as if they knew I loved them. Perchance they *did*; for invisible radii, inaudible language, go forth from the souls of all things.” These “hieroglyphics of the angels” communicate the morality of God’s design to Child, who delights in the intimacy of this communion typical of natural theology’s conceptualization of women’s place in the natural world.¹⁷⁰ Both more civilized than the animal world and yet carrying too many remnants of its baser impulses and bodily functions, civilized women were to cast their lot in with flowers in a path toward redemption.¹⁷¹ Child’s essays attest to the broad appeal of this impulse at mid-century, even among one of the more radical white women of her generation who was widely publishing.

¹⁷⁰ Lydia Maria Child, *Letters from New-York*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 112. Deborah Rosenthal emphasizes the deep interest Child maintained in gardening throughout her life. See Rosenthal, “Floral Counterdiscourse: Miscegenation, Ecofeminism, and Hybridity in Lydia Maria Child’s *A Romance of the Republic*,” *Women’s Studies* 31, no. 2 (2002): 221-45.

¹⁷¹ On the displacement of original sin to the woman’s body, see Goshgarian, “*To Kiss the Chastening Rod*,” 36-75.

Perhaps no other sentimental text as completely banks on the pervasive association between the propagation of civilized women and the cultivation of flowers for its thematic plot and political moral as Child's 1867 novel *A Romance of the Republic*. In this text, Child at once humanizes her mixed race heroines through their genteel association with flowers and exploits this link to create a feminist critique of the gendered and sexual exploitation of slavery. Slavery, principally, functions as a "cumulative poison in the veins of this Republic," and "a blighting influence on the souls of many generations," a contagion Child counters through organic strategies of her own.¹⁷² Her novel characterizes what she sees as some of the more pernicious effects of the role of flowers in domestic culture, particularly when elite women are bred, like hothouse orchids, solely to provide aesthetic pleasure for their keepers.¹⁷³ Many scholars have noted that the Reconstruction-era novel, set largely before the Civil War, offers interracial family relations and specifically adoption, marriage, and the training of domestic servants as a means to eradicate the racial difference allegedly tearing the nation asunder.¹⁷⁴ What fewer have analyzed is that this celebrated project of racial and national reconciliation is upheld through the biological and specifically botanical roots running throughout the novel that render her project dependent upon the languages of

¹⁷² Lydia Maria Child, *A Romance of the Republic* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 24.

¹⁷³ In an essay in the sentimental flower language mode Child wrote and published in the inaugural issue of her *Juvenile Miscellany*, flowers verbalize to young girls that they should become "useful and cheerful companions, in preference to those, which fit them only to be the gay flutterers of an evening." Child, "The Tulip and the Tri-Colored Violet," *Juvenile Miscellany* 1 (1826): 389-90, quoted in Rosenthal, "Floral Counterdiscourse," 227. Child also published two children's flower language books, *Flowers for Children* in 1844 and 1846 and *A New Flower for Children* in 1856.

¹⁷⁴ See for example Dana D. Nelson, introduction to *A Romance of the Republic*, by Lydia Maria Child (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997) and Carolyn L. Karcher, *The First Woman in the Republic: A Cultural Biography of Lydia Maria Child* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

birth and breeding.¹⁷⁵ Harvesting the strong links between sentimental literature and botany, physiology, and other life sciences, Child portrays two enslaved heroines who are “tropical flowers” to demonstrate how the imitativeness of the less civilized races as well as their careful cultivation by adoption and other means could gradually breed out racial difference and thus strengthen the national stock (18). Her novel provides an illuminating example of sentimentalism’s function as a literary arena in which elite women participated in the racial sciences through the racialized discourses of floral language and the mobility of civilized young women.

The reader first encounters the protagonists Rosabella and Flora Royal in their “Temple of Flora.” The room is a parlor adorned with floral motifs and fresh flowers by their deceased mother and frequented by the two heroines. From the “exquisitely painted garden” on the ceiling to the blossoms embroidered on the ottomans, the space is a highly realized portrayal of the centrality of flowers in sentimental fiction. As their visitor, Alfred Royal King, exclaims “Flowers [are] everywhere! Natural flowers, artificial flowers, painted flowers, and human flowers excelling them all” (5). Child utilizes the sentimental association between women and flowers to make three interrelated arguments throughout the novel. The first works to feminize her mixed race heroines in the eyes of her readers by characterizing them as flowers. As such, Flora and Rosabella join the pantheon of civilized sentimental heroines rather than cast their lot with the genre’s enslaved characters who, at most, tend to serve the plot as the objects of the heroines’ and

¹⁷⁵ Deborah Rosenthal offers a comprehensive, if optimistic, literary reading of the novel’s botanical logic that emphasizes how Child merged what Rosenthal sees as the divergent discourses of sentimentalism and science through her allusions to flowers. See “Floral Counterdiscourse.”

readers' sympathy.¹⁷⁶ Second, like others in her genre, Child insists that there is a right and wrong way to treat flowers and civilized women. One method professes “authenticity,” in which families work as partners of God to enable their charges to blossom, while another approach succumbs to the allure of “artificiality” and breeds an exotic bloom whose very preciousness ensures her vulnerability and isolation. Finally, Child soon reveals that, unbeknownst to the Royal youth, their mother was legally her father's slave, and that he has failed to legally free them from inheriting the condition of their mother. The novel works to illuminate the Lamarckian double meaning of this most common of legal euphemisms for slavery by suggesting that, with the proper cultivation and propagation in civilized domesticity, Flora and Rosa, and indeed all people of African descent in the United States, could escape inheriting the degrading effects of slavery and inch closer to civilization.

Raised as wealthy girls and ignorant of their status as slaves, Flora and Rosabella have been nurtured in close symbiosis with their environment. The result is that they are as lovely yet delicate as flowers. In fact, “[t]he garden and the flowery parlor . . . seemed almost as much a portion of themselves as their own persons” (40-1). Yet sentimental flower books and botanical texts written by women heaped praise most of all on wild flowers that seemed to thrive on the blessings of God alone and criticized the “artificiality” of the hothouse flower.¹⁷⁷ To their detriment, Flora and Rosabella have been “kept . . . like wax flowers under a glass cover,” (63) due to the protective instincts

¹⁷⁶ The minor enslaved characters in *Romance* certainly receive this treatment. For example, the reunion of the heroines with “their faithful servant” Tulee is narrated only with reference to “private conversations” relating “her humble little episode of love and separation . . . whispered only to Missy Rosy and Missy Flory” (379).

¹⁷⁷ On this point, see Gianquitto, “*Good Observers*,” 32.

of their widowed father and the inclinations of their mother to live in “a sort of fairy-land,” a “little world by [them]selves” (21). This condition leaves them rather more likely to melt once exposed to open air than to display the resilience and responsiveness of civilized youth. Wax flowers function as an evocative image of the oft-expressed risks slavery posed to the families of well-meaning men who neglected to manumit their (legally unmarried) wives and children in a willful ignorance of their own mortality. On account of their father’s inclination to protect his daughters through sequestering them from all society, the girls have no knowledge of their own or their deceased mother’s status as slaves and have barely an acquaintance in the city save their music teachers. Child deploys the floral motif to offer both a feminist critique of the confinement of wealthy women as a kind of colonial prize well as to demonstrate to a skeptical public that a mixed race character could indeed be full of blooming potential.

Upon their father’s sudden death, the girls are left orphans and slaves. The elder daughter, Rosabella, whose maturation has already hardened her capacities, registers the consequences of the dramatic change in her condition far more harshly. While the pubescent Flora retains an “elastic nature . . . incapable of resisting the glory of the sky, the beauty of the earth, the music of the birds and the invigorating breath of the ocean,” Rosabella has become far less responsive to the natural world and less capable of growth (89). Flora retains a resilient “impulsive naturalness” (155) and is an irrepressible burst of song and dance, but Rosabella was already “formed by nature and habit to cling to others,” (47) as if a trumpet vine which the gardener risks killing were she to remove its support. Indeed, when the dishonest Gerald Fitzgerald first arranges a sham marriage with Rosabella that conceals his purchase of her and her sister as his slaves and then

spirits them away to his Nassau plantation, their reactions to these successive waves of deceit differ markedly. Though Rosabella musters enough strength to refuse to submit to Gerald's request that she become his mistress, when he informs her of her legal status as a slave moments later she faints into a senselessness that persists for more than four months. The elastic Flora, however, successfully runs away to her future adoptive mother to escape Gerald's unwelcome advances.

Rosabella's protectors aver that many mixed race slaves would acquiesce to the role of a mistress. Gerald, similarly, anticipates that "[i]t will be strange indeed if I can't mold her as I will" (139). Unlike women conscious of their enslaved status, however, Rosabella has not been "educated, from childhood, to accommodate [herself] to [a] subordinate position" (179). Rather, she was raised as a civilized woman who, just as importantly, inherited her grandfather's "Spanish blood" which stokes her fiery pride (144). Consequently, she won't submit to Gerald, due to a mixture of environmental conditioning and inherited racial feeling, the result of her ancestors' experiences. Some sentimental critics insist that the emphasis of this text and others of its genre on the large impact that social relations and institutions have on the development of individual character is evidence that the novels, like their contemporaries in other fields, articulate a binary schematic in which they choose nurture over nature. In contrast, as I have been arguing, such a view conveys the theoretical model of present scholarship rather than accurately assesses the frequency in which the novels pose the physical transmission of culture from one generation to the next. Sentimental characters often inherit the emotional states of their ancestors in a model of transmission perfectly consistent with Lamarckian heredity in which culture and biology are intimately intertwined and

emotional states are racial inheritance. At the moment of her maturity, the heroine of Caroline Lee Hertz's *Ernest Linwood* (1856), for example, recognizes in the mirror's reflection a woman of strength and beauty where previously she had seen just a girl. Yet, "[t]he moment of triumph was brief. A pale shadow seemed to flit behind me and dim the bright image reflected in the mirror. It wore the sad, yet lovely lineaments of my departed mother."¹⁷⁸ Her mother's physicality and experiences haunt the heroine. Despite her best intentions, she physically inherits her mother's emotional past and is doomed to repeat her calamitous history of seduction and betrayal. Similarly, Child's novel carefully traces the presence of the physical and emotional qualities of each of the principle characters' parents. A close friend of Albert King's father, Mr. Royal confesses to the son, "[y]ou resemble him so strongly, that I have been involuntarily drawn to open my heart to you" (19). Relying on the link between physical embodiment and interior qualities advocated by the sciences of phrenology and physiognomy, Rosabella and Flora's father assumes that physical affinity signals interior likeness. Like other sentimental fiction, Child's novel advocates the role of heredity, proposing that emotional states become racial inheritance.

At the same time, however, many sentimental novels do attest to the overwhelming power of the environment to shape character and form, particularly those arguing an abolitionist viewpoint such as *A Romance of the Republic*. Alfred King, for example, expresses a willingness to permit Mr. Fitzgerald's son Gerald to marry their daughter Eulalia, for while he had "fear the qualities of his father might develop

¹⁷⁸ Caroline Lee Hertz, *Ernest Linwood, or The Inner Life of the Author* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856), 81 quoted in Barnes, *States of Sympathy*, 101.

themselves in him . . . he has not been educated among slaves. I think we can trust to that to make a great difference in character” (350).¹⁷⁹ His words are telling, that it is slaves rather than slavery that could cloud the purity of a young man, and are in keeping with the novel’s insistence that the post-Civil War nation could be healed if wealthy Northern whites were to act as missionaries, kith, or kin with those of African descent. Yet Gerald is in fact Rosabella’s son, whom she switched in infancy with his half-brother. The two half-brothers provide the novel’s most conclusive evidence of the degree to which the experience of racialization shapes character and form. Rosabella’s son, who is not raised as a slave but as the heir of the slave-owner Fitzgerald and his wife Lilly comports himself as an “elegant young man” (298, 363, 386). In contrast, Lilly’s birth son is raised as a slave and “has not Gerald’s gracefulness” and possesses a “firmer expression of the mouth” (413). Yet we shouldn’t overlook the central role heredity nonetheless plays in the transmission of culture these novels advocate. The physical effects of culture shape not only the present generation, but are then passed on to descendants. Heredity functions as the linchpin of the project of cultural rehabilitation. For many reformers, filtering eighteenth-century environmentalism through the new lens of hereditary transmission provided a biological rationale for their efforts, one that, as in Spencer’s theories, seemed to originate in nature itself. Furthermore, the theory promised that the seeds sown in one lifetime would be reaped by generations to come, ensuring that uplift work not only ameliorates the suffering of the present but occasions the better breeding of the future.

¹⁷⁹ In a twist on the sentimental adoption plot, Gerald Fitzgerald, Jr. falls in love with Eulalia King, who, unbeknownst to him, is in fact his sister. In this text, it is blood and common sentiment that draws them together, rather than the experience of having been raised to complete one another.

Abolitionist sentimental novels often insist that African Americans are capable of one day reaching civilization on account of their incredible “imitativeness” that ensures they will learn to mimic the mores and habits of their betters and as such, over time, transmit the qualities of civilization.¹⁸⁰ Child creates characterizations of African American malleability by emphasizing their close ties with civilized families through the sexual and economic relations of slavery. Consequently, both enslaved African Americans and individuals like the Royal sisters who spent their youths ignorant of their status as slaves have, to varying degrees, experienced what she saw as the positive effects of civilized life. Domestic space in sentimental novels creates sentimental impressions that mould those subjects who have inherited plastic constitutions from their ancestors. While unwilling to grant African Americans the potential for individually directed change and malleability, in keeping with racial science of the day, Child, Stowe, and other novelists build on the popular tradition of minstrelsy to suggest that blacks possess unique powers of imitation that, over time according to Lamarckian evolution, will produce physical effects.¹⁸¹ While Fitzgerald proclaims that all slaves are “wonderfully imitative,” (135) especially musically, Flora is the novel’s outstanding imitative character. She “excite[s] “many a laugh by her imitations” (82), including reproducing “the talk of parrots, the shrill fanfare of trumpets, and the deep growl of a contra-fagotto,” (25) and the “clumsy, shuffling dances” of plantation slaves (85). In a Lamarckian

¹⁸⁰ For another take on imitativeness in the novel, see Nelson, “introduction to *A Romance of the Republic*,” xiv-xvii.

¹⁸¹ Tawil perceptively links sentimental literature’s promotion of black impressibility and imitativeness to the tradition of minstrelsy, in which white audiences delighted in blacks’ performance of a “weirdly protean plasticity.” See Tawil, *Making of Racial Sentiment*, 164. As Tawil’s phrase suggests, his compelling analysis focuses entirely on literary texts and doesn’t explore the degree to which sentimental child plasticity impacted scientific practice and social reform as well – contexts that make this plasticity overdetermined, rather than odd.

framework, which dictates that function determines form, imitation produces evolutionary change. In the nineteenth century, breeding improved generations meant changing the habits of those already born. Accordingly, white abolitionist writers created images of African American imitativeness showcasing their capability of mimicking the behaviors of their superiors and thereby gradually transmitting “improved” constitutions.

The flexibility of Child’s mixed race and African American characters results from a reliance on other racial groups cast as, through their own inheritance, lacking mobility and the capacity for change. The exuberant powers of recognizing and reproducing the individuality of sounds and behaviors are produced in the novel by contrast to the turgidity of the unindividuated Eastern world. Whereas Flora can reproduce the chirrups of birds, in Turkey the “chattering and giggling” of women themselves possesses an “animal sound” that Alfred King’s father doesn’t even recognize as human speech (24). The “slow-moving caravans of the East” haunt the text as its constitutive outside, a graphic image of transport and mobility that instead of rapid movement and individual progress is overburdened by collective process into near stagnation (279). The mobility of the New World depends on this contrast with the “East,” a land viewed with abhorrence by the narrator and the sympathetic Mr. King, whose father had impressed upon him “the idea what different beings those women would have been if they had been brought up amid the free churches and free schools of New England” (24). In contrast, the alleged stasis of the East and its concordant long-term effects on women’s sense of mobility alerts the reader to Fitzgerald’s dissipated character, who enviously wishes he “were the Grand Bashaw” so that he could keep Flora and Rosabella “both in my harem” (12). As I showed in Chapter One with regards to

Moby-Dick, Orientalism provides mid-century writers with an alien entity through which, in contradistinction, the multicultural Americas can cohere.

Child worked out her views on the inheritance of culture quite clearly in non-fictional form in an essay penned after a visit to P.T. Barnum's American Museum in the spring of 1843, two decades before writing *Romance*. Impressed by the effects of lifestyle on the physiques of a group of fifteen Sac, Fox, and Iowa Indians on display at the popular institution, she affirms that their corporality presents "a keen satire on our civilized customs, which produce such feeble forms and pallid faces. The unlimited pathway, the broad horizon, the free grandeur of the forest, has passed into their souls, and so stands revealed in their material forms" (161). In other words, Child declares the physical inheritance of cultural traditions. As is often the case in scientific and literary writing, such praise comes twinned with the asseveration that Natives are mere children among the races, for "[t]he Past" has "reproduced in them" a majority of "the animal part of our mixed nature" (162). In contrast, whites can boast of inheriting "a congress of ages, each with a glory on its brow," a tidy summation of the belief that culture produces racial difference (162).

The ostensible purpose of Child's essay is to disagree with craniometry's calculation of facial angles as an indication of permanent racial character. She includes direct citation of their evidence in order to refute their claims that these measurements indicate the permanent racial superiority of Anglo-Saxons. Her attempt to dislodge their claims underscores the racial difference between whites and Native Americans, but casts this divergence as the result of inherited conditions that could be altered. To counter argue race scientists' notion of physical difference as immutable, she affirms that

divergent facial profiles “are the *effects* of spiritual influences, long operating on character, and in their turn becoming *causes*; thus intertwining, as Past and Future ever do” (163). Her formulation is as clear an expression as any of the imbrication of mid-century notions of heredity and environment, in which culture plays a physical role. As in her description of the propagation of flowers cited in this chapter’s epigraph as a metaphor for the passage of time, “seed-bud-and blossom” reproduce in a cycle of “endless progression,” such that the point of origin is indistinguishable from the moment of reproduction and expiration. Such a view of the passage of time is not merely a clichéd repetition of the chicken versus egg conundrum, but rather proclaims the degree to which Child and many of her contemporaries saw cultural and economic affiliation as a chain of physical inheritance extending back into evolutionary time. While social and biological evolutionists tended to declare that this pattern had produced humans of such wildly divergent capacities that it could never be altered and the non-civilized could never be full citizens of the United States as a consequence, others whom scientists disdained as too “sentimental” saw things differently. For reformers like Child and the other subjects of this dissertation, heredity posed the solution to its own dilemma. Bringing “the influences of Judea, and Greece, and Rome” and of contemporary civilization “to bear on the Indians or the Africans, as a race, would gradually change the structure of their skulls, and enlarge their perceptions of moral and intellectual truth” (163).¹⁸² The result, she

¹⁸² Not all at mid-century were unable to conceive of Mediterranean antiquity as bestowing a unique racial privilege to whites. Frederick Douglass, for example, in his under-studied refutation of racial science, “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered” (1854), issued a lengthy rebuttal to the polygenists of the American School of Ethnology the same year Josiah Nott defended the notion of races as distinct species in *Types of Mankind*. In this lecture, Douglass defends the humanity of African Americans, refutes the Aryan ancestry of Ethiopians, and emphasizes the impermanence of physical characteristics. See Frederick

affirms, is not to produce equal subjects lacking material, psychological, and emotional difference, but “variety, without inferiority” (163). Moments later, however, Child characterizes her solution to racial difference as a tragedy. Her deep regret at seeing primitive Indians “surrounded by the false environment of civilized life” (164), expresses sympathy for their position as sideshow spectacles, but it also reveals a deeply-held attachment to the permanence of racial difference and a discomfort with the “mingl[ing]” (163) she advocates in the same essay.¹⁸³

Two decades later, Child offered a set of solutions to perceived racial difference in *Romance* that is less ridden with internal contradictions, but no less dependent on hierarchies of race and class. The thoroughness of the era’s model of the family as microcosm of the nation ensured that Child offered the domestic relations of adoption, marriage, and domestic employment as resolutions to the political discord allegedly caused by the coexistence of one race approaching millennial perfection and another mired in the infancy of civilization. The novels’ unwitting adoptions raise two half-brothers who testify to the effects of environment in producing racial difference, and Flora’s adoption by a “cold Bostonian” once in love with her father works to soften the matron as it tempers the outbursts of the child. “[T]heir influence on each other was mutually improving to their characters,” a modification reflected in the “sunshine

Douglass, “The Claims of the Negro Ethnologically Considered,” in *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, vol. 2, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: International Publishers, 1950), 289-309.

¹⁸³ For an analysis of Child’s difficulties in escaping the craniological argument she critiques, along with insight into the similarities the letter shares with Melville’s attempts at the same in *Moby-Dick*, see Otter, *Melville’s Anatomies*, 165-168. For an analysis of the many reasons why Native Americans participated in popular entertainments from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century, see L.G. Moses, *Wild West Shows and the Images of American Indians, 1883- 1933* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996). Moses emphasizes the tension between reformers who were critical of the shows for promoting images of savagism and the fact that the performances presented some measure of lucrative employment and opportunity to travel for Natives themselves.

brightness” of Mrs. Delano’s countenance, courtesy of the “tropical” nature of her adopted daughter (287). The passage of the Massachusetts Adoption Act of 1851 signaled the nation’s willingness to legally recognize kinship relations structured by other ties than blood and marriage, a shift no doubt conditioned by the frequency of the theme in popular fiction. Twenty-five states followed soon after, and by the Reconstruction era adoption can function rhetorically for Child as a common familial arrangement, one that can solve pressing problems of racial difference and distrust.¹⁸⁴

Racial mixing through marriage and reproduction similarly poses the possibility of breeding out racial difference in the novel, as the qualities of civilization absorb less advanced and degenerate characteristics. Child naturalizes the idea of miscegenation and the mixed race woman in particular through characterizing Eulalia King, Rosabella and Alfred’s first born, as bred like a flower.¹⁸⁵ “Nature is very capricious in the varieties she produces by mixing flowers with one each other,” such that sometimes a new color is produced, sometimes one “is delicately shaded into the other,” and sometimes the distinct colors are assembled into various patterns. “Nature had indulged in one of her freaks in the production of Eulalia,” inheriting elements of each of her parents’ features, yet “[t]he combination” appears “very handsome” (302). Cleverly using a stock trope of sentimental writing in scientific and literary genres that relates civilized women to pious flowers, Child signals that racial mixing is the work of God’s hand. Rosenthal argues that this passage echoes popular botanical textbooks that instruct how to breed hybrid roses.

¹⁸⁴ E. Wayne Carp, ed. *Adoption in America: Historical Perspectives* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 5-6.

¹⁸⁵ Like all her female relatives, Eulalia is named after a flowering plant, in her case a blooming ornamental grass.

Such grafting and interbreeding works to “improve the quality” of the flowers and are described with terms from Linnaean botany rooted in language to describe human sexuality, suggesting that Child’s application of floral breeding to human breeding is overdetermined.¹⁸⁶ If the cultivation of flowers was meant to be a mid-century model for the breeding of civilized women, then Child points the reader’s attention not only to nature’s but to botanical science’s disregard for purity of stock to counter assertions of cross-racial relationships as unnatural. Locating racial mixing not in human wickedness, but in natural theology’s chosen symbol, Child thereby suggests that miscegenation is an organic path to national reconciliation.

Child offers a program for racial uplift that whites could engineer for African Americans. The extraordinarily wealthy Kings manage to reassemble the servants and slaves of their past as well as Lily Fitzgerald’s birth son, raised as a slave named George Faulkner, and his wife. Alfred King realizes at once that “the transformation [of George] into a gentleman would be an easy process,” which the family could shepherd to help atone for having robbed him of his birthright by Rosabella’s fevered baby swapping (413). Primed as he is to adapt to civilization given his hereditary birth, his military experience soon produces desirable physical effects and “considerably increased the manliness of his appearance” (435). His wife Henriette, a former slave, also manifests dramatic change. “Belonging to an imitative race, she readily adopted the language and manners of those around her” (433). Nonetheless, Henriette’s heredity proves a burden. After living amongst the Kings for three years, “[t]he improvement in her appearance

¹⁸⁶ Jane Haldimand Marcet, *Conversations on Vegetable Physiology* (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1830), 198, quoted in Rosenthal, “Floral Counterdiscourse,” 235.

impressed [Mr. King] greatly,” though “[h]er features were not handsome” and her “black hair” remained “too crisp” to conceal her “brown forehead” (433). Child is thus unwilling to grant floral beauty to those who had not yet inherited centuries of civilization and its consequent “superb head[s]” (234). Yet George and Henriette are Child’s model subjects of better breeding, and the novel concludes with King placing George and Henriette on a strict moral, training, and business regimen through which he hopes, in the future, to show that whites may “bring [African Americans] all up” to the “level” his class deems prudent (434). “When black Chloe” witnesses Henriette enjoying her piano instruction, she becomes “somewhat jealous” that the “same privilege” had been denied to her children, who were “black” rather than “brown” (419). Chloe and the other servants benefit primarily from the alleged joys of their employment, lacking as they do the visible evidence of a significant European inheritance. In Child’s vision of national reconciliation, a black servant class remains more or less intact.

As Child’s reliance on the language of biology makes apparent, such a plan is rooted precisely in her strongly held belief in the evolutionary effects of domestic civilization. Exploiting the floral analogy to the utmost, her novel argues for the potential of black equality by posing adoption, marriage, and reproduction as strategies for the cultivation of “human flowers,” provided they were from a stock capable of growth. Floral analogies naturalize the mixed race heroines Eulalia, Rosabella, and Flora as products of God’s hand, elastic and exuberant beings who need only fresh air and warm sentiment to blossom into womanhood. In contrast, organic metaphors suggest that the formerly enslaved of mixed race ancestry could be cultivated through training that, over time, will reproduce the habits and physiques of the civilized.

Uncle Tom's Tenement and the Cultivation of the Poor

In common with all abolition fiction after 1850, the indebtedness of Lydia Maria Child's text to Harriet Beecher Stowe's paradigmatic novel is palpable. In particular, Child and Stowe share a commitment to Lamarckian processes of evolutionary change and the belief in the imitateness of African Americans as the central solution to the ills slavery created. Several critics have commented on the evolutionary structure of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, presently the text that occupies the center stage of sentimental literary criticism. Lynn Wardley explores the novel's investment in the evolutionary effects of domestic space, illuminating how the characters' temperaments and physiques are determined in large part by their habitations.¹⁸⁷ Lora Romero has usefully analyzed the ways that nineteenth-century ideas of physical health structure Stowe's critique of patriarchal power, revealing the extent to which her text participates in the era's wide embrace of biological power relations.¹⁸⁸ These later studies suggest the incompleteness of Philip Fisher's earlier claim, in recognition of what he terms the novel's "Darwinism," that the "texture" of Stowe's novel "is sentimental but its structure is naturalist" (17). Sentimentalism, in his view, represents a transition point between historical romance and naturalist fiction, a halfway mark where the political concerns of authors like Cooper meet the economic involvement of Dreiser or Crane.

In contrast, I point to studies corroborating my own analysis to suggest that it is not just *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, but the multi-genre discourse of sentimentalism that maintained extensive participation in the models of social life as an organic body

¹⁸⁷ Wardley, "American Fiction."

¹⁸⁸ Romero's argument usefully demonstrates the degree to which sentimentalism was part and parcel of political structures. See Romero, *Home Fronts*.

promoted by Spencer and other popular scientific thinkers. While naturalism has typically been recognized as the first major U.S. genre to engage with evolutionary thinking as a fundamental literary strategy, I suggest that an appreciation of the wide influence of Lamarckian, Spencerian, and other evolutionary theories on literary culture before Darwin's work appeared in the United States in 1860 could abrogate the need to explain sentimentalism's interest in species change as primarily anticipating naturalism. In fact, biological change was a central concern of the nineteenth century and one that not only linked private and public spheres, but rendered any attempt to delineate them impossible. Sentimental authors' elaboration of the physiological impact of affect helped to develop this discourse of power that elevated the individual feeling and desire of European Americans into the status of forces of growth. Yet this analysis does not seek to congratulate sentimental authors for their previously underappreciated cultural power. Rather, I reveal the structural links between their projects, which are typically labeled "racial reform" (in the nineteenth-century as well as today), and the work of racial scientists whose work is widely dissected as helping to solidify racial hierarchies.

The abuses of slavery "*sink into my heart,*" Eva Sinclair famously warns her parents in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a tidy encapsulation of the physical effects of sympathy from the genre's model child heroine (256). Stowe argues on the opening pages of the novel that racial groups are differentiated on account of distinct inherited characteristics that have been shaped by their environment. Africans, she explains, are "an exotic race, whose ancestors, born beneath a tropic sun, brought with them, and perpetuated to their descendents, a character so essentially unlike the hard and dominant Anglo-Saxon race," that the gross inequality between these populations has been all but inevitable (3). "The

Saxon is born of ages of cultivation, command, education, physical and moral influence!” she enthuses, while “the Afric [is] born of ages of oppression, submission, ignorance, toil, and vice!” (268). White residents of Kentucky, in particular, are “a good illustration of the doctrine of transmitted instincts and peculiarities,” having inherited the “frankest, easiest, and most jovial” traits possible from their rural lifestyle (115). St. Clare, like Child’s Fitzgerald, functions as an example of the degenerating effects of slaveholding on the Southern elite, particularly because his father and uncle’s separate paths led one to become an upright Northern Yankee, and the other a dissipated slaveholder. Had they both been slaveholders, “they would have been as like as two old bullets cast in the same mould” (249). Stowe’s resolution to this evolutionary stand-off is infamously not abolitionism – for all of her black characters are transported to Africa at the novel’s close – but rather to convince her readers that an environment of feeling and sympathy could easily give the children of African descent a leg up the evolutionary ladder closer, though not ultimately reaching, the level of white civilization.

The novel’s use of the adoption trope enables Stowe to provide direct evidence of the effects of culture in shaping an individual. As Ezra Tawil has similarly pointed out, the orphan slave Topsy is presented to the reader as an “experiment” who demonstrates how easily warm feeling could leave its mark on this highly “sensitive and impressible race” (313).¹⁸⁹ Topsy is a “fresh-caught specimen,” whose “virgin soil” is ready “to be educate[d] . . . and train[ed] in the way she should go” (260, 264). Her noted “talent for

¹⁸⁹ Tawil convincingly argues that the trope of the “imitative negro” functions as the heart of Stowe’s political project in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, an agenda located at the intersections of sentimentalism and racial theory. His provocative analysis, however, is limited by his exclusive focus on the novel, at the expense of demonstrating the wide influence of sentimental racial categories on the evolutionary sciences and other arenas. See Tawil, *Making of Racial Sentiment*, 152-190.

every species of drollery, grimace, and mimicry” and powers of “imitating every sound that hit her fancy” suggest that she will be a particularly successful sponge (270). While Miss Ophelia ultimately accepts this challenge, it is Eva who first attempts to transform Topsy, using her love and affection. The slave child reciprocates with her first act suggesting her capacity to be good: she brings Eva a “beautiful bouquet” (309). Told by Eva that she “arrange[s] flowers very prettily,” Topsy completes the triumph by shedding her first tear of joy (310). The attention she fixes on flowers portends that she in fact possesses a capacity for imitative change. While cruel words, beatings, and shame had created a wildly resistant worker and “a mind stupefied and animalized by every bad influence from the hour of birth,” Miss Ophelia learns to cry a sentimental tear over the girl’s misery and to promise to learn to love the slave child (251). “From that hour, she acquired an influence over the mind of the destitute child that she never lost,” (324) Stowe writes, and Topsy comes to display qualities of obedience, sentiment, and hopefulness in her eager obedience to her Miss Ophelia’s wishes, especially after Eva’s death. For Stowe, sentimental sympathy is a physiological force that can reshape African American children’s emotional, mental, and physical characteristics in preparation for their journeys to Liberia, where Topsy and others will serve as midwives to the “birth-pangs” of a Christian Africa (469).

In the years following the Civil War, Stowe came to find a place for African Americans within the nation’s borders. She and her husband became part owners of a Florida plantation in order to demonstrate that the influences of “civilized life” would physically transform former slave hands into wageworkers who turned a profit for their

employers.¹⁹⁰ Her project memoirs explain its evolutionary rationale: while her laborers “were a fair specimen of the Southern negro as slavery had made and left him,” they “and their children are and will be just what *education* may make them” (289, 314-5). That the habits of wage labor for refined patrons could change the character of not only present workers, but also future generations, is a key feature of the many advice books, household manuals, novels, sermons, and even plantation memoirs we think of as the central texts of the culture of sentiment.

While Stowe’s most famous text, as with her plantation project, promises the rehabilitation of a “childlike” race, it is the capacity for upward evolution and, in poor circumstances, the downward spiral, of the children of the civilized that most captured the attention of her literary peers (160).¹⁹¹ The biological cast of Eva’s impressibility illuminates one of the central concerns of sentimental fiction, that the plasticity of European origin children could pose as much threat as promise. Lamarckian evolution’s premise that function dictates form offered the potential for unlimited growth when a child was raised in an environment that could best develop their moral, physical, and mental assets. Indeed, the sentimental genre – Lamarckism’s narrative form – charts a young girl who seeks her own family, learning both to restrain her own impulses and the importance of selecting the right environment for her development in the process.

However, as Cynthia Eagle Russett explains, late nineteenth-century social and scientific

¹⁹⁰ Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Palmetto-Leaves* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1968), 306. For details on Stowe’s Florida experiment and its relationship to her faith in the transformative power of the labor contract, see Rachel N. Klein, “Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Domestication of Free Labor Ideology,” *Legacy* 18, no. 2 (2001): 135-152.

¹⁹¹ Reformers turned their attention in particular to Native American youth, as I discuss briefly in the Epilogue. For readings of the rich political uses of the child’s status as always in the process of becoming, see Claudia Castañeda, *Figurations: Child, Bodies, Worlds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) and Levander, *Cradle of Liberty*.

thinkers elaborated three distinct yet often overlapping ways in which heredity could result in devolutions rather than transpire in improved generations. Darwin promoted the notion of atavism, which describes offspring that represent an unexpected reversion to a more primitive evolutionary type. Degeneration, codified in the 1857 work of French psychiatrist Bénédict Morel, signifies a “downward spiral” due to the transmission of environmental factors and usually ends, like little Eva, with the termination of the line. Finally, arrested development described a status of immobility, in which some organs or entire organisms failed to develop past a stage of immaturity (66-70). Of these three, degeneration, the pattern most dependent on the consequences of the environment of an organism, was by far the most popular explanatory mechanism for the threat of evolution gone awry. Degeneration was the twin of evolutionary progress, the specter that haunted the belief in the hereditary power of the environment to shape species change.

The continuance of the sentimental genre in the early heydays of naturalism suggests that the genre’s take on organic growth did not merely anticipate or predate naturalism’s interest in the relative effects of heredity and environment. Rather, sentimental fiction had a distinct political and theoretical investment that it carried into the Gilded Age years. Such a view illuminates the large role women writers played in the development of social evolutionary thinking as well as in developing the notion of “race” as a distinct hierarchy of biological and cultural difference that the theory relies on. One revealing text in this regard is Alice Wellington Rollins’ 1888 novel *Uncle Tom’s Tenement*, which is centrally concerned with the ways that the flexibility of civilized corporeality could backfire in degenerating environments. Stowe’s novel certainly had many imitators, though perhaps not many so bold as Rollins’ novel, which not only

adapts Stowe's plot, thematic structure, and character names and arc, but evolutionary paradigm as well. Rollins transposes Stowe's tale of the system of chattel slavery that exploits evolutionary racial difference to a story of the rapacious landlords of New York's tenements whose profit base relies on similarly inherited differences. Whereas sentimental classics such as *A New England Tale*, *The Lamplighter*, and *A Wide, Wide World* originally addressed audiences who had yet to hear of Darwinian natural selection, Rollins' book appeared during a time when evolutionary theories were hotly contested in the wake of the wide dissemination of Darwin's and Spencer's notions of organic growth and the belief that society itself functioned according to the same principles guiding individual organisms. The similarity of the model of organic growth *Uncle Tom's Tenement* shares with its antebellum literary predecessors, however, reflects the continuity of evolutionary theories held throughout the century that the popularity of the phrases "Darwinism" or "social Darwinism" in literary and cultural studies fails to capture.

Darwinism was one of many manifestations of species change and organic growth during the nineteenth century. Accordingly, the so-called Darwinian revolution beginning in 1859 should not serve as our only signpost to mark the exchange between literature and evolution. The term "Darwinism" operated as a synecdoche in the period, standing in for all evolutionary thinking, when in fact its theory was particular rather than pervasive. In fact, historians of science such as Peter Bowler and Robert Bannister emphasize the degree to which Darwin's ideas were "eclipsed" in the United States by competing evolutionary theories that persisted after the publication of *Origin of the Species*, especially those based on the Lamarckian inheritance of acquired characteristics, until the

modern Darwinian synthesis in 1940.¹⁹² In other words, sentimental fiction was not merely an unfortunate exploration of evolution that would soon be proven wrong by a scientist whose original discovery of a preexisting natural law was immediately recognized as a lightning bolt of truth, but one of many competing schema that sought to bring the behavior of individuals and social groups into line with natural law throughout the nineteenth century. Similarly, naturalism was not a bold experiment in exploring scientific ideas through literary structure, but a fall-out of the professionalization of each enterprise that had made significant headway by the 1880s. Naturalism could be said to be engaging with science only because the fields of arts and letters and scientific research were now seen as divergent enterprises. In contrast, sentimental literature emerged out of a fertile exploration of the mechanics of human growth and hereditary transmission that, since at least the age of Aristotle, had been led by writers and thinkers drawing simultaneously on narrative, empirical, lyrical, theoretical, and religious methods of research, analysis, and writing.

Gilded Age sentimental writing registered the ongoing and accelerated inequity of social relations under capitalism, including industrialization, urbanization, immigration, imperialist expansion, and the tremendous gap between rich and poor characteristic of the era. In these later decades, sentimental genres such as literature, photography, writing in social work, and other fields tended to emphasize the ways that sentimental impressibility could be brought not only to shape the individual household, but also to manage public institutions such as schools, boarding houses, suffrage organizations, immigrant

¹⁹² See Peter Bowler, *The Eclipse of Darwinism: Anti-Darwinian Theories in the Decades Around 1900* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution*; and Bannister, *Social Darwinism*.

neighborhoods, juridical arenas, and scientific practice.¹⁹³ For example, Alice Wellington Rollins' novel resituates sentimentalism's interest in the impressibility of youth from the bucolic landscapes characteristic of mid-century nostalgia for the yeoman farmer to the modern immigrant city, a key site of reformer fervor in the years during and following Reconstruction. Naturalist writers focused on the city as well, embracing the notion that inherited tendencies, while the products of ancestors' habits, won out over an individual's capacity to shape the direction of their own lives. Naturalism's characteristically strong use of foreshadowing, "unnatural" images, and overbearing symbolism work to curtail the character's opportunities in the reader's mind long before they present themselves to the character. Stephen Crane's *Maggie*, for one, in the eponymous novel, "blossoms in a mud puddle."¹⁹⁴ When the reader learns that Maggie's floral room decoration, bought to impress a beau with her attention to civilized domesticity, "appeared like violated flowers," she correctly anticipates the heroine's turn to sex work several chapters later, and perhaps also her self-inflicted demise (27).¹⁹⁵ In the naturalist schema, heredity dominates, rendering any attempt to improve oneself a tragicomic indulgence. In contrast, *Uncle Tom's Tenement*, in common with the sentimental genre to which it belongs, insists that bringing flowers to the urban poor and the urban poor to the countryside can effect an ameliorative constitutional change. Elite white reformers, she promises, can

¹⁹³ I here build on Laura Wexler's account of the public reform projects of post-Reconstruction domesticity. See Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 53-55.

¹⁹⁴ Stephen Crane, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (New York: Bantam, 2006), 20.

¹⁹⁵ Michael Elliott has shown the degree to which realist writing also played an important role in creating narrative strategies of evolutionary thinking. He argues that realism's attention to the unique details that gave groups a distinct identity, such as the language, dress, manners, and domestic relations specific to individual classes and locales, helped to articulate a concept of culture that led to Boasian relativism and broke away from the universalist narratives of progressive development argued by the nineteenth-century evolutionists under discussion here. See Michael A. Elliott, *The Culture Concept: Writing and Difference in the Age of Realism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

cultivate the poor, most especially by accelerating their removal to the West and thereby leaving the burgeoning city of New York to the wealthy. Using *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a comparative model, Rollins suggests that elites could resettle tenement youth in the country to solve the vexing disparity between the inhabitants produced by the tenement districts of the Lower East Side and the characters formed in the imperious mansions presiding over the northern stretches of the city. Her solution updates Stowe's deportation of African Americans to Africa in order to figuratively resolve the incongruity between the slave, hereditary product of barbarous Africa and raised in a shoddy cabin, and the civilized individual descended from European culture who "acquir[es], in a refined family, the tastes and feelings which form the atmosphere of such a place" (Stowe 365).¹⁹⁶

Uncle Tom's Tenement argues that the condition of poverty in New York tenements was not a consequence of industrial capitalism, but was an evolutionary effect of the tenements themselves, districts where "the clothes-line seemed to be the only things in the neighborhood that were decently clad."¹⁹⁷ As with slavery in Stowe's characterization, tenements lacked the material conditions many saw necessary for sentimental self-control. Their cramped quarters hopelessly muddled any attempt to create a sanctified private sphere and made the airing of dirty laundry the neighborhood's greatest virtue. "It is *not* poverty that makes the home," the novel repeatedly instructs, "it is the home that makes the poverty. What child, raised in these tenements, is going to

¹⁹⁶ Colleen C. O'Brien, "Race-ing Toward Civilization: Sexual Slavery and Nativism in the Novels of Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins and Alice Wellington Rollins," *Legacy* 20, nos. 1&2 (2003): 118. O'Brien traces how the rhetorical strategies of abolitionism structure what she sees as Rollins' defense, if a compromised one, of Irish American tenement dwellers. Her article is the only scholarship I have been able to locate about Rollins' novel.

¹⁹⁷ Alice Wellington Rollins, *Uncle Tom's Tenement* (Boston: William E. Smythe, 1888), 28.

grow up to become a competent citizen, and do anything well?" (32). Rollins' confident proclamations of the evolutionary effects of domesticity result perhaps from the wide, if indirect, degree of social influence the writings of sentimental authors had achieved on these topics. By the late 1870s, no less an authority than Lewis Henry Morgan, presently regarded as the nation's first cultural anthropologist, codified several of the characteristics sentimental writers had delineated as the crucial components of a civilized home as the universal evolutionary stages of life. His monumental *Ancient Society* (1877) outlined the seven characteristics pertaining to the seven sequential stages of development a society passes through before reaching the state of civilization. Morgan's seminal work dictated that subsistence, government, language, family, religion, house life and architecture, and private property, in that order, were both the cause and effect of group's arrival at a higher evolutionary plane. The placement of domestic relations and architecture, down to its floral festoonery, as the second-to-last stage a culture must reach before arriving at civilization signals the tremendous impact the authors of domesticity had on their scientific counterparts who were similarly exploring the physical transmission of human culture. In fact, Morgan identified domestic relations and the structure and adornment of the monogamous family home as so important to the development of civilization that it is the only one of the seven stages that he explored in a separate monograph-length work, issuing a volume titled *Houses and House-Life of the American Aborigines* in 1881. Science writing and literary sentimentalism continued to share a commitment to the evolutionary effects of domesticity despite the accelerating specialization of each form.

The plot of *Uncle Tom's Tenement* seeks to resolve a contradiction at the core of reform projects premised on the physiological impact of domestic space, a flourishing garden, and interpersonal affect. These sentimental uplift schemes, ranging from the establishment of off-reservation boarding schools to the migration of tenement youth organized by the Children's Aid Society, depended on the paid and unpaid work of middle-class and elite women who would instruct the charges in the prerequisite habits of evolutionary advance: cleanliness, promptitude, and religious feeling. Richard Henry Pratt, Charles Loring Brace, and Alice Wellington Rollins extolled the ability of civilized women to "keep hold of a lower class and gradually educate them up" closer to civilization through their sympathy, example, and instruction (Rollins 5). Yet this necessitated placing the somewhat malleable bodies of the elite in direct contact with the impoverished conditions that were allegedly both effect and origin of non-European degeneracy. The problem, as framed by Rollins, was how to orchestrate affective sympathy without intimacy.

Rollins plots this dilemma through the character of Effie Sinclair who, unlike Eva, survives to adolescence. Effie, the daughter of a Manhattan millionaire, becomes enamored with tenement reform, conceptualized as "forc[ing] the people to be clean till they have learned to like it" (33). Effie's regular visits to the Lower East Side in lavish gowns and a costly carriage are designed to "teach [the poor] to want nice things" and stimulate the habit of commodity desire that is a key component to reaching civilization (203). To Rollins, as to many others, the stage of primitiveness is characterized by a lack of awareness of one's own degradation. The desire for change, however, triggers an accompanying physiological, emotional, and mental reaction according to the sentimental

theory of bodily impressibility. Accordingly, young women like Effie could do a great deal of good by making tenement dwellers aware of their inferiority through their own example. However, like Eva, Effie has a plastic body and soul that her friends and protectors fear are absorbing the debauched atmosphere of Five Points and Cherry Street. Effie's "flower-like soul was lifting itself into the light . . . expanding in the healthful atmosphere of practical aspiration into lovely womanhood" (237). Yet instead of concentrating her efforts on the social engagements of Madison Avenue, her reform efforts are so successful and extensive that she considers taking a vow of poverty to live in the tenements where she feels she might have the most ameliorating effect on the lives of the poor through teaching them the habits of domesticity. She was at a vulnerable, malleable stage in which the contamination of poverty, her associates averred, would "strangle" her in its "pestilence," resulting in a "maiden" as "ruined" as if she herself had been a tenement prostitute (384). The physiological consequences of this affective relationship with the poor soon become visible, and Effie's father becomes distraught over her "pale" skin, "wistful" eyes heavy with "dark circles," and general "dreamy" demeanor (380). Finally convinced by her family and associates that to degenerate the tenement's only hope would be to ruin the lives of the poor as well as her own, Effie abandons the idea of forfeiting her wealth. Instead, she consents to participate in tenement reform as the titular owner of ten improved tenements which provide tenants with running water, shared laundry facilities, flower beds, and other conveniences while affording the landlords the opportunity to manage their tenants' affairs and a six percent return on their investment. As she signs her deed of property in the presence of her father and his investors, "[h]er white opera-cloak [fell] back a little from her throat, but the rich

white fur clung to her as if it did not like to be shaken off” (440). Thus saved from herself taking up the habits of poverty that produce its effects, Effie’s “rich white fur” clings to her as if it were her own skin. Through proprietorship and management, rather than camaraderie, Effie can affect progress without subjecting herself to contamination.

Uncle Tom’s Tenement’s extended critique of political economy continues the thread of sentimental novels such as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *The Wide, Wide World* that help to create domesticity as an ideology of capitalism. Rollins devotes entire chapters of her novel to descriptions of the degraded character of socialist meetings in the tenement, a mode of production she equates with slavery, and laudatory portrayals of Effie’s capitalist father convincing his workers, like a proto-John Galt, of his unique intellectual capacity to bear the burdens of company ownership. The novel’s devotion to capitalism stems in part from her political commitment to teaching slum landlords how to manage their poor. As Ralph Benham, the novel’s moral philosopher, avers, the solution to tenement poverty is to convince the landlords to turn their properties into spaces of amelioration rather than degeneracy (392). Given the deterministic role of place, elevating the poor would be impossible without the nation’s civilized landlords to manage their uplift. This unwillingness to see the root of the problem in capitalism itself rather than the sympathy of the landlords wearied William Dean Howells, who asked of the novel, “[b]ut is there any hope of permanent cure while the conditions invite one human creature to exploit another’s necessity for his profit?” As Howells comments, this

fundamental question is left “unanswered” in Rollins’ attempt to redress economic inequality with compassionate capitalism.¹⁹⁸

Yet there is also a place for the education of valiant tenement dwellers themselves in Rollins’ novel, whose unique worth is demonstrated by their willingness to embrace the opportunities of civilization for their children. The first time Effie visits Cherry Street, she dons a “delicate” frock and brings a bundle of flowers to distribute to tenement mothers. But the sudden “swarm” of children frightens her until she realizes that “it was lovely to have them care so much about a flower!” (145). Yet the tenement dwellers lack the potential for the salubrious effect of flowers enjoyed by the civilized, as they have not yet reached a stage of development where nature can be enjoyed as leisure rather than labor. The children fight over the flowers, scattering “petals, leaves and stems” everywhere in their struggle (147). In the vicious tautological logic of social evolutionary theories, the poor cannot enjoy a flower until they have already inherited constitutions that enable them to appreciate flowers as incarnations of divine grace. Karen Sanchez-Eppler argues that it was in part through mid-nineteenth century bourgeois representations of working-class children at work that middle-class ideas of childhood as a time of guilelessness, leisure, and play cohered.¹⁹⁹ Rollins’ reliance on this trope of poor children’s inability to play in order to paint the poor as uncivilized in the late 1880s suggests the tenacity of the link between popular literature, children’s leisure, and class. Simply put, the children lack the cultivation that would enable them to see the flowers as their counterparts in innocent and joyous growth. Accordingly, a precocious

¹⁹⁸ William Dean Howells, “Editor’s Study,” *Harper’s Magazine* 77, no. 461 (October 1888): 802.

¹⁹⁹ Sanchez-Eppler, *Dependent States*, 151-185.

young tenement girl advises Effie that what they need most of all is flowers “with a root” (145). As with all flowers in sentimental fiction, these requested flowering plants carry heavy symbolism. The foliage, like the children, need to be planted in nutritive soil where they may continue to develop under the careful yet leisured tending of Effie and her counterparts. If sentimental heroines are wildflowers who thrive in open air, then working-class children are struggling plants direly in need of arable soil and careful breeding by the civilized races.

Uncle Tom’s Tenement carries out these metaphors to their fullest realization. Effie remembers to bring potted plants to the tenements on subsequent trips and Rollins instructs her readers how they too may participate in preparing fertile soil for the management of the poor. At her debutante tea, the “bud” (368) Effie looks with pleasure on the “loads and loads of flowers” (369) decorating her mansion, knowing that she will have the servants send them to the tenement the following morning. Conscious of her role as a young bloom, she refuses to pin on a corsage or carry a bouquet in society due to a “peculiar horror of the long stiletto rung through the delicate stems and stabbing the lovely blossoms to the heart” and a sympathetic feeling that a “flower out of water” must be “suffering” (370). Such details not only portray vivid images of Effie’s unique capacity for sympathy, they provide models for how Effie must treat herself. A blooming flower, Effie realizes that she too must not nip her life off at the bud by removing to the tenements.

The children of the poor however, were not flowers in need of water, but plants that need a place to grow roots under careful cultivation. Tenement child Mattie returns from her Fresh Air Fund-sponsored trip with a box of planted grass, her only “solace”

back in New York (280). She held her “eyes fastened upon it whenever she was awake,” but this proves rather temporary as soon Mattie closes her eyes for once and for all (280). More than merely a metaphor for the alleged unnaturalness of tenement living conditions, plants function in the text as models for the progress of the poor, as flowers in sentimental culture stood in as incarnations of love and piety for the civilized. That after Mattie’s death, the sod box produces a single flower illustrates the optimism with which Rollins approached her project of evolutionary uplift (371). Perhaps, in the future, Mattie’s relations could join the ranks of the flowers.

The novel’s model working-class mother, Eliza, understands that it is her duty to ensure that her young son, not from a stock that is born to bloom, is bred in fertile soil and fresh air. White maid to the wealthy Selby family, Eliza agrees to scrimp so that her husband George may invest more money in his attempts to patent his invention, and they move into a crowded tenement. After only one year, its habits have made their impression on their son Harry’s plastic nature. A protective mother, “Eliza was bitterly conscious that in the year they had been there Harry had caught ideas and habits and thoughts and language and tastes that perhaps all the years of his after life in comparative luxury and at least decency might never be able to eradicate” (73). Whereas Eliza dreams of sending Harry to the country so that he may immerse himself in a pastoral paradise featuring beds of wildflowers, tended daises and roses, tidy orchards, nutritious crops, and gentle farm animals, in reality Harry spends the brutal New York summer watching tenement youth taunt a drunken man with imaginary snakes in the building’s basement. When George’s boss steals his invention some weeks later, and with it any hope of financial security, Eliza makes the leap of faith that had urged her foremother across the Ohio River. But

instead of clutching Harry tightly and throwing herself onto a block of ice, Eliza realizes that she herself, a mother of the tenements, is the problem. “Will no one save him,” she anguishes, “not from the slave-hunter or the blood-hounds, but from *me*, his *mother*, who can only give him too little food, too little air, indecency for shelter and vice for his companions?” (170). With “a great throb of agony,” Eliza realizes that it is her duty to save Harry from herself, and she decides to send him off with Brace’s Children’s Aid Society to be adopted by a new home in the ameliorative West (169). The “safety valve” of the West promised to cure not only the shortage of labor and housing in the urban east, but also to provide thousands of miles of fertile cropland to raise a new generation of Americans and simultaneously complete the conquest of the West.

In many ways, *Uncle Tom’s Tenement* is an indictment of slum management as an equivalent of slavery. But as in Stowe’s novel, the text’s participation in creating the racial theories of the primitive yet imitative bodies of the poor ensures that the narrative uplift project casts the marginalized as not just targets of reform, but also culprits of degeneration. For Rollins, elite women could effect change in the city without any risk of self-contamination if they set their minds to teaching the poor to relocate to the healthful west and to relying on adoption as a means to cleanse the city of the indigents’ youngest and most malleable generation. The effects of this reform work promised to free the city from degenerative influences for generations to come. The Fresh Air Fund and other charities that sent (and continue to send into the twenty-first century) poor children to the countryside for a week or fortnight in the summer held so much promise for Rollins not only because they provide youth with temporary amusement and diversion – a chance to play at bourgeois childhood – but also because they were “wielding an untold amount of

influence in making the children like the country” (291). As Benham explains, “children come home enthusiastic, and some of the families will move out by and by. . . [A]nother generation is growing up, of boys and girls whose whole heart is set on having a home in the country” (292). As the poor need to develop roots to thrive, the poor will be absorbed into the rural west, leaving the city and as many low-wage laborers the wealthier classes deemed necessary.²⁰⁰ When managed according to the natural laws of social evolution, Rollins suggests, sympathy has the potential not only to ameliorate without intimacy, but can resolve the need for unneeded contact altogether.

Rollins offers the reader two additional women who are models of providing the best opportunity for the better breeding of their children their station affords. One is a middle-class woman struggling to maintain her commitment that “[h]er children *should* have pretty things!” (198-99). She promises never to move away from the civilized Central Park so that they may benefit from its green space. The Park’s broad boulevards were indeed designed precisely by Frederick Law Olmsted to ensure that the bourgeoisie had a pastoral yet orderly space of leisure miles away from the contagions of the Lower East Side and the commerce of Wall Street.²⁰¹ The other woman, Cassie, is a lost daughter of the tenement streets who, like Eliza, nonetheless learns to save her child through adoption. The novel’s final image offers clear hope of evolutionary redemption. Cassie has a crisis of conscience brought about by Effie’s tutelage and realizes her duty

²⁰⁰ Charles Loring Brace’s plan to cleanse the city of indigent children, explored in the next chapter, also recommended the development of large suburbs within commuting distance of New York in which poor families would dwell. Brace’s design promised a city dominated by the wealthy but serviced by the poor. See Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years’ Work Among Them*, 3rd ed. (New York: Wynkoop, 1880), 51-63.

²⁰¹ See especially S.B. Sutton, ed., *Civilizing American Cities: A Selection of Frederick Law Olmsted’s Writings on City Landscapes* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971).

to “save the child!” from sex work, its likely inherited fate (469). It is “too late – too late – for the generation that is past,” the narrator declares on the novel’s final page, “but for the children, for the generations yet unborn, what heritage shall we prepare?” (468).

Realizing her duty as a breeder of the future, Cassie relinquishes her daughter to the care of fitter parents who will not “ruin her” as she would (467). Adoption, and its attendant possibilities of adaptation, proves Rollins’ best solution to rehabilitate the children of poor.

Interrupting the Inheritance of Fate

I have suggested that the genres of sentimentalism were centrally concerned with describing how experiences modify the body and how these acquired characteristics are passed on to the next generation. In particular, I focus on the trope of the orphan heroine to investigate how the young white orphan inherits a structure of feeling from her parents but remains malleable to new influences that continue to shape her body and form her character. Celebrating their heroines’ abilities to make judicious choices and exercise self-control, the novels trace the physical impact of their heroines’ model behavior as they bloom into gracious young women whose very moral worth is allegedly reflected in the curve of their jaw and the pallor of their skin. The genre’s engagement with the sciences and languages of flower study helped to create a model of civilized womanhood as a blooming wildflower who could prosper as long as she had healthful air and Christian nurture. In contrast, Rollins cast the poor as plants whose roots needed to be developed by the civilized. Sentimental fiction of the post-Reconstruction era has a greater tendency than its predecessors to apply the genre’s willingness to see families as

affiliative rather than biological in order to suggest adoption as an evolutionary strategy. Whereas earlier fiction portrays the resilience of civilized young girls who survive an orphan's trials before alighting at a familial home that will allow her to blossom, later reformist fiction such as Rollins' emphasized adoption as a means for the civilized to curtail the full brunt of the inheritance of the poor. The hardy New England protagonist of Helen Hunt Jackson's posthumous novel *Zeph* (1885), for example, successfully extracts a signature from the town prostitute during a moment of extreme duress that forfeits the rights to her baby. Professing that adoption is "the most natural thing in the world," the heroine delights in having obtained custody over the child, which she shares with the child's father whom she marries shortly thereafter (199-200). With little pity for the birth mother, Jackson's novel sees adoption as an accelerator of social advance, particularly in the healthful rural environments of Colorado and California.

In the next chapter, I turn to the reformer Charles Loring Brace, considered the father of modern foster care. Brace was deeply inspired by these evolutionary theories and by key architects of the sentimental ideology of the malleability of children, such as his boyhood preacher Horace Bushnell, and, one suspects, his cousin Harriet Beecher Stowe. I show how he was committed to transforming the sentimental orphan trope into a plan for action. He launched the Children's Aid Society of New York in 1853, and under his direction until his death forty years later, the Society removed hundreds of thousands of Irish, Italian, and other immigrant children from their parents and neighborhoods in the tenement districts of Manhattan. I argue that Brace's plan was not primarily designed to benefit the youth the agency worked with, but rather was intended to breed a healthier, hardier, and whiter generation of Americans. As such, both sentimental literature and the

origins of U.S. foster care can be considered important signposts in the development of proto-eugenic thinking in the United States. When a strict hereditarian view began to unseat the dominance of Lamarckian environmentalism at the turn of the century, priorities shifted to regulating who gives birth, rather than modifying the environments of children already born. Consequently, literary and social programs to ameliorate indigent children lost popular favor as a method of biological change.²⁰² Yet far from discarding the child as the figure of liberal reform, a wide variety of political constituencies redoubled their belief in breeding better children as a core function of modern democratic governmentality. The eugenics movements of the twentieth century thus illuminate an insidious legacy of sentimental novelists' work to promote the propagation of civilized children and the management of the poor as the seeds of national progress.

²⁰² For example, Claudia Nelson analyzes shifts in the representations of adoption in fictional and non-fictional writing from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1920s. She argues that turn-of-the-century social welfare and literary writing promoted childhood as an agent of reform, whereas by the first decade of the twentieth-century literary adoption tended to function as emotional remediation for women without children. See *Little Strangers*.

CHAPTER FOUR

Orphans of Progress: Child Migrants and Bodily Impressibility in New York Tenement Reform

“I have so much trouble with the girls I hire, I am almost persuaded if I have one to train up in my way from a child, I shall be able to keep them awhile”

– Harriet Wilson, *Our Nig*

As we saw in the previous chapter, sentimental discourse in the mid-nineteenth century constructed the civilized child as the incarnation of evolutionary growth and development. Popular novelists portrayed orphaned female youth as wildflowers whose hereditary elasticity, piety, and fertility ensured that they would flourish in a variety of settings. In contrast, the theory of sentimental bodily impressibility developed by evolutionary scientists, novelists, reformers, theologians, and others envisioned primitive youth as gardens teeming with weeds and in desperate need of tending. Opposing their contemporaries who understood the evolutionary stages of barbarism to connote static immutability, sentimentalists cast the primitive as malleable subjects that could be cultivated. Unlike fictional orphan heroines, however, whose alienation ironically reveals her hereditary potential for growth, the figurative and material orphaning of poor youth in literary texts and reform societies represents an elite and middle-class attempt to interrupt the inherited tendencies of barbarism.

For many well-off New Yorkers in the nineteenth century, the city’s increasing industrialization and attendant domestic and international immigration produced high density housing, low wages, and a heterogeneous population that threatened the racial,

gender, and domestic ideals the emerging middle classes promoted as civilization.²⁰³

Reformers' concerns about the rapidly changing urban landscape often crystallized in the symbol of the European street child. In their view, tenement youth were somewhat malleable subjects, and this very plasticity implied that the current condition of neighborhoods teeming with filth, corruption, and vice could become part of the very fabric of their being and be perpetuated in descendants for generations to come.

Tenement youth would transmit a predilection for illicit and immoral behavior, polluting the evolutionary progress of the national stock. For example, Lydia Maria Child expressed the thoughts of many when she toured the Five Points district in the early 1840s and reported that the "greatest misfortune" of the "squalid little wretches" of the Lower East Side was "that they were not orphans" and consequently could not be removed from their destitute neighborhoods to more "natural influences."²⁰⁴

Less than ten years later, the young reformer, reverend, and author Charles Loring Brace moved to New York City fresh out of Yale Divinity School and embarked on a large-scale effort to accomplish precisely what Child and others had wished. Brace interpreted the sentimental theory of bodily impressibility, which received particular elaboration in sentimental adoption fiction, as a plan for action. Unlike Child, Brace proved to have no qualms about recruiting tens of thousands of poor immigrant children from their families and neighborhoods in an effort "calculated to redeem these children physically and morally."²⁰⁵ From the early 1850s to his death in 1890, he built New

²⁰³ On the rise of capitalism in New York, see Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).

²⁰⁴ Child, *Letters from New-York*, 17, 43.

²⁰⁵ *The Children's Aid Society of New York. Its History, Plan and Results* (New York, 1893), 28. Hereafter noted in-text as *CAS*.

York's Children's Aid Society (CAS) into the nation's most visible child welfare organization. CAS ran a number of institutions designed to cultivate appropriate instincts and behaviors in Irish-American, German, and Italian tenement youth through labor, limited education, and the guidance of sympathetic authority figures. By 1893, CAS maintained twelve industrial schools that had trained over 100,000 youth and ran over twenty New York lodging houses that had sheltered over 200,000.

Nonetheless, the Society's favored project was its Emigration Plan, today best known as the "orphan trains." This landmark initiative migrated nearly 100,000 children from New York City to rural homes between 1854 and 1929, and inspired copycat programs among organizations such as the New York Foundling that collectively migrated at least another 100,000 youth. Recruited with a mixture of coercion and consent, children were sent to work rural homes to impress upon them a new set of inheritable instincts through the habits of civilized domesticity and hard labor. These efforts to atomize the families of poor were meant to destroy immigrant kinship networks as well as replace the asylum model for juvenile delinquency that predominated at that time. "All the seeds of vice which might otherwise lie dormant," Brace explained in the botanical imagery germane to sentimental evolutionary thinking, "spring up and grow noxiously" in the "hot-house air" of the asylum.²⁰⁶ These institutions enabled primitive instincts to flower and propagate, when it was in fact in the best interest of the emergent middle class to "prune dangerous impulses" (*BM* 3). That almost every single one of the migrated youth were of European ancestry, and almost half still had at least one living

²⁰⁶ C.L. Brace, *The Best Method of Disposing of Our Pauper and Vagrant Children* (New York: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck & Thomas, 1859), 5, 10. Hereafter noted in-text as *BM*.

parent, underscores the degree to which Brace and his organization seized sentimental bodily impressibility as a blueprint for national progress (CAS 40).

Numerous historians have examined Brace's astonishing child welfare programs, especially his westward Emigration Plan.²⁰⁷ The placing out program is now considered the origin of the foster care system in the United States, a marker of its groundbreaking efforts to house dependent children in small units modeled after the family. However, despite the long-term significance of Brace's work and his prolific publishing career in a variety of genres that provides historians with rich source material, scholars have overwhelmingly distilled the range of questions provoked by Brace's projects and writings into one hotly contested debate. One camp singles him out as a case study for examining how nineteenth-century reformers cruelly sought and gained control over the laboring classes through managing numerous aspects of their daily lives and family relationships. The other defends his efforts as an enlightened approach to the care of needy, dependent children for his recognition of street children as capable of humanitarian rehabilitation.²⁰⁸ Furthermore, existing scholarship excises Brace's research

²⁰⁷ One of the first historians to turn their attention to the role of Brace's Children's Aid Society within the larger history of the care of dependent children was Henry W. Thurston in 1930. See Thurston, *The Dependent Child* (New York: Arno Press, 1974). Other important assessments of Brace's work with tenement children include Boyer, *Urban Masses*; Miriam Z. Langsam, *Children West: A History of the Placing-Out System of the New York Children's Aid Society, 1853-1890* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1964); Marilyn Holt, *The Orphan Trains: Placing Out in America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992); Thomas Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision: Ideas and Institutions in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975); Bruce Bellingham, "Little Wanderers: A Socio-Historical Study of the Nineteenth-Century Origins of Child Fostering and Adoption Reform, Based on Early Records" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1984); Stephen O'Connor, *Orphan Trains: The Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children He Saved and Failed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001); Clay Gish, "Recruiting the 'Waifs and Strays' of the City: The Western Emigration Program of the Children's Aid Society," *Journal of Social History* 33, no. 1 (1999): 121-141; and Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1986).

²⁰⁸ Scholars who take a negative view of Brace's work, namely through arguing that he reinforced the class hierarchy by breaking apart immigrant families, include Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*; Ann

and publications in scientific fields from the assessment of his reform projects, a result of the contemporary division between sentimentalism and science that significantly obscures the significance of his work with the poor.²⁰⁹ In contrast, I suggest that placing Brace's child welfare efforts in the context of his extensive work in the fields of ethnology and evolutionary theory reveals that Brace's efforts to remove children from their poverty-stricken, immigrant families were not designed merely for the benefit of the children themselves any more than they were calculated primarily to serve present employers. Rather, he sought to address the needs of the capitalist and emergent middle classes for cheap labor by developing a better breeding project based upon the sentimental tradition of bodily impressibility, a goal that is at once far more chillingly calculating and wildly optimistic than current scholarship has held him responsible.

In this chapter, I draw on Brace's elaboration of evolution by embodied feeling in the genres of evolutionary theory, ethnology, medical geography, social welfare,

Vanderpol, "Dependent Children, Child Custody and the Mother's Pensions: The Transformation of State-Family Relations in the Early Twentieth Century," *Social Problems* 29, vol. 3 (1982): 221-235; and to some degree, Boyer, *Urban Masses* and Katharine Sara Bullard, "Saving the Children: Discourses of Race, Nation and Citizenship in America" (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2004). For a hagiographic account of Brace as the incarnation of the Christian spirit published for the Christian youth mass-market, see David and Neta Jackson, *Roundup of the Street Rovers* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2001). The far more common argument about Brace consists of a somewhat measured celebration of his programs as noble humanitarian efforts that provided much-needed care for dependent children and successfully overcame many of the period's prejudices towards the poor. For prominent examples, see Holt, *The Orphan Trains*; Langsam, *Children West*; Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision*, and O'Connor, *Orphan Trains*. Several historians have escaped (and similarly identified) this paradigm. As will be discussed below, Gish interprets Brace's western placing out program through prioritizing the experiences of working-class families themselves, a view that usefully complicates both the binary structure of Brace scholarship as well as the tendency of historians to emphasize the intentions and actions of reformers at the expense of the multivalent ways that the clients of reform institutions and organizations solicit their services. See Gish, "Recruiting the 'Waifs and Strays.'" For an illuminating discussion of the reductiveness of this dominant approach, particularly in relation to histories of groups marginalized by race, gender, and sexuality, see Peggy Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue: The Search for Female Moral Authority in the American West, 1874-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), xix-xxi.

²⁰⁹ Claudia Nelson, for example, argues that Brace's thinking was shaped more by religious principles than by scientific thinking. See Nelson, *Little Strangers*, 27.

theology, editorial journalism, and travel writing. His writing in these multiple forms reveals sentimentalism's wide reach among these still somewhat undifferentiated areas of knowledge. I analyze his social welfare work as the precipitation of his well-developed interest in evolving the "happy race of little heathens and barbarians," as he termed the offspring of the urban immigrant poor, into future generations of hardworking Protestant Americans whose labor would be useful to the wealthier classes.²¹⁰ His principal motivations were not to ensure the welfare of the youth themselves, but rather to mitigate the menace the immigrant poor seemed to present to the morals, property, and political system of New York and the nation.²¹¹ The Children's Aid Society promised to "implant" (CAS 3) in the city's "street Arabs" the main qualities thought to be the cause and effects of civilization: Protestant faith, familial sympathy, a dedication to domestic life, appropriately gendered behavior, and a love of private property and resource accumulation. This program of physiological and character transformation were designed to transform one of the country's greatest liabilities into a labor force both vast and honest that would prove an economic and moral asset rather than impediment to the nation's progression toward a future of "sympathy and humanity."²¹² Like many of his contemporaries, Brace believed that Protestant civilization "offers all the conditions which Evolution requires to form the perfect race or society," and his social welfare

²¹⁰ Quoted in LeRoy Ashby, *Endangered Children: Dependency, Neglect, and Abuse in American History* (New York: Twayne, 1997), 39.

²¹¹ Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years' Work Among Them*, 3rd ed. (New York: Wynkoop, 1880), 26. Hereafter noted in-text as *DC*.

²¹² Charles Loring Brace, *Gesta Christi: A History of Humane Progress Under Christianity* (New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1882), 469. Hereafter noted in-text as *GC*. On account of their public mobility and apparent rootlessness, the boys of the tenements were commonly referred to as "Street Arabs" in a range of mid- to late nineteenth-century public discourse, Brace's writing included. By aligning the children with a population seen as the antithesis of the West, such terminology emphasized the threat they seemed to pose to the moral and economic order of New York and the nation.

programs were designed to ensure that the influx of immigrants would not prevent the United States from claiming this millennial destiny (*GC* 473). Historian Clay Gish has demonstrated that working-class families, however, participated in the Emigration Plan for a variety of reasons, including much-needed labor training and temporary housing, as I explain.

Brace's writings and administrative work offer an important vantage point into the politics of nineteenth-century sentimentalism. His landmark child welfare efforts illuminate how sentimentalism continued to link scientific thinking and reform work into the late nineteenth century. They present a case study of how the sentimental theory of embodied emotion and corporeal impressibility played a constitutive role in developing the nineteenth-century categories of barbarism and civilization, which comprised discourses of gender, class, sexuality, and race. Furthermore, Brace's work provides a useful corrective to scholarly tendencies to interpret sentimentalism as primarily a discursive event and offer a dramatic illustration of the material consequences of sentimentalism's work to construct the child as the figure of national progress. The paucity of attention to Lamarckism in American studies, historical, and literary scholarship has obfuscated of the degree to which nineteenth-century interest in better breeding flourished under the guise of sentimental and environmentalist approaches like Brace's that emphasized social welfare work and childcare. While Brace's commitment to manipulating the heredity of the poor stands in contrast to twentieth-century hereditarianism that encouraged the regulation of the rates of childbirth rather than the act of child-rearing, it nonetheless reveals the depth of the nineteenth-century investment in controlled breeding. The efforts of the Children's Aid Society in fact represent a

landmark of proto-eugenic reform in the United States, a keystone that illuminates not only some of the consequences of sentimentalism's participation in racial thinking but its pivotal role in developing a culture of better breeding in the United States.

The Scientific and Sentimental Background of Charles Loring Brace

Together, the discourses of sentimentalism and civilization promised the inevitable progress of civilization under Christianity. Charles Loring Brace was an eager student of the role of sentimental bodily impressibility in ushering millennial harmony as advocated by Protestant theology, orphan fiction, social reform, and evolutionary science. He moved within an elite network of family, friends, and acquaintances that enabled him to be at the forefront of developments in each of these four interrelated intellectual traditions. Cousin to Harriet Beecher Stowe and Catherine and Henry Ward Beecher, these relations were strengthened by family connections on both his maternal and paternal sides. Brace grew up in the Beechers' Connecticut milieu, where his father was Stowe's teacher and later principle of Catherine Beecher's Hartford Female Seminary. So memorable did the young Harriet Beecher find her teacher that she modeled the character of Jonathan Rossitter in *Oldtown Folks* (1869) after Brace's father.²¹³ The familial inspiration went both ways, as well. Brace's own career path, beginning at Yale Divinity School but ending in social welfare reform, paralleled the leading role of Stowe's father, Lyman Beecher, in transforming Protestant reform societies into the power base of U.S.

²¹³ Stowe later lauded Brace's father, John Pierce Brace, as "one of the most stimulating and inspiring instructors I ever knew," and complimented him for much of the "training and inspiration" of her youth. In particular, she appreciated his talents in botany, mineralogy, and other natural sciences, as well as philosophy and composition. See Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage*, 80-81.

Christianity (rather than churches) in the wake of the “disestablishment” of state-sponsored religion in the early nineteenth century.²¹⁴

As a child, Brace was influenced by the family preacher Horace Bushnell, a popular theologian now credited with playing a major role in overthrowing Calvinist notions of children’s inborn depravity through emphasizing children’s impressibility to their environment. “The child looks and listens,” Bushnell warned in his famous sermon and subsequent tract *Unconscious Influence* (1852), “and whatsoever tone of feeling or manner of conduct is displayed around him, sinks into his plastic, passive soul, and becomes a mould of his being ever after.”²¹⁵ Offering a loosely formulated “law of social contagion,” Bushnell proposed that the environment sinks into the souls and bodies of children’s malleable natures, guaranteeing that “our life and conduct are ever propagating themselves” in the younger generation.²¹⁶ Lynn Wardley astutely emphasizes that to Bushnell (as well as to the Beecher siblings), the life and conduct of a household’s human and inanimate residents each played a foundational role in shaping the nature of the child and her future descendents. This made the domestic space a place of paramount importance for the evolutionary development of children, and illuminates why streetchildren’s inhabitation of public thoroughfares, darkened doorways, and slimy gutters in front of bars and saloons struck horror in reformers’ hearts.²¹⁷ Brace later remarked that the lecture “affected my whole life,” and he modeled the Children’s Aid

²¹⁴ For more on the “disestablishment” of U.S. Protestantism, and Beecher’s role within it, see Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture*, 17-43.

²¹⁵ Rev. Horace Bushnell, *Unconscious Influence: A Sermon* (London: Partridge and Oakey, 1852), 19.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, quoted in O’Connor, *The Orphan Trains*, 21.

²¹⁷ Wardley, “American Fiction and the Civilizing House,” 44, 45.

Society after the evolutionary theory of bodily impressibility that Bushnell played a formative role in developing.²¹⁸

Brace's social position also enabled him to keep up to date with contemporary developments in evolutionary science and ethnology, fields animated at the time by the intellectual and cultural tradition of embodied emotion. His study of the natural world bolstered his belief in the possibility of engineering dramatic changes in physicality and character within one generation. His Yale education, personal wealth, and the marriage of his cousin Jane Loring to Asa Gray, the most celebrated botanist of the nineteenth-century United States and one of Darwin's greatest stateside champions, granted him some degree of access to the leading scientists in the English-speaking world. These conditions underwrote Brace's work as a scientific popularizer. In fact, Brace was one of the first people in the United States to read Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*. Upon its publication in London in November of 1859, Darwin sent only two copies of the book to the United States – one to the famed Louis Agassiz and the other to Gray, his friend and colleague.²¹⁹ Brace studied Darwin's book avidly during a Christmas visit with the Grays at their Cambridge home the following month, shortly after it had arrived.²²⁰ At a meeting of the Transcendentalists in Concord a week later, it was Brace who first told Henry David Thoreau, Bronson Alcott, and the others gathered there of Darwin's theory of

²¹⁸ Emma Brace, ed. *The Life of Charles Loring Brace: Chiefly Told in His Own Letters* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1894), 8 quoted in Stephen O'Connor, *Orphan Trains: The Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children He Saved and Failed* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 19. Brace, *The Life of Charles Loring Brace* is hereafter noted in-text as *L*.

²¹⁹ Sidney Ratner, "Evolution and the Rise of the Scientific Spirit in America," *Philosophy of Science* 3, no. 1 (Jan. 1936): 105.

²²⁰ On the arrival of *Origin* at the Grays, see A. Hunter Dupree, *Asa Gray, 1810-1888* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 267.

natural selection, a theory which would profoundly shape their future work.²²¹ Brace himself came to see Darwinism as a panacea for the evils of the modern city, and read *The Origin of Species* thirteen times, combing it for solutions (L 300). Through Gray's connections, Brace's study of evolution culminated with a visit to both Darwin and prominent geologist and naturalist Charles Lyell in England. At Darwin's Bromley cottage, Brace informed the famous naturalist of U.S. scientist Dr. William Charles Wells' early nineteenth-century work on the evolution of the skin color of African Americans, which Darwin later cited as the first statement of the principle of natural selection, however limited it was in scope.²²²

Brace owned that "he owed a great deal intellectually" to his relationship with Asa Gray and boasted of their "incessant talks and disputations on Darwinism" (L 443, 303). The correspondence between the two friends bears the record of a sustained dialogue in which the botanist sought to curb Brace's flights of passion with the more tempered logic of deductive reasoning. In particular, Gray attempted to reign in the theologian's tendency to substitute wild extrapolation for reliable evidence. "When you *unscientific people* take up a scientific principle you are apt to make too much of it," he chided Brace after reviewing a manuscript that claimed that experiences like water-

²²¹ Ferrie Helkie, "An Interview with C. Loring Brace," *Current Anthropology* 38, no. 5 (1997): 852. C. Loring Brace, the reformer's great-grandson, is a noted physical anthropologist who revised the field in light of the precepts of natural selection. Both his independent work and collaborations with Ashley Montagu played a significant role in the discipline's move away from "race" as a physiological category.

²²² Charles L. Brace, "Darwinism in Germany," *North American Review* 110, no. 227 (1870): 287. Hereafter cited in-text as *D*. For Darwin's admission that "[Wells] distinctly recognizes the principle of natural selection, and this is the first recognition which has been indicated. . .", as well as his credit to Robert Rowley for bringing it to his attention via Brace, see Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (New York: Modern Library, n.d.), 5. This passage appears in *Origin* from the fourth edition on.

crossings had profoundly shaped the evolution of the Egyptian “race.”²²³ Like many others who approached Darwinism with philosophical, but not biological, training, Brace both championed Darwin’s theories and interpreted them as much more compatible with the inheritance of acquired characteristics than the English naturalist or his U.S. colleague were willing to acknowledge.²²⁴ Brace’s analyses, which read Darwinian natural selection as a system that promulgated the overwhelming power of the environment to change an individual’s hereditary material, chafed against Gray’s professional experience as a plant breeder who had witnessed through observation that a plant will produce offspring possessing a number of different characteristics, despite their identical environments.²²⁵ Yet the popular reading audiences who purchased Brace’s books in large part shared the reformer and preacher’s conviction in the nearly unlimited power of the individual to produce new characteristics that will be inherited by future generations, especially in European individuals whose bodies were promoted as malleable and elastic. Brace’s scientific publications thus provide an instructive place to examine how evolutionary impressibility served as the theoretical underpinning of his ongoing work with the Children’s Aid Society as well as how a popular science writer with the motivations of a

²²³ Asa Gray and Jane Loring Gray, *Letters of Asa Gray*, vol. 2 (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1894), 457, emphasis in the original.

²²⁴ Gray, in fact, chided Darwin himself for “read[ing] quite Lamarckian” in his reliance on the inheritance of acquired characteristics to explain how modifications to the organs are triggered and then passed onto descendants, and referred to these passages as the “weakest point of the book.” *Ibid.*, 457.

²²⁵ See, for example, *Ibid.*, 460. Nevertheless, Gray’s dedication to reconciling Darwinism with Protestant theology was one of the conditions of the rise of neo-Lamarckism during the last few decades of the nineteenth century. The work of Gray and others suggested that evolution was a process micromanaged by the divine, a move that specialists came to reject as unscientific. In response, many turned to Lamarckism as a more tenable union of divine and natural law by arguing that God had instituted a mechanism for change driven by experience, choice, and will. See Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 207. With no small flair for controversy, neo-Lamarckians presented their teleological theory as a sharp contrast with Darwin’s outline of an evolution motivated by population pressure and chance, a subject that is the focus of Chapter Five of this dissertation.

reformer rather than the training of Gray approached evolution at mid-century. His writings suggest the ongoing role of sentimentalism in scientific practice, something that perhaps unsettled figures like Gray, who helped professionalize U.S. science in part by developing allegedly objective means of study. Yet, in Gray, Brace had the ear of the thinker most responsible for demonstrating Darwinism's compatibility with divine law in the United States, an intellectual undertaking that secured the longevity of the theory during an era deeply hostile to materialist accounts of natural laws.²²⁶ Brace built on Gray's mantle of cosmic theism, which saw natural laws as the unfolding of a divine plan, to become one of the first to interpret evolutionary theory as a blueprint for reform, a trend that characterizes much of the late nineteenth-century United States.

The Evolutionary Theories of Charles Loring Brace

At the heart of Brace's intellectual and reform work (as well as Gray's criticisms of Darwin) was Darwin's theory of pangenesis. Hesitatingly articulated in *The Origin of Species*, pangenesis built on the pre-existing Lamarckian notion of the transmission of acquired characteristics and as a consequence was seized upon by interpreters like Brace who were committed to an interventionist approach to species change. A decade later, Darwin expounded upon pangenesis as the hereditary mechanism by which an organism registers adaptations and, in the right circumstances, passes them to descendants.²²⁷ Like other pre-Mendelian accounts of heredity, Darwin's theory proposed that each cell contains a unit, in this case termed a "gemmule," that registers the significant experiences of the cell and, at various stages of the organism's life, detaches from the host to join the

²²⁶ Ratner, "Evolution in America," 105-109; Bowler, *Evolution*, 205-6.

²²⁷ Charles Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* (London: John Murray, 1868).

organism's sex cells. The gemmule would transmit the qualities of its host cell to the reproductive organs, thus assuring that modifications made to the body during its lifetime would be perpetuated in its offspring. Darwin emphasized, however, that random variation in fact produced most adaptations. These changes would then be passed on to future generations only if they helped the organism better survive its environment. His nineteenth-century readers, however, like Brace, disregarded population pressure as the mechanism that drives evolution and seized the theory of gemmules as evidence that human intervention could shape species change.

For his part, Brace proposed that changing the individual's environment could radically alter an individual's gemmules. In Brace's words, while the gemmules inherited by a tenement prostitute from her similarly employed mother are "working in her blood, producing irresistible effects on her brain, nerves, and mental emotions," other "moral, mental, and physical influences" may prevent her latent desires from dictating her future (*DC* 43). For this reason, Brace planned the orphaning of poor children as a means to impress upon them the virtues of self-control, employment, and religiosity that would counteract their inherited impulses. "The separation of children from parents, of brothers from sisters, and of all from their former localities, destroy[s] that continuity of influence which bad parents and grandparents exert," Brace proclaimed, outlining his plan to Americanize immigrant youth by removing them from their families (*DC* 57).

Yet first and foremost, it was Herbert Spencer rather than Darwin or Gray whose ideas had the largest hand in shaping Brace's political and evolutionary thought. Spencer was one of the most influential intellectuals in the United States throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. As did Brace, most interpreted Darwin through the lens of

Spencer's grand synthetic theory. In the 1850s and 1860s, Spencer was a beacon of optimism to middle-class individuals representing a wide variety of political agendas because he saw all of human and animal life as an inexorable march toward progress and harmony.²²⁸ Today he is best remembered for coining the phrase "survival of the fittest," which Darwin later accepted as an appropriate characterization of natural selection. However, Spencer saw protracted competition and violence as an evolutionary strategy suited for the stages of savagery and barbarism, but not civilization.²²⁹ Based on a loose reading of German naturalist Karl Ernst von Baer's work, which argued that organic life progresses from simple to complex structures over time, Spencer proclaimed that all of life progresses from the homogenous to the heterogeneous. This was an evolutionary millennialism that guaranteed the progression of all extant organisms and their social structures. "The law of organic progress is the law of all progress," Spencer asserted, "[w]hether it be in the development of the Earth, in the development of Life upon its surface, in the development of Society, of Government, of Manufactures, of Commerce, of Language, Literature, Science, [and] Art."²³⁰ Consequently, Spencer merged the study and governance of the human and social body into one grand theory that promised a steady accession away from struggle and into peace if civilized humans could learn to bring social institutions into harmony with natural laws. As Mark Pittenger has written,

²²⁸ Herbert Spencer, *The Man Versus the State* (Caldwell, Id.: The Caxton Printers, 1965), 41.

²²⁹ In his later years, Spencer came to embrace a radically laissez-faire approach to government that condemned public institutions such as hospitals and educational facilities as "the coming slavery" for their use of tax money to proliferate unfit citizens who would contaminate social health. For good analyses of Spencer's shifting political thoughts, and the vituperative laissez-faire philosophy he embraced at the end of his life for which he is best remembered today, see Mark Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought, 1870-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 19-21 and Robert C. Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Thought* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 34-56.

²³⁰ Herbert Spencer, *Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative*, vol. 1 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1868), 3.

“it is a [s]mall wonder that [Spencer’s] all-encompassing explanatory schema, easily reducible to a few stock phrases and lending scientific sanction to a reassuring faith in inevitable progress, would prove comforting to nervous middle-class readers who felt themselves buffeted by social and economic change.”²³¹

Brace’s scientific work elaborates his understanding of the mechanism of species change. For Brace, arranging for “the physical and moral care [of the] young, according to the guiding lights of “sympathy and unselfish benevolence,” would provide “all the conditions which Evolution requires to form the perfect race or society” (*GC* 475). Written while at the helm of CAS, these texts demonstrate the depth of his commitment to accelerating evolutionary progress through manipulating the bodily impressibility of poor children. Brace issued his book-length foray into evolutionary theory during the Civil War. *The Races of the Old World: A Manual of Ethnology* (1863) aimed to present the educated reading public – which made little distinction between scientific writing and other popular genres – with a guide to contemporary ethnological research that was at once popular, accessible, and “trustworthy” on account of the author’s judicious discrimination between “fancies” and “facts.”²³² Perhaps a majority of the nation’s ethnologists at the time subscribed to the polygenist position of the American School of Ethnology, as we have seen in Chapter Two. In contrast, Brace’s underlying commitment was to enlist Darwinism to prove the common humanity of all races on earth to a wide audience. Like many others in the era, however, Brace’s interpretation of natural selection relied more heavily on the immediate transmission of adaptations made during

²³¹ Pittenger, *American Socialists*, 19–20.

²³² Charles L. Brace, *The Races of the Old World: A Manual of Ethnology* (London: John Murray, 1863), vi, v. Hereafter noted in text as *R*.

one's own lifetime than to the slow changes resulting from the random vagaries of population pressure over generations and generations. In fact, the radical dependence of the individual body on its environment for its form and function and the ability to transmit these acquired characteristics to descendants are the principle mechanisms of Brace's defense of monogenesis.²³³ Polygenists argued that the apparent differences between the races of the world were evidence that each group had descended from distinct ancestral species. Brace, on the other hand, proposed that current physiological difference among the brotherhood of men could be solely explained by the body's ability to adapt to its environment.

The Races of the Old World is a striking elucidation of Brace's commitment to a sentimental evolutionary change that functions through embodied emotion and physical impressibility. For Brace, a change in habit, feelings, and environment spurs dramatic modifications to the body in units of time as small as one lifetime. He presents a lengthy list of the adaptations animals have made to their environments when transported from Europe to the colonies, such as horses that "have formed a race with fur, instead of hair, and have changed to an almost uniform bay color" and European dogs "left wild on the coast of Africa, gradually comes to look like a jackal; his hair becomes red, tail branchy, ears stiff, and his voice changes to a howl" (R 355, 356). Amongst humans, similar transformations have been recorded when the colonized themselves come into contact with the institutions of the empire and civilization. Once in the U.S. North and the West Indies, Brace reports, natives of Guinea possess a physical constitution that is "much

²³³ Whereas some polygenists used Lamarckian theories to argue that different racial groups had descended from different ancestral species, John Haller, Jr. emphasizes that other scientific thinkers, like Brace, interpreted Lamarckism as a defense of monogenesis. Haller, Jr., *Outcasts from Evolution*, 74-9.

improved, merely by contact with whites and by a state of freedom,” a condition strengthened by a Mrs. Norton’s observation that free-born blacks in Sierra Leon “have more intelligent eyes, freer bearing, and a more agreeable form than their emancipated parents” (*R* 372). Like other students of race in the nineteenth century, Brace regarded the body as so flexible that he found the “most enduring token of race” to be language, rather than physical difference (*R* 6). Indeed, Brace argued that while it “must be admitted that the physical difference is very small” between an ape and an African bushman, an alleged physical similarity mobilized by the American School of Ethnology as a primary source of evidence for the polygenesis thesis, this method of distinction favors the highly flexible and ultimately unreliable measurement of physicality. Phenotypic parallels are insignificant in the face of the “gulf” that is “vast beyond measurement” between apes and men of all races in the arts of civilization (*D* 293, 294). Brace thus rejected ethnologists’ use of physiognomy and other sciences of physical measurement and comparison, preferring the developing field of anthropology that classified human groups based on their apparent mastery or lack of language, literature and the arts, religion, labor, governmentality, and private property to place human groups on their appropriate stage of the evolutionary scale from savagery to civilization.

Yet the Lamarckian inflections of social evolution rendered physical changes and social behaviors part of the same continuum, for as George Stocking has clarified, “[w]hat was cultural at any point in time could become physical; what was physical might well have been cultural.”²³⁴ From this point of view, social and biological evolution are indistinguishable. “It can not be questioned,” Brace asserted, “that the degree of

²³⁴ Stocking, Jr., “The Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race,” 10.

civilization or barbarism, affects all the features of the body and face” (*R* 372). Lamarckism rendered life a highly dynamic process, for an individual’s experiences, habits, and tendencies have the effect of either pulling their descendants down the evolutionary ladder or inching them upwards, a status reflected in the physicality and behavior of individuals and entire societies. As such, despite its emphasis on environmental influence, Lamarckism at its core is a theory of heredity, albeit one that is less deterministic than twentieth-century varieties of hereditarianism. It is this blend of hereditarianism and environmentalism that promised reformers that their actions would have long-term effects on the population.

Like the sentimental novelists discussed in the previous chapter and the paleontologists analyzed in the next, Brace lauded the qualities of “self-control” and the “moral principle,” as the most important characteristics of the civilized races (*R* 480). These traits were the cause and effect of the growth of civilized peoples, for they enabled an individual to restrain her behavior and resist the “vices and indulgences” of her environment so that only judicious adaptations resulted and good heredity proliferated (*R* 374). Sentimental novelists, for their part, emphasized the faculties of sympathy as a filter for a heroine’s responses to her environment. Sympathy and self-control functioned to regulate the impressions one received, ensuring that they would be beneficent for her individual and racial progress. For Brace, the “great Teutonic race,” which was by common definition the peak of evolutionary development, had reached its heights because it was “in the highest degree . . . gifted with self-control” (*R* 375). The United States, therefore, a nation dominated by Teutonic branches, was poised to develop into a

society of “goodness and purity, [wherein] Truth and Holiness be equally inherited and embodied among men” (R 401).

Brace’s ethnological work suggests why the Children’s Aid Society almost exclusively worked with children of European origin. While Brace declares that Teutons’ increasing capacity for self-control is leading “toward the progress and the final perfection of humanity,” he argues that Native Americans and African Americans lack these qualities of sentimental self-control, are thus less capable of acclimation, and consequently “must perish.”²³⁵ The susceptibility of individual physiology to habit and experience thus created distinct biological differences between the peoples of the earth that result in bifurcated patterns of development. This pattern severely undermines the abolitionist and egalitarian motivations of his book. “Like individuals, each group has its peculiar office and duty in the world’s development,” Brace instructed, a destiny which could mean that African Americans “might die out, as the Indian might die out, from the wear and tear and contact from a different and grasping race.”²³⁶ As Brace exemplifies, many Lamarckians had a bifurcated image of evolutionary progress, wherein white races ascend into evolutionary perfection and “lesser races” quietly fade into the background. In the apt words of George Fredrickson, “Brace’s pioneering effort to develop a Darwinist ethnology in opposition to the American School, although animated to some degree by antislavery humanitarianism, had demonstrated that most of the hierarchical assumptions of the polygenists could be justified just as well, if not better, in Darwinian

²³⁵ Charles L. Brace, *The Races of the Old World: A Manual of Ethnology* (London: John Murray, 1863), 375.

²³⁶ Brace, *Races of the Old World*, quoted in George Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 235.

terms.”²³⁷ For Brace, European origin promised some measure of potential that made his child welfare reforms viable.

Brace’s corpus of work elucidates that he saw the United States as a hallowed environment for the civilized races to achieve a millennial sympathy and harmony and to manage the development of the poor. A prolific writer of travelogues, in 1869 Brace issued a volume resulting from a trip to California. *The New West: Or, California in 1867-1868* is a medical geography that extols the virtues of the new state for evolutionary progress. In California, he finds “circumstances, in many respects more favorable than the Anglo-American has ever enjoyed” of the climate, vegetation, industrializing economy, and limitless supply of cheap labor. On account of these conditions, he reports, “a new and powerful community is springing up, and possibly a new race forming.”²³⁸ Imagining his travelogue as an ethnographic history of the future, Brace expresses a hope that copies of his text will survive into this period to reveal to the future glorious race their “humble and primitive foundations” (*NW* preface). Of all of California’s charms, he is most enchanted with the possibilities of San Francisco to spur future progress. “It is the most exhilarating atmosphere in the world,” he claims of the ocean breezes which prevent the city from becoming either too hot or too cold, and “[i]n it a man can do more work than any where else” (*NW* 39-40). American men, in fact, do not get old in California, he avers, but rather drop dead one day in their advanced years, right in the middle of their labors (*NW* 40). The combination of the productive climate, the need for labor, and

²³⁷ Fredrickson, *The Black Image*, 235. Although Fredrickson does not address the Lamarckism underlying Brace’s interpretation of Darwinism, such an approach was so common in the nineteenth-century that “Darwinism” at the time referred to a wide matrix of evolutionary thinking.

²³⁸ Charles Loring Brace, *The New West: Or, California in 1867-1868* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Son, 1869), preface. Hereafter cited in-text as *NW*.

unlimited natural resources combines for Brace into working conditions that are “paradise for female servants,” (NW 52) and other working people, many of whom are already becoming “capitalists” (NW 61). As this exuberant fantasy of free labor ideology attests, the ownership of one’s labor and a love for private property were key conditions of civilization and thus portended well for California’s future.²³⁹ Furthermore, Brace found that “the intelligent and moral element has the control, and keeps it vigorously,” a condition which tempers the working people and channels their energies toward maintaining domestic homes, a key condition of progress (NW 42, 52). It is this same elite tending of the poor that Brace was concurrently managing at CAS. In fact, the only significant obstacle to unchecked progress is the flourishing “hotel life” in San Francisco, replete with public vice that threatens the social organization of the city into private, domestic units guided by the angel of the house.

As a result of these factors, Brace declares that the American population is already undergoing dramatic physical changes. California, he relishes, is “the land of handsome men. One sees great numbers of fine manly profiles, with full, ruddy cheeks, and tall, vigorous forms” (NW 369). Women are becoming more fertile, children are “more ruddy, healthy-looking, and prettier than ours in the east,” and up in the Sierra, the lung capacity of the white population was expanding at an impressive rate, portending prolific breeding (NW 370, 369).²⁴⁰ While the Chinese and Native populations are interesting curiosities for this traveler, and he bemoans the active anti-Chinese sentiment

²³⁹ For Brace’s analysis of how free labor was evolving former slaves into a trustworthy, dedicated class of workers, see Charles Loring Brace, “The Fruits of Free Labor in the Smaller Islands of the British West Indies,” *Atlantic Monthly* 9, no. 53 (1862): 273-282.

²⁴⁰ Nineteenth-century scientists considered lung capacity an important indicator of racial difference. See, for example, Thomas J. Mays, “The Future of the American Indian,” *Popular Science Monthly* 33 (May 1888): 104-108.

in the northern part of the state, Brace declares the Digger Indians “fossils” who are stuck in barbarism and finds no place for either group in the future race of California (NW 152). As Brace clarifies, the sentimental doctrine of bodily impressibility did not imply unrestrained environmental influence. That is, habit and feeling are not the only or even the primary condition of racial formation, but the habit, self-control, and climate of one’s ancestors shape the actions of an individual. It is this aspect of mid-century evolutionary theory that built culture, blood, climate, race, and family into a cyclical, tautological complex, assuring the never-ending progress of races deemed progressive, and threatened ever-stagnating futures of groups relegated to barbarism. As a civilized groups, the “English-speaking family” of Californians is poised to maximize its capacity for judicious progress and promises to evolve into a “new race” that will break from the United States in its independent path toward evolutionary harmony (373). It is Brace’s subtended hope that he will be among them, as their earliest chronicler and discoverer, in the form of surviving copies of his book.

Brace complemented his interest in writing the ethnological history of the future with several full-length books on the history of progress under Christianity. These works comprise bold visions of the inexorable march toward a future of universal sympathy and harmony. What is partially developed in works like *Races of the Old World* as the role of sentimental sympathy and self-control in facilitating judicious adaptations and the proliferation of good heredity receives full treatment in these texts. “*There is a moral Force producing certain definite though small results during a certain period of time; and of a nature adapted to produce indefinite similar results in unlimited time,*” Brace writes, and this force is not only the divine power of God, but the power of an

individual's mastery of self-control and sympathy to make choices that benefit the development of the race (*GC* 469, emphasis in original). Those of European heritage have suffered through a history of slavery under antiquity and into the nineteenth century, the barbaric spectacles of the gladiators and other blood sports, the exposure of children, torture, and other horrors over the last millennium. However, the very fact that these occurrences were disappearing was in itself evidence that Christianity and its emphasis on self-control and sympathetic identification (at least in its mid-nineteenth century manifestations) facilitated the evolution of the race into a higher stage of civilization. The future, Brace saw, boasted of the improved role of woman as leader and moral paragon of the domestic sphere, free trade, and other boons to intertwined moral and economic development. "All that a barbarous and bloody past gave of vigour and courage, will be given by a future of peace and humanity," he proclaims (*GC* 465). Yet this progress, like all racial progress, is a bifurcated path, wherein "[t]he races with lower moral development went to the wall, and those with higher, grew in moral power" (*GC* 471). Yet, to develop the moral power of the chosen races, the proper treatment of the barbarous "is to elevate and civilize them," (*GC* 424-5) an ideal that will also build the "higher humanity and brotherhood" (*GC* 426) of the elite. This care and charitable treatment is especially important for youth, for they are "that which especially ensures the future of a race" (*GC* 473). Brace's scientific and sentimental framework assured that childcare was a method of accelerating the development of primitive street children whom, if left unchecked, threatened to destroy the harmonious future that Spencer promised. It is this agenda, wherein lie the origins of U.S. foster care, to which we now turn.

The Origins of the Children's Aid Society

For many well-off New Yorkers at mid-century, the ideology of the United States' unique destiny as a blessed imperial state and a shining beacon of hope posed as many problems as it promised to resolve. The city seemed to be bursting at the seams as a result of the explosion of the population from 200,000 residents to more than 800,000 in just thirty years.²⁴¹ Indeed, the nation's very economic and political exceptionalism seemed to threaten its own demise, and a variety of graphic pictorial, literary, journalistic, and criminological accounts produced the crowded, multiethnic tenement districts of Five Points, Cherry Hill, the Bowery, and other neighborhoods of the Lower East Side as the symbol of the perils of success.

If the Lower East Side came to be the emblem of the contradictory fortunes of industrial capitalism and global mobility in national discourse, then the child of the tenements figured as its representative subject. When Brace moved to New York City in 1852, he arrived at an auspicious moment for child welfare reform. Police Chief George Matsell had recently used the occasion of the semi-annual police report to whip up public concern over the threat that the thousands of children who lived their days and nights on the city's public thoroughfares posed to middle-class society, which was struggling to consolidate its power in a rapidly changing economic and political arena. The "embryo courtezans and felons" posed an "evil and a reproach to our municipality," Matsell declared, for the police force had yet to find an effective method to counteract their

²⁴¹ Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 67.

lawlessness.²⁴² Yet the threat street children posed to New York was deeper than property theft and a preponderance of filth. In the eyes of the elite, their very presence troubled the city's claim to civilized life. "The degrading and disgusting habits of these almost infants," Matsell inveighed, made it "humiliating to be compelled to recognize them as a part and portion of the human family."²⁴³ The police report had a tremendous impact on Brace's decision to leave the pulpit in order to undertake direct service work with indigent youth. While the police chief had difficulty imagining the poor as part of humanity, the preacher was armed with an evolutionary theology that knew how to upwardly evolve a primitive child. Their "wits [were] sharpened like those of a savage," (CAS 12) Brace declared, they possessed "wolfish habits" that render them "more cunning, more dangerous, than the animal," and because of their complete ignorance of Christianity, "they might almost as well have been the children of the Makololos in Central Africa."²⁴⁴ Where Matsell saw despair and criminality, Brace perceived barbarians with some potential for progress and an outlet for his ambition. He seized his chance to make his mark on New York, and, he hoped, the nation's evolutionary progress.

Brace was hardly alone in this decision to devote himself to the creation of institutions to serve the needs of dependent youth. The initial appearance of publicly and privately funded orphanages in the 1820s and 1830s turned into a flood of new institution

²⁴² *Semi-Annual Report of the Chief of Police From May 1, to October 31, 1849* (New York, 1850), History Matters, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6526/>.

²⁴³ *Semi-Annual Report*, 62, quoted in Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York: 1789-1860* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 195.

²⁴⁴ Charles L. Brace, "Wolf-Reared Children," *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks* 9, no. 7 (1882): 544. Hereafter noted in-text as "W"; DC 318.

opening their doors in the 1850s.²⁴⁵ For Brace, however, these orphanages ran exactly counter to the ideals of a hallowed domestic space, devoted parents, and cherished childhood promoted by the writers of sentimental novels, housekeeping guides, child-rearing manuals, and evolutionary theory as natural laws. As a devotee of Spencer, Brace struggled to develop social welfare schemes that would be in “in harmony with the great principles of political economy and the great impulses of human nature” by nurturing the spirit of individuality through atomized domestic life (*BM* 4, 10). He argued that orphanage asylums were in exact opposition to these goals and functioned as breeding grounds of vice. In these warehouse-like settings, youth were exposed to a litany of social contagions, a risk compounded by the tendency of the experiences of youth to germinate into the ingrained habits of adulthood. By congregating indigent, criminal, and other children into confined spaces, state workers created situations that “cultivated” the latent habits and tendencies the criminal class inherited from their ancestors (*BM* 5). As a consequence, a pauper child who “enters comparatively pure . . . comes forth corrupted and debased” as a result of the “thousand bad and unnatural habits . . . which grow poisonously” in the institutions (*BM* 10). As Brace’s biological and botanical metaphors illustrate, Brace embraced the Spencerian view that organic laws determine all individual and collective human behavior, and that vice, criminality, and other human failings should be treated as biological concerns. Anthony Platt rightly notes that Brace and other

²⁴⁵ E. Wayne Carp, *Family Matters: Secrecy and Disclosure in the History of Adoption* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 7-8. The legal framework enabled this rise. After 1835, authority over children was transferred from fathers to the state and private agencies, such as asylums and refuges, when parents were deemed incapable of providing “networks of good influence.” See Barbara Finkelstein, “Casting Networks of Good Influence: The Reconstruction of Childhood in the United States, 1790-1870,” in *American Childhood: A Research Guide and Historical Handbook*, eds. Joseph M. Hawes and N. Ray Hiner (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), 129.

penal reformers used “biological imagery,” to stress “the possibility of redemption through religious and medical intervention.”²⁴⁶ Yet the discourse of better breeding by sentimental impressibility is also pervasive in these accounts. Charging that asylums merely bred the very qualities they attempted to eradicate, Brace turned to the dictates of sentimentalism and domestic life to inaugurate a child welfare campaign that would take its place as the “best method of disposing of our pauper and indigent children” rather than function as a nursery for vice and immorality.

Brace was able to articulate, enact, and gain public support for his efforts to ameliorate “the mental and physical constitutions” (CAS 7) of Irish immigrant youth by manipulating the figure of the malleable young child produced by the intersections of evolutionary theory and the exceedingly popular literary trope of orphanhood.²⁴⁷ Brace’s innovation was to extend this paradigm to the children, and especially the male youth, of poverty-stricken Irish immigrants. By some standards, the Irish were centuries behind the development of Anglo Saxons, a primitivity that was both cause and effect of their fixed, rigid natures that, if capable of any change, was only for the worse. In contrast, Brace framed these tenement children as primitive beings who were rapidly becoming plastic, flexible Americans by virtue of their birth and residence in the United States. To Brace, street children were already so much the master of the habits and traits of ingenuity

²⁴⁶ Anthony M. Platt, *The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 30.

²⁴⁷ CAS was supported by a mixture of public and private funds. Miriam Langsam estimates that one-third of its budget came from government sources, one-third from private individuals, and one-third from miscellaneous sources, such as churches and the fees boys paid to the lodging houses (41). While Brace extolled the virtues of the middle classes as the heart of civilization and the backbone of the Society, significant funds came from New York’s elite. The first large sum of private money, which enabled CAS to purchase its first building, was redirected from an original earmark for the American Colonization Society (DC 283-4). In some years, more than half of the private money came from a few very wealthy people, including the Astors and the Vanderbilts. See Langsam, *Children West*, 41.

allegedly characteristic of Americanness that this posed its own risk. These children would “grow up to be voters, the implements of demagogues, the ‘feeders’ of criminals, and the sources of domestic outbreaks and violations of law” (*DC ii*). Furthermore, if left untreated, the infractions of these boys “would not be like the stupid foreign criminal class,” he warned, for “their crimes, when they came to maturity, [will] show the recklessness, daring, and intensity of the American character” (*DC 321*). In Brace’s America, even the crimes were exceptional. As a consequence of his faith in the evolutionary impact of environment and in the capacity for poor European youth to be civilized, the Children’s Aid Society targeted the children of Irish, German, and to some degree Italian immigrants, at the cost of the virtual exclusion of African American children and the offspring of immigrants from other nations.

Upon establishing the Children’s Aid Society in 1853, Brace implemented the “family system” (*BM 9*) for the care of “vicious children” (*BM 10-11*). This method was based on the German institution *Rauhe Haus*, which Brace had visited on his grand tour of Europe shortly before moving to New York. The model substituted domestic rehabilitation for incarceration by dividing youth into small units guided by a firm but caring guardian patterned after a “father” or “elder brother,” who would lead by the authority of sympathy and moral influence rather than through instilling the fear of punishment (*BM 11*). The family is “God’s reformatory,” argued Brace, and was thus the institution most amenable to eradicating the inherited traits of poverty and viciousness (*BM 12*). Attempting to implement much of the prescription of progress outlined by Spencer, the paradigm broke up collectivities of children into smaller, more easily manageable units and treated the youth themselves as carriers of a highly contagious

disease best combated through isolation. Brace established family-style institutions under the auspices of the Children's Aid Society that would train children in the desirable qualities of truthfulness, punctuality, and cleanliness through the emotional control and power of sympathy. Male superintendents were hired to supervise the boys' lodging houses, men whom Brace praised for their ability to relate to the boys' needs, inspire their faith and spirit of individuality, and when necessary, squash their disobedience. A number of New York's leading church women visited CAS's facilities, ostensibly to provide industrial instruction to the youth, but even more to provide a model of good behavior for the agency's female boarders. Female teachers were instructed to "suppl[y] the link of sympathy" between the Christian classes and the "wolf-reared children" of the streets, an emotional bond that would indebt the girls to the institution and engender their receptiveness to the "habits of order, cleanliness, and punctuality" necessary for their entrance into the workforce.²⁴⁸ "Your main object in these schools," Brace exhorted, "is to *exert a moral influence*. All things are subordinate to this" (A 9, emphasis in original). According to Brace, the attempts with young girls were successful, as their youth prevented them from "inherit[ing] the appetites of their mothers, or if they did, their new training substituted higher and stronger desires" (DC 141). Their work bore "natural fruit," and multiple metaphors of harvest underscore the generative function of their work (DC 142).

Under Brace's direction, CAS turned what Richard Brodhead has termed the regime of "disciplinary intimacy" widespread in mid-century familial, educational, and

²⁴⁸ C.L. Brace, *Address on Industrial Schools, Delivered to the Teachers of the Schools, November 13, 1868* (New York: Wynkoop & Hallenbeck, 1868), 4, 3. Hereafter noted in-text as A.

literary realms into a program of biological uplift.²⁴⁹ Brodhead's incisive term captures the "sentimentalization of discipline" rife at mid-century, a method in which the site of power was located in the emotional qualities of authority figures themselves, rather than in their positions of influence. This dynamic created an "emotional bond between the authority figure and its charge," which indebted the subject to the figures of authority for its very sense of self.²⁵⁰ Brodhead's archive of evidence for the prevalence of disciplinary intimacy culls from Stowe, Susan Warner, and Horace Bushnell's explanations of how parental love may "'work a character' more deeply 'in [the child],'" texts which, as we have seen, configured such influence as physiological phenomena.²⁵¹ Brace's work illuminates the evolutionary underpinnings of sentimentalism's internalization of power. The emotional impressions wrought by his employees were designed not only to produce obedient subjects in New York's lodging houses, but also to rewrite their hereditary material to transmit this newfound aptitude for Christian faith and moral self-control to future generations of "respectable domestics and factory girls" (A 7) who would aid rather than impede the middle classes' ascent into evolutionary perfection.

Principles of domesticity inform Brace's commitment to bringing the German family-system of penology and the spirit of domestic sympathy to the task of crime prevention in New York. Scholars such as Paul Boyer have dismissed Brace's engagement with domestic ideology as pandering to his era's discourse of morality in order to build popular support for his true agenda, which Boyer sees as cultivating the

²⁴⁹ Brodhead, "Sparing the Rod," 67-96.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 72.

anti-domestic traits of individualism and independence in street boys.²⁵² Brace's commitment to breaking up poor families might seem to support this interpretation of domesticity functioning as a hindrance, rather than a method of progress. Such a view, however, neglects the class hierarchy at the core of domestic ideology and civilizationism more generally. Brace saw the parents of the tenements as "wolves in human shape," (W 543) incapable of providing authentic homes. In regards to middle-class domestic space, however, he shared the view championed by his cousins the Beechers that the well-kept hearth was the origin of a nation's morality, growth, and progress. His book-length study of German domestic life praises the domestic habits of the middle class as working to "stamp" the "social character" of the nation.²⁵³ Based on a visit to Germany before he assumed the leadership of CAS, *Home-Life in Germany* (1856) is a study of the "internal social habits of a leading civilized Nation" packaged in the form of a travelogue (*H-L* iv). He sought to provide U.S. readers with an account of "calm, genial old German homes" with "quiet cultured tastes," a necessary instruction in the origins of Teutonic society that could counteract the "clamor and whirl" and "greed" of modern U.S. strivings (*H-L* v). Brace praises the simplicity and good taste of German home decoration, cuisine, and domestic hospitality, the characteristics the Beecher sisters promoted as molding the nature of children.²⁵⁴ He particularly praises the warmth and the "play of passion and feeling" and "sweet tones" exhibited by German women, comparing them favorably to the women in New England who "seldom" appear to be "spontaneous [and] natural," and

²⁵² Boyer, *Urban Masses*, 100-101. Boyer argues that while Brace publicly promoted domesticity, in reality his attitude toward family life was "somewhere between cool skepticism and outright hostility" (101).

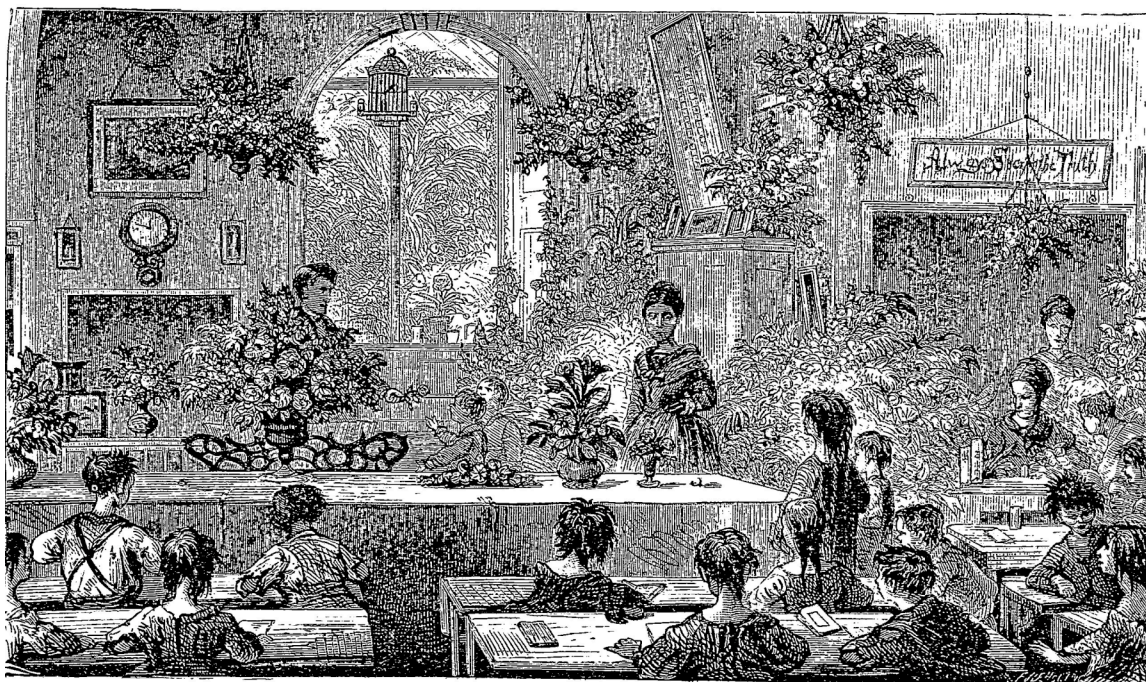
²⁵³ Charles Loring Brace, *Home-Life in Germany* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1856), iv. Hereafter noted in-text as *H-L*.

²⁵⁴ Wardley, "American Fiction," 44-50, 74-93.

vocalize an unpleasant “nasal twang and whine,” despite his own role in promoting the ideology of U.S. women’s restraint, self-control, and monogamy as the guiding principles of species change itself (*H-L* 337, 338).

The attention to the uplifting effects of the pleasant domestic atmosphere Brace demonstrates in his study of German households similarly guided his management of the CAS facilities. The agency established reading rooms to encourage youth to learn from high culture and abandon the popular literature that “degrade[s] and defile[s]” them (*DC* 117). The youth received religious instruction, and the agency attempted to impress upon them a love for cleanliness and the habits of work to drive them away from their neighborhoods and families. Under the direction of Mr. G. Calder, The Rivington Street Lodging House and industrial school was even decorated with the staples of high Victorian culture’s romance with natural history: live and cut flowers, ferns and other plants, an aquarium, and an outdoor garden. (See Figure 4.1.) As this idealized picture suggests, these organic embellishments did their best to “tam[e] and refin[e], for the time, the rough little subjects who frequented them” (*DC* 332). As we saw in the previous chapter, flowers and plants both provided pious models to children and young women and functioned as their literary stand-ins. For Brace and domestic novelists, flowers represented civilized youth whereas the children of the poor were plants in need of careful tending. Their presence in a CAS facility suggests that this analogy was understood as both figurative and literal. These lush surroundings might also inspire youth with a respect and desire for agrarian life, conditions that might encourage their removal westward. Brace’s belief in the power of flora to civilize street children was in no doubt also influenced by his close friendship with Frederick Law Olmsted, whose

designs for Central Park aimed to solidify the strength of the middle classes in New York by creating a lush urban oasis, isolated from the tenement districts, whose organic order would stimulate feelings of domestic civilization, entertainment, and a sense of passive spectatorship in the rapidly growing city.²⁵⁵ Tenement children themselves, however, were Brace's domain, and his goal was to transform "little Indians" into laborers who would become rather less acquainted with the public life of New York (DC 333).



POOR CHILDREN AMONG FLOWERS.

(The Rivington Street Lodging-House.)

Figure 4.1. "Poor Children Among Flowers." Reproduction from Charles Loring Brace, *The Dangerous Classes of New York, and Twenty Years' Work Among Them*, 3rd ed. (New York: Wynkoop, 1880), 333.

Sentimental Evolution and the Work of the Children's Aid Society

²⁵⁵ Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 101-139.

Promotional pieces of the Children's Aid Society's illuminate how its efforts to orphan the children of the poor were forged from sentimentalism's constitutive role in evolutionary thinking and popular literature. Decade after decade, their reports chart the upward evolution of rebellious street children. The protagonists begin as outsiders who could not or would not participate in the legal economy and were terrorized by drunken and otherwise unfit parents, conditions initially characterized through the conventions of urbanoid gothic literature. The end of the tale, however, transforms the child denizens of the mysteries-of-the-city plot into orphans deserving of pity and capable of progress, the sentimental heroes and heroines of domestic life. For example, Brace characterizes tenement children navigating urban mazes where, "Murder has stained every floor of its gloomy stories, and Vice skulks or riots from one year's end to the other" (*DC* 26). A history of the agency published in 1893 painted a scene of an agency dedicated to emotional protection, rather than civic cleansing. The life of street children, the report announces, "was of course a painfully hard one. To sleep in boxes, or under stairways, or in haybarges on the coldest winter nights, for a mere child, was hard enough; but to have no food, to be kicked and cuffed by the older ruffians, and shoved about by the police, standing barefooted and in rags under doorways as the winter storm raged, and to know that in all the great city there was not a single door open with welcome to the little rover, this was harder" (*CAS* 12). Such an account emphasized the priority CAS placed on retraining the habits and feelings of youth whose poverty-stricken life was defined by its lack of sympathy and intimacy, a primitive existence fitting them to be threats to domestic society.

When they become wards of the agency, however, CAS represented the youth as “friendless” young girls who valiantly tend to even younger children, possessing “heavy, sad looks” that “never changed,” or “one of the honestest, sweetest, most trustful faces that God ever blessed us by creating; a swimming, half-laughing blue eye, long light hair, and a round, sun-browned cheek.”²⁵⁶ As Karen Sánchez-Eppler has observed, these fundraising sketches placed middle-class readers in a familiar position, soliciting their tears for the struggle of an orphan heroine. But in this case, she points out, the orphans are real, and readers are asked to match their sympathies with dollars, as readers themselves can become the civilizing forces they wish their fictional heroines to experience.²⁵⁷ Furthermore, Stephen O’Connor’s comparisons of Children’s Aid Society internal documents with published reports emphasizes how the public accounts of their clients demonstrated substantial revisions guided by popular domestic literature, including making the youth seem innocent to the ways of the world, fictionalizing tragic deaths that orphaned the children, and knocking years off the children’s ages to emphasize a nurturing, filial relationship between the lodging house boarders and the superintendents.²⁵⁸

Whereas Brace recognized the capacity for adaptation and growth in street boys, he found the rehabilitation of young tenement women to be “almost futile and useless” (CAS 19). In this, he built upon the class hierarchy articulated in sentimental fiction and evolutionary theory that celebrated middle-class women as the paragons of moral

²⁵⁶ Children’s Aid Society, *Annual Report of the Children’s Aid Society* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1972), 24.

²⁵⁷ Sánchez-Eppler, *Dependent States*, 183.

²⁵⁸ O’Connor, *Orphan Trains*, 107-118.

development, and condemned working-class women as mired in their primitive appetites. Boys embodied an appropriate amount of impressibility, Brace argued, while girls were too primitive and as such lacked the self-control necessary to resist sexual temptation (DC 302). The results of their behavior left these girls beyond moral or physical redemption, guilty of the betrayal of what should have been their guiding instinct: “the desire of preserving a stock, or even the necessity of perpetuating our race” (DC 116). At base, Brace felt that street girls were largely incapable of transforming the instinct of sexual desire into sympathetic relations between the sexes, a trait that was a key component of civilization. Rather, street girls engaged in “crime and lust, its lower nature awake long before its higher,” triggering a degeneration that caused the girl child to “degrade its soul before the maturity of reason, and beyond all human possibility of cleansing!” (DC 116). As a consequence, Brace refused to work with girls if they had turned to sex work to make a living or were over eighteen years of age.

What particularly worried Brace, however, was how difficult it was for even a learned ethnologist such as himself to distinguish between those women who were spotlessly navigating the city streets and those plying the oldest profession. The source of endless grief at the Girl’s Lodging House was the difficulty of enforcing its plan to prohibit the entry of sex workers, for these young women were masters at casting themselves as the heroines of Brace’s own sentimental plot in order to obtain food and lodging at moments when they most needed it. Brace’s *The Dangerous Classes of New York* summarizes the paradox beautifully: “Sweet young maidens, whom we guilelessly admitted, and who gave the most touching stories of early bereavement and present loneliness, and whose voices arose in moving hymns of penitence, and whose bright eyes

filled with tears under the Sunday exhortation, turned out perhaps the most skillful and thorough-going deceivers, plying their bad trade by day, and filling the minds of their comrades with all sorts of wickedness in the evening” (*DC* 306). For Brace, the subjects of his sentimental fiction had a disturbing tendency to come to life, robbing him of his self-appointed creative powers by turning the plot to their own advantage.

Whereas Brace saw tenement women as likely too tainted to be redeemed through a change of environment, Brace cast newsboys and other male vagrants as masters of the entrepreneurial ethos who, when properly cultivated, encapsulated the best of the American spirit. “At heart we cannot say that [the street boy] is much corrupted,” Brace argued. “His sins belong to his ignorance and his condition, and are often easily corrected by a radical change of circumstances” (*DC* 114). While street trade had merely exacerbated women’s tendencies to licentiousness, in young boys it developed their capacity for wit and cunning, the very roots of the free market system. The Children’s Aid Society was insistent on accepting payment from its male lodgers as a means of developing their entrepreneurial spirit, gaining trust from the boys, and forging intimate relations with the society’s agent. Furthermore, the agency set up a small system of savings for the boys, to teach them “the desire for accumulation, which, economists tell us, is the base of all civilization” (*CAS* 16). Like many other proponents of capitalism during the Gilded Age, Brace held onto Adam Smith’s formulation of trade as a “bond of union and friendship” between men that increases sympathy between individuals and nations.²⁵⁹ Experiences of masculine camaraderie through market relations were primed

²⁵⁹ Adam Smith, n.d. quoted in Charles L. Brace, “Free Trade, as Promoting Peace and Goodwill Among Men,” (New York: New York Free Trade Club, 1879), 9.

to engineer boys who could play a role in the capitalist development central to millennial evolutionism.

These masculine intimacies were many of the same qualities that so attracted Horatio Alger to Brace and his project, such that Alger wrote several dime novels about the Children's Aid Society, kept both bed and desk at one of the boy's lodging houses, and occasionally took groups of boys home to live in his apartment. As these circumstances suggest, the sexuality and homosociality of street boys was not far below the surface of Alger's or Brace's narratives and behavior. Michael Moon argues that Alger reformulates domestic fiction as a homoerotic male romance that celebrates intimacy between an older man and growing boy as the basic component of capitalist relations.²⁶⁰ Brace's activities and rhetoric similarly present the market as a homosocial space that produces intimate relations between men, a necessary emotional condition for their upward evolution. Brace's sermons, Moon notes, similarly emphasize boys' longings for an older and wiser male friend to love them and support them, a dynamic which certainly complicates Brace's assertion that his organization supplies father and brother figures to the young charges.²⁶¹ Brace eagerly cast himself in the fatherly and brotherly role in this masculine romance, radiantly telling his sister, "I think there is nothing in the world so interesting as a healthy, manly boy and the attempt to help these fellows to help themselves is the most pleasant to me possible" (*L* 161). Brace's rhetoric suggests a homoerotic restaging of the brother/father/lover trope germane to sentimental adoption fiction. A letter he wrote to his college friend Fred Kingsbury in 1849, soon

²⁶⁰ Michael Moon, "'The Gentle Boy from the Dangerous Classes': Pederasty, Domesticity, and Capitalism in Horatio Alger," *Representations* no. 19 (Summer 1987): 87-110.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

before departing for a months-long walking tour of the United Kingdom with John and Frederick Olmsted, is even more suggestive about his commitment to homoerotic domesticity: “Yet there is a love of friends, to men, which I have in some degree, and am having more and more, a confidence which cannot *think* of being shaken, earnest desire for their happiness, and a sympathy which possibly is the noblest that exists. . . And I half believe that the love of two manly hearts to one another, who are struggling hard with evil, may be even a higher type of Love than man’s to woman. What do you think? John and I, you know, are together, – a pleasant lodging- house . . .” (*L* 65).²⁶² That Brace elsewhere referred to homosexuality as “revolting and abhorrent” (*GC* 36), and claimed that a society which supports it is leading toward a future of “disaster, ruin and death” (*DC* 116) is perhaps indicative of the “evil” which two men in “love” might be “struggling hard” to resist. Though Brace reported to John from Hungary that “the tall, strong, handsome men” there had taught him what “human beauty was,” and he confessed that he had “become so used to kissing *men*, that [he] shall hardly know how to kiss a woman,” Brace mastered the skill and married Letitia Neill in 1854 (*L* 133). Furthermore, Brace must have known of the prevalence of prostitution and same-sex relations among street boys, and indeed publicly and privately celebrated his desire for their manly, aggressive ways in the same breath that he condemned women’s sexual expression (unless, of course, those women were his German hostesses).²⁶³

²⁶² I have suppressed a paragraph break, and the ellipses mark where the editor, Brace’s daughter, excised the remainder of this train of thought.

²⁶³ On queer relationships and sex work amongst newsboys and in the Bowery more generally, see O’Connor, *Orphan Trains*, 229-231 and George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 32-45.

As stimulating as masculine intimacy was, however, its evolutionary effects were less apparent to Brace than were the habits of wage labor and independent homesteading that CAS intended to instill in youth. Convinced by the role that labor played in arousing boys' faculties to enable their evolutionary rise, the linchpin of the Children's Aid Society was its Emigration Plan that sent children to work in rural homes. The Society and other copycat organizations over a seventy-five-year period emigrated children to rural homes to serve as laborers while in the legal limbo of neither indentured servitude nor formal adoption.²⁶⁴ The combined efforts of these organizations placed out over 200,000 children between 1854 and 1929, the vast majority to rural New York, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio. Organizations abroad were also inspired by Brace's successful model; Canada, for example, emigrated over 80,000 youth from over fifty British child care facilities between the years of 1869 and 1924, most of whom were placed with farm families.²⁶⁵ The most active years of the U.S. program were the four decades prior to 1890, a period when the organization primarily sent out preteens and teenagers whose labor would be useful to their new families. Children who were *de jure* orphans who migrated during these years, rather than those treated as such by the Society, averaged a mere nine years old.²⁶⁶ While the rhetorical subject of the plan was almost uniformly masculine, 39% of all the children Brace's Society placed out to work were girls (CAS 40). The girls, however, were generally of a far younger age than the boys, for the agency

²⁶⁴ However, E. Wayne Carp argues that the desire of farmers to formally adopt their charges led to the proliferation of adoption laws in the United States, which began with the Massachusetts Adoption Act of 1851. See Carp, *Family Matters*, 11.

²⁶⁵ Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869-1924* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

²⁶⁶ Gish, "Rescuing the 'Waifs and Strays,'" 126.

had difficulty in recruiting adolescent women to migrate away from the city.²⁶⁷ Agencies chartered train cars that would head west, making stops in small towns where they had advertised the availability of farm hands from New York. Some youth were preordered: one rider later recalled that she was met at the station by a proxy “for the people who had ordered me. Like a package, I was addressed to my future parents.”²⁶⁸ Others would line up on the stage of the town hall or a similar location, as adults would pass through, choosing which to take home.

Once placed in a new home, the children were encouraged not to contact their families. This legal limbo was designed by Brace to cultivate the children’s sense of independence and to facilitate an easy change of surroundings to a more optimal environment, should the child find it necessary. This flexible contract also worked to the advantage of working-class families who used the Agency as a temporary labor placement service, despite the intentions of the reformers to rupture all connections between the youth and their tenement communities.²⁶⁹ These “kind western homes” were meant to civilize the children, to replace inherited desires with healthy discipline: “The change of circumstance, the improved food, the daily moral and mental influences, the effect of regular labor and discipline, and, above all, the power of Religion, awaken the[ir] hidden tendencies to do good . . . while they control and weaken and cause to be forgotten those diseased appetites or extreme passions which these unfortunate creatures inherit directly.”²⁷⁰ Children above the age of twelve were expected to work in exchange

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 130-131.

²⁶⁸ *1993 Orphan Train Rider Reunion*, VHS, New York Foundling. Author’s collection.

²⁶⁹ Gish, “Rescuing the ‘Waifs and Strays,’” 126.

²⁷⁰ Brace, *Dangerous Classes*, 45-6.

for their room and board until they turned eighteen, when they were formally permitted to leave the home. Brace's Emigration Plan was calculated to teach youth "inherited self-control" in a western community, "where there are many spare places at the table of life . . . and no harassing struggle for existence" (DC 45-6). As his words reflect, nostalgia for Jeffersonian agrarianism mixed with millennial sentimental evolutionism to produce a plan for human breeding that at once removed the poor from the urban streets and fulfilled the west's demand for cheap labor. Perhaps the most explicit celebration of the immediate transformation western labor could have on emigrated street youth appears in Horatio Alger's dime novel *Julius; Or, the Street Boy Out West* (1874). Before going west with the Children's Aid Society, the eponymous Julius: "[W]as meager and rather undersized. Want and privation checked his growth, as was natural. But since he had found a home in the West, he had lived generously, enjoyed pure air, and a sufficiency of out-of-door exercise, and these combined had wrought a surprising change in his appearance. He had grown three inches in height; his form had expanded; the pale, unhealthy hue of his cheek had given place to a healthy bloom, and his strength had considerably increased."²⁷¹

The iconography of the Children's Aid Society Emigration Plan provided readers with a visual map that equated domesticity and agrarian labor with evolutionary progress. An image often printed as the frontispiece of the organization's annual reports from the 1870s through 1890s demonstrates the evolution of the street boy to adopted son. (See Figure 4.2.) He begins, "homeless," crouched in the dark shadows of an urban corner

²⁷¹ Horatio Alger, *Julius; Or, the Street Boy Out West*. Introduction by S.N. Behrman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 78.

familiar to late nineteenth-century viewers as the habitat of a drunkard, their meager clothing providing glimpses of the glowing white skin and curly locks aimed to heighten the alleged tragedy of the scene. The charity worker aside the streetlight looks a better-dressed version of the adoptive father hero of Maria Cummins' best-seller *The Lamplighter*, though this man has managed to rescue not one child, but three. Shipped "off for the west" on a train as part of a group of uniformed youth, now the only thing standing between the orphan boy and a new family is hard farm labor behind the plow. This too highlights the boy's newly upright and triumphant gait he has acquired as an individual among the land of men, which contrasts sharply with the slouching carriage of his evolutionary beginnings among crouching children. A turn-of-the-century photograph of an orphan train on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe line strikes a rather more ambivalent tone. The photograph melds white youth and the classic symbol of modernity – the train – into one organic behemoth, crossing the empty plains. (See Figure 4.3). The image illustrates one of Brace's greatest hopes, that the vast West will as easily absorb the youth as their own bodies will take to its ways. Yet instead of a joyous composite of the visual markers of progress, the emptiness of the sky and land underscores the discordant image of a frozen train, seemingly as out of place as the young children are themselves. Standing, sitting, and spilling in front of, alongside, and out of the train's engine, coal, and oil cars, the youth are not the refined passengers of a Pullman, but so much cargo, charting a western course. In contrast to the destiny of the street girl, however, the children's fate is figured as a bright one. (See Figure 4.4.)



Figure 4.2. “The Work of the Children’s Aid Society.” This image often appeared as the frontispiece of the Children’s Aid Society’s Annual Reports. Reproduction from Marilyn Holt, *The Orphan Trains: Placing Out in America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).



Figure 4.3. “Orphan Train on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Line.”
Reproduced from Holt, *The Orphan Trains*.



Figure 4.4. “The Street-Girl’s End.” Reproduction from Brace, *Dangerous Classes*, 122.

An important recent analysis by Clay Gish explores the degree to which youth participation in the placing out program was motivated by a variety of desires and circumstances, only some of which were shared by CAS itself. Far from saving children from the brink of suicide, Gish reveals that the agency was used by working-class families “as an extension of strategies . . . long employed to ease family turmoil in times of crisis, to strengthen the family economy, and to smooth young people’s transition from the home into the world.”²⁷² Drawing on CAS intake and placement records from the beginning of the agency in 1853 until 1890, the year of Brace’s death, Gish finds that the average age of participants in the program was far older than the rhetorical subject of CAS promotions, ranging from 14 to 17 years of age. Furthermore, his sample reveals that a full one-half of the youths came to the agency as a means to enter the labor force, sometimes with a parent, rather than were swept away from broken-down hovels by shining angels of charity. The experiences of these youth suggest that they traveled westward for labor experience, rather than to join a new home, and the records suggest that “the vast majority of young people in the emigration program chose an employment arrangement rather than a familial relationship” with their hosts, and frequently left for new situations within the first year.²⁷³ Most surprisingly, given the entire absence of working-class family relations in Brace’s writings or Agency publications, more than one-half of youth who migrated were accompanied by their families. This picture of working-class self-determination and individuality differs strikingly from the sentimental, eroticized portraits of dependence and discipline painted by Brace. Through claiming to

²⁷² Gish, “Rescuing the ‘Waifs and Strays,’” 125.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 132.

break apart the families and neighborhoods of the Lower East Side, Brace attempted a national breeding program that would impress upon children the experiences of pastoral childhood that would transform them into Americans. Families themselves, however, had different agendas, and the evidence suggests that they were often able to turn the services of CAS to their own advantage.

From Proto-Eugenics to Eugenics

While the Emigration Plan enjoyed broad public support in its first three decades, by the late 1870s it began to unravel as a result of demographic shifts in the western states, a changing understanding of the interplay between environment and heredity, the professionalization of the social sciences, and the increasing emotional value of childhood in the national consciousness.²⁷⁴ The growing power of the Catholic Church enabled Catholics to register their complaints that the agency was trying to breed out their religion by removing Irish youth from their parents and placing them in Protestant homes. “They are undergoing a secret process by which it is hoped, that every trace of their early faith and filial attachment will be rooted out,” one philanthropist objected.²⁷⁵ Such objections were voiced repeatedly throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century, and contributed to a sense of suspicion that CAS was motivated by its desire to clean up New York City and did not have the best interests of the nation at heart. Catholic activists, in response, began to organize their own child welfare institutions that would guarantee Irish and other children would be placed in families of like faith. In response,

²⁷⁴ On the changing role of children, see Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), and Nelson, *Little Strangers*.

²⁷⁵ Quoted in Finkelstein, “Casting Networks of Good Influence,” 130.

those youth CAS migrated who were over the age of twelve were uniformly Protestant beginning in the 1890s.²⁷⁶

Yet the impact of Catholic opposition was minor compared to the wide-ranging effects of shifts in the practices of the biological and the social sciences. A growing trend in a range of scientific practice emphasized the role of heredity, rather than habit, in determining an organism's characteristics. This theoretical shift became transparent in the wide reception of Richard Dugdale's 1877 study *The Jukes*, a sociological study of the inmates of an upstate New York jail and the area's prison reports that claimed to have traced more than 76 convicted criminals, 18 brothel-keepers, 120 prostitutes, over 200 relief recipients and two cases of feeble-mindedness to one single eighteenth-century ancestor.²⁷⁷ While Dugdale argued that "environment tends to produce habits which may become hereditary," his work was widely received as proof that some poor families carry hereditary taints and was instrumental in gathering public support for the regulation of the fertility of poor whites in the early twentieth century.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, Francis Galton's advocacy of a science of better breeding that emphasized heredity over the influence of environment proposed that the regulation of childbirth, rather than child-rearing, should be the focus of state and charitable institutions. Laboratory results by biologists like August Weismann in the early 1880s further suggested that traits acquired during an individual's lifetime were not in fact passed down to offspring. When Gregor Mendel's work on genetics was rediscovered in 1900 it ushered in a new era of fixed inheritance, in

²⁷⁶ O'Connor, *Orphan Trains*, 304.

²⁷⁷ R.L. Dugdale, *The Jukes: A Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease, and Heredity* (New York: G.P. Putnam's, 1877).

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 66. Platt argues that Dugdale's research "was distorted almost beyond recognition by anti-intellectual supporters of hereditary theories of crime." See Platt, *The Child Savers*, 25.

which genes impervious to environmental influence were thought to determine one's physical appearance and behavior.

Brace's own project fell victim to the new regime of heredity. Influenced by the growing suspicion of the inefficacy of changing one's character through their experiences, a large number of members of the new profession of criminology in the Midwest during the late 1870s began to accuse Brace of dumping the eastern poor in their environs and polluting their regional stock. CAS was sending "criminal juveniles . . . vagabonds, and gutter snipes" to Midwestern states, one official charged, where they would proceed to indulge in the criminal behaviors their natures dictated.²⁷⁹ Alice Ayler, an orphan train rider sent to Kansas in the 1920s, recalls that her Midwestern home spurned her as "bad blood." "We kids from New York were of inferior stock," she relates. "[T]he bad blood is supposed to carry the bad things down from your parents. And you don't have a chance to do better."²⁸⁰ The chief sources of complaints were the states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana, which received high numbers of orphan train riders.²⁸¹ Faced with the accusation that the correctional facilities of this region were swelling with emigrant inmates, Brace began a series of in-house studies that would prove the efficacy of his rehabilitation efforts. His results validated his program, but didn't quell unrest in the industrializing Midwest, which was in the midst of its own crisis of urbanization. As a consequence, CAS began sending large shipments of children

²⁷⁹ Brace, *Dangerous Classes*, 462, quoted in Holt, *The Orphan Trains*, 121.

²⁸⁰ *The Orphan Trains*, DVD, directed by Janet Graham and Edward Gray (Boston: Public Broadcasting Service, 1995).

²⁸¹ Holt, *The Orphan Trains*, 121.

to the states of Virginia, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska instead, mostly in the agricultural peaks during fall and spring.²⁸²

These accusations that New York was purging its territory of the dregs of society were compounded by the professionalization of social work. Beginning in the 1880s, Brace's organization was regularly under fire from state organizations and other charities for the indifferent ways in which it selected families to receive children and the extremely poor efforts it made to check up on the children's situations. Chastising CAS and other faith-based child welfare organization as guilty of "sentimental ineptitude," professionals in the Midwest argued that scientifically managed institutions were far superior mechanisms of rehabilitation than Brace's domestic model.²⁸³ New middle-class attempts to manage the poor based their work on social science principles, rather than on domesticity. That by the 1880s social workers would accuse Brace of sentimentality suggests that their own steps to professionalization were postured on the rapidly accelerating division between the sentimental and the scientific. These views largely missed the fact that Brace's organization functioned as a de facto labor service, not as a scheme of redemption. Nonetheless, the bulk of social workers' complaints with CAS centered on its shockingly poor management style and its cavalier approach to selecting host families, qualities that jeopardized the youth they worked with, whatever the intentions of the reformers or the laborers themselves. Historians have estimated that, as a consequence of the negligent management of the placing out of Agency youth, more than

²⁸² Langsam, *Children West*, 25-6.

²⁸³ Percy G. Kammerer, "The Relation of the Church to Social Work," *Family* 8 (June 1927): 121-22, quoted in Holt, *The Orphan Trains*, 171. For a good analysis of the turn to scientifically informed social welfare work, see Molly Ladd Taylor, *Mother-work: Women, Child Welfare, and the State, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994).

one half of the children were housed in homes where they were overworked, emotionally, physically, and/or sexually abused, and extremely unhappy.²⁸⁴ Furthermore, awareness grew that a majority of the children Brace placed were not in fact orphans, a fact that jarred with the increasing value placed on children's emotional, rather than physical, labor.²⁸⁵ In fact, Brace's program is credited as indirectly launching the social welfare movement, so numerous and widespread were the concerns about the agency's fictionalized records, sloppy follow-through, and its agenda to break up families. As we have seen, on this last point, the agency was rather better at helping working-class families stay together than its promotion allowed. Nonetheless, the rhetoric of child welfare shifted starkly at the turn of the century toward a notion of biological families that were worth preserving and away from the social atomization and sentimental impressibility of Brace's plan.

In its later years, the placement program better fits the model of the "orphan train" now part of the national imaginary. The average age of travelers during this period dropped dramatically, as parents sought children who would become a part of their family, rather than provide a helping hand around the house and fields. CAS stopped recruiting from the tenement districts, and instead sourced their children from city orphanages whose needs better fit their goals of permanent placement. As a result of several high-profile scandals in which tenement parents had accused the agency of stealing their children, and instances where children used the service as a means to run

²⁸⁴ See, for example, Holt, *The Orphan Trains*.

²⁸⁵ For an excellent history of the sentimentalization of children at the turn of the century, which produced the child as "economically worthless and emotionally priceless," see Viviana A. Zelizer, *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

away without their parents' knowledge, CAS implemented parental surrender forms in 1895.²⁸⁶ Nonetheless, the agency still riled many who found the system a cynical commercialization of childhood.

Yet humanitarian concerns were not the ultimate cause of the end of Brace's placing out system. Rather, new forms of better breeding replaced their predecessor. Unconvinced by the effect of habitual actions and proper feeling in redeeming these children, Midwestern leaders put the Society on the defensive and in the 1890s began passing legislation prohibiting the transport of indigent children across state lines. These laws ought to be thought of as local versions of the anti-immigration laws debated continuously in Washington from the early 1880s until the passage of the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924. For example, as a result of CAS and other migrations, in 1899 Indiana, Illinois, and Minnesota passed statutes forbidding the placement of children with mental deficiencies and certain diseases within their state lines, and also implemented standards that agencies must follow in selecting foster homes. Missouri followed soon thereafter, and other states, like Kansas, required children to have attestations of good character, and bonds in amounts of as much as \$5,000 to back them up, to be permitted entrance to the state.²⁸⁷ The new evolutionary paradigm that understood heredity to be destiny guided this legislation, and as a consequence the children of the immigrant poor were increasingly considered contagions to be prevented from immigrating to the inner core of

²⁸⁶ O'Connor, *Orphan Trains*, 304.

²⁸⁷ Holt, *The Orphan Trains*, 148-150.

the continent. In 1929, Texas, the last state to legally permit child migrants, closed its doors to the placing out system, and the orphan trains ground to a halt.²⁸⁸

By the turn of the century, reformers were largely dedicated to regulating who gave birth in the first place, rather than controlling the environments of children already born. Brace's method of evolutionary transformation, based on the cutting-edge of 19th-century thinking at the intersections of science, literature, and reform, was losing its credibility. Yet as Wendy Kline has argued, we shouldn't let the work of eugenic leaders of the early twentieth century "define the parameters of eugenic meaning" in the United States.²⁸⁹ Rather, to trace the history of eugenics we must be attentive to the multiplicity of ways that environment, heredity, and evolution were understood during the nineteenth century. Lamarckian evolution in particular offered an agenda for biological optimization through childcare, one that suggests we might further examine the practices of motherhood, child-rearing, foster care, and adoption to understand human breeding in the decades before Galton. Furthermore, sentimentalism's extensive engagement with Lamarckian evolution, literature, and reform converged to produce the figure of the malleable child as the embodiment of progress. This trope prepared the way for pro-natalism to emerge as a primary agenda of racial and national progress in the early twentieth century.

Today, attitudes toward orphan trains, when they are remembered at all, are polarized nearly to the degree that sentimentalism is pitted as an opponent of the

²⁸⁸ Interestingly, 1929 was also the year that the last state without an adoption law passed legislation legalizing the practice. Nelson suggests this clarifies the extent to which children were now seen as important for their emotional qualities, rather than their labor output. See Nelson, *Little Strangers*, 2.

²⁸⁹ Wendy Kline, *Building a Better Race: Gender, Sexuality, and Eugenics from the Turn of the Century to the Baby Boom* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 14.

evolutionary mandates of Gilded Age robber barons. For example, the play “An Orphan Train” that played on the Northwestern University stage last spring promised Evanston audiences “inspirational adventures” in a “moving and amusing heart-warmer.”²⁹⁰ In contrast, a recent *New York Times* article on binge drinking in Wyoming blamed the problem in part on the “psychic print” left by orphan train migrations, despite the fact that by 1893 the Children’s Aid Society had emigrated less than 10 children to the state (CAS 40).²⁹¹ What these schisms obscure is the ways that sentimentalism did not disappear from view after the Civil War, but rather, became further entrenched in U.S. culture. Sentimental discourse had been elaborating the ways that bodily states and free market relations were the backbone of progress for over a century, investments that made it a ready partner of evolutionary theory, free market capitalism, and tenement reform. In our efforts to assess the promises and perils of sentimental sympathy, we must look not only at the Beecher family but also at their cousin Charles Loring Brace, and ride the rails from the Bowery to the plains of Illinois to see the ways that its adherents orphaned children in order to give them up to the allegedly healing nature of civilized market relations. For as much as Brace at times wished it were not so, the sentimental orphan trope came to life throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in ways that often challenged the foundations of the organization itself. Yet Brace’s amateur interest in evolutionary paradigms is far from the peak of sentimental science in the nineteenth century. Rather, the American School of Evolution and Indian reformers conceived of feeling and sympathy as the motivating factors of species change itself, and

²⁹⁰ *Northwestern University 2006-2007 Mainstage Season* (Evanston, 2006). Thanks to Jinah Kim for sending me this announcement.

²⁹¹ Timothy Egan, “Boredom in the West Fuels Binge Drinking,” *New York Times*, September 2, 2006.

saw the lives and land of the Lakota Sioux as holding the evidence of this change. It is to the history of this imperial evidence collection and the resistance they inspired amongst the Lakota Sioux we now turn.

CHAPTER FIVE

Stricken From the Fossil Record: The Sentimental Origins of the American School of Evolution and Red Cloud's Struggle for Lakota Sovereignty

“If it be true that reason must direct the course of human evolution, and if it be also true that selection of the fittest is the only method available for that purpose; then, if we are to have any race-improvement at all, the dreadful law of destruction of the weak and helpless must with Spartan firmness be carried out voluntarily and deliberately. Against such a course all that is best in us revolts. The use of the Lamarckian factors, on the contrary, is not attended with any such revolting consequences. All that we call education, culture, training, is by use of these. Our hopes of race-improvement therefore are strictly conditioned on the fact that the Lamarckian factors are still operative, that changes in the individual, if in useful direction, are to some extent inherited and accumulated in the race.”

-- Joseph Le Conte, “The Factors of Evolution”

The greatest scientific feud of the nineteenth century has been dubbed the “Bone Wars” by twentieth-century historians, a humorous moniker for paleontologists Edward Drinker Cope and Othniel Charles Marsh’s alarmingly competitive Gilded Age hunt for prehistoric fossils in the U.S. West. While friendly colleagues in the 1860s, by 1870 Cope and Marsh’s labors to locate, classify, and name the highest number of prehistoric species fueled a cut-throat competition that stretched from the prehistoric swamps of New Jersey to the dry riverbeds of eastern Oregon. The scientists stole one another’s employees, redirected entire train cars carrying specimens eastward from their intended destinations, spied on one another’s expeditions, planted the skulls and teeth of different species amongst buried animal remains to inspire errors of classification that would take years to sort out, obscured field marks identifying promising sites for future expeditions, and even dynamited entire fossil beds to prevent the other from pre-empting discovery. At home in Philadelphia and New Haven, the fossil feud inspired numerous accusations of plagiarism, the pointing out of one another’s errors, and highly visible squabbles (and a

fistfight involving Cope) before the leading scientific bodies of the day that finally spilled out over six installments of the *New York Herald* in 1890.²⁹² Their outlandishly public exploits shocked both the class of gentlemen naturalists they represented and the rising cadre of scientific professionals Marsh's family fortune enabled him to easily assimilate into and Cope, though wealthy, struggled to enter for most of his working years.²⁹³

Today, popular interest in the story remains, and the Bone Wars have been recounted in no less than three histories published during the last decade, one taking the form of a historical graphic novel.²⁹⁴ Contemporary scientific historiography commonly credits Cope and Marsh with generating a climate of competition that inspired feats of bravery and productivity that was good for scientific progress and celebrates the nearly 1,600 new species of prehistoric animals the two bone hunters disinterred and christened between 1864 and 1893. Yet the paleontologists' uncollegial behavior was atypical for Gilded Age science, in that its practitioners still generally bore much stronger connections to antebellum natural historians' sentimental conceptualization of their labors as the genteel appreciation of the wonders of God's creation than they openly embraced a struggle of the fittest as their own *modus operandi*. While remembered now as a pugnacious paleontologist, Cope and his voluminous research, in fact, represent a significant institutionalization of emotion, sympathy, and religious belief in modern

²⁹² The information in the above paragraph is collected from Mark Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur: The Fossil War Between E.D. Cope and O.C. Marsh and the Rise of American Science* (New York: Crown, 2000); David Rains Wallace, *The Bonehunters' Revenge: Dinosaurs, Greed, and the Greatest Scientific Feud of the Gilded Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); and Jane Pierce Davidson, *The Bone Sharp: The Life of Edward Drinker Cope* (Philadelphia: Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, 1997).

²⁹³ When Marsh assumed the paleontology post at Yale in 1866, he became the nation's first professor of paleontology. The position was unsalaried; Marsh taught no classes and relied on the largess of his uncle George Peabody for an income. See Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur*, 24.

²⁹⁴ Jim Ottaviani and Big Time Attic, *Bone Sharps, Cowboys, and Thunder Lizards: A Tale of Edward Drinker Cope, Othniel Charles Marsh, and the Gilded Age of Paleontology* (Ann Arbor: G.T. Labs, 2005).

scientific practice. As such, Cope's consequence to the history of U.S. science is not only in the front-page copy his rivalry with Marsh earned and the number of new species identified, but also the ongoing and significant intersections between evolutionary science and sentimental impressibility that the publications, field diaries, and personal correspondence of Cope and his colleagues reveal.

In this chapter, I demonstrate that Cope and his cohort of U.S. paleontologists, comparative anatomists, and other scientists – self-titled the American School of Evolution – interpreted their amassing fossil cache as the proof that feeling, sympathy, and self-control were the forces of evolutionary change.²⁹⁵ The American School dedicated themselves to opposing Darwinian natural selection on the grounds that evolution by population pressure disregarded organisms' alleged ability to shape their own evolution and failed to account for the origin of life itself. They offered their fossil creatures as evidence of a progressive, teleological account of the development of life based on the principle of the inheritability of acquired characteristics most famously associated with the French naturalist Jean Baptiste Lamarck. Cope's cohort, who also dubbed themselves the neo-Lamarckians, proposed that sentiment and feeling initiated a developmental process that began by stimulating life at the cellular level, next developed the dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures, then catalyzed the rise of "primitive" humans, and finally led to the emergence of the highly differentiated sexual and gender characteristics that were seen as both the cause and effect of Anglo-Saxon civilization.

²⁹⁵ While Marsh endorsed natural selection rather than neo-Lamarckism, his Darwinism was of a decidedly American cast in that he saw evolution as a teleological progress of progression. See Peter Bowler, *Fossils and Progress: Paleontology and the Idea of Progressive Evolution in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Science History Publications, 1976), 130.

This evolutionary paradigm of inherited sentiment, I reveal, is rooted in the ideology of embodied progress that sentimentalism had refined over the previous century in such venues as best-selling women's domestic fiction.

In telling this history of the role of sentiment in facilitating the rise of hereditarian thinking, I combine the strategies of intellectual and social history to give a fuller picture of both the material conditions and effects of paleontological work. I turn to the fossil beds of the West, where Cope and other evolutionists maintained that the visual record of how one species had transformed into another lay buried. Digging beneath over a century of reportage that celebrates the paleontologists as brave young explorers dedicated to their science in spite of active Indian resistance unearths a unique look at the material conditions of the production of theories of evolution. While much of the historical scholarship on Marsh and Cope published over the past two decades has described their interactions with Native Americans, little if any has engaged the methodological and analytic insights of Ethnic Studies, Postcolonial Studies, or Gender and Sexuality Studies. As a result, the extant histories celebrate the scientists as "innocent" frontier heroes surviving the wilds of the west, virtually mouthing Cope's own praise of his employees "enthusiastic devotion to science . . . [and] the courage and regardlessness of physical discomfort" they displayed "in the pursuit of the idea of progress."²⁹⁶ However, in quite a literal way, theories of evolution depended on European and U.S. imperialism. The conquest of the Plains Indians made the tremendous reserve of western fossils available

²⁹⁶ Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur*, 121; Edward Drinker Cope, "Preface," in *Report of the United States Geological Survey of the Territories*, ed. F.V. Hayden, III (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1884), xxviii.

to European and U.S. scientists for the very first time.²⁹⁷ As Cope reported in 1879, “no portion of the earth offers greater promise of results than America. . . . If the types of life have originated independently, we will find evidence of it by studying American paleontology; if their origin has been through gradual modification, America should furnish us with many intermediate faunae.”²⁹⁸ Whereas in the late eighteenth century, “sentimental sympathy began to flow along the arteries of European commerce, in search of its victims,” in the words of Peter Hulme, in the nineteenth, sentimental science pursued the bloody trail of U.S. expansion and conquest, in search of its evidence.²⁹⁹ Beginning in the 1860s, teams of paleontologists funded by the U.S. Geological Survey and other bodies and accompanied by U.S. troops, officers, and scouts accompanied the trail of Indian conquest to lay claim to the extensive fossil beds buried in what had just been Native land.

To this end, I show how evolutionary scientists played a role in enacting their millennial vision of obliterating the primitive races so that the continent would be inherited by the civilized. In particular, I narrate this quest for the proof of evolution by tracing the multifaceted ways that the Oglala Lakota and especially the leader Red Cloud (*Makhpiya-Luta*) negotiated with, resisted, and manipulated evolutionary scientists in the 1870s. Aware of scientists’ dependence on their lands, Lakota leaders, and Red Cloud in particular, were able to turn Marsh’s desire for access to their South Dakota reservation

²⁹⁷ Scientists today still consider the fossil record the litmus test of the existence of evolutionary species change and credit Marsh’s fossil collection of the thirty species of horse predating the modern *Equus* as the first physical proof of evolution.

²⁹⁸ E.D. Cope, “The Relations of the Horizons of Extinct Vertebrata of Europe and North America,” in *Department of the Interior, United States Geological and Geographical Survey*, ed. F.V. Hayden, V, no. 1. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1879), 33.

²⁹⁹ Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492–1797* (London: Methuen, 1986), 229, quoted in Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 75.

into a bargaining tool in their efforts to maintain sovereignty in the midst of conquest. I thus show how Gilded Age evolutionary scientists and reformers fashioned science and sentimentalism as allies that rendered dinosaur bones and Indian lives fossils that naturalized the conquest of the West by the civilized, a deadly collusion that Red Cloud and other Lakota leaders attempted to turn to their advantage.

While critics have traditionally taken the firing of the cannons of the Civil War as ringing the death knell of sentimentalism, recent studies have argued for a considerable extension of this earlier periodization and a corresponding reassessment of its political engagements.³⁰⁰ I argue that the American School of Evolution represents a significant example of the discursive and material engagements of post-war sentimentalism and one of the last places where sentimentalism and science were openly fashioned as mutually constitutive strategies for progress. Furthermore, that the evolutionary and racial theories of these race scientists – some of whom, like Cope, are notorious for their objection to woman suffrage and their efforts to prove the physical inferiority of non-Anglo Saxon peoples – are rooted in sentimentalism offers a particularly revealing account of the way that many found sentimentalism useful in developing brutal hierarchies of difference. For Cope and his school, the malleability of the civilized posed substantial risk in light of the increasing demands for political equality voiced by white women and African Americans. In response to these perceived threats to a millennial future, they argued incessantly for the sequestration of white women in the private sphere and the exportation of African Americans out of the continent or the continuation of the relations of slavery. The vitriol

³⁰⁰ See especially John M. Gonzalez, “The Warp of Whiteness: Domesticity and Empire in Helen Hunt Jackson’s *Ramona*,” *American Literary History* 16 no. 3 (2004): 437-465; Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*; Shah, *Contagious Divides*; and Wexler, *Tender Violence*.

of their rhetoric, including assailing women's sympathy and emotionality in the midst of their theories' reliance on sentimentalism, also reveals how scientists professionalized their discipline in the late nineteenth century in part by disguising their own indebtedness to the tradition of sentimentalism. Furthermore, I show how the American School dismissed any notion of the malleability of the non-civilized races on which reform efforts like Charles Loring Brace's were based. The American School thus offers an important example of sentimentalism's role in developing the nineteenth-century racialized and gendered categories of savagery and civilization. To that end, I reveal how the multifaceted discourse of sentimentalism gave rise to notions of fixed heredity at the end of the nineteenth century and paved the way for the brutal hereditarian politics of the twentieth century that declared that biology is destiny.

Edward Drinker Cope and the American School of Evolution

Evolutionists like Edward Drinker Cope, Alpheus Hyatt, and Alpheus Spring Packard provide a fascinating example of the institutionalization of sentiment in post-Reconstruction culture in what historians of science and literary studies of sentimentalism typically would have us to believe are the most unlikely places.³⁰¹ For instead of brutal social Darwinian struggle, these intellectuals "willingly confess[ed] to having some tincture of sentimentalism in [them], God be thanked!" and proffered "sympathy, pity, [and] love" as the forces that drive biological and cultural evolution.³⁰² Paleontologist E.D. Cope, whose record of nearly 1,500 publications garners him the title of the most

³⁰¹ Exceptions include Nelson, "'No Cold or Empty Heart' and Wardley, "American Fiction and the Civilizing House".

³⁰² Charles Peirce, "Evolutionary Love," *Monist* 3, no. 1 (1892): 180; Joseph Le Conte, "The Theory of Evolution and Social Progress," *Monist* 5, no. 4 (1895): 493.

published scientist in U.S. history, was the most visible member of “the American School of Evolution.” This group was active from the late 1860s to the dawn of the new century.³⁰³ Formed of a cadre of Louis Agassiz’s disciples (who nonetheless turned against their distinguished teacher in their acceptance of the existence of evolutionary species change), these scientists believed that Lamarck had offered the most viable theory of evolution. They interpreted Lamarck as proposing that species change was the result of internal desires stimulating acquired characteristics that organisms then transmit to their descendants. As it attributed the mechanism of evolutionary change to the individual *feelings* of an organism, rather than to population pressure, Lamarckism enabled evolutionists to offer self-directed “evolution by creative love” as an alternative to the Darwinian survival of the fittest.³⁰⁴ In sum, the chief difference between Darwinian and neo-Lamarckian notions of evolution was that the former relied on chance to dictate an organism’s adaptation as well as its survival, while neo-Lamarckians argued that the individual organism directed all change for its own benefit and then passed on its adaptations to descendants.³⁰⁵ Availing himself of the Victorian sexual ideology that his school increasingly contributed to over the 1880s and 1890s, Cope labeled Darwinian variations as “promiscuous,” for bodily modifications are preserved in an opportunistic

³⁰³ For a thorough contemporary account of the activities of the neo-Lamarckians, see Alpheus S. Packard, *Lamarck: The Founder of Evolution. His Life and Work* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 383-424.

³⁰⁴ Peirce, “Evolutionary Love,” 188.

³⁰⁵ In what follows, I use the moniker “neo-Lamarckian” rather more loosely than was originally intended by Packard and others. I designate both the work of those paleontologists, embryologists, and morphologists most closely associated with the American School as “neo-Lamarckian,” as well as the work of thinkers like Charles Peirce who championed the inheritance of acquired characteristics from other scientific and social scientific disciplines. I retain the “American School of Evolution” as denoting Cope and his immediate cohort.

fashion, whereas Lamarckian changes through use, habit, and will “are derived from conscious experience.”³⁰⁶

The un-official school was primarily located in the museums, periodicals, and scientific organizations of the Northeast and was most active from the 1870s through the early years of the twentieth century.³⁰⁷ Cope struggled throughout his professional life to secure one of the newly available academic appointments for researchers that began to appear during the 1860s and 1870s. His difficulty in finding a permanent post suggests the relatively measured pace at which the professionalization of science proceeded. In contrast, advances in printing and distribution technologies and networks that revolutionized the print culture of the mid-century United States provided much of the material conditions for these scientists’ success. Their work was most often seen on the pages of the *American Naturalist*, founded in 1867 by Packard, Hyatt, Edward Sylvester Morse, and Frederick Ward Putnam as a counterpoint to the more Darwinian *Journal of American Science*, which had become a pulpit for O.C. Marsh’s latest investigations.³⁰⁸ Cope bought the *American Naturalist* for \$1500 in 1877 and served as its co-editor from 1878 to the 1890s and transformed the journal into the mouthpiece of the movement. As the century came to a close, new popular periodicals on scientific and social thought such as *The Monist* and *The Open Court* offered these thinkers a wide platform for

³⁰⁶ E.D. Cope, “The Present Problems of Organic Evolution,” *Monist* 5, no. 4 (1895): 572-573. This article contains his most succinct summary of the differences between Darwinian, neo-Lamarckian, Spencerian, and other forms of evolution. For a good clarification of Darwinian, Lamarckian, Neo-Darwinian, and Neo-Lamarckian views, see Ernest Boesiger, “Evolutionary Theories after Lamarck and Darwin,” in Francisco Jose Ayala and Theodosius Dobzhansky, eds., *Studies in the Philosophy of Biology: Reduction and Related Problems* (London: Macmillan, 1974), 21-44.

³⁰⁷ One exception is Joseph Le Conte, who hailed from a slave-owning Confederate family to become the University of California’s first geologist, a lifelong apologist of slavery, and an opponent of woman’s suffrage.

³⁰⁸ J.S. Kingsley, “Sketch of Alpheus Spring Packard,” *Popular Science Monthly* 33 (June 1888): 262.

evolutionary metaphysics and forays into the social consequences of their scientific work. Their full-length productions were published and distributed by the country's best printers of scientific books, especially the New York house of Appleton and Company, which turned writing on evolution into a profitable print market.³⁰⁹ The popularity of these works suggests the overlap between popular reading and scientific thought still prevalent in the late nineteenth century. Though Cope was desperate for academic recognition, he has also been called the nation's last great naturalist on account of his expertise in a number of rapidly differentiating scientific disciplines.³¹⁰ The neo-Lamarckians thus represent one of the last bodies in the U.S. life sciences to substantially engage with non-specialized intellectual traditions. Today, there is little scholarly interest in the neo-Lamarckian school, perhaps precisely because of the ways that the popular print tradition of sentimentalism shaped their evolutionary thinking in their refusal of Darwinism.³¹¹

The American School of Evolution crafted desire and sympathy as the force of life itself and as the nexus of both somatic and social change. A "life force" directs one's activities toward the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain.³¹² In the life span of a single generation, the life force floods to an organ that is used in the pursuit of pleasure – Cope once explicitly applied the human male erection as an illustration of this principle –

³⁰⁹ Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon, 1955), 22-3.

³¹⁰ On Cope's struggles for professionalization, see especially Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur*.

³¹¹ For a good introduction to the work of the neo-Lamarckians, see Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 85-100 and Haller, *Outcasts from Evolution*, 187-202. That this school is so understudied can also be attributed to prevailing attitudes in some strains of the history of science that see little of note in the nineteenth-century United States, as well as little to be gained in uncovering the histories of scientists who championed "losing" theories.

³¹² E.D. Cope, *The Origin of the Fittest: Essays on Evolution* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1886), 35.

and drains out from under-used parts of the body.³¹³ If the activity becomes a habit, the body experiences a consistent cycle of development and atrophy. After “great, habitual, and long-continued” practice, through a vaguely described process by which a series of vibrations within the body re-writes its hereditary material to transmit these new contours, changes in an organism’s structure are then passed on to succeeding generations.³¹⁴ The life force theory effectively turned the materialist variability of Darwinism on its head. Rather than subjected to the whim of nature, nature itself became subjected to an individual will. “This quality of the vital principle is a power of choice, and, in so far as *consciously* exercised, is *will*,” Cope explained, articulating a universal vitalism entirely absent in Lamarck’s work that later generations of scientists and historians have found exceedingly embarrassing.³¹⁵ Sensibility to the environment – and a mental constitution that could both identify and act on rudimentary desires, emotions, and sensations – was thus the definition of life itself: “life may be described as the condition which can feel.”³¹⁶

The neo-Lamarckians’ use of the discourse of sentimental bodily impressibility in order to argue that species change was driven by the individual mastery of desire and will was nearly overdetermined. Indeed, sentimentalism’s insistence on the intertwined relations between the self and the other, the physical and the cultural, and the emotional and the physiognomic serves as one of the conditions of the emergence of evolutionary thinking itself. Originating in the eighteenth-century tradition of sensibility,

³¹³ Ibid., 203.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 29.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 35.

³¹⁶ Edward D. Cope, “The Modern Museum,” *Penn Monthly* X (1879): 602, 603.

sentimentalism conceived of the civilized body as a malleable entity that could make judicious adaptations. As we have seen, the orphan trope in sentimental literature, for example, celebrated the apparent ability of European origin heroines to transform their character and their body through judicious choices, sympathy, and self-control. Similarly, reformers such as Charles Loring Brace and the administrators of off-reservation boarding schools for Native Americans similarly hoped that repeated habits would have a dramatic physical and emotional consequence on young children recruited for the programs. In this light, the neo-Lamarckian school's chief innovation was to recast the popular tradition of sentimentalism as the origin of life itself.

Not only have bodily parts been constructed by life force's capacity for feeling, "but the mind itself has been by them elaborated from these forms of simple consciousness in conjunction with memory."³¹⁷ The capacity for sensation directs mental development, so that the descendants of those animals who are more sensitive to their surroundings – and can remember their impressions through memory, which is then transmitted to the next generation as "instinct" – are poised to assume a higher stage of development. Bureau of Ethnology director John Wesley Powell went so far as to claim that the repeated exercise of the capacity for sensation developed "the endeavor to secure happiness," so that a higher animal is "endowed with the power of feeling pains and pleasures," evidenced by the ways that "[t]he cubs of the bear dance on the greensward; the swallow floats on the air with lilting wings of joy; the trout plays in the brook as if sunlight were elysium."³¹⁸ As we saw in Chapter One, this belief in animal consciousness

³¹⁷ A.S. Packard and E.D. Cope, "Editors' Table," *American Naturalist* 16, no. 6 (1882): 490.

³¹⁸ John W. Powell, "The Growth of Sentiency," *Forum* XI (1891): 167.

– the process by which an animal registers whether something is painful or pleasurable – was a widespread nineteenth-century phenomenon and it fueled a host of studies on animal cognition and emotion. Neo-Lamarckian work represents an apex of these beliefs in the universality of will, memory, and desire. If evolution was self-directed along the lines above, then animals have demonstrably developed consciousness, will, desire, sentiment, and sympathy, and the pages of the *American Naturalist* were filled accordingly with reports of friendly snails, sensitive horses, sympathetic bulls, highly cognizant cats, and lesbian geese throughout the last two and a half decades of the nineteenth century.³¹⁹ Life, then, originates and develops through a series of complex interactions between an individual’s desires and needs and its external environment that effectively dissolves a resolute boundary between the body, mind, and its external conditions.

For the neo-Lamarckians, sensation in animals had transformed into sentiment and sympathy in the higher animals and the “higher races.” The American School of Evolution ultimately provided less of an explanation for how life had originated than it offered a theory for how the mastery of sensation and sentiment had produced white bourgeois America. In Cope’s work, the experiences of sensibility and sentiment spurred the development of the Indo-European mind from the brains of “less complex” forms of animal and human life. Outdoing even the domestic novelists, Cope subsumed the importance of the entirety of human emotional expression underneath the guiding light of

³¹⁹ On the belief in animal consciousness, see especially E.D. Cope and J.S. Kingsley, “Editors’ Table,” *American Naturalist* 21, no. 11 (1887): 1007-8. On the mental, emotional, and sexual lives of non-human animals (but not, of course, use of the anachronistic term “lesbian”), see especially John Dean Caton, “Unnatural Attachments Among Animals,” *American Naturalist* 17, no. 4 (1883): 359-363; Joseph James, “The Reasoning Faculty of Animals,” *American Naturalist* 15, no. 8 (1881): 604-615; and Charles L. Edwards, “An Expression of Animal Sympathy,” *American Naturalist* 21, no. 12 (1887): 1129.

“sympathy, or the love of other beings than self” as “the especially beneficial emotion.”

³²⁰ Sympathy is particularly advantageous for human development because the practice of love and feeling made habitual stimulated changes in the brain structure that evolved beasts upward through the social evolutionary ladder from savage, through barbarian, to civilized. What had originated – and remained – as sexual instinct in animals and savages had transformed into the “higher” principles of sentiment and sympathy amongst the elite and growing white middle classes. “The social life and the family relation” are responsible for this transformation, as the products of mental evolution became the stimuli themselves as increasingly “complex” levels of social organization gave rise to an increasing capacity of feeling.³²¹ For the neo-Lamarckians, “evolution means an acquisition of the power of self-control, from the material as well as from the mental standpoint.” Thus, “[e]volution is the conquest of matter by mind; it is the long process of learning how to bring matter into subserviency to the uses of mind.”³²² Self-control thus was the method through which the civilized had attained power over evolution and learned to direct their impressions for their own benefit. As we have seen, sentimental reformers similarly attempted to manage the impressions of the poor on account of their belief that self-control was both the method and the goal of civilization.

In common with millenarian thinking, Cope saw free market capitalism and species change as the continuous strengthening of the bonds of sympathy between the civilized races alone. Consequently, whites had surpassed the need for struggle and had now reached a harmonic evolutionism of prosperity, industry, and sympathy. Their

³²⁰ A.S. Packard, Jr. and E.D. Cope, “Editors’ Table,” *American Naturalist* 16, no. 6 (1882): 491.

³²¹ Edward D. Cope, “Descent of Man,” *Modern Science Essayist* 1, no. 7 (1889): 169.

³²² E.D. Cope, “Ethical Evolution,” *Open Court* III, no. 82 (1889): 1525, 1523.

marked success had been rapid: “The most useful and successful man in the Plymouth Rock colony was he of the strongest arm and broadest shoulders, but the most useful and successful man of the metropolis to-day is he of the greatest business tact and shrewdness and the broadest human sympathies.”³²³ Cope summarized the three actions white America ought to take to stimulate further evolutionary progress: “Furnishing literary means of record and distribution of the truths of religion, morality, and science . . . facilitating the migration and spread of nations holding the highest position in the scale of morality [and] [t]he increase of wealth, which multiplies the extent of the preceding means.”³²⁴ For Cope, the print culture of sentiment, imperialism, and capitalism form a holy trinity of uplift, ushering whites to their divine role as guardians of an ever more peaceful future. The American School of Evolution thus provides a graphic example of the role of sentimentalism in producing the racist discourse of civilization and savagery.

At the peak of Indo-European emotional development lays a sense of emotional graciousness that exceeds sympathy – altruism. Cope made a careful distinction between sympathy as an action that benefits another at the same time as serving one’s own self-interest and altruism as an act that in no way contributes to the actor’s well being. Sympathy ultimately functions as an expedient state of feeling, as “the affections or sympathies should be developed sufficiently to produce a desire for the happiness of others, through the pleasure the happiness of others gives us.”³²⁵ Presenting the formula of the domestic novel as evolutionary doctrine – that making others feel good, especially

³²³ A.S. Packard, Jr. and E.D. Cope, “Editors’ Table,” *American Naturalist* 20, no. 6 (1886): 535.

³²⁴ Cope, “On the Hypothesis of Evolution,” 215.

³²⁵ A.S. Packard, Jr. and E.D. Cope, “Editors’ Table,” *American Naturalist* 16, no. 6 (1882): 491.

those beneath you in social stature, brings its own reward – Cope lays bare the function of sympathy as building the character of the actor. This emphasis on the one who does the feeling as the important half of the sentimental evolutionary relation is a key feature that made it such a ready partner of institutionalized reform, as virtuous white women could build their moral authority through “civilizing” savage children. As Le Conte explained with telling hesitancy, if one mixes two races widely different in “in grade of race evolution . . . the inevitable result will be, must be, ought to be, that the higher race will assume control.”³²⁶ White women, then, stood primarily to gain from their advocacy for Native American education, for the American School was quite insistent that the “superior race” would “exterminate” any social or physical contagions contracted through contact with an “inferior race.”³²⁷ In contrast, altruism grants its performer no conscious benefit, and thus must be enforced by institutional means. “As [i]t is part of the doctrine of evolution that habits will ultimately disappear on the removal of their stimulating cause,” social pressure must be constant to encourage the existence of altruism, for truly selfless deeds – by their very nature - fail to make any impact on the actor.³²⁸

In neo-Lamarckism, sympathy and sentiment found its zenith in white women, and white men functioned as masters of rational justice that kept women safe from the ever-present risk of emotional excess and hysteria, protected their interests, and ran the affairs of the nation-state. Poised in counterbalance to sympathy and altruism, the rational faculty of justice – embodied by white men – “enable[s] the possessor to dispose of his

³²⁶ Joseph Le Conte, *Evolution and its Relation to Religious Thought* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 359.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 359- 360.

³²⁸ Cope, *Origin*, 238.

sentiments in the proper manner.”³²⁹ In the late 1880s and 1890s, Cope repeatedly advocated higher education for women as well as monogamous marriage between educated partners that freely allowed for divorce as the best means to develop Indo-European evolutionary potential through the proper balance of womanly feeling and manly justice. In effect, the evolutionists called for white men to use their women “in the proper manner;” that is, as caring and comforting wives that made life more pleasant by their sympathetic natures, as long as they were kept under strict control by the rational powers of their husband. While praising sympathy and sentiment as originative forces of life, Cope and others nonetheless made clear that they were inferior traits to masculine rationality, which existed to keep both emotions and women in check. In its excess, sympathy took the form of “physical vices, superstitions, and selfish ambitions,” traits that lead first to the degeneration of an individual, and eventually to the downfall of a society.³³⁰ When Charles Guiteau fatally shot President Garfield in 1881, Cope and Packard wrote two editorials diagnosing the man as insane, meaning “the emotional or sentimental elements of character have so far overcome the rational as to cause the commission of self-destructive acts.”³³¹ Guiteau had become, in other words, overly feminized, and women –especially white women, who displayed a higher degree of gender differentiation than the less evolved – lived in a constant state of emotional excitability that threatened to get out of control unless a male were present to curb her flights of passion. “[P]robably the most distinctive feature of the female mind” is its tendency to break down under periods of stress,” a condition due to her “greater

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ E.D. Cope, “The Future of Thought in America,” *Monist* 3, no. 1 (1892): 23.

³³¹ A.S. Packard, Jr. and E.D. Cope, “Editors’ Table,” *American Naturalist* 16, no. 1 (1882): 34.

emotional sensibility, which interferes more or less with rational action,” Cope opined in several of his pieces.³³²

Sentiment was thus not merely the absence of rationality, but could serve as its very hindrance. Indeed, sympathetic identification represents an “escape from the exercise of the faculties necessary for support and protection. The sympathetic temperament which would do this for men is only profitable as the function of a special class or sex.”³³³ In other words, white women’s capacity for the proper expression of sensibility and sentiment garnered them a special role in the development of “the race” for originating new paths for upward development and tying their husbands in bonds of affection. However, this capacity functioned as baldly self-preservative. Without such feelings of sentiment, men would simply have no need for women altogether: “There is absolutely no reason why men should expend their energies on women, excepting as an expression of personal affection.”³³⁴ Rather more bluntly, Cope wrote to his daughter Julia, then in the midst of weighing her own marriage proposition, that “[i]n fact, women have no standing with men excepting through the bonds of affection. Outside of these they ‘don’t count.’”³³⁵ Indeed, women’s emotional state, which was always in need of containment and control, provided the very meat of heterosexual intimacy. For Cope, the emotional thrill of white men’s absolute power over women stimulated the race’s evolutionary growth. Rationality was always ready to vanquish the feminine, but for the

³³² Edward D. Cope, “The Relations of the Sexes to Government,” *Popular Science Monthly* 33 (1888): 723. Later that year, this article was printed and distributed as a pamphlet by the New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage. E.D. Cope, “On the Material Relations of Sex in Human Society,” *Monist* 1, no. 1 (1890): 39.

³³³ E.D. Cope, “What is the Object of Life?” *Forum* IV, no. 1 (1887): 49.

³³⁴ E.D. Cope, “The Oppression of Women,” *Open Court* VIII, no. 354 (1894): 4104.

³³⁵ E.D. Cope to Julia Cope, March 27, 1888. Edward Drinker Cope, Letters, American Museum of Natural History. This collection is hereafter cited as Cope, AMNH.

latter's beguiling social graces, a dynamic that kept the civilized race safely evolving upward toward harmony and cooperation and away from savage struggle. Cope's vitriol toward emotionality and women's sentiment, even in the midst of an evolutionary theory based on the discourse of sentimentalism, suggests the changes underway in sentimental discourse by the end of the nineteenth century. The hostility expressed toward sentimentalism by this scientist points to the ongoing specialization of science, which proceeded in part by ostensibly divorcing itself from its roots in sentimentalism.

White men were the peak of civilization for the American School and thus possessed uniquely malleable constitutions. Given the rapidly changing political climate of the Gilded Age, this posed a substantial risk. Cope in particular threw his weight behind restrictive political measures to ensure that whites would maintain racial purity and that women's sentiment would continue to serve as the emotional complement to manly rationality and altruism. Threatened by the rise of the New Woman and ongoing struggles for black equality at the turn of the century, Cope wasted no words in casting the upset of hierarchical gender and racial relations as unleashing the power of "nature red in tooth and claw."³³⁶ In his vision, women's weakness makes them expendable. "Were women of the same sex as man, that is, were she simply another kind of man," Cope wrote, "she would soon be eliminated from the earth under the operation of the ordinary law of the survival of the fittest. . . . And such is often the actual history of male men who possess marked feminine characteristics."³³⁷ To a modern reader, perhaps what is most surprising about this passage is the very comfort and ease with which he suddenly

³³⁶ The oft-cited phrase is Tennyson's, from "In Memoriam A.H.H." (1850).

³³⁷ Cope, "On the Material Relations of Sex," 39.

uproots the characteristic of gender from any physical mooring, as if it were the most obvious thing in the world that men might perform as women. If women were men, he postulates, they would be vanquished in struggle, which, by the way, is already happening. Cope, as it turns out, was tormented by the perceived rise of gender deviance.

One of his most vitriolic pieces pronounces the residence of African Americans in United States and the possibility of the extension of the suffrage to (white) women as the “Two Perils of the Indo-European.” The problem is the mixing of gender and racial traits, respectively, for both prove far too permeable for Cope’s comfort. Advocating enforced colonization, Cope argued that “[t]he highest race of man cannot afford to lose or even to compromise the advantages acquired by hundreds of centuries of toil and hardship, by mingling its blood with the lowest.” While his critics disagreed, he found no assurance that miscegenation would not take place, and thus found outright deportation the only viable option to prevent “an unpardonable sale of a noble birthright for a mess of potage.”³³⁸ As he found white racial characteristics far too tenuous, so did he find white sexual differentiation to be a precarious specialization threatened by contamination. The largest cause was the growing campaign for woman suffrage. Suffrage catalyzes “gender confusion,” or “the effeminization of men and the masculinization of women,” a condition that finds “counterfeits of both sexes, each a fraud to the other, and both together frauds before the world and the universe!”³³⁹

To guard against such degeneration, the American School of Evolution averred that the function of social institutions was to enforce men and women of all races to carry

³³⁸ E.D. Cope, “Two Perils of the Indo-European,” *Open Court* III, no. 126 (1889): 2054.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2070.

out their physical destinies (as if these were so clear cut!), in spite of any personal or biological inclination for gender deviance or variance. Most of all, they opposed woman suffrage on the ground that it would erode the gender difference upon which civilization was based. That the need for such social discipline was imminent runs throughout Cope and Hyatt's work. While heterosexual attraction is positioned as the only natural form of sexual love, Cope can only assure its normalcy through the use of two qualifications and a double negative: "Women of *feminine type, with developed intelligence*, have never failed of response from the other sex."³⁴⁰ Another essay affirms that binary sexual differentiation is only found objectionable "by persons who are themselves not normal types."³⁴¹ Yet the very viability of queer subjects proved to be one of the neo-Lamarckians' principle arguments against woman suffrage. Far from challenging women to adopt unnatural roles, white women seemed far too eager and able to "become virified."³⁴² Subject to "certain conditions of habit or surroundings," one's body could suppress its female characteristics and extend its masculine traits, regardless of the sex assigned at birth (90). Women's participation in the political process would trigger an atavism that would develop the latent tendency to develop androgynous characteristics. Hyatt is forced to admit that such gender deviance, following as it does the basic principles of neo-Lamarckism, is "perfectly natural and not in a common sense degenerative" (90). Nevertheless, such evolutionary sexual reassignment "would not belong to the progressive stages of the evolution of mankind" (91). White women, it

³⁴⁰ E.D. Cope, "The Applied Metaphysics of Sex," *American Naturalist* 19, no. 8 (1885): 822. Emphasis added.

³⁴¹ E.D. Cope, "Sex in Government," *American Naturalist* 21, no. 4 (1887): 399.

³⁴² Alpheus Hyatt, "The Influence of Woman in the Evolution of the Human Race," *Natural Science* XI, no. 65 (1897): 91. Citations hereafter marked in text.

seems, in clamoring for the suffrage, were developing into men and thus promising to erase the very mastery of sentiment that had proven the cause and the means of civilization.

Whereas neo-Lamarckians saw middle class and elite white women as malleable, they saw working-class whites and people of color as merely throwbacks from the past, a living archive of the evolutionary depths from which whites had risen. In the words of Peter Bowler, “Lamarckism provided the means of linking cultural evolutionism to the physical anthropologists’ efforts to establish a hierarchy of racial types,” principally through the notion of recapitulation.³⁴³ Recapitulation is a teleological model of biological growth that had been in circulation since the days of Aristotle, but reached its peak of influence during the nineteenth century. Cope and Hyatt joined evolutionists such as Ernst Haeckel in independently elaborating original theories of recapitulation, a doctrine in which an individual’s development in the womb and infancy (ontogeny) is thought to re-trace the development of its species or race (phylogeny). Encouraged by the work of embryologists and comparative anatomists who noted phenotypic parallels such as the resemblance of the respiratory organs of the human fetus to the gills of an adult fish, many nineteenth-century scientists felt that human embryos literally retraced the evolutionary development of their animal ancestors.³⁴⁴ After each generation repeats its inherited history of evolutionary progression in gestation and youth, if external conditions were favorable, they incrementally reach the next level of advancement during adulthood. The individual’s descendants would then become heir to these progressions, and add

³⁴³ Bowler, *The Non-Darwinian Revolution*, 139.

³⁴⁴ See, for example, Edward Drinker Cope, “The Developmental Significance of Human Physiognomy,” in *Origin*, 281–293.

developments of their own as the “race” inched upward. If conditions were poor, however, degeneration would occur, and the race would slip dangerously downward, rapidly reverting to stages last seen hundreds of years prior.

According to Stephen Jay Gould, the American School of Evolution “exalted recapitulation to a higher status than it had enjoyed before or has achieved since,” for they utilized it as the fundamental process of growth and spun it into a vast political agenda.³⁴⁵ Cope’s version of recapitulation functioned through the laws of acceleration and retardation, theories of time intended to explain how an organism could build on the histories of its ancestors. In evolution by acceleration, individual development quickens as it ascends the hierarchy of development, so that a white fetus could re-trace the work of thousands of centuries over the course of mere months, leaving plenty of room in the individual’s own life to develop additions of her own through activities and will. As Le Conte explained, “The law of acceleration is a sort of young-Americanism in the animal kingdom. If our boys acquire knowledge and character similar to that of adults of a few generations back, they will have time while still young and plastic to press forward to still higher planes.”³⁴⁶ Deceleration occurred when an organism did not reach her target stage in the time allowed, perhaps as a result of her political activity, resulting in the deletion of the traits not yet acquired. Cope and his cohort searched for the precise mechanism of this process, and settled upon memory and instinct as a disembodied physical code capable of

³⁴⁵ Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny*, 85.

³⁴⁶ Le Conte, *Evolution*, 179.

transmission between individuals and generations that remade the future in light of the past.³⁴⁷

Models of recapitulation collapse different temporal slopes into the same physical space. Recapitulation locates “primitive men” humans as white men incompletely developed, a living archive of the past that white males had long since superseded. For all the rigid progressionism of this scale of development, recapitulation allows for a radical break with linear time, as past, present, and future co-exist. If natives are thought to literally be undeveloped whites, then the past is still alive, and subject to control. Recapitulation is an imperialist’s dream, as conquered peoples become fossils in their own time, relics of the past whites had long since left behind as past, present, and the future are thrown open to manipulation and exploitation.

Neo-Lamarckians and others claimed that the progressive evolutionary development of so-called primitive peoples had already nearly reached its zenith. In this view, non-white peoples were merely chaff in the mill of progress, trial runs long since discarded when whites had superseded “organic evolution . . . by the law of *force*,” and reached “evolution by the law of *love*.”³⁴⁸ In other words, Natives were steps on a linear path of evolution that had been superseded, and thus were destined to vanquish. The alleged lack of emotional feeling, sympathy, and gender specialization were cited as central evidence that racialized subjects lacked the basic materials of progress and

³⁴⁷ The rediscovery of Mendelian genetics provided a more useful means to trace biological development around 1900 than these notions of the transmission and transference of memory. The neo-Lamarckian concept of ontogeny as inherited memory was institutionalized in the psychoanalysis of the early twentieth century, however. For a reading of Freud’s notion of Jewishness as Lamarckian racial instinct, see Eliza Farro Slavet, “Freud’s Moses: Memory Material and Immaterial” (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2007).

³⁴⁸ Le Conte, *Evolution*, 88. Emphasis in the original.

retained strong resemblances to their quadrumanous ancestors. If U.S. “savages” were to advance at all, it was therefore through the means of animal-like struggle in the competition for labor. Le Conte thus argued that “the possession and use of inherited slaves is consistent with, and may even be conducive to, the highest morality.”³⁴⁹

Though built on sentimentalism, Neo-Lamarckism provided a rationalization for dooming Native Americans and other peoples of color to the fate of gradual extinction and is thus one of the starkest illustrations of sentimentalism’s structuring of nineteenth-century racial discourse. Cope offered the definition of human rights itself as “*the right to pursue a course of progressive evolution without obstruction by unnecessary obstacles,*” and was quite clear on the two primary obstacles facing his country: the presence of African Americans and the campaign for woman suffrage.³⁵⁰ While the process of evolution from barbarism to civilization “has been one of relentless severity, and thousands, yes millions of men have been sacrificed in accomplishing the result,” the vanishing of inferior types of human has enabled whites to make “the passage from under a ‘law of conflict’ to a ‘law of harmony.’”³⁵¹ The evolution of sentiment and sympathy was thus the earthly reward of the lucky few, a hierarchy of feeling that ought to put to rest the persistent claim by contemporary scholars that Lamarckism inherently offered the nineteenth century a socially progressive alternative to Darwinism and sentimental sympathy served as a strategy to resist racial thinking. In fact, the neo-Lamarckian school developed a theory of stratified sentiment, in which racialized subjects were saddled with

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 354.

³⁵⁰ Edward Drinker Cope, “What is Republicanism?” *Open Court* X, no. 453 (1896): 4897. Emphasis in the original.

³⁵¹ Edward Drinker Cope, “What is the Object of Life?” *Forum* IV, no. 1 (1887): 55, 56.

an inflexible heredity. This theory of the lack of malleability amongst some races illustrates the degree to which racial thinking had traveled since eighteenth-century environmentalism. In fact, the work of Cope and his cohort led directly to the rise of eugenic hereditarianism in the early twentieth century in which social engineering was calculated on the basis that biology is destiny.

Naturalizing Expansion: The Prehistoric Evidence of Evolution

In this section, I demonstrate how the methodology of the paleontologists' search for physical evidence is part and parcel of the political significance of neo-Lamarckian sentimental science. In common with other evolutionists of the nineteenth century (as well as the twentieth), neo-Lamarckians considered the fossil record to hold the incontrovertible proof of evolutionary species change. A series of skeletons from the same species of animal over a period of evolutionary time would show how bodily modifications had been passed down over generations, eventually resulting in a branching off into a new species altogether. The proof of their evolutionary vision of unbridled U.S. progress lay in the indigenous lives and lands of the U.S. West. Consequently, O.C. Marsh, E.D. Cope, and their employees entered reservation lands in the midst of the Lakota, the Cheyenne, and other tribes' wars with the United States government in the 1870s, eager to dig up Indian lands and plunder Indian graves in their search for prehistoric bones. The scientific and social meanings of the fossil riches they uncovered from Native land framed their explorations as the disinterested advancement of knowledge while simultaneously legitimated U.S. ownership of Kansas, the Dakotas,

Montana, Texas, New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, and Oregon.³⁵² Bone hunting literally led the way for white settlers to move westward; several of Cope's Kansas paths were later used by wagon trains.³⁵³ Their expeditions brought teams of scientists, under the protection of the national army, into Lakota, Kiowa, Comanche and many other tribal lands.

As the century wore on, the publicity and display of enormous fossil skeletons provided a means for white Americans to assert ownership over the newly acquired territory through claiming "the long history of the great West."³⁵⁴ In the view of these scientists, white North Americans could lay claim to dinosaurs as their own progenitors, remnants of the struggle in their evolutionary past before savagery had given way to sentiment. Furthermore, the fact that western fossils were seized at all reflected the conquest of Native America, an event that Shari Huhndorf argues enabled white Americans to strike a note of nostalgia for indigenous sovereignty. "Indians, now safely 'vanishing,' began to provide the symbols and myths upon which white Americans created a sense of historical authenticity, a 'real' national identity," she notes.³⁵⁵ In the minds of many whites, "primitive" peoples assumed their place next to dinosaurs as relics from their prehistoric past, where they retroactively predicted America's dawning strength. An examination of evolutionists' evidence collection thus provides a vantage point into how millennial thinking played out in material ways, and actually furthered the

³⁵² Accounts that demonstrate the role paleontology played in dispossessing Native land include Allison Dussias, "Science, Sovereignty, and the Sacred Text: Paleontological Resources and Native American Rights," *Maryland Law Review* 55 (1996): 84-159.

³⁵³ Charles H. Sternberg, *The Life of a Fossil Hunter* (New York: Henry Holt, 1909), 34-5.

³⁵⁴ Henry Fairfield Osborn, "Prehistoric Quadrupeds of the Rockies," *Century Illustrated Magazine* LII, no. 5 (1896): 715.

³⁵⁵ Shari M. Huhndorf, *Going Native: Indians in the American Cultural Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 22.

U.S. conquest of North American lands. While sentimental racial discourse animated attempts to eliminate the “savage,” however, Native Americans had their own say. As I show, Red Cloud was able to appropriate the paleontologists’ desire for access to his lands into a means of resisting the U.S. government.

Though Montana and the Dakotas were among the country’s most promising sites for fossil discovery, it wasn’t until the fortunes of the Lakota Sioux shifted in the 1870s that Cope and rival paleontologist Marsh (who was not a member of the American School) could outfit expeditions into the area. For several years prior to 1870, the Lakota had held the upper hand against the United States government and had maintained control over their gold and fossil-rich territory. The Bozeman War (1866-1868), also known as Red Cloud’s War, ended in a complete victory for the Lakota, as they not only won the closure of the Bozeman Trail in their Wyoming territory, but also the shuttering of the three primary forts built to protect the thoroughfare and temporarily staved off the necessity of removing to a federal agency.³⁵⁶ In the process, Red Cloud became recognized as the only Native American to ever win a major war against the United States government, a distinction that unduly singles out Red Cloud for a complex effort waged by numerous Lakota leaders, many of whom held higher rankings in tribal councils than did the warrior.³⁵⁷

In the summer of 1869, O.C. Marsh wished to lead a Yale bone-hunting expedition near Lakota territory, but was advised against doing so on account of the

³⁵⁶ As a primary route to the goldfields of Montana, the Bozeman Trail was of vital interest to the U.S. government.

³⁵⁷ In an exemplary study of Oglala political structure that prioritizes Native perspectives, Catharine Price argues that Red Cloud never reached the highest levels of tribal or multi-tribal leadership, despite the United States’ insistence on treating him as the “head chief” of the Lakota. See Price, *The Oglala People, 1841-1879: A Political History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996).

strength of Cheyenne and Sioux resistance.³⁵⁸ By the summer of 1870, however, the allied Sioux tribes had begun to experience a loss of power. The Lakota relinquished the disputed borderlands of their designated territory and moved onto reservation land, the Red Cloud Agency (soon to be renamed Pine Ridge Agency) of northwestern Nebraska. Desiring to threaten the Lakota into further retreat, the army seized upon Marsh's renewed plans for an expedition in the summer of 1870. "It will make it a little embarrassing to the Sioux, by sending a force south of their reservation," western fort director Phil Sheridan wrote with bravado. The Yale expedition was backed by the head of the army, outfitted with no less than six army wagons, and at one point was accompanied by 30 troops.³⁵⁹ Cognizant of the symbolic and material worth of their forays into the plains, badlands, and arroyos of the west, as well as the imminent danger these frontrunners of nation building faced, the government supplied this and subsequent expeditions by Marsh and Cope with military escorts of the likes of General Custer, Wild Bill Hickock, and Buffalo Bill Cody.³⁶⁰ The paleontologists often used military forts as their bases out west and hired local Native Americans who knew fossil-rich sites as scouts; Marsh hired two Pawnee men by the names of Tucky-tee-lous and La-hoor-a-sac for his first Yale expedition.³⁶¹ Marsh's trip met no resistance from Native leaders, though they engaged in such activities as robbing skulls from Lakota funeral platforms. (See Figure 5.1). The trip received wide publicity in papers across the country that catapulted both Marsh and the search for fossils into the public eye. Marsh and a team of

³⁵⁸ Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur*.

³⁵⁹ Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur*, 25, 29, 32.

³⁶⁰ Buffalo Bill led the Yale Expedition of 1870 expedition for a day. See Wallace, *The Bonehunters' Revenge*, 60.

³⁶¹ Adrienne Mayor, *Fossil Legends of the First Americans* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 183.

Yale students made three additional fossil-gathering trips west of varying scientific success over the subsequent summers.

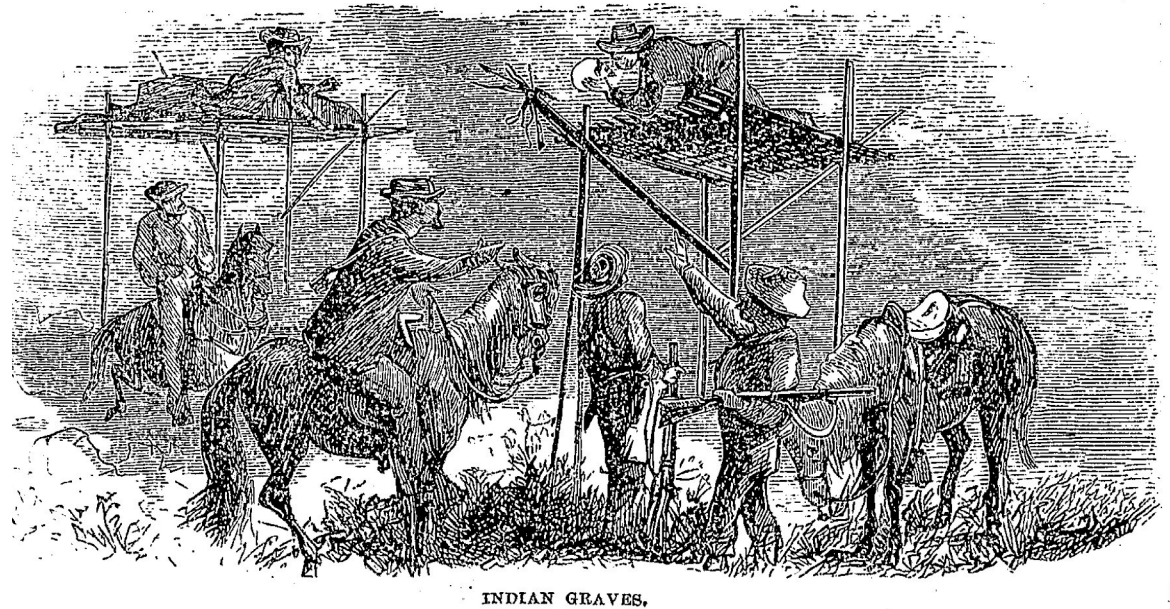


Figure 5.1. “Indian Graves.” The illustration shows Marsh’s Yale Expedition looting Lakota funeral platforms. Reproduced from C.W. Betts, “Yale College Expedition of 1870,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 43, no. 257 (Oct. 1871): 665.

The Lakota, of course, had long known of the existence of the tremendous prehistoric creatures, many of which lay partially exposed in the rugged outcroppings of their land. In the 1880s, Bureau of Ethnology linguist Reverend James Dorsey reported that the Lakota averred that the bones “now found in the bluffs of Nebraska and Dakota” were the remains of the *Unkcegila*, the most powerful gods in Lakota theology, deities responsible for creating both earth and humankind. The Lakota instructed Dorsey that the *Unkcegila* resembled “buffalo,” were “horned water monsters with four legs each,” and

still dwelled in the Missouri River, feeding on the spirits of local people.³⁶² As historian Adrienne Mayor notes, prehistoric fossils played a central role in Lakota origin stories, important pre-Darwinian evolutionary thinking that argued that these tremendous beasts had once dwelled in an inland sea that covered the plains. Mayor argues that while numerous twentieth-century historians of science have asserted that Native Americans knew next to nothing about the existence of fossils, the Lakota incorporated fossils into their religion, medicine, and historical accounts. Cope, Marsh, and other paleontologists working in the northern plains were thus indebted to Lakota people for their knowledge about fossil deposits as well as access to their lands.³⁶³

Marsh's quest for fossils brought him back to Lakota territory in search of the *Unkcegila* in the fall of 1874. In the escalated tensions of that year, native leaders such as Red Cloud quickly identified his investigations as a substantial threat, and later, as a significant negotiating weapon in their efforts to maintain political autonomy on the reservation. Earlier that summer, General George Custer had invited Marsh along his treaty-breaking scientific and military expedition into the Black Hills. While Marsh declined, he did send along a representative who became one of four scientists in the party that discovered gold in the hills, setting off a flood of speculators and developers into Lakota territory that precipitated the loss of the sacred Paha Sapa three years later. Several months following Custer's initial foray into the Hills, General Edward Ord, commander of the Department of the Platte, wrote Marsh a letter informing him that "a vast deposit of fossil remains of extinct marine and other animals has been discovered ten

³⁶² James Owen Dorsey, "A Study of Siouan Cults," *Eleventh Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1894): 438-41.

³⁶³ Mayor, *Fossil Legends*, 220-295.

miles north of the Red Cloud Agency covering an area six miles square.”³⁶⁴ Government scientists had long suspected that these White River badlands might be “the greatest cemetery in the world for Eocene mammalia,” and Marsh was eager to make his discoveries.³⁶⁵ Despite the risk involved in following Custer’s heels so closely with another scientific expedition that would assess the value of Lakota land to U.S. interests, Marsh made haste to the Red Cloud reservation in early November. He was accompanied by a team of soldiers for protection as well as officers who volunteered to serve as fossil collectors. They soon found themselves in the middle of an important struggle for sovereignty on the reservation. Two weeks prior, the hated agent J.J. Saville had mounted a United States flag on the roof of the reservation’s stockade. With Red Cloud’s leadership, the Lakota quickly destroyed the flagpole that symbolized a total loss of political authority on their own land, and an ensuing battle between twenty-six U.S. troops and many more Lakota warriors was only averted by the quick decision of Lakota elders (but not including Red Cloud) to let the soldiers retreat. Saville’s subsequent effort to mount a census tabulation of the natives living and/or eating at the reservation only made tensions worse, as Saville was withholding the distribution of rations until the Natives consented to be counted.

Upon Marsh’s arrival in the midst of this important struggle for symbolic and material control over the reservation, he solicited the tribal council for permission to pass through Lakota land on his trip north. At the council, leaders including Sitting Bull, White Tail, and Red Cloud made it clear that they believed Marsh was actually in search

³⁶⁴ Marsh correspondence, reel 26, frame 744, 9 June 1873, O.C. Marsh Papers and Correspondence, Sterling Archives, Yale University quoted in Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur*, 112.

³⁶⁵ Joseph Leidy to Ferdinand Hadyen, uncited, quoted in *ibid.*, 122.

of gold. Red Cloud's friend, the hunter and ranchman James Cook, reports that during Marsh's visit "he heard a great deal of the Indian side regarding bone-hunting in the Sioux hunting grounds."³⁶⁶ Despite Cook's extensive knowledge of the area, he had never heard of the fossils until American Horse and other Oglala leaders taught him about the "stone bones" just before Marsh's arrival. Showing Cook "[a] piece of gigantic jawbone containing a molar three inches in diameter," American Horse explained that it came from a "thunder horse," creatures that dwelled the plains many years before and had come to their ancestors' aid by chasing buffalo into their camps during times of starvation (196). When Marsh sought the council's permission, Cook acted as an intermediary. As Cook notes in his autobiography: "I told [Red Cloud] that Professor Marsh was a friend of the Great Father at Washington; that, if he were allowed to hunt for stone bones, I thought he would be a good friend to the Sioux people; and that I was sure he was not hunting for yellow lead (gold). Red Cloud said that if Professor Marsh were a good man, he would help him and his people get rid of the agent who was then in charge of them, and whom they cordially disliked and openly accused of dishonesty" (196-197).

Red Cloud and other tribal leaders thus saw in this paleontologist eager to mine his land the opportunity for a bit of leverage with the United States government in their struggle with Saville. Seizing the opportunity to obtain a powerful ally, Oglala leaders offered Marsh passage as long as he consented to two important conditions: that Marsh guarantee a substantial wage increase for the Lakota men hired by the expedition and that he bring the tribe's testimony of the corrupt activities of Agent Saville directly to

³⁶⁶ James H. Cook, *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier as Cowboy, Hunter, Guide, Scout, and Ranchman* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 196. Citations hereafter marked in text.

Washington.³⁶⁷ As Marsh later attested, “Red Cloud made specific charges of fraud against the agent and contractors, and urged me to make this known to the Great Father, and to carry him samples of the rations the Indians were then receiving. Mainly to gain consent for my expedition to proceed, I made Red Cloud the promise he desired.”³⁶⁸

When Marsh assembled with his troops and officers, however, the Lakota’s original suspicions were quickly aroused, and a group of young warriors drew their guns at Marsh, forcing the party into a rapid retreat to Fort Robinson, stationed just outside Native land. Anxious to win this strategic battle, Saville encouraged Marsh to hold a feast for the Oglala leaders in an effort to gain their goodwill. After dinner, the leaders consented to the fossil hunt and appointed Red Cloud’s brother Spider as the leader of the expedition party, although they once more refused passageway when Marsh assembled his command the following day.³⁶⁹ Refusing to take the Indians’ threat seriously, Marsh snuck through agency land late that night and reached the fossil beds. The Lakota let him pass, opting instead to keep a careful watch over his work to ensure that he remained true to his word.

Given the lack of relevant primary sources authored by Natives, what happened next is open to interpretation.³⁷⁰ After some days, Spider and another man came into

³⁶⁷ Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur*, 114. While Sitting Bull was chief of the Hunkpapa, a band of Indians who refused to live within the reservation grounds, he was present at the council that day on account of the ongoing resistance to Saville’s displays of power.

³⁶⁸ O.C. Marsh, *A Statement of Affairs at Red Cloud Agency, Made to the President of the United States* (New Haven, CT [?]: O.C. Marsh, 1875), 3. Citations hereafter marked in text.

³⁶⁹ George E. Hyde, *Red Cloud’s Folk: A History of the Oglala Sioux Indians* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), 24-7.

³⁷⁰ A narrative dictated by Red Cloud has recently been authenticated as the chief’s autobiography, making him the only nineteenth-century Indian leader besides Geronimo and Black Hawk to leave mediated remembrances. The chief had no official knowledge of this bequest, however; in 1893, two white friends of Red Cloud’s collaborated to pump him for information for two to three hours a day on a bench outside the Pine Ridge post office, and then surreptitiously translate and record the stories at the end of each session.

Wiscasa Pahi Huhu's camp (the Lakota had dubbed Marsh "Man-That-Picks-Up-Bones") to warn that the non-Agency Mijincou were preparing to ambush the fossil hunters.³⁷¹ Marsh directed his party to pack up the two tons of fossils already collected and depart, thus narrowly missing the arrival of the war party the day after the expedition's removal. Whether the Mijincou's threatened attack was part of Red Cloud's strategy or not is difficult to verify; it is certain, however, that Marsh felt that the chief saved his life. "We escaped a large war party of Indians in consequence of warning and assistance sent by Red Cloud," he later attested. "This act of kindness led me on my return to the Agency to make further investigations there" (8). Red Cloud later brought him samples of government-issued rations that were putrid or otherwise appallingly insufficient as testament to Saville's fraudulent management of the Agency. Marsh packed them away alongside his fossils for the trip back to New Haven.

For five months, Marsh did nothing to complete his end of the bargain. Come spring, however, he marched into the Commissioner of Indian Affairs office in Washington to register his complaints against the mismanagement of the Red Cloud Agency. Disgusted by the commissioner's lack of concern, Marsh went straight to President Grant and initiated the launching of an extensive investigation into the corruption of the so-called Indian Ring. As the central accomplishment of Grant's Peace

Cook's remembrance that Red Cloud "did not want to say anything for white men to write down in order to make money for themselves by selling his words" gives us some idea of how Red Cloud viewed the role available to Natives in the literary marketplace (184). As the text covers the period from Red Cloud's first battle to 1864, however – before Red Cloud took up arms against the United States government – the authors had trouble finding a publisher. As a result, the narrative provides an account of Lakota life on the Great Plains before the arrival of significant numbers of white emigrants; perhaps this was a strategic move on Red Cloud's part to ensure its unmarketability. The text wasn't published until 1997, following historian R. Eli Paul's verification of the document. See R. Eli Paul, ed., *Autobiography of Red Cloud: War Leader of the Oglalas* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1997).

³⁷¹ Cook, *Fifty Years on the Old Frontier*, 197.

Policy, the Red Cloud Agency was of particular interest to both the administration and the press, the latter of which jumped at the whiff of scandal. After three months, the investigation concluded with varied results that both the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the advocates of Indian reform could interpret as victory. Although formally cleared of fraud, Saville resigned his post and the commission noted a host of problems in the management of the Red Cloud Agency. As one of the first investigations into corruption at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as a scandal at what was arguably the most important agency in the West, Marsh's provocations had brought the failure of the Peace Policy into the public eye. As Marsh had noted, "[t]hat a chief of such note and ability as Red Cloud should be subjected to the caprices of such an agent, is in itself a gross indignity, and ill-calculated to inspire him or his people with respect for the advantages of civilization" (14). The next winter, Red Cloud approached Lieutenant Carpenter, who had served as one of Marsh's fossil-hunting employees, at his quarters at Fort Robinson. He asked Carpenter to send Marsh a peace pipe and dictated an accompanying letter recounting his relationship with Marsh: "He came here and I asked him to tell the Great Father something. He promised to do so, and I thought he would do like all white men, and forget me when he went away. But he did not. He told the Great Father everything just as he promised he would, and I think he is the best man I ever saw."³⁷² Red Cloud, it seems, felt that his alliance with Marsh had been a success.³⁷³

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³⁷² Marsh Papers and Correspondence, quoted in Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur*, 143.

³⁷³ Some years later, one of Marsh's fossil collectors, by the name of Hank Clifford, married one of Red Cloud's daughters. Yale Peabody Museum History and Archives, "The Yale College Scientific Expedition of 1873," Yale Peabody Museum, <http://www.yale.edu/peabody/archives/YCSE1873.html>.

For his part, Edward Drinker Cope tended to align himself with the U.S. government rather than with Native leaders during his extensive fieldwork throughout the West. He took advantage of sites such as the plains of northern Colorado that were made available to outside researchers on account of Grant's "peace policy" that advocated assimilation rather than extinction, and had wrested native control from their lands through mostly non-violent means. As Cope wrote to his father from Colorado in 1873, "[w]ithout the good effects of Grant's peace policy the exploration I do not hesitate to say could not have been made."³⁷⁴ Cope's desire to claim species found him traversing the borders of Lakota territory during the infamous summer of 1876, and he found ready introductions to territorial officials such as the governor and federal surveyors, from whom he "obtained all possible information respecting the country, the Indians, etc."³⁷⁵ Unlike the armchair naturalists Melville satirized in *Moby-Dick*, Cope relished his role as a frontier scientist; his protégé Henry Fairfield Osborn, later the director of the American Museum of Natural History, praised his mentor's "glorious opportunity of entering the unknown Western field as a pioneer."³⁷⁶ Like all work in the natural sciences, paleontology relied on the geographic mobility of capital to bring scientists into proximity with their specimens. Cope's publications alone relied on fossilized remains others had collected from Central and South America, the Caribbean, Eurasia, the Philippines, Australia, and West Africa. A mixture of university monies, private fortunes, and several of the numerous federal geological surveys funded Cope and Marsh's own

³⁷⁴ E.D. Cope to his father, July 6, 1873, Cope, AMNH, quoted in Jaffe, *The Gilded Dinosaur*, 101.

³⁷⁵ E.D. Cope to Annie Cope, August 14, 1876. Cope, AMNH.

³⁷⁶ Henry Fairfield Osborn, "A Great Naturalist: Edward Drinker Cope," *Century Illustrated Magazine* LV, no. 1 (1897): 12.

expeditions, which were something of a big business. Cope's fossil-hunting employee Charles Sternberg once claimed that Cope had spent \$20,000 digging in Kansas alone.³⁷⁷ Much happier in the field than at home in Philadelphia, Cope's travels found him excavating bones in eastern Oregon, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Montana, Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, Texas, New Mexico, and northern Mexico.

While Cope's letters to family members tended to minimize the threat he faced from Natives resistant to encroachments into their territories, expedition members writing to mass audiences were free to narrate his travels with the available tropes of settler colonialism on the borderlands. In Kansas in the summer of 1871, Cope was accompanied for a short time by a land developer named W.E. Webb, who published a highly fictionalized account of the expedition as *Buffalo Land: An Authentic Account of the Discoveries, Adventures, and Mishaps of a Scientific and Sporting Party in the Wild West* the following year.³⁷⁸ The narrative stars a "Professor Paleozoic" and goes so far as to include entire chapters written directly by Cope. That said, the representation is far from hagiographic, as Webb delights in painting the professor as a bumbling fool rather reminiscent of James Fenimore Cooper's naturalist Doctor Battius in *The Prairie* (1827). While Professor Paleozoic's archeological pronouncements throughout the text are comically suspect – he identifies a surveyor's stone as ancient Indian art – his performance as a frontiersman is far more successful.

³⁷⁷ Letter to the Editor, n.d., Cope, AMNH.

³⁷⁸ William Edward Webb, *Buffalo Land: An Authentic Account of the Discoveries, Adventures, and Mishaps of a Scientific and Sporting Party in the Wild West* (Cincinnati: E. Hannaford & Co., 1873). Citations hereafter marked in text.

One of the novel's most suspenseful episodes finds the party stopped by Chief White Wolf and a small band of Cheyenne demanding food for the group's right of passage. The professor negotiates a council to be held at the Land Office of nearby Hay's City, in which he valiantly partakes of the peace pipe to secure the visitors' access to Cheyenne hunting grounds. The accompanying illustration uses many of the visual markers of frontier lawlessness. (See Figure 5.2.) As the group sits in a barren clapboard room, two whisky outlets are visible through the open door. Wide, full-featured faces framed by long, unkempt hair mark some bodies as indigenous, while protruding noses and foreheads and swollen bellies identify others as poor, opportunistic whites of the borderlands. Visually marking the distance between the scene of frontier justice on hand and the national law, a puff of smoke rises from Paleozoic's lips as he holds the pipe in front of his unbuttoned coat, the cloud rising below, but parallel to – and thus never to meet - the stars and stripes flying on the horizon.



Figure 5.2. “The Pipe of Peace – The Professor’s Dilemma.” Reproduced from William Edward Webb, *Buffalo Land: An Authentic Account of the Discoveries, Adventures, and Mishaps of a Scientific and Sporting Party in the Wild West* (Cincinnati: E. Hannaford & Co., 1873).

Throughout their writings, Cope, Sternberg, and Webb naturalize Native opposition to their presence much in the way they record the unearthing of fragile fossils: both become relics from previous geologic eras, suddenly exposed to the eyes of modernity. Cope’s expedition to the Black Hills in the immediate aftermath of Custer’s defeat brought ample opportunity to stage frontier heroics. Encouraging the townspeople of Lawrence, Kansas to attend a lecture to be delivered by Cope, Sternberg promoted their trip into the Paha Sapa in the fall of 1876 as an undertaking that “[n]one but the most daring white hunters and trappers” had the gumption to enter, for it was “the most

dangerous place for white men in North America.”³⁷⁹ Cope had calculated that Sitting Bull and his men would be engaged in fighting the U.S. army for around three months, thereby leaving the fossiliferous hills vacant for ample exploration time. “It took a great mind to conceive the idea, and a brave man to execute it,” Sternberg gushed. Cope’s gamble paid off, and though his cook and guide quit the expedition for fear of their own lives, Cope’s only interactions with Natives served to bolster, rather than diminish, his reputation as an intrepid frontiersman. “I was introduced to Bear Wolf war chief of the Mtn Crows who has taken 26 scalps & stolen 900 horses from the Sioux!” he wrote to his wife, obviously pleased with the cultural cachet the interaction afforded him.³⁸⁰ Using a favorite contemporary trick to show mastery over indigenous peoples, Cope relished in the shock four Crow men experienced when he removed his false teeth after dinner.³⁸¹ Anxious to use the fruits of science as political authority, Cope enjoyed what he imagined as the clash of temporalities, as relics of the past came face to face with the modern men and technologies in the process of stripping them of their land and way of life.

Cope didn’t need a symbolic set of dentures to signify the discursive and material power he held over Native Americans, however. The classification of western prehistoric life that evolutionary science depended on was not just an educational display of the powers of paleontology, but an allegedly benign assertion of ownership over that history, and by extension, over that land. In *Buffalo Land*, Webb lovingly narrated the access to the rich historical past of the continent that the fossil explorations enabled. The plains of Kansas, he wrote, “teem with their savage races and scarcely more savage beasts. The

³⁷⁹ Letter to the Editor, n.d., Cope, AMNH.

³⁸⁰ E.D Cope to A. Cope, August 27, 1876. Cope Collection.

³⁸¹ E.D. Cope to A. Cope, September 2, 1876. Cope Collection.

very soil which these tread is written all over with a history of the past, even its surface giving to science wonderful and countless fossils of those ages when the world was young and man was not yet born” (25). Remnants of the same evolutionary past as the fossils, the “savages” and “beasts” trampling the plains are ignorant of the rich meaning of the bones lying underneath their feet, waiting to be recognized. Webb intimates that the act of digging, interpreting, classifying, and ultimately drawing the bones was merely reading a “history of the past” that communicated only with the civilized. Yet such a process functioned as an act of atavistic control. In this view, as the interpreters of the bones, the United States became the rightful inheritors of their legacy and of the land. When examined in light of the neo-Lamarckians’ theory of progressionist development by sentiment and sensation we can see how the discovery of the *stegosaurus* and the *tyrannosaurus rex* in the fossil beds from the Dakotas to Eastern Oregon was interpreted as evidence for the superiority of the Indo-European race. Having climbed out of the vicious struggle these beasts waged – yet inheriting the advantageous characteristics of the winners – neo-Lamarckians used their fossil monsters and the “savagery” of Native Americans as corroborating evidence that whites had entered a stage of harmonic evolutionism where struggle gave way to sentiment.

Popularizing the Prehistoric

The discovery and display of the ferocious monsters of the past provided a glorious ancestry that naturalized U.S. expansion as the missing link that connected an illustrious history with a millennial future. In finding the fossil record that would prove the existence of evolutionary species change by embodied feeling, the work of U.S.

paleontologists imparted a physical account of “deep time” that would give the United States the illustrious history its citizens so craved. At mid-century the appearance of William Hickling Prescott’s work on pre-Columbian Aztec and Incan culture spurred a national anxiety that the tribes displaced and taken over by the United States were insufficiently accomplished and of an inferior grade, an inheritance that elites and the middle class felt was discordant with their own ambitions. In an era in which the present was imagined as a linear descendent of the past, this posed no small concern. Consequently, the fossil record of dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures unearthed in the U.S. West, promoted as “the largest and most terrible animals that have ever inhabited the earth,” seemed to confirm to many contemporary scientists and the public at large that white U.S. Americans could lay claim to a magnificent heritage.³⁸²

As W.J.T. Mitchell comments, “the excavation and display of big fossil bones had been connected to national pride and prestige since the era of Thomas Jefferson.”³⁸³ Remains of gigantic mastodons had been discovered in sites around the Ohio and Hudson Rivers since the early eighteenth century. Interest in the skeletons mounted at the close of the century as better-preserved fossils appeared, and in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1781) Jefferson went so far as to project that the enormous beasts probably still roamed the plains of the west. Regardless of their present status, however, Jefferson was “certain such a one has existed in America, and that it has been the largest of all terrestrial beings,” and thus provided solid evidence to falsify the Comte de Buffon’s extremely

³⁸² William H. Ballou, “Strange Creatures of the Past: Gigantic Saurians of the Reptilian Age,” *Century Illustrated Magazine* LV, no. 1 (1897): 15.

³⁸³ W.J.T. Mitchell, *The Last Dinosaur Book: The Life and Times of a Cultural Icon*. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 6.

influential theory of New World degeneracy.³⁸⁴ Anxious to let the continent's buried skeletons speak for U.S. potency, the president had devoted an entire room of the White House for the storage of old bones. While there were some significant finds throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the treasures unburied by the feverish exploits of Cope and Marsh, and especially Marsh's series of horses (and later his birds with teeth), brought U.S. paleontology into its own. Their finds demonstrated that far from being the degenerate offspring of Europe, the wilderness of America held the clues to the deep and magnificent history of all life on earth. In northwestern New Mexico, for example, Cope had uncovered "by far the oldest quadrupeds known," one part of his large body of work that made him, in Osborn's opinion, responsible for the world's most "profuse and overwhelming demonstration of the actual historical working of the laws of evolution."³⁸⁵ According to historian Martin Rudwick, the discovery of the evolutionary past through the scientific practices of the U.S. brought the nation's elite the intellectual prestige it craved: "Marsh's re-interpretation of the phylogeny of the horse family, relegating the older European discoveries to the status of offshoots of an American main line of evolution – a picture that has been confirmed by all subsequent research – symbolises appropriately the emergence of American paleontology from its earlier quasi-colonial status into full intellectual maturity."³⁸⁶ Now the U.S. could lay claim both to the history and the brains that allowed for a hallowed past and the superior science needed for its disinterment.

³⁸⁴ Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (New York: Library of America, 1984), 169.

³⁸⁵ That the bone wars had yet to see its final battle is apparent in Osborn's posthumous praise, as he attempts to award Cope with the achievement customarily granted Marsh. Osborn, "A Great Naturalist," 13-14.

³⁸⁶ Martin J.S. Rudwick, *The Meaning of Fossils: Episodes in the History of Paleontology*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 254.

Just before Cope passed away, *Century Magazine* sent illustrator Charles Knight to the naturalist's Philadelphia home for two weeks to make preliminary sketches of the great dinosaurs and other beasts that Cope had unearthed. At the time, the public had seen little of the creatures, but *Century* magazine produced a series of three articles in 1896 and 1897 that featured Knight's illustrations. The last turned out to be Cope's obituary, penned by Henry Fairfield Osborn, Cope's protégé and a rising star in paleo-science. According to these images, the United States had inherited a history of incredibly aggressive and fierce megafauna, "the largest and most terrible animals that have ever inhabited the earth."³⁸⁷ (See images 5.3 through 5.6.) Knight later recalled Cope's infectious mastery of his material and his methodology that "applied his profound knowledge of the life of the present to a clarification and explanation of the life of the past," an indulgence in presentism that encouraged Knight that he could "picture quite distinctly just what these mighty beasts looked like as they walked or swam in search of food."³⁸⁸ Presentism, after all, was a key feature of neo-Lamarckian scientific practice, as species change was imagined to function on a linear and teleological scale of development directed by an animal for its own good (versus random Darwinian chance that placed the past outside the realm of rational choice). Consequently, a rational and emotional analysis of prehistoric creatures could be undertaken using the conditions of the present as the yardstick.

³⁸⁷ William H. Ballou, "Strange Creatures of the Past: Gigantic Saurians of the Reptilian Age," *Century Illustrated Magazine* LV, no. 1 (1897): 15.

³⁸⁸ Charles Knight, *Autobiography of an Artist*. Unpublished manuscript. Charles Knight Collection, American Museum of Natural History. This collection is hereafter cited as Knight, AMNH.

Ever threatened by the rising tides of immigrants and claims for political and social equality he railed against in his private and public writings, Cope's present necessitated that white America discover and celebrate its glorious ancestry to fortify its claims to dominance. Not coincidentally, Knight's paintings show a variety of spectacular dinosaurs engaged in epic conquests. As W.J.T. Mitchell observes, his famous *Leaping Laelaps* refers to nothing as much as John Ward's *Bull's Fighting* (1800), building on classic images of animal combat and grandeur. (See figure 5.3). Yet these airborne *dryptosauri* are far more agile than their quadrumanous forerunners, their ferocity more a result of their violent athleticism than sheer bulk. After studying the fossil remains of an animal, Knight made three-dimensional models of their possible shapes so that he might draw a more "realistic" form, a practice he later utilized in his nearly three-decades employ at the American Museum. Knight delighted in imagining the supple contours of skin and muscle that might have clothed the magnificent bones. While set in pleasing landscapes, the animal figures are the centerpieces of his work, a composition that makes his pictures alive with motion. His *Laelaps* transforms the common pounce of kittens at play into a fight of astonishing proportions, the claws of the supine animal reaching toward the spectator in case he misses his fellow prey. The shadow of the suspended monster leaves an otherworldly cast, as if its body is moving too rapidly for even the sun's rays to catch. His paintings emphasize the anatomical structures developed for fighting and protection but leave invisible any organ of the reproductive or digestive system that would betray that these bodies were built for anything but virile combat. Knight often depicted land-based animals in heroic solitude against a soft background that makes the prickly surfaces of the animals all the more apparent. He tended to

represent waterborne creatures engaged in the conquest of appetite, their long bodies twisted into menacing gestures and schools of fish fleeing in terror.

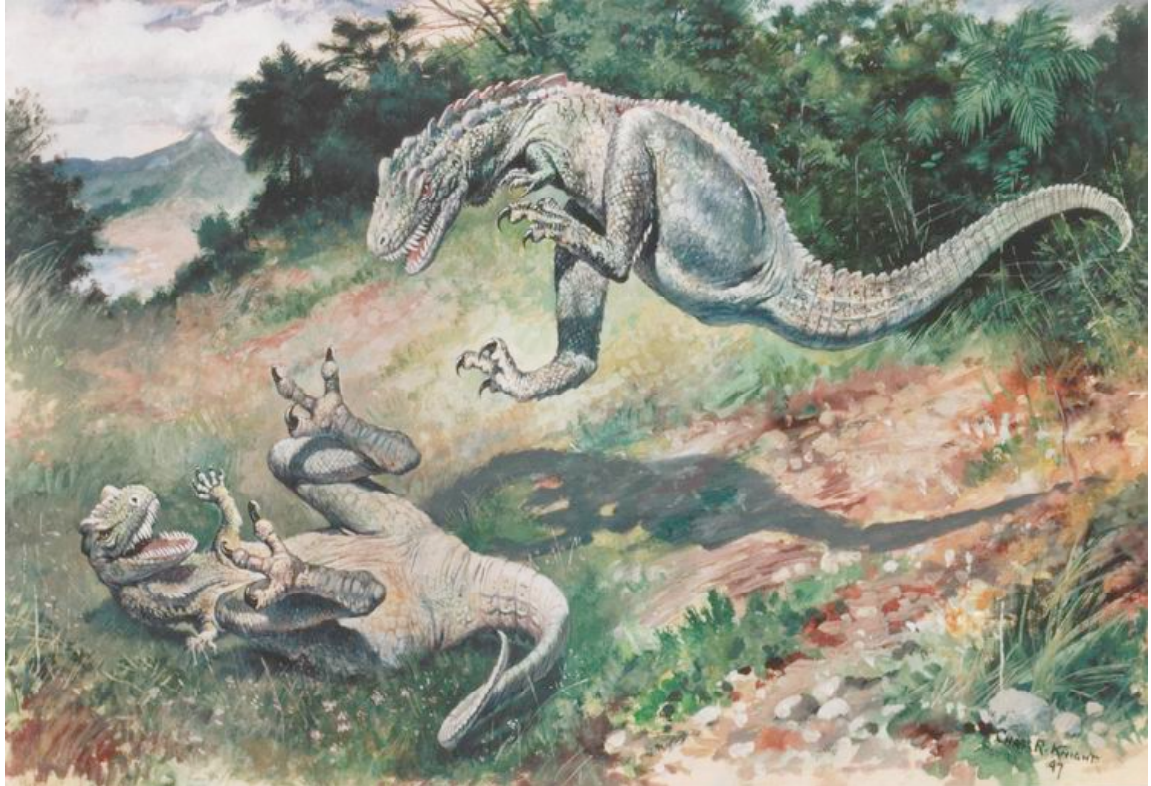


Figure 5.3. *Leaping Laelaps*, by Charles Knight. Reproduced from Henry Fairfield Osborn, "A Great Naturalist: Edward Drinker Cope," *Century Illustrated Magazine* 55, no. 1 (1897): 14.

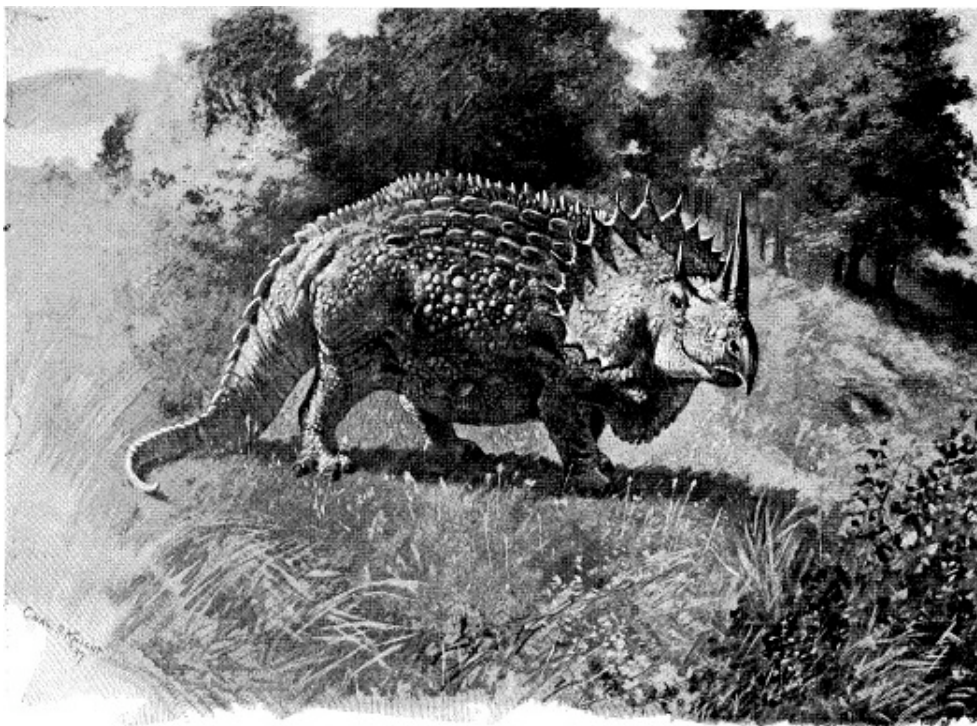


Figure 5.4. *The Horned Dinosaur*, by Charles Knight. Reproduced from Osborn, “Edward Drinker Cope,” 18.

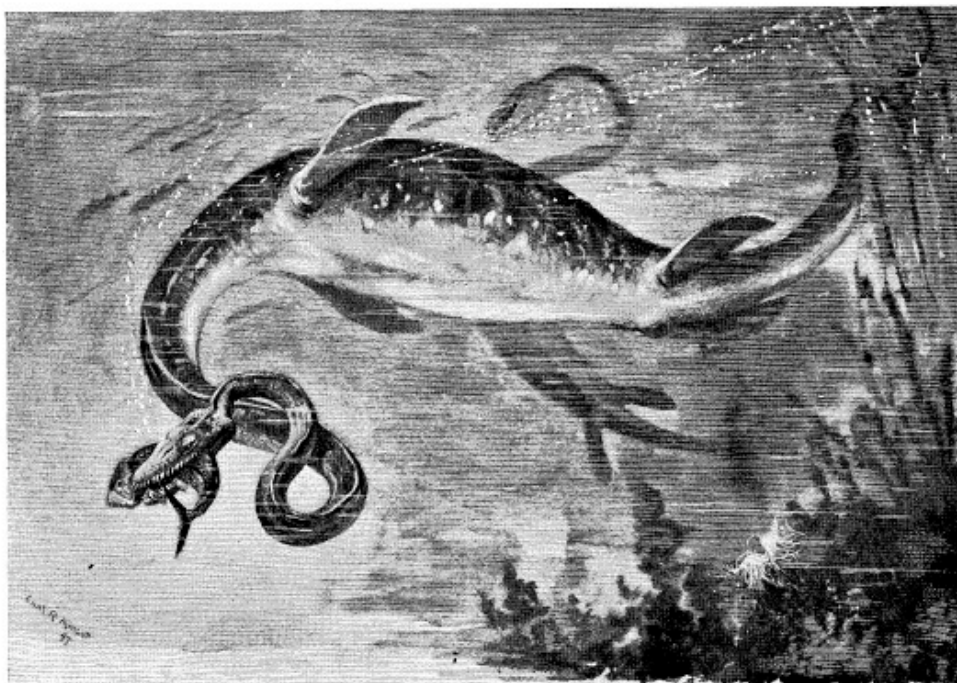


Figure 5.5. *Flat-tailed Plesiosaur*, by Charles Knight. Reproduced from Osborn, “Edward Drinker Cope,” 16.

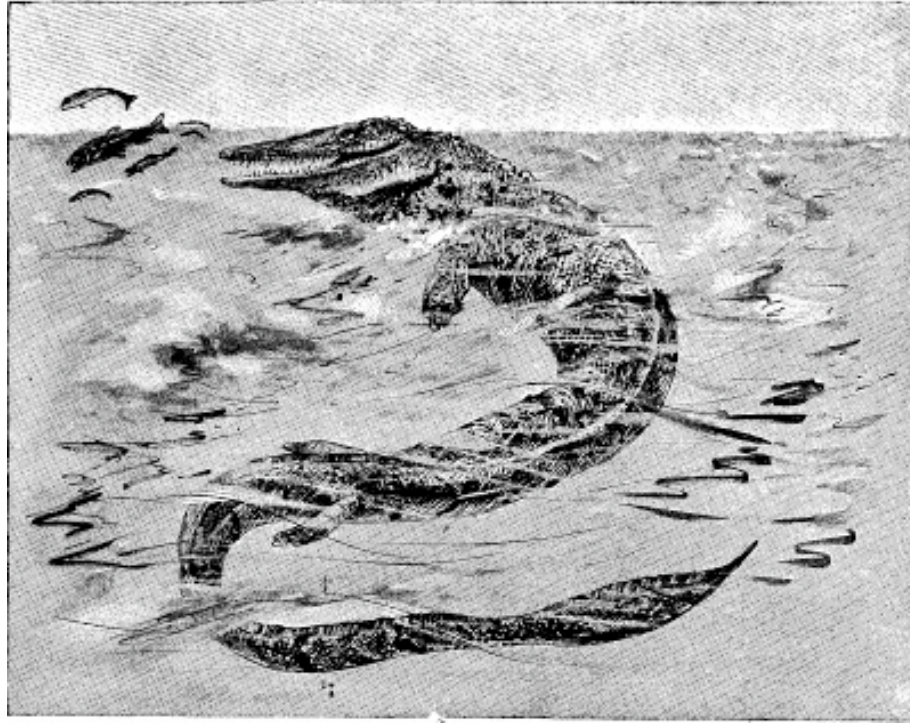


Figure 5.6. *Ram-nosed Mosasaur*, by Charles Knight. Reproduced from Osborn, “Edward Drinker Cope,” 21.

While Knight’s turn-of-the-century illustrations have been interpreted as the very images of “social Darwinism,” I submit instead that attending to the multiple theoretical strands of evolution in the period permits us to see how they are wrapped up in a sentimental science that understood the animals as evidence of a divinely inspired, harmonic evolutionism of progression from beast to savage, and savage to civilized.³⁸⁹ Attentiveness to the Lamarckian factors of evolution Cope and many other U.S. scientists endorsed brings into relief the ways that cooperation, harmony, and sympathy were imagined as the fruits of evolutionary progress that financially secure whites alone had earned. In much contemporary scholarship, “Social Darwinism” is used to denote a Gilded Age belief in life as brutal struggle, where all humans are forced to compete with

³⁸⁹ See, for example, Mitchell, *The Last Dinosaur*.

one another for survival according to the laws of organic nature. In fact, however, most nineteenth-century whites felt the theory to be as repulsive as their twentieth-century counterparts do (at least when applied to themselves), and deferred instead to a variety of laws of organic and social evolution that promised their race alone an ascent into eternal harmony.³⁹⁰ All other peoples, however, were throwbacks from the past, “outcasts from evolution” who had already reached their growth potential and were destined to go the way of the dinosaurs.³⁹¹

Knight’s corpus forms a pantheon of unsexed, fighting machines whose very corporeality paradoxically affirms the preeminence of the unmarked white male body. Prior to the last decade of the nineteenth century, it was the exploits of the bone hunters themselves rather than the bones that captured the public’s imagination.³⁹² But as the century came to a close, print and scientific institutions realized they had a marketable commodity on their hands, one that nicely corresponded with the teleological visions of progress many white U.S. Americans increasingly felt was their birthright during the nationalist 90s. Public interest in Knight’s *Century* pictures encouraged Osborn, by then the director of the American Museum of Natural History, to solicit his uncle J.P. Morgan’s funds to purchase the paintings for the Upper West Side landmark. The acquisition became one of the institution’s first steps toward turning its dinosaur collection into a popular attraction. Soon, Knight and others were developing new techniques to mount dinosaur remains “in approximately natural position,” rather than the

³⁹⁰ Hofstadter’s classic exposition of social Darwinism formulates a doctrine far more capacious than many later cultural critics, using his work, employ. His study notes the influence of other evolutionary theories such as Lamarck (though not as sufficiently as he could) and is careful to document its detractors like Lester Frank Ward, resulting in a study that explores the struggle for the social implications of Darwinism.

³⁹¹ The phrase is Mark Haller’s.

³⁹² Mitchell, *Last Dinosaur*, 135.

“separated bones” almost all natural history museums had on display. Knight recalled that “these creatures were then absolutely new to the vast majority of the American public, and they went wild over the new mounts, the Museum elected many new members, and got no end of publicity.”³⁹³ Thanks in part to Knight’s illustrations and exhibitions, dinosaurs had become a business, and it his images that became the popular likeness of the creatures (and of prehistoric men) for much of the twentieth century. The American Museum installed its first *Tyrannosaurus Rex* in 1911, “providing a macho figurehead for the entire dinosaur clan and a sensational spectacle of animal violence unprecedented in natural history display.”³⁹⁴ Osborn, who argued that dinosaurs had met extinction as a result of migration and mixing that weakened their stock, a decade later would turn the American Museum into conference facilities for the World’s Eugenic Congress, solidifying his investment in the study of dinosaurs as a lesson for the heritage of the white race.³⁹⁵

The fossil record of dinosaurs and other prehistoric creatures seemed to confirm to Cope and others that life had become increasingly complex as time progressed, for their oldest geological finds were tiny lizards that had metamorphosed into these beasts that could have stared down skyscrapers. According to the hack journalist William H.

³⁹³ Knight, *Autobiography of an Artist*, n.p., Knight, AMNH.

³⁹⁴ Mitchell, *Last Dinosaur*, 151. The first *Tyrannosaurus Rex* skeleton had been unearthed from Montana in 1902.

³⁹⁵ For an excellent reading of the American Museum’s participation in eugenics under Osborn’s direction see Donna Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 26-58. It was Andrew Carnegie, however, who would most explicitly capitalize on the potential of the image of the dinosaur at the turn of the century. After buying up the remains of an enormous skeleton found at Como Bluffs, Wyoming – a commission that dubbed the new species *Diplodocus Carnegii* – the tycoon made extravagant gifts of plaster casts of the 84-foot-long skeleton to museums in England, Germany, France, Mexico, the Netherlands, and Argentina in a show of the union of U.S. antiquity, industrial modernity, and imperial largesse. In Mitchell’s astute analysis, the efforts of Knight, Osborn, Carnegie and others had transformed the dinosaur into a monument to “manliness, racial purity, and the naturalness of big capital.” See Mitchell, *Last Dinosaur*, 152.

Ballou, as his death drew near Cope was on the verge of identifying a reptilian branch that he felt had even evolved into Mammalia, and thus human beings, as size gave way to mental and physical complexity and gender differentiation. The ferocious animals of the past, then, gave white U.S. Americans a magnificent heritage. They were also used by the neo-Lamarckians as evidence of just how far the civilized had come in transcending the need for struggle. If this is what the soil of prehistoric America could support, the images seem to say, imagine the possibilities Manifest Destiny now allowed as industrial America seized the fertile plains and sent both the dinosaurs and Native Americans into their proper resting place in the natural history museum, modernity's hallowed tomb. In *Buffalo Land*, Webb depicts precisely this juxtaposition, a West in which Anglo-Saxon ingenuity has built mechanical monsters that put the dinosaurs to shame as mere grist in the mill of progress: "whenever man's busy industry cleaves asunder the surface, the depths, like those of ocean, give back their monsters and rare shells. Huge saurians, locked for a thousand centuries in their vice-like prison, rise up, not as of old to bask lazily in the sun, but to gape with huge jaws at the demons of lightning and steam rushing past, and to crack the stiff backs of savans with their forty feet of tail" (113). Far from miring in toil and sweat, civilized Americans had superceded the brute struggle of nature epitomized by these animals through the specialized development of sentiment and sensation, an ascension that can produce such intrepid (and foolish) men as Professor Paleozoic. Gone is the need for men of Cope's class to sport anything but the "stiff back" of civilized man. While there is quite a leap to be made between the existence of ancient reptiles and the emergence of homo sapien "civilization," many were eager to take this jump, and none more so than the neo-Lamarckians who cast species change as a self-

directed development through the capacities of sensibility, self-control, and “the sentiments of sympathy and benevolence.”³⁹⁶

Red Cloud in New Haven

In the winter of 1882, Red Cloud made one of his many diplomatic trips to the Washington area. While on the eastern seaboard he traveled north to New Haven to visit the paleontologist who had proved such a useful ally eight years prior. Professor O.C. Marsh, then president of the National Academy of the Sciences, greeted the chief amongst a fanfare of press anxious to capture the reunion of this seemingly unlikely pair. During his four-day stay at Marsh’s newly completed mansion, Red Cloud’s host took him to the Peabody Museum of Natural History, which Marsh had convinced his capitalist uncle to found so that he might have a job as its director, to see the fossilized dinosaurs dug up from the Red Cloud Agency. Marsh also brought his guest to the Winchester Armory and to the local firehouse. Red Cloud refused to attend a church service. More than 100 visitors sought Red Cloud’s acquaintance on a single day of his visit, including the local mayor.³⁹⁷ The highlight of the visit for the press and for Marsh, however, was a two-hour sitting at a local portrait studio. Marsh told a New Haven reporter that Red Cloud “was not at all inclined to sit . . . He only did so because I was anxious to have him.”³⁹⁸ Consenting to the session, Red Cloud not only posed for photos with Marsh but made solitary portraits, some of which provided close-up images of his

³⁹⁶ Edward Cope, “On the Hypothesis of Evolution, Physical and Metaphysical,” in *Half Hours with Modern Scientists. Lectures and Essays by Profs. Huxley, Barker, Stirling, Cope and Tyndall*, ed. Noah Porter (New Haven: Charles Chatfield & Co., 1872), 237.

³⁹⁷ “Red Cloud in New-Haven,” *New York Times*, January 21, 1882, 2.

³⁹⁸ “He Faces the Camera: Red Cloud is Photographed,” *New Haven Register* 41, January 22, 1883, 1, quoted in Goodyear, *Red Cloud*, 76. Goodyear notes that Red Cloud had been photographed on at least sixteen different occasions prior to this sitting.

physiognomy that Marsh later had enlarged at the Museum's expense.³⁹⁹ And yet, Red Cloud again drew the line where he saw fit with this scientist, who was now as interested in the bones beneath Red Cloud's skin as he had been in the fossils interred in his lands. When requested to submit to a molding of a plaster cast of his head, presumably for the use of Peabody ethnologists, Red Cloud resolutely refused.⁴⁰⁰

The most duplicated image from the photo session shows Red Cloud and Marsh locked in a stately handshake. (See figure 5.7.) While Marsh stares intently in three-quarter profile at the camera and the viewer, Red Cloud keeps his gaze steady on Marsh himself. The professor seems poised to spring forward, his foot turned pointedly away from the gaze and toward the presumably welcoming audience. The peace pipe and pipe bag, meant to be a symbol of Red Cloud's friendship, hang limply in the center of the photograph, drawing a visual gulf between them rather than a moment of cross-cultural intimacy. That Marsh himself supplied these potent symbols of Native governance from his collection at the Peabody underscores the paleontologist's enormous power over Red Cloud and his people.⁴⁰¹ The accessories are a brutal reminder of the context of the visit, one in which friendship, emotion, and affect went hand-in-hand with the relegation of Native Americans to the role of living fossils.

³⁹⁹ Goodyear, *Red Cloud*, 80.

⁴⁰⁰ "Red Cloud in New-Haven," *New York Times*, January 22, 1882, 2.

⁴⁰¹ Goodyear, *Red Cloud*, 79.



Figure 5.7. “Red Cloud and Othniel Marsh,” by Frank A. Bowman. Reproduced from Frank H. Goodyear III, *Red Cloud: Photographs of a Lakota Chief* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

In their search for evidence, teleological evolutionists compiled dinosaurs out of heaps of buried bones and construed Native Americans from the ranks of resistant nations as relics from another evolutionary time. Arguing that all life has emerged as a result of the embodied feeling and desire of the tiniest organism, the American School of

Evolution echoed the larger society in trumpeting sentiment as both the means of organic growth and social control. Whereas animal life had ascended the evolutionary ladder through the physical results of their own will, in the present human world sentiment was fashioned as a means for middle-class and elites, especially men, to direct the growth and progress of the national body. In this chapter, I have shown how scientists attempted to harness the social power of sentiment as a means to maintain their state authority during a time of national expansion and tremendous social change, an imperative that found them eager to naturalize the conquest of the plains tribes through the intertwined strategies of science and sentiment. Examining how the discourse of embodied feeling shaped scientific practices reveals how sentimentalism was a significant political discourse until the late nineteenth century and played a significant role in shaping whiteness as a racial status of malleability, mobility, and progress.

And yet, the act of conquest is never a unilateral defeat. As a leader of considerable ability and resources, Red Cloud recognized the scientists' dependence on his land and life for the evidence of evolution. He often succeeded in playing the needs of the paleontologists and reformers to his own advantage, however increasingly insignificant these moments of resistance became as the Lakota and the chief himself gradually lost power. Red Cloud passed away in 1909, not long after having traveled to spend some time visiting with his old friend James Cook, the man who had first encouraged him to seek Marsh as an ally, on his Nebraska ranch. Formerly Lakota territory, Cook's property now makes up a large portion of Agate Fossil Beds National Monument. No longer an active digging site, this piece of Red Cloud's land now serves as a kind of natural history museum, a static monument for dinosaur-loving spectators to

write their own versions of the evolutionary past. In Red Cloud's day, however, it was a contested site, one that saw evolutionary science enlisted both as an active agent of Indian removal and U.S. imperialism as well as a means for an increasingly utterly disenfranchised people to gain a foothold in their negotiations with the United States government.

As we have seen, hereditarianism played an important role in Lamarckian and other environmentalist theories of species change. While these approaches emphasized the ability of cultural context to effect change on the organism, they rely on the ability of the species to transmit these changes as inherited "racial" qualities. By the turn of the century, hereditarian approaches reached a fever pitch on both sides of the Atlantic, an outlook characterized by the belief that vice, immorality, and deviancy are inborn racial characteristics impervious to environmental change. Cope's protégé Henry Fairfield Osborn became a leading eugenicist, a genealogy that nicely symbolizes how nineteenth-century Lamarckian heredity paved the way for the emergence of extensive hereditarian measures to control women's fertility at the dawn of the twentieth.

Yet there is also another line of descent that can reveal roots of eugenic thinking in the confluence of nineteenth-century sentimentalism and evolutionary science. In order to challenge the growing hereditarianism of the era, multiethnic reformers carried into the twentieth century the sentimental theory of the malleable body in which domestic relations, moral values, and religious spirit produce biological improvements. These champions of environmentalist better breeding accommodated the growing skepticism of the feasibility of the inheritance of acquired characteristics apparent at the turn of the century. They abetted their efforts to improve racial fitness by modifying environmental

conditions by also advocating for birth control to reduce the propagation of the unfit. In the following chapter, I briefly point to the ways that the eugenic thinking of W.E.B. Du Bois demonstrates how the proto-eugenic model of bodily impressibility persisted alongside and in opposition to the ascendance of dominant U.S. eugenics well into the twentieth century.

CHAPTER SIX

Eugenics and the Color Line

[T]he mass of ignorant Negroes still breed carelessly and disastrously, so that the increase among Negroes, even more than the increase among whites, is from that part of the population least intelligent and fit, and least able to rear their children properly. . . They must learn that among human races and groups, as among vegetables, quality and not mere quantity really counts.”

-- Clarence Gamble, “Birth Control and the Negro”

Contemporary scholarship on U.S. eugenics frequently attributes the above quote to Clarence Gamble, a physician and heir who played an important role in eradicating many social and legal prohibitions of birth control. Typically, the passage is cited from Gamble’s appeal for funding for “The Negro Project,” which began in 1939 under the auspices of Margaret Sanger’s Birth Control Federation of America. The Project aimed to ameliorate the poverty of the Southern black working class by reducing their birth rate. Gamble’s lament often provides scholars with the key piece of evidence to confirm the initiative’s racist and eugenic designs.⁴⁰² In fact, however, the bald-faced eugenic appeal is the work of African American intellectual and uplift leader W.E.B. Du Bois, who was himself affiliated with the Project. Gamble adopted the quote verbatim from Du Bois’

⁴⁰² See, for example, Angela Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage, 1981); Nancy Ordovery, *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 150-152; and Linda Gordon, *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right: Birth Control in America*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin, 1990), 282-283. The additional information that Gamble funded a class-based sterilization project in Puerto Rico the same year and spearheaded the testing of the birth control pill there 15 years later, endeavors that resulted in the sterilization of one-third of all Puerto Rican women from 1939 to the early 1970s, is often used as corroborating evidence. However, it is important not to discount the women who gladly obtained contraceptives and tubal ligations from the Puerto Rican programs. On U.S. black women’s struggle for reproductive autonomy, see Jessie Rodrique, “The Black Community and the Birth Control Movement,” in *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible’: A Reader in Black Women’s History*, eds. Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed (Brooklyn: Carlson, 1995), 505-520. On the complex politics of Puerto Rican birth control and sterilization campaigns, including the work of feminist organizations to promote both practices, see Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

article “Black Folk and Birth Control” (1932), which was published twice in Margaret Sanger’s *Birth Control Review* and later printed as a pamphlet for use by the Project.⁴⁰³ Nearly 15,000 copies of Du Bois’ call for African Americans to “breed” intentionally were distributed among county health departments, African American nurses associations, black leaders, and other groups.⁴⁰⁴

I propose that a principle reason most scholars have ignored or dismissed the role of Du Bois and other noted black intellectuals and activists such as Mary McLeod Bethune, Walter White, and E. Franklin Frazier as members of the Negro Project’s National Negro Advisory Council and with better breeding more generally is a parochial view of dominant Anglo-Germanic versions of eugenics as definitive.⁴⁰⁵ Until recently, scholarly consensus has understood U.S. eugenics to be a movement for white racial purity that arose out of strict interpretations of Mendelian genetics, which saw heredity as immutable.⁴⁰⁶ These axioms not only ruled out the possibility of transmitting acquired characteristics, but also foretold disastrous consequences for the coupling of individuals who were not from the same narrowly and racially defined gene pool and often dismissed non-Anglo Saxon stock as inherently weak. In this brief chapter, I suggest that the lens of

⁴⁰³ After the first printing, the article was renamed “Negroes and Birth Control.”

⁴⁰⁴ On the number of pamphlets distributed, see Florence Rose to W.E.B. Du Bois, Jul. 22, 1945, Sanger Papers, microfilmed, Smith College. The original papers of this collection are held at the Library of Congress. This collection is hereafter cited as Sanger, microfilmed.

⁴⁰⁵ The argument about the politics of Du Bois’ interest in birth control is a charged one, and all but a handful of scholars excuse Du Bois from anything remotely resembling eugenic leanings. Scholars who argue that Du Bois’ interest in birth control and/or evolutionary improvement was not eugenic include Shawn Michelle Smith, *Photography on the Color Line: W.E.B. Du Bois, Race, and Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Gordon, *Woman’s Body, Woman’s Right*; Dorothy Roberts, *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty* (New York: Vintage, 1997); and Rodrique, “The Black Community.”

⁴⁰⁶ On Lamarckian approaches to U.S. eugenics, see especially Alexandra Stern on eugenics in California. Stern, *Eugenic Nation*. Marouf Arif Hasian, Jr. has identified eight categorically distinct meanings of U.S. eugenics in the first four decades of the twentieth century. Hasian, Jr., *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 28.

proto-eugenics can help complicate the historiography of U.S. eugenics itself by revealing the longevity of the Lamarckian and sentimental belief in bodily impressibility. The overwhelming emphasis on Mendelian U.S. eugenics is a consequence of the scholarly investment in sentimentalism and science as diametric opposites. Du Bois' interest in bodily impressibility into the twentieth century, however, shows the persistence of sentimentalism's engagement with scientific thinking, even though science had by and large emerged as a distinct discipline by 1920. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, sentimental bodily impressibility and the related theory of civilization functioned as a constitutive discourse of racial thinking. To this end, Du Bois and other uplift leaders turned to the bodies of thought that had played a significant role in crafting progress as the meaning of whiteness and blackness as stagnation in an attempt to revamp the meaning of racialization for African Americans. Examining the role of sentimentalism in eugenics also brings into relief twentieth-century better breeding models that promised the potential to better racial stocks rather than to preserve mythic white racial purity and thus illuminates the multiethnic participation in the deeply problematic eugenics movements of the twentieth century United States.

In this exploratory chapter, I briefly examine Du Bois' writings on three intersecting areas of heredity and civilization. I address his interest in the role of sexual and domestic practices in accelerating or impeding the social evolution of African Americans' cultural and biological heredity, as well as the relative fertility rates of the poor and the "aspiring classes."⁴⁰⁷ Finally, I investigate his little-known relationship with

⁴⁰⁷ I borrow the term "aspiring classes" from Michele Mitchell, who notes that terms like "middle class" or "owning class" "obscure the specific circumstances of a people that were, for the most part, barely liberated

the Negro Project by drawing on the organization's archival records housed in the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College. Overall, I argue that Du Bois' work points to the co-existence of sentimental proto-eugenic models of better breeding alongside hereditarian eugenics well into the twentieth century, even in the work of a single individual.

Evolutionary Uplift

The work of W.E.B. Du Bois suggests that the appeal of sentimental better breeding strategies as an evolutionary plan of social advancement lasted into the twentieth century. This is not to suggest that Lamarckism is inherently fitted to reformist agendas, as the deeply reactionary politics of the neo-Lamarckian school make especially clear. Nevertheless, the idea that "improvements" made by one generation could be inherited by the next was an attractive one to Du Bois, who was deeply invested in harnessing the power of social science to not only diagnose but ameliorate the conditions of African Americans. Like Charles Loring Brace, Du Bois interpreted the theory of sentimental bodily impressibility that received its fullest elaboration in sentimental fiction as a plan for action to redeem peoples others saw as mired in barbarism. He embraced the civilizationist arguments of the late nineteenth century and adapted them to promise African American uplift, rather than demise. Many scholars have noted Du Bois' commitment to evolutionary thinking at the turn of the nineteenth century, though some frame it as merely imitative and somehow not "genuine." For example, in a recent volume devoted to eugenic thought in U.S. literature, editors Lois A. Cuddy and Claire

from chattel slavery." Mitchell also uses "aspiring classes" to signal the growing class hierarchy among African Americans in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. See Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), xx.

M. Roche insist that the reliance of African American intellectuals on evolutionary thinking, including Du Bois, was simply due to their inability to escape the norms of their era: “Like Alexander Crummell and other noted black leaders of the time, Du Bois reveals a style of thinking that crept into the psyche of intellectuals, regardless of their race – that is, a cognitive and rhetorical pattern that framed history and progress in terms of evolution.”⁴⁰⁸ Cuddy and Roche's approach to these intellectuals' investment in ideas of biological progress renders invisible Du Bois' conceptualization of uplift through better breeding precisely *because of* racial hierarchies. In this reductive view, black leaders' deployment of original branches of eugenic thought as a deeply problematic strategy to both adapt and counter racist science becomes their passive complicity with evolutionary ideology.

Specifically, Du Bois posited black humanity “through evolutionary class differentiation” that removed race as a defining characteristic of civilization and redoubled hierarchies of class, gender, and sexuality in its absence.⁴⁰⁹ As Kevin Gaines and Shawn Michelle Smith have extensively argued, Du Bois upheld class stratification and the bourgeois gender norms of chastity, monogamy, and the restriction of women to the domestic sphere as habits of civilization that could lift blacks up the evolutionary hierarchy.⁴¹⁰ For example, in his 1908 Atlanta University study *The Negro American Family*, he reports that “[w]ithout a doubt the point that the Negro American is furthest

408 Lois A. Cuddy and Claire M. Roche, “Introduction: Ideological Background and Literary Implications,” in *Evolution and Eugenics in American Literature and Culture, 1880-1940: Essays on Ideological Conflict and Complicity*, eds. Cuddy and Roche (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 2003), 34.

⁴⁰⁹ Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 4.

⁴¹⁰ Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 152-178 and Smith, *Photography on the Color Line*, 77-112.

behind modern civilization is in his sexual *mores*.”⁴¹¹ He is careful to clarify that this condition is not on account of inherent depravity, but rather due to “training and instinct” (38). Accordingly, the training of black women in virginity until marriage, Protestant domesticity, and monogamy could produce an inherited instinct that would compel a rapid elevation from primitiveness to civilization. To Du Bois, this breeding by sexual restraint was necessary, given that black families have inherited the criminal sexual states of their white ancestors. He argues that one of the legacies of “two centuries of systematic legal defilement of Negro women,” is “the hereditary weight of a mass of corruption from white adulterers.”⁴¹² Interestingly, however, Du Bois also insists that African American women have something to teach white culture, especially in their awareness that sexuality is a “legitimate, beneficent appetite when normal” and in the strength of their “mother-love and family instinct” (42). While domesticating black women functions as the linchpin of his evolutionary paradigm, he nonetheless finds black sexual expression – especially when it results in children born in marriage – an important antidote to Victorian prudery.

The centrality of European-defined civilizationist paradigms to Du Bois’ vision of black respectability is particularly apparent in his use of visual culture. Du Bois provided incontrovertible evidence of black social evolution both to assert black respectability to a hostile public and to provide models for striving African Americans. The *Negro American Family*, for example, contains 15 pages of drawings and photographs illustrating the “evolution of the Negro home” from savagery to civilization. The series

⁴¹¹ W.E.B. Du Bois, ed., *The Negro American Family* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 37.

⁴¹² W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Terri Hume Oliver (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 14.

begins with sketches of a “group of African huts,” images borrowed from Henry M. Stanley’s *Through the Dark Continent*, continues through photographs of slave cabins and city tenements, and finally reaches pictures of the stately homes of black professionals and businessmen made by Atlanta’s first black photographer, Thomas E. Askew.⁴¹³ (See Figures 6.1 and 6.2.)

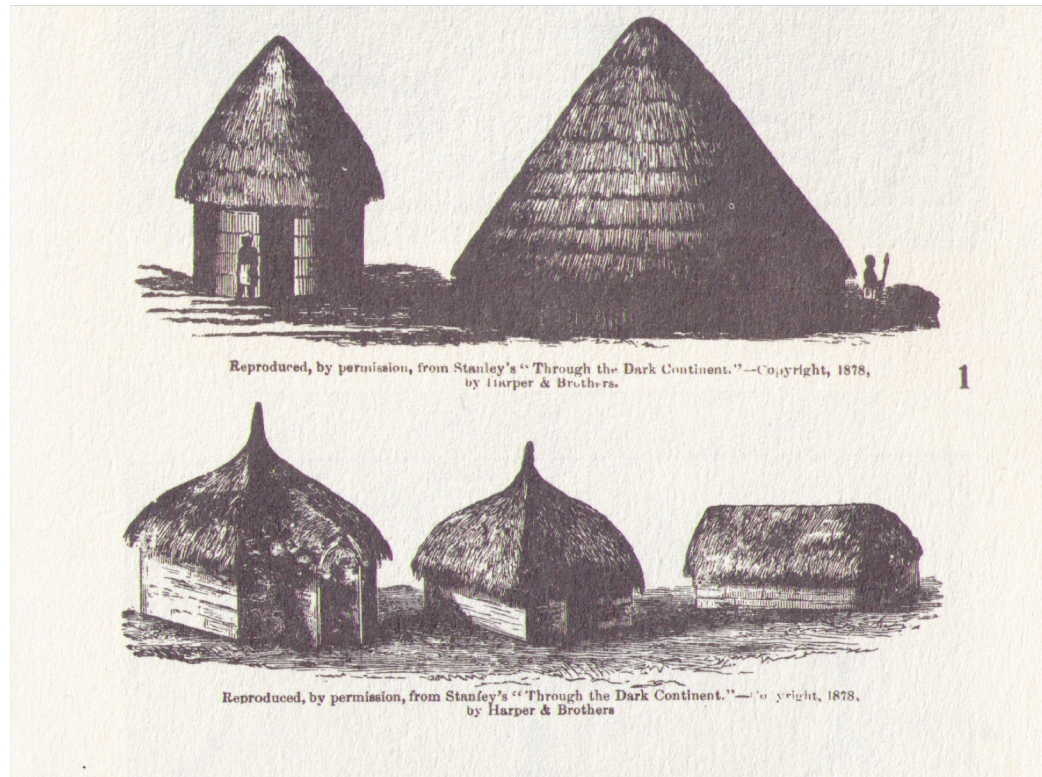


Figure 6.1. “Group of African Huts.” Reproduced from W.E.B. Du Bois, ed., *The Negro American Family* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), 81.

⁴¹³ On Askew, see Smith, *Photography on the Color Line*, 65-76.

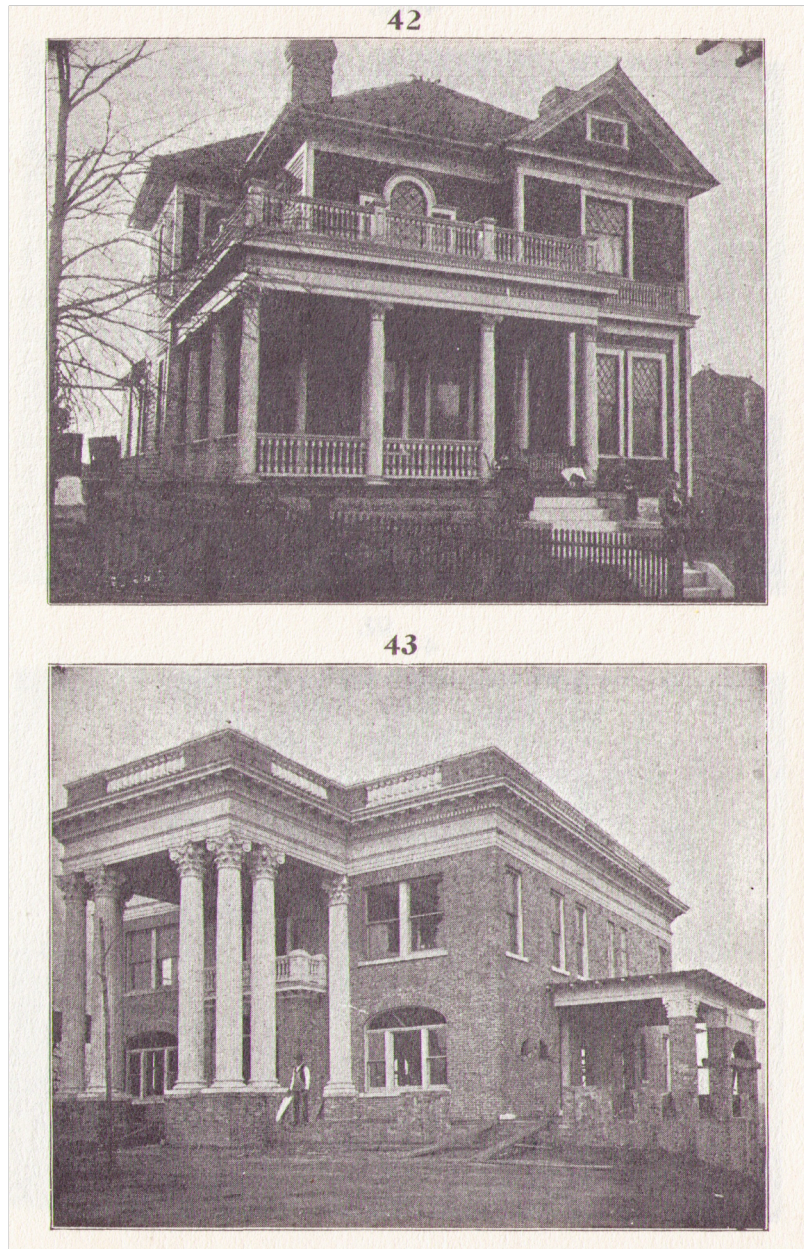


Figure 6.2. “Residence of a Negro grocer” and “Residence of a Negro business man, insurance manager and proprietor of barber shops.” Reproduced from Du Bois, ed., *Negro American Family*, 96.

Throughout the report, Du Bois links the material wealth of black families and especially their domestic arrangements with their ability to master the social norms of civilization.

In keeping with the Lamarckian paradigm, the behaviors of middle-class domesticity trigger physical effects. Extensive interior portraits of well-dressed families made by Askew and collected and assembled by Du Bois embody a bourgeois respectability predicated on binary gender roles and Victorian sexual decorum. In the words of Smith, “Du Bois founds an African American middle class on gender differentiation and sexual discipline.” In the Georgia Negro photographs he assembled for the 1900 Paris Exposition, for example, “his claims to racial equality through class stratification are figured through gender hierarchy.”⁴¹⁴ In so doing, Du Bois remade the intersections between nineteenth-century sentimentalism and evolutionary science into a path for African American uplift that might redress the severe economic discrimination, political exclusion, and prevalent extra-legal means of violent control such as lynching and rape African Americans faced at the turn of the century.

The long-term cultural and physical effects of these domestic social arrangements were assured by Du Bois’ theories of heredity. Neo-Lamarckism was an important component of U.S. social science from the 1880s to the 1910s, particularly in the field of sociology.⁴¹⁵ This theoretical orientation persisted thirty years following Weismann’s experiments to disprove the inheritance of acquired characteristics and suggest the continuing appeal of the role of human intervention in heredity. Given Du Bois’ path-breaking role in urban sociology beginning in the 1890s, Du Bois’ intellectual milieu was steeped in neo-Lamarckian thinking.⁴¹⁶ Since neo-Lamarckism, according to its most

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 79.

⁴¹⁵ Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 234-269.

⁴¹⁶ Using Stocking’s work on neo-Lamarckian social science, political scientist Adolph Reed, Jr. has convincingly demonstrated that Du Bois’ work before 1915 bears the stamp of a discursive field dominated

prominent historian, “gave what we would now call 'culture' a crucially determining role” in evolution at the turn of the century and paved the way for anthropologist Franz Boas to similarly sever the concept of “race” from hereditarian biology, we can better understand how neo-Lamarckism served both Du Bois’ oppositional eugenics project and his larger anti-racist work.⁴¹⁷ As deployed by Du Bois, neo-Lamarckism's emphasis on the role of human agency opened up a space for pedagogical intervention denied by other social scientific and scientific approaches to heredity, most notably Weismannic-Mendelian genetics. Lamarckism also enabled Du Bois to contest the growing hereditarianism of the era. Initiated by Galton and Weismann and taken to radical extremes by eugenicists like Charles Davenport, Lothrop Stoddard, and Madison Grant, increasingly in-vogue theories of heredity condemned racialized and other “unfit” subjects to a fixed place at the bottom of the evolutionary hierarchy.

In the 1904 lecture and pamphlet *Heredity and the Public Schools*, Du Bois makes the stakes of contemporary debates about heredity clear and proposes “social heredity” as an alternative to the ruthlessness of *non*-Lamarckian thinking.⁴¹⁸ He details a qualified neo-Lamarckian approach that emphasizes the role that culture and human intervention play in heredity yet also takes pains to outwardly accommodate the challenge to the theoretical validity of Lamarckism Weismann had launched throughout the 1880s and 1890s. Du Bois provides an overview of the implications of Darwinist and hereditarian theory on the potential of black uplift through education for his assembled audience of

by neo-Lamarckism. See Adolph Reed, Jr., *W.E.B. Du Bois and American Political Thought: Fabianism and the Color Line* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 93-126.

⁴¹⁷ Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 256.

⁴¹⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, “Heredity and the Public Schools,” in *Du Bois on Education*, ed. Eugene Provenzo, Jr. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 112.

principals of African American schools. He notes the dominance of hereditarian thinking in the era, opening his speech with the claim that “[t]here is perhaps no single subject upon which so much has in recent years been said, and from which so many widely varying conclusions have been drawn as upon the subject of heredity” (112). He notes that “Weismann of Germany has shown us a newer and more subtle conception” of heredity wherein “no acquired characteristics of the individual after birth are ever transmitted to his descendants” (116). While Du Bois accepts this theory as a now accurate description of physical inheritance, he finds that it has led to “a weakening of interest in the public school, a lessening of faith in what human training may accomplish, and a general tendency to sit back and watch the lower classes and the lower races waver and wander on, unhelped and with little sympathy from above” (117). He charges “the Darwinian theory” with supporting “the idea that the white races were about to inherit the earth because of a certain innate superiority,” a racism that the “Weismannic theory clinched . . . by denying that even the appearance of exceptional Negroes could disprove the general rule” (119). A year prior in *Souls of Black Folk* (1903), Du Bois had similarly critiqued the hands-off fatalism of Weismannic thinking. In contrast, he advocates interventionist breeding of the type undertaken by nineteenth-century reformers. He laments that “[t]he silently growing assumption of this age is that the probation of the races is past, and that the backward races of to-day are of proven inefficiency and not worth the saving. Such an assumption is the arrogance of peoples irreverent toward Time and ignorant of the deeds of men” (162). To that end, he continually presents African Americans as a “less developed” race in need of “lifting,” a rise the elite and aspiring classes could manage.

While Du Bois acknowledges that acquired social characteristics are not physically inherited by future generations, he counters with a concept of social heredity that bears the mark of Lamarckian thinking and its “vague sociobiological *indeterminism*” that Stocking identifies as paradigmatic of U.S. social sciences in the early twentieth century.⁴¹⁹ Du Bois explains that “the tendency to permanence in acquired character is what is known as heredity,” thereby reasserting Lamarck’s principle in a speech on heredity that ostensibly accommodates Weismann’s critique. Severe economic and political inequalities not only affect the development of individuals, but also harm the social heredity of future generations. His hereditarian thinking draws a fuzzy line between external phenomena and personal inheritance that is characteristic of Lamarckian thinking and distinctly different from the hard heredity embraced by prominent eugenicists. This heredity by impression compels his elitist assertion that poverty necessarily depraves one’s character. He sketches a comparative scenario to illustrate the importance of social heredity on a child’s potential: “take for instance a boy; he is born and reared in the slums of New York; conceive now of a boy of exactly similar endowment, born on a farm in Ohio . . . in the one place the social influences of the slums of New York are going to form a street Arab, quick, keen, depraved, perhaps criminal, while the surroundings of the other boy are going to give to the world a slower, more honest, and more open nature” (117). Du Bois thus draws a comparison uncannily similar to Brace’s ongoing child migration project to illustrate the function of heredity. In this instance, as explored in Chapter Two of this dissertation, neo-Lamarckism enabled the

⁴¹⁹ Stocking, Jr., *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 256, emphasis in original.

intervention of children's agencies to "save" the children from degenerate criminality through removing them from their families and neighborhoods.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the potential of interventionist breeding is particularly apparent in Du Bois' infamous article "The Talented Tenth" (1903). As is well known, this essay proposes that African American racial progress will be led by an elite group of men who will shepherd the development of the "bottom" ninety percent. In the opening line of the essay, Du Bois posits that African American education ought to be "developing the Best of this race that they may guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst, in their own and other races."⁴²⁰ For Du Bois, "the color line" is a false division, but biological and cultural differences do in fact uphold a hierarchy of worth irrespective of racial identity. Using the language of better breeding and bodily impressibility, the Worst carry contamination and death and pose the threat of corrupting the quality of the Best. Indeed, he goes so far as to define slavery itself as the institutionalized reproduction of the "unfit": "[F]or what is slavery but the legalized survival of the unfit and the nullification of the work of natural internal leadership? Negro leadership therefore sought from the first to rid the race of this awful incubus that it might make way for natural selection and the survival of the fittest" (77). The Talented Tenth are thus charged with policing women's fertility as a method to lead the black masses to education, political determination, and economic sufficiency. Like many of his contemporaries, Du Bois enlists Darwinian thinking as the rationale for an evolutionary progress that depends on human intervention, a mechanism the twentieth century understands natural selection to explicitly prohibit.

⁴²⁰ W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Talented Tenth," in *Du Bois on Education*, ed. Provenzo Jr., 76.

Birth Control and the Differential Birth Rate

Many Du Bois scholars have noted that Du Bois was a prominent and early supporter of birth control movements in the United States.⁴²¹ Indeed, he embraced birth control as a means to catalyze the evolutionary development of the African American masses, manifesting the slippage between eugenics and contraception endemic to the U.S. birth control movement as a whole. Explicit neo-Lamarckism fades out of his social scientific framework by 1915, in keeping with trends in the discipline.⁴²² During this same period, however, Du Bois became an ardent advocate of birth control as a means to redress many of the gross inequalities African Americans suffered. A critic of birth control rhetoric writing in regards to a Negro Project proposal draft circulating among the Project's supporters clearly states why this approach to contraceptives signals a eugenic interest in better breeding rather than the goal of women's reproductive self-determination: "will you please tell me, an ignorant sociologist, whether we know anything at all about the significance of a declining birth rate other than on specific individuals and on specific families? As a sociologist, I must confess that I know of no case in history where birth control has resulted in 'the cultural . . . advancement' of any large group."⁴²³ As the sociologist surmises, birth control advocates including Du Bois cast contraception as a "means for reducing evils" that were far outside the scope of individual family planning. Chief among these include a healthier nation, which had particular importance for Planned Parenthood during World War II, when the agency

⁴²¹ See, for example, W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Correspondence of W.E.B. Du Bois*, ed. Herbert Aptheker, vol 1. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1973) and David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century*, vol. 2 (New York: Holt, 2000), 273.

⁴²² Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 93-126.

⁴²³ Unknown to Dr. Joseph H. Willits, Nov. 16, 1939, Florence Rose Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith Collection. This collection is hereafter cited as Rose, Smith.

promoted birth control as necessary to match the “physical fitness” recently achieved by Germany in “one generation” in part through “birth control centers.”⁴²⁴ Birth control was also promoted as a remedy to poverty, criminality, urban crowding, and other social ills rooted in economic inequality rather than in the fertility of heterosexually active women. Du Bois’ writings advocating birth control for racial advance show the depth of his interest in strategic reproduction as a broad social remedy and illuminate the fluidity between proto-eugenics and twentieth-century eugenics. Rather than abandon the possibility of elite control of evolution Lamarckian theories promised, Du Bois and other activists dedicated to improving the nation’s heredity transferred their allegiance from education, childcare, and training to the realm of birth control in the post-Lamarckian age.

Du Bois shows a decades-long commitment to African American uplift through reducing the birth rate of the black working class through contraceptive methods and encouraging bourgeois African American women to have more children. This differential birth rate is cast as a means to proliferate a healthy, strong, and upwardly mobile black populace. He often framed birth control as necessary for black “masses” to achieve economic advancement, combining beliefs in women’s reproductive self-determination with elitist concern over working-class reproduction. He regularly positioned birth control as a method of “science and sense” to guide racial progress, rather than to enable heterosexual couples to make their own reproductive choices.⁴²⁵ “We in America,” he

⁴²⁴ “Why Planned Parenthood is Important Now,” n.d., Margaret Sanger Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College. This collection is hereafter cited as Sanger mss., Smith.

⁴²⁵ “Opinion of W. E. B. Du Bois,” *Crisis* 24 (October 1922), 248 quoted in Daylanne English, “W.E.B. DuBois’s Family *Crisis*,” *American Literature* 72, no. 2 (2000): 294.

editorialized in the *Crisis*, “are becoming sharply divided into the mass who have endless children and the class who through long postponement of marriage have few or none.”⁴²⁶

A statement Du Bois prepared for public address at the 1925 Sixth Annual Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference at the request of its president, Margaret Sanger, is instructive of the extent to which Du Bois conceived of birth control as a means to control the relative birth rates of the poor and the aspiring class. Sanger had written Du Bois a letter, stating that “[w]e would greatly appreciate a message from you to either encourage us to continue our work, or to express your frank opinion of what we should do and how to do it, if possible.”⁴²⁷ I quote Du Bois’ supplied statement in full:

“Next to the abolition of war in modern civilization comes the regulation of birth by reason and common sense instead of by chance and ignorance. The solution for both of these problems of human advance is so perfectly clear and easily accomplished that it is only kept back by the stupidity of mankind, the utter refusal of even educated persons to face the problem frankly. While this is, in the highest degree, discouraging, it is on the other hand, encouraging to know that only ‘light, more light’ is needed and here as elsewhere we have simply to keep everlastingly at it to bring ultimate triumph.”⁴²⁸

Du Bois frames “the regulation of birth” in eugenic terms, for “birth by reason and common sense” will accelerate “human advance,” in contrast to breeding “by chance and ignorance.” Furthermore, Du Bois does not take this opportunity to critique the increasing cooptation of birth control by white supremacist eugenicists – some of whom, such as Lothrop Stoddard and Henry Fairfield Osborn, served on Sanger’s various committees – but threw his weight behind birth control as a means of world salvation. The proceedings of the conference underscore that such an intervention was necessary. Speakers included

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Aptheker, ed., *Correspondence of W.E.B. Du Bois*, 301.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., 302.

the noted white supremacist eugenicists Irving Fisher and Henry Pratt Fairchild and the conference attendees passed a “eugenic resolution” that advocated the increased reproduction of the “fit.”⁴²⁹

Du Bois himself encouraged the increased fertility of the Talented Tenth to catalyze the betterment of the black populace. In these editorials he worries that a lowering birth rate of the educated classes would threaten their perceived ability to guide the race. A 1916 “Men of the Month” feature of the *Crisis* praises the “sturdy family of a teacher” who was preventing “race suicide,” thereby echoing the white supremacist eugenicists’ rallying cry. The editor continues to praise the teacher’s role in class-based demographic optimization: “One thinks of the families of colored people as growing smaller, and they are. Particularly the educated and careful folk have few or no children; but some are willing to bear the burden of the next generation and to train little men and women to go forth and fight.”⁴³⁰ Du Bois argued that blacks must join whites’ interest in interventionist reproduction: “The Negro has not been breeding for an object . . . Nevertheless he is beginning to gather himself together. He finds himself surrounded in the modern world by men who have been bred for brains, for efficiency, for beauty . . . In time efficiency and brains and beauty are going to be well-bred in the American Negro race.”⁴³¹ Du Bois suggested that this burden of training can also be undertaken by middle-class adoption, suggesting that his eugenic vision is not limited by Mendelian heredity but continues to consider the role of acquired characteristics in human progress. “There

⁴²⁹ Edwin Black, *War Against the Weak: Eugenics and America’s Campaign to Create a Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003), 134; Ordover, *American Eugenics*, 136-137.

⁴³⁰ “Men of the Month,” *Crisis* 12 (October 1916): 278, quoted in English, *Unnatural Selections*, 47.

⁴³¹ “Opinion of W.E.B. Du Bois,” *Crisis* 24, no. 4 (1922): 152-153.

are to be sure not enough children of the better class; and this is a matter for earnest thought among us,” he writes in the *Crisis*'s 1926 Annual Children's Number. “If children are not born to the family, why not adopt them?” As the article continues, Du Bois argues that these children of the “better classes” – implicitly adopted or birthed – will uplift their less fortunate playmates: “The masses of this world have always been unpleasant companions and only by contact with the better can they be made more pleasant and more useful.”⁴³² Du Bois' work in the *Crisis*, which itself helped to facilitate adoptions through matching prospective parents with birth mothers, illuminates how a proto-eugenic and eugenic agenda could overlap yet maintain a distinct difference from dominant U.S. eugenics that emphasized white racial purity and the contamination of African American bodies.⁴³³

Scholars have praised Du Bois as critical of eugenics on account of his objection to many of the social policies Anglo-American eugenicists engineered. The terrain of U.S. law in the first three decades of the twentieth century reflects the enormous success eugenicists achieved in passing legislation that curbed immigration and reproductive rights, creating the most extensive eugenics legislation outside of Nazi Germany. As interpreted by the vast majority of U.S. eugenicists, Mendelian-Weismannic genetics dictated the necessity of cleansing *human* contaminants from the white gene pool. This is a project quite different from cleansing *contagions* harmful to humans through public health measures or other reform strategies that promote reproduction as collective

⁴³² “Opinion of W.E.B. Du Bois,” *Crisis* 32, no. 6 (1926): 283.

⁴³³ English, *Unnatural Selections*, 48. In the words of English, “[t]he *Crisis* of the 1920s both envisions and documents the emerging eugenic breed, produced through a combination of nature (breeding) and nurture (training), that Du Bois hypothesizes . . . Under Du Bois' editorship, the *Crisis* is thus a kind of eugenic ‘family album,’ a visual and literary blueprint - for the ideal, modern black individual” (48).

betterment. Whereas neo-Lamarckians tended to unite social and biological reform, “the new genetics caused eugenicists to turn from social reforms to biological ones, on the understanding that social reforms were limited in their effects to a single generation.”⁴³⁴

Du Bois thus took pains to object to the three central political projects of Anglo-American eugenicists: the practice of coerced sterilization, anti-immigration legislation, and laws preventing cross-racial relationships. Du Bois and other African American intellectuals, for example, tracked rapidly proliferating sterilization legislation – twenty-four U.S. states had laws by the end of the 1920s legalizing the sterilization of “unfit” individuals without consent – and were vigilant about its potential use as a method of black genocide. A writer by the name of Elaine Ellis, for example, wrote a series of articles in the *Crisis* about proposed eugenicist legislation to sterilize sharecroppers in the South, arguing that “[o]ne can readily visualize its vicious application as a means of controlling the labor supply.”⁴³⁵ Du Bois similarly called for blacks to serve as sterilization watchdogs. He cautioned: “The burden of this crime will, of course, fall upon colored people, and it behooves us to watch the law and the courts and stop the spread of the habit.”⁴³⁶ It is this opposition to eugenics policies and the racial logic of strict hereditarianism more generally that has led scholars to cast Du Bois as a fierce critic of eugenic thinking. However, the lens of proto-eugenics illuminates that better breeding assumed multiple guises and was a fundamental component of nineteenth-century as well as twentieth-century notions of racial progress. While Du Bois indeed voiced many

⁴³⁴ Stepan, *Hour of Eugenics*, 65.

⁴³⁵ Elaine Ellis, “Woman of the Cotton Fields,” *Crisis* 35 (1938): 333, quoted in Jamie Hart, “Who Should Have the Children? Discussions of Birth Control among African-American Intellectuals, 1920-1939,” *Journal of Negro History* 79, no. 1 (1994): 81.

⁴³⁶ W.E.B. Du Bois, “Forum of Fact and Opinion,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 June 1936, sec. 2, 1, quoted in Ordovery, *American Eugenics*, 153.

important concerns about the brutal hereditarian logic of eugenic policies, such criticism registers his resistance to Mendelian eugenics that disallowed the possibility of progress, rather than demonstrates his opposition to all better breeding programs.

Unlike Mendelian eugenicists who condemned miscegenation, Du Bois articulated eugenic racial mixing as a method of biosocial innovation. In addition to didactic editorials promoting hybrid vigor, the genre of fiction provided a platform for Du Bois to imagine an alternate political reality in which the birth of mixed race babies portends a global overthrow of Anglo-American imperialism.⁴³⁷ This goal is tentatively articulated in “The Comet” – a story included in his vigorously anti-imperialist *Darkwater* – and more fully realized in his novel *Dark Princess: A Romance* (1928). In both accounts, mixed-race reproduction represents “great constructive deeds” that challenge racial economies.⁴³⁸ In *Dark Princess*, the fruition of new economic, political, and racial relations depends upon the productive consummation of the two protagonists. Matthew Towns, a Talented Tenth medical student turned revolutionary, plots the overthrow of Euro-American imperialism with an elite international coalition of color led by Kautilya, Princess of Bwodpur, India. Their gendered physical worth marks them as exceptional and particularly worthy of breeding; Kautilya is “a radiantly beautiful woman” (8) and Matthew’s “gray suit lay smooth above the muscles and long bones of his close-knit body” (101). While their union meets many obstacles, at the novel’s close they have dedicated themselves to each other and their cause of “raising not all the dead, sluggish, brutalized masses of men, but to discovering among them genius, gift, and

⁴³⁷ Michael Dorr, “Fighting Fire with Fire: African Americans and Hereditarian Thinking, 1900-1942,” <<http://www.wfu.edu/~caron/ssrs/Dorr.rtf>>.

⁴³⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dark Princess* (Jackson, Miss.: Banner Books, 1995), 42.

ability in far larger number than among the privileged and ruling classes. Search, weed out, encourage; educate, train, and open all doors!” (225). These starkly eugenic methods are aimed at a radical overthrow of global imperialism and its exploitation of racial hierarchies that the novel vividly dissects. While the novel closes before their coalition meets their first success, their future victory is assured in the birth of Matthew and Kautilya’s son who will inherit the throne to India’s only non-colonized region. At the novel’s finish, Kautilya “raise[s] her son toward heaven” as unknown voices “from the forest” crown him “Messenger and Messiah to all the Darker Worlds!” (311). Their project of the global solidarity of peoples of color has been saved through the birth of their mixed race patriarch whose genetic make-up embodies and reproduces their transnational coalition. For Kautilya and Matthew, beautiful breeding enables their resistance.

Du Bois and the Negro Project

Du Bois offered another kind of rhetorical support to breeding as a path for social advance in his service as a member of the Birth Control Federation of America Negro Project’s Negro Advisory Council. The Negro Project is an aspect of his work that, to my knowledge, has not been explored in scholarship about Du Bois’ relationship to birth control and eugenics. The Council was formed so that the Project would, in the privately expressed words of Clarence Gamble, “appear to be of, by and especially for the colored race,” as “there is a great danger [it] will fail because the Negroes think it a plan for

extermination.”⁴³⁹ This front was deemed particularly necessary given that no African American had any involvement in the formation of the Project and it was run by a woman who confessed to her boss Margaret Sanger, “I get hot and cold flashes when I think of it! What do I know about Negro projects anyway?”⁴⁴⁰ Du Bois initially joined the Project in late 1939 as a member of the Georgia State Committee, one of several advisory boards set up by the Birth Control Federation of America (soon to be renamed Planned Parenthood Federation of America), including a large National Negro Sponsoring Committee, which was formed through sending requests to those listed in the *Colored Who's Who* directory. When the Project eliminated state-level committees in 1941, Du Bois accepted Sanger's invitation to join the National Negro Advisory Council, which consisted of around twenty-five members.⁴⁴¹ He appears on the organization's letterhead from this date, while his article “Negroes and Birth Control” was circulated by the Project beginning in 1940.⁴⁴²

The Project operated two demonstration birth control clinics serving African Americans to test the viability of such services; one was located in Nashville and the other in rural Berkeley County, South Carolina. It also administered an educational program to generate attention to birth control by distributing printed materials such as Du Bois' piece to black doctors, medical organizations, and church leaders; distributing exhibits suitable for conferences and other large gatherings; preparing a speakers bureau; and garnering magazine and newspaper publicity. According to the Chairman of the

⁴³⁹ Clarence Gamble to Mrs. Rinehart, Nov. 1, 1939, Sanger, Smith; Gamble memo, n.d., Sanger, Smith. The latter quote is also cited in Linda Gordon, *The Moral Property of Women: A History of Birth Control Politics in America*, 3rd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 235.

⁴⁴⁰ Florence Rose to Margaret Sanger, Dec. 3, 1939, Rose, Smith.

⁴⁴¹ Florence Rose to W.E.B. Du Bois, Jul. 22, 1941, Sanger, microfilmed.

⁴⁴² Rose, Smith.

Advisory Council, “the ultimate destiny of the nation and the preservation of its democratic ideals” depends “in large part,” on the “soundness of mind and body” of its African American children. Birth control for African Americans, Planned Parenthood avowed, could prevent “the ultimate price of impaired health, delinquency, dependency and death.”⁴⁴³ An edit made by Margaret Sanger to Project material suggests how thinly the aims of many involved in the Project were veiled: “This is a special project whose purpose is to improve Negro health and to reduce the extremely hig [sic] ~~birth~~ death rate among Negro mothers and babies.”⁴⁴⁴ Advisory Council member Dorothy Ferebee made the point much more succinctly to the *Chicago Defender*, citing the Project as a “a vital step to the elimination of human waste.”⁴⁴⁵

The educational materials of the Negro Project evidence the direct connection the Project made between individual family planning and large-scale racial advance representative of the eugenic approaches to birth control that dominated the era. A full-color poster exhibit available in two different sizes, for example, featured three panels that together suggest planned pregnancies will deliver black families from rural poverty to urban modernity. (See figure 6.3.)

⁴⁴³ “Better Health for 13,000,000,” Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 1943, 3.

⁴⁴⁴ Florence Rose to Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls, Nov. 10, 1941, Rose, Smith.

⁴⁴⁵ “Press Release,” April 4, 1942, Rose, Smith.

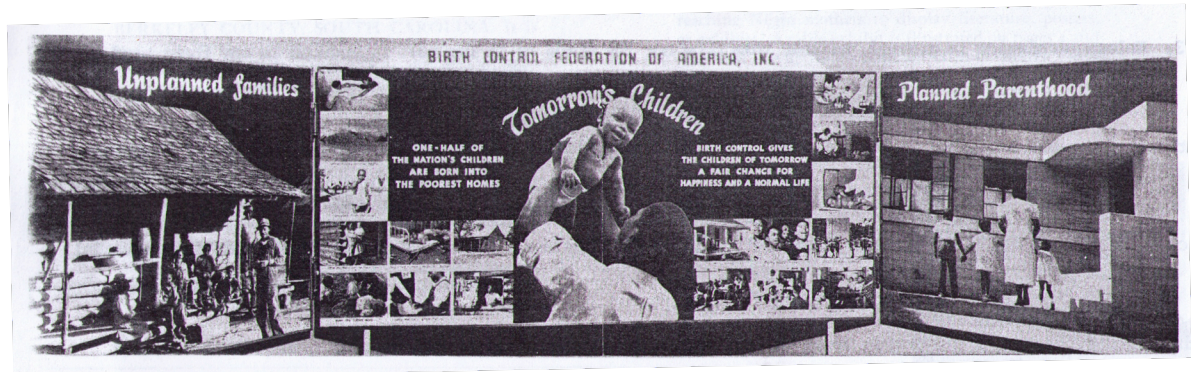


Figure 6.3. Negro Project poster exhibit. Reproduced from Florence Rose papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

On the left, the viewer first encounters “Unplanned families,” imaged by what appears to be a poor sharecropping family gathered on the small porch of their single-room dwelling. Long shadows cast by each of the figures, the water basin, and the simple roof suggest that this family represents the sunset of the race. A new day dawns in the center panel on account of “Tomorrow’s Children,” a phrase that floats above the head of young male infant like a corona, who is proudly held up to the light by a young father wearing a white collared shirt. The spherical composition of this center image strongly evokes the shape of a rising sun – not to mention the punning homonym between “sun” and “son.” Small pictures of the basic interior of the family’s cabin appear to the left of the aloft child, opposed by interior shots of a wealthier family’s domestic life on the other side. The far-right panel illuminates the deliverer of this “happiness” and “normal life,” as a woman and three small children, all clothed in gleaming white, at once ascend and are dwarfed by the steps of a Planned Parenthood clinic housed in a stylish, light-colored vaguely art moderne building. The streamlined contours of the facility and the jaunty angle in which it is framed suggest the pleasures of a modernity founded on

minimalism.⁴⁴⁶ Unlike the triumphalism of the man with his smiling son, however, the four small figures approaching the clinic stand as if witnesses – rather than participants – to a dawning modernity.

Though the clinics brought much needed contraceptive and other medical care to the women who willingly visited them, the Project folded in 1944. This was largely due to Planned Parenthood’s perception that African American women fundamentally mistrusted the intention of the clinics and stayed away from them in large numbers.⁴⁴⁷ Margaret Sanger, for her part, fought with Project administrators from the beginning to ensure that the Project worked with African American doctors and community leaders, whom she imagined would have the widest influence over large numbers of people. As these details suggest, the Project had the misguided approach of reaching a severely marginalized population through contacting the professionalized classes. Advisory Council members such as NAACP President Arthur Spingarn and Mabel Staupers, Secretary of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, had voiced their recommendation to Planned Parenthood leadership that they adopt a grassroots strategy to work with local community members. In their view, it was folly to communicate strictly with handpicked elite “leaders,” doctors, and others with whom the vast majority of poor black families had little contact.⁴⁴⁸ These strategies were never heeded, and the incorporation of the Project into the larger aims of Planned Parenthood in 1944 upon the

⁴⁴⁶ On the influence of eugenic thinking on industrial design, see Christina Cudgell, *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

⁴⁴⁷ Memo, Jan. 1944, Rose, Smith.

⁴⁴⁸ For example, at a 1942 board meeting, Spingarn informed the agency: “I am concerned about the emphasis on doctors. My experience is that the group we are trying to help rarely has access to physicians.” Minutes of National Advisory Council Meeting, Dec. 11, 1942, Rose, Smith.

recommendation of a hired “Negro Consultant” signaled the organization’s retreat from developing specific programming to reach African Americans.⁴⁴⁹

Du Bois’ involvement in the Negro Project suggests his willingness, along with other professional African Americans, to support elite-led contraceptive campaigns designed to deliver broad public and social remedies. In contrast, Southern black women in large numbers recognized such priorities where they saw them and steered clear of the Tennessee and South Carolina facilities. While the efforts of the Project were ultimately a far cry from the racist goals of eugenic scientists of the 1920s and 1930s, who embraced such radical measures as sterilization without consent, its history provides a clear example nonetheless of the mainstreaming of better breeding at mid-century. In this respect, Du Bois’ participation as one of the African American intellectuals to function as a veneer for Planned Parenthood represents less the egregiousness of his eugenic ideals than it reveals the broad middle-class acceptance of the idea that national destiny depended on reproductivity of the poor – a destiny which Southern African American women continued to view with extreme skepticism, if not outright hostility. Like the proto-eugenics of nineteenth-century sentimental novels, child welfare reform, and evolutionary science, twentieth-century eugenics pinned the nation’s future on the management of the poor.

An in-depth exploration of Du Bois’ postwar commitment, or lack thereof, to better breeding falls outside the scope of the extant analyses of Du Bois’ eugenic thinking. In the absence of scholarly attention to how, when and why biosocial improvement faded from his thought, I will here attempt only to sketch out some useful

⁴⁴⁹ “Highlights of 1944-1945 Program,” Rose, Smith.

ways to approach its decreasing importance in his writing and activities after World War II. Daylanne English offers “the very relentlessness of Jim Crow and of racial terrorism in the United States” as the catalysts of his shift away from biological solutions to racialized inequality.⁴⁵⁰ However, Du Bois was as fully aware of institutionalized segregation and racial violence as productive of U.S. nationalism, rather than as aberrant, in the 1920s as he was in the 1940s. Furthermore, racist thinking was firmly established in the birth control movement of the late 1910s and the 1920s, the years of Du Bois’ greatest involvement.

Another tempting interpretation would consider Du Bois’ increasing commitment to Marxism the determining factor. The structural analyses offered by Marxist thinking might have provided Du Bois with more tenable models of economic and political transformation than the individualist thrust of better breeding which proffered biological solutions to politico-economic problems. And yet, Du Bois’ interest in the revolutionary potential of the proletariat predates the 1940s, and in texts such as *Darkwater* eugenic and Marxian frameworks exist side-by-side. While Du Bois’ use of Marxian analysis increased in the 1930s, most notably with the magisterial *Black Reconstruction* (1935), evidence suggests that Du Bois did not necessarily find a materialist focus incompatible with controlled birth as a progressive strategy. As late as 1948 Du Bois spelled out a reproductive agenda for the Talented Tenth in an anniversary address at Wilberforce University. His lecture, “The Talented Tenth: The Re-Examination of a Concept” was delivered to the Boulé society, which Reed describes as “a national organization explicitly for upper-status black men,” and charged the Talented Tenth with eugenic

⁴⁵⁰ English, *Unnatural Selections*, 159.

reproduction as a means of social change.⁴⁵¹ In as starkly heteronormative and eugenic pronouncement as any he ever made, he proscribed their responsibility to dedicate themselves to “the rehabilitation of the indispensable family group by deliberate planning of marriages with mates selected for heredity, physique, health and brains with less insistence on color comeliness or romantic sex lure miscalled love: youth should marry young and have a limited number of healthy children.”⁴⁵² That Du Bois rooted these revisions of the Talented Tenth in Marxist analysis suggests that Du Bois’ increasingly collectivist view did not necessarily entail an absolute rejection of sociobiological modes of political change – or of elitism itself.

According to Michele Mitchell, however, the role of reproductive politics did play a decreasing role in black radical agendas from the early years of the Great Depression on. Du Bois’ move leftward coincided with an increasingly national role for the radicalized black leadership during the Depression years; for example, socialist organizers such as A. Philip Randolph made significant inroads in organized labor, black club women formed the National Council of Negro Women in 1935 and intervened in regional and federal politics, and figures such as Paul Robeson became national icons. Mitchell observes that “African Americans became somewhat less anxious over the literal reproduction of the race and the very term ‘racial destiny’ resonated less and less after 1930,” as intraracial notions of improvement gave way to demands for social,

⁴⁵¹ Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 67.

⁴⁵² W.E.B. Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth: The Re-Examination of A Concept,” address to the Sigma Pi Phi Grand Boulé, Wilberforce, Ohio, August 12, 1948, *Du Bois Papers*, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Mass., Reel 80 #1119-20, quoted in Reed, *W.E.B. Du Bois*, 68.

political, and economic equality at the national level.⁴⁵³ As such, Du Bois' turn away from eugenic rhetoric echoes the shifting strategies of other black leaders away from an emphasis on the politics of birth.

Du Bois ostensibly disassociated himself from eugenic rhetoric by the 1940s, a move that parallels a shift away from public endorsements of strict hereditarianism on all sides of the political spectrum after the horrors of Nazi Germany were brought to full public eye. Eugenics had reached its nadir in Nazi Germany, where over 350,000 people were forcibly sterilized and 6 million Jews and others murdered under a racist program of eugenic cleansing. Following these atrocities, scientists and reformers worldwide hurried to publicly distance themselves from eugenic thinking, a rhetorical move which both encouraged the intransigence of pre-World War II eugenics to go unnoticed as well as deflected attention from the ongoing eugenic investments of postwar genetics research.⁴⁵⁴ An imaginative sketch in *Dusk of Dawn* (1940) implies that Du Bois entirely rejected the premise of better breeding. A passerby asks Du Bois, “[i]s it possible that you have never heard of the Jukes, or of the plain results of hereditary degeneration and the possibilities of careful breeding?” In reply, Du Bois laments: “It is not possible, they have been served up to me ad infinitum. But they are nothing. I know greater wonders: Lincoln from Nancy Hanks, Dumas from a black beast of burden, and Kant from a saddler, and Jesus Christ from a manger.”⁴⁵⁵ This dismissal of eugenic hereditarianism does not imply a wholesale rejection of the possibilities of better breeding, however. As we have seen, Du

⁴⁵³ Mitchell is nonetheless quick to point to the legacy of gendered and sexualized activism in black political movements well into the close of the century. See *Righteous Propagation*, 245-246.

⁴⁵⁴ See Stern, *Eugenic Nation*.

⁴⁵⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940), 659-660, quoted in English, *Unnatural Selections*, 181.

Bois' major objection to hereditarian thinking was to refuse the virulent racism of thinkers like Charles Davenport and Lothrop Stoddard, who saw heredity as destiny. In contrast, like other Lamarckian influenced social reformers, Du Bois saw heredity and birth as a plane of intervention.

One reason that scholars have been so reluctant to identify Du Bois' interest in reproductive politics as eugenic in the face of evidence such as the above is on account of the disciplinary specialization largely complete by the 1920s. Whereas the earlier period had seen substantial overlap between scientific and literary methods, by the early twentieth century Du Bois' interests in racial and economic justice and the social sciences were seen as antithetical to the concerns of eugenic scientists. Sentimental bodily impressibility, a principle link between science and letters during the second half of the nineteenth century, was indeed increasingly a distant memory in scientific practice. Yet Du Bois' support of the theory of physical malleability and the evolutionary effects of domesticity until around 1915 shows the lasting appeal of Lamarckian thinking. Du Bois expanded the social scientific discourse of civilization at the turn of the century to include some role for African American men, largely by displacing primitivity onto the sexuality and fertility of black women. Around the time that support for the inheritance of acquired characteristics all but eroded from U.S. social science, Du Bois transferred his allegiance from shaping heredity as a means of racial advance to embracing controlled reproduction. Du Bois thus provides an example of how the proto-eugenic model of upward evolution through the elite management of the habitual actions and feelings of the children of the

poor transitioned over the turn of the century into social progress through the elite regulation of poor women's fertility.

Du Bois' interest in the theory of embodied and inherited emotion also suggests the doctrine's role in producing the nineteenth-century concept of race. Throughout this dissertation, I have endeavored to show how bodily impressibility suggested that individual emotional states would be inherited by the next generation. This hereditarian notion helped give rise to the idea of racial difference that was comprised of differences not just in bodily form, but also in interior character. Sentimental novelists in particular promoted inherited feeling as creating a lineage of civilized girls whose blooming naturalness and potential for uninterrupted growth mimicked that of a wildflower that could prosper in the most trying of climates. In contrast, novelists and reformers such as Charles Loring Brace cast the children of the poor as garden plots that needing careful tending so as not to be overcome with weeds. I have suggested that this characterization played a fundamental role in producing a notion of race as a set of qualities both permanent and perfectible. It is this legacy of racial thinking that sentimentalists imparted to Du Bois as a student of social science in the late nineteenth century. Dedicated to strategizing racial advance, it is little wonder that Du Bois turned to the strategies of civilized domesticity and sentimental impressibility that helped give rise to the notion of racial progress in the first place.

EPILOGUE

“The task before us [at Carlisle Indian Industrial School] was not only that of accepting new ideas and adopting new manners, but actual physical changes and discomfort had to be born uncomplainingly until the body adjusted itself to new tastes and habits.”

-- Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle*

One of the goals of this dissertation has been to unsettle “social Darwinism” as the operative framework characterizing the interaction between biological thinking and the wider culture from which it was actively removing itself through disciplinary specialization. As formulated by Richard Hofstadter in 1944, social Darwinism describes a political “conservatism that tried to dispense with sentimental or emotional ties,” in justifying the gross inequalities of wealth in the late nineteenth century on the grounds that struggle and antagonism are nature’s paths for progress.⁴⁵⁶ Most literary and cultural studies scholars have taken social Darwinism to be the anti-sentimental ethos of competitive capitalism, at the expense of Hofstadter’s commentary on the widespread belief that economic activity was the principal arena that developed individual character and feeling. In contrast, I have revealed the prominence of sentimental neo-Lamarckian theories of evolution, which have been largely ignored in not only literary and cultural studies, but also to a large degree in the history of science. I have pointed to a number of evolutionary models of impressibility developed in elite fiction, popular women’s literature, religious thought, domestic advice discourse, domestic reform, black uplift ideology, and the sciences of paleontology and comparative anatomy to show that evolution was a varied conversation among individuals representing diverse

⁴⁵⁶ Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, 7.

constituencies and claims to power. In particular, examining the “losing” theories of Lamarckism sheds light on the significant contributions of figures on the margins of professional scientific practice in the era, such as women and African Americans. I show that the sentimental theory of bodily impressibility did not lead to theories that deserve the label “unscientific,” but rather, functioned as one of the last links between popular and multiethnic literary and cultural traditions and professional scientific practice.

Nonetheless, I have stressed that this domestic, civilizing model of evolutionary change had many shared results with what has more commonly been termed social Darwinism: specifically, the privileging of the whiter, wealthier classes in the development of the United States. Lest this seem like a minor debate, I hasten to clarify that genocide is now also on the hands of the collusion of liberal reform and “disinterested” science, yoked to capital. We know that the robber barons of the Gilded Age had blood on their hands, but our understanding of white middle-class sentimental culture’s participation, whether in the domestic novel or the paleontology dig, has been much slower to come. Reformers extended the template of sentimental impressibility as a blueprint to marginally advance the uncivilized to a level in which they would be useful to the wealthier classes. A brief look at the role of sentimental impressibility in shaping the work of off-reservation Native American boarding schools may provide a further glimpse into the pervasiveness of sentimental evolutionism in nineteenth-century culture and its dramatic impact on the lives of those deemed primitive.

In 1879, two years following the Black Hills War, the U.S. Army seized upon a novel way to ensure that it held the upper hand in its relations with the Lakota. When an energetic Second Lieutenant by the name of Richard Henry Pratt requested funds to open

a boarding school for Native children in some unused Carlisle, Pennsylvania barracks, Indian Commissioner Hayt jumped at this chance to hold the children of the Spotted Tail and Red Cloud Sioux “hostages for the good behavior of their people.”⁴⁵⁷ At the Rosebud Agency, Pratt successfully overturned Spotted Tail’s initial refusal to permit the agency’s children to learn the ways of “thieves and liars” at the boarding school by duplicitously insisting that the training would prepare the tribe’s youth to “look [after] their business affairs in Washington” so that a loss like the Black Hills could not be repeated (223). Though delivering the same argument he had rehearsed with Spotted Tail’s people, Pratt had considerably less success in recruiting children at the Pine Ridge Agency, where “Red Cloud stood like a rock against the plan.”⁴⁵⁸ While American Horse relinquished three of his children, “the best [Pratt] could do was to enroll a party of sixteen, mostly boys” (226). Carlisle Indian Industrial School opened that fall with more than 200 students from about twelve tribes, kicking off a trend in Indian education to “conquer the Indians with a standing army of school-teachers” that would last until the Indian New Deal of the 1930s.⁴⁵⁹ The movement is well known to have sought to effect the “total annihilation of the Indians, as Indians and tribes” through assimilation.⁴⁶⁰ I suggest that the lens of sentimental evolutionism clarifies that this movement was yet another

⁴⁵⁷ Richard Henry Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom: Four Decades with the American Indian, 1867-1904*, ed. Robert M. Utley (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 220. Citations hereafter marked in text.

⁴⁵⁸ George Hyde, *A Sioux Chronicle* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 52.

⁴⁵⁹ Merrill Gates, Proceedings of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian, 1891, in *Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners, 1891* quoted in David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995), 27.

⁴⁶⁰ Address to a weekly meeting of Protestant ministers in Baltimore, 1891. Richard Henry Pratt Papers. Yale Collection of Western Americana, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

application of reformers' beliefs that they could forcibly evolve primitive populations and prepare for their millennial future by manipulating the relative plasticity of youth.

Pratt managed the institution at Carlisle on the model of Indian education he had first developed while serving as the prison keeper of 72 insurgent leaders from the Kiowa, Comanche and Cheyenne tribes in St. Augustine, Florida's Fort Marion at the end of the Red River War in 1875, and then as director of the program in Indian education at the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institute. Pratt used these institutions as laboratories for social evolution, aiming to demonstrate "the potency of environment" in solving the so-called Indian Problem.⁴⁶¹ Convinced that slavery had "forcibly transformed millions of primitive black people," into productive laborers and thus had proven to be "a more humane and real civilizer, Americanizer, and promoter of usefulness for the Negro than was our Indian system," Pratt saw a dramatic potential for one's surroundings to remake one's standing on the evolutionary ladder (312). Pratt embarked on a system of forced civilizationism through military drills, Christian education, and extensive menial labor to physically, psychically, and socially remake his subjects. Pratt took the most pride in his implementation of the Outing Program at Carlisle. A striking copy of Brace's placing out project, the Outing Program sent worthy students into rural Pennsylvania homes as summer laborers in order to more fully inculcate the children with the habits of serving as a wage laborer for a "civilized" family.

The popular significance of the boarding school movement was precisely in its promise to breed out rebellion and savagery and create future generations of willing wage

⁴⁶¹ Richard Henry Pratt, "How to Deal with the Indians: The Potency of Environment" (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress Photoduplication Service, 2006), n.p.

laborers through generations of evolutionary uplift.⁴⁶² Pratt's favorite method of encouraging parental support and public funds encouraged the view that the off-reservation boarding school was a demonstration of neo-Lamarckian somatic change, wherein repeated use and habit spurred corresponding physical modifications. Pratt publicized the fact of this somatic transformation through the deliberate staging and wide distribution of "before and after" photographs of the Natives under his charge, a practice he first employed at Fort Marion. The photographs provide a visual display of Harriet Beecher Stowe's remarks after her visit to Pratt's jail that the Florida prisoners had arrived "seem[ing] more like grim goblins than human beings," but had been transformed into "docile and competent workmen."⁴⁶³ (See figure 7.1). Through the apparatus of the camera, a medium that was seemingly vested with the ability to capture its subjects as they really were, the resistance leaders' altered clothing, hair, and posture becomes corporeal evidence of a bio-cultural transformation. As Laura Wexler observes, the photographs "make it possible to literally envision the scene of imposition of sentimental modalities on people who were in no sense the intended beneficiaries of domestic fiction," as the children are subjected to a sentimentalized education that sees their minds and bodies as "malleable" to the reformers' desires.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶² Drawing on written sources largely authored by Native Americans (rather than government reports, for example), Brenda Child argues that off-reservation boarding schools fostered a pan-Indian identity. Though careful to describe the drudgery these schools entailed, she also suggests that parents and children resisted such institutionalization and "used government boarding schools for their own advantage" (8). See Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998). For a history of the boarding school movement that emphasizes the theoretical underpinning of the schools, as well as Native Americans' extensive resistance to the institutions, see Adams, *Education for Extinction*.

⁴⁶³ Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The Indians at St. Augustine," *Christian Union*, April 18, 1877, 16.

⁴⁶⁴ Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 103, 111.



Figure 7.1. “Tom Torlino.” Reproduced from Smithsonian Institution, National Anthropological Archives [#53,599 and #53,599-A].

Anxious of showing tribal leaders the “progress” underway in Indian education, the Indian Office organized a large gathering of parents to visit the Carlisle and Hampton institutions in June of 1880. In anticipation of this visit, several Rosebud Agency leaders traveled to Carlisle and stayed in residence for a few days. Spotted Tail made no qualms about quite publicly pronouncing his horror at discovering how Pratt had “made ‘a soldier place’ of Carlisle.”⁴⁶⁵ He railed against finding their children clothed in military uniforms, suffering from insufficient room and board and a litany of menial labor tasks, and subject to excessive punishment to the degree that his son had been locked up in

⁴⁶⁵ Hyde, *A Sioux Chronicle*, 55.

solitary confinement in the guardhouse for a week. Spotted Tail insisted on convening a meeting with all the Sioux children, the chiefs, and Carlisle officials to discuss the conduct of the school. Red Cloud declared, “this land is ours. My friends, the pale faces, have a land across the ocean,” and threatened to remove all Lakota children.⁴⁶⁶ In the end, only Spotted Tail was permitted to withdraw his children from Carlisle, at his own expense, but it was an unprecedented act of defiance in the Indian reform movement’s prized project. Subsequent dispatches from the Indian Office to Spotted Tail failed to convince the leader to reenroll his children, and succeeding recruiting trips to their agency failed to enlist even a single child from the Pine Ridge Agency.⁴⁶⁷

While the devastating impact of sentimental evolutionary reform strategies on Native Americans perhaps reached their nadir at Carlisle and in the deterritorializing Dawes Act of 1887, some Native American leaders themselves adapted the political rhetoric of sentiment as a vehicle for their protestations against the United States government and their solicitation of public sympathy. Recent work in Native American studies illuminates how figures as diverse as Black Hawk, William Apess, S. Alice Callahan, Sarah Winnemucca, and Zitkala-Sa employed sentimental literary strategies in their published works while resisting much of its racial hierarchy.⁴⁶⁸ As Laura Mielke notes, however, sentimental sympathy was a double-edged sword for Native authors, as “the Indian’s life story acquired tremendous value in the antebellum United States for the

⁴⁶⁶ Pratt, *Battlefield and Classroom*, 238.

⁴⁶⁷ George Hyde, *A Sioux Chronicle* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 57.

⁴⁶⁸ See, for example, Laura L. Mielke, “native to the question”: William Apess, Black Hawk, and the Sentimental Context of Early Native American Autobiography,” *The American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (2002): 246-270; Cari M. Carpenter, *Seeing Red: Anger, Sentimentality and American Indians* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008); and Susan Bernardin, “The Lessons of a Sentimental Education: Zitkala-Sa’s Autobiographical Narratives,” *Western American Literature* 32, no. 3 (1997): 212-239.

emotional power it wielded.”⁴⁶⁹ Furthermore, leaders who overtly adopted American political strategies risked losing credibility amongst their tribes. Red Cloud, for example, was much maligned from the 1880s throughout the twentieth century as overwhelmingly accommodating to whites, a position often supported by a series of photographs he made in the 1880s that portray him adopting the physical appearance of white domestic culture. Frank Goodyear, however, has recently argued that Red Cloud seized photographic representation as a means to negotiate both his relationship with white America as a diplomat and amongst the Lakota as a tribal leader in his advanced years; widely circulated photos of the chief in a three-piece suit and shorn hair shaking hands with statesmen and others in positions of authority in white culture were important tools to maintain his political authority.⁴⁷⁰ In other words, Native leaders shaped sentimental literary and visual culture as a multifaceted discourse that could be adapted to a variety of political uses; Red Cloud, for example, came to praise Carlisle for providing Native children with a basic formal education.

Off-reservation boarding schools and the various ways that Native Americans such as Red Cloud negotiated with the cultures of sentimental evolution provide a graphic example of the material and discursive effects of this intellectual and cultural tradition. The emergent nineteenth-century middle class believed that the hereditary potential of the “civilized” would lead them to millennial harmony. Fearful that the presence of the “primitive” would impede their progress, reformers devised various strategies so that the multitudes they called barbarians would either advance to a level in

⁴⁶⁹ Mielke, “native to the question,” 250.

⁴⁷⁰ Frank H. Goodyear III, *Red Cloud: Photographs of a Lakota Chief* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

which they would be useful to the elite, or remove themselves from major metropolitan cities or the North American continent altogether. Such a goal could be expressed as outright hostility, in the case of scientists like Edward Drinker Cope, or sympathetic compassion, in the case of writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Lydia Maria Child, and Alice Wellington Rollins and reformers such as Charles Loring Brace and Richard Henry Pratt. Others engaged in various capacities with hereditarian thinking and sentimental impressibility adapted racial thinking in its discursive and material guises as a platform for the individual and/or collective advance of severely marginalized peoples. I have pointed to the efforts of Harriet Wilson, Red Cloud, Frederick Douglass, and W.E.B. Du Bois to interpret sentimental embodiment as a means for racialized groups to participate in civilization on their own terms.

This dissertation participates in recent trends in literary studies that reveal the extensive reach of sentimentalism. Far from a private discourse stemming from women's confinement, sentimentalism is a sweeping intellectual and cultural tradition that functioned as one of the last links between such broad areas of human activity as imaginative writing and the study of the natural world. By emphasizing sentimentalism as a specific yet pervasive approach to embodiment, rather than a literary genre or a discrete political practice, this project uncovers the shared crystallization of the logic of race in figures as seemingly diverse as abolitionist writers advocating sympathy for the enslaved and racial scientists who devoted themselves to cataloging the evidence of biological difference. I have thus attempted to show that sentimental thinking in literature, science, and reform was productive of nineteenth-century ideas of race. To that end, I hope to be following the calls of Laura Romero, Susan Pearson, and June Howard for scholars to

restrain from labeling sentimentalism as either reactionary or progressive, but instead to explore how the discourse has animated multiple spheres of modernity.

I have also pointed to the degree to which the notion that human intervention could direct the development of racial groups was a fundamental component of the logic of human difference. Whereas some scholarship attempts to equate racist thinking strictly with biological determinism, historicizing nineteenth-century sentimentalism suggests that one of the most pernicious effects of the logic of racialization is precisely its fluidity. In a schematic where the cultural becomes biological and the biological becomes cultural, there is very little escape.⁴⁷¹ In the sentimental model, for example, the expression of elite sympathy for the enslaved works to enlarge the heroine's capacity for feeling in ways that further her alleged racial difference. "Race" in the nineteenth century is not a static descriptor, but a state of becoming, one that foretold a plane of opportunity ranging from rapid advance to slow but inexorable deterioration. It is this sense of race as an evolutionary stage of becoming that I have attempted to demonstrate.

Viewing nineteenth-century race in this light illuminates the degree to which the logic of better breeding is thus built into the modern notion of race. Race-as-becoming suggests the utility of viewing nineteenth-century child welfare reform, child advice manuals, or literature portraying white girls' blooming potential as not just racial or national projects, but as evidence that the belief in the infinite reproduction of the actions of the middle class is itself a logical consequence of literary and scientific theories of biological difference. In other words, racial thinking in this period is based less on the

⁴⁷¹ Stocking states: "Lamarckianism made it extremely difficult to distinguish between physical and cultural heredity. What was cultural at any point in time could *become* physical; what was physical might well *have been* cultural." Stocking, "Turn-of-the-Century Concept of Race," 10.

present biological and cultural difference between groups of people than on the perception that these differences will be compounded – or perhaps minimized – in the time to come. Racial status functions as a kind of palimpsest of the past and the future, in which the choices and opportunities of one's ancestors and descendents layer upon each other in ways that promise either increasing mobility or the quickening sand of a sinkhole.

The foundational role of sentimental impressibility to nineteenth-century ideas of embodiment thus suggests that a commitment to the biological improvement of citizens is endemic to nineteenth-century racial thinking and at least its early twentieth-century legacy. To this end, I have attempted to demonstrate the continuity between proto-eugenic models of better breeding by childcare and eugenic models of racial advance by the regulation of women's fertility. This view of race-as-becoming may also illuminate why controlled reproduction in multiple forms continues to appeal to a wide variety of political constituents into the twentieth-century, ranging from family planning advocates and U.S.-led programs to modernize the developing world to the overwhelming anticipation that interpreting the results of the human genome project will present dramatic new solutions to broad social problems. It is my hope, however, that the collective project to identify the tautological perniciousness of racial logic may contribute to imagining new models of human affiliation in which human embodiment no longer seems to point to the cause of or to provide the answer to structural economic and social inequalities.

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Plan of Organization

- I. Archival and Manuscript Sources
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