

TRANSFORMING THE RACE-MOTHER: MOTHERHOOD AND
EUGENICS IN BRITISH MODERNISM

By

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INTRODUCTION

British eugenics and Modernism have two things in common: each became popular during roughly the same period and each has been defined as a discourse centered on great men. Early definitions of Modernism concentrated on the “Men of 1914:” Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, and James Joyce. The study of British eugenics has focused on its originator and his successor, Francis Galton and Karl Pearson, and eugenics in general is more associated with Nietzsche and Hitler than with its British origins. Studies on Modernism and eugenics, then, tend to go down a predictable path. Eugenics is assumed to be encapsulated by the idea of the morally autonomous Superman and Modernism has been represented, until recently, primarily by the mentality of the “Men of 1914.” For example, in his study *Breeding Superman*, Dan Stone explores the influence of Nietzsche on British eugenics and argues that Nietzscheanism “lent credibility to an emerging Modernism which perceived itself to be fighting against an entrenched decadence in the artistic and literary world.” Stone says, “Nietzschean concepts and terms would be bandied around by George Bernard Shaw and W.B. Yeats, T.E. Hulme and Wyndham Lewis, as if the mere invocation of them was sufficient to send the Georgians and the pastoralists running” (65). According to this view, Modernists and eugenicists each regard themselves as superior and autonomous, rising above the deterioration of modern life. While the eugenicist would improve the race by controlling human breeding, weeding out the fit from the unfit, Modernists would

create art so complex that it would separate the true intellectual from the rest of the rabble.¹

Although studies like Stone's clearly offer useful insights for certain Modernists, they hinge on a narrow definition of both Modernism and eugenics. Critical work on Modernism in the last thirty years has virtually exploded the myth of British Modernism as the exclusive domain of men. Feminist scholars such as Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Rita Felski, Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Susan Stanford Friedman, Jane Marcus, and Bonnie Kime Scott have all done significant work in expanding the Modernist canon to include female authors. Other authors, such as Ann Ardis and Marianne DeKoven, have forged links between New Woman novels and Modernism.² Similarly, recent work on eugenics has revealed that it was not always the male-dominated, anti-feminist discourse many would assume. Like Modernism, eugenics included many different voices and emerged at time when the cultural imagination was preoccupied with the woman question. Although eugenics had a definite anti-feminist component, historians such as Lucy Bland, Leslie Hall, Greta Jones, George Robb, and Richard Soloway, have argued that women, even feminists, were deeply involved with the movement.³

If we begin to think about eugenics as being as much about women as men (or perhaps, even more about women than about men), we discover a female figure alongside

¹ For another example, see John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia, 1880-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992).

² See Ann L. Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990) and Marianne DeKoven, *Rich and Strange: Gender, History, Modernism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

³ See specifically Lucy Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Feminism, Sex, and Morality* (London and New York: Tauris Parke Publishers, 2001), Leslie Hall, "Women, Feminism, and Eugenics," *Essays in the History of Eugenics*, ed. Robert Peel (London: The Galton Institute, 1998), Greta Jones, "Women and Eugenics in Britain: The Case of Mary Scharlieb, Elizabeth Sloan Chessner, and Stella Browne," *Annals of Science* 52.5 (1995), George Robb, "The Way of All Flesh: Degeneration, Eugenics, and the Gospel of Free Love," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6.4 (1996), and Richard Soloway, "Feminism, Fertility, and Eugenics in Victorian and Edwardian England," *Political Symbolism in Modern Europe*, ed. Seymour Drescher (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1982).

(and often opposing) the Superman – the eugenic mother, or race-mother. Although unfamiliar to most contemporary readers, the term “race-mother” was immediately recognizable to the reasonably educated British reader in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The term evoked contemporary debates about degeneration, a possibly weakening empire, eugenics, and the role of the mother in breeding and shaping the race of the future. “Race-motherhood” draws attention to the idea that the British family is a microcosm of the British Empire; the mothering choices and skills of individual woman thus have the power to determine the future of the entire British race. As the American poet William Ross Wallace wrote in 1865, “The hand that rocks the cradle / Is the hand that rules the world.”

When one begins to consider eugenics and Modernism as co-existing, dynamic discourses, new avenues of inquiry open. For example, old questions about Modernism and the maternal body are made new when viewed through the lens of eugenic theory. A redefinition of eugenics reveals the presence of eugenic feminism, which in turn becomes a viable discourse for Modernists to question and to adopt. In this dissertation, I will examine how New Women and Modernist writers negotiated the fertile, prolific discourses of eugenics and maternity, strategically choosing whatever seemed most useful for their political and artistic ends. In responding to eugenics, writers did what eugenicists themselves had already done – allied themselves strategically with the ideas of the past, but placed them in a different context, causing them to signify differently. Building on scholarship linking New Woman novels to the emergence of Modernism, I will concentrate on the ways in which New Woman novelists challenged and redefined eugenics, paving the way for the more avant-garde Modernists.

Before turning to the eugenic path from New Woman novels to the Modernist transformations of the race-mother we must first understand the cultural currents to which both eugenicists and Modernists were responding. Francis Galton's eugenic theories can be traced back to his 1865 article "Hereditary Talent and Character" and his 1869 book, *Hereditary Genius*. But eugenics was not really seized by the popular imagination until the end of the nineteenth century, when discourses about cultural and "racial" degeneration abounded. In Britain, trends such as economic decline, a falling birthrate in the upper classes, urban poverty and overcrowding, and imperial instability were interpreted as signs that the very force of evolution was moving backwards. The explosive, pessimistic reaction to these cultural trends, which spurred the eugenics movement, can only be explained by an examination of the cultural context in which these results were interpreted. The popularity and widespread acceptance of natural science combined with class anxiety to create a lens through which "facts" were read. It seemed obvious to a fair number of upper and middle-class people that the country was regressing and that the classes previously held to represent the nation would be threatened, if not overwhelmed, by the sheer biological force of the class that they contemptuously called "the residuum."

The problems that came to a head near the end of the century had been building for some time. Since the industrial revolution, the English population had been moving away from rural areas and toward cities, and this influx of "the masses" meant that members of the working classes were both more numerous and more visible. It was likely that this increase in the number of working and lower-class people and the problems that accompany overcrowding and poverty led to the popular perception of

cities as the seats of social decline. Throughout the Victorian period, cities in general and London in particular had been characterized in newspapers and popular fiction as sinking quagmires of poverty, crime, prostitution, and generalized debauchery.

Around the turn of the century, generalized worries about social decline became more targeted. Max Nordau warned of the “Dusk of Nations” and pointed to numerous signs of moral, as well as physical, decline (6). Nordau claimed, “One epoch of history is unmistakably in its decline, and another is announcing its approach” (5). Discourses about the end of an age – the *fin-de-siècle* – proliferated and degenerate-hunting became a popular occupation. “Degenerate” was a widely applied label that covered a variety of behaviors, ranging from the socially-disruptive to the merely unconventional. English readers were fascinated by European authors, such as Benedict Morel, Cesare Lombroso, and Max Nordau, who studied criminal, degenerate types and warned of their proliferation.⁴ Nordau’s *Degeneration* (1895) explored what he considered to be a prevailing degenerative trend, not only in “criminals, prostitutes, anarchists, and pronounced lunatics” but also in authors and artists (vii). Modern artists, particularly those belonging to the Symbolist and Decadent movements, were considered to be degenerates producing degenerate art. The 1895 trials of Oscar Wilde further solidified the connection in some minds between the Modern artist and a degenerate lifestyle. A similar anxiety surrounded New Women, suffragists, and other women pushing the boundaries of traditional gender roles. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter One, women had more economic and educational opportunities; this, coupled with the

⁴ Two influential texts were Bénédict Augustin Morel, *Traité Des Dégénérescences Physiques, Intellectuelles Et Morales De L'espèce Humaine Et Des Causes Qui Produisent Ces Variétés Maladies* (Paris: J.B. Baillière, 1857) and Cesare Lombroso, *L'homme Criminel: Criminel-Né, Fou Moral, Épileptique: Étude Anthropologique Et Médico-Légale* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1887).

increasing visibility of women in the public and political spheres, caused much debate about whether women were progressing or regressing.

Although “degenerate” and “degeneration” were imprecise terms that often referred to behavior, lifestyle, or occupation, physical degeneration was nevertheless a realistic concern. Britain’s failures in the early part of the Boer war were often interpreted as signs of national degeneration and fed anxieties about the stability of the empire. The seeming falloff in the caliber of the unstoppable British military led to a review of those applying for military service, and the number of rejections of military recruits on grounds of physical unfitness was alarmingly high. Anxious citizens like Arnold White cited the high rejection rate for military recruits, claiming in 1899 that 40% of residents of industrial towns were unfit. In 1901 Maj. Gen. Sir John Frederic Maurice estimated the number as closer to 60%.⁵ The resulting investigation by the newly created Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration seemed to give scientific credence to these claims. Although today we might explain these physical defects and weaknesses by pointing to pollution, malnutrition, and poor health care, at the time the British suspected that the problem was that the best stocks were having too few children and the poor too many.

These fears of degeneration led to increased interest in eugenics, a nascent philosophy of cultural improvement through better biology. To its adherents, eugenics was simultaneously a philosophy, a science, and a religion. Eugenics promised to remedy not only physical degeneration, but also moral degeneration, solving a host of social ills. Historian Richard Soloway describes it as “a biological way of thinking about

⁵ See Richard Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 41 and Samuel Hynes, *The Edwardian Turn of Mind* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1968), 22.

social, economic, political, and cultural change”(xxiv). The eugenics movement was profoundly nostalgic about the past, but guardedly optimistic about the possibility of positive change. Eugenics emphasized the power of the individual to direct the course of evolution.

The eugenics movement went from an exclusive scientific discourse to a widely accessible popular topic in a fairly short period of time, in part because it proved to be so adaptable. The science of heredity was still in flux. Genetics as we know it did not exist; the best knowledge posited “germs” that carried hereditary material, which might or might not be suffused throughout the blood. Confusion persisted about what, exactly, was inheritable. While the rediscovery in 1900 of Gregor Mendel’s experiments seemed to indicate the presence of “unit characters” that were either inherited or not, independent of environmental influences, Lamarck’s theory that an acquired or environmentally caused characteristic could be inherited was widely believed. For example, Lamarckian theory would assert that a man who developed weak lungs due to inhaling coal dust would then pass this lung weakness on to his children. It was assumed that a child of a criminal or prostitute would become some type of criminal, regardless of environment, because the tendency for “vice” was passed on. As Soloway points out, even the doctors and professionals testifying to the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in 1902 “tended to confuse physical deterioration with hereditary degeneration and used these terms interchangeably” (43). The slippage between environment and heredity allowed alliances between eugenicists and groups interested in moral reform and public health reform. Greta Jones defines the “social hygiene” movement in Britain between 1900 and 1960 as equally concerned with eugenics, health,

and social reform.⁶ Eugenics also appealed to people with very different political agendas. Traditional moralists might find themselves sharing a lecture with free-love advocates. Antifeminists could debate suffragists, both drawing from eugenic theory to make opposing arguments.

This malleability of eugenics must be taken into account when analyzing eugenics and its transformations. Foucault describes eugenics as an example of the most repressive kind of state intervention into human sexuality, a manifestation of “bio-power,” in which the state takes control over the regulation of bodies ostensibly for the protection of the people. According to Foucault, the science of sex

set itself up as the supreme authority in matters of hygienic necessity, taking up the old fears of venereal affliction and combining them with the new themes of asepsis, and the great evolutionist myths with the recent institutions of public health; it claimed to ensure the physical vigor and moral cleanliness of the social body; it promised to eliminate defective individuals, degenerate and bastardized populations. In the name of a biological and historical urgency, it justified the racisms of the state. (54)

Yet another of Foucault’s greatest insights is that power has a history; its methods of expression transform over time. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, eugenics was a science that promised power, ostensibly to a new aristocracy of “the fittest:” wealthy, British, upper-middle-class males with an understanding of Darwinism and scientific terminology. Foucault also tells us that “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (95). He means this in a general sense: that the network of power relations allows for and depends upon resistances, but it is also true in a more specific way – one can simultaneously resist and accept certain

⁶ See Greta Jones, *Social Hygiene in Twentieth Century Britain* (London, Sydney, and Wolfboro, New Hampshire: Croom Helm, 1986).

aspects of a discourse in an attempt to both redefine the system and gain power from it. In particular, women, whose behaviors and choices were often the targets of eugenic rhetoric, wrote back to a system that would repress them. We see this enacted literally with Victoria Welby and Olive Schreiner, who write letters and essays in response to two great eugenic men of science, Galton and Pearson, redirecting attention from the eugenic “great man” to the “race-mother,” a term Welby seems to have coined. These and other resistances to eugenics transformed the movement from within, forcing eugenics itself to evolve.

While theories about race and of degeneration fascinated many Modernists, I have chosen to focus in this dissertation on those who were intrigued by eugenics and for whom eugenic motherhood was linked to the potentially transformative properties of art.⁷ For some writers, such as Joseph Conrad and T. S. Eliot, the race-mother was more a target of skepticism than a site for renewal and redemption. But to understand the varied reactions to race-motherhood, it is important first to understand the figure to whom they were responding, and this dissertation aims to write that missing chapter in the history of literary responses to British eugenics.

Chapter One explores the relationship between women and eugenics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While there was a strong antifeminist component to eugenics perpetuated by the father of eugenics himself, Francis Galton, the eugenics movement was far from univocal, particularly with regard to the Woman Question. It is indeed true that even some women, such as Iota (Kathleen Mannington

⁷ For several influential studies on Modernism and degeneration, see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, C.1848-C.1918* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel, 1880-1940* (Cambridge; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1994) and David Trotter, *The English Novel in History, 1895-1920* (London; New York: Routledge, 1993), Chapter Seven.

Caffyn) and Arabella Kenealy, tended to use eugenics to endorse a traditional definition of motherhood. But these antifeminist tendencies were attacked and redefined by socialists, eugenic feminists, and New Women novelists. Eugenic socialists, such as H.G. Wells, Grant Allen, and Emma Brooke, argued for a system of state support for mothers, which they referred to as the “endowment of motherhood.” They also put pressure on traditional gender roles, using eugenics as a justification for free love. New Women writers integrated eugenic rhetoric and concepts into their novels, creating a subgenre of the New Woman novel I call the eugenic romance. Through the eugenic romance and other more traditional forms such as letters and essays, women such as Victoria Welby, Emma Brooke, Menie Muriel Dowie, and Olive Schreiner wrote back to those who would use, define or repress them, speaking through and about the eugenic mother, or race-mother, as an empowering force for female self-definition and social regeneration.

The struggle of eugenic feminists to produce their own eugenic texts – to speak and write about eugenic motherhood rather than to be written about, prefigures the struggle of female Modernists to gain recognition in a similarly male-dominated movement. Like the New Women novelists, female Modernists sought new ways of defining what it meant to be a modern, female writer; yet they also seemed to feel an even greater impulse to separate from Victorian gender roles, to escape from or destroy them. Thus, I turn to Mina Loy and Virginia Woolf to examine the ways in which female Modernists responded to eugenic feminism and the race-mother.

Chapter Two discusses the eugenics of Mina Loy. Although Loy is usually considered an American Modernist, I argue that Loy’s British origins and her

preoccupation with her repressive Victorian mother led her to draw from British eugenic feminism in her poetry and manifestos. Like New Woman authors and feminists, Loy espoused eugenic motherhood. In her “Feminist Manifesto” she argues that intelligent women have a responsibility to bear children. But Loy also says that children should be conceived in free unions and symbolize the mother’s psychic development as an artist. In her work, eugenic motherhood is often inseparable from the work of the female Modernist. Loy argues that the Modernist author could achieve social regeneration by rejecting Victorian bourgeois values and raising consciousness through art. Throughout her work, Loy assumes that the evolution is not only physical, but also encompasses social and psychological progress. In her writing about Futurism, she argues that new forms of art help consciousness evolve and will eventually improve society. In other prose and poetry she paints conceiving and giving birth to a child as a form of female artistry. Thus, in her work eugenic motherhood is simultaneously literal and figurative. Loy’s own life displays this overlap; her desire to have a child by Filippo Marinetti or Georgio Papini, the leaders of the Futurist movement, mirrors her desire to fuse the masculine avant-garde Modernist energy of Futurism with feminist poetics.

While Loy seems to have been fully committed to the tenets of eugenic motherhood, and simply experienced difficulty uniting eugenic motherhood and Modernist artistry, Virginia Woolf has a much more ambivalent relationship with eugenics, which I discuss in Chapter Three. Woolf had multiple connections to eugenics. Her father, Leslie Stephen, had connections to Galton, and the Stephen family was included in Galton’s list of exceptional families. Woolf was thus intimately familiar with the eugenic emphasis on great men. Many of Woolf’s friends and acquaintances were

involved with the eugenics movement, and her lover, Vita Sackville-West, wrote eugenically themed novels. But Woolf also was personally affected by the repressive elements of eugenics; many of her doctors were eugenicists and interpreted Woolf's mental illness from this perspective. It is likely that the Woolfs' decision not to have children was based on worries about a hereditary taint. Woolf rejects and critiques eugenics as it was practiced by "great men" such as her father and doctors. She was denied access to eugenic motherhood in her own life, but was aware of its importance to the feminist movement. Thus, in her feminist essays, Woolf suggests eugenic political goals, including the endowment of motherhood.

However, Woolf's most complex engagement with eugenic motherhood occurs in *To the Lighthouse*. Mrs. Ramsay is not just a representative of the Victorian Angel of the House; she is also a eugenic race-mother. Lily's simultaneous love for and repudiation of Mrs. Ramsay also reflects Woolf's own ambivalence towards race-motherhood. The fact that Lily resists the pressure to marry and have children, instead seeking independence as an artist, would suggest Woolf hopes to transcend race-motherhood. But Lily's art is deeply tied to the domestic art of Mrs. Ramsay; Lily's ability to complete her painting is dependent on her memories of Mrs. Ramsay.

James Joyce shows a similar pattern of incorporating race-motherhood into his discussion of artistic production. As an Irishman, a member of the group considered by the British to represent the overbreeding underclass (and sometimes a different race entirely), James Joyce is alienated from British eugenic discourse. Joyce's negotiation with eugenics and race-motherhood is thus more complicated than that of a British citizen. In *Stephen Hero* and *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce's semi-

autobiographical hero Stephen Dedalus is torn between adopting English race-thinking and transforming British eugenic ideas into a specifically Irish form. While attempting to assert his independence from his own mother, Stephen continues to long for union with a pure Irish woman. I argue that the portrayals of Emma Clery and the woman of the Ballyhoura Hills are Joyce's attempt to construct a specifically Irish race-mother. Joyce rejects the pure English race-mother, but combines her regenerative power with that of the adulterous Irish sovereignty Goddess. Stephen imagines that union with the Irish race-mother would transform him into a kind of artistic race-father, an idea that he develops in greater detail in *Ulysses*. In Stephen's discussions of Shakespeare, race-fatherhood is conflated with artistic success. But both are dependent on a race-mother, such as Anne Hathaway or Molly Bloom, who is simultaneously mother, mistress, and midwife. Thus, although Joyce overtly mocks eugenics in some sections of *Portrait* and *Ulysses*, he also borrows and transforms eugenic ideas.

It is important to note that other Modernists responded quite differently to race-motherhood. Authors such as T.S. Eliot and Joseph Conrad were well aware of degeneration theory and consciously modeled some of their characters on those whom society considered degenerate. Yet each of these authors doubted the efficacy of eugenics for real social improvement. For these authors, then, race-motherhood represented a worn-out trope to be sharply parodied or critiqued.

T.S. Eliot was well-versed in eugenic theories, writing about them in the *Criterion* and even reviewing articles from the *Eugenics Review* as representative examples of "Recent British Periodical Literature in Ethics."⁸ Furthermore, as recent critics have

⁸ Published in *The International Journal of Ethics*; see Donald J. Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats and the Culture of Degeneration* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 76.

argued, T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* has definite eugenic overtones. The cruel "breeding" of the opening line alerts us to the possibility that the poem is about both literal and figurative breeding. Throughout the poem we encounter references to irresponsible, sometimes mindless, coupling. Juan Leon argues that Lil and her five children are part of the "dysgenic flood," as is Mr. Eugenides, and their threats are "staved off" by abortion and homosexuality, respectively.⁹ Childs argues that the point of the poem is "not that the Modern world is infertile, but rather that it is irresponsibly and dangerously fertile" (123). This dangerous fertility is the fault of the female body breeding uncontrollably. If not the exclusive source of corruption, women are the carriers of it, in the form of hysteria or venereal disease, and their effect on society is almost exclusively dysgenic.

Conrad, too, turned a skeptical eye to the race-mother. As William Greenslade has established, Conrad was very familiar with degenerationist discourse, especially that of Cesare Lombroso, who studied physiognomy in the hopes of determining criminal tendencies. Greenslade argues that Conrad drew from Lombroso for both the physical characterizations and character of Donkin in the *Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* and Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. But in *The Secret Agent*, Lombroso and degeneration are evoked ironically. Various physical markers of degeneracy are given to most of the characters. Although Ossipon reads Lombroso religiously and uses his theories to make judgments about others, he fails to notice that he himself has the physical markers of degeneration. Greenslade accounts for the increased irony in *The Secret Agent* by conjecturing that Conrad had become skeptical of degeneration theory, as he was of any theory with a

⁹ Juan Leon, "Meeting Mr Eugenides': T. S. Eliot and Eugenic Anxiety," *Yeats Eliot Review* 9.4 (1988), 173.

claim to absolute truth: “what activates [Conrad’s] skepticism about the irrationality of ‘rational’ science is a lack of belief in the perfectibility of man, in the development of a better self, and a profound political conservatism” (107-8). This seems right, but I would also point out that Conrad’s rejection of eugenic improvement finds its most distinct expression through a critique of race-motherhood in the person of Winnie Verloc. As an ironic foil to the more positive race-mothers to be studied in subsequent chapters, Winnie is worth dwelling on for a moment.

Winnie serves as a darkly ironic challenge to the same ideal of race-motherhood potentially affirmed by the New Women novels. In the Author’s Note to *The Secret Agent*, Conrad claims that the novel is the story of “Mrs. Verloc’s maternal passion” and that the other characters are grouped around her. By placing Winnie in the center of a home that is also a pornography shop and by making her a part-time shopkeeper there, Conrad ironically plays with the idea of the mother as a bulwark against the immorality of the outside world. The men who come in to purchase pornography or prophylactics are blocked from their desires:

the customer of comparatively tender years would get suddenly disconcerted at having to deal with a woman, and with rage in his heart would proffer a request for a bottle of marking ink, retail value sixpence (price in Verloc’s shop one-and-sixpence), which, once outside, he would drop stealthily into the gutter (5).

The image of Winnie’s buxom body, with her “full bust” and “broad hips,” is juxtaposed against the “faded, yellow dancing girls.” Winnie does not suppress male desire so much as redirect it. But her tidy hair and, steady eyes, and “air of unfathomable indifference” do not mark her as sexually available (5). Without the reward of so much as a flirtation, the man is forced into an unrewarding financial transaction and leaves the shop still frustrated.

Despite the fact that Winnie's presence in the shop prevents men from pursuing either pornography or contraception, she is not a moral force. Victorian ideology and certain forms of eugenic discourse assumed that the wife had the power to improve men and children by her very presence and goodness. But in Winnie's case her financial dependence on Verloc and her remarkably incurious nature cause her to accept her husband's habits, manners, associates, and actions without comment. She never attempts to improve Verloc in any way and tacitly condones his every action. In fact, her efforts to create domestic harmony depend primarily on misrepresentation: she attempts to convince Verloc that her brother Stevie is useful and teaches Stevie that Verloc is unequivocally good. Ironically, all of Winnie's lies pave the way for the destruction of her domestic tranquility when Verloc uses Stevie as an unwitting suicide bomber.

Winnie's "maternal" relationship with Stevie also inverts our usual expectations for eugenic motherhood. Stevie's identification as a "degenerate" immediately creates a certain set of expectations based on the conventions of New Woman novels. A degenerate child is usually a punishment for choosing a degenerate husband, and the potential race-mother always has a choice. But Conrad emphasizes that such choice is an illusion. Although Winnie could have chosen a different suitor, the son of a butcher, Conrad tells us: "his boat was very small. There was room in it for a girl-partner at the oar, but no accommodation for passengers" (243). Burdened with Stevie, Winnie is, according to the discourse of eugenics, trapped by the sins of her parents. The product of a dysfunctional household presided over by an abusive, alcoholic father, she was forced to become Stevie's surrogate mother by the age of eight. The fact that Winnie has no

biological children further reinforces her dependence on Stevie. To be a mother at all, she must be Stevie's mother, and he will perpetually be a child.

Although it has been argued that Winnie is a Edwardian version of the dangerous New Woman,¹⁰ I would argue that the weight of the novel is on Winnie's blind adherence to the role of dutiful wife and mother and her unquestioning support of the status quo. When she can no longer serve as a mother to Stevie, Winnie lacks any identity at all and becomes capable of anything. Winnie is not dangerous because she is a New Woman; she is dangerous because she is a mother to a degenerate child. The template for Winnie Verloc is the mother in Conrad's short story, "The Idiots" (1898). In this story, a woman has four mentally handicapped children. The children are a great disappointment to the father, whose main concern is the stewardship of his land. The parents pray and consult doctors, but each new child continues to show signs of disability. The mother, sensitive to how she is mocked and blamed by society, wants to cease having children after the fourth is born. The husband becomes increasingly drunken, abusive and violent, insisting that surely one of their children will be normal. When she requests to be left alone, he grabs her with the intention of raping her. She stabs him in the heart with a kitchen knife, then flees into the night. The similarities to *The Secret Agent* are obvious, but in "The Idiots" murder is justified by eugenics. The wife believes it is her responsibility to prevent the birth of another "idiot" child, and Conrad ironically illustrates that a knife to the heart is an excellent form of birth control. Juxtaposing the two texts gives us new insight into the detail that Verloc's last act was to call Winnie with a "note of wooing" (262). Winnie murders her husband, in part, because of his erotic interest in her. The possibility of procreative sex must be foreclosed.

¹⁰ See Rishona Zimring, "Conrad's Pornography Shop," *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 43.2 (1997).

The fact that the mother in each story is a murderess draws attention to darkest possibilities of eugenics, what eugenics could (and did) become when not tempered with a regard for human dignity and value. What better way to undercut eugenic optimism than to transform the race-mother into a mother of degenerates who murders for the sake of the race? A eugenic mother cannot murder her degenerate children without ceasing to be a mother, but she could quite logically murder the father of such children. From an amoral eugenic perspective, both Verloc and Winnie are performing a useful service, destroying different forms of degeneration – Verloc disposes of Stevie, while Winnie disposes of Verloc. Similarly, Ossipon is exactly right to avoid any entanglement with Winnie, and his abandonment of her also leads to a eugenic act – the removal of Winnie herself from the gene pool. Suicide is the coup-de-gras for a race-mother who judges herself to be degenerate. Thus, without ever explicitly evoking eugenics or race-motherhood, Conrad displays a deep skepticism of their efficacy for social change and renewal.

As I will show in this dissertation, however, Eliot's and Conrad's negative responses to the race-mother must be grasped as reactions against a more positive strand in Modernist discourse, one in which renewal, growth, and transformation are neither deferred to the next life, as in Eliot, or rejected as naively optimistic, as in Conrad. As I will demonstrate, authors such as Loy, Woolf, and Joyce continually return to the race-mother as they attempt to speak about artistic identity and to imagine the potential of art for social renewal. These Modernist adaptations of the race-mother are only possible, however, because the race-mother as she emerged at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries was already a disruptive, transformative figure,

through which socialists, eugenic feminists, and others sought to redefine eugenics, as we will see in Chapter One.

CHAPTER I

THE EVOLUTION OF RACE-MOTHERHOOD: NEW WOMEN WRITERS AND EUGENICS

In 1904, at the age of 82, Francis Galton presented a paper to the Sociological Society entitled “Eugenics: its Definition, Scope, and Aims.”¹ 1904 was rather an odd time to define eugenics. *Hereditary Genius* had been written in 1869 and Galton had invented the term “eugenics” in 1883. At the time of Galton’s speech, eugenics was already part of the cultural imagination; any number of authors had already written about it and it had become widely used in non-scientific circles. H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw were both present at the meeting, patiently waiting to present their own eugenic visions for society. Thus, Galton’s speech was actually an anxious attempt to regain control over the definition of eugenics. After Galton’s speech, Karl Pearson, Galton’s successor, began the discussion by acknowledging that he didn’t even approve of the Sociological Society because of its democratic approach to science, stating:

Frankly, I do not believe in groups of men and women who have each and all their allotted daily task creating a new branch of science. I believe it must be done by some one man who by force of knowledge, of method, and of enthusiasm hews out, in rough outline it may be, but decisively, a new block and creates a school to carve out its details. . . A sociological society, until we have found a great sociologist, is a herd without a leader – there is no authority to set bounds to your science or to prescribe its functions. (6)

¹ The text of this speech and the discussion following it, including Welby’s statements, is recorded in Francis Galton, “Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 10.1 (1904).

Pearson implies that Galton ought to serve as the center of scientific knowledge about eugenics and paints him as a kind of ultimate regulating authority. He also implies that this particular audience is in need of boundaries, guidance, and correction.

The tone of the ensuing discussion was not nearly as reverential as Pearson and Galton might have liked. The audience did not hesitate to criticize Galton's theories and his speech. In particular, near the end of the discussion, Alice Drysdale Vickery asserted, "the question of heredity, as we study it at present, is very much a question of masculine heredity only, and that heredity with feminine aspects is very much left out of account" (x). Vickery literally speaks back to Galton and points to a gap in Galton's theories, which was replicated by many of his followers – his near complete exclusion of women. At this same meeting, Lady Victoria Welby also responded to Galton's paper, asserting that what was truly needed was for women to develop their innate talents for "race-motherhood," by which she meant to indicate not only motherhood of the race, but by and for the race – a talent originating from instinct. In the act of speaking back to Galton, Vickery and Welby serve as representative examples of feminist responses to eugenics; they resist erasure and respond to masculine bias as they struggle to redefine eugenics by centering it on motherhood rather than fatherhood, race-mothers rather than great men.²

Welby's term, "race-motherhood," caught on and was circulated not only among her circle of friends, but in the press as well. "Race-motherhood" seemed a particularly convenient term to sum up the important role motherhood played in eugenics because it allowed quick reference to the metaphor linking individual breeding to the welfare of the

² To avoid the possibility of excluding Alice Drysdale Vickery, I should mention that although she is not a central figure in the dissertation, she is equally worthy of examination. Herself a doctor, after her husband's death in 1907 she ran the Malthusian League. In 1922 Margaret Sanger dedicated *The Pivot of Civilization* to her, and Vickery was a pioneer in the birth control movement.

entire race. In fact, the term has been reclaimed by certain contemporary historians, such as Claudia Nelson, George Robb and Richard Soloway, who study eugenic feminism.³

But Lady Welby herself has nearly vanished from history and her extensive correspondence is buried in various archives. Welby belongs to a similar group of little-known eugenic feminists, whose contributions to both eugenics and literature are only now beginning to be explored.

While it is impossible to escape the conservative bias of some eugenic rhetoric, what most critics fail to note is the way in which the conservative position was attacked and redefined by eugenicists, feminists, and New Women novelists. In doing so, authors often merged traditional female forms of writing with eugenic rhetoric and concepts; this led to hybrid forms; for example, a subgenre of the New Woman novel that I am calling the eugenic romance. Through the eugenic romance and other more traditional forms, such as letters and essays, women such as Emma Brooke, Menie Muriel Dowie, and Olive Schreiner wrote back to those who would define or repress them, speaking through and about the eugenic mother, or race-mother as an empowering force for female self-definition and social regeneration. As we will see later, Schreiner in particular creates a counter discourse not only to eugenics but to Darwinism as well.

The maternal body was the forum for an ideological power struggle within the field of eugenics as multiple parties claimed the right to define motherhood. The stakes of such an ideological battle were quite high: in this Victorian paradigm, concepts of nationalism depended on concepts of women. Nationalism was bound up with

³ See Claudia Nelson and Ann Sumner Holmes, *Maternal Instincts: Visions of Motherhood and Sexuality in Britain, 1875-1925* (Houndmills and New York: Macmillan Press; St. Martin's Press, 1997), Robb, "The Way of All Flesh: Degeneration, Eugenics, and the Gospel of Free Love," and Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* .

imperialism, and thus linked to power and control on a global scale. Anne McClintock argues that when males define nationalism, “gender difference between women and men serves to symbolically define the limits of national difference and power between men. . . . Women are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation but are denied any direct relation to national agency” (354). The British eugenics movement would appear to be an obvious representation of the convergence of male national control, enforcement of gender differences, and the granting of symbolic rather than actual agency to women. The thrust of this analysis is to examine to what extent this interpretation of eugenics is correct and to what extent internal and external struggles resisted and upset this convergence. My contentions are: first, that the eugenics movement was far from univocal, particularly with regard to the Woman Question, and that this multiplicity of voices is central to our understanding of the power dynamics in play and second, that the symbolic power granted to women through eugenic constructions could be and was parlayed into actual power; for many, political intervention appeared possible by manipulating eugenic rhetoric or revising the system from within, rather than by overt opposition or revolution.

To understand the context from which this critique arose, we must examine the historical situation. In England in the 1880s and 90s, the condition of woman was changing rapidly. Although women were still not allowed to take degrees at male universities, they could attend a number of all-women institutions, the first and most famous being Girton in Cambridge. The second Married Women’s Property Act was passed in 1882, giving married women the same rights to buy, sell, and own property as unmarried women had. In 1883, *The Story of an African Farm* by Olive Schreiner, with

its assertive heroine and questioning of gender roles, ushered in a genre of similar “New Woman” novels. In 1894 Sarah Grand coined the term the “New Woman” – by which she meant a woman who had decided that the walls of her home did not necessarily mark the boundary of her proper sphere.⁴ “New Woman” evoked a sense of freshness and change, implying that gender itself might be malleable. The media seized on this term to symbolize the changing roles of women; some denounced her, while others celebrated her.

The New Woman was usually middle-class, with a fair amount of leisure time. She was educated – self-taught or at a university like Girton – knew the facts of reproduction at least on a theoretical basis, and sought personal liberties such as smoking and rational dress. The New Woman was usually unmarried and wanted to be more free to come and go as she pleased; she rode a bicycle and argued that she was just as entitled as her brothers to a latch-key. Vaguely dissatisfied with her life, the New Woman wanted freedom but often had no idea how to describe what freedoms she wanted or how to attain them.

Interpreting the New Woman and other turn-of-the-century feminists through the lens of today’s feminist theory is problematic. Even the advanced women of the time were quite conservative compared to feminists today. Many were proud British subjects, supporting the empire and accepting the racist and capitalist values that undergirded the imperialist project. Few questioned that marriage and motherhood were the most desirable roles for women. Most also accepted the common Victorian notions that women were more moral and had less sexual desire than men. These values were

⁴ Grand first uses the term in, “The New Aspect of the Woman Question,” in *North American Review* 158 (March 1894), 270-76.

reflected in the social purity movement that developed rapidly in the 1880s. This movement, spearheaded by women, was sparked by protests over the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860s. The Acts, repealed in 1886, were meant to stop the spread of venereal disease, but the method they employed was compulsory medical examination of prostitutes; their male clients were allowed to do as they pleased. The social purity movement protested this double standard, arguing that male promiscuity was equally at fault for the spread of disease. They condemned male sexual license and worked to restrict all forms of what they considered obscene or immoral behavior. They supported state intervention such as censorship and more restrictive laws, and often targeted the poor.⁵ This too, was a face of the New Woman.

In general, we can say that women of the 80s and 90s had a drive not only to understand their lives, but also to change them. The “Woman Question” had been a dominant issue in public forums, and women were beginning to join groups to discuss possible answers. Women were active in temperance reform, suffrage, philanthropy, religion, spiritualism, and even socialism. Since Social Darwinism was the language of the day, the rubric through which human behaviors and social problems were interpreted, another significant path to female social power was to gain education about biology and the natural sciences. Judith Walkowitz notes that in the Men and Women’s Club, founded in 1885 by Karl Pearson ostensibly for the purpose of encouraging understanding between the sexes, the women often felt marginalized and discouraged by their inability to frame their ideas in scientific terms (146). Women were spoken about by the men of the group, but without access to privileged scientific discourse, they had no

⁵ See Angelique Richardson, *Love and Eugenics in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003), 46 and Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Feminism, Sex, and Morality*, 96.

way of speaking about themselves in a way men respected. Gaining access to the dominant mode of discourse was therefore imperative in a quest for female self-definition and social change. Learning to argue in a language men respected was as crucial to female emancipation as gaining the vote. When viewed in this context, it is unsurprising that feminists and New Women were drawn to eugenics, which was a particularly accessible application of Darwinism. Both a science and a social movement, eugenics at its most simplistic was a way to empower individuals to make society better.

Those women first venturing into the realm of evolutionary and eugenic theory must have found it a particularly alienating experience. In *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock analyzes how the Victorians imagined race by examining two pictorial representations of evolution. One is a racial family tree with the names of races considered primitive inscribed on the bottom branches and the European races at the crown. Another is an illustration of male faces evolving from simian to more refined types. McClintock argues these illustrations show how the culture conceived both race and history. The family Tree of Man illustrates a concept of “natural time as *familial*” (38). However, as McClintock points out, in both representations, as well as in many other Victorian representations of evolution, women are completely excluded. Thus we have the odd contradiction that humankind was thought of as a vast evolutionary family, but it was a single-parent household, with no mother.

Though the female, and specifically the mother, was often erased in evolutionary systems, when women did appear, the theories encode antifeminist biases. The most obvious example of a male writer who followed these patterns was the father of evolution himself, Charles Darwin. As Darwin refined his evolutionary theories, he was hesitant to

apply them to humanity, perhaps anticipating the far-reaching consequences such theories would have. But when he did put forth such theories in *Descent of Man*, his ideas about human development were undeniably negative toward women. As Eveleen Richards discusses, Darwin claimed that man had evolved to be more powerful and intelligent than woman, and that men rightly exercised more power of sexual selection. While this pattern was not seen in nature, in which the female nearly always had more sexual choice than the male, Darwin interpreted woman's disempowered state as the hallmark of civilized society.⁶ Thus, Darwinism and patriarchal society became mutually reinforcing.

Evolutionary theory thus created a doubly oppressive situation for women: they were either erased or debased. The science of genetics as we know it today had not been formed and the fact that inherited characteristics came equally from the mother and father had yet to be discovered. When Francis Galton began to apply Darwin's theories of natural selection to mankind as he developed eugenics, he followed the tradition of excluding women, focusing almost entirely on transmission of characteristics from male to male. Francis Galton's article "Hereditary Talent and Character" (1865) and his later book, *Hereditary Genius* (1869), surveyed exemplary men so as to understand the inheritance of genius in families. Yet Galton ignored women except for a few cursory remarks. His purported reasoning for this exclusion was that the male of the species was genetically superior to the female and women were merely vessels for nurturing the germ plasm of the males (Soloway 114).

When Galton did discuss women, he thought of them primarily as breeders. His few studies of women focus exclusively on their physical characteristics. He was

⁶ See Eveleen Richards, "Darwin and the Descent of Women," *The Wider Domain of Evolutionary Thought*, ed. David and Ian Langham Oldroyd (Holland, London, and Boston: D. Reidel, 1983), 70-2.

fascinated with breast size, which he was certain would correspond positively with fertility. During his early expeditions to Africa, Galton surreptitiously measured the curvy Hottentot women (Kevles 7). In an unpublished work, *Kantsaywhere*, Galton imagines a eugenic utopia in which the women are “thoroughly feminine and . . . mammalian.” The women look like those depicted in “Aurora” by Guido, and have “massive forms, short of heaviness, and seem promising members of a noble race.”⁷ For a long time, Galton operated under the assumption that the most prolific mothers would have the largest breasts, and was surprised that his experiences did not seem to support that claim (Soloway 117).

Thus, the two “great men” of evolutionary science, Darwin and Galton, often did exclude and objectify women. Many other scientific writings in the late nineteenth century show an equally antifeminist tone. Richards has argued that there was a backlash in the 1870s against the burgeoning women’s movement, consisting of a massive upsurge in anthropological and medical writings endorsing traditional conceptions of women and their role in society (94-5). At the same time that they were claiming that women were destined by nature to be obedient wives and mothers, male scientists warned that any deviation from traditional gender roles was a danger. Evolutionary science dodged this seeming contradiction by casting the danger in terms of atavism, degeneration, and insanity. As Lucy Bland points out, the prostitute was often the target of such combined allegations; she was held up as an example of female regression.⁸

Scientific discourse, including male eugenic discourse, often focused on what women should avoid, explicitly linking the behavior of women to the stability of the

⁷ *Kantsaywhere*, Galton Collection, Manuscripts Library, University College, London.

⁸ See Bland, *Banishing the Beast: Feminism, Sex, and Morality*, Chapter Three.

empire. In this framework, a preoccupation with motherhood and eugenics began to emerge. Imperialism and motherhood were constructed as co-dependent, as we see in Arnold White's 1909 article "The Future of Britain." He states: "You may find a substitute for almost everything in the world, but there is one thing that is unique and cannot be set aside – motherhood . . . The Empire depends primarily not on Dreadnoughts but on cradles and on knowledge."⁹ Anna Davin argues that this linkage of imperialism and motherhood was a double-edged sword. On one hand, "Motherhood was to be given new dignity: it was the duty and destiny of women to be the 'mothers of the race,' but also their great reward" (13). On the other hand, women were to blame for everything that might go wrong in child rearing, which could lead to state involvement to create what Greta Jones describes as "a web of restrictions on women's lives" (489). Mothers, especially working-class mothers, were considered ignorant and in need education in "mothercraft," including care of the child, hygiene, and cooking (Davin 13-14).

Mothers, both their bodies and their conduct, thus became an area of interest to the state. The maternal body was in need of control, education, and definition. Whether the fault was due to heredity or environment, the mother was to blame. If degeneration was hereditary, the mother needed to be educated to choose a mate with more care or to limit the size of her family. If the fault lay with the environment, this was equally the responsibility of mothers. However, not all mothers were created equal. Eugenic rhetoric often uncritically replicates class assumptions; middle class mothers were exalted, while laboring and poor mothers were demonized. Just as the prostitute was the target of discourses of social purity, the poorest mothers were depicted as drunken slatterns who were ignorant of the most basic facts of hygiene and childrearing. Such

⁹ *Black and White* 29 March 1909, Eugenics Education Society Scrapbooks, Wellcome Library, London.

assumptions are reflected in the fact that at the first meeting of the Eugenics Education Society in 1908; their first act was to propose drafting a resolution protesting the closing of an inebriates' hospital because of the number of unfit women who would be released into society and be free to pursue motherhood.

The ideal eugenic mother, then, was middle class. And this was precisely the class in which women's rights were becoming an issue and in which the New Woman had arisen. The rising numbers of women seeking education and employment outside the home were met by a conservative backlash. Antifeminist writers sought to bolster their claims by turning to eugenics, arguing that eugenic motherhood excluded participation in the public sphere. In this case, eugenics served as a method of control and discipline, a way of forcing women to adopt behaviors the authors described as "natural." For example, in their 1909 work *The Family and the Nation* W.C. D. Whetham and his wife Caroline claim that women's activities outside the home need to be vigorously curtailed, arguing: "the quiet home life necessary for right birth and management of a large family is incompatible with many external activities" such as "work and influence in social, industrial, and political life." These activities are described as "a direct menace to the future welfare of the race" (198) and, according to the Whethams, exert an unwholesome fascination that "will lead women to become unwilling to accept the necessary and wholesome restrictions and responsibilities of normal marriage and motherhood. Woe to the nation whose best women refuse their natural and most glorious burden!" (199).

Even Karl Pearson, supposedly one of the more egalitarian eugenicists and the founder of the Men and Women's club, harbored grave concerns that feminism and emancipation might be detrimental to the race, claiming in 1885:

We have first to settle what is the physical capacity of woman, what would be the effect of her emancipation on her function of race-reproduction, before we can talk about her 'rights,' which are, after all, only a vague description of what may be the fittest position for her, the sphere of her maximum usefulness in the developed society of the future. The higher education of women may connote a general intellectual progress for the community, or, on the other hand, a physical degradation of the race, owing to prolonged study having ill effects on woman's child-bearing efficiency."¹⁰

Paradoxically, the eugenic rhetoric objecting to the emancipation of women and to their increased participation in the workplace and public spheres actually opened up avenues for female self-fashioning. By adopting some of the rhetoric of eugenics, women gained a new authority to speak to and about women. For example, Arabella Kenealy was a eugenicist physician and New Woman novelist. She was also a confirmed antifeminist, arguing repeatedly that feminists were unattractively and unnaturally mannish.¹¹ Oddly enough for a prolific author and doctor, she lectured women that outside interests were drawing energy away from motherhood, and wondered in 1911 whether "the refined and highly-organised but neurotic mothers of our cultured classes" had sufficient "mother power" to produce genetically fit children (Qtd. Soloway 113).

The movement encouraging women to devote themselves to motherhood often cited demographic trends. Eugenicists believed that the drop in the birth-rate in England could eventually lead to what they called "race suicide," or the utter disappearance of the Anglo-Saxon race. This notion was taken quite seriously at the turn of the century, and one obvious solution was to compel women to bear more children. In "Plain Words on the Woman Question," Grant Allen claims that he has deduced that each woman must

¹⁰ Karl Pearson, *The Ethic of Freethought*, Second ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1901), 355. Pearson's article "The Woman's Question" was first read at the Men and Women's club in 1885 and then reprinted in his volume.

¹¹ For an example of a mannish woman, see the title character in *Dr. Janet of Harley Street*. Kenealy's *Feminism and Sex Extinction* (1920), written in part as a refutation of Olive Schreiner's *Woman and Labour*, takes this idea as its central thesis.

bear an average of six children in order to even keep the population stationary. In this article, Allen puts forth the common argument that the higher education of women was leading them to become “unsexed” and acquire a distaste for motherhood, “the function which nature intended them to perform.” He argues that what is needed is education to “suckle strong and intelligent children, and to order well a wholesome, beautiful, reasonable household” (453).

These many examples illustrate how some social conservatives promoted motherhood as the corrective to dangerous feminist or New Woman attitudes. This was also illustrated in turn-of-the-century novels. Since Angelique Richardson’s groundbreaking study of eugenic feminism and New Women novels, critics of New Women novels are beginning to acknowledge the pervasive influence of eugenics on this genre. One critic even refers to “the characteristic New Woman interest in eugenics” (Wintle 71). Although one might assume that all New Woman novels would be progressive, in fact, the opposite was often true. New Woman novels were as likely as not to be cautionary tales about the deleterious results of too many modern attitudes.

One of the common themes in the more conservative New Woman novels is the New Woman who is saved by motherhood. In these novels, the heroine is a modern girl, usually with intellectual leanings, but this identity does not make her happy. The heroine makes a few brief bids for freedom, but is eventually subsumed into the marriage plot. What is most interesting about these anti-feminist novels is the way eugenic motherhood is used as a justification and compensation for women’s lack of freedom.

A Yellow Aster by Iota (Cathleen Mannington Caffyn) illustrates this tendency. It is peppered with eugenic references: for example, the father of the family declares that

his son, Dacre, is a “very clearly-defined specimen of throwing-back” to the soldiers and duelists on his mother’s side of the family (23). The heroine, Gwen Waring, is decidedly unemotional, having been raised by two absentminded, intellectual parents who study fossils. The motherly neighbor, Mrs. Fellows, puts most of the blame on Gwen’s mother, declaring “I don’t believe those children ever got properly hugged in all their lives by that inhuman little mother of theirs” (25). The novel makes it clear that poor mothering leads to emotionally crippled daughters. When Gwen marries, she thinks of it as a loveless experiment. Her husband believes there is an unexpressed maternal part of Gwen’s personality that will be revealed through marriage and motherhood. Gwen, however, does not believe such an aspect exists. Viewing a portrait of herself as a bride, she claims to see no resemblance: “With that mature strong tenderness in every line of her, and that divine protecting patient air of hers – that woman might be a mother of nations. . . . I contain nothing . . . that could be moulded into that woman” (163).

Non-eugenic breeding and lack of parenting are condemned in the novel. Gwen’s husband nearly loses his life trying to save a child denounced as “a congenital idiot” who throws himself in front of a train to spite his nurse (185). Gwen’s mother realizes too late she has not paid enough attention to her children and declares, “we never had any right to have children. While we have been worrying over the dry fossils of the past we have allowed the living – the young – to wither around us” (138). This combination of messages shows that the novel uncritically replicates common eugenic prejudices, such as the fear of regression and the danger of degenerate children. But at the same time, the novel presents the scientific study of evolution as a kind of danger, particularly for mothers.

The eventual destination of the novel is Gwen's redemption through motherhood. Gwen has to overcome her unemotional, rationalistic view of life, unearthing her latent propensity for motherhood. This transfiguration is foreshadowed by the repentance of her own mother, who on her deathbed suffers a break with reality, imagining herself a young mother enthralled by her child. Later, when Gwen's baby endures a life-threatening illness, Gwen discovers a vocation for motherhood in nursing it. The narrator avows: "the latent truth of her nature broke through its bonds and unfolded itself hour by hour" (254). Gwen herself exults in her newfound state, exclaiming, "I am a woman at last, a full, complete, proper woman and it is magnificent" (256). Finally, Gwen transforms herself into a race-mother who takes care of the social hygiene of her entire community; she learns about manure and drainage and even keeps a medicine chest with which she doctors the babies of the community.

A similar plot, in which the New Woman needs to be "taught" the value of motherhood, is seen in *The Woman Who Wouldn't*, by Lucas Cleeve (Adelina Kingscote) one of the many books written in response to Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did*. While the target of the author's critique in Caffyn's novel was the overeducation of women, in this novel Kingscote argues that the overvaluation of chastity could lead to women avoiding their sacred duty, with disastrous consequences. Like Gwen Waring, Kingscote's heroine, Opalia, is a modern girl with a Girton education. Having overheard an apparently explicit conversation between her brother and a male cousin at a wedding, Opalia becomes horrified at the thought of the sexual act and resolves to keep her purity by never engaging in it. Although she is in love with Alan D'Arcy, she refuses to marry him unless they can live chastely. To a modern audience, Opalia's decision might seem

ludicrous, but she is far from an atypical woman of her time. In fact, the author tells us Opalia represents “the sprit of the age” and “is the result of deep-rooted modesty coupled with a spirit strongly imbued with the sentiments of the century” (34). Opalia takes the logic of the social purity movement as far as possible. While this novel is less overtly eugenic than *A Yellow Aster*, heredity is blamed for Opalia’s unusual ideas. We are told that her father is an intellectual and her mother “a sensible woman” but Opalia, evidently a throw-back “to some past ancestor and a past grandmother the mother of the professor,” has a revolutionary streak (34).

Kingscote implicitly argues that it is not only chastity, also but wifely sexual availability that can save a man from immorality. Opalia struggles with the decision of whether to marry Alan in order to save him from an affair with a society dame. When Opalia finally gives in to marriage, she still tries to live chastely with her husband, and this frustration drives him to the affair Opalia had hoped to prevent. Opalia then submits to a sexual relation with her husband, not only to keep him from another affair, but also because she is reminded of the Biblical injunction for women to submit. Her advisor, Lady Neath, tells Opalia that the compensation for submission and childbirth is “the proud possession of a child” (217). The novel ends with the birth of Opalia’s child and the statement, “all the degradation, all the expiation, all the suffering was wiped out, and that, in His infinite pity for the horrors of womanhood, God had provided a compensating joy, the exquisite, incomparable joy of maternity” (225). Thus, motherhood becomes stale propaganda for the status quo and, more disturbingly, the compensation for enduring a husband’s affair and eschewing one’s convictions.

Thus far, we have examined the many different ways in which eugenics tended to alienate, repress, or attempt to control women. As the above examples indicate, even some female writers participated in this process. In all the above examples, however, there is an implication that the mothering behaviors of individual women have great power: the potential to make or break the empire. Women have to be controlled precisely because they have the power to effect change. Thus, it is no surprise that feminists tended to embrace their roles as mothers, either symbolic or literal, as they argued that women needed to have more rights and opportunities in society. The underlying argument in most eugenic texts is that this inherent mother-power – this great ability to improve society – exists. Their goal then becomes defining and applying racial motherhood in empowering ways.

In the history of eugenics, this move towards female empowerment has one potential origin in late nineteenth and early twentieth century socialism, in particular the writings of those associated with the Fabian club. While socialism was still a male-centered discourse, they approached the question of how to encourage motherhood from a different perspective. Their contribution to the problem of how to encourage women to produce more children was a proposal for the state endowment of maternity, also called maternity insurance or a maternity pension. Instead of arguing that the lower birth rate was due to women's moral defects, higher education, or failure to realize their duty, socialists recognized that having children was an economic activity. A significant number of eugenicists also had socialist sympathies, and some felt that eugenic goals could only be achieved in a socialist state. The Fabian Society thus became a forum for

discussing the connections between eugenics and socialism and for discussing the state support of motherhood.

The most tireless Fabian advocate of the endowment of motherhood was H.G. Wells. In *An Englishman Looks at the World*, Wells argues that most people, except for the very rich, limit their family size in order to give economic advantages to their children. He argues that eugenic rhetoric is well and good, but “the modern State has got to pay for its children if it really wants them” (232). This points to the question of how such a program might be paid for and to whom the money would be distributed. While some maternity insurance proposals were targeted only at the poor, the eugenic slant of Wells’s program comes in his suggestion that money be distributed according to the incomes of the parents and paid for by a special tiered income tax, so that the childless of a particular class would be paying only for the children of parents in that class.

Wells envisioned the endowment of maternity as being a remedy for the economic inequality between women and men. His *New Woman* heroine, Ann Veronica, is faced with the practical difficulty of how to pay for the independence she desires. She ends up borrowing money from a friend of the family, Dr. Ramage, without realizing that he expects sexual favors in return. After the economic realities of her situation are made clear to her, Ann Veronica dreams of “an altered world in which . . .the Fabians and reforming people believed. Across that world was written in letters of light, ‘Endowment of Motherhood.’ Suppose in some complex yet conceivable way women were endowed, were no longer economically and socially dependent on men” (236). Wells’s socialist perspective allows him to see that the existing social system placed the mother in the

position of an unpaid servant. Wells's utopian vision is of a socialist state in which there will be:

an entire new system of relations between men and women, that will be free from servitude, aggression, provocation, or parasitism. The public Endowment of Motherhood as such may perhaps be the first broad suggestion of the quality of this new status. A new type of family, a mutual alliance in the place of a subjugation, is perhaps the most startling of all the conceptions which confront us directly we turn ourselves definitely towards the Great State. (129)

Although both Pearson and Wells shared similar paternalistic views about women's "true" nature and the need for women to choose maternity over any other potential life goals, agitation for the endowment of maternity served to educate women about the relationship between economic and social inequality and was an important contribution to the developing feminist movement. The combination of socialist and eugenic viewpoints opened up the possibility of disconnecting eugenic motherhood from the imperialist project; motherhood could be perceived as a social and racial service that did not necessarily support the goals of imperialism. However, Wells was not successful in gaining widespread support for his ideas. According to Samuel Hynes, Wells attempted a coup of sorts, trying to wrest control of the Fabian club from Sidney Webb. He wanted the Fabian club to take a more active role in encouraging government reform, and his platform was the endowment of motherhood. When he was not able to sway the society to include the endowment of motherhood in their Basis (the document of the society's principles), he resigned in a huff, citing this as his primary reason (Hynes 117-8). It would seem that the conflict had more to do with Wells and Webb themselves, because the society did publish a tract arguing for the endowment of motherhood, written

by H.G. Harben.¹² However, the eugenic overtones of the proposal are removed in this publication, because the project is characterized as aid for the poor and a deterrent to infant mortality, rather than encouragement for the middle classes. Wells, too, had his revenge, publishing *The New Machiavelli*, a thinly-veiled roman á clef in which the Webbs are satirized as the Baileys and the politician-protagonist achieves unexpected success running on the platform of endowment of motherhood.

Given the conservative, antifeminist nature of much eugenic writing about motherhood and the essentialist assumptions of most eugenicists, even those with socialist leanings, one might surmise a natural antipathy between feminists and eugenicists. This characterization of the situation is summarized in the 1911 work, *Woman and Womanhood* in which Dr. Caleb E. Saleeby states:

hitherto the eugenists have inclined to oppose the claims of feminism . . . whilst the feminists, one and all, so far as Anglo-Saxondom is concerned . . . are either unaware of the meaning of eugenics at all, or are up in arms at once when the eugenist . . . mildly inquires: But what about motherhood? And to what sort of women are you regulating it by default?" (7-8)

However, Saleeby's implication that feminists and eugenicists had been enemies prior to 1911 is not entirely accurate. Eugenics may have begun with the two great men of science – Darwin and Galton – but the movement was far more inclusive than has previously been acknowledged. Within the pages of Galton's theories, women may have been excluded from eugenic discourse, but they were never excluded from the movement; their voices simply need to be reclaimed.

Lady Victoria Welby, who coined the term "race-motherhood" in her speech to the Sociological Society, had a long relationship with Galton and was largely responsible

¹² See Henry D Harben, *The Endowment of Motherhood*, Fabian Tracts, No. 149 (London: Fabian Society, 1910).

for persuading him to join the Sociological Society. Galton sent her his early proofs of eugenic speeches and publications, which she eagerly read and critiqued. Welby combined a high rank, connections with the Queen, a prodigious list of correspondents, and a keen mind. Although she had no formal education, she was an avid correspondent with many of the leading philosophers of the day, most notably Charles Peirce. Welby's primary interest was in the philosophy of interpretation, which she called "significs." While Welby's reputation has faded, she was respected in her own lifetime and was asked to contribute an article on significs to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1911. Welby corresponded with not only Galton, but also Pearson and Havelock Ellis, and was interested in a number of subjects loosely pertaining to eugenics, including the scientific investigation of maternal impressions, composite photography, and breeding experiments.¹³

In the aforementioned 1904 speech, Welby argues that eugenics requires the involvement of women. She states: "one of the first things to do . . . is to prepare the minds of women to take a truer view of their dominant natural impulse toward service and self-sacrifice" (14). She argues that the current educational system was failing to prepare women for motherhood, which, to Welby, involved not only conception and love, but also developing and training the child. Although critics have noted the usefulness of the term, "race-motherhood," the multi-faceted meanings Welby ascribed to this term are not usually discussed. Although not always predating the work of other women, Welby's papers and letters serve as an exemplar, a template for the rhetorical strategies employed by eugenic feminists. She begins with the eugenic valorization of motherhood but then

¹³ For more on Victoria Welby, see William Andrew Myers, "Victoria, Lady Welby," *A History of Women Philosophers*, ed. M.E. Waithe, vol. 4 (Dordrecht and Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995).

deepens and broadens the meaning of motherhood. For Welby, biological productivity is not a necessary part of “race-motherhood.” Instead, she stresses women’s intellectual power: she attributes the evolution of language to women and claims women have a kind of instinctive knowledge that manifested itself more fully in primitive society, in which women naturally have “powers of swift insight and penetration” and “powers also of unerring judgment” (14). Welby laments the social climate in which a shrewd older woman was more likely to become a fortune-teller than to contribute her knowledge in a productive way to society. Thus, for Welby, motherhood is not a passive biological action, but a social contribution made possible by a different kind of intelligence not prized or even recognized by modern society.

In a letter to Galton, Welby states: “I was glad indeed that you agreed as to the usefulness of the cultivation in women (beginning such training in infancy) of that ‘racial sense’ which is my translation of ‘subconsciousness’ and would I think work for the results you aim at in Eugenics.”¹⁴ Here, Welby makes what in historical hindsight looks like a Freudian move by ascribing what she has previously identified as a primitive instinct to the subconscious. Therefore, all women have access to the powers of insight and judgment she attributes to women in primitive cultures. Welby’s overriding argument is that the force of motherhood, whether directed toward the actual raising of children, social service, or even teaching, is naturally inclined to the betterment of the race.

Welby continues her discussion of the need for preparing women for race-motherhood by discussing the outcome of such education:

¹⁴ Printed in Victoria Welby, *Echoes of Larger Life: A Selection from the Early Correspondence of Victoria Lady Welby*, ed. Nina Cust (London: J. Cape, 1929), 196, hereafter abbreviated as ‘Letters.’

It would make for the experimental discovery of how far leading ideas in the higher races, now called vaguely ethical, theological, religious, mythological, are really attempts to reproduce in impressive or awe inspiring symbols the facts of evolving life or even the constitution of nature itself. If so, such attempts would of course often take grotesque forms and fail of their object, which is in essentials that of Eugenics. But their 'sub-conscious' impelling 'force' would, when recognised and rightly directed, be helping, through the generation of constantly rising - ascending - ideas, to do your work of raising the level of the race. (Letters 196)

Here Welby widens her discussion to connect evolutionary forces and seemingly disparate ideas, such as ethics, theology, religion and mythology. She argues that these ideological systems might be inspired by evolution; if this is so, then as these ideological systems evolve and change, so might the race be improved through “the generation of constantly rising – ascending – ideas” (196). In this letter, as well as in others, Welby assumes that the evolutionary process is a powerful, primitive force that, if properly understood and harnessed by the scientific process, would inevitably lead to the improvement of the race. In other letters, Welby follows the well-known habit of identifying nature as female and maternal, and thus creates a linkage between the evolutionary forces of nature, the evolution of ideas, and the mothering forces of individual women.

In a letter to C. Lloyd Morgan, Welby puts further pressure on the role of the mother, this time deploying a slippage between mind and body. She argues that “mental sex” is reversed, by which she means that in the intellectual realm the biological activity of conception is symbolically inverted. Welby states:

the true function of race-motherhood on the intellectual side has been to supply those “starting” ideas - derived directly from a rich and subtle race experience (and beyond that from the whole realm of life) - which have then to be worked out logically, critically, constructively, by the masculine brain, by man as the Son of Humanity. In short the race-mother intellectually fertilises her son, though mental gestation is normally impossible to her. (Letters 181)

Welby goes on to state: “I do not however wish to be supposed to claim the initiating power entirely for women. There is no doubt that some men – possibly all the truest thinkers – are in this hermaphroditic, just indeed as women tend to become so, as I have suggested, after middle age” (Letters 181). The language here is particularly provocative; the female is given the agency of fertilizing an idea, while the man’s womb of logic allows it to be fully formed. Further, Welby’s transformation of motherhood into “intellectual fertilization” prefigures a pattern Modernist authors will later adopt by transforming the biological into the symbolic.

According to Welby, after a woman ceases to be capable of childbearing, she becomes like the great thinkers – mentally hermaphroditic and presumably capable of both fertilizing and gestating ideas herself. These types of ideological interventions are crucial to eugenic feminism. Welby at first seems to be holding a very conservative position, assuming that a woman could never supply fully developed ideas without a masculine intermediary. However, Welby’s definition of intellectual hermaphroditism and her continued assertion that woman has a primitive intelligence both different from and greater than man’s are radical ideas. Furthermore, Welby, herself in middle age, understands that women’s fertility is biologically limited but argues that her importance to society as a whole is not limited by this fact.

Throughout Welby’s correspondence, we see evidence of the complex negotiation many women had with eugenics. Beginning with the basic eugenic idealization of motherhood, Welby exploits the many cultural and social meanings of motherhood to carve out a space of even greater agency. She even implies that evolution itself is a maternal force. The radical potential of Welby’s ideas was not lost to the feminist

movement. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, Welby's acquaintance, was a militant feminist, and in an interview defending her group's use of violence she states: "they have all the courage and all the final desperation of the mother creature at bay." Then Pethick-Lawrence goes on to state, "yes, that is the secret of the women's movement – the dawning in the consciousness of women of the sense of race-motherhood and of the corresponding sense of human dignity which expresses itself in the determination to be included in the human commonwealth as a sovereign half of a sovereign people" (8.) Pethick-Lawrence's rhetoric is a clear effort to redirect the symbolic power ascribed to eugenic motherhood into actual political power. She moves easily between positions we would today see as antithetical; she justifies radical, even violent protest by appealing to the values of motherhood and imperialism.

Welby literally spoke and wrote back to Galton about his eugenic theories, and both he and history have tended to ignore her contributions. I would suggest that in future evaluations of eugenics, we begin to look for women like Welby, who can serve as a kind of subversive intellectual partner to Galton, a figurative race-mother to his eugenic fatherhood.

Welby was not alone in her attempts to first learn about, and then transform eugenics. The continuing popularity and appeal of eugenics in the early twentieth century is displayed by the founding in 1908 of the Eugenics Education Society. As Soloway notes, half of the members of the Eugenics Education Society were women, forty percent were unmarried, and some were active in the suffrage movement. In fact, the Eugenics Education society was essentially founded, organized, and run by a young

widow, Sybil Gotto (128). At its founding in 1908, the Eugenics Education society included a clause in its charter stating that the society would never exclude women.

While the Eugenics Education Society represented the propaganda branch of the movement, Karl Pearson's work at the Eugenics Laboratory pursued what was then considered to be the hard science of eugenics: the data harvesting and statistical analysis that would demonstrate the influence of heredity on any number of characteristics. While it was unremarkable for genteel women to participate in clubs, particularly those with a social improvement or philanthropist slant, it was less common for women to participate in scientific fieldwork, write reports, and deliver lectures. Thus, the involvement of women in this branch of the movement is even more interesting.

While Pearson asserted that, in general, women were better off as wives and mothers, he had no problem employing the exceptions in his laboratory. For example, Ethel Elderton worked at the Biometric lab at the University College of London as a researcher, then began delivering lectures, and was eventually granted a position at the College (Kevles 39). In 1908 Pearson writes to Galton, saying, "she is the life and soul of the place, knows the whole of the material, and keeps everything going."¹⁵ A day later he writes to gently chastise Galton for his support of the anti-suffrage society and to remind him their work depends on women. He states, "Among the fourteen workers in the Biometric and Eugenics Laboratories at present we have five women and their work is equal at the very least to that of the men. I have to treat them as in every way the equals of men. They are women, who in many cases have taken higher academic honours than the men and who are intellectually their peers."¹⁶

¹⁵ Pearson to Galton, 14 December 1908 (Galton Papers, University College London).

¹⁶ Pearson to Galton, 15 December 1908 (Galton Papers, University College London).

Although he was a strong follower of Galton, Pearson was slowly coming to respect the importance of women to eugenics. He was aided in this by Olive Schreiner, whom I will discuss later in the chapter. Another male eugenic insider who actively sought compatibility between his ideas and those of women was Caleb Saleeby. Prior to his involvement with the eugenics movement, Saleeby was a temperance reformer. According to Soloway, he was perhaps the “most energetic publicist of eugenics before the war” (50). Saleeby wrote numerous newspaper articles, delivered speeches, and published books that asserted the centrality of women to eugenics, particularly in their roles as mothers. In 1911 Saleeby argues:

we have not yet reckoned with the vast importance of motherhood as a factor in the evolution of all the higher species of animals, and its absolute supremacy . . . in the case of man. Any system of eugenics or race culture, any system of government, any proposal for social reform . . . which fails to reckon with motherhood or falls short of adequately appraising it, is foredoomed to failure and will continue to fail. (Parenthood and Race Culture 166-7)

Unlike many conservative eugenic writers, Saleeby did not see an incompatibility between motherhood and an expansion of women’s legal and economic opportunities. In a speech delivered to the University Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage in March of 1908, Saleeby asserts that the granting of suffrage for women will increase their chances for economic security. Saleeby claims that the surplus of women in the population is a “diseugenic” position, and argues that if women were given the choice, they would exercise the freedom to refuse husbands who are “definitely and indisputably inferior.” Saleeby concludes that he is convinced that women’s suffrage will be eugenic, and therefore he supports it.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Cambridge Weekly News* 11 March 1908, Eugenics Society Scrapbooks, Wellcome Library

In his later work, *Woman and Womanhood*, Saleeby calls for the creation of “Eugenic Feminism” and explains why the goals of feminists and eugenicists are not far apart. Contradicting Galton, who argued that women had less verifiable hereditary influence than men, Saleeby asserts that “each parent contributes an exactly equal share to the making of the new individual, and all the ancient and modern ideas of the superior value of well-selected fatherhood fall to the ground” (2). Saleeby shows that he understands the potential objections of feminists to eugenics, noting that the eugenic assertion that the most intelligent and best women must, at all costs, be mothers, seems like just another way of repressing them: “Her sex has always been sacrificed to the present or to the immediate needs of the future as represented by infancy and childhood; and there is no special attractiveness in the prospect of exchanging a military tyranny for a eugenic tyranny” (11).

To appeal to feminists and counter this idea of eugenic tyranny, Saleeby asserts that the desire for male dominance is repulsive and “the men who seek to maintain male dominance are the enemies of mankind” (16). Saleeby emphasizes instead how eugenics creates greater freedom for women. For example, he readily acknowledges that some women will choose not to marry, and that this choice might well be for the eugenic good:

I desire nothing less than that girls should be taught that they must marry – any man better than none. I want no more men chosen for fatherhood than are fit for it, and if the standard is to be raised, selection must be more rigorous and exclusive, as it could not be if every girl were taught that, unmarried, she fails of her destiny. The higher the standard which, on eugenic principles, natural or acquired, women exact of the men they marry, the more certainly will many women remain unmarried. (17-18)

Saleeby’s comments highlight a tenet of eugenic thought that was particularly attractive to eugenic feminists. In choosing a mate, eugenic principles would have to outweigh all

other social norms, opening up an interesting space of agency for women. Although in practice it was wildly classist, in theory eugenics transcended class, allowing women a wider range of choices. Furthermore, as Saleeby indicates, the lack of suitable male partners means that choosing *not* to marry is eugenically defensible.

Most feminists did not object to marriage as an institution; what they objected to was their lack of choice in the matter and the social pressure to marry “well.” Eugenics argued that wealth and position were not always the best indicators of “fitness;” women needed to be educated to recognize health. The social purists seized on this idea; to them, both physical and moral health were synonymous with male chastity. Angelique Richardson summarizes:

Given the unhealthy tendency of men to promiscuity and vice, and the natural instinct of women to virtue, social purists and eugenic feminists increasingly emphasized the importance of female choice of a reproductive partner, replacing male passion with rational female selection. Women could become managers of male passion, and agents of regeneration, and so introduce the idea of direction and progress into human development. (49-50)

If women had less sexual passion and were less promiscuous than men, it stood to reason that they were more capable of making well-thought-out decisions about their reproductive partners.

New Women novelists incorporated the idea of eugenic selection into their novels to create an entirely new form, which I am calling the eugenic romance, and classifying as a subgenre of the New Woman novel. In the eugenic romance, the heroine is faced with the traditional dilemma of whom to marry, but also faces the added pressures of what significance her choice will have for her progeny and for the race in general. These novels were often generated by women who were involved in the eugenics movement.

The novelist Emma Brooke was a member of the Fabian club, and although not officially a member of the Men and Women's Club, she followed its activities. In 1886 Brooke wrote a response to Pearson's aforementioned paper on "The Woman Question" in which she passionately disagreed with many of his assertions about the possible necessity of compelling the best women to become mothers. She asserted that not all women possessed a maternal instinct. Again, we see the pattern of a woman responding to a male eugenicist, drawing attention to what he might have missed. But like other women drawn to eugenics, Brooke eventually sought a collaborative relationship with Pearson. She then corresponded with him about the relationship between women's economic position and their roles and opportunities in society. As a result of this correspondence, each produced papers arguing for the state support of motherhood. Judith Walkowitz believes that Pearson borrowed Brooke's points without attribution in his 1887 essay "Sex and Socialism," while Pearson biographer Theodore Porter argues that Brooke took the outline of her essay from her correspondence with him.¹⁸ In either case, Brooke's paper was received warmly at both clubs.

In addition to her scholarly career, Brooke was also a New Woman novelist and the author of *A Superfluous Woman* (1894). Brooke's eugenic and socialist sympathies are subtly infused throughout the novel, which initially appears to be a light romance, but ends as a eugenic and feminist critique of marriage and motherhood. In *A Superfluous Woman*, the protagonist Jessamine Halliday faces the traditional, female romantic dilemma – whom to marry – but her choices are a healthy peasant she loves or the

¹⁸ See Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight : Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, *Women in Culture and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 156, and Theodore M. Porter, *Karl Pearson : The Scientific Life in a Statistical Age* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 16.

degenerate but socially acceptable Lord Heriot. Jessamine's choice is not only about health and evolutionary fitness, but about whether she can pass up economic and social stability and marry outside of her own class. Furthermore, the novel is not about love for its own sake, but about love that produces children, and what those children might be like.

Jessamine is a "superfluous woman" because she contributes nothing of relevance to society. She flits from social cause to social cause, never thinking deeply about any of them. In fact, the novel opens with Jessamine so overcome by the ennui and pointlessness of her existence that she decides to will herself to die. The quirky eugenicist doctor, Dr. Cornerstone, is called in and tells Jessamine a story illustrating the actual conditions of the poor, raising her from her funk and causing her to develop a new interest in work and suffering.

Repulsed by the idea of marrying Lord Heriot and struggling against her Aunt Arabella, who is pressuring her to accept him, Jessamine instead runs away to the country and pays a farmer named John McKenzie to allow her to work on a farm. While on the farm, Jessamine does very little actual work and a lot of musing and wandering through the countryside. She falls in love with another farmer, Colin MacGillvray, a quiet reserved man who, according to Mrs. McKenzie, keeps his "mind in his worruk" (52).

The book makes a clear distinction between the healthy country people and the dissolute Londoners. While on a walk, Jessamine meets a child who is the picture of health. Surprised at the child's precocious language skill, beauty and development, she inquires about her and is shocked to learn that the child is the illegitimate child of two peasants. Jessamine feels an immediate maternal pull towards her: "How Jessamine

loved this beautiful little mortal who had been born into this world out of wedlock!”
(149).

Brooke fuses together the sexual and maternal drives, arguing that Jessamine’s desire for Colin is also caused by her drive to be a mother: “She longed definitely and deeply after motherhood. . . . It colored all her love for Colin and was not distinct from it” (201). Although the novel is less didactic than some, it is clear that Jessamine is an unconscious eugenicist; because Colin is healthy and morally upright, Jessamine desires his child. However, there is still the bar of class. Jessamine does not particularly like the idea of marrying her country love and living in the same tiny home with Colin’s aged, ignorant parents. She toys with the idea of having a sexual relationship with Colin instead of marrying him and imagines what it would be like to return to London with his child in her arms (164).

The force of Brooke’s novel is to critique society and her tool is eugenics. She denounces the London marriage market for promoting degenerate marriages. In the list of London marriages, Jessamine reads that a middle-aged man considered the “biggest rake in Great Briton” has been married to a girl whose family is “permeated with hereditary insanity, and who was herself said – in strict confidence – to have had her moments” (119-20). Nobility, clergy, and law unite to support and condone such a marriage, which will bring together “two splendid land properties” and unite the blood of the bride with the wealth of the bridegroom (120). But to Jessamine, with her new appreciation of health, this seems like “a breath of poisonous air.” She is moved to reevaluate her own potential mate, Lord Heriot, “the greatest ‘catch’ in Europe and the

most debauched of men,” who has a drunken younger brother, a sister who is “a microcephalous idiot” and a bad tempered father dying of paralysis (120).

Jessamine’s romance turns into a tragedy as she unexpectedly decides to leave Colin, return to London, and marry Lord Heriot. Even this decision is attributed to heredity; Jessamine acknowledges it was the “Aunt Arabella” in her that made her return and do the socially expected thing: “She and I are kin. There lies the root of the evil. What is in her is in me also” (264-5). After the two are married, the extent of Heriot’s degeneration becomes clear. We are told:

That the Heriots had survived at all was the result of the extraordinary advantages in sick nursing which wealth had permitted them to enjoy . . . That cause and one other had prevented their natural extinction, the other cause being the alliances into which their wealth and titles had tempted England’s fair daughters from time to time. For generations the Heriots had purchased handsome women as wives in much the same way as an Eastern despot buys the inmates of his harem. Had it not been for these two measures the family would have died out as quickly as the generations of the vicious are said to perish in the slums of London. (277)

Jessamine is punished for making a diseugenic choice by having two degenerate children. Doctor Cornerstone views them with horror, stating, “On those frail, tiny forms lay heavily the heritage of the fathers. The beaten brows, the suffering eyes, expiated in themselves the crimes and debauchery of generations.” The daughter is described as “malicious,” while the boy is “a poor malformed thing – a child who lived in pain” and whose eyes “followed his mother up and down the room with an awful look of perpetual reproach.” The doctor tells her it was a crime “to become a mother by that effete and dissipated race” (273). And, according to the novel, such a crime cannot be undone by the mother’s repentance. Jessamine’s daughter, the “idiot girl” kills her brother in a fit of rage, thus ending the Heriot line. As Jessamine takes to her bed and drifts toward death, she imagines the healthy little boy she would have had with Colin (307).

For its time, *A Superfluous Woman* was a particularly radical novel. When the reader contrasts the healthy illegitimate peasant child with Jessamine's own defective and homicidal brood, the novel becomes an argument for free love and motherhood without marriage. This aligns Brooke with other male socialist eugenicists, such as George Bernard Shaw and H.G. Wells, who also argued that eugenics naturally led to procreation without the requirement of marriage. In this novel, marriage to a degenerate male is a far greater danger than social disapproval. If the Heriot family is viewed as a microcosm of degenerating society, Jessamine's marriage is a "crime" that will metaphorically lead to the violent destruction of the race. Thus, while the novel relies on eugenic assumptions for its message, the thrust of the novel is to use eugenic motherhood as an argument for defying society's social mores and increasing women's social and sexual freedom.

In *A Superfluous Woman*, Jessamine is drawn to the eugenically-fit peasant and chooses wrongly, but in *Gallia* by Menie Muriel Dowie, the heroine faces the opposite dilemma; she is in love with a man whom she eventually concludes is degenerate. Dowie's novel is experimental in both subject matter and narrative form. The first five chapters follow Mark Gurdon's experiences in Paris. The title character is deferred until chapter six, and even after she is introduced we learn about Gallia Hamesthwaite primarily through her interaction with others. Gallia's identity is not fixed and she is aware of this. When Hubert "Dark" Essex dines at her home, he abruptly questions, "so this is who you are?" and insults her father (40). Gallia asserts that she is "a sport" who doesn't take after her parents. Dowie obviously means this term in the biological sense, suggesting that Gallia is a mutation, biologically as well as socially 'new.' She evaluates

herself as “too half-and-half – neither a good woman of the old kind nor a good woman of the new” (51).

Dowie constructs this in-between state as representative of the New Woman and applies it specifically to gender roles. We are told Gallia “developed late” and “when femininity descended upon her” she “resented it fiercely.” She is not fully socialized into her gendered position; she has not played at “keeping house, teaching school, having callers, as most girl-children do.” Gallia, in fact, is terrified of children and young mothers and disgusted by the “coquetry” of her girl friends (39). Gallia is neither feminine nor masculine, and she is similarly neither innocent nor worldly. Gallia is aware of the facts of life; she shocks her mother by reading critically the articles in the newspaper about the “State regulation of vice” (33). She has educated herself about natural sciences and been to Oxford, but we are told that “the broad facts of nature, if applied to herself, revolted her to sickness” (39). While this mixture of characteristics might seem unusual, Dowie assures the reader that, “there are a great many Gallias in the world nowadays, and they are, for the most part, very unhappy people” (39).

However, Gallia is resigned to the indeterminate identity she has developed. We are told, “sentimentally, the old style of woman was her ideal” but Gallia has reached a different stage of development. She tells herself, “you cannot interfere with the clock of evolution that is wound up and goes on in each one of us; you cannot arbitrarily put back its hand to the time of fifty years ago. Some people’s clocks go slower than others, that is all. It isn’t that I’m pleased with my pace, or that I like myself as I am, but I’m a quick clock” (41). Like other eugenic feminist authors, Dowie lays down a framework based on the assumptions of Darwinism and intervenes to redefine the terms. The force of

evolution is like a clock that is simultaneously social and individual; Gallia is an aberration because her evolutionary clock runs faster, but at the same time she is also an example of what the woman of the future will be. Gallia is not a woman who needs to be corrected or discover her “true” and “natural” state; Dowie paints her as the inevitable destination of womankind.

Gallia’s fluidity with regard to gender roles allows her to overcome her natural reticence and exercise her right to sexual selection by declaring her love to her friend from Oxford, Dark Essex, relatively early in the narrative. Essex refuses her without much sensitivity. This disappointment is compounded by the death of her mother; as her mother lies in her coffin Gallia regrets never having pursued a closer relationship with her and begins to think of maternity as an option for herself. While reminiscing about her mother, Gallia concludes that motherhood is better than romantic love: “a woman gets a great deal out of motherhood; more than she does out of marriage: motherhood is, on the whole, better suited to her than marriage, I believe” (92).

Other New Woman novels take the position that while marriage might be a social evil, maternity is an innate drive. While Gallia’s example of conversion to maternal feeling upon the death of her mother might appear to replicate that position, Dowie puts pressure on such an assumption by asserting that Gallia’s decision is simultaneously a kind of atonement for her failure to love her mother and a reasoned choice based on the benefits women derive from motherhood. Further, unlike many of her New Woman counterparts, Dowie acknowledges that “maternity” might actually be a politically expedient persona. Dark Essex comments:

the posing woman will care for her children too. She can’t afford not to. Maternity is a strong pose with your platform woman. She has to be regarded as a

‘thorough wife and mother,’ it fills the cheap seats so. Yes, women have a lot of courage. But I don’t believe the woman breathes, who, if she didn’t care for her children, would have the courage to say so. (108-9)

Dowie anticipates a much later phase of feminism by suggesting that “maternity” is an ideological construct, one that can be strategically deployed in support of feminism.

Dowie undercuts the “naturalness” of maternity by implying that any woman who did not have maternal feelings would keep silent due to overwhelming social pressure.

Gallia never ceases to love Dark Essex but accepts his rejection without a fight. She instead turns to eugenics as her motivating passion. Her new criteria for men are “that they should be well-grown and healthy and sound – in wind, limb, and temper” (112). She shocks her friends by arguing that the health of the race would be improved by hiring surrogate parents to bring into the household of those unfitted to have children. Gallia is consistent with her new ideology and evaluates all potential suitors eugenically. Being well off and reasonably attractive, Gallia is confident she will be able to find a marriage partner and plans to continue to exercise her power of sexual selection. She is somewhat discomfited when she learns that her desired partner, Mark Gurdon, has had a mistress who induced her own miscarriage. However, Gallia concludes that the moral judgments of the past have no bearing on the eugenic search for a mate. It is implied that the mistress is actually a factor in Gurdon’s favor because it proves he can father children. When Gurdon falls deeply in love with Gallia and proposes, Gallia refuses to sentimentalize the situation, telling him she does not love him but will happily accept him as the father of her children.

Gallia’s choice of a mate based on eugenic principles seems to be endorsed by the author. At the end of the novel we learn that Dark Essex would be a eugenically

unsuitable partner. He confesses that he has congenital heart failure, and announces, “a man with pronounced heart-disease ought not to marry. Nothing is more inevitably hereditary” (200). However, it is difficult to say this is a novel that completely endorses eugenics. The tone of the ending of the novel is regretful rather than triumphant. Essex reveals that he has now fallen in love with Gallia but does not press his suit when Gallia reveals she has decided to accept Mark’s anticipated proposal. Although Gallia is satisfied with her choice, she thinks constantly of Essex during Mark’s proposal. The novel’s message is clear – to choose eugenics, one must sacrifice romance.

A core component of the eugenic romance is the threat posed by the degenerate suitor. If one version of the degeneration narrative casts the prostitute as the ever-present symbol of atavism, the eugenic romance places the wooing male (suitor, fiancée, or husband) in this role. A common Victorian trope was the idea that women were sexually and morally more pure than men; women were told that this purity would help them save men from their baser desires. But the Contagious Diseases Act and its repeal had made it known to the public that men who frequented prostitutes were likely to bring venereal disease home, and no amount of wifely sexual purity or persecution of prostitutes could prevent this situation. Often active in the social purity movement, New Woman novelists, especially those with knowledge of eugenics, argued that physical degeneration was caused by male promiscuity. As we saw in *A Superfluous Woman*, Heriot’s “debauched” behavior is overlooked by London society but visited horribly on his children. We see this same linkage in Sarah Grand’s *The Heavenly Twins*, but Grand makes more explicit that degeneration and venereal disease go hand in hand. When Grand’s heroine Evadne learns of her new husband’s past sexual misadventures, she

chooses not to consummate the marriage and remain abstinent. When told that his promiscuity is in the past, she declares, “there is no past in the matter of vice. The consequences become hereditary and continue from generation to generation” (80). Unlike Kingscote’s protagonist in *The Woman Who Wouldn’t*, Evadne sticks to her plan to be both married and abstinent and avoids the birth of degenerate children. Evadne’s sacrifice is painted sympathetically through contrast with her friend Edith. Having grown up without theoretical or practical sexual knowledge, Edith is unable to recognize that her future husband is infected with venereal disease. Evadne tries to warn her, but her warnings are neither appreciated nor believed. Edith gives birth to a syphilitic child, harbors murderous thoughts about her husband, and eventually goes mad and dies.

The aforementioned eugenic romances display the ways feminists attempted to utilize eugenic motherhood to carve out a space of sexual and social agency. Male promiscuity was the problem and female chastity was usually, although not always, the answer. However, the most well known eugenic romance, *The Woman Who Did*, is by a male author, Grant Allen, which allows us to compare and contrast male and female approaches. While this is not, in the strictest sense, a feminist novel, it has many elements in common with the female eugenic romances, including valorization of eugenic motherhood and the danger of the degenerate male.

Allen’s heroine, Herminia, is an educated woman who believes in the doctrine of eugenics. Herminia is also an advanced feminist who believes marriage is a social evil. This combination of beliefs leads logically to motherhood out of wedlock, a free union with her chosen partner, Alan Merrick. Herminia knows she will suffer socially because of this choice, but believing her future child is far more important than herself, chooses to

make herself a eugenic martyr. Herminia pins all her hopes on her child, Dolores, (or Dolly) whom she believes will be the first step toward regenerating society.

Allen's novel brought a firestorm of criticism from both conservatives and feminists, and consequently sold extremely well. Although more than one critic has found Herminia, painted sympathetically in the novel, an apt representative of Allen's fantasy women and the embodiment of his eugenic ideals, the ending of the novel complicates this position. Dolly ends up not sharing her mothers' views, and is entirely conventional. Kept ignorant of her illegitimacy until of marrying age, Dolly is mortified to learn that her chances of a society marriage have been greatly harmed. Dolly rejects her mother, going to live with her paternal grandfather instead. She tells her mother she cannot marry because she doesn't want to burden her husband with such a mother-in-law, and Herminia obediently commits suicide.

Allen's politics complicate any claims about the feminist or anti-feminist significance of this novel. Although Allen claimed he was a supporter of women's rights, he also believed that women should and must choose motherhood above all other options and that the higher education of women distracted them from this most fundamental mission. It is likely Allen's essentialism that causes Ann Heilmann to claim this is a "stridently misogynistic" novel that postulates "female sexual submission to eugenically sound men as a mark of feminist liberation" (53). Heilmann fails to take into account, however, the vast tapestry of novels written by women making similar claims; submission to eugenically sound men was a legitimate goal for the eugenic feminist.

Furthermore, one could point out, as Nicholas Ruddick does, that Herminia suffers precisely because she does not choose a eugenically sound man.¹⁹ According to Allen, the best men will feel a strong pull towards marriage and parenthood and marry early in life. He frankly postulates that the others “substitute prostitution for marriage” (68). Merrick, Dolly’s father, is one of these late-marrying men, leading Allen to the condemnation that he was “not quite one of the first, the picked souls of humanity. He did not count among the finger-posts who point the way that mankind will travel” (67). As a result, Dolly, despite being raised by an intellectual, freethinking mother, develops commonplace ideas “by a pure act of atavism. She had reverted to lower types. She had thrown back to the Philistine” (143-4). Thus, Allen’s story is, in fact, simply a variation on the classic female tale of degenerate male sexual danger. Herminia does not die of syphilis, but she does die because she has chosen a man who was unworthy of her and given birth to his child. Although Allen clearly expected his audience to condemn Herminia and allowed for his novel to be read as a cautionary tale, Herminia never repents or regrets her actions. And like Thomas Hardy in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, Allen insists on the purity of his heroine despite her sexual activity. The last line of the novel is “Herminia Barton’s stainless soul had ceased to exist for ever” (165).

The previous examples illustrate how female authors (and a few males) responded to eugenics by presenting alternative theories, and even fresh forms of narrative that recenter our attention on the race-mother. Many of these women were literally writing or speaking back to male eugenicists, and Olive Schreiner is no exception. If Victoria Welby should be considered the intellectual race-mother of eugenics, then Olive

¹⁹ See Nicholas Ruddick, "Introduction," *The Woman Who Did*, Broadview Editions (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2004).

Schreiner serves as her daughter. Just as Welby challenged Galton's assumptions, Schreiner challenged those of Galton's heir apparent, Karl Pearson, in the process finalizing what Welby and other eugenic feminists began – taking male eugenic rhetoric and transforming it into fully realized feminist literature.

Schreiner is best known for her novel, *The Story of An African Farm*, which is widely regarded as the first New Woman novel. Raised on a farm in South Africa, Schreiner had more practical knowledge of racial mixing than most English citizens. Like most British South Africans, her initial imperialist and racist mindset warred with her experiences with both the Boers and the native inhabitants. She was self-educated, intellectually curious, and well-versed in a number of subjects. After her initial success with *The Story of an African Farm*, Schreiner turned her energies more toward political writing, and Virginia Woolf later mourned what she saw as Schreiner's squandering of her literary gift.²⁰ With the onset of the Boer war, Schreiner began to strongly oppose imperialism and to question British racial thinking, although she never quite freed herself from her own racism. She was a staunch supporter of women's rights and an unending social critic. Unlike many New Women, who made assumptions about prostitution without direct knowledge, Schreiner sought out, interviewed, and even lived among prostitutes as research. Schreiner was a darling of the Suffragettes, and her book, *Woman and Labour*, was considered their Bible.

Although critics have studied aspects of Schreiner's work, few have discussed her engagement with eugenics. Schreiner had a lifelong friendship and correspondence with Havelock Ellis and an intense intellectual relationship with Karl Pearson. She scrutinized Pearson's work closely and much of her later work reacts to his eugenic theories, which

²⁰ See Virginia Woolf, "Olive Schreiner," *The New Republic* 18 March 1925.

she reframed and revised. When Schreiner joined the Men and Women's Club, she was immediately drawn to Pearson. Regarded by some members of the club as the only woman who could argue with Pearson on his own level, Schreiner immediately entered into passionate debate with him. After Pearson presented his paper "The Woman's Question," which questioned the effect women's emancipation might have on the race, Schreiner told him there was "a great deficiency" in his paper and it "left out one whole field; to me, personally the most important one."²¹ Later she clarifies: "The omission was 'Man.' Your whole paper reads as though the object of the club were to discuss woman, her objects, her needs, her mental and physical nature, and man only in as far as he throws light upon her question. This is entirely wrong." (Qtd. First and Scott 148). While Schreiner disagreed with many of Pearson's theories, she was drawn to him, mentally, emotionally, and physically, although she emphatically denied there was any sexual component to their relationship. Carolyn Burdett argues that Pearson was the most significant intellectual influence Schreiner had in the latter half of the 1880s (49).

Schreiner corresponded with Pearson about a number of subjects, sharing her plans for a massive scientific study of women. Although Schreiner is careful to assert her interests are entirely intellectual, her correspondence to Pearson has an erotic charge. Schreiner delighted in correcting him in his misapprehensions about women's bodies and argued with him about married sexual behavior. She tells him "you are wrong in saying that women feel ANY dislike to intercourse with their husbands during pregnancy" and that he is "entirely wrong" in asserting that a man experiences less sexual desire for a

²¹ 12 July 1885, Olive Schreiner, *Olive Schreiner Letters*, ed. Richard Rive, vol. I: 1871-1899 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 65, hereafter abbreviated as "Letters."

women who is nursing.²² Schreiner asks to dedicate the novel she is working on (*From Man to Man*) to Pearson, and playfully mocks what she imagines as his hesitation because the novel talks too much about feelings.

Schreiner was passionate in all senses of the word, and it was clear to those around her that her passion for Pearson was not as disinterested and intellectual as she liked to portray it. Matters came to a head when she had a breakdown that her doctor and rejected lover, Bryan Donkin, interpreted as a hysterical episode caused by her repression of her desire for Pearson.²³ Donkin wrote to Pearson claiming that Olive was in love with Pearson and asking that if he returned the affection in any way to visit Schreiner and put her out of her misery. Pearson did not visit and wrote Schreiner a letter that no longer exists. Schreiner responded by saying that Donkin was incorrect and “if he told you I loved you with sex-love it was only a mistake on his part” (116).

Schreiner’s relationship with Pearson was never the same after this incident; although she continued to correspond with him occasionally, it was clear that Pearson had rejected her. Unable to engage Pearson in debate on a personal level, she continued to debate him in her writing, and her political works carry an underlying critique and revision of eugenics that has been hardly remarked upon.

Woman and Labour was considered the Bible of the women’s movement. According to Carol Barash, “militant suffragists read Schreiner’s *Woman and Labour* to each other in prison, they quoted it frequently, and assimilated its tone and language to a wide range of writings on gender, morality, and sexuality” (269). Barash sees

²² 10 June 1886 and 12 June 1886, (Letters 81-82).

²³ See Ruth and Ann Scott First, *Oliver Schreiner* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1980), 166. As Lucy Bland points out, Donkin later authored an entry on hysteria for *A Dictionary of Psychological Medicine* (64-5).

Schreiner's work as flawed, however, because it is contaminated by racism and eugenics. (279). However, as Carolyn Burdett counters, "evolutionary and eugenic ideas, and Schreiner's use of them, are more complex than such criticism allows" (49). In particular, Barash objects to what she sees as Schreiner's "belief in archetypal maternity," arguing that it shows "a capitulation to the patterns of white male dominance" (279). However, I see Schreiner's treatment of motherhood as far more complex. Like Burdett, I argue that *Woman and Labour* is a response to Pearsonian eugenics, and furthermore, that Schreiner's rhetorical strategies in this essay are typical of the feminist reconfiguration of eugenic rhetoric. Although she did have great respect for motherhood, Schreiner's position in this work is a strategic deployment of the rhetoric of race-motherhood, her goal being to transform through inversion many of the claims of conservative eugenics, while maintaining the political and social clout eugenic motherhood gave women.

Woman and Labour seeks to subvert and overturn the assumption made by conservative eugenicists that social degeneration was or could be caused by the emancipation and education of women. Schreiner revisits the common assertion that current society was on a downward slide similar to that experienced by the Greeks and Romans. Schreiner begins by agreeing that these societies' fall was due to its women, but argues that social collapse occurs when women turn to "sex parasitism" instead of useful labor. Schreiner argues that Greek women slowly turned away from useful labor; first they ceased physical toil, and then they transferred the responsibilities of childrearing to servants, until they contributed nothing of worth to society. Schreiner

argues that, like prostitutes, Greek women sold their bodies and were complicit in their own objectification, becoming parasites dependent on men.

Many aspects of Schreiner's essay are responses to Pearson. Her title is borrowed exactly from one of Pearson's essays published in the *Fortnightly Review* and reprinted in *Chances of Death*. In this article, Pearson argues that the "two great problems of modern social life" are the problems of women and labor (226). The article equates the labor of women bearing children to that of the average workman, and argues that neither, at the present time, has a socialist consciousness of their contribution to the state. Schreiner's focus on labor is probably also a response to Pearson's article "Socialism and Sex," reprinted in *The Ethic of Freethought*. Pearson's article begins with a quotation from Schreiner, and in the article he claims:

The labour of woman is a fund of infinite value to the community, and her right to have educational and professional institutions thrown open to her is based upon her duty to contribute to the common labour-stock of the community. The moral force behind the 'Woman's Rights' platform is woman's duty to labour. Such labour, I am sure, in the case of the great majority of non child-bearing women is not synonymous with 'home duties.' (421)

Although there are large areas of overlap between Pearson and Schreiner's work, the differences are more striking. Pearson's endorsement of state endowment of motherhood rests on the assumption that the labor women perform in bearing children is their primary social contribution. In *Socialism and Sex*, although he carves out a limited space of female agency, he recommends that women be granted access to education and the professions only if they have not borne or cannot bear children. In *Woman and Labour*, Schreiner refutes the idea that "woman should perform her sex functions only, allowing man or the state to support her, even when she is only potentially a child-bearer and bears no children," which she says was proposed by "a literary man in England some years

ago” (207). Schreiner argues that such an assumption is both classist and ridiculous because it requires ignoring the fact that the English middle-class lifestyle is supported by the physical labor of working-class women.

Schreiner puts great value on physical labor but argues that the industrial revolution has necessitated a transition toward intellectual labor, particularly science and invention. The same industrial revolution has reduced women’s domestic labor, narrowing her sphere without offering her the opportunity to transition to new types of labor. While Pearson sees biological maternity as women’s primary labor, as Burdett points out, Schreiner “seeks to disassociate the ‘parasite’ woman’s sexuality and maternity from the field of labor. Entirely sexualized, even when a child bearer, the parasite woman’s maternity does not constitute ‘labour’ without the metonymic support of other, more legitimate kinds of labouring” (61). For Schreiner, giving birth to children is a biological function but not deserving of dignity in and of itself. In fact, bearing too many children is another kind of parasitism leading to social degeneration:

the state whose women produce recklessly large masses of individuals in excess of those for whom they can provide instruction and nourishment is a state, in so far, tending toward deterioration. The commandment to the modern woman is now not simply “Thou shalt bear,” but rather, “Thou shalt not bear in excess of thy power to rear and train satisfactorily.” (59-60)

Schreiner’s logic in *Woman and Labour* draws heavily on Lamarckian theories of inheritance; like the eugenicist, she draws parallels between the condition of the individual and the condition of the race. However, she completely dismantles the argument that women are merely the passive vessels in which male inheritance is carried.

Schreiner argues:

For while the female animal transmits herself to her descendant only or mainly by means of germinal inheritance, and through the influence she may exert over it

during gestation, the human female, by producing the intellectual and moral atmosphere in which the early infant years of life are passed, impresses herself far more indelibly on her descendants. Only an able and labouring womanhood can permanently produce an able and labouring manhood; only an effete and inactive male can ultimately be produced by an effete and inactive womanhood. (107)

Schreiner constructs an argument within a Darwinian and eugenic framework while at the same time rejecting the biological determinism that undergirded both philosophies. For Schreiner, biological maternity is entirely separate from the more important goals of human development and social improvement. Reversing the argument that women should limit their participation in the public sphere because of the great service they did raising children, Schreiner argues that only a woman who is active and thoughtful can create active and thoughtful children.

Schreiner creates a kind of genealogy for the English race-mother. According to Schreiner, she is descended from ancient racial mothers who were strong warrior women, “Teutonic” mothers who are “virile” and either fight beside their men or run the household entirely while they are absent:

We have in us the blood of a womanhood that was never bought and never sold; that wore no veil, and had no foot bound; whose realised ideal of marriage was sexual companionship and an equality in duty and labour; who stood side by side with the males they loved in peace or war, and whose children, when they had borne them, sucked manhood from their breasts, and even through their foetal existence heard a brave heart beat above them. (148)

Racial motherhood and social regeneration, according to Schreiner, comes from women who are on an equal footing with men.

Schreiner anticipates Carol Hanisch’s argument that the personal is political by nearly 60 years; she argues that the intellectual and personal development of individual women will contribute to the development of women in general, and thus society as a

whole.²⁴ This logic allows Schreiner to laud the woman who refuses marriage and renounces “motherhood, that crowning beatitude of the woman's existence, which, and which alone, fully compensates her for the organic sufferings of womanhood” because her efforts to develop herself will make “more possible a fuller and higher attainment of motherhood and wifehood to the women who will follow her” (128). Burdett rightly points out that Schreiner’s rhetorical strategies are perplexing for modern readers. Burdett summarizes, “the striving, aspiring modern woman, who demands access to education and the professions, is doing so in order to make her way back to a (reformed) domestic life” (61). Or in other words, the modern woman who renounces motherhood does so for the benefit of future mothers. This is a quirky and creative reconfiguration of eugenic motherhood. While some eugenicists had allowed a space for women to refuse marriage and motherhood on the grounds that eugenically fit specimens were not available to them, Schreiner takes this a step further. To refuse motherhood and pursue personal development instead is a gift women can give the mothers of the future.

Unlike many of the female writers of her era, who were just as hesitant as males to describe the female body, Schreiner celebrates it. In a striking, unusual metaphor, Schreiner merges the biological and the symbolic. She argues that each generation passes through:

the body of its womanhood as through a mould, reappearing with the indelible marks of that mould upon it, that as the os cervix of woman, through which the head of the human infant passes at birth, forms a ring, determining for ever the size at birth of the human head, a size which could only increase if in the course of ages the os cervix of woman should itself slowly expand; and that so exactly the intellectual capacity, the physical vigour, the emotional depth of woman, forms also an untranscendable circle, circumscribing with each successive generation the limits of the expansion of the human race (124).

²⁴ For the essay in which she coined this term, see Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political," *Feminist Revolution* (New Paltz, N.Y.: Redstockings, Inc., 1975).

Instead of challenging the sexist tendency to reduce women to their biological functions, Schreiner playfully accepts such an assumption; women, *all* women, are a body, which is further reducible to the “os cervix,” or the opening of the cervix. However, Schreiner then argues that such a reduction is instead an expansion, because (according to Schreiner’s interpretation) it is this ring that determines the size of the human head and according to the rules of metonymy, the limit of the expansion of the human mind. If the human mind has become bigger, it is precisely because women have also grown and expanded in ways that transcend the biological. According to Schreiner, the continuation of human evolution depends on the social evolution of women.

In her novel, *From Man to Man*, Olive Schreiner puts forth her most in-depth critique of eugenics and continues a feminist intervention into the terms of the debate. In *Woman and Labour*, Schreiner had taken on Karl Pearson, but in *From Man to Man* she takes on both eugenics and Darwinism itself. Schreiner began the novel in 1873 and continued to revise it until her death, at which time it was posthumously published by her husband. First and Scott describe it as a “didactic propagandist text,” and *From Man to Man* deals explicitly with many taboo subjects, including sexual exploitation and prostitution (173). Schreiner critiques the patriarchal system that would condone male promiscuity while deploring it in women. One heroine, Rebekah, marries a man who is consistently unfaithful to her; she takes refuge in devoting herself to motherhood, but cannot ignore her husband’s affairs when he fathers a child with their colored servant girl. Rebekah’s sister Bertie falls in love with her tutor, who seduces and then deserts her. Bertie’s reputation and chances for a happy marriage are ruined forever, and eventually she is forced to turn to prostitution.

Rebekah is both a devoted mother and a social critic; she sits up at night writing social philosophy about the subjects that interested Schreiner herself: degeneration, evolution, and the relations of the sexes. Rebekah ponders the demise of past civilizations and wonders whether it might be possible for one civilization to continually advance without degenerating and collapsing. Through Rebekah, Schreiner proposes a radical critique of Darwinian evolution. Instead of the Social Darwinist model in which the most powerful races are the most advanced, naturally dominating over those less developed and weak, Rebekah argues that the most advanced individuals or races are at the present time inevitably destroyed by society. These destructive tendencies could easily be seen an example of social degeneration, but Rebekah paints these advanced individuals as martyrs to the cause of evolution; their individual struggles may be fruitless, but they eventually help the race as a whole to survive.

Rebekah states the basic position of eugenics in order to debate it:

granting that you are right and the full developed individual and the race must be hampered and limited by that of the less developed, is it not practically our duty and for the benefit of humanity that we should forcibly suppress, cut off, and destroy the less developed individuals and races, leaving only the highly developed to survive? (170)

Rebekah then asks the questions often dodged by eugenicists: who should choose who lives and who dies? She argues that there is no body of humans “impartial enough, and untouched by the warping of personal and racial prejudices, to be able to determine for the race at large just what qualities are desirable and should be reserved and which should render their possessors liable to destruction” (170). Rebekah systematically attacks the assumptions of eugenics, arguing that each race or class has desirable qualities and that

the supposedly advanced white upper-class male at times shows less human development and more corruption than the “savage” races.

Having debunked eugenics, Rebekah then writes back to Darwin: “You say all evolution in life has been caused simply by the destruction of the weaker by the stronger” (185). How, then, she wonders, can one explain the survival of a race of meek, gentle creatures like the mierkats of Africa? She argues that the mierkats as a species have survived because they act for the good of the young; at the approach of a predator, older mierkats risk their lives by carrying the children of the colony back to their hole, thus ensuring the survival, not of themselves, but the mierkat race. The adult mierkats, according to Schreiner, go hungry so that their young might be well fed. Schreiner argues that it is not always destruction and dominance that allow survival; sometimes “fitness” is defined by the desire to protect and sacrifice. This drive, according to Schreiner, can be called mother-love, and it, not competition, is the motivating force of evolution:

through all nature, life and growth and evolution are possible only because of mother-love. Touch this, lay one cold finger on it and still it in the heart of the female, and, in fifty years, life in all its higher forms would be extinct; man, bird and beast would have vanished and the cold dim dawn of sentient existence would alone exist on a silent empty earth. Everywhere mother-love and the tender nurturing of the weak underlies life, and the higher the creature the larger part it plays. (185)

Schreiner is arguing here for nothing less than a redefinition of evolution in which the maternal instinct displaces the competitive drive as the primary force guiding human development and ensuring the survival of the race.

While Darwinism and Galtonian eugenics had decentered the female, particularly the maternal, in both *Woman and Labour* and *From Man to Man*, Schreiner works to

place women at the center of theories of evolution, degeneration, and eugenics. Her intervention often employs the rhetorical strategy of accepting many of the premises of eugenics, then arguing on a different track to eventually invert eugenic claims. For example, Schreiner accepts the idea that women are responsible for social degeneration. But she argues that degeneration is not caused by women laboring outside the home, becoming educated, or participating in social movements. Instead, it is the *lack* of useful work that causes women to degenerate. She does not condemn motherhood; on the contrary, her ideal is the “mighty labouring woman who bears human creatures to the full extent of her power, rears her offspring unaided, and performs at the same time severe social labour in other directions (and who is, undoubtedly, wherever found, the most productive toiler known to the race)” (103). But, according to Schreiner, biological motherhood is only a tiny component of race-motherhood; to become better mothers, women must become better people and more involved citizens.

The critical tendency to denounce eugenics as among the greatest of social evils has led to a particularly one-sided view of its relationship to women. At times, eugenics did, indeed, serve as an authoritative discourse used to control women and their bodies, forcing them to conform to prescribed ideas about motherhood and gender roles. Poorer-class women were targeted and denounced for reckless breeding and lack of parenting skills, and then held up as a negative example for middle-class women. One explanation for the participation of women in such a movement would be that they believed the ruling ideology and were complicit in their own subjugation. A second might be the desire to gain power and authority over other women, taking the only power available to them – the power to lecture other women about what their behavior should be.

While these are reasonable explanations that indeed hold true for certain women, it does not explain the near-overwhelming evidence that eugenics also appealed to precisely those women who were bent on reconfiguring the relations between men and women and with expanding women's social, economic, and political spheres. I would suggest that for many women, both motherhood and eugenics were crucial political positions. The very argument conservatives were making, that in order to be a good mother one must refrain from being too involved in the public sphere, implied that motherhood was not only biological, but also performative. As such, it could be adopted for political purposes. As Dowie puts it, "Maternity is a strong pose with your platform woman" (108). While there were obviously strong countervoices, like Mona Caird who argues in *Daughters of Danaus* that "Motherhood, in our present social state, is the sign and seal as well as the means and method of a woman's bondage" (341) many authors and activists realized they could not afford to relinquish the power and reverence with which motherhood was regarded in Victorian England. Eugenics combined the existing reverence for motherhood, the authority of a privileged scientific discourse, and the assertion that it was only through woman that the tide of degeneration could be turned back. This was a tremendous position of power that women could use to their advantage.

By exploiting the many social meanings eugenic motherhood had accumulated in the Victorian era, women could intervene to emphasize whichever meaning was politically most useful to them. Race-motherhood was simultaneously biological and civic; the term itself holds in tension the narrow sphere of home and family and the wider sphere of world citizenship and responsibility. Eugenic feminists argued that it was their capacity for race-motherhood that entitled them to practice it in whatever way was most

individually appealing and socially useful. While eugenic motherhood seems at first to be biologically deterministic, individuals came to define race-motherhood as something that so far exceeded biological motherhood that it was only loosely connected to the act of giving birth to children. Eugenics even served as a powerful force for sexual freedom when it was used to justify, either implicitly or explicitly, motherhood without marriage. And, finally, power of sexual selection included not only the choice among men, but also the choice not to marry at all.

While I have emphasized the political usefulness of eugenic feminism, the rhetorical strategies these authors employed are equally important. In a strategy that would make French feminists such as Cixous and Kristeva proud, these women (and occasionally men) exploited the linguistic instability inherent in “motherhood” to create a powerful alternative narrative to male-centered eugenics. When discussing narratives by social purity feminists, Angelique Richardson states, “degeneration was a masculine narrative, while regeneration, which reversed its plot, was feminine” (52). The feminization of eugenics was, at its core, a rhetorical and linguistic intervention. Those women who pushed the definition of eugenic motherhood the furthest, such as Victoria Welby and Olive Schreiner, emphasized the symbolic power of the mother and the intimate connection between the biological and the intellectual. Welby’s “intellectually fertilizing” mother and Schreiner’s contention that the expansion of the human mind is limited by the “os cervix” are fully-realized moments of rupture, a reconfiguration of biological determinism that prefigures the ways in which many Modernists will expand the meaning of eugenics by relocating it in the domain of the intellectual and the aesthetic.

CHAPTER II

MINA LOY: MODERNIST, MONGREL, RACE-MOTHER

Mina Loy had many personae. A painter, a poet, an actress, and a designer of clothes, hats, lampshades, lamps, and children's toys, Loy is an artist not easily defined. She was loosely affiliated with both the Futurist and Dadaist movements, but was not fully committed to either. Loy's Modernist reputation is founded on a number of poems published in radical American magazines, such as *Rogue*, *The Trend*, and *Others*. Ezra Pound announced in 1920 that her poetry compared favorably to Marianne Moore's. He praised her hard, concrete writing and even coined the term "logopoeia," or "the poetry of ideas" to describe her poetry. Pound declared that her poetry exemplified "le temperament de l'americaine" (Burke 292).

Loy was, in fact, not an American at all. She was born in Britain and when she began writing for American publications, she was living in Florence. At the time of Pound's declaration, Loy had only lived in America for short periods. Nevertheless, Loy found an audience in America; soon after she moved to New York in 1916, the *New York Evening Sun* published an article on the society page pronouncing her a representative "modern woman." The article praised Loy's play, *The Pamperers*, in part because of its European origins: "The play was written over on the other side, where Modernism is said to have begun" (Qtd. Burke 224). However, Loy was willing to play the part of American poet, declaring "No one who has not lived in New York has lived in the Modern world" (Qtd. Gilmore 281). Virginia Koudis's book, *Mina Loy: American*

Modernist Poet, places her beside Marianne Moore, William Carol Williams, and Gertrude Stein as a quintessentially American voice.

Although Koudis includes Loy in the canon of American Modernists, I would like to focus on a relatively underexplored Loy persona – the British eugenic feminist. Although her many references to eugenics have not passed without critical notice, most critics have difficulty reconciling Loy’s cosmopolitanism, feminism, modern attitudes, and partly-Jewish inheritance with her apparent commitment to eugenics. To truly understand Loy’s deployment of eugenics, we must place her in dialogue with her British predecessors. Loy’s eugenic Modernism is simultaneously a continuation of past British eugenic feminist strategies and a radical Modernist reconfiguration. Many of the authors I discuss in Chapter One adapted male eugenic discourse by imagining a new literary genre, the eugenic romance, in which the heroine makes decisions about marriage and procreation using eugenic criteria. My contention is that eugenic romance was an equally powerful idea for Loy, both literally and metaphorically. In her autobiographical poetry, essays, and personal communication, Loy cites eugenic ideas as guiding principles in her own life. More importantly, eugenic motherhood and Loy’s Modernist revision of it are woven into the substance and imagery of her poetry.

Since Loy constantly mined her own life and love affairs for poetic inspiration, fairly detailed analysis of her biography is necessary in order to understand her (sometimes) obscure imagery. As a critic, I find a metaphor in Loy’s affair with Filippo Marinetti, the hyper-masculine Futurist and eugenicist. I argue that Loy’s ambivalent attraction to Marinetti, and later Georgio Papini, parallels her attitude towards eugenics.

Her early poetry, especially, reflects the desire to unite the energy and power of masculine futurism with her own feminist poetry centered on the desiring, maternal body.

Loy's search for new models of motherhood began by rejecting the old ones. According to Carolyn Burke, Loy, like her exact contemporary, Virginia Woolf, felt an "inner necessity to escape from the Victorian era," which to her was symbolized by the angry "Voice" of her mother (17). The portrait Loy paints of her mother is less of a self-sacrificing Angel in the House, and more of an avenging one. Loy was the child of a conservative English mother, Julia Bryan, and a Jewish father, Sigmund Lowy. Their unlikely marriage was forced upon them by Julia's pregnancy with Loy; in her autobiographical poem "Anglo Mongrels and the Rose" Loy conjectures that her mother saw her as a living representative of her own sin, and thus devoted herself to punishing her child at any sign of moral transgression. Like many Victorian women, Julia avoided any references to the female body and when Loy acquired a distorted knowledge of the facts of birth from a friend, Julia told her she was now "like a leper" for having possession of such a "disgusting secret" (Burke 30). A childhood poem about the marriage of a daisy and a gnat produced the assessment that Loy "had the mind of a slut" because "Nice girls never think about weddings until after they're married" (Burke 31). As Loy entered puberty, her mother appeared angry at her developing curves, calling her a "nasty girl" and asking, "Do you think at your age it is decent to have a figure?" Julia apparently saw in Loy's developing womanhood a painful reminder of her own unhappy past, shrieking, "your vile flesh, you'll get no good out of it. Curse you. Curse your father" (Burke 33).

Loy's childhood experiences are translated into her long autobiographical poem, "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," in which Julia becomes Ava, the English Rose. As we will see in more detail later, in "Anglo-Mongrels" as well as in other poetry, Loy conflates Victorian motherhood, British racial heritage, and sexual and social repression. Loy literally fled from this terrifying racial mother, leaving her mother country and her own mother simultaneously. To escape from these forces and to imagine a new identity for herself, Loy would become an artist and a citizen of the world

In Munich and Paris, where she traveled to study art, Loy came to know the avant-garde art movements and to move in more Bohemian circles. Her definitive escape from Britain came as a result of her marriage to the artist Stephen Haweis. According to Loy, she became pregnant after her first sexual experience at the age of twenty-one and was forced to marry Haweis. Although her domestic situation was not entirely to her liking, Loy's marriage allowed her to continue being a cosmopolitan world traveler. In Paris Loy met Gertrude Stein, who introduced her to a number of modern artists, including Picasso. Loy channeled her energy into painting, and she, not Haweis, was elected a member of the prestigious Salon d'Automne. In 1906 the family moved to Florence, where she would live for ten years, continuing to paint, and embarking on her career as a poet. She befriended Mabel Dodge, a rich American socialite, feminist, and art enthusiast who traveled between New York and Florence, and whose society brought Loy into contact with the American literary world. But it was not until she became interested in the Italian Futurist movement that Loy began the literary formal experimentation that would earn her a reputation as a Modernist.

In Florence, Loy was introduced to a new artistic philosophy by her young boarder, Francis Stevens. Stevens was an enthusiast of Futurism, which Cinzia Blum describes as “the first, most vociferous, and ultimately the most influential movement of the Modernist avant-garde” (vii). In those days, Italian Futurism was nearly synonymous with Filippo Marinetti. His “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” (1909) argues for a violent revolution in art. Marinetti denounces Italian and European culture for its outmoded commitment to sentimentality and the art forms of the past. To break away, one must destroy artistic tradition; Marinetti describes this destruction as setting fire to the libraries and flooding the museums. Futurist art would glory in and celebrate the energy of the mechanical and the modern; in particular, Marinetti was inspired by the speed and force of the automobile. Energy, physical dynamism, violence, and destruction would be the characteristics of the new art. Marinetti consciously employed hyper-masculine language and imagery. He recommended free verse and syntactical experimentation, encouraging infinitives and multiple nouns, while disapproving of the use of “I,” as well as adjectives, adverbs, and punctuation.

Marinetti’s theatrical, aggressive persona was the embodiment of his Futurist ideas. According to Burke, when he met Loy in 1913, he immediately suggested she have sex with him. Taken aback but also titillated, Loy began a teasing flirtation with Marinetti and with Futurism itself. She wrote Mabel Dodge: “I am in the throes of conversion to Futurism, but I shall never convince myself. There is no hope in any system that ‘*combat le mal avec le mal*,’ & that is really Marinetti’s philosophy – though he is one of the most satisfying personalities I ever came in contact with.” (Qtd. Burke 157). Loy’s first published work was “Aphorisms on Futurism” published in *Camera*

Work in 1914, forever marking her indebtedness to Futurism for inspiring her identity as a writer.

Despite this early Futurist identification, Loy's works as a whole, like her letter to Dodge, reflect a much more ambivalent relationship with Futurism. Loy's literal love affairs with and separations from both Marinetti and Giovanni Papini became fodder for her early Modernist poems. Although in "Mina Loy and the Futurists" Elizabeth Arnold characterizes Loy's attitude toward Futurism as primarily satiric, it is more accurate to follow Loy herself and characterize her relationship with Futurism as a passionate affair. Drawing from her feminist sympathies and her British roots, Loy situates the poetics of maternity and the biological in a passionate alliance with Futurism, which eventually becomes unsatisfying.

In "Aphorisms on Futurism," while Loy seems to be self-identifying as a Futurist, she selects only those aspects of Futurism compatible with her own politics. Loy emphasizes the necessary break with the past and the glorification of the creative individual. She argues that new artistic forms are necessary in order for consciousness to expand: "it is the new form . . . that moulds consciousness to the necessary amplitude for holding it" (151).¹ But Loy's Aphorisms avoid the hyper-masculine language of Marinetti, who glorified militarism and made the famous assertion that war is a form of eugenics, stating war is "the world's only hygiene" (42). We can contrast these statements to Loy's aphorisms "LOVE the hideous in order to find the sublime core of it" and "OPEN your arms to the dilapidated, to rehabilitate them" (149). The revolution Loy

¹ Unless otherwise noted, Loy quotations come from Mina Loy, *The Lost Lunar Baedeker: Poems of Mina Loy*, ed. Roger L. Conover (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996). This edition contains Loy's own textual corrections and attempts to faithfully recreate Loy's experimentations with capitalization, underlining, and typography.

imagines is not war or violence, but linguistic transgression. She imagines a Futurist “we” that would “shout the obscenities” and “scream the blasphemies” that others “whisper alone in the dark” (152).

In “Aphorisms,” Loy imagines Futurism as a kind of mental cleanser, doing the work of psychoanalysis. It will allow people to break free of both their “perceptive consciousness” and “the mechanical re-actions of the subconsciousness” (152). Implying that the psychological makeup of the individual is linked to his or her race and culture, Loy calls the “subconsciousness” the “rubbish heap of race-tradition.” In her own case, Loy felt that repression was a racial trait, declaring, “the Anglo Saxon covered-ness goes hand in hand with a reduction of the spontaneous creative quality” (Qtd. Burke 191). When we observe that, for Loy, her British racial heritage came directly through her controlling mother, who anxiously denied her own and her daughter’s sexuality, we can see why Loy was inspired by Marinetti’s frankness about sex and his daring suggestion that the past could be destroyed through art and the individual will.

Although Loy embraced many aspects of Futurism, as many critics have noted, she objected to Marinetti’s insistence on “scorn for women,” the ninth tenet of his first manifesto.² Although he justified it by arguing that his objections were not to individual women but to sentimental *Amore*, Loy did not enjoy, according to Burke, being “treated as an exception to the abasement of her sex” (157). Marinetti’s vision at times extended to the most radical exclusion of women possible; in his novel *Mafarka*, the hero gives

² See, for example, Carolyn Burke, *Becoming Modern: The Life of Mina Loy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 156-7, Lisa Ress, “From Futurism to Feminism: The Poetry of Mina Loy,” *Gender, Culture, and the Arts: Women, the Arts, and Society*, ed. Ronald and Susan Bowers Dotterer (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna UP, 1993), 118, and Elizabeth Arnold, “Mina Loy and the Futurists,” *Sagetrieb* 8.1-2 (1989). Arnold argues that Loy turned to feminism in order to survive as a female poet immersed in “the midst of macho avant-gardists” (84).

birth to a mechanical son through an act of will. Contemptuous of feminism, Marinetti declares in a section of “War, the World’s Only Hygiene” that women are “wholly inferior in respect to character and intelligence,” and regrets “their childish eagerness for the miserable, ridiculous right to vote” (73). He argues that Futurism should support suffrage, but only on the grounds that female participation in government would make it collapse more quickly.

Given Marinetti’s positions, it is unsurprising that there were few female Futurists. In response to Marinetti’s manifesto, Valentine de Saint-Point published the “Manifesto of Futurist Woman” in 1912 and the “Futurist Manifesto of Lust” in 1913.³ She follows Marinetti in condemning feminism but argues that women and men are made equal through lust. Loy’s “Feminist Manifesto” (1914), unpublished during her lifetime, strategically draws from Marinetti and Saint-Point, but asserts very different conclusions.

“Feminist Manifesto” illustrates how Loy was beginning to critique existing cultural systems, including feminism, for failing to provide women with new ways of imagining identity. In it she brings together feminism, Futurism, and eugenics, and responds implicitly to the masculine biases of Futurism. The very language of the “Feminist Manifesto” illustrates how Loy incorporated some aspects of Futurism while rejecting others. The look of the essay evokes the typographical experimentation of Futurism, which can be most clearly seen in Roger Conover’s 1996 printing in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, in which he reproduces Loy’s variations in font size, bold type, and strategic underlining. As Virginia Kouidis has noted, Loy freely used “I,” adjectives, and adverbs, but also shows “extreme verb consciousness,” avoiding the past tense and using

³ See Valentine de Saint-Point, “Manifesto of the Futurist Woman,” *Futurism and Futurisms*, ed. Karl Pontus Hultén and Palazzo Grassi (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986), and Valentine de Saint-Point, “Futurist Manifesto of Lust,” *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (New York: Viking Press, 1973).

present participles and gerunds to create a sense of movement (57). Loy liked the energy and force of Futurism, but wanted to keep her female self, the “I,” at the center of her poetry.

Loy does not adopt the Futurist tone of ridicule and contempt for feminism, but does put forth her own objections to the movement. Loy calls feminism “inadequate,” but does so because she finds their methods and philosophies outdated. She criticizes contemporary feminism’s emphasis on economic and political equality, arguing that these policies continue to define women in relation to men and draw them away from self-discovery; she advises ‘leave off looking to men to find out what you are not – seek within yourselves to find out what you are’ (154). As both Rachel Blau du Plessis and Paul Peppis have noted, Loy’s strongest objection is to social purity feminism and its glorification of mental and physical purity.⁴ She tells these women: “all your pet illusions must be unmasked” and “cease to place your confidence in economic legislation, vice-crusades & uniform education” (153).

Drawing from Havelock Ellis for her argument, Loy critiques a system that overvalues virginity, transforming it into a commodity that must be sold in order to procure a marriage, a situation she dramatizes in her poem “Virgin Plus Curtains Minus Dots.”⁵ She suggests a radical corrective: “the unconditional surgical destruction of virginity through-out the female population at puberty” (155). Both of these points are

⁴ See Rachel Blau DuPlessis, "'Seismic Orgasm': Sexual Intercourse, Gender Narratives, and Lyric Ideology in Mina Loy," *Studies in Historical Change*, ed. Ralph Cohen (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1992), 266 and Paul Peppis, "Rewriting Sex: Mina Loy, Marie Stopes, and Sexology," *Modernism / Modernity* 9.4 (2002), 564-66. While DuPlessis sees Loy as unequivocally opposed to social purity feminism, Peppis argues that Loy actually brings together “arguments of social purity and free love,” thus resisting the ideological opposition between the two (566). I see more evidence on the side of DuPlessis.

⁵ The economic exploitation of women is the central theme of this poem. Lacking “dots” or dowries, the virgins cannot buy a purchaser for their virginity. They look out from behind curtains at the passing men.

taken from Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex Volume VI: Sex in Relation to Society*. In this volume, Ellis discusses the meaning of virginity in different cultures and argues in modern society the woman continues to be the possession of men because her virginity is considered a valuable commodity with which she purchases financial and social security. He says that in protest of this, some support the "abolition of physical virginity" and cites in particular the German authoress Una Poenitentium who "advocates the operation of removal of the hymen in childhood" (404).⁶

Loy's eugenic feminism is made clear in her bold assertion that "Every woman of superior intelligence should realize her race-responsibility, in producing children in adequate proportion to the unfit or degenerate members of her sex" (155). Those critics unaware of the strategic partnership between British feminism and eugenics that I describe in Chapter One are puzzled by the seemingly discordant interjection of eugenics. Aimee Porzorski claims Loy "perversely" embraces a discourse that is "counterintuitive" to her own mixed racial heritage (41). She assumes that Loy's eugenics must have been inspired by Marinetti because "Marinetti's misogyny and belief in Italian race-superiority ultimately inspired documents declaring women valuable only for reproducing "pure" babies offered up as the future of the Italian race" (43). It is true that Marinetti was influenced by a specific strain of eugenics inspired by Nietzsche; his worship of genius and desire for an autonomous, self-reproducing hero strike these notes. However, Loy's language is pure British eugenic feminism. As I argued in Chapter One, it was commonplace for feminists to respond to a particularly misogynistic kind of eugenics by

⁶ My argument for this book as an influence on Loy's "Feminist Manifesto" is supported by her note to Mabel Dodge that the destruction of virginity was "suggested by some other woman years ago – see Havelock Ellis" (Qtd. Conover 216).

asserting in its place a more female-centered discourse. Loy does not adopt Marinetti's eugenics; she subverts it.

Loy's use of key eugenic phrases in the "Feminist Manifesto" shows more than a passing familiarity with the different factions of eugenic feminism. The idea that intelligent women had a responsibility to produce children was espoused by both conservative male eugenicists and eugenic feminists, but Loy uses other language that had become more contentious. Loy urges women to claim their "right to maternity," a phrase first used to argue for an increase in marriages, then later as a justification for free love (155). In an unhappy marriage herself, Loy insists that children should not be the result of "a possibly irksome & outworn continuance of an alliance" (155). Loy's support of free love on eugenic grounds groups her with radical British socialists such as George Bernard Shaw, H.G. Wells, Grant Allen, and even Emma Brooke. Peppis points out similar arguments also being made by feminists such as Stella Browne, Dora Marsden, and Rebecca West (565).

Loy also implicitly responds to the arguments of social purity feminists, who argued that because women were more physically, mentally, and morally pure than men, they could serve as a force for social and racial regeneration. Loy uses the language of these feminists against them, asserting, "The realization in defiance of superstition that there is nothing impure in sex – except the mental attitude to it – will constitute an incalculable & wider social regeneration than it is possible for our generation to imagine" (155). Loy's vision of "social regeneration" thus involves a society that is less hampered by sexual repression. She argues that the complete woman is both "mistress" and "mother" (154).

As Loy did not keep detailed records, it is nearly impossible to know which authors influenced her eugenic philosophies. As noted before, Loy drew heavily from Havelock Ellis. According to Burke, she was also aware of the controversy surrounding the publication of Margaret Sanger's book on contraception. However, it is also possible that Loy read Schreiner's *Women and Labour*, published in 1911. In this work Schreiner discusses women's economic history as parasites, dependent on men and accepting their economic support even when they are only potentially child-bearers. Schreiner argues that parasitic women who do not contribute any useful labor to society are only one step away from prostitutes. In "Feminist Manifesto" Loy uses similar key terms and assumptions, stating, "as conditions are at present constituted – you have the choice between Parasitism, & Prostitution – or Negation" (154). While Schreiner argues that new opportunities for labor will free women from their parasitism, Loy sees no escape without "Negation" – total loss of identity. Loy characterizes the relationship between the sexes as "the enmity of the exploited for the parasite, the parasite for the exploited" and asserts, "the only point at which the interests of the sexes merge – is the sexual embrace" (154).

As indicated earlier, Loy was not the first to use eugenics as a justification for free love. But she adds an additional dimension to the argument by emphasizing that the production of a child is also a sign of personal, artistic development. She states, "Each child of a superior woman should be the result of a definite period of psychic development in her life" and asserts that people follow "their individual lines of personal evolution" (155). While the woman in question is already a eugenically-fit subject, a "superior woman," Loy argues that it is not only biological evolution that should be

valued, but also the evolution of the creative individual. For the mother who is an artist, a child is a creative work. Just as one can survey an artist's body of work and divide it into "periods" that roughly correspond with the artists' development, so too, should one be able to map a woman's psychic development by examining her children.

Loy's choice to place eugenic motherhood at the center of her "Feminist Manifesto" is somewhat surprising given the circumstances of her own life. As we have seen, Loy rejected nearly everything associated with her own mother. If Loy's accounts can be believed, Loy's mother resented her existence and the marriage she felt forced into. Like her own mother, Loy had to marry a man she disliked because of an unplanned pregnancy. By 1914 she had had three children in rapid succession, all of whom suffered health problems; her first daughter died of meningitis at only one year old. Her second daughter was the result of an affair with her doctor. Although Haweis was having his own affair and the two were living apart, he threatened not only to divorce her, but also to tell her father, on whom Loy depended for financial support. She was bound to Haweis again when he agreed to raise the girl as his own. Her third child, a son, was created in part out of obligation; she told Haweis she would make up for her infidelity by giving him a biological child.

Loy could easily have focused on the loss of personal freedom that motherhood entailed. Instead, she incorporated motherhood into her political and artistic philosophies. Loy asserts, "My conceptions of life evolved while...stirring baby food on spirit lamps – and my best drawings behind a stove to the accompaniment of a line of children's cloths hanging out to dry" (Qtd. Conover lxvi). For Loy, maternity becomes inseparable from artistry, as we see in perhaps her most famous poem, "Parturition." In it

Loy sees to modernize both maternity and artistry by characterizing birth as an act of female creativity; furthermore Loy's celebration of this female power acquires extra significance when it is juxtaposed with Marinetti's claims about the superiority of male creativity.

Loy's poem is a strike at the Victorian denial of the female body and her own mother's strenuous avoidance of anything to do with sexuality or birth. The poem uncovers the most personal of acts, making birth both physical and public. Loy speaks from and about her own maternal body, beginning with her pain. Her circle of pain is like a sun in its own "cosmos of agony" (4). The pain of labor eventually becomes so intense that the speaker has a kind of out-of-body experience. Her self is fragmented; she does not recognize "the gurgling of a crucified wild beast" as her own sound and claims "the foam on the stretched out muscles of a mouth" is no part of herself (5).

In her "Feminist Manifesto," Loy argues that woman must be both mistress and mother – both sexually desiring and procreative. Her language in the poem also captures this duality; birth is simultaneously intensely painful and sensual, even orgasmic:

There is a climax in sensibility
When pain surpassing itself
Becomes exotic
And the ego succeeds in unifying the positive and negative poles of sensation
Uniting the opposing and resisting forces
In lascivious revelation (5-6)

Birth and labor are dangerous, a precarious liminal state in which either mother or child could die. The speaker feels the nearness of death during a moment of calm – either a pause in the contractions or a moment right after giving birth:

Relaxation
Negation of myself as a unit
Vacuum interlude

I should have been emptied of life
Giving life (6)

The layering of language shows how deeply connected identity and maternity are in Loy's poetic worldview – her life and very self are at stake. But she emphasizes this “vacuum interlude” is only temporary; her mind returns to life again:

For consciousness in crises races
Through the subliminal evolutionary processes

As we saw in the “Feminist Manifesto,” in which Loy links together the development of the artist and the production of children, here she conflates the language of mental evolution and that of biological evolution. Having approached death, Loy is jolted back into life – her mind is rapidly cycling through “evolutionary processes,” evolving back toward a stable ego.

Loy depicts procreation as a deeply instinctual act, one which nature urges women to engage in without regard to their own lives and which she captures in the striking image of a “dead white feathered moth / Laying eggs” (6). But this life drive is not merely biological; it is artistic and spiritual. In fact, the physicality of birth is downplayed at the very moment the child is entering the world. The child is “a touch of infinitesimal motion / Scarcely perceptible,” but the mother suddenly is filled with energy; the child is “precipitating into me / The contents of the universe” (6). The speaker is dissolved into Maternity-as-life-force. She is “Identical / With infinite Maternity” and

Absorbed
Into
The was – is – ever – shall – be
Of cosmic reproductivity (7)

The speaker's artistic vision "Rises from the subconscious." While artistic tradition might suggest a comparison between the Madonna and child, Loy imagines a cat "With blind kittens." Loy emphasizes the biological facts of existence, the reality of sex, birth and death; in the next stanza the cat (or kitten) becomes an:

Impression of small animal carcass
Covered with blue-bottles
– Epicurean – (7)

Like the dead moth, flies are compulsively laying eggs in the carcass, which will support their young. But the provocative interjection "Epicurean" implies delight and sensuality. Whether this descriptor applies to the mind of the speaker-as-artist, taking a decadent delight in the image, or more likely, the flies themselves, again the purely biological is overlaid with the sensuous; Loy seems to be arguing that even at its biological and animal roots, motherhood is artistry.

Loy's poem is most provocatively read as a reaction to the most eugenic and misogynistic elements of Futurism, the worship of the great man. Written in the same year as "Aphorisms on Futurism" and the "Feminist Manifesto," "Parturition" can be read, like these works, as an attempt to simultaneously incorporate and repudiate Marinetti's doctrines. In Loy's poem, "Lion's Jaws" (1920) Marinetti's theory of the Godlike hero who would reproduce without women is obviously mocked; she describes his manifesto as:

notifying women's wombs
of Man's immediate agamogenesis
. . . Insurance
against the carnivorous courtesan (47)

Agamogenesis, the ability to reproduce asexually, saves the hero from being trapped by a "carnivorous courtesan," whose desire to breed with him will lead to his destruction.

In “Parturition,” Loy creates a reverse discourse to Marinetti’s scorn for women; the speaker of the poem is elevated to greatness by and through her own female body. The Futurist love of mechanical and masculine energy pales in comparison to the “infinite Maternity” and “cosmic reproductivity.” Loy, however, mocked Marinetti’s grand egotism about *Mafarka*, exhibited both in the subject matter and in his loud assertion that his novel was “the greatest masterpiece extant” (Burke 154). Thus, in “Parturition,” the egotistic inflation of the mother is only temporary and her viewpoint is ironically undercut. The mother’s sublimity is revealed to be one part of a paradox: her “superior Inferiority” (5). The ending of the poem reminds us that every “woman-of-the-people” wears a “ludicrous little halo / Of which she is sublimely unaware” (7). Maternity may be sublime, but it is also common, and the worship of individual women is “ludicrous.”

Loy’s ambivalent feelings about Futurism, symbolically captured in her poetry, also took the form of literal affairs with both Marinetti and Papini. Feeling deeper sympathies with Papini, Loy nonetheless was drawn to Marinetti’s energy and sexual frankness. Although she insisted their affair was casual, when the war Marinetti had so eagerly hoped for broke out in Europe, Loy was frightened for him. According to her friend, Neith Boyce, Loy planned to travel to Milan “and get a child by him before he goes to war – she says there is nothing else for women to do in war-time” (Qtd. Burke 174). Boyce apparently had a talent for gossip and related the story to George Cook, a New York reporter, who paints Loy as “the woman who split the futurist movement” and says Loy had “the august desire, so marked in ancient Hebrew literature, to ‘preserve the

seed' of valued men" (Qtd. Burke 176). Cook, perhaps unwittingly, links together Loy's Jewish heritage and her eugenic sentiments.

While most of the writers who espoused eugenic and free love philosophies did not necessarily live them out, Loy literally pursued eugenic motherhood; she practiced what she preached. According to the hints she drops in "Lions' Jaws," Loy had a similar desire to bear Papini's child:

These amusing men
discover in their mail
duplicate petitions
to be the lurid mother of "their" flabbergast child
from Nima Lyo, alias Anim Yol, alias
Imna Oly
(secret service buffoon to the Woman's Cause) (49)

The identity of the competing "flabbergasts" is not at all concealed by their names: "Raminetti" and "Bapini." Writing after both affairs had ended, Loy appears to be mocking the identity she adopted in each affair and perhaps even her own feelings about the necessity of having a Futurist child. But what this language does make clear is that Loy felt that while she may have acted foolishly, her desire was in service of the "Woman's Cause" – an act of eugenic feminism.

The tone of "Lion's Jaws" is unequivocally satiric; it was written after Loy had severed herself from Futurism. But Loy's homage to her love affair with Papini, – "Love Songs," or "Songs to Johannes" – is written immediately after their separation and is a far more tortured working through of her desire to have Papini's child. According to Conover, both the form and the subject matter of the poem were shocking to contemporary readers; her extensive descriptions of sexual intercourse, desire, and bodily functions were only slightly more offensive than her elimination of punctuation and

experimental line spacing (189). The opening invocation to “Pig Cupid,” “his rosy snout / Rooting erotic garbage” marks Loy’s deliberate mockery of the romance tradition (53). But “Love Songs” is not only about an affair gone sour; it is about the failure to procreate, both literally and metaphorically.

Maeera Shreiber argues that the poem centers on “the traumatic loss of a child through abortion” (91). There is some support for this claim – Loy refers to “bird-like abortions” (54) she sees on the ceiling and the poem is full of references to deformed, incomplete, and unrealized children. As we will see, however, other textual evidence supports the idea of a miscarriage, and miscarriage or a failure to conceive makes more sense with the overall tone and imagery of the poem. Arguing that Loy had an abortion requires ignoring many aspects of her life and philosophies. Loy chose continued dependence on a cruel and unfaithful husband rather than an abortion when she became pregnant with her doctor’s child. While she was likely ignorant of abortion as an option when she first married Haws, her doctor/lover surely would have known how to procure an abortion had she wanted one. During her affairs with Marinetti and Papini, Loy had already decided on a divorce and no longer feared the wrath of her husband, who was living with another woman. At that point in her life, Loy appears to have believed that it was her eugenic right and duty to have a child by Marinetti or Papini. Given this mindset, an abortion may well have been unthinkable.

I agree with Shreiber that “Love Songs” is about the traumatic loss of a child. Whether that child was literally conceived or only imagined remains unknown. What is clear throughout the poem is the tremendous importance Loy ascribed to a child she would have with Papini. In “Parturation,” the speaker links together female artistic

subjectivity and motherhood in a mutually supportive relationship; motherhood not only serves as a model of artistic creation, it is a source of poetic vision. In “Love Songs,” the poet is denied maternity and simultaneously suffers a loss of poetic identity. The symbol of the imagined child becomes more overdetermined when we consider that Loy imagined her child would be a triumph of eugenics. Paul Peppis argues that Loy’s valuation of maternity was likely influenced by the arguments of some free-love eugenicists, who viewed the Love Child as eugenically superior because it was born from mutual passion (570). This was certainly a theory with which Loy would have been in sympathy. As we have seen from her “Feminist Manifesto,” she argues that a child should be a biological representation of a certain psychic period in a woman’s life. It is likely that Loy imagined that this particular child would be a realization of what she hoped to create in her poetry: the union of masculine Futurism with aesthetic female artistry.

The “Pig Cupid” who opens “Love Songs” is simultaneously author and child; like Loy herself, the pig is pulling text (“erotic garbage / ‘Once upon a time’) out of sexual consummation, “wild oats sown in mucous-membrane” (53). The pig’s actions reference the correspondence between mother and child, author and poem. Often depicted as the son of Aphrodite, Cupid is the ultimate love child. But Loy’s imagery distorts the mother-child relationship. The problem is not Cupid’s porcine form, which could have any number of meanings, but the fact that the pig is both the “Spawn of Fantasies” and continually spawning fantasies itself, in a self-referential textual loop. The mother has a disturbing lack of agency; she is nothing but the “mucous-membrane” from which the masculine “white star-topped weed” is removed by the male pig (53).

This action could represent either withdrawal as a form of birth control or the removal of an imperfect or undesirable fetus, a “weed” in the garden of humanity.

Evidence mounts up that the speaker regards her lover as having denied her the opportunity to conceive. Multiple allusions converge when the speaker asserts that she

Must live in my lantern
Trimming subliminal flicker
Virginal to the bellows
Of Experience (53)

The lantern alludes simultaneously to the Biblical wise virgins; the story of Psyche, who accidentally scalds her lover with a drop of oil; and perhaps a genie in a bottle.⁷ The small lantern contrasts with the “eye in a Bengal light” of the previous stanza; the strong Eye/I of the poet is dimmed (53). Her desire to create is reduced to a subliminal flicker, and the speaker feels that she is made virgin as she shelters her little flame against the bellows of a Blakean “Experience.” With this combination of allusions, the speaker captures her isolation, her disillusionment, and her poetic impotence.

The fairly abstract metaphor of the lamp and the flame is immediately juxtaposed with one of the most graphic images of the poem. The speaker refers to her lovers’ genitals as a

skin sack
In which a wanton duality
Packed
All the completion of my infructuous impulses (53)

Again, the speaker seems to feel both longing and resentful; she is “infructuous” and the man’s genitals are withholding “completion” from her. Throughout the poem it is hinted that the relationship is a battle between the two, in which the woman has the

⁷ For an excellent reading of the allusions to the story of Psyche in this poem, see Maera Shreiber, “Love Is a Lyric / of Bodies’: The Negative Aesthetics of Mina Loy’s Love Songs to Joannes,” *Mina Loy: Woman and Poet*, ed. Maera and Keith Tuma Shreiber (Orono, Maine: The National Poetry Foundation, 1998).

disadvantage. The act of love is described in words with violent connotations: “broken flesh with one another,” (54) “humid carnage,” (57) and “the impact of lighted bodies / Knocking sparks off each other / In chaos” (59). In three compact, punning lines, sex is a destructive game of badminton:

Shuttle-cock and battle-dore
A little pink-love
And feathers are strewn (56)

The writer’s desire to have a child is nearly inseparable from her desire to create poetry.

She begs her lover:

Come to me There is something
I have got to tell you and I can’t tell
Something that has a new name
A new dimension

The desire to speak, to articulate something new and avant-garde, seemingly cannot be realized without a union of the male and female. The speaker fumbles through the womblike pre-linguistic world of sensory input: “It is ambient,” “something shiny” “it is in my ears.” But again, understanding and articulation are denied. There is something in his eyes that she “must not see” and in her ears something he must not hear. She cries out that “where two or three are welded together / they shall become god,” but her lover pushes her away (58).

Stanzas in the past conditional tense hint at an unrealized child. In an elegy to unrealized bliss, the speaker asserts a fairy-tale scene in which “a lullaby” is part of the lover’s idyllic life:

We might have lived together
In the lights of the Arno
Or gone apple stealing under the sea
Or played
Hide and seek in love and cob-webs

And a lullaby on a tin-pan (59)

The imagery of this stanza evokes the romantic Rosetti paintings of which Loy was fond as a teenager. The prelapsarian nature of the imagined idyll is mimicked by the straightforward, unsophisticated style of this stanza. But even in the loveliest moments Loy can imagine, the child is unrealized, at the very edge of the text, evoked by a homely lullaby.

The other stanza in the past conditional imagines the child as a product of war: they “might have given birth to a butterfly / With the daily news / Printed in blood on its wings” (54). Again we see Loy’s tight layering of allusions; the fantastic Pig Cupid here has its imagined counterpart. The Greek “Psyche” means both soul and butterfly. The butterfly/soul/psyche is another textual child, imprinted with news of the war. Of all the possible “children” in this poem, this image represents most clearly Loy’s vision of a fusion between soulful female artistry and masculine, war-loving Futurism. If Neith Boyce accurately reported Loy’s statement that the only thing for women to do in wartime was to get pregnant, this “child” symbolizes how life could have been created to preserve the parent’s essence in the midst of war. Finally, the blood-stained butterfly encodes the nature of Loy’s affair (fragile and temporary) and its occasion (wartime).

The blood on the butterfly’s wings is connected to the “Red” that symbolizes the speaker’s failure to conceive. The menstrual blood is:

Red a warm colour on the battle-field
Heavy on my knees as a counterpane
Count counter
I counted the fringe of the towel
Till two tassels clinging together
Let the square room fall away
From a round vacuum
Dilating with my breath (60)

The “red” reminds the speaker of war; as we have seen, Loy’s relationship with Papini was also a battle in which she had been countered and ultimately defeated. In “Parturition” the mother experiences a vacuum after giving birth, but it is immediately filled with life pouring from the child into the mother. Here, the speaker’s womb is a vacuum that only grows more powerful as she distracts herself with the image of two tassels clinging together.

The argument that the red refers to menstrual blood and signals a miscarriage or failure to conceive is further supported by stanza 24, in which the speaker declares:

The procreative truth of ME
Petered out
In pestilent
Tear drops
Little lusts and lucidities
And prayerful lies (62)

Tears, menstrual fluid and creativity are all linked; all are escaping from the speaker.

The best argument for a miscarriage resides in the language in the preceding stanza:

Irredeemable pledges
Of pubescent consummations
Rot
To the recurrent moon
Bleach
To the pure white
Wickedness of pain (62)

The potential conception never comes to fruition; it is an “irredeemable pledge.” The “lies” may be between the people involved, but the language may also refer to a miscarriage. The speaker implies that the imagined child was somehow false, and she seems to be worried that her own womb is “pestilent,” that the “rot” points to something wrong within her own body, which has to be bleached clean.

One of the most perplexing stanzas of the poem can be explained as the speaker musing on the fetus that failed to develop:

Nucleus Nothing
Inconceivable concept
Insentient repose
The hands of races
Drop off from
Immodifiable plastic (63-4)

The potential child is a nucleus, an idea, something asleep. But something has gone wrong and it has become an oxymoron: an “inconceivable concept,” “immodifiable plastic.” Continuing the parallels between children and art, the speaker describes the fetus as being like a clay statue that will be molded by the “hands of races” – the racial heritage that will shape its development. But these hands “drop off,” like the fetus that does not develop and remains incomplete.

Near the end of the poem, Loy moves from the specific to the general. Ceasing to blame the individuals involved in the affair, the speaker concludes that “Evolution” is the real problem. Evolution sweeps us against our will into sex/love/procreation. Nature is an “irate pornographer,” and the “petty pruderies” of her subjects are little match for the overwhelming drive to procreate (63). The speaker invokes evolution as if it were a deity that would listen to her supplication, suggesting that the solution to the problem would be the redirection of the course of evolution itself towards making different men and women who can actually have mutually satisfying relationships.

The speaker implies that such evolutionary redirection would be diseugenic (as opposed to the eugenic pairing she had sought.) She freely acknowledges such a direction would be “unnatural” and these new sons and daughters would be more animal than poet. They would “jibber at each other / Uninterpretable cryptonyms / Under the moon” but

each would have the power to communicate their need for love: “some way of braying
brassily / for caressive calling.” They could live in ignorance, supposing that “tears / Are
snowdrops or molasses” (65). The real problem, she seems to be saying, is that people
want union; if sex were to differentiate rather than to merge, this new species could
“clash together”

From their incognitos
In seismic orgasm

For far further
Differentiation (66)

The speaker condemns the course that evolution has taken so far, asserting, “Protoplasm
was raving mad / Evolving us” (67). Thus, the speaker of “Love Songs” concludes by
blaming evolution for her desire for unity and consequently for her unhappiness. While
the speaker feels she has been swept along by evolution, her eugenic worldview is seen in
the assumption that evolution is something that can be redirected. What the speaker
cannot imagine is a redirection of evolution that would produce happiness, unity, *and*
poetry.

Without more biographical evidence, it is impossible to tell whether Loy had a
miscarriage or simply failed to conceive the eugenic child she imagined. In any case,
knowing the “literal” truth might not help at all, because Loy tended to shape the literal
with her fancy on a fairly consistent basis. Loy’s multiple identities as feminist, artist,
mother, and eugenicist create threads of meaning that are so tightly woven in Loy’s
poetic tapestry that they may be inseparable. In her poetry, a “child” is always a literal
child, a poetic creation, and a source of identity for the mother.

If Loy's early poetry shows a desire to escape from her origins and to imagine a new identity, "Anglo-mongrels and the Rose" (1923-25) marks a metaphoric return. Over the space of two years, Loy writes a poem interrogating how race and culture shaped both her parents' and her own identity. Like Woolf in *To The Lighthouse*, Loy attempts to resolve something about her past by transforming her parents into characters in a story. A female *künstlerroman*, the poem traces how Ova, the child of an English rose and a "wondering Jew," grows towards adulthood. In "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," Loy both accepts and rejects eugenic ideas, presenting a complex and modern understanding of how race and culture shape identity.

A quick reading of the poem shows a surprising commitment to race-thinking with the proliferation of Jewish stereotypes in Loy's descriptions of her father, Exodus.⁸ For example, Judaism is almost synonymous with love of money; Exodus's Jewish ancestors were:

calculating prodigies of Jehovah
 crushed by the Occident Ox
 they scraped
 the gold gold golden
 muck from off its hoofs (112)⁹

Loy implies that no matter what persecutions the Jews have to suffer, they will find a way to make money. Loy's grandmother is named "Lea" and she has hair "long as the Talmud" and exotic "tamarind eyes" (111). But the pileup of Jewish stereotypes pales in comparison to the racial stereotypes used to describe Ava, Ova's mother.

⁸ For a detailed analysis of Loy's use of Judaism, in this poem and other works, see Alex Goody, "'Goy Israels' and the 'Nomadic Embrace': Mina Loy Writing Race," *In the Open: Jewish Women Writers and British Culture*, ed. Claire Tylee (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2006).

⁹ All quotations from "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose" and "International Psycho-Democracy" are from Mina Loy, *The Last Lunar Baedeker*, Jargon Society, ed. Roger L. Conover (East Haven, Connecticut: Jargon Society, 1982).

The poem's most savage satire assails English womanhood in the form of Ova's mother, called at various times Alice, Ava, and the English rose. As I have already indicated, in her depiction of Ava, Loy brings together Victorian motherhood, British racial heritage, and sexual and social repression. While Exodus is separated from his people, both geographically and mentally, Ava is in her element and is Englishness itself. She is described:

Early English everlasting
quadrate Rose
paradox-imperial
trimmed with some travestied flesh
tinted with bloodless duties dewed
with Lipton's teas
and grimed with crack-packed
herd-housing
petalling
the prim gilt
penetralia
of a luster-scioned
core-crown (121)

Elizabeth Frost describes Loy's style in this section as "satiric overwriting," arguing that "assonance and alliteration overwhelm to the point of parody" and that Loy's verbal inflation here, her "overdoing of technique" is itself, "a parody of English self-seriousness" (45).

I argue that this "overwriting" functions for markers of race as well: Ava's identity as the ideal British woman is so overwritten that it becomes destabilizing parody. Ava's description highlights the Victorian paradox of womanhood; she is alive but without flesh or blood. Her body has been so strenuously denied that she is only trimmed with "travestied flesh." The "duties" are simultaneously a reference to obligations and taxes, and Loy also plays with the homophones "dew teas" and "do tease." Ava is a tease,

revealing enough to be sexually enticing but defending herself, like the rose, with hidden thorns. This teasing is mirrored in Loy's language; Ava's "prim gilt / penetralia," is a euphemism that avoids the word "genitalia," but "penetralia" is a significantly more suggestive word. This language, like Victorian sexual repression, draws more attention to what it supposedly conceals. Genitals are a source of guilt but also "gilt," as if they were an item covered in gold so as to look more valuable. The word "scion" with its dual meaning of "shoot" and "descendant" combines with "luster" to imply pure, valuable offspring, suggesting Ava's good breeding potential. "Core-crown" similarly implies inherent value and royalty. While a Jewess's marriage is a more straightforward financial transaction – her virginity is protected until the matchmaker is paid – the English rose must simultaneously defend and sell herself. We are told repeatedly that the rose is not accessible without funds, and even then she appears as only "an exotic fragrance" (128). In fact, it is Exodus's financial success that gives him the choice: "finance or / romance of the rose" (121).

Although Ava is the least sympathetic character in the poem, Loy's satire goes beyond character assassination to show how each character in the poem is actually caught in a racio-cultural matrix that determines how he or she will behave. It is British culture that requires Ava to simultaneously seduce and repel, waiting for the suitor who will offer her financial security. Ava is taught by culture and romantic novels to expect nothing but "the bended knee" from man, and responds to her husband's sexual advances – "the sub-umbilical mystery / of his husbandry" – hysterically (126). Loy asserts:

New Life
when it inserts itself into continuity
is disciplined
by the family

reflection
of national construction
to a proportionate posture
in the civilized scheme

deriving
definite contours
from tradition
personality
being mostly
a microcosmic
replica
of institutions (153)

This section of the poem resonates strongly with Althusser's definition of the family as an Ideological State Apparatus that indoctrinates the children with the approved ideology of its culture.¹⁰ Loy insists that even what we consider our "self," our personality, is derived from the institutions around us; this becomes our national and racial identity. This sense of cultural indoctrination is considerably more sophisticated than racial identity received through biological parenthood.

Not only has Ava unquestioningly adopted English values and prejudices, she also serves in the role of ideological enforcer, trying to fit both husband and child into her understanding of what they should be. Her role is

disciplining the inofficial
"flesh and devil"
to the apparent impeccability
of the English (129)

Both Ova and her father are "inofficial," cut off from and not recognized by privileged discourse. They represent that which Victorian society so strongly repudiated: "flesh and devil," and must be disciplined. Further, Ava is prejudiced against her husbands' Judaism, which he refuses to renounce. We are told that:

¹⁰ See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses: Notes toward an Investigation," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

She suffered a savage irritation
that this Jew
should not invest himself automatically
with her prejudices of a superior
insulation
at the merest hint (146)

and that she “can flaunt the whole of England in his foreign face” (145). Ava is a most unflattering portrait of a race-mother; her overwhelming racial prejudice makes her a tyrant in her own home. We are reminded that for the English rose to exist, she must be constantly reinforcing and reinforced by British ideology.

Loy savagely attacks the British child-rearing practices that are produced by this suffocating sense of superiority, taking some covert shots also at their eugenic assumptions with her continued parallels between the breeding of roses and of people. The British goal is the proliferation of “innocent” children who “bloom” with “hot-house purity” in English nurseries (155). But Loy argues that the British love their children “only symbolically.” The rose’s “propagations” can be “cut off” if any one fails to “defer / his opinions to his flower” (154). This systematic destruction of children’s ability to think for themselves causes the speaker to infer that the British must believe God prefers the “Idiot child.” The child receives the supposedly eugenically-necessary fresh air and milk but is also fed on “colored imbecilities” of children’s literature. In other words, the English believe they are producing eugenically-fit children, but their prized well-bred children are actually made into the “Idiots” and “imbeciles” they fear. Ignorant children become perpetually childish adults; the English subject carries its “bland taboo / from the nursery to the cemetery” (156).

But Loy cannot totally break free from her commitment to race-thinking, or her own desire for a superior racial heritage. At the same time she denounces Ava’s racial

prejudice, Loy seeks to construct a superior heritage for Ova through her father, Exodus.

Exodus has the family history of a fairy tale; his stepfather sends him to live with:

Sinister foster parents
who lashed the boy
to that paralysis of
the spiritual apparatus
common to
the poor (112)

These “sinister” parents teach Exodus a trade, paralyzing his natural upper-class sensibilities. Exodus has been “sharpened” by brief stimulation of his intellect but “blunted” by his lower-class experiences, which place “inhibitions / upon his sensibility” (114). Later, when Exodus compares himself to the English around him, we are told he belongs to “an aristocracy out of currency” (116). While one implication is that the Jew’s importance depends on whether or not he has funds, another is that Loy’s father’s Jewish heritage is as aristocratic as the English; it has simply fallen out of favor.

Equally important in Loy’s construction of her father as superior is his frustrated artistry, which he hands down to his child. Exodus privately paints “sunflowers turned sunwards” in his spare time. But having no training and having been already shaped by his experiences, Exodus can only tentatively reach “towards the culture / of his epoch knowing not how to find / and finding not contact” (119). So instead he turns his energy inwards, in a hypochondriac exploration of his own body, and finally gains a sense of self and community through English medicine. Medicine connects Exodus to England; “the parasite attaches to the English Rose / at a guinea a visit.” More importantly, medicine offers a way for Exodus to understand himself:

He becomes more tangible to himself the exile
mechanism he learns is built
to the same osseous structure shares

identical phenomena with those
populating the Island (119)

While British racial prejudice would emphasize difference, English medicine tells Exodus that his Jewish body is, in significant ways, identical to that of the English.

Many critics have seen an inherent contradiction in Loy's belief in eugenics, believing that someone whose father was a Hungarian Jew ought to feel alienated by eugenic discourse. While Loy strongly denounces British racial superiority, in "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose" she clearly does not give up on eugenics altogether. Instead she introduces the possibility that the Jewish race is the higher one because it produced in her the qualities she associates with superiority – intelligence and artistry. The one blessing Ova receives from her heritage is "The Jewish brain" (132). Perhaps Loy, like the reporter who described the "desire so marked in ancient Hebrew literature, to 'preserve the seed' of valued men" (Qtd. Burke 176) had found a way to bring together eugenics and Judaism.

Although Frost has suggested that Loy may have subscribed to the theory that the hybrid is a better breed than its progenitors (43), throughout the poem Loy characterizes her breeding as something she had to struggle against. For Ova, most of her heritage is a curse rather than a gift. In a reversal of *Sleeping Beauty*, in which the child's fairy godmothers give her blessings and one curse, Ova's godmothers, the "genii / of traditional / Israel and Albion" give her the curses of her "racial birthrights" (131). Her brain and her artistic heritage come through her Jewish father and are what Ova most identifies with. Her female, British body was forced on her: in her mother's "moronic womb" she gathered her "involuntary flesh" (146).

Loy implicitly argues that, alienated by temperament and intelligence from much of British ideology, Ova is without a way to decode her inner life. She is “Lacking dictionaries / of inner consciousness” (148). She struggles, mostly without success, to fashion herself as an artist in a culture in which artistry is not encouraged. Loy makes it clear that class is the determining factor here; Penfold (modeled on her husband Stephen Haweis) was petted and encouraged to be an artist from his childhood, while she feels that she is scrabbling around in excrement trying to make art.

Attempting to run away, both as a child and later as an adult, Loy discovers that her British biology connects her to British ideology against her will:

Suburban children
of middle-class Britain
ejected from the home
are still connected
with the inseverable
navel-cord of the motherland
and
need never feel alone (154)

Every time she attempts to leave home, the very streets of Kilburn close in around her to “deliver her / into the hands of her procreators” (171). For Loy, biology is not destiny, but it becomes so when combined with class and culture. The emphasis on the inescapability of the British racial mother, the slow pull back through the “navel-cord of the motherland” causes us to wonder to what extent Loy felt herself controlled by the racial and cultural forces she so often enthusiastically repudiated. On some level, Loy realized that she would never escape her origins.

Throughout many of Loy’s works, she characterized heredity, society, and evolution as irresistible forces. We see this in “Anglo-Mongrels” in Loy’s feeling that her very flesh has been forced upon her. As much as she would like to identify with the

artistic, intellectual heritage she traces through her father, her environment controls who she can become. In “Love Songs,” evolution is described as an overwhelming force, sweeping the protagonists towards love, sex, and procreation. But in one of Loy’s late works, the pamphlet “International Psycho-Democracy,” she asserts that it could be possible to gain control of these forces, to redirect evolution through the application of human will in a sort of mental eugenics program.

Loy defines Psycho-Democracy as “A Movement to focus Human Reason on The Conscious Direction of Evolution” (276). In this work, Loy moves far away from Futurism, arguing against war and asserting that change is possible through evolution rather than revolution. The “conscious direction of evolution,” which sounds like a eugenic catchphrase, is not a program of selective breeding. Instead, it involves understanding cultural conditions and committing oneself to new ideas. Loy argues that society is made up of “idea-fabric” and that the phases of evolution can be “marked by different kinds of ideas for which men tortured each other” (278). She asserts that new ideas, “creative inspiration” (as opposed to force) will be the key to lifting humanity into the next phase of existence (277).

If in “Anglo Mongrels” Loy illustrates how the individual is often defined against his or her will by cultural institutions, in “Psycho-Democracy” Loy pursues the inverse of this idea – the possibility that individuals, by advancing their minds, might also change society. As she puts it: “Psycho-democracy considers social institutions as structural forms in collective consciousness which are subject to the same evolutionary transformation as collective consciousness itself” (278). Loy rejects a materialist definition of social institutions and instead emphasizes that they are grounded in

“collective consciousness.” If consciousness gives form to social institutions, then a shift in consciousness can literally change the world. According to Loy, even class is a state of mind and a shift in class could be accomplished by an act of will.

Loy wants to reconfigure existing power structures, redistributing ideological power to a different collective. She appeals to “the thinker, the scientist, the philosopher, the writer, the artist, the mechanic, the worker, to join intelligent forces in a concerted effort to evolve and establish a new social symbolism, a new social rhythm, a new social snobbism with a human psychological significance of equal value to that of militarism.” Despite her claims to democracy, Loy’s proposal sounds more like a eugenic oligarchy. The “intelligent forces” will create “a new social snobbism” (282). While Loy is not specific about what new ideas need to be introduced into society, it can be assumed that she is putting forth a variation of the same argument that made her identify with Futurism: the argument that the modern artist, by pursuing new forms of art, can help consciousness expand. Psycho-democracy, then, combines Modernism, eugenics, and Marxism, empowering artists to help society move toward a more evolved state.

Loy’s Psycho-Democracy, with its wide, inclusive audience and its lack of direct references to motherhood, marks a new phase in her adaptation of eugenics. The unity between men and women that she previously sought in a sexual relationship is now subsumed into the larger ideal of democracy. Loy is conscious of this transition; the lines in “Love Songs:” “the impact of lighted bodies / Knocking sparks off each other / In chaos” (59) describe the relationship between two people. But in “Psycho-Democracy” Loy uses nearly identical language to describe *life* as it currently seems. “Psycho-Democratic evolution” will transform this vision of life-as-war into “a competition

between different kinds of good” (279). By focusing on the intelligence and creativity of the individual, regardless of gender, Loy avoids the biological determination she struggles with in earlier works. “Psycho-Democracy” returns again to the idea Loy put forth in her earliest works – that breaking away from Victorian assumptions and pursuing psychic and artistic development would lead to social regeneration.

In “Feminist Manifesto,” “Parturition,” and “Love Songs,” Loy’s conjunction of artistry and biological maternity walks a thin line between jubilant celebration of female creativity and reductive polemic. Loy breaks away from Victorian silence about the female body to speak openly about female desire, pleasure, and pain. In doing so, she imagines a distinctively modern mother, one who acknowledges her body and her sexuality as the ground of her creativity. Loy’s choice to model the female artist on the British eugenic mother may illustrate her desire to reconcile the frightening racial mother of her childhood with her own identity as a partially-British mother and artist. In “Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose” Loy attempts to aestheticize both the race-mother and her own mother, and to explain how a female artist could be born from an “English rose.” It is telling, however, that the poem is unfinished. The last description of Ova tells us:

So on whatever day
she chooses “to run away”
the very
street corners of Kilburn
close in upon Ova
to deliver her
into the hands of her procreators (171)

This image, combined with the “inseverable / navel-cord of the motherland” tells us that Loy’s attempt to lift the race-mother into the realm of the aesthetic and to place her in the past is only partially successful. Loy literally cannot imagine herself as a fully developed

artist. Having characterized her mother as a tyrannical race-mother, Loy then fails to escape her.

In another way, Loy's choice to literally pursue eugenic motherhood is ultimately limiting. In "Love Songs," she also implies that artistic creation doesn't just mirror procreative sex; it is dependent upon it. Without maternity, there is no female artist. Loy is caught in the same bind as many of her Victorian and New Woman predecessors. Social purity eugenic feminists were able to expand the definition of motherhood, in part because they so strenuously denied the female body. If sex and desire were denied and replaced by a spiritualized social mother-impulse, then women need not be defined by their bodies and the greatest contribution women could make – race-motherhood – would not require physical birth. In contrast, free-love eugenicists recognized the existence of female desire and sexuality, but they sanctified this desire in service of the production of a eugenically-fit child. Sex that did not result in a child made one "not quite a Lady," an identifier that Loy wryly acknowledges in "Lion's Jaws" (50).

Although she lived a life as daring and sexually free as any character in a New Woman novel, Loy required a eugenic justification for her sexual freedom. Similarly, she attempts to justify her identity as a female Modernist by grounding it in eugenic motherhood. Loy so desired a Futurist child because she wanted to incorporate Futurism into her poetry and art; she wanted a biological representation of the fusion of feminism and Futurism that she was seeking. She asserts in her "Feminist Manifesto:" "Each child of a superior woman should be the result of a definite period of psychic development in her life" (155). But what happens if the maternal body fails to conceive? Does that mean

that without the production of new children the female artist cannot continue to develop? Certainly this would seem to be Loy's anxiety in "Love Songs."

Loy's imaginative failures draw our attention to the limits of eugenic motherhood for the female Modernist. Literally seeking to be a race-mother makes it very difficult to relocate race-motherhood to the realm of art – to transform the regenerative power of racial motherhood into the regenerative possibilities of art. For Loy at least, race-motherhood could not be simultaneously literal and figurative, and the task of reconciling the two would fall to another female Modernist: Virginia Woolf.

CHAPTER III

VIRGINIA WOOLF AND THE JOURNEY FROM RACE-MOTHER TO MODERNIST ARTIST

One of Virginia Woolf's eugenic remarks has become notorious:

On the towpath we met & had to pass a long line of imbeciles. The first was a very tall young man, just queer enough to look twice at, but no more; the second shuffled, & looked aside; & then one realised that every one in that long line was a miserable ineffective shuffling idiotic creature, with no forehead, or no chin, & an imbecile grin, or a wild suspicious stare. It was perfectly horrible. They should certainly be killed. (Diary I: 13)

Although this is buried in a diary entry in 1915, the critic interested in Woolf and eugenics cannot help but notice her espousing a dramatic form of negative eugenics. As a well-read Englishwoman, Virginia Woolf was certainly exposed to the nearly ubiquitous talk about eugenics in the popular press around the turn of the century, and this entry seems to show that she had taken some of it to heart. As one begins to study Woolf's life and acquaintances, more connections to eugenics emerge. Recently Donald Childs has pointed out that many of Woolf's doctors were eugenicists, including Sir George Savage, T.B. Hyslop, and Maurice Craig,¹ and Woolf's friends John Maynard Keynes and Ottoline Morrell were members of the Eugenics Education Society. According to Suzanne Raitt, Vita Sackville-West, the woman with whom Woolf had a lesbian affair, was "an unashamed eugenicist, and her extensive knowledge of the subject shapes the narrative of, and the assumptions behind, two of her earliest popular novels, *Heritage* (1919) and *The Dragon in Shallow Waters* (1921)" (41). One of Woolf's biographers,

¹ For more on the eugenics of Woolf's doctors, see Stephen Trombley, *All That Summer She Was Mad* (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1981).

Hermione Lee, argues that “theories of genetic heredity were generally accepted in her circle” and that Woolf “often described herself in terms of inheritance, whether in reference to her mental condition, her “genius,” or the split in her character between different tendencies” (55).

When viewed as a whole, Woolf’s biography and writing show that she indeed was conversant with contemporary eugenic ideology. However, to understand how Woolf related to race-motherhood specifically, we must engage in a kind of genealogy, tracing the evolution of Woolf’s own complicated, ambivalent relationship to both maternity and eugenics in order to understand how, as a writer, she transforms and modernizes the late Victorian construct of the race-mother. In a sense, Woolf’s writing has its own eugenic and maternal heritage stemming from several factors: the conservative influence of her parents, Julia and Leslie Stephen; the socialist and eugenic leanings of her husband, Leonard Woolf; Woolf’s own feminism; and her struggles with mental illness.

Woolf’s eminently Victorian mother died on May 5, 1895 when Woolf was thirteen. Her loss resulted in great psychic turmoil for Woolf. Her father immersed himself in self-indulgent mourning and Woolf’s stepsister, Stella Duckworth, was forced to take over the running of the household. Thus, Woolf was left relatively unprotected from a number of emotional and physical stressors, including the sexual abuses of her stepbrother, George Duckworth. After her honeymoon in 1897 Stella herself became quite ill and Woolf concurrently experienced her first bout of psychological illness. Quentin Bell’s assertion that “Virginia’s health and Stella’s were in some way connected” (I: 56) rings true. He argues that Woolf’s mental health went downhill

because Stella's health continued to decline, but one wonders if the illness Woolf experienced was also connected to the news that Stella was pregnant. A young Virginia was forced to face multiple displacements and the symbolic, then literal, loss of yet another mother. It is likely that Stella's death no more than two months after the announcement of her pregnancy added to her already convoluted mental associations between maternity, death, and illness.

In "A Sketch of the Past," Woolf writes, "Until I was in my forties . . . the presence of my mother obsessed me. I could hear her voice, see her, imagine what she would do or say as I went about my day's doings" (80). Her mother as absent presence is the ground upon which much of Woolf's work is built. Unable to view her mother through an adult's eyes, Woolf has only her childhood memory on which to rely. She asks Vanessa "what do you think I did know about mother? It can't have been much" (Letters III: 379). Thus, the gaps in Woolf's mental and written portrait of her mother were partly filled in by discourse – by what she knew about late Victorian motherhood. From this combination emerges Woolf's description of the ideal of Victorian motherhood, the Angel in the House, a term she borrows from Coventry Patmore's 1854 poem of the same title. Woolf describes this icon in "Professions for Women," setting up an antagonistic, deadly relationship between the Angel of the House and the female writer. The Angel threatens the existence of the woman writer's work, so the writer must catch her by the throat and kill her. The Angel threatens to pluck the heart out of her writing by cautioning her to avoid offending the men whose novels she reviews and not even to try to form opinions of her own. The Angel "was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of

family life. She sacrificed herself daily . . . in short, she was so constituted that she never had a mind or wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others”(285). This seems an accurate picture of Woolf’s own mother, Julia Stephen. Although no doubt an intelligent woman, Julia did not write books, instead preferring letters and children’s stories. Her only published writing is on nursing, her area of expertise. She was conservative in her political leanings, did not support women’s suffrage, and disagreed with Leslie Stephen’s contention that her daughters should be educated well enough to earn a living.

Thus, from her mother Woolf received a conservative, oppressive heritage, one that had to be killed, or transformed in a dramatic way, as the very precondition of her writing. This process will be discussed later with regard to *To the Lighthouse*. However, Woolf’s early loss of her mother also created a deep, nostalgic longing for both her actual mother and the ideals of womanhood she represented.

Woolf had a similarly ambivalent relationship to her father. Even after his death, she notes his birthday in her diary, writing “he would have been 96 . . . today. . . but mercifully was not. His life would have entirely ended mine. What would have happened? No writing, no books; – inconceivable” (Diary III: 208). Her claim here that she could never have written if her father were alive may have been based on the observation that all the women who took care of her father died. However, Woolf’s mental relationship to her parents is obviously more complex than her confessed parricidal desire.

In fact, it was from Leslie Stephen that Woolf received her intellectual, authorial birthright. Stephen was a respected philosopher – the author of the *History of English*

Thought in the 18th Century and the editor of *The Cornwall Magazine* and *The Dictionary of National Biography*. Stephen noted Virginia's intelligence and verbal talents in her early childhood and in 1893 writes to Julia, "Yesterday I discussed George II with Ginia. She takes in a great deal and will really be an author in time. History will be a good thing for her to take up as I can give her some hints."² Of all the children, Stephen found Virginia to be most like him and the most likely to follow in his footsteps as a respected author.

From Quentin Bell's biography we learn that after Stella's engagement Leslie Stephen turned his attention to his other children. According to Bell, instead of looking to Virginia as his next caretaker, Stephen saw again that Virginia was "clearly destined for his own profession" and began trying to get to know her better, telling her about "the distinguished literary figures of the past whom he had known" (I: 54). It is clear that at this time Stephen began to see Virginia as bearing his legacy. It is almost certain that all the literary figures Stephen discussed were male, and it must have seemed to Woolf that she was enmeshed in a net of great men. Further, she was expected both to follow in the footsteps of her father and to appreciate the literary heritage she received through him.

Woolf was actually implicated in hereditarian ideology before she was born. Woolf's godfather James Russell Lowell hailed her appearance with a poem, hoping she would be a good "sample of heredity" (Lee 55). Leslie Stephen was a friend of Francis Galton,³ and the Stephen family, along with their friends, the Stracheys, are cited in Galton's *Hereditary Genius* (1869). Thus, it is likely that these thoughts shaped her thinking when she read Galton's *Hereditary Genius* in 1905. At any rate, she explicitly

² Leslie to Julia, 29 July 1893, Berg. (Qtd. Dunn 10).

³ Cited in David Bradshaw, "Eugenics: 'They Should Certainly Be Killed.'" *A Concise Companion to Modernism*, ed. David Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003).

addresses some of its ideas in the book in which she discusses patrilineal intellectual heritage, *Night and Day* (1919).

Hereditary Genius started the English eugenics movement. Galton began with the assumption that greatness, which he equated with social position and recognition, was hereditary. Like Stephen, Galton identified and studied great British men. Galton selected men of eminence using the *Dictionary of Men of the Time*, obituaries, performance on examinations, and other reference documents (Gillham 158). Unsurprisingly, he concluded that his hypothesis was correct and that men of eminence were likely to breed other men of eminence. However, he also found some troubling statistics: that ability seemed to disappear within three generations and that eminent persons were reproducing at a much slower rate than the public at large.

Woolf initially seems to have some sympathy with Galton's hypothesis about genius. In her novel, *Night and Day*, she describes the central female character by stating:

Denham had accused Katharine Hilbery of belonging to one of the most distinguished families in England, and if any one will take the trouble to consult Mr. Galton's "Hereditary Genius," he will find that this assertion is not far from the truth. The Alardyces, the Hilberys, the Millingtons, and the Otways seem to prove that intellect is a possession which can be tossed from one member of a certain group to another almost indefinitely, and with apparent certainty that the brilliant gift will be safely caught and held by nine out of ten of the privileged race. (36)

Katherine's grandfather, Richard Alardyce, is described as "the rarest flower that any family can boast, a great writer, a poet eminent among the poets of England." Then Woolf states, "and having produced him, they proved once more the amazing virtues of their race by proceeding unconcernedly again with their usual task of breeding distinguished men" (36). She further observes, "even the daughters, even in the

nineteenth century, are apt to become people of importance – philanthropists and educationalists if they are spinsters, and the wives of distinguished men if they marry” (36-7). These statements suggest an uncritical acceptance of Galton’s tenets; Woolf basically paraphrases Galton’s arguments in *Hereditary Genius*, adding only her own reminder that even spinsters can become eminent women. However, when viewed as a whole, the novel complicates any easy acceptance of Galton’s views. Despite Katherine’s close biological ties to her famous grandfather as the only child of the poet’s only child, she herself shows “no aptitude for literature” and dreads the interminable project of helping her mother write her grandfather’s biography (43). Like Woolf herself, Katherine finds her intellectual heritage somewhat stifling. Katherine secretly admits that she would like to do something entirely different – study mathematics.

Katherine’s conflict in the novel is whether to choose to marry William Rodney, a fairly respectable writer and government clerk, or Ralph Denham, a lawyer from a family who, by his own admission, has “never done anything to be proud of” (18). Denham seems to be somewhat of an anti-Galton, declaring, “I hate great men. The worship of greatness in the nineteenth century seems to me to explain the worthlessness of that generation” (20). Although Rodney is more respectable, neither of Katherine’s choices could be described as an eminent man. Katherine herself is very slow to become emotionally involved with either man, but finally accepts Ralph after a scene in which each one looks at the secret papers of the other and accepts them without ridicule or judgment. Thus, we can say that at the end of the novel, Woolf rejects the tenets of both eugenic marriage and romantic love and chooses instead a companionate attachment between equals.

One of Woolf's later long essays, *Three Guineas*, also engages directly with Galton's hereditary theories and later eugenic rhetoric, this time in both a more subtle and strategic way. In *Three Guineas*, Woolf explores the social and educational inequities facing women and asks how women could improve their situation and prevent war. Although one could easily argue that the narrator of the piece is Woolf herself, I argue that Woolf constructs a persona to appeal to her audience and strategically introduces eugenic feminism as support for her feminist claims.

In the beginning of the essay, Woolf immediately invokes class; like Woolf herself, the woman writer is positioned as one of "the daughters of educated men." She is addressing a man like Galton or her father: a well-off, educated, middle-aged man. The narrator establishes her similarity to this man by stating:

We both come of what, in this hybrid age when, though birth is mixed, classes still remain fixed, it is convenient to call the educated class. When we meet in the flesh we speak with the same accent; use knives and forks in the same way; expect maids to cook dinner and wash up after dinner; and can talk during dinner without much difficulty about politics and people; war and peace; barbarism and civilization – all the questions indeed suggested by your letter. (4)

Throughout *Three Guineas*, the narrator creates an identification, a position from which she speaks, as one of the "daughters of educated men," belonging to "the educated class." By using this language, Woolf immediately hails a particular set of people, those for whom "the educated class" is an important identity. The narrator's calm assurance that "classes still remain fixed" posits her as someone unlikely to recommend social upheaval.

While it is entirely possible that Woolf's choice to speak to "the daughters of educated men" is a sign of her own class bias, it has additional significance. Galton, Leslie Stephen, and the men they studied could easily be identified as all "educated men." Further, the eugenicists themselves often claimed to speak for educated men and assumed

that the fitness of such men was and should be self-evident. Positioning the narrator as the daughter of an educated man creates a symbolic kinship with those who consider themselves educated men, while at the same time pointing to the gap in Galton's work and in such a system of cultural identification. Woolf both asks and answers the question, "what about the daughters of educated men?" Later on, Woolf shifts this identification, claiming she is sending her first guinea to benefit "the daughters of uneducated women" who will dance around their new house of education while it is on fire from the inside (83).

The narrator posits that the daughters of educated men, while seemingly belonging to the same class as their fathers, are actually reduced to a secondary subset by their restricted access to education and to the professions. Through an elaborate debate, the narrator eventually argues that it would be best for society if women were allowed complete access to the current educational systems and to the professions; however, they must guard against sacrificing their idealism, or else society will be no better off. The narrator further recommends that in order for women to truly be free, they must free themselves from loyalties to family or country that would prevent them from thinking independently, and suggests they organize a group of "outsiders." However, after the narrator has suggested the formation of this radical group, she makes what seems to be a far more conservative suggestion for the primary goal of the outsiders: "above all she must press for a wage to be paid by the State legally to the mothers of educated men" (110). As support for this suggestion, the narrator states:

Consider . . . what effect this would have upon the birth rate, in the very class where births are desirable – the educated class. Just as the increase in the pay of soldiers has resulted, so the papers say, in additional recruits to the force of arms-bearers, so the same inducement would serve to recruit the child-bearing force,

which we can hardly deny to be as necessary and as honourable, but which, because of its poverty, and its hardships, is now failing to attract recruits (111).

Here, we see that if Woolf does not follow the gospel of eugenics, she is at least aware of its tenets and able to put forth an argument to appeal to eugenicists. As we have discussed, the differential birth rate was a key area of concern for eugenicists. The language used here – recruiting women to the “child-bearing force” – bears striking similarity to language used by eugenicists, both before and after World War I.

Woolf makes the same argument made by H. G. Wells and other socialist eugenicists for state endowment of motherhood. As discussed in Chapter One, the Fabian Society also had close ties to eugenics through George Bernard Shaw, Sidney and Beatrice Webb, H.G. Wells, and Caleb Saleeby. Both Leonard and Virginia were members of this society, and the language in this essay shows Woolf took the more eugenic side of the argument. The narrator suggests that such an endowment be paid to “the mothers of educated men,” as opposed to mothers in general. The major concern of eugenicists was how such an endowment could be limited to the upper class. Thus Woolf’s most radical statement in the essay – that women are and should be outsiders in their own country – is tempered by an appeal to eugenic rhetoric and an endorsement of socialist, eugenic motherhood.

Although in this essay the narrator seems to be in agreement with eugenicists, Woolf sometimes keeps a critical distance from these ideals. In a footnote to the essay, the narrator makes another reference to the differential birth rate as she is discussing what daughters of educated men might do to prevent war. The narrator states: “There is of course one essential that the educated woman can supply: children” (147). She then suggests that the falling birth rate might be the result of women refusing to bear children

destined to die in war. Rather than express horror at the choice of educated women to reject childbearing, as many eugenicists often did, the narrator seems to espouse it, stating, “one method by which she can help to prevent war is to refuse to bear children” (147). Despite the fact that the narrator appeals to a eugenic audience with her focus on “daughters of educated men” and her repeated references to the differential birth rate, it is impossible to conclude from these arguments that Woolf completely endorsed eugenics. What we can say is that among the many literary personas Woolf adopted, one was a eugenicist. Further, this eugenic persona is not particularly conservative; conservative eugenicists would have been horrified by the suggestion that women eschew their patriotism and national identity. They would have been even more horrified by the suggestion that choosing not to have children might be a noble act of pacifism. Instead, Woolf’s eugenic persona has more in common with the socialist and feminist eugenicists who were working to redefine eugenic motherhood as race-motherhood. Moreover, it shows conclusively that Woolf was aware of eugenic rhetoric and arguments, and that she believed that her audience in *Three Guineas* (likely those sympathetic to the early feminist movement) would be aware of and persuaded by such rhetoric.

This feminist eugenic persona is also evident in Woolf’s short story, “A Society” (1921), about a club of women who agree not to bear children until they know more about the world around them. While this is a short, humorous story, it addresses a serious contemporary problem: how women could reconcile the demands of motherhood, education, and developing feminist consciousness. Each of the characters chooses a realm to explore. Judith has been studying science, and she reports to the club, “I’m longing to explain my measures for dispensing with prostitutes and fertilizing virgins by

Act of Parliament” (10). Judith tells of “an invention of hers to be erected at Tube stations and other public resorts, which, upon payment of a small fee, would safeguard the nation’s health, accommodate its sons, and relieve its daughters” (10). The implication is that one could solve a number of social problems by replacing prostitutes with a male masturbation device. In an idea anticipating the modern sperm bank, Judith has also invented “a method of preserving in sealed tubes the germs of future Lord Chancellors ‘or poets or painters or musicians’ . . . ‘supposing that is to say, that these breeds are not extinct, and that women still want to bear children’” (10). One supposes that the virgins fertilized by Acts of Parliament would receive these superior “germs,” not the “germs” collected in the masturbation machines. Although “A Society” is inflected by Woolf’s characteristic irony and humor, it also says something important about the relationship between eugenics and feminism as Woolf perceived it: she saw eugenic education as an inescapable component of the development of feminist consciousness.

As we have seen, Woolf’s eugenically-themed writings have been influenced by her conservative parental heritage and her knowledge of socialist and feminist engagements with eugenic motherhood. However, there is yet another dimension of Woolf’s relationship to eugenics and maternity; this one centers on her own bouts of mental illness.

Although much has been written about Woolf’s mental problems, few critics discuss the aspect of Woolf’s illness that obviously occupied her mind and the mind of her family: whether she had what was called a “hereditary taint,” and if so, whether it could have come from the man so focused on passing down greatness – her own father. Woolf’s father’s secret, concealed by the rest of the family, was his daughter Laura, the

result of Leslie Stephen's first marriage to Harriet Marian (Minnie) Thackeray, daughter of William Makepeace Thackeray. Laura was what we might today call a mentally challenged child with behavioral difficulties. The language of the time was much less kind and she was classified as an "idiot." She was kept separate from the Stephen children and was sent to an asylum when Virginia and her sister Vanessa were five and eight, respectively. She lived the rest of her long life in this asylum, nearly completely ignored by her family. It is a true eugenic irony that Leslie Stephen secured a connection to one of the great literary minds of the previous generation and the result was a child who seemed to bear a hereditary taint. Stephen, of course, blamed Minnie's mother, Isabella Shaw Thackeray, who had indeed gone mad.

According to Hermione Lee, many of Woolf's mental characteristics that, when exaggerated, caused her illness, resemble those in her father's family. Her grandfather, James Stephen, was as Leslie said, "thin skinned" and "could not bear to have a looking-glass in the room lest he be reminded of his own appearance . . . He could not bear that his birthday should ever be noticed." James had painfully acute feelings, was prone to depressive episodes, and had breakdowns and headaches. He worried about Leslie, who was a sickly child (Lee 61). In his childhood Leslie was also "thin skinned;" Lee describes "his violent temper and 'nervous naughtiness,' his passionate reactions to criticism. . . his 'morbid' sensitivity . . . and the nervous exhaustion which made the doctors talk about the dangers of 'effeminacy' and brain fever" (69).

When Woolf began to show signs of mental turmoil, including panic attacks, headaches, and physical pain, she was treated by the Stephen family doctor, eugenicist Sir George Savage, who was considered an expert on the inheritance of insanity.

Although Woolf no doubt had mixed feelings about him, he was a friend of the family and was the doctor the family most consulted about Woolf's periodic mental illnesses. Like many of the physicians of his age, Savage believed that insanity and other neuroses were to a certain degree inherited, and furthermore, that insanity in the parent could lead to any number of complications in the children. He states in 1887: "from parent to child the insane or nervous disposition may be transmitted . . . An insane parent may have an insane, wicked, epileptic, or somnambulistic child."⁴ As we have stated before, a belief in eugenics did not necessitate a clear understanding of the laws of inheritance as we understand them today. The term "degeneration" was an all-purpose designation used to designate physical, mental, and moral deviation from the ideal. Lamarck's contention that environmental influences could be inherited was often deployed by conservatives to mean that a parent they considered morally corrupt (one who engaged in drinking, carousing, homosexuality or atheism, for example) would pass down not only those specific weaknesses, but a whole range of undesirable physical and mental traits.

As both Trombley and Childs have noted, in a 1911 article Savage contends that persons with serious mental illness should be prohibited from marriage and "[m]arriage should never be recommended as a cure"⁵ (100). Thus, it is perplexing indeed that in 1913 he advised Leonard that having children would do Virginia "a world of good" (Q. Bell II: 8). However, in this same study on insanity and marriage, Savage prefaces his discussion of the conditions under which marriage should be prohibited by stating: "certain persons who have suffered from a degree of mental disorder which may be

⁴ G. H. Savage, "Alternation of Neuroses," *Journal of Medical Science* 32 (1887), 486 (Qtd. Trombley 128).

⁵ See Trombley, *All That Summer She Was Mad* 155, and Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats and the Culture of Degeneration*, 30.

classed as insanity may yet recover and marry with no real increase of risk to their partner or to their children” (97). Since Savage argues that one of the bars to marriage should be “periodical recurrences” of insanity, it is likely he would have reversed his assessment later in his treatment of Woolf.

A second explanation for such advice could be Savage’s class prejudice. Savage recognized Woolf as a member of his own class; she was a friend of the family and they even socialized, although Woolf remarks in 1905 that his dinner “was more heavy and dreary than you can conceive” (Letters I: 179). For conservative eugenicists, social status conveyed a kind of literal “good breeding,” which created some leeway in their diagnosis of insanity or unfitness.

This brings us to perhaps the most haunting connection Woolf had to maternity: the fact that it was denied to her, ostensibly because of her mental illness. As we have already remarked, in 1913 Leonard Woolf had consulted Sir George Savage because he was concerned about the effects having children would have on Virginia’s mental health. He consulted numerous doctors and caretakers. Maurice Craig and Jean Thomas were against having children, Maurice Wright and George Savage were in favor, and T. B. Hyslop recommended postponing the decision (Lee 329). In his autobiography, Leonard writes that “some time in the spring it was at last definitely decided that it would not be safe for her to have a child” (149). The passive tense here deliberately obscures who made the decision, but as Woolf herself was suffering greatly, it is likely this decision was made by Woolf’s doctors, Leonard, and Virginia’s sister Vanessa. Leonard’s wording also causes us to question why childbearing would not have been safe – because

it would be damaging to Virginia, or because he might end up with an insane or otherwise abnormal child, as well as the challenging wife he already had?

Many critics, including Donald Childs, Stephen Trombley, and Hermione Lee, have speculated that eugenics played a part in the decision that the Woolfs would not have children. Lee cites a cancelled passage from *The Partigers* in which Elvira describes how to get an abortion. Upon arriving at a doctor's practice, a woman simply says "my husband" and blushes and the doctor immediately responds "most inadvisable . . . the welfare of the human race." Lee interprets the doctor's response as supportive of the step to terminate the pregnancy because "fear of hereditary insanity might have been one of the reasons for their not having children" and suggests that the decision not to have children may have been forced on Woolf the way she was forced into rest-cures (330-1).

Before she married Leonard, Virginia Woolf wanted children. She envied her sister Vanessa, who seemed to her to be enjoying perfect domestic bliss married to Clive Bell. Vanessa's first two children were born in 1908 and 1910, which may have led Woolf in 1911 to consider the possibility of marrying Walter Lamb. While on the train, Janet Case (her past teacher and family friend) asked her what she was thinking and she replied, "Supposing next time we meet a baby leaps within me?" Miss Case responded "that was not the way to talk" (Letters I: 473). When considering Leonard as a possible marriage partner in May 1912, she writes a letter to him outlining her mental debate, stating, "he will give you companionship, children, and a busy life" and "I want everything—love, children, adventure, intimacy, work" (Letters I: 496). Although she was fairly nonplussed by the sexual side of marriage, Woolf clearly was not employing

birth control and regarded children as inevitable. Shortly after her marriage, on October 12, 1912, she writes of a visit to Violet Dickinson during which Dickinson gave her a cradle and a table. Woolf writes that she

discovered a cradle, fit for the illegitimate son of an Empress. When I brought forth my theory however, they fathered the cradle on me. I blushed, disclaimed any intention and so on; and blushing leant my elbow on a table. "What a beautiful table this is anyhow!" I exclaimed, thinking to lead the conversation away from my lost virginity and the probable fruits of it. . . . My baby shall sleep in the cradle; I'm going to eat my dinner off the table tonight." (Letters II: 649)

This is the letter that caused Quentin Bell to remark, that "Virginia was still cheerfully expecting to have children. Leonard already had his misgivings but I do not think that Virginia became aware of them until the beginning of 1913" Bell argues that Leonard decided "it would be too dangerous for her to have them" and editorializes "In this I imagine that Leonard was right. It is hard to imagine Virginia as a mother" (II: 7).

Interestingly, in his introduction to Volume II of Woolf's letters, Nigel Nicholson (the son of Vita Sackville-West) states, "It is not difficult to picture Virginia as a mother, particularly, one imagines, of a girl" (xiii). But both agree that this decision was painful for Woolf, with Bell stating "it was to be a permanent source of grief to her and, in later years, she could never think of Vanessa's fruitful state without misery and envy" (8), and Nicholson opining that "Her childlessness added to her sense of deprivation. It was another penalty imposed upon her" (xiii).

Despite the numerous diary entries in which she associates her childless state with failure, Woolf did not seem to actively resist this decision. She blamed herself for her "insanity" and consequently her lack of children. In a 1926 diary entry she thinks about Vanessa and her children and states "My own gifts & shares seemed so moderate in comparison; my own fault too – a little more self control on my part, & we might have

had a boy of 12, a girl of 10. This always rakes me wretched in the early hours” (III: 107). Although she was denied biological motherhood, it is possible that Woolf redirected the psychic energy of this desire into her drive to be an author, to produce books instead of babies. Perhaps, too, Woolf saw herself as not alone in her predicament. As a feminist whose views grew stronger as she got older, Woolf must have been aware of the incredible surplus of unmarried women in England, a problem heightened by World War I. Woolf might have consoled herself that she was by no means the first woman forced to forego motherhood, and there were plenty of productive options available to her. In fact, feminism, even eugenic feminism, recognized that motherhood might not be viable or even desirable for many women.

Thus, when we explore in Woolf’s works the artist who rejects motherhood, denying regeneration through biology and substituting instead other modes of social regeneration, we see that this concept has a multi-layered history, emerging from Woolf’s own life, her experiences with eugenics, and her social and political consciousness. The movement from race-motherhood to artistry is addressed most fully in two of Woolf’s novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, which I see as paired texts, the latter developing more fully the ideas put forth in the former.

Mrs. Dalloway is emphatically a post-war novel; set in 1923, five years after the end of World War I, it is about the necessity of regenerating society – picking up the pieces and carrying on after this great national trauma. Clarissa Dalloway, Peter Walsh, and Septimus Smith are all preoccupied with the past, and their challenge in the novel is how to transform old systems of meaning and replace them with new ones. In Woolf’s characteristic way, there emerges a complex interrelationship between maternity,

regeneration, art, death, mental illness, and eugenics as her characters evaluate the present and look forward to the future.

The novel begins with an impression of life, a fresh summer morning in June.

The world is full of vitality, and this energy is identified with the feminine and maternal:

“The mothers of Pimlico gave suck to their young.” Infused with energy, Clarissa muses:

For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, how one sees it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drink their downfall) do the same; can't be dealt with, she felt positive, by acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life. (5)

Woolf here links women to artistic vision: Clarissa and the women she sees are envisioning and building the life around them and time itself is refreshed by this action.

The inebriate women who would previously have been classified as degenerate and dealt with by acts of Parliament are necessary to this process as well; they, too, participate in this social renewal.

While the war is over and the English identity seems to be restored (people are playing cricket and “The King and Queen were at the Palace”), there are signs that this ideal of Englishness is forever transformed by the intervention of the mechanical and commercial (5-6). As Clarissa is buying her flowers, she hears “a violent explosion” coming from a car outside. This violent explosion immediately evokes the sounds of the war, but it is not a threat; instead the car is a vessel for the power of the aristocracy and the English government. Although the people around the car know that the passenger is “of the very greatest importance,” they have no idea whether the face momentarily glimpsed was “the Prince of Wales’s, the Queen’s, the Prime Minister’s?” Everyone imbues the car with significance and imagines a different personage in the car. Clarissa

imagines it was the queen: “And for a second she wore a look of extreme dignity standing by the flower shop in the sunlight while the car passed at a foot’s pace, with its blinds drawn. The Queen going to some hospital; the Queen opening some bazaar, thought Clarissa (23-24). The car is a floating symbol of Englishness, of patriotism and optimism. In fact, Woolf seems to be telling us, it doesn’t actually matter who is in the car; what is significant is how the idea of aristocracy and importance affects the crowd.

A second crowd waits at the gates of Buckingham palace. They, too, are seeking a symbol; they “bestowed emotion, vainly, upon commoners out for a drive; recalled their tribute to keep it unspent while this car passed and that; and all the time let rumour accumulate in their veins and thrill the nerves in their thighs at the thought of Royalty looking at them” (27). Sarah Bletchley, one of the mothers of Pimlico “with her baby in her arms,” imagines the Prince coming to visit his mother. These widowed mothers with children have great sentimental impact, especially on one of the male members of the crowd:

Little Mr. Bowley, who had rooms in the Albany and was sealed with wax over the deeper sources of life but could be unsealed suddenly, inappropriately, sentimentally, by this sort of thing—poor women waiting to see the Queen go past— poor women, nice little children, orphans, widows, the War—tut-tut— actually had tears in his eyes. A breeze flaunting ever so warmly down the Mall through the thin trees, past the bronze heroes, lifted some flag flying in the British breast of Mr. Bowley and he raised his hat as the car turned into the Mall and held it high as the car approached; and let the poor mothers of Pimlico press close to him, and stood very upright. The car came on.” (28-29)

When the women in the novel imagine the Queen, they derive something from the idea of her – a blessing, a reassurance, a dignity and strength of their own. Queen Victoria is the ultimate race-mother. But Woolf emphasizes that the viewer, who links together mothers, the Queen and patriotism, creates the meaning and power of this symbol.

The stability provided by the idea of the aristocracy is interrupted by the appearance of yet another symbol of the war and mechanical modernity. Like the violent explosion that signified the first appearance of the car, “The sound of an aeroplane bored ominously into the ears of the crowd” (29). But this airplane, evoking the horrors of air raids, is instead skywriting a message that is read differently by everyone. It distracts and entrances the crowd; the car, the previous recipient of such fascination, passes unnoticed. This seems to imply that the symbols of the past (the aristocracy, the queen, and perhaps even the racial mother) are being displaced and transformed, this time by commercialism. Apparently the English people find skywriting advertisements equally inspiring.

Septimus Smith’s interpretation of the skywriting is radically different from that of the crowd. Others try to spell out the word “toffee” and to identify possible brand names, but Septimus sees the writing as symbolic:

they are signalling to me. Not indeed in actual words; that is, he could not read the language yet; but it was plain enough, this beauty, this exquisite beauty, and tears filled his eyes as he looked at the smoke words languishing and melting in the sky and bestowing upon him in their inexhaustible charity and laughing goodness one shape after another of unimaginable beauty and signalling their intention to provide him, for nothing, for ever, for looking merely, with beauty, more beauty! Tears ran down his cheeks. (31)

Septimus interprets the writing in the sky as poetry. Although it is constantly transforming, Septimus sees it, like Keat’s Grecian Urn, as a thing of beauty that will be a joy forever. He cannot read the language but he can interpret its meaning, and it is energizing, beautiful, and good.

The airplane as a symbol also evokes different meanings for the crowd; as it is flying away, one man sees it as embodying the rationality and power of science. It is “nothing but a bright spark; an aspiration; a concentration; a symbol . . . of man’s soul; of

his determination . . . to get outside his body, beyond his house, by means of thought, Einstein, speculation, mathematics, the Mendelian theory” (41). The Mendelian theory refers to Gregor Mendel’s famous experiments, which determined the existence of dominant and recessive genes. The Mendelian theory eventually did away with the Lamarckian theory of inheritance; this was an area of contention among eugenicists and the adoption and clarification of the Mendelian theory paved the way for modern genetics. Thus, although the generative maternal force linked with Englishness and aristocracy that opens the novel is initially displaced by the mechanical, commercial, and rational, it nevertheless continues, woven throughout the novel.

Consider in this light the wanderings of Peter Walsh, who encounters a female vagrant and instantly conflates her unintelligible song with “the voice of an ancient spring spouting from the earth” (122). The two continue to be fused together and the woman/spring sings of love. The song emerges from a hole that is simultaneously earth, mouth, and vagina:

As the ancient song bubbled up opposite Regent’s Park Tube station still the earth seemed green and flowery; still, though it issued from so rude a mouth, a mere hole in the earth, muddy too, matted with root fibres and tangled grasses, still the old bubbling burbling song, soaking through the knotted roots of infinite ages, and skeletons and treasure, streamed away in rivulets over the pavement and all along the Marylebone Road, and down towards Euston, fertilising, leaving a damp stain. (123)

This song is the symbol of the continuing generative force of the mother. It is simultaneously life and art; the fertile song/water is without human meaning but it continues, spreading its generative power over English soil. Like the woman Clarissa sees who “love life,” here the degenerate, aged woman, a vagrant and a burden on society, is placed among the artist figures in the novel. The ancient woman/spring is a

symbol of the endurance of life in the midst of grief. She mourns for her lover, “dead these centuries.” Thus, in this novel, female generative power is balanced against grief, death and loss.

In a strange, dreamlike interlude, which deserves extended consideration, Woolf develops the further significance of the maternal symbol. The dream, which may belong to Peter Walsh, is spurred by the appearance of a “grey nurse.” This grey nurse is a foster-mother, a caretaker of children, which also connects to Woolf’s own mother’s profession. Grey is a recurrent color in this novel and it seems to symbolize the liminal, washed out state of England as a whole and its midpoint between life and death. The nurse is imbued with symbolic significance and connected to a spectral vision seen by a solitary male traveller out for a walk who sees this feminine figure “at the end of the ride” and muses:

Nothing exists outside us except a state of mind, he thinks; a desire for solace, for relief, for something outside these miserable pigmies, these feeble, these ugly, these craven men and women. But if he can conceive of her, then in some sort she exists, he thinks, and advancing down the path with his eyes upon sky and branches he rapidly endows them with womanhood; sees with amazement how grave they become; how majestically, as the breeze stirs them, they dispense with a dark flutter of the leaves charity, comprehension, absolution, and then, flinging themselves suddenly aloft, confound the piety of their aspect with a wild carouse. (85-6)

Here Woolf comments on the continuing power of the maternal symbol for the male: his imagination can create femininity and maternity even in the trees, and “if he can conceive of her, then in some sort she exists” to provide him with solace and relief. This quotation further directs us to the fact that the maternal symbol is not stable; she appears in a dream and as a tree. She is evoked by Walsh’s desire for a symbol that dispenses “charity, comprehension, and absolution.”

The dreamlike interlude concludes with yet another reference to the a racial mother, this time shrouded in grief: “coming to the door with shaded eyes, possibly to look for his return, with hands raised, with white apron blowing, is an elderly woman who seems (so powerful is this infirmity) to seek, over a desert, a lost son; to search for a rider destroyed; to be the figure of the mother whose sons have been killed in the battles of the world” (87). Here is an explicit example of the transformation of the race-mother. Her days of childbearing are past. She is filled with grief. Her sons destroyed in the war, she waits for her husband to return. The ideal of a young, hopeful mother producing healthy English children is gone, replaced by the mother in the abstract, and in mourning.

The nurse and the old woman, Walsh’s visions of regenerative maternal force, are also constructed in a historical moment; they represent the actual English women whose sons and husbands perished in the war. Furthermore, they highlight the determination to keep life going. Woolf seems to suggest that even society women participate in this process. For example, Clarissa Dalloway’s most admired role model is Lady Bexborough “who opened a bazaar, they said, with the telegram in her hand, John, her favourite, killed” (5). While this could be interpreted as callous, it actually sends a message – mothers must have courage, for life must go on and bazaars must be opened. Clarissa Dalloway mentally defends her party against the imagined criticisms of Peter Walsh and her husband by asserting: “What she liked was simply life. ‘That’s what I do it for,’ she said, speaking aloud, to life” (183-4). She muses about her own parties:

Here was So-and-so in South Kensington; some one up in Bayswater; and somebody else, say, in Mayfair. And she felt quite continuously a sense of their existence; and she felt what a waste; and she felt what a pity; and she felt if only they could be brought together; so she did it. And it was an offering; to combine, to create; but to whom? An offering for the sake of offering, perhaps. Anyhow, it was her gift. (184-5)

Clarissa's parties are to her an affirmation of life, an attempt to bring people together. Into the void of the separation and alienation of modern life, she throws an offering – her parties are her gifts, her affirmation of life and human connection.

Not every road to social regeneration is equally valued in this novel, however. For example, Lady Bruton, denied the possibility of leading troops herself because of her gender, has derived a scheme of "Emigration" as her social contribution. Lady Bruton's pet project is, as Childs puts it, "so clearly eugenical that Woolf might just as well have made her the delegate that the British Women's Emigration Association sent to the First International Eugenics Congress in 1912" (39). Childs steadfastly contends that while "Lady Bruton is an object of fun... the object of Woolf's disdain is not the eugenical project itself, but rather the ineffectualness of Lady Bruton's enthusiasm" (41). I disagree with this assessment. When examined closely, Lady Bruton's project is definitely eugenic but also ridiculous. Lady Bruton's goal is "emigrating young people of both sexes born of respectable parents and setting them up with a fair prospect of doing well in Canada" (108). Hugh Whitbread's letter to *The Times* about this scheme mentions, "the superfluous youth of our ever-increasing population" and "what we owe to the dead" (110). This implies that Lady Bruton's solution to the overpopulation of the lower classes is to transport a large number to Canada.

Eugenicists were particularly concerned with the drop in the English birth rate and the ways in which immigration and emigration would affect this rate. They were also concerned that the ablest men might be leaving Britain as colonial administrators, so they encouraged women to move to the colonies in order to marry these worthy men. However, Lady Bruton's scheme has some flaws in logic. If the youths in question are

somehow “superfluous,” implying that they are members of the overbreeding working class, moving them to Canada and allowing them to breed freely there would simply pawn the problem off on somebody else. There is also a contradiction in characterizing these youth as both “superfluous” and born to “respectable parents.” It was the children born to non-respectable parents – such as the mentally ill, drunkards, and prostitutes – that the eugenicists most wanted to remove. If the youths in question are the children of “respectable parents,” then it would be far more advantageous for the nation to give them a “fair prospect of doing well” in Britain. Lady Bruton’s argument makes sense only if one assumes that she wants to hinder the better specimens of the working class from breeding with their more undesirable cohorts; however, removing the better specimens would speed the degeneration of the lower classes, not hinder it. Any way one views it, Lady Bruton’s project would not be in the best interest of the British nation. In fact, T.B. Hyslop (one of Woolf’s doctors) even comments on the ultimate ineffectualness of these types of plans in his 1924 book *The Borderland*:

The various schemes on foot for the complete removal and transplantation of some of the rising generation to our colonies form a decided step towards relieving the distress from overcrowding. Such steps as these tend to favour arrest of decay, but they also mean attenuation and diffusion of the British virus and, therefore, the conferring of immunity against regeneration of the race. (73-4)

Thus, Lady Bruton’s emigration scheme, if she should manage to pull it off, would actually be counterproductive to the goal of social regeneration. This suggests that Woolf sees eugenic solutions to the problem of social regeneration as ultimately inadequate.

While the female characters in Mrs. Dalloway clearly represent the force of social and artistic regeneration after the war, the potential for artistic regeneration also resides in the male artist figure, Septimus Smith. But, as we will see, Septimus’s potential is

hampered by his insanity and the intervention of his doctors. It is through Septimus that we see Woolf's most virulent critique of conservative eugenics and the beginning of a pattern of regeneration through the artist that will be completed in *To the Lighthouse*.

Septimus has visual and auditory hallucinations and he has threatened to kill himself. As Savage might say, this is clearly "acute delusional insanity" with "periodical recurrences" and Septimus is one of the most serious cases, who should not marry or bear children. In fact, Septimus might not have been considered that wonderful an evolutionary specimen before the onset of his insanity. Repeated references to his large, angular nose mark him as of the Jewish type and his employer judges him weak and advises football to toughen him up. Septimus is described as "a border case, neither one thing nor the other," with the potential to either evolve or degenerate (84). However, an in-depth study of Septimus's character proves that he eludes the simple labels of "degenerate" and "insane."

Septimus, a former poet, has a particularly "literary" kind of insanity. His doctor, Sir William Bradshaw, notes, "He was attaching meanings to words of a symbolical kind. A serious symptom, to be noted on the card" (96). Septimus jots down the content of his delusions everywhere, and as his death nears, he asks his wife Rezia to gather together his writings, which are fragmentary and incomplete. In fact, the process of his composition seems remarkably like that of high Modernism – as T.S. Eliot might say, shoring up fragments against ruin. Septimus's stream-of-consciousness, associative flow is a heightened version of Woolf's own writing style, lending further support for a comparison between Woolf and Septimus.

As many critics have noted, even the content of Septimus's experience with insanity is remarkably similar to Woolf's own. After the death of her father, Virginia took to bed and heard birds singing in Greek (Q. Bell I: 90). In *Mrs. Dalloway* we have a remarkably similar situation, when Septimus hears birds "sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words" how there is no sorrow and no death (24). Septimus is clearly a figure for the author; more specifically, he embodies the way the modern artist, as in Max Nordau's *Degeneration*, is stigmatized and labeled as degenerate and unfit because of his or her "insanity."

Septimus's doctors are his enemies, not his allies. Sir William Bradshaw in particular is figured as a eugenicist of the most conservative, controlling type: "Sir William not only prospered himself but made England prosper, secluded her lunatics, forbade childbirth, penalized despair, made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views until they, too, shared his sense of proportion" (99). Bradshaw's treatment for Septimus recalls closely Savage's treatment for Woolf. When a person comes to him with a mental complaint, Bradshaw will "order rest in bed; rest in solitude; silence and rest; rest without friends, without books, without messages; six months' rest; until a man who went in weighing seven stone six comes out weighing twelve" (99). How Bradshaw is described emphasizes the desire for power and control, which is legitimated by eugenics; and by stating that he "made it impossible for the unfit to propagate their views," Woolf draws a parallel between censorship and eugenics.

Bradshaw's control, legitimated not only by eugenics but also by Christianity and his power over others, verges on that of an evil dictator. He is criticized for his devotion to conversion, a "fastidious Goddess, [who] loves blood better than brick, and feasts most

subtly on the human will” (100). Sir William’s wife was his first victim and is “quick to minister to the craving which lit her husband's eye so oilily for dominion, for power” (101). Bradshaw’s patients are also characterized as victims: “Naked, defenceless, the exhausted, the friendless received the impress of Sir William's will. He swooped; he devoured. He shut people up” (102). While the portrait of Bradshaw must have been drawn from Woolf’s acquaintance with Savage, Savage was a more moderate eugenicist than Sir William Bradshaw seems to be. Thus it is likely that her portrait of Bradshaw is also taken from her knowledge of T.B. Hyslop, whom Leonard also consulted about the advisability of having children. Hyslop was a dogmatic and highly conservative eugenicist, who opposed the education of women and lobbied for preventing procreation of the mentally defective (942).

One of the doctors Leonard consulted about having children, Hyslop may also have come to Woolf’s attention in 1910 due to his critiques of the First Post-Impressionist Exhibition organized by Roger Fry. Hyslop wrote: “the only criticism with regard to post-impressionism now offered is a quote from an insane person who informed the writer that, in his opinion, only half of the post-impressionistic pictures recently exhibited were worthy of Bedlam, the remainder being, to his subtle perception, but evidence of shamming degeneration or malingering”⁶ (Qtd. Trombley 226). Therefore, according to Hyslop, those artists who were not clearly degenerate were faking it. In another work Hyslop claims that “Post-Impressionism, Futurism, and Cubism, and some of the other morbid manifestations of art” were very similar to art created by the insane and “from humane motives we are prompted to aid in the survival of those who are

⁶ T. B. Hyslop, "Post Illusionism and Art in the Insane," *The Nineteenth Century* 69 (1911), (Qtd. Trombley 226).

biologically unfit; but with regard to the encouragement, or even toleration of Art which in itself is loathsome and degenerate there may be, with justice, quite another option” (273-4).

Thus, the conservative eugenic perspective would argue that many modern artists were immoral, insane, and degenerate. Some eugenicists would argue that the artists’ influence on society was pernicious and they should be controlled for the good of the race and their art destroyed. In order for us to understand how the character of Septimus might be a challenge to these conservative eugenic assumptions, we must examine the source of his insanity, which is not heredity but environment. Septimus is suffering from what today we might classify as post-traumatic stress disorder, or “shell-shock.” Woolf builds irony by initially classifying Septimus’s transformation during the war as an evolution of sorts: “the change which Mr. Brewer desired when he advised football was produced instantly; he developed manliness; he was promoted; he drew the attention, indeed the affection of his officer, Evans by name” (86). Septimus has become tough, strong, the picture of a Victorian man. When Evans is killed,

Septimus, far from showing any emotion or recognising that here was the end of a friendship, congratulated himself upon feeling very little and very reasonably. The War had taught him. It was sublime. He had gone through the whole show, friendship, European War, death, had won promotion, was still under thirty and was bound to survive. He was right there. The last shells missed him. He watched them explode with indifference. (86)

Septimus has emerged changed from a struggle for survival. He has evolved into a modern man and the Darwinian struggle has been won. But Woolf presents us with this paradigm precisely so that we can see its deleterious effects. In his evolution, Septimus has lost something crucial – he cannot feel. This is emphasized in the novel several different times, and this inability to feel love, compassion, joy, or sorrow drives Septimus

to the realization that “it might be possible that the world itself is without meaning” (88). Septimus’s new view of humanity is a bleak wasteland indeed: “human beings have neither kindness, nor faith, nor charity beyond what serves to increase the pleasure of the moment. They hunt in packs. Their packs scour the desert and vanish screaming into the wilderness. They desert the fallen” (89).

As we can see, Septimus’s “evolution” causes him to see all of humanity as degenerate and bestial. He is raised to a position of power, similar to that of the eugenicists, because he can recognize and classify degeneration in others. In fact, from one perspective he could be considered the uber-eugenist, since he can see so much degeneration. However, Septimus resists this subject position. Recalling the opening entry from Woolf’s diary, among the sights that haunt Septimus is “a maimed file of lunatics being exercised or displayed for the diversion of the populace (who laughed aloud), ambled and nodded and grinned past him, in the Tottenham Court Road, each half apologetically, yet triumphantly, inflicting his hopeless woe. And would HE go mad?” (90). Unlike the other spectators, Septimus knows that he could easily be in their place. By this description Woolf forces us to question – who is evolved and who degenerate? Who is worse, the hopeless lunatic or the populace who laugh aloud at them? While others gaze, classify, and ridicule, Septimus sees the lunatics looking back at him and actually finding agency and power in their subjection: they are “triumphantly inflicting . . . hopeless woe.” Septimus’s privileged subject position is identified as unstable – they immediately cause him to question, “Would HE go mad?”

Septimus’s inner dialogue allows us to read Woolf’s diary entry differently. Unlike the “populace” Woolf is not amused by the “imbeciles” she sees; they strike her

as horrible. Her own half sister Laura and the possibility of hereditary insanity were both concealed by her family, but here mental deficiency is put on display for others' amusement and judgment. Septimus's fear that he might go mad and be in the position of these lunatics points to the possibility that this is the covert fear that drives Woolf to pronounce "they should certainly be killed." Woolf would rather have died than have her madness put on display; in fact she literally chose that option. Her suicide note declares, "I feel certain that I am going mad again" (Qtd. Lee 744).

In her own life, Woolf may have been overcome by the fear of her own possible madness, but in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Septimus's seemingly mad ramblings are not without purpose and significance, and actually comment ironically on the eugenic assumptions of his doctors. Septimus makes the conscious decision not to have a child, not because he is worried about his own capacity to pass on insanity, but because the world itself is insane and immoral: "One cannot bring children into a world like this. One cannot perpetuate suffering, or increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions, but only whims and vanities, eddying them now this way, now that" (89). Also, in one of Septimus's odder visions he believes he sees a Skye terrier turning into a man. He asks himself:

But what was the scientific explanation (for one must be scientific above all things)? Why could he see through bodies, see into the future, when dogs will become men? It was the heat wave presumably, operating upon a brain made sensitive by eons of evolution. Scientifically speaking, the flesh was melted off the world. His body was macerated until only the nerve fibres were left. It was spread like a veil upon a rock. (68)

Here Woolf again harnesses some of the rhetoric of degeneration and eugenics, questioning what might be the final destination of such thought. Many contended that the modern problems of insanity and hysteria were in fact due to evolution, a process that had

somehow made the nerves more and more sensitive in highly evolved minds. Like H. G. Wells, who, in *The Time Machine*, imagined the final destination of planetary life would be crab-monsters and a crustacean-like creature with tentacles, Septimus speculates that the end result of eons of evolution would be that mankind would be nothing but nerves, and it was not inconceivable in the future that dogs would take their place.

Although Septimus has an increasingly low view of humanity, he is presented in the novel as one who endures the fragmentation of the modern experience, who continues to see beauty in the world, and who is a force for renewal. His visions are antithetical to a divided view of humanity because he sees the interconnectedness of things:

But they beckoned; leaves were alive; trees were alive. And the leaves being connected by millions of fibres with his own body, there on the seat, fanned it up and down; when the branch stretched he, too, made that statement. The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern; the white and blue, barred with black branches. Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds. (22)

While Septimus has certainly done terrible things, what separates him from Sir William Bradshaw is his remorse for his failures: in particular, his inability to feel compassion and love for others. It is in fact this suffering, this remorse, that has some hope of redeeming humanity. Septimus is figured as Christlike: “Septimus, lately taken from life to death, the Lord who had come to renew society, who lay like a coverlet, a snow blanket smitten only by the sun, for ever unwasted, suffering for ever, the scapegoat, the eternal sufferer” (25). While his delusions of divinity are common among the insane, Woolf deploys this identification precisely to put forth the possibility that perhaps it is true; society will not be renewed by those who inflict their power upon others, but by those who suffer in the name of all humanity. Perhaps even the mad, degenerate artist has the power to redeem society.

Septimus's eventual suicide allows him to escape the limitations put on him by his doctors, to escape being confined in a home and to choose freedom instead. In fact, his suicide is not without purpose because the simple act of hearing about it spurs Clarissa on to a deeper level of reflection. She discovers that there is something essential about the human spirit, which Septimus has preserved even in death:

A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate; people feeling the impossibility of reaching the center, which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded, one was alone. There was an embrace in death. (184)

Although they have never met, Clarissa and Septimus have a connection. Through his death Septimus finally evades the control of Holmes and Bradshaw, and, as Clarissa makes clear, he preserves something essential about himself. Septimus Smith's death is in the end a sacrifice for another because his death allows others to appreciate life: "She felt somehow very like him – the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away . . . he made her feel the beauty, made her feel the fun" (186). Septimus's death is a comfort to Clarissa and serves as a unifying force. For a time it restores her interest in living, thus serving paradoxically as a force of social and mental renewal.

In *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf explores the many possible paths to social regeneration in a post-war society. The mothers of Pimlico raise their babies, grieving mothers open their bazaars, and Clarissa Dalloway gives a party. The overriding message is that life does and must go on. What is absolutely clear, however, is that while the idea of race-motherhood still has important symbolic power, conservative eugenics is no longer a viable method of viewing the world. Woolf reveals the need for power and control that

underlies much eugenic rhetoric as well as the instability of the eugenic position. She offers an alternative path to social renewal through the actions of the women in the novel and the death of Septimus Smith. Woolf holds out the hope that in a world that seems alienated and without meaning, there may still be connections, through life and perhaps even through death. And it will be the mothers *and* the degenerate artists through which such meaning will emerge.

Woolf continues her project of seeking alternative paths to social renewal by critiquing and transforming eugenic ideology in *To the Lighthouse*, her most complex engagement with eugenic motherhood. In this novel Woolf's focus on the character of Mrs. Ramsay and the strength and force of her maternity eventually leads to an in-depth engagement with the symbolism of race-motherhood.

It is an accepted critical commonplace that Mrs. Ramsay is modeled on Woolf's mother, Julia Stephen. But as Phyllis Rose points out, she is also a portrait of Vanessa Bell, whom Virginia felt was the true inheritor of her mother's bent for domesticity and motherhood.⁷ Woolf herself acknowledged that she had put both her parents into *To The Lighthouse*, and that the work was therapeutic for her. On the anniversary of her father's birthday in 1928, she states: "I believe. . . that I was obsessed by them both, unhealthily; & writing of them was a necessary act" (Diary III: 208). But to see *To The Lighthouse* as solely the exorcism of parental demons is to shortchange the novel. For the psychological shift in consciousness Woolf experienced was the transformation from the personal to the impersonal, from the psychological to the historical. By transforming her parents into characters, she came to recognize them as constructions of their time.

Regarding her father, Woolf states, "He comes back now more as a contemporary. I must

⁷ See Phyllis Rose, "Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Woolf," *Women's Studies* 1 (1973).

read him some day” (Diary III: 208). Thus, Woolf recognized her actual parents and deprived them of their archetypal power, while simultaneously memorializing it in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. And while Woolf’s own process of grief no doubt results in the power and poignance of the depiction of Mrs. Ramsay, Woolf also responds to the historical moment. Mrs. Ramsay is a product of her time; thus, Mrs. Ramsay’s symbolic power within the story accrues as a result of the eugenic construction of motherhood as well as Woolf’s personal history.

More than one critic has found this an apt picture of Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse*. The fact that Lily Briscoe, the artist figure, cannot finish her painting until Mrs. Ramsay has died further strengthens this parallel. To date, no one has characterized Mrs. Ramsay as a eugenic mother, espousing and living out the example of a mother determined to regenerate the race. However, she fits all the major requirements. Mrs. Ramsay has fulfilled the primary goal of a race-mother by marrying an intellectually fit specimen and by raising a brood of eight healthy children. In fact, she dwells happily on the fitness of her children. Mrs. Ramsay’s hopes for the future are all tied to her children, and she thinks of her children as all possessing genius, although in different ways. Mrs. Ramsay believes, at least in part, in physiognomy, the idea that the shape of one’s head might determine one’s personality or future occupation. She imagines her youngest, James “on the Bench or directing a stern and momentous enterprise in some crisis of public affairs” (10) or as a great artist because, “He had a splendid forehead” (49). The sheer mass and energy of the children are impressive even to outside observers such as William Bankes, who mentally names them after the Kings and Queens of England.

The healthy English Ramsay children are contrasted with the family's guest, Charles Tansley, who is identified as unfit in a number of ways. While most of Mr. Ramsay's young male admirers have been "exceptionally able" (13), Charles Tansley is "Not a polished specimen" (101) according to Mr. Ramsay and "a miserable specimen . . . all humps and hollows" and a "sarcastic brute" according to the children (15). Tansley would be an unsuitable marriage partner for her daughter Prue and Mr. Ramsay claims, "He'd disinherit her if she married him" (102).

Although Tansley would not be allowed to marry Prue, Mrs. Ramsay fosters him anyway because her maternal instinct in fact extends to all English men: "Indeed, she had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could not explain, for their chivalry and valor, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance" (14). Again, one aspect of eugenic motherhood was a self-conscious promotion of Englishness and the achievements of English men. Mrs. Ramsay's children rebel against her causes – among them, the Bank of England and the Indian Empire – but Mrs. Ramsay, who is later imaginatively linked with Queen Victoria, dominates them and demands their allegiance. Here we see imperialism and maternity explicitly connected, as Mrs. Ramsay becomes the queen of her own household and enforces the ideals of imperialism. Woolf's novel, like eugenics itself, depends on the metaphor linking home and country, individual and race.

Mrs. Ramsay also devotes herself to social work. In her private thoughts, we see this side of Mrs. Ramsay: "she ruminated the other problem, of rich and poor, and the things she saw with her own eyes, weekly, daily, here or in London, when she visited this widow, or that struggling wife in person with a bag on her arm" (17). Like many women

of the time, Mrs. Ramsay is concerned with social inequity, and her specific method and areas of concern overlap with the concerns of eugenicists. Mrs. Ramsay gathers data about the people she visits in a notebook, and through this action wants to “become what with her untrained mind she greatly admired, an investigator, elucidating the social problem” (18). This particular moment hints at an underexplored facet of Mrs. Ramsay’s character. Mrs. Ramsay is not merely sympathetic to others; she believes that social problems can be solved scientifically, through research and investigation, as opposed to say, charity and religion. This fusion of scientific method and social conscience was common to the social hygiene movements with which Mrs. Ramsay is clearly in sympathy and of which eugenics was a part.

One of Mrs. Ramsay’s pet projects is proper ventilation, which she believes will prevent spoilage. Even in this small detail we see Mrs. Ramsay as an active social force, working against degeneration. She lectures her own servants as well as the people she visits, “[t]hat windows should be open and doors shut” (44). But Mrs. Ramsay’s true passions are “hospitals and drains and the dairy” (89). She asserts, “It was a disgrace. Milk delivered at your door in London positively brown with dirt. It should be made illegal” (89). As Donald Childs points out, Mrs. Ramsay’s interest in “the iniquity of the English dairy system” (155) and the necessity of providing good, clean milk to everyone mark her as sharing the concerns of eugenicists (Childs 33).⁸ While some eugenicists were strict Social Darwinists who argued that the race would be improved if the poor continued to perish because of poor hygiene, mainstream British eugenics was in league with and supported movements for social hygiene. In fact, in “Eugenic Ideals for

⁸ For more on the significance of Mrs. Ramsay’s discussion of milk, see Megumi Kato, “The Milk Problem in *to the Lighthouse*,” *Virginia Woolf Miscellany* 50 (Fall 1997).

Womanhood” (1909) Alice Ravenhill states that “women should interest themselves in all that promotes the health of the people . . . They should investigate the conditions under which food-stuffs are produced, packed, transported, distributed and cooked in order to control dirt and to check preventable disease” (273). Ravenhill asks how many women visit “the farm from which the milk for their household is supplied” and asserts that “such details have eugenic significance [and] are only perceived by trained eyes” (273).

Mrs. Ramsay wishes she could intervene more actively in these eugenic problems: “A model dairy and a hospital up here – those two things she would have liked to do, herself. But how? With all these children?” (89). In Mrs. Ramsay’s reflections about the impossibility of such enterprises, we see the eugenic equation between family and state breaking down. Mrs. Ramsay has been forced to choose between her passion for social work and the demands of raising such a large family. This dilemma faced many of the women active in social movements; in particular, those who left their homes and children to speak in public about eugenic motherhood faced scathing charges of hypocrisy.

Another way in which Mrs. Ramsay can be considered a race-mother is in her function as a force of social stability. She consciously enforces gender roles and compels romantic attachments. We see Mrs. Ramsay teaching gender roles to her own children as she says, “Jasper, because he was the gentleman, should give her his arm, and Rose, as she was the lady, should carry her handkerchief” (123). But this enforcement is even more obvious as she compels those who are not her children, but merely visitors to the household. In particular, Mrs. Ramsay reaches out to Lily Briscoe, the artist who is staying with the family. She attempts to stress for Lily the importance of maternity and

to arrange a marriage for her with William Bankes. She contends that “an unmarried woman has missed the best of life” (77) and even though she recognizes the sacrifice of independence, insists “that people must marry; people must have children” (93).

Although Lily tries to resist Mrs. Ramsay’s compulsion to marry, Minta and Paul Rayley succumb to her pressures. After Minta has accepted his proposal, Paul thinks, “He would go straight to Mrs. Ramsay because he felt somehow that she was the person who has made him do it” (118-9). Mrs. Ramsay’s drive is an overwhelming force, and Lily finds it hard to assert her desire to paint instead of marry. She thinks, “There was something frightening about her. She was irresistible. Always she got her own way in the end . . . Now she had brought this off – Paul and Minta, one might suppose, were engaged” (152).

While Mrs. Ramsay is regarded by Lily as a bit of a bully, she is to men more like a muse, who inspires others to feelings of classical romance. Her very voice on the telephone line inspires romantic feelings, causing William Bankes to tell her, “Nature has but little clay . . . like that of which she moulded you” and to state, “the Graces assembling seemed to have joined hands in meadows of asphodel to compose that face” (46-7). Mrs. Ramsay transforms ordinary men into larger-than-life heroic figures. When Charles Tansley sees her at the top of the stairs in the home they are visiting, silhouetted against a picture of Queen Victoria, it evokes pride and heroism. He immediately takes her bag for her and when another man sees him, Tansley feels, “an extraordinary pride . . . for he was walking with a beautiful woman” (25). Mrs. Ramsay has a similar effect on Paul Rayley, who thinks, “she had made him think he could do anything . . . she made him believe that he could do whatever he wanted” (110).

Although Mrs. Ramsay is aware that her beauty gives her power, she is never in full control of its effects; instead, she is like a piece of art that inspires her viewers and therefore improves humanity and culture. Lily thinks of this when she observes Mr.

Bankes watching Mrs. Ramsay:

For him to gaze as Lily saw him gazing at Mrs. Ramsay was a rapture, equivalent, Lily felt, to the loves of dozens of young men. . . It was love, she thought . . . love that never attempted to clutch its object; but, like the love which mathematicians bear their symbols, or poets their phrases, was meant to be spread over the world and become part of the human gain. (73-4)

After gazing at Mrs. Ramsay, Mr. Bankes feels “that barbarity was tamed, the reign of chaos subdued” and Lily reflects, “that people should love like this, that Mr. Bankes should feel this for Mrs. Ramsay . . . was helpful, was exalting” (74). Thus, we can see that Mrs. Ramsey’s association with love and art is also a part of her function as a force of social stability and regeneration.

While Mrs. Ramsay is implicitly connected to eugenics through her interest in social hygiene, her strongest connection to eugenic motherhood can be seen in her consistent description as a force of regeneration. As is implied in the previous passage, Mrs. Ramsay is an advocate for race regeneration through marrying and begetting children, just as she is a force for the spiritual and mental regeneration of her household, particularly that of her husband. We see this most clearly in her description through James’s eyes, when her husband comes to her for reassurance:

Mrs. Ramsay . . . seemed to raise herself with an effort, and at once to pour erect into the air a rain of energy, a column of spray, looking at the same time animated and alive as if all her energies were being fused into force, burning and illuminating (quietly though she sat, taking up her stocking again), and into this delicious fecundity, this fountain and spray of life, the fatal sterility of the male plunged itself, like a beak of brass, barren and bare. (58)

Although James's Oedipal envy colors his description of Mr. Ramsay as "fatally sterile" and perhaps explains his description of his father's beak plunging into his mother's fountain, this image of Mrs. Ramsay remains one of the most powerful in the novel. Mrs. Ramsay's maternal energy animates the lives of the characters and she pours her own life force into ensuring the existence of others.

Again and again Mrs. Ramsay directs her own energy towards a kind of literal "home-making," creating harmony in her extended family. There is no greater example of this than the dinner party, which begins with each character immersed in his or her own thoughts. Mrs. Ramsay reflects:

There was no beauty anywhere . . . Nothing seemed to have merged. They all sat separate. And the whole of the effort of merging and flowing and creating rested on her. Again she felt, as a fact without hostility, the sterility of men, for if she did not do it nobody would do it, and so, giving herself a little shake that one gives a watch that has stopped, the old familiar pulse began beating, as the watch begins ticking—one, two, three, one, two, three. And so on and so on, she repeated, listening to it, sheltering and fostering the still feeble pulse as one might guard a weak flame with a news-paper. (126)

Mrs. Ramsay's maternal energy, here characterized as being like her own pulse, must be again given to others; her flame will enliven and bring together all the party, at whatever personal cost. And this sacrifice of her own energy creates a peaceful gathering, culminating in a moment of transcendence and peace arising from all present:

There it was, all round them. It partook, she felt, carefully helping Mr. Bankes to a specially tender piece, of eternity . . . there is a coherence in things, a stability; something, she meant, is immune from change, and shines out (she glanced at the window with its ripple of reflected lights) in the face of the flowing, the fleeting, the spectral, like a ruby; so that again tonight she had the feeling she had had once today, already, of peace, of rest. Of such moments, she thought, the thing is made that endures (158).

From her overt insistence on marriage to the power of the domestic harmony created at the dinner party, Mrs. Ramsay's maternal energy is the force that holds the first part of the novel together, creating stability and meaning.

Thus, when Mrs. Ramsay abruptly dies in the middle of the novel, it is a great loss – a passing away not only of a woman, but the death of an ideal of race-motherhood, one that could ground the future of the British Empire in the sheer force of maternity. There are signs throughout the novel that this ideal cannot and will not hold; if the home is a metaphor for the country, then both show signs of degeneration. The house has become shabby and the furniture decrepit; the doors will no longer shut and the locks no longer latch. The family is in financial trouble, Mr. Ramsay is making no progress in his work, and we are constantly given the impression that Mrs. Ramsay cannot continue her frantic pace and her exhausting efforts to keep things moving forward in the same way. When Mrs. Ramsay is alone, she slides into pessimism, reflecting that life was “terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance. There were the eternal problems: suffering; death; the poor. There was always a woman dying of cancer even here” (92). Mrs. Ramsay's veiling of the boar's skull above her children's beds is an ominous symbol that she is merely shielding the family from the inevitability of death and decay.

If “The Window” is the story of eugenic resistance to the forces of degeneration and cultural collapse, in “Time Passes,” degeneration has its day. The family leaves, Mrs. Ramsay, Prue, and Andrew all die, and the house falls further and further into neglect and disrepair. Air and darkness invade the house and the forces of mold, dust, and decay hold sway. Near the end of its long period left unoccupied, the house is invaded by toads, thistles, swallows, rats, and butterflies. Even the flowers have

descended into miscegenation: “Poppies sowed themselves among the dahlias; the lawn waved with long grass; giant artichokes towered among roses; a fringed carnation flowered among the cabbages.” Woolf asks, “What power could now prevent the fertility, the insensibility of nature?” (207). The changes in the home clearly represent the changes in England as a result of World War I. Men who went to war were literally absent from their homes, removed from view and dying somewhere else. For those not enthusiastically supporting the war, there was a great feeling of waste and loss. And for the eugenicists World War I was a nightmare. All the best specimens of masculinity had been sent off to fight. Huge numbers died, leaving only those who had been judged unfit for military service to breed the next generation. In “Time Passes,” we are left with the idea that England has lost the power to resist moral and cultural decay.

It is therefore highly ironic that the force opposing the power of rot, decay, and entropy is herself a degenerate figure. Mrs. McNab is old and of questionable moral character. Like the degenerate female vagrant in *Mrs. Dalloway*, Mrs. McNab drinks, lurches and leers, and sings a song “robbed of meaning, like the voice of witlessness, humor, persistency itself, trodden down but springing up again, so that as she lurched, dusting, wiping, she seemed to say how it was one long sorrow and trouble, how it was getting up and going to bed again, and bringing things out and putting them away again” (196-7). Mrs. McNab represents a kind of life force, but not a rational, thoughtful one. From a eugenic perspective, Mrs. McNab would be considered a lower specimen; she has bred children, but without consciousness or any effort toward improvement. In fact, Mrs. McNab is now finished with childbearing altogether. Thus Woolf’s choice to cast Mrs.

McNab and her helpers, her son and Mrs. Bast, as the saviors of the house signals a radical shift in the values of the past.

Woolf's choice to symbolize a change in ideology with a character belonging to the laboring classes is hardly exclusive to *To the Lighthouse*. In "Mrs. Bennett and Mr. Brown," Woolf uses the example of a domestic servant to symbolize the "change in human relations" – the alteration in ideology – that occurred as the Victorian era transformed into the modern era, which Woolf describes as Georgian. Woolf states, "In life one can see the change, if I may use a homely illustration, in the character of one's cook. The Victorian cook lived like a leviathan in the lower depths, formidable, silent, obscure, inscrutable; the Georgian cook is a creature of sunshine and fresh air; in and out of the drawing room, now to borrow the Daily Herald, now to ask advice about a hat" (320). In "Time Passes" Mrs. McNab functions exactly like this cook; a heretofore erased voice (that of the laboring class) suddenly erupts into the text, signifying social change.

By choosing to focus in "Time Passes" on the specific type of woman feared and reviled by eugenicists, it is clear that Woolf is ushering in a different age, one in which the motivating illusions of the past, such as a eugenic belief in the power of British upper-class maternity to regenerate the race, must now be put aside. Mrs. McNab and her helpers "stayed the corruption and the rot; rescued from the pool of Time that was fast closing over them now a basin, now a cupboard; fetched up from oblivion all the Waverley novels and a tea-set one morning." They bring in builders and the scene is described: "some rusty laborious birth seemed to be taking place, as the women, stooping, rising, groaning, singing, slapped and slammed, upstairs now, now down in the

cellars. Oh, they said, the work!” (209-10). Instead of relying on upper-class-maternity to stabilize and continue society, Woolf suggests that we must instead begin to value a different kind of bio-energy. Those who continue to exist and to work, no matter what class they belong to, will keep society functioning. Woolf ironically rewrites the narrative of the past; instead of middle and upper class mothers literally birthing healthy, English babies, here the laboring class figuratively gives, “rusty laborious birth” to the future.

While Mrs. McNab functions as a force quelling the forces of degeneration, Lily Briscoe is an even more obvious ideological substitute for Mrs. Ramsay. Over the course of the novel, Mrs. Ramsay’s dominant point of view is replaced by Lily’s. Like Elizabeth Dalloway, who is accused of having the blood of some “Mongol [who] had been wrecked on the coast of Norfolk” (185-6), Lily has “Chinese eyes” and is therefore racially ambiguous. This mark of racial impurity, however, is also the source of Lily’s artistic power. Like Mrs. McNab, who leers at herself sideways in the looking glass (130), Lily sees the world at a slant.⁹ Her multiple outsider identities, as a guest in the house, an artist, and perhaps a lesbian, all make this different view possible. While Mrs. McNab’s vision seems to symbolize the power to not be overcome by the hopeless of death and destruction, Lily’s artistic vision allows her a distance from the ideology of the world around her. We have seen that William Bankes’s gaze at Mrs. Ramsay inspires courtly love and heroism, but looking at Mrs. Ramsay does not have the same effect on Lily.

⁹ Childs contends that Elizabeth Dalloway’s “Chinese” eyes are meant to be an allusion to Mongolism, today known as Down’s Syndrome, and that Woolf’s own anxieties about the heritability of mental defect are coded in this reference (50-1). Recently, Patricia Ondek Laurence has used Lily’s eyes as a metaphor for the way British Modernists envisioned Chinese art and artists. She argues that Elizabeth and Lily’s “Chinese eyes” are a mark of their “otherness” and unreadability to the women who would define them. See Chapter Five, Patricia Ondek Laurence, *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

Even though she is looking at Mrs. Ramsay at the same time – her “different ray” added to “his beam” – Lily reflects instead “no woman could worship another woman in the way he worshipped” (75).

Although Lily appreciates Mrs. Ramsay’s beauty, she distrusts it because she has seen the effect it has on others – to compel and interpolate them into the ideology of heterosexual marriage and romance. Mrs. Ramsay’s beauty is “a golden mesh” (78) in which one can get caught and she reflects: “Fifty pairs of eyes were not enough to get round that one woman with . . . Among them, must be one that was stone blind to her beauty” (294). Lily instead wants to love Mrs. Ramsay in a way that surpasses the limits ascribed to her by heterosexual romance; she wants to know “the spirit in her, the essential thing” (76) and penetrate into the “chambers of the mind and heart,” becoming one with Mrs. Ramsay “like waters poured into one jar” (79). But this knowledge is never realized in the first part of the novel and it is not until after Mrs. Ramsay’s death that Lily both makes her peace with her and fully comes into her own artistic powers.

When Lily returns to the house after Mrs. Ramsay’s death, her activities give us a clear indication of what Woolf proposes will ultimately replace the biological or maternal power so revered by eugenics – artistry. When Lily returns to the Ramsay house she decides to paint again the picture she began when Mrs. Ramsay was alive: “Suddenly she remembered . . . There had been a problem with the foreground of a picture . . . She would paint that picture now” (220). The problem of this painting, how to envision a relationship between different masses, has been with Lily all these years; at this moment she is ready to seek a solution to the problem. In order to understand the power and metaphoric significance of Lily’s painting, we must first understand its qualities. In the

original portrait, the dyad of Mrs. Ramsay and James is signified by a purple triangle, and as Lily explains to Mr. Bankes, “A mother and child might be reduced to a shadow without irreverence. A light here required a shadow there” (81-2). Lily changes an icon of eugenic motherhood into an abstract form, one that is not light but shadow. Bankes is intrigued and somewhat troubled by the fact that Lily chooses not to represent the beauty of the mother; as I have already discussed, this is in fact a choice that helps Lily elide the conventions of romantic narrative, which is fueled by the perception of beauty. Lily instead wishes to rely on the specificity of her own vision.

Lily’s vision is clearly abstract, and several critics have noted the similarity of her work to the aesthetic beliefs of the Bloomsbury group, especially the doctrines of Roger Fry.¹⁰ Elizabeth Abel sums up Lily’s theories of painting when she claims:

she insists . . . her work, is to be an autotelic whole, freed from the claims of representation and accessible by purely formal criteria. Making “no attempt at likeness” and insisting on the formal relations of masses, lights, and shadows, Lily echoes Fry’s belief that “our reaction to a work of art is a reaction to a relation and not to sensations of objects or persons or events,” that the aesthetic effect arises from “self-contained, self-sufficing structure which are ‘not to be valued by their reference to what lies outside’” (72).

Abel directs our attention to the fact that Lily’s work arises out of the perception of a relation in the field of the visible, but that it is independent of what it portrays. The shapes that Lily creates are not necessarily representative of people or objects, but only of the relations between them. Furthermore, as we see from Lily’s revelation at the dinner party, “that she would move the tree to the middle, and need never marry anybody” (262)

¹⁰ See David Dowling, *Bloomsbury Aesthetics and the Novels of Forster and Woolf* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1985), Jane Goldman, “Artist and Feminist Communities of 1910: Post-Impressionism, Suffrage Aesthetics, and Intersubjectivity in to the Lighthouse,” *Virginia Woolf and Communities: Selected Papers from the Eighth Annual Conference on Virginia Woolf*, ed. Jeanette McVicker and Laura Davis (New York: Pace University Press, 1999), and Christopher Reed, “Through Formalism: Feminism and Virginia Woolf’s Relation to Bloomsbury Aesthetics,” *The Multiple Muses of Virginia Woolf*, ed. Diane F. Gillespie (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993).

it is not always necessary to paint relations between forms as they currently exist. If Lily can move the tree further toward the middle, she can also symbolically reconfigure the relations between people and the ideology underpinning and justifying these relations.

In *The Political Unconscious*, Fredric Jameson uses the term “aestheticizing strategy,” which he claims is “a strategy which for whatever reason seeks to recode or rewrite the world and its own data in terms of perception as a semi-autonomous activity” (230). Jameson finds in certain aspects of Modernism and modern art a nonideological space. In particular he states that

the increasing abstraction of visual art thus proves not only to express the abstraction of daily life and to presuppose fragmentation and reification; it also constitutes a Utopian compensation for everything lost in the development of capitalism – the place of quality in an increasingly quantified world, the place of the archaic and of feeling amid the desacralization of the market system, the place of sheer color and intensity within the grayness of measurable extension and geometrical abstraction. The perceptual is in this sense a historically new experience, which has no equivalent in older kinds of social life. (236)

I would argue that Woolf also sees a compensatory potential in modern art, and that her aestheticizing strategy is Utopian. But instead of seeking an escape from the present, Woolf seeks a partial escape from the past within the imagined space of a painting within a text.

Woolf ascribes enormous power to the abstract form of Lily’s painting. But it is not merely the technique of the painting that gives it power; it is also its elegiac character. This particular work of art consciously recognizes its indebtedness to the ideology of the past, a set of ideals about maternity and regeneration, which have been lost in the fragmentation of modern existence. Like Mrs. McNab, who pauses in the midst of her work to envision Mrs. Ramsay, Lily reminisces while she paints, resolving both her memories of Mrs. Ramsay and her idealized vision of her. At first Lily is angry with

Mrs. Ramsay for dying, but then she begins to reflect on pleasant memories involving Mrs. Ramsay and is comforted. Lily imagines sitting beside Mrs. Ramsay on the beach in silence, and it is this memory that begins the transfer of Mrs. Ramsay's maternal power to Lily, described in particularly Freudian language: "the moment at least seemed extraordinarily fertile. She rammed a little hole into the sand and covered it up, by way of burying in it the perfection of the moment. It was like a drop of silver in which one dipped and illumined the darkness of the past" (256). This language marks a transformation in *To The Lighthouse* from the biological to the symbolic. Both Lily and Mrs. Ramsay are androgynous, almost symbolically hermaphroditic. Lily is fertilized by her memory of Mrs. Ramsay and her actions in the sand simultaneously create a womb and fertilize it. The silver drop symbolizes life force itself, a liquid simultaneously masculine and feminine.

In order for Lily to complete her painting she must separate herself from Mrs. Ramsay's ideas, reminding herself that Paul and Minta Rayley did not, in fact, live happily ever after – they quarreled constantly until Paul found a mistress and they settled into a companionate friendship. Unlike Sally Seton, the lesbian character in Mrs. Dalloway, who acquiesced to compulsory heterosexuality and had "five enormous sons," Lily never married William Bankes, instead choosing intellectual friendship. But even with this separation, Lily still has not resolved her grief, and in the midst of thinking about Mr. Carmichael, the old opium addict who wrote war poetry, her eyes fill inexplicably with tears: "looking at the picture, she was surprised to find that she could not see it. Her eyes were full of a hot liquid (she did not think of tears at first) which, without disturbing the firmness of her lips, made the air thick, rolled down her cheeks"

(267). This (vaguely amniotic) gush of tears is another way in which the biological and maternal power of Mrs. Ramsay is made manifest and transferred to Lily; again, she is fertilized by Mrs. Ramsay and her tears mark an outpouring of creativity as well as grief. Lily even cries out in a moment of *jouissance*: “Mrs. Ramsay!” she said aloud, “Mrs. Ramsay!” The tears ran down her face” (268)

If the language used to depict Lily’s memories of Mrs. Ramsay often implies fertilization, the entire process of Lily’s painting could easily be described as a metaphor of laborious birth. Lily reminds herself that the artist must get hold of “that very jar on the nerves, the thing itself before it has been made anything. Get that and start afresh; get that and start afresh” (287). From this embryonic idea, this pre-verbal expression, Lily gradually gives her work form. Her composition process goes in waves; thoughtful contemplation interrupted by pain and anguish, returning to contemplation again. After each pang of grief, Lily is rewarded with another image of Mrs. Ramsay, which she can integrate into her work as a whole. At the end of this cycle, Lily has one final sharp pain, but is rewarded by a final, peaceful image of Mrs. Ramsay: “Mrs. Ramsay—it was part of her perfect goodness—sat there quite simply, in the chair, flicked her needles to and fro, knitted her reddish-brown stocking, cast her shadow on the step. There she sat” (300).

Unlike the previous visions, this one alerts Lily that it is time to truly give birth, to finish her work: “And as if she had something she must share, yet could hardly leave her easel, so full her mind was of what she was thinking, of what she was seeing, Lily went past Mr. Carmichael holding her brush to the edge of the lawn. Where was that boat now? And Mr. Ramsay? She wanted him” (300). This moment, Lily realizes it is time for her to finish her painting – to finally share her thoughts and perspectives through her

art. Lily's desire for Mr. Ramsay is not a sign of Lily's inability to complete her painting on her own. It is instead an acknowledgement that Mr. Ramsay is her partner in grief and that his journey to the lighthouse somehow parallels her own birthing process. Lily's gift – this peaceful vision of Mrs. Ramsay – is something that allows her to reach out imaginatively to Mr. Ramsay, to give him her sympathy and to incorporate him, too, into her painting. And after she imagines Mr. Ramsay landing, Lily completes her painting by drawing a line in the center of the painting, and Woolf states: "Yes, she thought, laying down her brush in extreme fatigue, I have had my vision" (310).

Lily's vision is given shape in her painting, an abstract, changeable work in which Victorian relationships and ideals, such as the overvaluation of the family and the directive toward eugenic motherhood, are reconfigured to fit a new time. In the twentieth century, according to Woolf, the eugenic mother is replaced by other figures – initially Mrs. McNab, and later and more powerfully, Lily Briscoe, the artist. But this new kind of creativity, this art that can now be shared with others, is not an art without any relationship to the eugenic idealization of biological maternity that preceded it. As we see from the description of Lily's artistic process, the female artist gives birth precisely because of her relationship with the mothers who came before her. As Woolf states in *A Room of One's Own*, "we think back through our mothers if we are women." Lily's memories of Mrs. Ramsay's accomplishments – the fervor with which she pursued not only the birthing and rearing of her own children, but also the mothering and support of the entire English race – are the very precondition of Lily's art.

Multiple factors influenced the regenerative themes of *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*. From her mother, Julia, Woolf inherited a pattern of femininity that she

would both nostalgically yearn for and eagerly repudiate. From Leslie Stephen, Woolf inherited her authorial birthright, her hereditarian thinking, some connections to early eugenics, and perhaps even her mental illness. In later years, Woolf became aware of socialist eugenics through her husband and her membership in the Fabian Society. In her feminist writings, Woolf evokes and seems supportive of eugenic motherhood, perhaps to appeal to her audience. However, Woolf's own mental illness and the fact that she never had children, perhaps for eugenic reasons, strongly shaped her negative associations with a particular form of conservative eugenics. Although Woolf never belonged to a eugenic society and never wrote eugenic propaganda, it is clear that eugenics was a feature of Victorian society that Woolf engaged with intellectually and emotionally.

In contrast with her feminist essays, Woolf's novels show more widespread critiques of eugenics, often in the form of satire. Yet it is also clear that she recognized the enormous symbolic power of eugenic motherhood and its applicability in addressing problems of social regeneration. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, socially regenerative power is distributed throughout the novel, split between multiple characters. The artist figures, responsible for artistic regeneration, are a mourning female vagrant, Clarissa, and Septimus Smith. This fragmentation and distribution of the regenerative force tends to soften its impact, and the reader is also asked to believe that suicide is paradoxically a socially regenerative force.

In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf simplifies the theme of social regeneration by focusing on a mother/foster daughter pairing (albeit an erotically charged one). Mrs. Ramsay unifies all the characteristics of a race-mother. When she passes away, it concretely represents the need for a different method of social regeneration. There are

still two potential “artist” figures; Mrs. McNab compares to the female vagrant, while Lily replaces Elizabeth Dalloway, Septimus Smith, and Sally Seton. Lily, however, emerges as dominant. She renounces the eugenic compulsion to marry and beget children and courageously becomes an artist instead. And like Woolf herself, Lily memorializes the eugenic ideal of motherhood in her art.

In her diary in December 1927 Woolf writes: “And yet oddly enough I scarcely want children of my own now. This insatiable desire to write something before I die, this ravaging sense of the shortness & feverishness of life, make me cling, like a man on a rock, to my own anchor. I don't like the physicalness of having children of one's own” (167). While Woolf did not hold this position consistently, it is possible that *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* resolved many of her ambivalent feelings – about her parents, about her childlessness, and about eugenics.

CHAPTER IV

“STILL HARPING ON THE MOTHER:” JAMES JOYCE AND EUGENIC TRANSFORMATIONS

"Virginia Woolf's private evaluation of James Joyce's *Ulysses* was not favorable. She wrote in her diary: "I finished *Ulysses* and think it is a mis-fire. Genius it had, I think; but of the inferior water. The book is diffuse. It is brackish. It is pretentious. It is underbred, not only in the obvious sense, but in the literary sense" (II: 199). While Woolf and Joyce have historically been held up as examples of the Modernist stream-of-consciousness form, it is clear that Woolf did not initially recognize Joyce as a fellow Modernist genius. Although later she expressed guarded approval, especially of Joyce's techniques, this initial response is actually quite telling. Woolf's choice of adjectives, especially "inferior" and "underbred," points not only to her personal opinion, but also to a much larger cultural phenomenon – the patterns of racial thinking that, at this point, were an inescapable component of both the British and Irish minds.

To speak about Joyce's engagement with British eugenics and the ideal of race-motherhood, we must first ask, "What difference does Irishness make?" Although there was a movement in Joyce criticism for some years to interpret Joyce as an apolitical citizen of the world, several recent critics have overturned this idea, beginning with Dominic Manganiello, who in *Joyce's Politics* argues that Joyce's works are not only influenced by politics, but are political pieces themselves. The latest post-colonial trends

see Joyce inescapably caught in the bind of the English colonial oppression of the Irish.¹ This colonial oppression took many forms, not the least of which was the proliferation of racial stereotypes. English popular writing in the Victorian era constructed the Irish as an entirely different race. According to L. P. Curtis, the British regarded themselves as “Anglo-Saxons” and defined themselves against the Irish “Celts” or “Gaels” whom they considered to be lower on the evolutionary chain.² Curtis defines this kind of race-thinking as “Anglo-Saxonism.” Anglo-Saxonists believed that the Anglo-Saxon peoples of the British Isles had particular qualities and talents handed down through inheritance that made them superior to all other races. Thus, the threats to this racial and cultural superiority were degeneration, race-suicide, and the contamination of Anglo-Saxon Blood by mixing it with “foreign” blood (Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons* 11-12).

As an Irish author, Joyce, one would think, should have had nothing but contempt for English eugenics. Few critics explore Joyce’s engagement with eugenics, and those who do tend to draw this conclusion.³ Donald Childs includes Joyce in his list of “literary dissenters from eugenics” (13). Mary Lowe-Evans classifies eugenics as one of the “crimes against fecundity” Joyce supposedly condemned in “Oxen of the Sun” (1).

¹ For several significant postcolonial analyses, see Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson and Edward Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1990), Enda Duffy, *The Subaltern Ulysses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), Vincent John Cheng, *Joyce, Race, and Empire* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995), Ellen Carol Jones, ed., *Joyce: Feminism/Post/Colonialism*, vol. 8 (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998), and Derek and Marjorie Howes Attridge, ed., *Semicolonial Joyce* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

² See L. Perry Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts: A Study of Anti-Irish Prejudice in Victorian England*, *Studies in British History and Culture*, vol. 2 (Bridgeport, Conn.: University of Bridgeport, 1968).

³ Eugenics is briefly mentioned in some critical articles. See Vike Martina Plock, "A Feat of Strength in 'Ithaca': Eugen Sandow and Physical Culture in Joyce's *Ulysses*," *Journal of Modern Literature* 30.1 (2006) and Andrew Gibson, *Joyce's Revenge: History, Politics, and Aesthetics in Ulysses* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), for discussions of eugenic references in Ithaca. See also Erwin R. Steinberg, "Otto Weininger's Sex and Character Was Never 'Prime Material for a Comedy'," *James Joyce Quarterly* 36.3 (1999), in which Steinberg argues that Joyce took seriously Weininger’s theories of the degenerate Jew.

And Frank Budgen takes a similar position, arguing that the medical students in “Oxen” are punished because they have “sworn allegiance to the newer gods of Malthus and the eugenic societies” (216). However, I would argue that Joyce’s engagement is far more complex than unqualified opposition – eugenics was, for Joyce, an important cultural phenomenon to which he was ambivalently drawn, and one that he found to be influential on his theories of artistic creation.

Although I do not assume that Joyce’s works are autobiographical, or that we can read *Portrait* as a transparent window into Joycean politics, these works show that Joyce was attuned to the racial thinking of his time. I argue that, for Joyce, the discourse of eugenics had rich symbolism and rhetoric, which could be mined both for the purpose of parody and to form his protagonists’ own artistic theories. In particular, I argue that in *Stephen Hero*, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Ulysses*, artistic success is presented as dependent on race-motherhood. However, Joyce imagines the Irish race-mother as transforming and reversing some of the qualities of the English race-mother, in the final analysis eliding both English social mores and biological determinism but retaining her power for social and artistic regeneration.

An account of the English application of eugenic principles to Ireland will be useful at this juncture. Anglo-Saxonism could easily be identified as a core ideology of eugenicists. For example, in 1892, the socialist eugenicists Sidney and Beatrice Webb write about their forthcoming trip to Ireland: “We will tell you about Ireland when we come back. The people are charming but we detest them, as we should the Hottentots – for their very virtues. Home Rule is an absolute necessity in order to depopulate the country of this detestable race” (Qtd. Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons* 63). But racism alone does

not encompass the fullness of the eugenic response to the Irish. Demographically, Ireland was somewhat of a puzzle. The Famine of 1845-9 had rapidly depopulated the country. Approximately 1,000,000 deaths can be attributed to the famine alone. Moreover, other demographic trends, such as emigration and a drop in the marriage rate, had begun to decrease the population even before the Famine. After the Famine, more and more Irish were choosing late marriage or permanent celibacy. Thus, we have the amazing statistic that the population of Ireland in the early 1840s was around 8,200,000 and by 1911 it had decreased to 4,400,000 (Foster 323). The Neo-Malthusians held the position that these trends were to Ireland's benefit; their journal, *The New Generation*, asserted that Ireland "was much more prosperous and better off with a population of four million than it had been with twice that number a century earlier" (Soloway 254). Some eugenicists agreed, believing that the famine spurred on natural selection, weeding out the worst of the Irish. A mildly eugenic evaluation of the Famine persists; R. F. Foster claims in *Modern Ireland* that "the Famine decimated precisely the class that traditionally favored improvident early marriages. The small farmer ethos took over, postponing fertility, avoiding subdivision, and insisting on a firm material basis for marriage" (341). However, the most common eugenic view of Ireland at the turn of the century was that the Famine and emigration were having a diseugenic effect, removing so many Irish that it would make the regeneration of that nation nearly impossible. In *Parenthood and Race Culture* (1909) Caleb Saleeby states, "The case of Ireland is at present an insoluble one because the emigration of the worthiest had had full sway" (5).

Finally, no assessment of English eugenic attitudes about the Irish can be complete without a discussion of Irish fertility. Even with the vast depopulation of the

continent and the drop in marriage rates, the overall population of Ireland recovered quickly after the Famine because married Irish women had one of the highest fertility rates in Europe. In 1911 the average family included nearly seven children (Kennedy 169). Some British eugenicists saw Irish fertility as an example for the rest of the civilized world. In a chapter examining the birth rate in the United Kingdom, the conservative Whethams decry the drop in the English birth rate, noting “In Ireland alone . . . the drop was checked about 1890” (127). However, the problem was that this Irish fertility, approved by the English when confined within that nation’s borders, was no longer desirable when the Irish immigrated to England. The majority who came to England worked as poor laborers and contributed to what the eugenicists thought was the main national problem: differential fertility. In “The Decline in the Birth-Rate,” (1907) Sidney Webb states:

In Great Britain at this moment, when half, or perhaps two-thirds, of all the married people are regulating their families, children are being freely born to the Irish Roman Catholics and the Polish, Russian, and German Jews, on one hand, and to the thriftless and irresponsible – largely the casual laborers and the other denizens of the one-roomed tenements of our great cities – on the other. . . . This can hardly result in anything but national degeneration; or, as an alternative, in the country gradually falling to the Irish and the Jews. (16-17)

Often the Irish are considered *part* of the degenerate English poor, but for Webb, the Irish and Jews are clearly not even qualified for English citizenship; their unchecked fertility threatens to overwhelm and destroy the Anglo-Saxon domination of England.

Joyce himself was caught up in Anglo-Saxon racial thinking and this ideology shaped how he viewed his own people. In his youth, Joyce was particularly contemptuous of the general Irish populace. In “The Day of the Rabblement” (1901) he begins with a quotation from Giordano Bruno: “no man. . . can be a lover of the true or

the good unless he abhors the multitude” (69). Joyce’s argument in this article is that the Irish Literary Theater, by choosing to perform works by Irish authors exclusively, was pandering to a lower form of art. He states, “The Irish Literary Theater must now be considered the property of the rabblement of the most belated race in Europe” (70).

A few years later in 1907, in a speech to an Italian audience in Trieste, Joyce is a bit more generous to his countrymen.⁴ He states, “The English now disparage the Irish because they are Catholic, poor and ignorant” but then goes on to blame English colonial exploitation for the Irish conditions (167). He seems to believe that the famine was diseugenic, claiming that “the English government . . . allowed the best of the population to die from hunger” (167). We can compare this to the voice of the Citizen in *Ulysses*, who asks, “Where are our missing twenty millions of Irish should be here today instead of four?” (267). These Irish are clearly also missing because of emigration, which Joyce sees as the only possible option, claiming, “No one who has any self-respect stays in Ireland” (171). Taking up the issue of social regeneration directly, Joyce states “it would be interesting . . . to see what might be the effects on our civilization of a revival of this race” (173). But in Joyce’s evaluation, the Irish are hindered as much by their adherence to Catholicism as their economic circumstances; he asserts, “I confess I do not see what good it does to fulminate against the English tyranny while the Roman tyranny occupies the palace of the soul” (173).

Joyce, who left Ireland in a self-imposed exile in 1904, continued to correspond closely with his relatives; thus, he may have had some knowledge of the blooming of the eugenics movement in Ireland. According to historian Greta Jones, eugenics officially

⁴ See James Joyce, "Ireland, Land of Saints and Sages," *The Critical Writings of James Joyce*, ed. Ellsworth and Richard Ellman Mason (New York: The Viking Press, 1959).

came to Ireland in August of 1911 when a National Public Health Congress was held in Dublin. Although a meeting was held prior to the congress to begin a Eugenics Society in Dublin, the society, for unknown reasons, did not establish itself after the Congress. Irish people interested in eugenics, such as William Butler Yeats, the Guinness family, and Lady Aberdeen, instead joined the Eugenics Education Society. The Irish eugenics movement did put down roots in Belfast in the year 1911 when the London Eugenics Education Society sent its president, Leonard Darwin, to address them on “The new science, eugenics or race hygiene” (83). From the years 1911-1914, this group held a series of public lectures in the hopes of encouraging public support for the extension to Ireland of the British Mental Deficiency Act of 1913.

Irish eugenics enthusiasts even made some inroads with the Catholic Church, showing again the malleability of eugenic discourse and its appeal to widely different groups. Catholic officials were particularly sympathetic with the aims of arousing racial pride and physical and mental improvement. According to Jones, the church

found acceptable in eugenics the emphasis upon pro-natalism, motherhood, pride in progeny, and the strengthening of the awareness of the social importance of marriage. To reinstitute marriage and children as the center of social life was, Catholic commentators believed, a commendable attempt to stem the tide of decadence. (91-2)

Some Catholic priests went so far as to suggest that the church ban the marriage of those whom they believed could not possibly raise healthy offspring – those deemed mentally deficient or exceedingly poor (G. Jones 92). However, the church never relinquished its control over marriage and sexuality, accepting only “a version of eugenics which avoided direct intervention in reproduction (whether by birth control or sterilization) and which

did not allow the state to intervene in areas of morality and marriage law which the church regarded as its own preserve” (G. Jones 91).

Thus, only a certain form of eugenic ideology was easily embraced by Catholicism – the linkage between motherhood and social regeneration. We see a Catholic nun such as Margaret Anna Cusack writing:

Every mother is forming the future generation, . . . every mother is affixing her stamp and seal to the society which will be when she perhaps has gone to her account.

It is an awful thing to think how far we can control and influence the destinies of an entire race, of a race preparing for its future life. Mothers! Arise in the greatness of your power, in the splendour of your strength, and be the regenerators of the world. (15)

The kind of regeneration Cusack recommends, however, is not merely physical; it is a spiritual and moral regeneration as well. She exclaims, “how much sin may be prevented by the example of a good woman!” (15). Thus, eugenic rhetoric in Ireland was sometimes filtered through Catholicism; race-thinking, physical regeneration, and spiritual regeneration were linked.

Catholic priests, sensitive to the rhetoric their audience found persuasive, seized on the idea of depopulation leading to “race suicide” and used this phraseology to argue against birth control. According to Soloway, “By the mid 1930s Catholic denunciations of birth control were as likely to emphasize race suicide as they were theological pronouncements and papal encyclicals” (264). However, by this time Catholicism and eugenics had mostly parted ways; according to Jones “in the 1920s the hostility of eugenicists to the poor – particularly the fertile poor – became more pronounced. Moreover, although eugenicists were initially reluctant to embrace birth control as a eugenic policy, by 1925 they were actively engaged in its promotion among the allegedly

dysgenic classes” (93). Thus, Catholic hostility to birth control led them in 1930 to classify eugenics as outside acceptable Catholic doctrine (G. Jones 94). Ironically, the church denounced eugenics while at the same time utilizing eugenic rhetoric to promote their anti-birth-control agenda.

While it is unclear how much Joyce knew about the eugenics movement in Ireland, there is clear evidence that he was exposed to eugenic ideology. Joyce alludes both to Nietzsche and to Shaw’s *Man and Superman* with his references to Stephen as “Kinch, the superman” (42) in *Ulysses*. Moreover, as Richard Ellmann notes, in 1903 he signed a letter to Nora “James Overman” (142).⁵ Joyce’s Trieste library contained several books by authors with eugenic sympathies. He owned the aforementioned anti-Irish tract by Sidney Webb, “The Decline in the Birth Rate,” because it was included in a bound volume of Fabian tracts. While it cannot be proved that Joyce read this pamphlet, it is more likely that he read the other works: Havelock Ellis’s *The New Spirit*, George Bernard Shaw’s *Getting Married*, and Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did*. Ellis, Shaw, and Allen represented a liberal approach to eugenics and each espoused eugenic feminism.

Havelock Ellis was a sexologist whose goal was to reconcile eugenics with the full expression of sexuality. He was a close friend of Olive Schreiner and, as we have seen, his work also influenced Mina Loy. Richard Brown persuasively argues that Joyce read and was influenced by Ellis’s most famous work, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (83). However, Ellis also published books on eugenics, including *The Problem of Race Regeneration* (1911) and *The Task of Social Hygiene* (1912), and Ellis’s eugenic beliefs

⁵ Unless specified, all Richard Ellmann quotations refer to the standard Joyce biography, Richard Ellmann, *James Joyce*, New and rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

permeate *The New Spirit*. This text does not initially seem eugenic; it purports to be a survey of literary figures representing the “New Spirit” of enlightenment, and discusses Diderot, Heine, Whitman, Ibsen, Tolstoy, and Huysmans. However, Ellis pays close attention to the inheritance these authors gained from their mothers, who are described in eugenically-inflected terms. Regarding Heine, Ellis states, “it was his mother with her strong and healthy nature, well developed both intellectually and emotionally, and her great ambitions for her son, who, as he himself said, played the chief part in the history of his evolution” (74). Ibsen’s mother was “a quiet lovable woman, the soul of the house, devoted to her husband and children. She was always sacrificing herself (137).

Ellis’s eugenic feminism is evident in his narration of Tolstoy’s encounter with a prostitute who was raising her daughter to the same occupation; Ellis claims Tolstoy “realized that it was the mother herself who had to be saved from a false view of life according to which it was right to live without bearing children and without working. . . the one mother sends her daughter to the public-house, the other to the ball” (200). Like Olive Schreiner, Ellis seems to be arguing that women have a responsibility to labor, but unlike Schreiner, Ellis sees bearing children as acceptable social labor. Finally, Ellis’s eugenics and feminism lead him to contend, “The rise of women – who form the majority of the race in most civilized countries – to supreme power in the near future, is certain. Whether one looks at it with hope or with despair one has to recognize it. For my own part I find it an unfailing source of hope” (10).

In *Shaw and Joyce: The Last Word in Stolen Telling*, Martha Black argues that George Bernard Shaw is an unacknowledged source for many of Joyce’s themes and characters, particularly Leopold Bloom. The fact that Joyce owned Shaw’s play, *Getting*

Married, tells us it may have been one of these unacknowledged sources. Joyce could not have missed the eugenic content and Shaw's particular brand of socialism and feminism. In the preface to his play, Shaw writes, "marriage is now beginning to depopulate the country with . . . alarming rapidity." According to Shaw, it is not the "Free Lover" who will destroy marriage and the race, but the couples employing preventative checks: "the licentiousness of marriage, now that it no longer recruits the race, is destroying it" (39). After this declaration, Shaw devotes several pages to the problem of "superfluous" women:

The right to bear a child, perhaps the most sacred of all women's rights, is not one that should have any conditions attached to it except in the interests of race welfare. There are many women of admirable character, strong, capable, independent, who dislike the domestic habits of men; have no natural turn for mothering and coddling them; and find the concession of conjugal rights to any person under any conditions intolerable by their self-respect. Yet the general sense of the community recognizes in these very women the fittest people to have charge of children, and trusts them, as school mistresses and matrons of institutions, more than women of any other type . . . Why should the taking of a husband be imposed on these women as the price of their right to maternity? (39)

Shaw thus proves himself a eugenic feminist characteristic of his age; like most eugenicists, he assumes women have a "right to maternity" and an innate desire for it, and he discourages the use of birth control by the upper classes. Although his opposition to birth control might seem repressive, he is quite radical in his suggestion that women might be making wise eugenic choices by not entering into marriage with unsuitable partners, stating: "The best mothers are . . . those who place a very high price on their services, and are quite prepared to become old maids if the price is refused, and even to feel relieved at their escape" (40).

Finally, the third eugenic book in Joyce's library is *The Woman Who Did* by Grant Allen. As I discussed in Chapter One, *The Woman Who Did* is a eugenic romance.

In it, Herminia opposes marriage for roughly the same reasons Shaw cites above. Herminia argues that her choice to enter into a sexual relationship outside of marriage will allow her the autonomy she would otherwise lack. She also believes free love will lead to eugenic pairings. The child she conceives is repeatedly referred to as the hope for the regeneration of mankind. Although Herminia's eugenic feminism is eventually treated ironically, *The Woman Who Did* is one of the first texts in which the female heroine acts on the theories behind race-motherhood, taking them to their logical conclusions. As R.B. Kershner claims, "Joyce gives the book a backhanded tribute in the 'Cyclops' episode of *Ulysses* when *The Woman Who Didn't* appears in the list of 'tribal images of many Irish heroes and heroines of antiquity'" (Bakhtin, 267).

Although we cannot know to what extent these particular texts influenced Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Ulysses* display a complex engagement with race thinking, eugenics, and eugenic feminism. We might have some justification for reading *Stephen Hero* as autobiography, as parts of it are transcribed, without much alteration, from Joyce's actual experiences. However, *Portrait* is an entirely different story. What seems to me to be the main difference between the two works is that in *Portrait*, aesthetic theory is no longer solely Stephen's domain. This might seem counter-intuitive, considering that Stephen's aesthetic theory occupies a huge amount of space in both *Portrait* and *Ulysses*. However, in *Portrait*, Joyce deliberately paints Stephen as a flawed, incomplete character, never fully realizing the Joycean theory of art.⁶ Perhaps Joyce realized that a character who never quite reached enlightenment was far more interesting than a mature artist. Therefore, Stephen is constantly shown in

⁶ For a classic example of this argument, see Hugh Kenner, "The *Portrait* in Perspective," *James Joyce's a Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man: A Casebook*, ed. Mark A. Wollaeger (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2003).

dialogue with others; his view is deliberately narrow because it needs to be expanded by those around him. Dramatic tension is created both by Stephen's growth and his retreats.

Hugh Kenner describes Stephen as "the egocentric rebel become an ultimate" (31). Stephen's main characteristic is refusal. He refuses any act that would make him part of a group: he refuses to sign a petition, he refuses to join the Gaelic league, and he refuses to go to Mass. Stephen sees himself as pressed on all sides by forces attempting to shape his identity:

When the gymnasium had been opened he had heard another voice urging him to be strong and manly and healthy and when the movement towards national revival had begun to be felt in the college yet another voice had bidden him be true to his country and help to raise up her language and tradition. In the profane world . . . a worldly voice would bid him raise up his father's fallen state by his labours and, meanwhile, the voice of his school comrades urged him to be a decent fellow, to shield others from blame or to beg them off and to do his best to get free days for the school. (82)

The multiple, conflicting ideologies of these various social groups pull at Stephen, and he feels he is hailed by a "din of all these hollow-sounding voices." Stephen says that "He gave them ear only for a time" and "he was happy only when he was far from them, beyond their call, alone or in the company of phantasmal comrades" (82). But Stephen's belief that he has silenced the call of these social forces, that he can instead rely on "phantasmal comrades," is belied by both our own knowledge of subject formation and by Stephen's experiences. Although Stephen believes himself perfectly capable of self-fashioning, the truth is that Stephen is inescapably shaped by the forces of history and by the social groups he so strongly repudiates. To deny one's participation in an ideological system is still to be a part of it. As Stephen's uneven rejection of Catholicism shows, the very forces he tries to escape become the unconscious content of his identity. For Stephen, his fantasy of autonomy conflicts with both his actual experience and his

somewhat uncontrollable mental world, leading him to his famous declaration in *Ulysses*, “history. . . is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake” (28). Thus, from the position of the reader, an emphatic denial of influence from Stephen also serves to illustrate what forces *are* active in shaping him.

Returning again to the above passage, we can say that Stephen is affected by Irish eugenic discourses, such as the contemporary construction of masculinity emphasizing health and strength; he is shaped by the ideal of Irish nationalism espoused by such societies as the Gaelic League. And finally, Stephen is shaped by his father, family, and friends. Thus, Joyce presents us with a character who is unable to separate himself from social forces while simultaneously declaring the utter necessity of such separation.

Portrait is an ironic picture of the artist who is given multiple opportunities to grow and develop through engagement with others, and who only partially succeeds. Each of Stephen’s close friends represents a quality that Stephen lacks in himself and a way of looking at the world that would enhance his narrow view.

A conversation that illustrates Stephen’s need (and refusal) to incorporate the ideas of others also contains *Portrait’s* most obvious reference to eugenics. As Stephen is discussing his theory of aesthetics in *Portrait*, he notes that one of the problems with a universal theory of aesthetics is that beauty seems to be relative:

The Greek, the Turk, the Chinese, the Copt, the Hottentot, said Stephen, all admire a different type of female beauty. That seems to be a maze out of which we cannot escape. I see, however, two ways out. One is this hypothesis: that every physical quality admired by men in women is in direct connexion with the manifold functions of women for the propagation of the species. It may be so. . . . For my part I dislike that way out. It leads to eugenics rather than to esthetic. It leads you out of the maze into a new gaudy lecture-room where MacCann, with one hand on *The Origin of Species* and the other hand on the new testament, tells you that you admired the great flanks of Venus because you felt that she would

bear you burly offspring and admired her great breasts because you felt that she would give good milk to her children and yours. (181-82)

The reference to a maze with two possible exits immediately brings to mind the Labyrinth designed to house the Minotaur. Like the nightmare of history, this maze is something that it seems one “cannot escape.” This maze is the problem of how the artist approaches life; it is the problem created by Dedalus, Stephen’s mental and artistic father. It is thus tremendously important that “eugenics” is a legitimate exit from the maze. It is a way that Stephen rejects and mocks, but that does not mean that Joyce himself discounts this theory. It is in fact a parallel discourse to Stephen’s aesthetic theory – another path through the maze of history and an intelligent, humanistic approach.

This reading is further supported by a study of the character of MacCann, characterized in the above quotation as eugenicist preacher. MacCann is based on Joyce’s friend Francis Skeffington, a fellow student at University College. Joyce evaluated him as the cleverest man at University College, excepting, of course, himself (R. Ellmann 61). Joyce nicknamed him “Hairy Jaysus,” likely a reference to his tendency to preach about social causes, as well as to the beard Skeffington grew as a protest against shaving. Skeffington supported many different movements. According to Richard Ellman, he was against smoking, drinking, and vivisection, and supported pacificism, vegetarianism, and women’s rights (62). Skeffington and Joyce both socialized at the home of David Sheehy, played charades together, and in general were comrades. They disagreed genially on many subjects and enjoyed spirited debate. After Joyce’s essay on the Irish Literary Theater, “The Day of the Rabblement” was refused by the college magazine, *St. Stephen’s*, Joyce joined forces with Skeffington, whose essay advocating equal access to university education for women had also been rejected. The

two published a pamphlet together but included the qualifier: “each writer is responsible only for what appears under his own name” (Mason 69). Thus Joyce and Skeffington were joined together as intellectuals, rebels, and outcasts, but they wanted to make clear to everyone that their outcast careers took different paths.

In *Stephen Hero*, the character of “McCann” is described as “a serious young feminist” (39). Skeffington’s feminism was also quite fervent; when he married Hannah Sheehy, he adopted the hyphenate surname “Sheehy-Skeffington” as a statement of his views on women’s rights. In addition to its feminist message, Skeffington’s article “A Forgotten Aspect of the Women’s Question,” published with Joyce’s “The Day of the Rabblement,” displays some eugenic elements. Skeffington argues that co-education would be beneficial to society because it would be “to the advantage of both sexes and to the future well-being of the race” (10). He concludes with the argument that Irishwomen deserve equality in University culture, and this equality “will enable them to accomplish worthily their due share in the regeneration of Ireland” (12). Skeffington’s focus on the Irish race and its possible regeneration is evidence that McCann’s linkage with eugenics may have been modeled on Skeffington’s eugenic feminism.

Although in the preceding passage Stephen appears to want to escape eugenics, his “way out” of the maze is equally dependent on evolutionary theory. He states, “though the same object may not seem beautiful to all people, all people who admire a beautiful object find in it certain relations which satisfy and coincide with the stages themselves of all esthetic appreciation” (182). The biological language of stages implies that aesthetic appreciation evolves, just as people evolve. As one evolves in one’s capacity to see beauty, one appreciates a more perfect form. Therefore, Stephen is

motivated to encourage others to evolve so they will appreciate his work. Thus, at the same moment Stephen seems to be rejecting eugenic theory, he incorporates its language and tenets in his own theory of aesthetic evolution.

Stephen's denial of eugenics is also belied by his own preoccupation with racial thinking. Vincent Cheng notes that Joyce used the term "race" eleven times in *Portrait*, referring three times to the Irish as a "priestridden" race. Cheng claims Joyce used "race" the way most of his contemporaries did, "as a term that was interchangeable with the concepts of both nation and ethnicity" (17). In "Genius, Degeneration, and the Panopticon," R. B. Kershner also argues that Stephen is a product of the racial thinking of his time, stating that Stephen's bid for superiority in *Ulysses* through joining the ranks of artists "is entangled with a number of formations in the nineteenth-century popular mind, many of which have their genesis in the scientific conceptions of the period" (378). In particular, Kershner sees Stephen as resisting theories of degeneration, including those that would explain his family's changed social position in these terms (380).

Emer Nolan argues that although Stephen denounces eugenics, "some of his own arguments begin to lead him in the same worrying direction:"

The political and the ethical questions which Stephen faces, when couched in the terms of scientific materialism, become inflected by a grosser materialism of blood and genetics. In this we can recognize a modernism not merely of rationalist demystification, but one which has truck with ideas of biological determinism and even of race consciousness, which would elsewhere appear to be quite foreign to Joyce's fiction. (286)

I would argue that, on the contrary, "race-consciousness," as Nolan puts it, is present in a covert form in most of Joyce's fiction. In fact, Stephen's denouncement of it, like his denouncement of Catholicism, serves to show its importance.

Stephen's eugenic thinking is far more obvious in *Stephen Hero* than in *Portrait*. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen argues with Madden, the Irish nationalist, about reviving the Gaelic language and rejecting English culture. The nationalism Madden espouses is a kind of reverse discourse against British eugenic thinking. According to Curtis, "Celticism tried to accomplish for the 'Irish race' what Anglo-Saxonism had managed to do for the 'English race,' namely to raise the people concerned to an exalted position of cultural and racial superiority" (15). The Irish argued that they, not the English, were "direct descendants of a pure and holy race, composed of the Firbolgs, Tuatha de Dananns, and Milesians" (15). The Gaelic revival led to the reinstatement of Gaelic and Irish sports and much rhetoric about healthy manhood. In particular, the Irish peasant was cited as an example of racial purity.

When Madden claims that the Irish should reject "English civilization," Stephen responds in racialized terms: "the civilization of which you speak is not English – it is Aryan. The modern notions are not English; they point the way of Aryan civilization" (54). According to Stephen, Aryan civilization is uniformly good and the English are the gateway through which it may be accessed. Stephen questions the nationalist elevation of the Irish peasant as an example to Irishmen, stating (in language that ironically presages Woolf's condemnation of *Ulysses*), "his cleverness is all of a low order. I really don't think that the Irish peasant <<represents>> a very admirable type of culture" (54).⁷ At the end of *Stephen Hero*, Stephen visits his godfather in the country on his way to Paris and has a chance to examine these peasants closely. Joyce states, "Physically, they were almost Mongolian types, tall, angular and oblique-eyed. Stephen . . . always looked first for the prominent cheek-bones that seemed to cut the air and the peasants in turn must

⁷ The "<<>>" marks here represent a word Joyce had crossed out in the manuscript to change later.

have recognized metropolitan features for they stared very hard at the youth as if he were some rare animal[s]”⁸ (244). Stephen’s racial evaluation is tinged with irony, as the object of his study is equally fascinated by his appearance and gazes back at him as if Stephen, not he, were the animal in the zoo. Stephen’s language and observations represent standard Anglo-Saxon race thinking, a fact Madden observes when he retorts, “No West-Briton could speak worse of his countrymen. You are simply giving vent to old stale libels – the drunken Irishman, the baboon-faced Irishman that we see in Punch” (64-5).

This passage in *Stephen Hero* relates directly to an aspect of Anglo-Saxonism that Curtis studies in this book, *Apes and Angels*. Curtis explores the way representations of the Irish in the popular press changed in response to Irish agitation for Land Reform and Home Rule. Political cartoons moved from the portrayal of a genial, uneducated Irish peasant – ‘Paddy’ – to a monstrous, apelike, Irish revolutionary, implying the degenerate status of the Irish. For example, in 1862 *Punch* published the following satire on the Irishman in London:

A creature manifestly between the Gorilla and the Negro is to be met with in some of the lowest districts of London and Liverpool by adventurous explorers. It comes from Ireland, whence it has contrived to migrate; it belongs in fact to a tribe of Irish savages: the lowest species of the Irish Yahoo. When conversing with its kind it talks a sort of gibberish. It is, moreover, a climbing animal, and may sometimes be seen ascending a ladder with a hod of bricks. (Qtd. Curtis 100)

Thus, in *Stephen Hero*, Stephen’s Anglo-Irish sympathies are established and he seems to share some of the English racial prejudices. I would suggest that for Stephen, Anglo-Saxon race thinking, and even eugenic discourse, are linked to an English literary inheritance. Stephen desires the benefits of “Aryan” civilization and culture and looks to

⁸ The brackets represent a textual correction.

the English as his literary forefathers, but at the same time he feels utterly alienated by his position as a colonized subject. We see this in *Portrait* during a conversation between Stephen and the dean of studies of his school. Stephen is attempting to describe the paper he is writing on aesthetics. After a debate about the word “tundish,” Stephen recognizes that no amount of mastery in the English language will allow him the same relationship to it as the native:

The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words *home, Christ, ale, master*, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (166)

Stephen is in a doubly alienated position. He rejects nationalism because he sees European culture as superior. However, his position as colonized subject makes it impossible for him to achieve the mastery of the English language he hopes will create his artistic identity.

Stephen’s alienation – his lack of a clear English or Irish identity – leads him to confront the uncomfortable fact that his identity as an Irishman and an artist may depend on a relationship to the Irish mother. As Stephen struggles to define himself, many female figures are important. Dante, his aunt, is an important influence in childhood, but she is mocked by Stephen’s father and Stephen comes to discard her ideas. The unnamed “bird-girl” serves as an artistic inspiration; she leads Stephen to feel like an artist. And finally, Stephen turns to prostitutes for comfort and sexual satisfaction. However, three main figures in the book are continually connected with each other and with the development of art, and they shed light on the connection of biological and artistic conception and on Joyce’s construction of the Irish race-mother. These figures are

Stephen's mother, Emma Clery, and the unnamed peasant woman of the Ballyhoura Hills.

It is no secret that in *Portrait* Stephen struggles to separate from his mother. Suzette Henke argues, "Both *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait* might be seen as extended delineations of Stephen's 'flight from woman'" (Women 120). Owing to his mother's fervent Catholic faith, the mother church and the literal mother are conflated in his mind, and Stephen feels a need to separate from both. Again, *Stephen Hero* has more explicit hereditarian content on this subject than *Portrait*. In *Stephen Hero*, Stephen's mother tells him, "None of your people, neither your father's nor mine, have a drop of anything but Catholic blood in their veins" (134). In a deleted passage ambassadors of the Church tell Stephen, "Catholicism is in your blood." Joyce revises this to state, "Living in an age which professes to have discovered evolution, can you be fatuous enough to think that simply by being wrong-headed you can recreate entirely your mind and temper or can clear your blood of what you may call the Catholic infection?" (206). These passages show several different theories of inheritance. To Stephen's mother, Catholicism is a racial identity, one that Stephen has inherited purely through both sides of the family. The second theory of inheritance appears to be Larmarckian. Generations practicing Catholicism have created an inherited "mind and temper" that has become part of Stephen's heredity. While he might regard it as an infection that could be treated or removed, others would argue it is indelibly inscribed in his body and mind.

While Stephen is motivated to separate from his mother because of his rejection of Catholicism, the reason that seems more mentally pressing is the psychological upset caused by thinking of his mother's body. In his early school years, Stephen is asked if he

kisses his mother every night before he goes to bed; this is like a Freudian fairy-tale riddle – either answer is wrong. If he says yes, as he initially does, he is a “mama’s boy” and incest is symbolically suggested. If he says no, as he then tries to, he is a bad son, or perhaps one who resists *because* he is sexually aware. The questioner, Wells, had previously shoved him into the cesspool in the boy’s lavatory, and this action is symbolically linked to his mother’s body, whose lips are soft and “wetted his cheek.” The mystery of adult sexuality is suggested to Stephen as he begins to question “What did that mean, to kiss? . . . Why did people do that with their two faces?” (26).

A parallel scene appears in *Stephen Hero*, in which the female body is also constructed as incomprehensible and full of corruption and death. Joyce illustrates over and over again that “Reproduction is the beginning of death” (*Portrait* 199). Stephen is much older, in college, and his sister has been ill for some time. As his sister is dying, his mother interrupts Stephen at the piano, demanding, “Do you know anything about the body?” She then tells him in a prolonged interlocation, “There’s some matter coming away from the hole in Isabel’s . . . stomach . . .” (163). When asked what to do, Stephen’s response is incomprehension: “I don’t know, he answered trying to make sense of her words, trying to say them again to himself” (163). Stephen cannot comprehend the female body, and his mother’s Catholic reticence and lack of command of language introduces a pause pointing to some kind of Freudian or Lacanian mystery – the hole in Isabel’s – *what?* The word “stomach” does not solve the problem for Stephen; he clearly cannot bring himself to imagine his sister’s body. Stephen’s command of language fails him; like the alienation he feels in *Portrait* when confronted with a native speaker of the English language, here he is alienated from the language of the maternal. This language

is unclear, slippery, and bodily, while at the same time demanding something of him. Stephen poses the reasonable question, “What hole?” and his mother responds, “The hole. . . the hole we all have . . . here” (163). This dramatic statement answers Stephen’s question but implies even more mysteries. The bellybutton is the hole we all have because we are born from women. One would assume that Stephen’s mother pointed to her own belly to illustrate, reminding Stephen that he once was carried there; her life once nourished his through the cord that made his “hole.” And metaphorically this is the cord that Stephen cannot seem to cut. Again, this situation is nightmarish and incomprehensible for Stephen. The hole both suggested and elided by the ellipsis is the other hole we all have, the anus, pointing again to the filth of the body. Isabel’s bellybutton, her ancient connection to her mother, has become like the anus; it has come open and is oozing “matter.” The mater/matter connection is obvious. Isabel’s distorted birth process is also the sign of her death; further, it is an indication to Stephen that the maternal connection is horrifying, inexplicable, and cannot be denied.⁹

Another scene in *Portrait* sheds light on the further symbolic significance of maternity for Stephen and its connection with language and art. He is visiting Queens College with his father and Stephen feels numb and uninspired. He listens to his father’s stories “without sympathy” (85). When he begins to tour the college, his father’s “lively southern speech . . . now irritated his ears” (86). They enter into the anatomy theater, a kind of amphitheater for viewing surgeries or having anatomy lessons. While Stephen’s father looks for his initials, Stephen finds a different inscription: “On the desk he read the

⁹ Richard Ellmann tells us in the biography that this scene is recorded in one of Joyce’s epiphanies and occurred when his brother George died of peritonitis (94). The fact that Joyce transformed his brother’s male body into his sister’s female body is particularly interesting and further highlights the linkage between the female body, death, and corruption.

word *foetus* cut several times in the dark stained wood” (87). Richard Ellman says this serves as a symbol of Stephen’s puberty “in which sex is reproachful, irresistible” (37). However, the language also implies this is a moment of inspiration: “The sudden legend startled his blood: he seemed to feel the absent students of the college about . . . A vision of their life, which his father’s words had been powerless to evoke, sprang up before him out of the word cut in the desk” (87). As Maud Ellmann argues, this inscription “encroaches on the father’s power. First, it breaks out where the father’s name should be. Second, it lets forth a vision of the past that Simon Dedalus’s words are ‘powerless to evoke’” (169).

Thus, a written reminder of woman’s ability to create life suddenly engenders a story. Maud Ellmann states “Both the timing and the meaning of the word suggest that *Foetus* represents the navel of the novel: the founding scar that marks the primordial attachment of the fetus to the mother. Imprinted on both men and women, the navel testifies to the facticity of motherhood, rather than the mystery of fatherhood” (169). Through Stephen’s experiences in this scene, as well as through his own theories, we see that the maternal body, in particular the biological ability to conceive and bear children, is the inspiration for art, the original writing that Maud Ellmann argues is symbolized by the bellybutton and here, by the inscription *Foetus*.

But the body of the female is horrifying for Stephen and he attributes his own feelings to the imaginary inscriber. He reads the inscription as “a trace of what he had deemed till then a brutish and individual malady of his own mind” (87). Stephen feels sickened by the reveries that enter his mind, believing they are “monstrous” and “abase his intellect”(87). Stephen’s thoughts, which are likely the fruit of an adolescent sexual

awakening, seem to his Catholic sensibilities to be full of sin. Thus, Stephen's rejection here is simultaneously a rejection of his own sexuality and the narrative inspired by an engagement with the female body.

Later, Stephen seeks to transfer his maternal longing to the body of another woman in an erotic encounter. However, his encounters with prostitutes, while they fill a bodily need, are not inspiring to him. The maternal body and its traces are a constant psychological reminder for Stephen of the connection between artistry and maternal creation. But in *Portrait* the mother is more than a primal symbol; she is also a gateway to the Irish racial and national identity. Stephen's attraction to Emma Clery (E. C. of the villanelle) sheds light on this linkage between women and national identity, emphasizing how "race" factors into the construction of a potential "race-mother."

In *Stephen Hero*, Emma is a far more developed character than she is in *Portrait*; Emma is a young university student he meets while visiting the Daniel household (clearly modeled on the Sheehy home Joyce himself visited as a student). Emma is a confirmed nationalist, speaking Gaelic and going to meetings. Stephen even decides to take a class in Gaelic so they will have something in common. He is drawn to Emma, in part because of her nationalism. She feels a relationship to Ireland that Stephen cannot; in a sense he rejects every mother he can find – his biological mother, the mother church, and mother country. He comes close to rejecting Emma also because she is distressingly middle-class; all her interests seem to him to be pedestrian and incompatible with his artistic temperament. However, Stephen still longs for union with her, and in *Stephen Hero*, he attempts to consummate this union by suggesting to Emma that they have a liaison, one night together, at the end of which they will both go their separate ways. Needless to say,

Emma, requiring a bit more respect and commitment, rejects him and doesn't speak to him for the rest of the book.

In *Portrait*, Emma is reduced to an ambiguous E. C., the temptress who inspires Stephen's villanelle. She is also conflated with one of the Sheehy sisters, probably Mary, who, unbeknownst to her, inspired many of Joyce's youthful poems (R. Ellmann 150). However, Stephen still desires a kind of union with her, articulated in the language describing the composition of his villanelle. The villanelle, as Kenner was the first to note, is the result of a wet dream and Stephen's bid to form an art that transcends the maternal body. He borrows language of the annunciation, comparing his imagination to the body of the Virgin:

O! In the virgin womb of the imagination the word was made flesh. Gabriel the seraph had come to the virgin's chamber. An afterglow deepened within his spirit, whence the white flame had passed, deepening to a rose and ardent light. That rose and ardent light was her strange wilful heart, strange that no man had known or would know, wilful from before the beginning of the world; and lured by that ardent rose-like glow the choirs of the seraphim were falling from heaven. (188)

Stephen's conflation of the womb and the imagination is a fulfillment of his earlier contention that "when we come to the phenomena of artistic conception, artistic gestation, and artistic reproduction I require a new terminology and a new personal experience" (182). Here he has taken Emma's heart within his womb-like soul. Emma's heart reverences Ireland and purity; therefore, to incorporate her heart is to metaphorically incorporate into himself the ideologies that affect Stephen, but to which he cannot seem to swear allegiance. This symbolism creates a union with Emma that substitutes for the physical consummation Stephen desired in *Stephen Hero*.

In *Portrait*, Emma is not merely linked with nationalism; she is the symbolic representative of the Irish race and a potential race-mother, as we see when Stephen

muses, “perhaps the secret of her race lay behind those dark eyes” and says “ she was a figure of the womanhood of her country, a bat-like soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness” (191). The Irish soul is compared to a bat, perhaps because the bat is furtive and nocturnal. An evolutionary oddity, the bat evolved to fit itself to the darkness, symbolically the darkness of Irish ignorance. According to Don Gifford, “In Finno-Ugric tradition, the bat is one of the forms the soul takes when it leaves the body during sleep” (199). The bat in connection with the female also brings to mind the vampire, again implying that the female is dangerous and destructive as well as inspirational.

Stephen resents what he sees as Emma’s flirtation with the young priest, Father Nolan, and resentfully imagines her making confession to him: “To him she would unveil her soul's shy nakedness, to one who was but schooled in the discharging of a formal rite rather than to him, a priest of the eternal imagination, transmuting the daily bread of experience into the radiant body of everliving life” (192). Again we see Stephen attempting to use the language of the church to describe his artistic powers, and again in a way that references and co-opts reproductive power; the artist will make a “body” that is eternal.

Stephen’s abortive relationship with Emma has a textual parallel with the encounter between Davin and the unnamed peasant woman Marian Eide has called, “The Woman of the Ballyhoura Hills.” Davin is an innocent young nationalist who is shocked and disturbed by Stephen’s recounting of his sexual experiences, but who also tells Stephen about his own temptation. Stranded after attending an Irish field hockey match, Davin tries to find transportation and stops at a lonely cottage to ask for a drink. He says:

After a while a young woman opened the door and brought me out a big mug of milk. She was half undressed as if she was going to bed when I knocked and she had her hair hanging and I thought by her figure and by something in the look of her eyes that she must be carrying a child. She kept me in talk a long while at the door, and I thought it strange because her breast and her shoulders were bare. She asked me was I tired and would I like to stop the night there. She said she was all alone in the house and that her husband had gone that morning to Queenstown. . . . When I handed her back the mug at last she took my hand to draw me in over the threshold and said: '*Come in and stay the night here. You've no call to be frightened. There's no one in it but ourselves.*' (160)

Eide argues that “The Irish peasant woman presents a brief though complexly realized figure of the nation” (377). She contends that this figure is Joyce’s resistance to the nationalist personification of Ireland as either “an idealized woman (Mother Ireland or the beautiful queen) or a degraded seductress (the woman who invites a stranger into her bed)” (377). Suggesting that Davin’s contention that the woman is pregnant is based on slight evidence, Eide argues “it is as though he must guard against his own sexual longings by transforming this woman in to the erotically inaccessible ideal of Irish motherhood” (384). Yet if the romantic language “something in the look in her eyes” is less conclusive evidence than her figure, the aforementioned statistics about Irish fertility show that any married Irish woman of childbearing years was more likely than not to be pregnant. What’s more, the woman’s pregnancy is absolutely essential to her symbolic function. She is a nationalist symbol precisely *because* she is pregnant; she is a figure of the fecund race-mother. Giving Davin “a big jug of milk,” and appearing with bare breast and shoulders, the woman’s association with motherhood and fertility is unmistakable.

Eide also argues that this woman “presents an altered version of the conventional representation of Ireland as a woman who invites the colonizing stranger into her bed.” Since the woman woos the Irish nationalist instead of the colonizer, the structure of the

story is inverted (384-85). I agree that the choice of Davin as love interest is extremely important. In the language of the Gaelic revival (the Irish transformation of English eugenic thinking) Davin is a pure Irish youth. We are told “His nurse had taught him Irish and shaped his rude imagination by the broken lights of Irish myth” (158-59). He is a “Firbolg,” one of the legendary pure races from which the Irish descended, and a “peasant.” He “sat at the feet of Michael Cusack, the Gael” the Irish nationalist who supported traditional Irish sports (158). Davin is thus a type of his race, just like Emma and like this peasant woman. For him to unite with the fecund Irish mother would definitely disrupt the narrative of the Irishwoman’s acceptance of the colonizer; moreover, it would be a specifically Irish eugenic pairing.

The fact that the woman is already pregnant complicates this reading somewhat; however, the imagery of fecundity and the adulterous situation also tie the woman to the paradigm of the Irish Sovereignty goddess as described by Maria Tymoczko in *The Irish Ulysses*. Tymoczko states that “the Irish goddess Medhb is an example of this mythical dimension of Irish female types; without apology Medhb tells her consort Ailill that she requires a husband with no jealousy, for, she says, ‘I was never without [one] man in the shadow of another’” (114). Davin is literally in shadow, standing outside the house as the woman invites him in. It is likely that this racial mother/goddess, having achieved her first lover, is inviting in the second. The Irish race-mother, unlike the English race-mother, distributes her gifts freely.

Davin, a good Roman Catholic boy who is pure in deed as well as word, refuses this union, although the offer puts him “all in a fever” (160). Another important element of this story is the fact that it is told by Davin rather than Stephen; since Davin is not

troubled by fears of the corruption of the female, his story is beautiful and pure in a way that Stephen can only aspire to. It is no wonder that Stephen is envious of this experience and the story itself. Joyce tells us in words that bear striking similarity to Stephen's assessment of Emma:

The last words of Davin's story sang in his memory and the figure of the woman in the story stood forth reflected in other figures of the peasant women whom he had seen . . . a type of her race and of his own, a batlike soul waking to the consciousness of itself in darkness and secrecy and loneliness and, through the eyes and voice and gesture of a woman without guile, calling the stranger to her bed. (160-61)

The words used to describe the peasant woman are so similar to those used to describe Emma that one might think that Joyce merely duplicated the same description. However, this concluding description of the peasant woman shows her as exactly what Stephen wishes Emma would be: "without guile, calling the stranger to her bed." He resents her "tarrying awhile, loveless and sinless, with her mild lover and leaving him to whisper of innocent transgressions in the latticed ear of a priest" (191). In both situations, Catholicism is a bar to union; in one it is Davin's, the other Emma's.

Another passage near the end of *Portrait* ties all these images together and makes explicit their connection to eugenics. Stephen is walking with Cranly and thinks of "the patricians of Ireland housed in calm" and asks: "How could he hit their conscience or how cast his shadow over the imaginations of their daughters, before their squires begat upon them, that they might breed a race less ignoble than their own?" (205). Kershner accurately identifies this passage as displaying "Lamarckian spiritual eugenics."¹⁰ Most importantly, while the desire to breed a "less ignoble" race is clearly eugenic, Stephen also continues his habit of shifting the symbolic power of biological fertility into the

¹⁰ See R. B. Kershner, "Genius, Degeneration, and the Panopticon," *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (Boston and New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1993), 383.

artistic realm. Stephen wants to be the father of a better Irish race, but he does not want to do it literally. This connects back to Stephen's earlier contention that aesthetic appreciation evolves as the race evolves. If he could improve the imaginations of Irish women, this might be passed on to the next generation; thus, art becomes a eugenic force for cultural improvement. This passage reveals that, for Stephen, aesthetics and eugenics are *not* separate, opposing forces. Instead, eugenics is folded into aesthetics, and this fusion occurs specifically in relation to the potential mothers of the Irish race.

Stephen also continues here the parallel between the womb and the imagination. If the artist's imagination can become a womb, it stands to reason that the wombs of Irish women can be accessed through their imaginations. Kershner is correct that this theory is Lamarckian, but Stephen is also referencing the myth of the maternal impression, discussed as far back as the Greeks. The idea was that what a woman saw (or did, or felt) when pregnant would be transferred to the fetus.

After linking his artistic aspirations explicitly to eugenics, Stephen thinks again of the Woman of the Ballyhoura hills:

And under the deepened dusk he felt the thoughts and desires of the race to which he belonged flitting like bats across the dark country lanes, under trees by the edges of streams and near the pool-mottled bogs. A woman had waited in the doorway as Davin had passed by at night and, offering him a cup of milk, had all but wooed him to her bed; for Davin had the mild eyes of one who could be secret. But him no woman's eyes had wooed. (205-6)

This passage again compares the Irish race to bats, but shows some progression. The bats are no longer awakening, but actively flying. However, Stephen knows that he is still missing something. His contention that "him no woman's eyes had wooed" makes no sense literally; Stephen has clearly had sexual experiences. However, the prostitutes are a poor substitute for a woman who is also an Irish race-mother. Stephen's ultimate

maturity, in his own world-view, would be union and procreation with a simple woman who represented the type of her race, as Nora Barnacle did for Joyce himself.

Unfortunately, Stephen's journey towards eugenic parenthood is halted by his continuing inability to love his mother without feeling as if she is subsuming him. Stephen discusses with Cranly his refusal to go to communion service on Easter. Cranly tries to persuade Stephen that he should do it for his mother's sake. He asks Stephen "Do you love your mother?" Again, Stephen's response is incomprehension: "I don't know what your words mean" (207). Cranly tries to create empathy in Stephen by asking him, "Has your mother had a happy life?" and "How many children had she?" "Nine or ten, Stephen answered. Some died" (208). Cranly then makes an argument that will haunt Stephen in Ulysess:

Whatever else is unsure in this stinking dunghill of a world a mother's love is not. Your mother brings you into the world, carries you first in her body. What do we know about what she feels? But whatever she feels, it, at least, must be real. It must be. What are our ideas or ambitions? Play. Ideas! . . . Every jackass going the roads thinks he has ideas. (208-9)

Cranly effectively dashes Stephen's worldview here, telling him that ideas are nothing compared to the love a woman experiences through the biological act of carrying and giving birth to a child. Stephen realizes the essential difference between them, thinking that "He [Cranly] felt then the sufferings of women, the weakness of their bodies and souls: and would shield them with a strong and resolute arm and bow his mind to them" (211). Later, Stephen notes that Cranly is "Still harping on the mother" (216), missing the irony that *he* has made far more elaborate attempts to play upon the idea of motherhood, transforming and incorporating the mother's biological fertility and her power of social regeneration into his own theory of art.

Instead of making the attempt, like Cranly, to imaginatively identify with women, Stephen immediately decides that his friendship with Cranly is over and resolves, “Away then: it is time to go” (211). Although some might see this as a final bid for independence, according to the terms of Stephen’s own aesthetic theory, it is instead a retreat, a kind of figurative regression. Stephen refuses to move forward and develop a mature relationship with women. He does not become independent; he faithfully records his mother’s words and lets her pack his “new secondhand clothes.” He says his mother “prays . . . that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels” (218). Stephen appears blissfully unaware of the irony of her words; one cannot learn the ways of the heart without family or friends. Stephen seems to believe that he is in some way escaping from his mother, towards the father. He evokes both God and his namesake Dedalus, saying, “Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.” Stephen then describes the creation he plans to do: “I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race” (218). Although the reference to the “conscience of my race” still manifests an awareness of biological connection, Stephen avoids any mention of the womblike imagination that fascinated him earlier, instead substituting a decidedly non-biological “smithy” of the soul.

Although Stephen believes he is about to fly like the mythical Dedalus, we know that like Icarus, his flight will be abortive. He makes it to Paris but crashes back to earth in Dublin. Stephen’s experiences in *Ulysses* further develop the linkage in Joyce’s work between eugenics, biological fertility, and art. However, Stephen’s inability to separate from his mother and to have a mature relationship with a woman continues to halt his

progress as an artist. With Stephen's form already fixed by *Portrait*, Joyce introduces a new character, Leopold Bloom, whose mature, married state and empathy for women serve as a foil for Stephen.

In *Ulysses*, many of the patterns established in *Portrait* are elaborated and clarified. Stephen continues to link the creation of art with maternal biological creativity, but his associations between the maternal body and death and corruption are even stronger, his mother having died in the intervening time. His mother's dead body is now a signifier floating around his imagination. She comes to him in a dream, "loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath, bent over him with mute secret words, a faint odour of wetted ashes" (9). Stephen is haunted by guilt for his refusal to kneel and pray for her when she begged him to on her deathbed. Like the "fox burying his grandmother," (22) the nonsensical answer to the riddle Stephen poses to his students, Stephen attempts to bury his guilt and memories of his mother, but they always return.

Although the emphasis on hereditarian thinking is not as strong in *Ulysses* as in *Stephen Hero* or *Portrait*, Stephen continues to think about maternity in hereditarian terms and in ways that also show Anglo-Saxon racial prejudice. He looks at one of his young Irish students and thinks, "Yet someone had loved him, borne him in her arms and in her heart. But for her the race of the world would have trampled him underfoot, a squashed boneless snail. She had loved his weak watery blood drained from her own" (23). This passage shows a eugenically-inflected prejudice against the Irish in general and this student in particular, who has "weak, watery blood" and is unfit to compete in the world. We also see that, in Stephen's mind, the life of the child drains life from the

mother. We can compare this to Stephen's thinking later, "Bridebed, childbed, bed of death. . . He comes, pale vampire, through storm his eyes, his bat sails bloodying the sea, mouth to her mouth's kiss" (40).¹¹ Here, the bat-like soul of the Irish, previously associated with the racial mother, is transformed into a male vampire bat that drains the blood from the female. Previously the maternal body was seen as a source of corruption that should be resisted, but now the emphasis is on the corruption drained *from* the mother's blood into the blood of the child.

In a second transformation of the symbolism of *Portrait*, the beautiful woman of the Ballyhoura hills who offered Davin a mug of milk is replaced by an aged milkwoman who pours milk into a jug for the young residents of the Martello tower. While the woman still dispenses milk to her young hero, Stephen emphasizes that her body is no longer fertile: "He watched her pour. . . into the jug rich white milk, not hers. Old shrunken paps" (12). Thus, the race-mother of *Portrait* has now turned into a crone:

Old and secret she had entered from a morning world, maybe a messenger. She praised the goodness of the milk, pouring it out. Crouching by a patient cow at daybreak in the lush field, a witch on her toadstool, her wrinkled fingers quick at the squirting dugs. They lowed about her whom they knew, dew-silky cattle. Silk of the kine and poor old woman, names given her in old times. A wandering crone, lowly form of an immortal serving her conqueror and her gay betrayer, their common cuckquean, a messenger from the secret morning. To serve or to upbraid, whether he could not tell: but scorned to beg her favour. (12)

Many critics have identified this figure as the Irish Shan Van Vocht, or Poor Old Woman, a traditional symbol of Ireland that Yeats incorporated in his play *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. Patrick Keane cites the milkwoman as another example of the myth of the devouring female in Joyce, claiming she is an "impoverished, ignorant, sterile, and utterly subject form" (56). Tymoczko argues that she is a form of the Sovereignty goddess, "the hag

¹¹ According to Gifford, this statement is a version of the last stanza of "My Grief on the Sea," translated from the Irish by Douglas Hyde (62).

who has a drink to offer, as in *The Adventure of the Sons of Eochaid Muigmedon*” (108). But Tymoczko agrees with Keane that the milkwoman represents a negative view of “a peasant Ireland that appears to be beyond reviving,” the milkwoman having lost her native language and comically mistaking it for French (109).

According to Caitriona Moloney, the basic feature of the Celtic sovereignty goddess “involves a beautiful woman metamorphosed into a hag whose sexual favors bestow the rightful rulership of the country onto her lover and then restore her to youth and beauty (106). Tymoczko argues that “Joyce does not have her metamorphose” and that the milkwoman shows that “Gaelic Ireland is dead, and its symbol, the Shan Van Vocht is only the butt of jokes” (109). However, if we view *Portrait* and *Ulysses* together, there has indeed been a metamorphosis from fecund race-mother to witchlike crone between the two books. And like the woman of the Ballyhoura Hills, the milkwoman offers her gift to someone other than Stephen. Stephen thinks, “She bows her old head to . . . her bonesetter, her medicineman; me she slights” (12). The milkwoman is impressed by Buck Mulligan, who is a medical student. As we learn in “Oxen of the Sun,” Mulligan’s interest in medicine has also given him an awareness of eugenics and social hygiene.

As Athena was to Telemachus, this old woman is a messenger, and further, a representative of Ireland itself. But Stephen has just said that he “scorned to beg her favour.” Her message, whatever it might be, remains undelivered and the milk goes to Mulligan. Unworthy as Mulligan might be to receive a divine gift, he still seems to find something rejuvenating in the milk, or at the very least makes the effort to tell the old woman, “If we could live on good food like that. . . we wouldn't have the country full of

rotten teeth and rotten guts. Living in a bogswamp, eating cheap food and the streets paved with dust, horsedung and consumptives' spits" (12). This statement seems to contradict the critics' contention that the milkwoman is completely infertile and without power – her milk is “good food.” Further, the milkwoman is not totally removed from her origins as the eugenic race-mother. Mulligan's statements invoke the eugenic promotion of social hygiene, especially with regard to milk products. According to Mulligan, the clean Irish milk the milkwoman provides could increase the health of the people. While eugenics still serves as a powerful undercurrent to the scene, the possibility of union is removed; Mulligan takes her milk and sends her away, shortchanging her on the bill.

In *Portrait*, heredity is discussed almost entirely through the mother. In *Ulysses*, Stephen makes explicit his reasoning, arguing “Paternity may be a legal fiction.” He rejects the *Portrait* symbolism of male artistic conception mimicking the annunciation, saying:

Boccaccio's Calandrino was the first and last man who felt himself with child. Fatherhood, in the sense of conscious begetting, is unknown to man. It is a mystical estate, an apostolic succession, from only begetter to only begotten. On that mystery and not on the madonna . . . the church is founded and founded irremovably because founded, like the world, macro and microcosm, upon the void. Upon incertitude, upon unlikelihood. (170)

Since paternity can never be certain, it is a mystery requiring faith. In *Portrait*, Stephen attempted to conceptualize artistry (the writing of his villanelle) through Catholic iconography; here Stephen re-writes Catholic principles based on the mysteries of biological conception. This focus on fatherhood allows Stephen to temporarily put aside his problems with the maternal body and frees him to develop his theory of art more fully.

The father on whom Stephen is so focused is not his biological but his literary progenitor, William Shakespeare. Although in *Portrait*, Joyce introduces ironic distance between Stephen's aesthetic theory and his own, here Stephen's theories about Shakespeare seem to be Joyce's. In *The Consciousness of Joyce*, Richard Ellmann tells us that in twelve lost lectures delivered in Trieste from 1912-1913, Joyce developed his theory of the autobiographical nature of *Hamlet* and its relation to Shakespeare's life (48). Stephen expands Shakespeare's reputation as the father of English literature to carve out an identity that can only be characterized as a race-father. Stephen declares, "When Rutlandbaconsouthamptonshakespeare or another poet of the same name in the comedy of errors wrote *Hamlet* he was not the father of his own son merely but, being no more a son, he was and felt himself the father of all his race, the father of his own grandfather, the father of his unborn grandson" (171). Here we have an entirely new twist on artistry, inheritance, and biological conception. According to Stephen, the death of Shakespeare's son freed him, allowing him to transcend the laws of biological inheritance and time itself; he is a race-father precisely because artistic fatherhood subsumes and destroys biology.

Feminist critics of *Ulysses* are often troubled by the model put forth here, and developed later in "Oxen of the Sun" when Stephen announces: "In woman's womb word is made flesh but in the spirit of the maker all flesh that passes becomes the word that shall not pass away. That is the postcreation" (320). Following Gilbert and Gubar, who state that Joyce is "seeking to appropriate the primal verbal fertility of the mother" (263), Susan Friedman argues that in *Ulysses*, Joyce substitutes the artistic creation of his mind for the biological productivity of the female. According to Friedman, this continues the

patriarchal religious paradigm in which the masculine mind of God supplants the womb as the model for and space of creation (79-80). Such a model of artistic creation, according to Friedman, denigrates the biological act of conception and delivery and elevates creation through the mind. As Frances Restuccia puts it, Joyce “repudiates the real mother’s womb, while he worships it in its imaginary form” (53). However, while Suzette Henke agrees that “[Stephen] has relentlessly attempted to achieve mastery over the outer world by adopting a male model of creation,” she notes also Joyce’s “satirical rendering of Stephen’s logocentric paradigm” (83). In fact, Mulligan refers to conception in the mind specifically to mock Stephen. He states, “Wait. I am big with child. I have an unborn child in my brain. Pallas Athena! A play! The play’s the thing! Let me parturiate!” and “clasp[s] his paunchbrow with both birthaiding hands” (208).

These analyses fail to place Joyce’s oeuvre in historical context and fail to explore the rich linkages in his work between artistry and maternity, biology, and nationalism. The construction of Shakespeare as an artistic race-father is simultaneously a repudiation and transformation of the eugenic thinking Stephen found so provocative in *Portrait*. The elevation of Shakespeare to artist and race-father does not only elide the body of the mother; it disrupts the entire system of biological inheritance and perfection through breeding. Here, the *death* of the son is the birth of the artist

Like Woolf, however, who memorializes the race-mother, Mrs. Ramsay, in her art, Joyce creates a system that is equally dependent on the race-mother. Joyce substitutes artistic genesis for biological procreation, but continually figures such genesis as only possible through a relationship with some type of race-mother. While Joyce does, indeed, replace the body of the mother with the mind of the artist, his artistic system

encompasses the acts and thoughts of both Stephen and Bloom and we must examine both. None of the critics who claim Joyce adopts a phallogocentric model of creation explain the fact that the Joycean artist *requires* a relationship with the race-mother in order to be productive.

Stephen puts forth two possible paths to artistic development, which sometimes overlap: union with the adulterous race-mother, and learning from the race-mother-as-midwife. This is made clear when Stephen suggests that perhaps, like Socrates, Shakespeare, “had a midwife to mother as he had a shrew to wife” (166). Stephen sees Socrates and Shakespeare both as intellectual fathers to the Aryan race. But this fatherhood was in fact, learned from women. When Stephen is asked, “What useful discovery did Socrates learn from Xanthippe?” He replies, “Dialectic . . . and from his mother how to bring thoughts into the world (156). According to Gifford, Socrates’ mother, Phenareté, was a midwife and “Plato describes Socrates’ behavior as “midwifery” since Socrates seemed to help his students “give birth” to understanding that they had already possessed before the dialogue began” (207).

According to Stephen, Ann Hathaway’s seduction and subsequent cuckolding of Shakespeare was the catalyst for the creation of his art. Hathaway is simultaneously Shakespeare’s mother, his wife, and a crone presiding over his deathbed: “She saw him into and out of the world. . . She bore his children and she laid pennies on his eyes to keep his eyelids closed when he lay on his deathbed” (489). Hathaway is also associated with a goddess,¹² and as Moloney points out, with the Celtic hag (110). Speculating about Joyce’s sources in Celtic mythology, Moloney argues that Joyce re-writes the

¹² The goddess who conquered Adonis is Venus, but the “greyeyed goddess” may also be a reference to Athena.

traditional Celtic sovereignty myth in *Ulysses*, “substituting adultery for sexual intercourse with the hag and betrayal for the usual mythical result of the intercourse, kingship” (110). In Moloney’s argument, “the adulterer becomes Joyce’s icon of sovereignty” and the women who commit adultery in *Ulysses* are combined with images of the Celtic sovereignty goddess (110).

I argue that in *Ulysses*, adulterous women are figured as Irish goddesses because that imagery creates a specifically Irish racial mother, simultaneously evoking and transforming the English ideal of the pure race-mother. The importance of adultery in this system cannot be overstated. Adultery is a part of the tapestry of Celtic goddess-myths and of actual Irish history through the affair between Kitty O’Shea and Parnell. But even more important is the symbolic function of adultery in destabilizing existing systems. When a woman commits adultery, the system of racial purity and paternal inheritance is disrupted because a woman having relations with two men cannot be certain which one might have fathered any child born. It is precisely this kind of rupture that allows new systems to be created and generates Modernist, artistic creativity. Therefore, in Joyce’s system, the adulterous race-mother is in fact, a symbol of the Modernist incorporation and transformation of eugenic motherhood. And a consummation with her is most devoutly to be desired. Stephen’s question to himself as he describes Shakespeare’s seduction by Hathaway echoes his thoughts about Davin’s encounter with the woman of the Ballyhoura Hills: “And my turn? When?” (157).

As we have seen, Hathaway is both wife and midwife. She, like Socrates’s midwife mother, teaches a man to “bring thoughts into the world” (156). Hathaway is both the material of Shakespeare’s art and the agent of his creation as a subject able to

form his own discourse. One might question the classification of the midwife as race-mother. However, I would suggest that midwifery is the obvious occupation of the race-mother in old age. Having been biologically productive, the race-mother has gained the knowledge and experience to assist other women. Further, although she is beyond the age at which she can give birth physically, the midwife can still continue to give birth metaphorically by aiding another, expanding her productivity exponentially. The Bloom's midwife, Mrs. Thornton, refers to the many children she has helped bring into the world as "all my babies" (133). Thus, the midwife is the ultimate race-mother.

Stephen dwells on midwives constantly. As Stephen is walking along the strand and views two women who have also decided to make a visit to the shore. Stephen thinks, "Like me, like Algy, coming down to our mighty mother. Number one swung loundily her midwife's bag, the other's gamp poked in the beach" (31). One of the women is clearly identified as a midwife, while the other is textually linked to midwifery by the reference to a "gamp." The fictitious midwife Sairey Gamp was so well known that, as Jean Towler and Joan Bramall point out, "gamp" was slang for midwife for almost a century until it became slang for an umbrella, an article which Sairey Gamp always carried (170). The quotation continues: "One of her sisterhood lugged me squealing into life. Creation from nothing. What has she in the bag? A misbirth with a trailing navelcord, hushed in ruddy wool" (32). The sisterhood of midwives, not the artist, has the power of creation from nothing. When wondering what might be inside the midwife's bag, he immediately imagines a dead fetus, a threatening mental image. Stephen is struggling to come to terms with his forced separation from his mother as a result of her death and to be reborn as an independent person. The fetus Stephen

imagines is deformed or incomplete, and hushed – unable to utter a sound – as Stephen himself feels incomplete because he cannot create an original work as an artist. And like the word “foetus” carved on the desk in the anatomy theater, thinking of a fetus immediately inspires verbal play in Stephen’s mind. He thinks, “The cords of all link back, strandentwining cable of all flesh” (32). His thoughts slide from the navel itself to mystics who contemplate their navel, to God and creation, to Eden, to Eve’s navel-less belly, to images of wheat and corn, to Eve’s “womb of sin,” and to his own conception. Clearly, it is the midwife who inspires such sliding. Stephen’s chain of associations traces his own origin to the womb of his mother.

Midwifery continues to emerge in *Ulysses* as a powerful symbol inspiring artistic production. It is fitting that the story Stephen tells, which he entitles, “The Parable of the Plums or a Pisgah Sight of Palestine”¹³ is inspired by the two midwives mentioned above. As he begins to tell the story of “two Dublin vestals,” Stephen consciously pursues a phallogocentric act of creation, saying, “On now. Dare it. Let there be life” (119). He imagines the midwives climbing Nelson’s pillar. The huge phallic symbol is a challenge for the women, who strain their way to the top, calling on divine help and, in a sense, worshipping the phallus: “Glory be to God. They had no idea it was that high” (119). The women, afraid the pillar/phallus will fall, regard the statue of Nelson, a “one-handed adulterer” and they become “too tired to look up or down or to speak” (121). As the imagined misbirth in the midwife’s bag was hushed, so now Stephen hushes the midwives. But Stephen’s control over even his own imaginary characters falters, and the characters impudently refuse to be made powerless.

¹³Gifford glosses, “A Pisgah Sight of Palestine” as the vision granted Moses of the Promised Land. At this juncture, Jehovah renews his promise that the land of Canaan will belong to the children of Israel (153).

The midwives engage in metaphoric acts of resistance, refusing to be controlled by either the giant phallic symbol or the author. They sit down and begin to eat a bag of plums. They leisurely eat the plums, “spitting the plumstones slowly out between the railings” (122). The midwives, beyond the reproductive age and snidely called “virgins,” are metaphorically giving birth. These metaphoric births reflect Stephen’s loss of control and the return of his old fear of the maternal body. In an inversion of the usual process of conception and birth, the midwives consume the “fruit” and give birth to the seed. In Patrick McGee’s interpretation of this scene, the midwives “turn their backs on the monument to patriarchy, its cultural erection, and eat the fruit symbolic of the original woman’s transgression against the father’s law” (24). This particular cultural erection was offensive to Dublin nationalists because Horatio Nelson was an English hero, famous for the battle of Trafalgar. Thus, the midwives are turning their backs on a specific *type* of patriarchy – the domination of the British military over the Irish. The midwives are a particularly disruptive force – they are escaping and transforming biology, simultaneously asserting their independence from both men in general and the English phallus in particular.

Despite Stephen’s “sudden loud young laugh” and the assertion in the following intertitle that “PEN IS CHAMP” (122), the midwives do not seem to agree that the penis is champ. As McGee argues, their *jouissance* is beyond the phallus and they evade any attempt to subvert them to a phallogocentric order (24). Stephen’s supposedly daring narrative has been rather unsuccessful. At the end of Stephen’s story, Professor MacHugh compares Stephen not to Socrates (the male intellectual midwife) but to Gorgias, a Sophist.

Since Stephen rejects female midwives, his only chance for progression is to either find an adulterous female or a man who has learned the power of midwifery, like Socrates. Both of these possibilities are opened up through Stephen's contact with Leopold Bloom. While Stephen is the central focus of *Portrait* and also of the beginning of *Ulysses*, when Bloom is introduced in Chapter Four, "Calypso," he emerges as a character significantly more complex and interesting than Stephen himself, and their stories continue on parallel tracks until their inevitable meeting. If Shakespeare's union with the adulterous woman/midwife gives him the identity of race-father and disrupts the system of biological inheritance, Bloom's relationship with Molly and his mixed racial heritage act in a similar fashion. As we will see, when an Irish Jew marries the Irish race-mother/goddess, a new kind of art is formed.

Bloom's racial heritage is essential to the part he plays in transforming the assumptions of British eugenics. As we saw in Chapter Two, in "Anglo-Mongrels and the Rose," Mina Loy explores her "Mongrel" heritage, what it meant to be half-Jewish when her mother and country valued Englishness. Loy's struggles to articulate herself as an artist are directly linked to this racial conflict. Loy eventually attempts to substitute Judaism for Englishness, to create a superior intellectual heritage for herself through her inheritance of her father's "Jewish brain." Joyce takes this "mongrelization" much further than Loy; for Joyce it is the mixture that is powerful, and it is precisely the mongrel or hybrid nature of Bloom's racial inheritance that allows him to function as a disruption of English assumptions about race and eugenics.

Like the Irish, the Jews are victims of Anglo Saxon "race-thinking." The Englishman Hanes enthusiastically studies Ireland but hates the Jews, stating, "I don't

want to see my country fall into the hands of German jews either. That's our national problem, I'm afraid, just now" (18). Gifford argues that this statement is the result of German propaganda accusing the Jews of having taken over the press and financial system of the country (4). This concurs with Mr. Deasy's comment that "England is in the hands of the jews. In all the highest places: her finance, her press" (28). In addition, one of Joyce's sources for the character of Bloom, according to Richard Ellmann, was Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*, an anti-Semitic and antifeminist work (477).¹⁴ This racial prejudice takes a more specific form when Deasy goes on to state, "[Jews] are the signs of a nation's decay. Wherever they gather they eat up the nation's vital strength" (28). This language echoes the language of eugenics and implies that the Jews are a degenerative force.¹⁵ As we saw earlier, Webb classifies the unchecked fertility of the Jew in England as a national threat. According to Soloway, "the influx of Eastern European immigrants, mainly Jews, between 1880 and 1914 stirred up some ethnocentric, eugenicist fears about race adulteration" (60).

Joyce consistently draws parallels between Bloom's position as the recipient of abuse and racial stereotyping and Irish treatment at the hands of the English. One of the newspapermen tells Stephen about a speech by John F. Taylor defending the revival of the Irish tongue. In this speech, Taylor compares the condition of the Irish to that of the Israelites in Egypt. They refused to accept the culture and religion of their oppressors,

¹⁴ For a discussion of the significance of Weininger's theories to *Ulysses*, see Robert Byrnes, "Bloom's Sexual Tropes: Stigmata of the 'Degenerate Jew'," *James Joyce Quarterly* 27.2 (1990), Robert Byrnes, "Weiningerian Sex Comedy: Jewish Sexual Types Behind Molly and Leopold Bloom," *James Joyce Quarterly* 34.3 (1997), and Steinberg, "Otto Weininger's Sex and Character Was Never 'Prime Material for a Comedy,'" "

¹⁵ Since eugenics is most commonly associated with German race-prejudice against the Jews, it might be surprising to learn that a minority of eugenicists thought that interbreeding with the Jewish race might actually make the English race stronger; in *Man and Superman*, George Bernard Shaw argues that "the son of a robust, cheerful, eupeptic British country squire" and "a clever, imaginative, intellectual, highly civilized Jewess, might be very superior to both his parents" (222).

and eventually led the chosen people out of bondage. Joyce thus directs our attention to the fact that British race-thinking oppressed both the Irish and the Jews similarly, but ironically, in *Ulysses* the Irish fail to notice this, or worse yet, replicate the same type of racial prejudice. They regard Bloom as an alien and the book is punctuated by both mild and virulent anti-Semitism.¹⁶ Bloom is referred to as a “coon” (88) and “a perverted jew” (276); Jews are accused of having “a sort of queer odor” (250) and of “filling the country with bugs” (265). In ‘Cyclops,’ Bloom’s response to the Citizen’s combination of Irish nationalism and anti-Semitism is the statement “I belong to a race too . . . that is hated and persecuted. Also now. This very moment. This very instant” (273).

Unlike Stephen, who has been born into an Irish Catholic identity and struggles to reject it, Bloom has been born into an unstable racial heritage. He tells Stephen “Christ, was a jew too and all his family like me though in reality I’m not” (525). The racial characteristics Joyce has attributed to him from Weininger, including his interest in sexual matters and his garrulousness, mark him as of his racial type. But Joyce complicates this easy identification. Having been baptized both Protestant and Catholic, with a non-Jewish mother, Bloom is technically not Jewish. Bloom’s religion might be considered Catholicism but he seems instead to be a secular humanist. Thus, Bloom, like Shakespeare, destabilizes the usual system of inheritance and racial thinking.¹⁷ Joyce tells us that Bloom is only “Jewish” because he is constructed as such by the views of

¹⁶ For an analysis of Bloom’s Jewishness and Joyce’s knowledge of and feelings about Jews, see Ira Nadel, *Joyce and the Jews* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1989). For the actual historical conditions of Jews living in Ireland, see Cormac O Gráda, *Jewish Ireland in the Age of Joyce : A Socioeconomic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ For another critic who argues that Bloom’s racial identity is unstable and therefore a subversive force, see Bryan Cheyette, *Constructions of 'the Jew' in English Literature and Society: Racial Representations, 1875-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993). See also Cheng, who argues that Joyce reverses cultural stereotypes, like Jewishness, Orientalism, and otherness in general, transforming them into “redeeming concepts and comparisons” (27).

others; thus, Bloom's statement that "Christ, was a Jew . . . like me though in reality I'm not" is a kind of Irish bull, a seeming non sequitur that is actually a profound statement.

In his own way, Bloom is as interested in heredity as Stephen. He takes the idea of degeneration seriously. In "Oxen of the Sun," one of the medical students, Punch Costello, behaves offensively and Bloom imagines him, "a cropeared creature of a misshapen gibbosity" who reminds him of the "missing link of creation's chain desiderated by the late ingenious Mr. Darwin" (333). However, Bloom exploits the slippage in the term "breeding," which was used to simultaneously indicate well-selected biological inheritance and upper-class manners. Bloom argues that "breeding" is exhibited by respect for and sympathetic treatment of women: "those who create themselves wits at the cost of feminine delicacy . . . to them he would concede neither to bear the name nor to herit the tradition of a proper breeding" (333).

Bloom is also preoccupied with his own inheritance and what he will pass on to the next generation. While in the bath, Bloom imagines his penis is the "limp father of thousands" (70). But Bloom is not the father of thousands; Milly is his only child and her inheritance seems to have come almost directly from her mother. Bloom thinks: "Molly. Milly. Same thing watered down" (74). Bloom's main focus is on the loss of his son, Rudy, shortly after birth. Having no one to carry on his name, Bloom is in a sense the "last of [his] race" (234). However, this loss also links Bloom to Shakespeare; according to Stephen the loss of Shakespeare's son inspired *Hamlet*. As Richard Ellmann points out, Shakespeare's son lived for eleven years, while Bloom's lived for eleven days (57). Stephen imagines Shakespeare's artistic voice in *Hamlet* is addressed to his dead son. He literalizes this idea by asking his audience to picture Shakespeare performing as the ghost

of the king: “to a son he speaks, the son of his soul, the prince, young Hamlet and to the son of his body, Hamnet Shakespeare, who has died in Stratford that his namesake may live for ever” (155). Although Bloom is sometimes read as the man of science, who contrasts Stephen’s literary leanings, as Lenehan remarks, “There’s a touch of the artist about old Bloom” (193). Bloom himself imagines Shakespeare as being like Martin Cunningham, who is in turn a lot like Bloom himself: an intelligent “sympathetic human man” with “Always a good word to say” (79).

Bloom’s parallel with Shakespeare is further enhanced by his union with and cuckolding by Molly. Like Hathaway, Molly is goddess-like. Joyce himself sometimes classified her as an earth Goddess and wrote to Budgen “Her monologue turns slowly, evenly, though with variations, capriciously, but surely like the huge earthball itself round and round spinning” (263). Tymoczko identifies her as a version of the Irish Sovereignty goddess, in part because of her associations with fertility. With large, round breasts that were so full while she was nursing that Bloom had to milk them himself, Molly is a symbol of plenty and fecundity. Tymoczko also points out that Molly menstruates every three weeks, and is thus, “potentially fertile inconveniently often” (115). However, Molly chooses to limit this fertility by practicing birth control. Some critics have suggested that Molly and Bloom have been abstinent since Rudy’s death, but it is far more likely that her preferred methods are douching and coitus interruptus, as we see when she thinks that it’s good Boylan doesn’t ejaculate much “in case any of it wasnt washed out properly the last time I let him finish it in me” (611). Joyce makes clear the Blooms’s sexual relations are “incomplete,” not nonexistent (605). Like her adultery, Molly’s use of birth control is a disruption of English eugenic expectations – the modern

Irish race-mother retains her ability to inspire without having to endure the discomfort of pregnancy.

Joyce's most detailed exploration of the relationship between biological and artistic productivity is "Oxen of the Sun." Joyce himself made this comparison, describing his writing as a child he carried "in the womb of the imagination" and fed "out of [his] brain and memory" (Letters II: 308). As Richard Ellmann has argued, in "Oxen of the Sun" we see both "the birth of a baby in nature" and "the birth of a work of art" (Consciousness 69). Mina Purefoy's labor and delivery and the dialogue of Stephen, Bloom, and the medical students are described in nine different styles of composition, moving roughly chronologically through the history of the English language. Joyce implies that by the conclusion of the chapter a new style has evolved. Further, Joyce indicated that he was also interested in the parallels between the evolution of the English language and the evolution of humanity. Joyce wrote to Budgen that the progression of the chapter linked to "the periods of faunal evolution in general" (Letters I: 140).

It would not be amiss to state that the subject of this chapter is evolution. But in order to discover what relation "Oxen of the Sun" has to eugenics, we must carefully examine the cast of characters beginning with Mina Purefoy. The name comes from Dr. R. Damon Purefoy, the leading obstetrician in Dublin in 1904 (R. Ellmann 364). Literally, the name means "pure faith." Robert Janusko argues that the name reflects "the faith in the future of the race evidenced by the doctor who both keeps people alive and brings infants into the world, and by the proliferant Purefoys who have taken literally the 'prophecy of abundance' and produced so many children without being oversolicitous for their future welfare" (31). This combined emphasis on both purity and fecundity also

connects the Purefoys to the eugenics movement. It is important that the Purefoys are twice identified as Methodist, not Catholic. Therefore, Mina's fecundity is not a result of the Catholic Church's prohibitions against birth control. The Purefoys are having children because they think making more Purefoys to be desirable.

Theodore Purefoy has a respectable job as an accountant at the Ulster bank, and according to Bloom, is well connected with a cousin working in Dublin Castle. Although the Purefoys may not technically be any higher in class than, say, Bloom himself, the Purefoys have a high estimation of their own importance and that of the Purefoy name. Their newest child is "a Purefoy if ever there was one, with the true Purefoy nose" (343). They are unusually snobby in their naming of the children, saying that the child "will be christened Mortimer Edward after the influential third cousin of Mr. Purefoy in the Treasury Remembrancer's office, Dublin Castle" (343). Thus, the Purefoys combine a sense of their own purity and importance with fecundity – all the ingredients of a eugenic recipe. The child Mina is delivering will be her ninth one to live and the Purefoy children are described as "hardy annuals" (132).¹⁸

Mina Purefoy is also elevated above purposeless fecundity by the voice of the narrator. Mina and her husband have "fought the good fight" (343). Theodore is congratulated, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" (344). If, as several critics have suggested, this chapter is about the Biblical command to be fruitful and multiply, it is also about a conflict between those who procreate and those who don't. Further eugenic connections are established by the fact that during a section praising Mina Purefoy's milk, there is a reference to Zarathustra. Mina's milk is, "the milk of human

¹⁸ In his list of the Purefoy children Joyce lists nine names, but one is deceased, so it is unclear if the total number of living Purefoy children is eight or nine.

kin” and the paragraph concludes with an invocation to “Partula, goddess of childbirth, and Pertunda, goddess of copulation” (346).

If Mina Purefoy can be tentatively classified as a race-mother, we cannot argue that her position is to be envied. She has labored for days to produce this child, barely escaping death. Bloom is extremely sympathetic toward Mina’s pain in delivery. He thinks of her by name eight times, not counting her appearances in “Circe.” He thinks, “Poor Mrs. Purefoy” no less than three times. Further, constant childbearing has taken its toll on her body: “She is a hoary pandemonium of ills, enlarged glands, mumps, quinsy, bunions, hayfever, bedsores, ringworm, floating kidney, Derbyshire neck, warts, bilious attacks, gallstones, cold feet, varicose veins. A truce to threnes and trentals and jeremies and all such congenital defunctive music!” (345-46).

Molly is considerably less reverential of Mina Purefoy’s fecundity than the narrator of “Oxen of the Sun.” She disapproves of Theodore Purefoy “filling her up with a child or twins once a year as regular as the clock” (611). While the Purefoys may imagine a pure heritage, Molly’s assessment sees just racial ambiguity. Budgy (Victoria Frances) is “the one they called budgers or something like a nigger with a shock of hair on it Jesusjack the child is a black.” While either the children or childbirth are “supposed to be healthy,” Molly can’t imagine “a squad of them falling over one another and bawling you couldnt hear your ears” and says that men are to blame because they are “not satisfied till they have us swollen out like elephants” (611). Again, we see Molly openly rejecting excessive fertility, as well as undercutting the Purefoy’s possible eugenic intentions.

Buck Mulligan's discourse in "Oxen of the Sun" illustrates further Joycean eugenic parody. Buck Mulligan is introduced as "Hyg. Et Eug. Doc." Or "Doctor of Hygienics and Eugenics." He is the author of a eugenic scheme for "a national fertilizing farm" to minister to unmarried women or those with infertile husbands. Mulligan promises "the fecundation of any female of what grade of life soever who should there direct to him with the desire of fulfilling the functions of her natural" (329). Mulligan's explanation of infant mortality is an amusing parody of the eugenic discourses about social hygiene. Mulligan blames "the fallingoff in the calibre of the race" on everything from "inhaling the bacteria which lurk in dust" to "revolting spectacles" such as ugly publicity posters and "religious ministers of all dominations" (341-42). He recommends that to ensure healthy progeny, pregnant females should contemplate the fruits of culture and art and "artistic coloured photographs of prize babies" (342). While in *Portrait*, Stephen seems to be quite serious about his desire to improve the race by affecting the imaginations of the daughters of the race, here this idea is attributed to Mulligan and treated ironically.

Having examined Mina Purefoy and Buck Mulligan, it is obvious that through them, eugenic reproduction is treated ironically. Further, in "Oxen of the Sun" itself, the English language does not appear to be evolving into a more pure state; instead the final destination is miscegenation. The ending of the chapter is, in Joyce's own words, "a frightful jumble of Pidgin English, nigger English, Cockney, Irish, Bowery slang and broken doggerel" (Letters I: 140). Ending a chapter on "evolution" with the language of degenerates creates a space of resistance to eugenics. Therefore, we can conclude that

although Joyce could hardly be called a eugenicist, he still found the language and symbolism of eugenics a productive ground for borrowing, parody, and transformation.

Bloom's disruption and transformation of eugenic systems is seen most fully in "Circe." The most dramatic transformation in "Circe" is Bloom's metamorphosis into the abjected feminine during a sadomasochistic scene with the whoremistress Bella/Bello. However, Bloom experiences other transformations that set the scene for this act. When Bloom is put on trial for allegedly making a pass at his maid, the lawyer's defense is "a momentary aberration of heredity." The lawyer then gives a laundry list of atavistic tendencies, saying "shipwreck and somnambulism" run in his family, he has "cobbler's weak chest" and he is "of Mongolian extraction" (378). Hereditary degeneration is presented as something fixed and beyond an individual's control, which could exonerate him or her from the normal requirements of social behavior. But seconds later, Joyce explodes this viewpoint, as Bloom transforms into an Oriental servant, self-consciously acting out his "otherness" for the benefit of an unconvinced audience. When the "degeneration" defense fails, the lawyer reverses the racial terms of the argument, arguing that Bloom is "the whitest man I know" and an imperialist with property in Asia Minor (378). Joyce reveals here the relativity and reversibility of eugenic discourse; degeneration and eugenic fitness are both subjective and performative.

But Bloom's transformations do not stop here. Public opinion shifts suddenly and Bloom is elected Lord-Mayor and then King of London. Bloom's speech reflects a hodgepodge of political views. Dominic Mangiello has argued that it represents "bits of collectivist, Marxist, and individualist anarchist theory" (112). Martha Black argues that Joyce based Bloom's political speech, to some extent, on Shaw's political leanings and

socialist platform.¹⁹ If this is the case, Shaw's eugenic leanings are also captured in Bloom's politicking. Bloom declares that he has a plan for "social regeneration" (400) and he advocates "free love" (399) and "mixed races and mixed marriages" (400). Among the items Bloom distributes to the crowd are birth control devices and a book entitled, "Care of the Baby."

After Bloom's stump speech, eugenic discourse is evoked again by Bloom's examination by the medical students of "Oxen of the Sun." Mulligan is here called a "sex specialist." His testimony is consistent with his earlier identification as a doctor of eugenics, but his eugenic patter is subjected to a dash of Joycean wordplay. Bloom has been "born out of bedlock." Mulligan also diagnoses other symptoms of hereditary degeneration, stating, "traces of elephantitis have been discovered among his ascendants" and diagnoses Bloom with, among other things, chronic exhibitionism, latent ambidexterity, premature baldness, idealism, and memory loss. Mulligan has also examined his pubic hairs, declared him a virgin, and suggests, "in the interest of coming generations" that Bloom's genitalia be preserved "in spirits of wine in the national teratological museum" (402).

Bloom has thus transformed from a degenerate into a eugenic success, and back into a degenerate, through the application of medical scrutiny. Then he transforms again into the identity that has most interested critics. Dixon identifies Bloom as "the new womanly man" and announces he is "about to have a baby" (403). This moment ironically marks the fulfillment of Stephen's fantasies of artistic generation, and I would suggest, temporarily transforms Bloom into a race-mother. Having incorporated femininity into himself through his great sympathy with women, Bloom also embraces

¹⁹ See Black, 222-29.

the midwife-as-race-mother, Mrs. Thornton. Bloom's fecundity is illustrated by the fact that he immediately bears eight children, who are ironic parodies of the eugenic emphasis on genius and racial purity. These children are "wellmade, respectably dressed and wellconducted" and have "valuable metallic faces." While this is obviously a reference to the stereotype of Jewish usury, the children are also literally purely minted. They are also geniuses, "speaking five modern languages fluently and interested in various arts and sciences" and their genius is rewarded with social and fiscal success as "They are immediately appointed to positions of high public trust in several different countries" (403).

Bloom's transformation into a race-mother is further illustrated by his new title, "Midwife most Merciful" whom the Daughters of Erin entreat, "pray for us" (407). However, Stephen's fear of death and the feminine prevents him from being similarly transformed in Nighttown. In "Circe," Stephen must confront the ghost of his mother and says to her: "Tell me the word, mother, if you know now. The word known to all men" (474). His mother has no answer for him because Stephen must learn to articulate his *own* words – to become a productive artist, as well as a man who himself knows love. When Stephen refuses to repent and pray, a green crab representing cancer sticks its "grinning claws" into Stephen's heart. In reaction, Stephen screams, "Nothung!" and "lifts his ashplant high with both hands and smashes the chandelier" (475). This lamp is another symbol connected with the midwives. Stephen refers to them in his "Parable" as vestals – tenders of a sacred flame – and the professor calls them "wise virgins," an allusion to the Biblical virgins whose lamps were filled with oil. The lamp may represent woman's wisdom or enlightenment.

Stephen rejects both his mother and this wisdom as he strikes a wild blow at this symbol. Having smashed the vestal lamp, Stephen throws his ashplant to the floor and flees. The ashplant that Stephen has carried is now revealed as the Wagnerian sword belonging to Siegfried, which had previously been planted in the heart of an ash tree. Despite Stephen's decisive act, as Timothy Martin points out, the Siegfried parallel here only "measures his inadequacy" (43). Stephen seems to want to assert himself as a man – a hero – but his act is neither manly nor heroic. Stephen's stroke of the ashplant is not the act of the creative artist, but an act of destruction. The sword/phallus/pen has done nothing.

When Stephen flees, Bloom is left to retrieve his ashplant and to deal with the damage Stephen has caused. In fact, Stephen's destructive act has not been successful. As Bloom reveals, the flame is not damaged, only the glass that covered it. At the end of "Circe" we find Stephen lying on the ground in a fetal position, again having fled the mother and again having regressed. Little has changed for him as he mumbles the words of another's creation, fragments of Yeats's "Who Goes With Fergus." In contrast, Bloom – after successfully undergoing the trials of the night – emerges as a competent, fast-thinking man who evades the police and manages to get Stephen safely out of Nighttown. Having experienced race-motherhood, Bloom can now evoke it in others. He commands Cissy Caffrey, "Speak, you! . . . You are the link between nations and generations. Speak, woman, sacred lifegiver!" (488). At the end of "Circe," Bloom also becomes a race-father. He has been transformed into an artist who, like Shakespeare, can change the death of his son into art. The chapter ends with Bloom speaking to a vision of his deceased son Rudy, who is happy, prosperous and well.

By rejecting and attempting, once again, to escape from his mother, Stephen proves that he is not yet an artist. However, Bloom – already a father and productive member of society – has in “Circe” crisscrossed and eluded eugenic definition, given birth, transformed into a race-mother and a midwife, and transformed his grief into art. Stephen produces nothing/Nothing because he continues to reject union with the race-mother. Unlike Bloom, Stephen is unable to embrace the race-mother and she remains suspended in his mind, alternately an object to be worshipped or feared. Within Stephen’s own discussion of artistic production symbolized by the relationship of Shakespeare and Ann Hathaway, he knows that to be an artist is to embrace the race-mother. His turn to be an artist, the father of generations, will occur only when he ceases to reject, try to control, or try to destroy this powerful force.

Bloom’s return to Molly, therefore, is a symbolic return to a specifically Irish race-mother. While, during the adventures of the night, Bloom has been both a symbolic race-mother and race-father, near the end of *Ulysses*, Joyce suggests that he might become a literal father again. The Blooms have refrained from having children after Rudy’s death, and it is possible that Bloom worried he carried a hereditary disease. Thinking of Rudy, Bloom muses, “Mistake of nature. If it’s healthy it’s from the mother. If not from the man” (79). In “Oxen of the Sun” one of the explanations put forth for the death of an otherwise healthy infant is that it possessed “morboous germs” not obvious at its birth. This genetic defect causes it to “disappear at an increasingly earlier stage of development” and while the parents might suffer pain at its death, it is “in the long run beneficial to the race in general in securing the survival of the fittest” (342). However, Molly has never made decisions with eugenics in mind. When selecting Bloom, she

thinks, “as well him as another” (643-44). She definitely doesn’t want to have a child with Boylan, although he is a eugenically-fit specimen and she’s sure “hed have a fine strong child” (611). Her assessment is that “Poldy has more spunk in him yes thatd be awfully jolly” (611). Thus, Molly is considering choosing to risk another child with Bloom because the two of them get along so well; having another child would be “awfully jolly.”

In all ways, Molly is a disruption of the eugenic system of race-motherhood. However, this does not limit her ability to inspire masculine creation – her racial motherhood is symbolic rather than literal. In the final analysis, Molly is Joyce’s greatest commentary on eugenic motherhood. By giving her the last word, a resounding “yes” representing the life force itself, Joyce illustrates the need to transform the ideals of the past, such as regeneration through biological fecundity, into regeneration through art. Molly is symbolically, not literally, fecund, and she has been endlessly inspiring, not only to Bloom but to generations of critics.

In conclusion, the Irish race-mother is a central figure in *Stephen Hero*, *Portrait*, and *Ulysses*, showing that eugenics was a far greater influence on Joyce’s works than most critics acknowledge. In *Portrait*, Joyce countered the Irish Nationalist discourse of racial purity with a eugenic transformation of his own, creating an artist who desires union with a woman who is the type of her race. Failing this, Stephen muses about how to improve the imaginations of potential race-mothers so that they might breed a “less ignoble” race. In *Ulysses*, eugenics is drained of its idealistic value when it is channeled through the character of Buck Mulligan, who is painted as a kind of lesser Shakespearean fool, performing and parodying eugenic discourse for the amusement of his audience.

But eugenic parenthood continues to be an important idea in *Ulysses*. The race-mother of *Portrait*, the Woman of the Ballyhoura Hills, may be replaced in *Ulysses* by the aged milkwoman, but she is also joined by Anne Hathaway and several midwives, including Bloom himself, who help their artist companions “bring thoughts into the world.” And finally, in the character of Molly Bloom we have the modern Irish race-mother, whose adultery and inner dialogue inspire the plot of *Ulysses*.

CONCLUSION

From one perspective, British eugenics and Modernism are quite different. Eugenics was part science, part social movement, and Modernism belonged to the realm of art and often strove to paint itself as apolitical. However, viewing the movements as contemporaneous discourses allows us to see commonalities. Members of both the eugenics and Modernist movements felt that the Victorian past appeared to be slipping away, and they sought ordering principles to make sense of a world that seemed to be increasingly complex and challenging. The Modernists channeled their cultural and historical anxieties into the production of bodies of artistic work, while eugenicists mapped their anxieties onto the physical body. Eugenicists imagined that by influencing individual bodies they could also shape the body politic. While the Modernists were interested in the body, particularly in exploring more freely flowing desire, in their text the artist often replaces the mother as the textual focus and possible source of cultural renewal.

As a political movement, British eugenics may not seem very effectual. No laws were ever passed in England to enforce compulsory sterilization of those considered defective, nor were the socialists able to gain the endowment of maternity. In contrast, the American eugenics movement was much more politically successful. According to Kevles, “by the end of the nineteen-twenties, sterilization laws were on the books of twenty-four states” (111). In 1927, in a case later referred to as *Buck v. Bell*, the U. S. Supreme Court judged these laws to be constitutional. However, the success of a discourse should not be measured only by the passage of laws, but by its influence on the

minds of the people. Eugenics had a profound effect on the British imagination and eugenic ideas appeared in periodicals, popular fiction, and, as we have seen, in Modernist literature.

While part of my goal has been to trace the way eugenics influenced Modernism, I also consider eugenics no less “textual” than Modernism, and, like Modernism, eugenics had a particularly complex relationship with the maternal body. Eugenicists saw biological heredity as a text they could decipher and potentially edit. The eugenic focus on great men initially placed the maternal body in the position of a text under erasure, a vessel that produced matter but didn’t signify much. Later eugenicists became preoccupied with the female body as a text to be read and written about and upon. Just as female Modernists often had to strive for recognition in a male-dominated movement, so too, female eugenicists struggled for the right to produce their own eugenic texts – to speak and write about eugenic motherhood rather than to be written about.

The very presence of eugenic ideas in a female-dominated genre (the New Women novels) points the ways women often struggled to merge a traditionally female narrative – the romance – with a “New” definition of women as rational, scientific thinkers. Our picture of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century feminist is enhanced when we acknowledge that women may have challenged some social and cultural mores, but they often failed to question imperialist assumptions, such as the belief that Britishness was a racial identity and the finest in the world. Also, many women felt that the mastery of scientific discourse (particularly natural science) was a path to personal legitimacy and political power. Eugenics was, for the reasons discussed in Chapter One, a particularly accessible scientific discourse for women, and motherhood was a subject about which

women could be expected to have some specialized knowledge. Eugenic content in New Women novels, then, maps the ways in which even those seeking to redefine gender, to make a woman “New,” sought legitimacy by referencing the power of “old” roles, such as the British racial mother.

While thus far I have spoken about New Women who adopted eugenic feminism as a unified group, individual authors differed greatly. The texts they produced could be supportive of traditional gender roles and marriages, or, more provocatively, they could imagine other options for women, such as celibate partnerships or even free love. The attitudes of individual authors parallel the divisions within the eugenics movement, which included those who wanted to return to the values of the past, W.C. Whetham and Francis Galton for example, and those who imagined eugenics as part of a total reconfiguration of society around socialist values, such as H.G. Wells and G.B. Shaw.

In assessing the writers who engaged with eugenic feminism at the turn of the century, two stand out – Victoria Welby and Olive Schreiner. These women are particularly provocative, both in the way they used language and the ways in which they imagined alternative discourses to male-centered eugenics. Of the two, Welby is less familiar. She has now been largely erased from history, and her voice can only be accessed through a few speeches and letters. Welby literally wrote back to Galton, reading and critiquing his essays, and in the process created her own eugenic theories, refocusing on “race-motherhood,” a term that she seems to have coined. Welby, who had gained a reputation as a female philosopher, should also rightly be considered the intellectual mother of the feminist branch of eugenics. Welby created a counter-discourse to Galton’s theories about great men by placing the mother at the center of

eugenics, a move that would be employed by countless other eugenic writers, both male and female. Welby thought of the force driving evolution as essentially maternal, and compared nature to a mother who desired the full development of her children. In Welby, we see the expression of what so many eugenic feminists seemed to desire and yet could barely articulate – an alternative discourse to the masculine-dominated world of Darwinism and eugenics.

If Welby was the mother of feminist eugenics, Olive Schreiner occupies the position of her intellectual daughter. Galton had passed the reins to his successor, Karl Pearson, and Schreiner wrote back to Pearson in the same way Welby had challenged Galton's assumptions, often in the same format of letters between the two. In these letters, Schreiner continually reminded Pearson of what he tended to ignore – emotion, feeling, and the female body. Schreiner's erotic desire for and rejection by Pearson parallels the way she was unable to find a perfect union between her feminist ideas and Pearson's eugenics. Like Welby, Schreiner's theories focused on race-motherhood, but unlike Welby, Schreiner was not a biological mother. This might explain why Schreiner expanded the definition of motherhood to emphasize the contributions that women who were not biological mothers could make to womanhood as a whole in *Woman and Labour*.

Both Welby and Schreiner offer concrete models for the way later female Modernists would seek to reclaim and redefine eugenics and motherhood. For example, both Mina Loy and Virginia Woolf wrote in response to male figures with eugenic connections, to whom they were ambivalently drawn. Both Loy and Woolf have much in common with the New Women writers who preceded them. Each sought to resist

“outdated” Victorian gender roles, and each felt it was necessary to escape bourgeois sexual repression. In addition, each woman associated such repression with her Victorian mother, and felt it was necessary to escape her, taking refuge in a Bohemian artistic community.

Loy’s inspiration to begin the process of “writing back” to male-dominated eugenics was a conflict with her lover, Filippo Marinetti. Marinetti’s futurism inspired the form and subject matter of Loy’s poetry, but his contempt for women kept Loy from fully embracing his philosophies. While Schreiner had denied that her passion for Pearson was erotic, Loy merged erotic and intellectual passion and unabashedly sought affairs with Marinetti and his Futurist rival, Papini. For Loy, desire and maternity were inseparable, which she demonstrates in her poetry, most famously in “Parturition.” Thus, Loy brought together the literal and the figurative and imagined that the perfect union of feminist eugenics and masculine Futurism would take the form of a child with Marinetti.

So for Loy, the eugenic mother was also a desiring subject, and the female Modernist could produce both children and poetry out of that desire. Like her New Women predecessors, Loy sought to create a discourse with the mother at the center, but in her case, she also sought to literally live out her theories, bearing children whom she believed reflected her artistry. Her unfulfilled desire for a Futurist child is painfully displayed in “Love Songs.” The tone of failure and despair in this poem points us to the potential dangers in merging Modernism and race-motherhood – in Loy’s case, the union is literally inconceivable. While race-motherhood provided a powerful model of the importance of female creativity, it also required a literally productive female body. Other authors, like Schreiner, sought to escape this essentialism by emphasizing the social and

symbolic components of motherhood. But Loy's very emphasis on speaking from and through her own productive female body eventually trapped her and made it impossible for her to be simultaneously eugenic mother and Modernist poet.

Like many of the women I have discussed in this project, Woolf wrote in response to a masculine eugenic discourse, but in her case there is no single male figure to whom Woolf is responding, nor does she fully embrace eugenic feminism. Woolf's engagement with eugenics is correspondingly more complex, and requires deepening our model of the female Modernist "writing back" to a male eugenic voice. For Woolf, eugenics was often a painfully oppressive force. Although her father was not overtly a eugenicist, Galton had cited the Stephens as an example of a family of genius, and her father looked to young Virginia as the one most likely to follow in his footsteps and be an author. The eugenic emphasis on male genius simultaneously created pressure and alienation – Woolf was expected to inherit genius, but she was a woman and therefore thought to be incapable of fully expressing it. To add an extra complication, Woolf's inheritance potentially carried both genius and insanity (a fact of which Galton seems to have been unaware). When Virginia's potential mental problems manifested, the family doctor who was called in was none other than Sir George Savage, a noted expert on the heredity of insanity. Eugenics simultaneously called for Woolf to procreate and to refrain from procreation, an obviously impossible situation.

When Leonard consulted Woolf's doctors about whether or not they should have children, he was likely motivated not only by his care for Virginia's welfare, but also eugenic concerns. The fact that two of the doctors he consulted were both noted eugenicists further strengthens this possibility. The problem of who finally decided

Leonard and Virginia would not have children has never been adequately solved by the biographers, but it is clear that Woolf's reproductive choices were not solely her own, and that eugenic concerns were a factor. Woolf, then, could easily be viewed as a victim of the most coercive aspects of eugenics, and her hostility to eugenics can be seen in *Night and Day* and in the characterization of Sir William Bradshaw in *Mrs. Dalloway*. What seems surprising, however, is that Woolf's relationship with eugenics could best be described as ambivalent. Like the female authors before her, Woolf is drawn to the possibility of disrupting such a male-dominated system by interjecting a female voice. While father, husband, and doctors, all represented various oppressive aspects of eugenics, Woolf's friend and lover, Vita Sackville-West, was also a eugenicist and we also find positive eugenic content in Woolf's works. In "Three Guineas" Woolf argues for the endowment of motherhood, and in "A Society" she imagines an education in eugenics to be part of developing female consciousness.

While Loy regarded biological, eugenic maternity and authorship as not only co-equal but codependent, Woolf splits these identities into two in *To the Lighthouse*, in the forms of Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe. While *To the Lighthouse* is often read as Woolf's attempt to both memorialize and break free from her own mother, it is equally instructive to read the novel as Woolf breaking free from a biological model of eugenic maternity. Mrs. Ramsay is a Victorian mother, but she is also a race-mother. Mrs. Ramsay acts as a matchmaker, bringing the people around her together and urging them towards marriage and procreation. Her creativity is entirely centered on her maternal and domestic roles. Lily has dual relationships to Mrs. Ramsay: she is both foster-daughter and desiring subject. Lily's lesbian desire further traces the patterns we have seen in

previous chapters in the female writer's desire for a relationship with the male eugenicist. Lily both loves and resists Mrs. Ramsay, seeks union with her and yet is denied. Lily frames her life-choices as between artistry and marriage and chooses to be an artist. However, this choice is not a simple escape from Mrs. Ramsay and the construction of eugenic maternity she represents. Woolf makes it clear that Lily's painting is a tribute to Mrs. Ramsay, inspired by an image of her with her youngest son. Lily cannot paint until she has sifted through her memories of Mrs. Ramsay and seen the connections between artistry and maternity.

Barred from biological maternity, perhaps for eugenic reasons, Woolf herself chose to write books instead of having babies. Yet in *To the Lighthouse* she acknowledges that eugenic maternity remains as a powerful model of female empowerment, even for an unmarried, lesbian artist. Lily consciously chooses to avoid marriage and children, but is ultimately quite aware that Mrs. Ramsay and all she stands for remains as the grounding of her artistic empowerment. Unlike Loy, who wanted to literally give birth to a eugenic child representing the union of uber-masculine Modernism and feminine poetics, in Lily Briscoe, Woolf presents us with a Modernist artist who resolves the conflict between artistry and motherhood by choosing the symbolic over the literal.

Joyce could easily be read as representing the male voice of authority against which both eugenic feminists and female Modernists wrote. However, in Chapter Four, I argue that Joyce's Irishness actually places him in similarly marginalized position; as a colonized subject belonging to a race the British considered both inferior and overbreeding, Joyce was forever alienated from British eugenic discourse. In *Stephen*

Hero and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus flirts with Anglo-Saxon racial prejudice and rejects the Irish counter-discourse to eugenics that would posit a pure, superior Irish race. Like Loy and Woolf, Joyce perceives a tension between, as he puts it, eugenics and aesthetics. Stephen consciously chooses aesthetics, but as Joyce makes clear throughout the novel, Stephen cannot completely escape eugenic thinking.

Joyce consciously attempts to harness the symbolic force of eugenic motherhood, which leads him to a series of disruptions and substitutions. In place of the British eugenic mother, Joyce constructs an Irish racial mother, bringing together Irish Sovereignty myths and eugenic discourse. In *Stephen Hero* and *Portrait of An Artist as a Young Man*, both Emma Clery and the unnamed woman of the Ballyhoura Hills represent this potential race-motherhood, and serve as inspiration for the young artist. For Joyce, like Loy, the racial mother is also a desiring subject, and as we saw in Woolf, she is also the object of the artist's desire. Stephen attempts to resolve the tension between biological creativity and artistic creativity through a heterosexual relationship in which he seeks a sexualized mother-substitute. However, the female, maternal body erupts uncomfortably into Stephen's internal world, constantly challenging him to acknowledge the insufficiency of art to replicate biological creativity. While this observation has been made by feminist and psychoanalytic critics for quite some time, rarely is it placed in historical context. The biological and artistic conflict in Joyce's works often has eugenic resonance, and the difficulties Stephen faces reflect the difficulty that the Modernist artist has in incorporating eugenic theory into Modernist art.

In *Ulysses*, Joyce reacts to these difficulties by pushing overtly eugenic content to the margins of the text. Instead of Stephen struggling to reconcile eugenics and

aesthetics in a relationship with a racial mother, in *Ulysses* she is reduced to an aged milkwoman and Buck Mulligan becomes a kind of eugenic buffoon, evoking eugenic discourse primarily for the purpose of parody. However, this decentering of eugenics continues to leave traces. Instead of the racial mother, in *Ulysses* Joyce focuses on the racial father; Leopold Bloom literally displaces Stephen as the center of the narrative. Leopold Bloom's race is foregrounded; he experiences alienation and discrimination as a Jew, but it is paradoxically precisely that alienation that gives him insight into the Irish condition. Bloom is also textually linked to Shakespeare, whom Stephen regards as a kind of textual English race-father. Yet all these shifts and displacements somehow lead inevitably back to the race-mother, in all her transformations and disguises. We are told that Shakespeare and Socrates both owe their greatest works to figurative female midwives, who inspired them and helped them give birth to great works of art. This idea is both parodied and reflected as Bloom embraces a midwife and gives birth to eugenically-fit children. And at the end of *Ulysses* we return to both the procreative and artistic power of the racial mother with Molly's resounding "Yes."

Joyce's convoluted journey away from and towards eugenic motherhood points us to a few final claims. First, the eugenic mother resists repression. The view of human heredity espoused by Darwin and Galton, in which women were practically erased, was transformed by the eugenics movement. Individual authors, most often women, worked to place the race-mother at the center of evolutionary debates. Secondly, eugenic motherhood was, in the balance, more empowering than disempowering for women. Against the dire threats that the actions of women were causing the race to degenerate, eugenic feminists asserted the great potential of women to cause the race to evolve, if

they should gain a sense of themselves as humans equal to men. Thirdly, eugenic motherhood is an extremely flexible concept; as we saw in Chapter One, the meaning of race-motherhood could change completely depending on whether one emphasized the biological or social aspects of motherhood. The essentialists tended to focus on numbers of children and how to encourage “fitter” women to have them, while others emphasized “quality” over quantity and argued that foster-motherhood or social service were equally important. This fluidity accounted for much of the widespread appeal of eugenic motherhood.

Eugenicists seemed to view the world in terms of biology and inheritance and were preoccupied with statistics and their meanings. However, eugenicists were also engaged in the process of creating a narrative – one which involved an idealized past, a dark and degenerating present, and a vision of a future improved through individuals taking conscious control of the force of evolution. Modernism shared a similar picture of the past and present, but often lacked any clear vision for how the future might be improved. Loy’s assertion in “Aphorisms on Futurism” that “it is the new form . . . that moulds consciousness to the necessary amplitude for holding it” (151) points to an underlying belief held by many Modernists (particularly those who got bad reviews) – that the human mind needed to evolve to appreciate Modernist art. It is no surprise that Modernists might see parallels between the conscious direction of human evolution and the evolution of an individual mind. Thus we see previously unexplainable textual moments, like Stephen Dedalus musing about how to use his art to affect the minds of the future Irish mothers, “that they might breed a race less ignoble than their own” (205).

For the Modernist author aware of eugenics, the symbolic strength of the race-mother was nearly irresistible. Some authors, such as Eliot and Conrad, preferred to focus on the degenerate mother. Yet for Loy, Woolf, and Joyce, the race-mother is a complex figure with both literal and figurative roots. The race-mother as she is figured in Modernist texts may have some relationship to the actual mothers of the authors and to archetypal representations of female creativity. But more importantly, she is a historically-specific symbol of the values and tropes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which Modernist authors struggled to both escape and incorporate as they imagined themselves creating art with the potential for social renewal.

For the aspiring female Modernist, though some aspects of the race-mother may have felt outdated and overly Victorian, the parallels between producing a eugenically-fit child and an intellectually-fit text were impossible to miss. Some, like Mina Loy, attempted literally to combine the two. Loy's disappointment when she was unable to have a child with Marinetti, however, points to the limits of such a metaphor. Artistic creativity may be modeled on biological creativity, but if artistic creativity is *predicated* on biological creativity, the female artist is at the mercy of her body. Like the eugenic feminists before them, female Modernists were forced to make a choice as to whether they valued symbolic or biological motherhood more. Woolf was compelled by circumstances and by her husband to birth books, not babies. Therefore it is not surprising that both Woolf and Joyce elevated the symbolic over the biological. Motherhood (and potentially fatherhood) of a work of art is, in their texts, more important than biological maternity. However, *To the Lighthouse* and *Ulysses* both acknowledge the race-mother as the precondition of that art.

The eventual move Woolf and Joyce make to subordinate eugenics to imagination should not be viewed as a triumph of Modernism over eugenics. Instead, it emphasizes that eugenics was always imaginary; it was a way of imputing symbolic significance to the bodies of women. Similarly, the dependence of Modernism on eugenic motherhood shows us the ways in which Modernism was deeply implicated in the ideologies of its day. The construction of eugenic motherhood controlled the ways in which the bodies of women were read and sometimes led to coercive social practices to prop up these readings. But as Foucault notes, “where there is power, there is resistance” (95.) This potentially repressive ideology was co-opted, modified, and reversed by the multiple voices of authors, both male and female, who sought to expand the limits of what race-motherhood might signify.

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