Horror in Evolution: Determinism, Materialism, and Darwinism in the American Gothic

by

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Abstract

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Unlike other psychologically-oriented examinations of the American gothic tradition, this study traces the impact of the pre- and post-Darwinian theories of evolution on that tradition. In the first chapter, issues of reception and response are considered in terms of the effect the academic embrace of Jamesian aesthetics and psychological criticism had on the interpretation of the American gothic as a psychological genre in which there could be no place for the materialistic biologism of Edgar Allan Poe and the evolutionary gothicism of Frank Norris, Jack London, and Howard Philips Lovecraft. In the second chapter, Poe is reconsidered in pre-Darwinian rather than pre-Freudian terms, for though he died a decade before the appearance of Darwin's *Origin of Species,* his treatment of race and savagery in "Murders in the Rue Morgue" and *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,* and of hereditary insanity in "Berenice" and "Fall of the House of Usher" prefigure treatments of race scientists after Darwin would routinely make on the one hand, and the formulation of hereditarian theories of disease and degeneration Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau would popularize on the other. In the third chapter, after acknowledging the powerful influence of Poe on Frank Norris, this study details the ways in which the latter's *Vandover and the Brute* and *McTeague* incorporate the evolutionary theories of neo-Lamarckism and orthogenesis to create a horrifying vision of a humanity

whose behavior remains ever determined by conflicting sexual needs and racial habits. In the fourth chapter, Poe's influence on Jack London and the attempt London made to link the gothic and naturalist traditions are placed within the context of London's preoccupation with racial destinies and the fate of socialism, as treated in his lesser-known science fiction fantasies, "The Red One" and *The Scarlet Plague*. In the last chapter, the evolutionary horror tradition is brought to a close with Lovecraft, whose worship of Poe and philosophical affinities with London and Norris are brought to bear on the personal and national fears of miscegenation, inbreeding, criminality, and immigration Lovecraft's reactionary fantasies trace in his "Arthur Jermyn," "The Lurking Fear" and "The Shadow Over Innsmouth."

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Preface

Since World War II, the world of academic literary criticism has tended to treat the genre of gothic fiction as a primarily psychological genre. Whether the literary matter at hand depicts psychopathological narrators or supernatural creatures, critics have been quick to analyze the genre to which they belong in Freudian terms. Even when using other theoretical models — feminist, Marxist, Lacanian, deconstructive — the interpretive turn is always back to a Freudian model of mind and thus a Freudian understanding of horror.

But this image of the gothic tradition, while in many respects accurate, remains inadequate because it refuses to take into account other gothic streams. One of those streams standing in tentative opposition to the Freud-inspired version of the genre is what I denominate, for lack of a better term, the evolutionary gothic. This study is thus an attempt to correct the excessive psychological emphasis which has been placed on the American gothic tradition and to undo the distortion of the tradition by that emphasis.

Perhaps the place to begin in shifting the focus from the psychological to the evolutionary gothic is not with Darwin's *Origin of Species*, published in 1859, but with the Enlightenment itself. Despite the tremendous leaps in science which accompanied the rise of Renaissance humanism, the conflict between religion and science, between soul and substance, between mind and matter, would not fully emerge until the era of Enlightenment. It was then that the integration of Aristotelian logic and church doctrine by theologians began break down in its confrontation with the introduction and application of Baconian theories of induction, vis-a-vis Galileo, to natural phenomena. But this was only the beginning A far greater menace to the chains religion had laid on scientific thought appeared with the rise of a more rigorous philosophical skepticism. Though foreshadowed by philosophers like Réné Descartes and Bishop Berkeley, this

brand of skepticism found its most vigorous proponent in David Hume. Hume, however, did not stand alone in his radical skepticism. The arguments he levelled at many a cherished notion, but especially at the deistic inference of the existence of deity from nature were shared by others. Equal to the challenges posed by him to English-speaking audiences were the deterministic and materialistic doctrines of certain French philosophes who threatened the philosophical certainties of the Continent. From the random spontaneous generations of Diderot to the automated man of d'Holbach, it was deterministic and materialistic theories like these that, beside the later anti-teleological positions of John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, were to underwrite the evolutionary thinking of Herbert Spencer, Charles Darwin, Thomas Henry Huxley, and Ernst Haeckel. Small wonder to find camped beside this stream of thought such literary figures as Edgar Allan Poe, Frank Norris, Jack London, and Howard Philips Lovecraft, for whom the terrifying wonders of a materialistic and deterministic existence were also rich sources of literary horror.

Though an argument could be made that the use of materialistic and deterministic doctrines by Poe, Norris, London, and Lovecraft for literary purposes was merely a matter of crass intellectual opportunism, it would be overstating the case to assume that there was no real investment on either their part or that of their audiences in the implications of those doctrines. With Darwin's theory of natural selection, the long-recognized, but much-maligned materialistic determinism of Hume and the philosophes had gained a new lease on life. All of a sudden a radically different conception of human existence was introduced into the West. In the place of the spiritual struggle for salvation was now situated a material one for resources. As scientists and philosophers, reformers and politicians struggled to take hold of the Darwinian beast in their midst through the introduction of scientific societies and the proposition of new social reforms, ever more expansive explanations of human conduct in evolutionary terms were being espoused with a steely determination and a greater vehemence by social Darwinists, neo-

Darwinists, neo-Lamarckians, theists, orthogeneticists, and innumerable other groupings. Spencerian and Marxist theories of struggle competed with one another to explain the total person as social policies and political parties aligned themselves to whichever interpretation presumably favored their platforms.

But the totalizing edifice Darwin had unwittingly built was to come crumbling down in the mid-twentieth century as a new wave of anthropologists and psychologists arrived on the scene. Now the fight was on between hard-and-fast materialistic determinists and psychologically-oriented dialecticians, with the results soon becoming apparent. Spencer's block-universe was knocked over by Dewey's more supple dialectical one; Weismann's ancestral memory was wiped clean by Freud's repressed childhood wishes. With the subsequent institutionalization of the Deweyan dialectic and the Freudian model of mind, the battle was over. The age of a simplified, mechanical, often racist and chauvinist, materialistic determinism had come to a close. Picking up the pieces, however, would not be so easy in the new Darwinian struggle that ensued among intellectual disciplines to reconcile themselves to this new academic reality.

One of the first sacrifices to this new reality, and specifically within the realm of literary criticism, was the American gothic. Despite the strong materialistic and deterministic biases of such writers as Poe, Norris, London, and Lovecraft, their incorporation into the new and improved canon of American literature depended on the reinterpretation of those biases in ways that did little service to the very real fears an evolutionary determinism once held for their respective American audiences. There were three methods by which academia cleaned off the sticky materialism of these four figures. The first was to ignore or suppress the materialistic, proto-evolutionary (hence, anti-Freudian, or so supposed) elements of their fiction. Poe was the main victim of this procedure, as his fictions were transformed from the materialistic treatment of animalism and disease as sources of criminality into prophetic testimonies to the accuracy of Freudian (and post-Freudian) views of psychopathology. The second method was to

remove authors too obviously materialistic, deterministic, and evolutionary in their views from the gothic canon altogether. By this means, London and Norris, instead of standing as possible major figures in the materialist stream of the American gothic tradition became minor "dark" figures in the American realist tradition, foils to the more polished literary lucubrations of worthier contemporaries like Henry James or Mark Twain. The third method, the easiest and nastiest, but most distorting of all, was the benign neglect bestowed upon writers who failed (or refused) to fit the pre-established aesthetic categories of the academy. This has been Lovecraft's fate, even in spite of the well-known fact by readers and writers of horror that, irrespective of his aesthetic limitations, he has been and is still the most significant influence on the twentieth-century horror art.

In scouring the gothic tradition clean of its materialist ethos, the academy performed two functions simultaneously. First it made the gothic tradition, shorn of an otherwise reductive Spencerian Darwinism, presentable to the American academy for some form of canonization. Second, it did the rest of American literature, and maybe even American society itself, the favor of substituting for a dreadful evolutionary determinism a more amenable psychological determinism. But in consigning America's evolutionary gothic tradition to non-existence — either through charges of irrelevancy or literary reductiveness — the academy committed itself to the enactment of a Freud-like repression of its own. Instead of confronting the dark reality a deterministic universe once held for American readers, the academy swept that reality under the rug by turning discussion over to the dialectical complexity and Derridean freeplay of the all-too-Freudian (or Lacanian or what have you) conflict between fear and desire so common to psychological treatments of the gothic tradition.

Unfortunately, the problem with such free play, Freudian, Derridean or otherwise, is its failure to take into account the constraints imposed by historical context. This is not to say that there is no place for other theoretical treatments — psychoanalytic, feminist and so forth — but it is playing fast and loose with texts to apply these

theoretical perspectives without considering the relationship of these texts to their contexts, of authors to their audiences, of writers to other writers, or of what is internal to these texts to external intellectual currents. While it is true that none of these theoretical perspectives necessarily demands jettisoning context, it is often the case that once employed, they often end up doing just that. And the result has been to rigidify rather than open up ways of seeing texts, ways one finds by restoring historical context.

From the collection of writers offered here — Poe, Norris, London, and Lovecraft — I am tempted to argue that what we know from literary history rather than what we get from literary criticism suggests that they too represent a literary tradition. That is to say, putting it more boldly, they represent not only a significant gothic literary tradition, but one that has grown more important among popular readers since World War II.

To that end, a great deal in this study has gone into reconstructing the connections these writers held not only with one another but even more significantly with their predecessors and contemporaries in such fields of intellectual inquiry as medicine, biology, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, and economics. But in order to restore these lost connections, the ground must first be cleared, which is what I attempt to do in my first chapter. More bibliographical than critical in purpose, this chapter begins with a question that, though directed to a text outside of the scope of this study, nevertheless unifies in many ways problems that bedevil this attempt to forge an evolutionary gothic tradition — and that question is where did Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau* go? That is to say, why has the novel proven so difficult to classify? The answer to this question is the solution to a number of problems that surround this formulation of a evolutionary gothic tradition, an answer that underscores the institutional prejudice against materialist fiction that began with Dewey's attack on Spencer and was continued in the assault of post-war pro-psychological critics on their Marxist predecessors in an attempt to privilege a Jamesian dialectic aesthetic over a Dreiserian philosophical materialism. It is an answer

that highlights the academic effort to psychologize the gothic in order to gain for it a certain canonical status.

The first revision in the formulation of a materialist gothic tradition is a reconsideration of the role played by the ostensible father of the psychological gothic in America — Edgar Allan Poe. This is the topic of the next chapter. Despite his obvious interest in the psychological character of fear, Poe was at heart a materialist (though not an atheist). Moreover, though he died before the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species,* which was to breathe new life into post-bellum deterministic and materialistic views of reality, Poe's profound interest in science and his continuous raiding of popular science outlets for material (encyclopedias, newspapers, journals, and much else) suggest that there was already an assemblage of pre-Darwinian tropes available for his use. One set of tropes can be seen in Poe's treatment of primates and blacks in "Murders in the Rue Morgue" and *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,* suggesting the availability even in Poe's era of the racially charged, hierarchical images of evolutionary descent, many of which were to follow in Darwin's wake. Another set of tropes that follows a less Freudian than hereditarian model, one later espoused by post-Darwinian degenerationists, may be discerned in his treatment of criminality and insanity in "Berenice" and "Fall of the House of Usher." In either set of tropes, the point remains that Poe bears just as much the prefigurative stamp of Darwinian as he does of Freudian thought. His interest in racial, criminal, and even animal psychology should not blind us to the materialistic, biological basis of his treatment of these topics.

In the third chapter, I reconsider the relationship of Norris to the gothic tradition, or rather the curious quandary of his absence from it. Despite the gothic overtones of his fiction, from his earliest short stories to his final novels, Norris and his fellow naturalists have by and large been forced to stand outside the pale of gothic literature. The intransigence (or perhaps blindness) on the part of the academy poses especially difficult problems for the formulation of a coherent evolutionary gothic *tradition* in terms of

literary influence. Even so, despite the obvious influences of Emile Zola and Rudyard Kipling on Norris, I consider the unusual but fruitful connection between him and Poe in terms of the emphasis both laid on the achieving of dramatic, often dark, literary "effects," a central component of horror fiction writing. With this link established between the two writers, it is but a short step to asking to what ends did Norris turn his literary effects in his early dark novels, *Vandover and the Brute* and *McTeague.* Borrowing from neo-Lamarckian and orthogenetic alternatives to Darwin's natural selection, as well as from a spate of popular degeneration theories, Norris organizes his own set of Poesque literary effects to formulate a rather grim deterministic outlook. Where in *Vandover*, the degeneracy of sexuality is cast as more a biological than moral failing, in *McTeague*, Norris offers a scenario in which race-based instincts are anything but suited for self-preservation of the species. While Norris' presence in a psychological gothic tradition may be debatable, his presence in an evolutionary is, I think, indisputable.

And what applies to Norris may well apply to his naturalist contemporary, Jack London, the subject of the fourth chapter. Like Norris, London too has no obvious place in the American gothic tradition, despite the pride he took in the power of his darker fiction. Cutting London off from the academic gothic tradition was a naturalist vision that looked to the intransigence rather than violation of Law as the true source of horror. Yet as unusual as his position was, London nonetheless discerned a common link in the function naturalist and gothic fiction performed of returning readers to their evolutionary origins through the propagation of fear. This return carried for London a threat as well as a promise. In spite of the color-line he would draw in the sand between altruistic whites deserving of socialism and individualistic non-whites damned to a capitalistic savagery, London realized, as he makes clear in "The Red One" and *The Scarlet Plague,* that the scientism and capitalism of white Western civilization threatened to blow away his neat little racial division. A believer in the naturalist world order, London thus found in non-

white savagery the instrument through which he attempted to instill in his presumably racist readers a fear of the effects of Western capitalism.

In the final major chapter, the stage is given to Howard Philips Lovecraft, whose rising stock among readers and scholars continues to befuddle more staid academics. While part of his newfound posterity may be attributed to his embrace by popular culture, as well as to his profound influence on two generations of horror writers, much may also be imputed to the modernity of his approach to what scares readers. The most intensely materialistic and deterministic of the writers represented here, Lovecraft offered perhaps the most effective vision of horror through his conception of the "weird." A distinctly materialistic approach to what horrifies, Lovecraft's notion of the weird enveloped not only the supposedly psychological Poe, but aligned him with the naturalistic realists he purported to detest. Despite certain obvious differences between Lovecraft's fantasies and Norris and London's naturalist fictions, the former's fearful representations of cross-species miscegenation, degenerative inbreeding, and immigrant sexuality in "Arthur Jermyn," "The Lurking Fear" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth" respectively suggest that Lovecraft drew from the same intellectual well as his naturalist predecessors to nourish his horrifying vision of a degenerate universe.

Irrespective of the complications of classification — such complications being an inevitable part of any attempt to classify against the grain of traditional categories — the materialist or evolutionary gothic is an honest to goodness reality with which gothic literary criticism must come to grips. Few if any have properly apprehended this tabooed area in American fiction, though a good start has been made by the weird fiction scholars who have written on Lovecraft and his contemporaries. But there is much yet to be done if we are to reach across the barriers of genre and recognize the clear relationships that obtain, despite apparent differences, between the gothic, the naturalist, and the weird fiction traditions, traditions that are linked directly and indirectly by the materialistic, deterministic, and evolutionary ethos of pre- and post-Darwinian thought.

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Chapter One
Introduction
(Re)covering the Past: Unearthing America's Lost Gothic

Despite what should seem an obvious connection — the horrors of evolution and the horrors of the gothic tradition — the link between the two has largely gone unexamined. While analyses of their relationship can be found in the occasional article or book chapter, there has as yet been no comprehensive, synthetic examination of that relationship, no attempt to distinguish a coherent tradition of works that speak to the horrors of evolution in the form of the gothic tale.

Why there has been no such attempt, unfortunately, is not so easy a question to answer. Rather it is a long and complicated affair, having much to do with the academic conception of gothic fiction as a primarily, if not purely, psychological genre, on the one hand, and with the attack on naturalist fiction by post-War American literary criticism on the other. In other words, the disappearance of an evolutionary gothic sub-tradition from the wider stream of the American gothic can be attributed to the anti-determinist, pro-psychological tendencies of twentieth-century American and gothic literary criticism.

To illustrate the strength of these tendencies, consider the reception accorded not an American novel of horror, but a British one, a text whose long shadow, it might be said, hangs over this study: Herbert George Wells' *The Island of Doctor Moreau.*

Where Did Moreau Go?

In 1896, following the critical success of *The Time Machine,* there sprang from the prolific pen of the young H. G. Wells a strange, dark, new novel entitled *The Island of Doctor Moreau.* When it first appeared, it was greeted by reviewers with great clamor and many a denunciation. Wells' friend and fellow reviewer, Dr. Chalmes Mitchell criticized Wells not only for presumably poor science, but for seeking out "revolting details with the zeal of a sanitary inspector probing a crowded graveyard." Decrying "the

blood Mr. Wells insists upon forcing on" his audience in the novel's scenes of vivisection, Mitchell concludes "Wells had spoiled a fine conception by greed of cheap horrors" (Parrinder, *Critical Heritage* 44-45). One unsigned reviewer in *The Manchester Guardian* declared *Moreau* a "curious fantasy ... intrinsically horrible" (48); another in the *Speaker* fumed Wells had "no excuse" making a book that sent "a thrill of horror through the mind of the reader" (50); in the *Guardian*, a third declared it "an exceedingly ghastly book" (52), while a fourth in *Spectator* judged it "gruesome," a "ghastly conception" not recommended "to readers of sensitive nerves, as it might haunt them too powerfully" (46-48).

In noting the vehement response of Wells' first outraged readers, Wells scholars have perspicaciously discerned in *Moreau's* composition and thematic temperament the influence of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Borello 56; Williamson 79; Gill 51; Batchelor 17; Costa 16; McConnell 98). Early drafts of the novel even reveal Poe's dark influence (Philmus xviii-xix; Rainwater). And though critics traditionally group *Moreau* among Wells' early "scientific romances," most acknowledge how much darker it is than the others. Parrinder, for example, regards it as a novel "with much more deeply horrifying implications" than *The Invisible Man* (*H. G.Wells* 26). J. N. Williamson notes that "Wells creates an atmosphere of dark horror ... with the smoking jungle of this volcanic island, with Prendick's glimpses of the shambling, enigmatic Beast Folk, with the ominous behavior of Montgomery and Moreau," and "with the unendurable screaming of a puma under vivisection" (76-77). Batchelor considers it "the darkest of the romances" (17); Draper argues how to "the casual reader it may seem rather gratuitously and obsessively macabre" (43), while Costa adds "in terms of the shocking imagery of the work, [Wells'] appraisal was accurate. *Moreau* is hard on the nerves" (16). One might think from these descriptions that the

reception accorded *Moreau* by Victorian readers and contemporary critics alike would place it well within the horror tradition as we know it.[1] But this is not the case.

More typical has been the effort to *remove* it from such a tradition. Despite the obvious influence of Shelley, Stevenson, and Poe on the novel, Wells scholars continue to lay a greater emphasis on its satirical origin in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (Haynes 35; Williamson 77; Batchelor 13; Draper 47; McConnell 105). Wells himself indicated this key influence when he noted in his introduction to the Atlantic edition of his works that "the influence of Swift is very apparent in it" (ix). But if so apparent, why the horrified reaction of his readers? If so obvious, why the insistence of literary critics on rescuing the novel from its shameful gothic character by purporting to unveil it satirical nature, so deftly concealed behind its sensational horrors? As Alfred Borello puts it, in a stab at the supposed thickheadedness of *Moreau's* original reviewers, its "satirical intent was not at first apparent and it was read and accepted as a gripping horror story and nothing more. That Wells had a more serious intent, however, is clear from the subtitle he had originally proposed for it, 'A Satire'" (56). J. R. Hammond comments to the same effect, asserting that many "readers have laid the book aside under the impression that they have read a gripping horror story and nothing more" (85), when in fact, "Wells had a more serious, didactic intent" (85). But why these face-saving gestures? Were readers then, as now, wrong to see *Moreau* as a horror story? Were they mistaken to respond to it *primarily* as one?

In the effort to save Wells from the cheap sensationalism of the typical late Victorian horror tale, Wells scholars appear almost apologetic of the novel's horrifying contents, even as they recognize and welcome its dark thematic character. Indeed, in the attempt to define its "true" genre as satire, many display a bias against horror shared not

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[1] I use the terms "gothic" and "horror" interchangeably for the moment. Though there have been attempts to distinguish the two, common usage makes it clear that the grounds for those distinctions are hardly tenable.

only by Wells' censorious contemporaries, but by Wells himself, who had been dismayed by the novel's initial reviews. But even if Wells thought *Moreau* a satire, he could not deny the horrifying impact it had on readers, a disjuncture suggesting that, though in composition, Wells may have intended a satire, in reception, it was anything but.

Yet there is an even stranger twist to the history of the novel's critical reception. For even as Wells critics scramble to save the novel from the clutches of gothic sensationalism, affirming through their collective denial its perfect compatibility with the horror tradition, few critics who specialize in the gothic have bothered to take the bait. A short review of the several gothic bibliographies quickly illustrates this point. Receiving nary a citation in those of secondary criticism by Frederick S. Frank and Benjamin Franklin Fisher, *Moreau* fails to make the cut even in the presumably comprehensive reader's guides to horror fiction by Neil Barron and Marshall Tymn. Moreover, in spite of the obvious influence of gothic classics like *Frankenstein* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Moreau* receives little or no mention in the full-scale studies of the gothic and horror traditions by Julia Briggs, William Patrick Day, Walter Kendrick, Elizabeth McAndrew, Martin Tropp, and S. L. Varnado.[2] In what seems like a dirty trick played by gothic critics on Wells scholars, the energy spent snatching *Moreau* from the jaws of gothic sensation appears wasted as *Moreau* falls through the cracks of the gothic tradition to land in a limbo of works without a genre.

But even the purgatory into which *Moreau* has fallen must be qualified. For while *Moreau,* like a ghost, appears to have vanished from the gothic tradition, we would do well to remember that the tradition represented so far is largely an academic

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[2] The studies mentioned here are comprehensive in the sense that they are not delimited by categories that would of necessity exclude *Moreau.* Popular categories of this sort include gender (women's gothic), nationality (American gothic), and timespan (from Walpole to Maturin). Two exceptions to comprehensive studies of the gothic, noteworthy for their inclusion, albeit brief, of *Moreau,* are Punter's *Literature of Terror* and Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion.* As a study in contrasts, more disturbing is the case of Tropp, who devotes an entire chapter to the literary treatment of evolutionary fears without once mentioning *Moreau* (90-102). His more traditional choice is Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.*

one. *Moreau's* absence from the academic horror tradition does not necessarily mirror its reception by popular culture. Like Wells' reviewers, whose gut level responses confirmed *Moreau* as a work of horror, modern popular audiences, unlike their academic counterparts, have also come to recognize *Moreau* for what it is. In *Horror: The 100 Best Books,* when Gene Wolfe, as one of the "world's top horror, science fiction and fantasy authors," was invited "to contribute a brief essay on his ... favourite book" (9), he settled on *Moreau,* having already based a trio of horror novellas of his own on it (49-51).[3] But perhaps the surest index to the novel's true genre is revealed by its translation into film, first as the 1932 *Island of Lost Souls* with Charles Laughton and Bela Lugosi, and then as the 1977 remake, *The Island of Dr. Moreau,* with Burt Lancaster and Michael York.[4] There is little doubt that two hours in a dark theater with either of these would be time enough to recognize that, though Wells might not have comprehended the genre of his novel, Hollywood certainly did.

While it is true *Moreau* has traveled a strange trajectory in its reception, it is not a path peculiar to the novel, since what is so compelling about the case of the "missing *Moreau*" is how well it touches upon the difficulties that stand in the way of outlining in more general terms an evolutionary gothic tradition. Though as a British novel, *Moreau* must stand outside the pale of this study, its thematic content and the history of its reception point up quite nicely the critical biases that have affected the reception and interpretation of of those contributions by American writers like Poe, Norris, London, and Lovecraft to the evolutionary gothic tradition.

Fitting a Square Peg in a Round Hole.

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[3] See Wolfe's*The Island of Dr. Death, The Doctor of Death Island,* and *The Death of Dr. Island.* A complete list of *Moreau*-inspired works can be found in Philmus 211-30, in which it is made quite clear that their genre is either horror or science fiction — not satire.

[4] The translation of the novel into its two film versions is exhaustively examined by Renzi 60-89.

Why situating *Moreau* in the academic gothic tradition should seem like fitting a square peg in a round hole is by no means a simple question to answer. While the reaction of the novel's first readers, and of readers ever since, suggests something irrational about its being dropped from the gothic tradition, its erasure from it is not so unusual when placed within the context of the long history of critical disapprobation that has met the gothic tradition and its recent acceptance only after the institutionalization of psychological criticism. To answer why *Moreau* should be a square peg at all is to explain how the hole that is the gothic tradition came to be chipped round in the first place; to understand why *Moreau,* like the evolutionary fiction of Poe, Norris, London, and Lovecraft, has no place in the gothic tradition is to recognize how acceptance of the gothic tradition by the academy depended upon the unspoken agreement that only works that responded to an already accepted mode of literary criticism — psychological criticism — were to be embraced.

If there really is some truth to the old saw that commercial success is the surest sign of critical failure, then gothic literature must surely stand as one of the best examples of that precept. When Wordsworth in 1802 tried to explain in his preface to *Lyrical Ballads* the unusual popularity of gothic fiction in England and America, he harshly concluded it to be a response to "a craving for extraordinary incident" which had been brought about by the ever "increasing accumulation of men in cities" and the "uniformity of their occupations."[5] Unfortunately, the effect of this "craving" on literary taste was anything but beneficial to the "invaluable works of our elder writers," which, according to Wordsworth, were being "driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse" (qtd. in Kendrick xxiii). Nor was Wordsworth alone in his disdain. As gothic bibliographer Frederick Frank notes, many of the "earliest critics of the Gothic deplored its inartistic

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[5] On the popularity of the gothic in Britain, see Summers 60-105; in America, Ringe 13-35, 58-78.

extremes and garish appeal" (*Guide* ix). Even today, one can still find critics like Walter Kendrick in the same breath lambasting producers of "scary entertainment" for degrading the culture at large, while scolding scholars for taking such entertainment seriously:

> Perhaps the scholars worry that the horror tradition has produced too few masterpieces to justify the labor of studying it. By ordinary academic standards, a very short shelf will hold all the goosefleshy works worth looking at ... [But even w]hen they've been gussied up as "popular culture," such things still need to be read psychoanalytically, psychosexually, or in some other way that makes them symptoms of forces higher and better than themselves. Otherwise, the embarrassed scholar sinks in a morass of throwaways, churned out for profit and scanned at idle moments, then junked. Even now, when the academic canon has been nearly kicked to pieces, these are not the building blocks of a scholar's reputation. (xxii)

Kendrick continues in this vein, deploring such entertainment *ad nauseum,* never once noting how his attack on the horror industry's addiction to recycling clichéd material is itself a recycled cliché in the long tradition of overstated declarations of taste. Unfortunately, because these declarations come from the self-proclaimed conservators of literature, they carry an academic clout denied the arguments marshalled by supporters in defense of the besieged genre.

Still as overbearing as Kendrick is, he does get at the heart of the critical enterprise that initiated the academic glut in the 1950s of gothic studies — the omnipresence of psychoanalytic criticism. Before World War II, there had been little in the way of gothic literary criticism. But early critics like Dorothy Scarborough and Edith Birkhead helped set the tone for how the gothic tradition was to be handled in the academy. Scarborough was especially significant in this regard because she "anticipated the central point about the fundamental psychic crisis of the Gothic later enlarged upon by the great twentieth-century interpreters of the Gothic, Eino Railo, Montague Summers, Robert D. Mayo, Maurice Lévy, and Devendra Varma," namely "that the primal Gothic conflict was 'internal between one's own selves'" or, in other words, "psychomachic" (Frank, *Guide* xii). In treating "psychomachia, or war within the self" (xii) as *the* central

gothic theme, Frank lends a certain historical support to Kendrick's criticism of how "such things still need to be read psychoanalytically, psychosexually" to justify being read at all. Consequently, if Kendrick is right, then the academic canonization of gothic fiction became possible only after psychological criticism had itself found a greater academic acceptance. And this is the key to solving the case of the missing *Moreau.*

Despite Birkhead and Scarborough's significant contributions in the 1920s, the number of major works of gothic criticism remained small. This "state of scholarly indifference or hostility," however, "began to change radically and swiftly ... when several American scholars began to take on [Montague] Summers' challenge for reinvigorated Gothic studies" (Frank, *Gothic* x). By the 1950s, the field of gothic studies had begun to bloom, growing in size through the miraculous fertilizing powers of Freudian and post-Freudian criticism. Of course, none of this had started in a vacuum, the ground having already been broken by, among other things, Freud's 1919 essay "The Uncanny," Princess Marie Bonaparte's psychobiography of Poe, and Edmund Wilson's famous conclusion in 1934 that *The Turn of the Screw* was about a "sex-repressed" governess.[6] Wilson's suggestion proved particularly useful in opening the doors of academia to the gothic because of the stormy debate that ensued (Kimbrough 181). If gothic scholars thus felt comfortable in finally offering gothic literature for canonization, it was only because psychological criticism, having swept much of academia before it, had finally made the genre critically and intellectually respectable.

But there was a price to be paid for acceptance, sacrifices to be made to the Gods of psychological criticism, the grandest of those sacrifices being the erasure from the gothic tradition of anti-psychological elements, if not entire works. To answer why *Moreau* hasn't been treated as part of the gothic tradition, despite its clear descent from

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[6] Robert Kimbrough, however, scrupulously points out predecessors in Harold C. Goddard's "A Pre-Freudian Reading of *The Turn of the Screw,*" which, though formulated by 1920, was not published until 1957, and Edna Kenton's "Henry James to the Ruminant Reader: The Turn of the Screw." On the reception of Wilson's thesis in the 1950s and 1960s, see Martina Slaughter's "Edmund Wilson and *The Turn of the Screw.*" All essays appear in the 1966 Norton edition edited by Kimbrough (181-214).

Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is to acknowledge its apprehension by the newly-enfranchised practitioners of gothic scholarship as being *too biological for its own good.* As a tale whose locus is not the mind, but the body, whose thematic investments are more in Darwin than in Freud, it fails to pass muster with the guardians of the gothic canon. Less a story of "psychomachia," of the mind split and at war with itself, than of the mind at war with its organic foundation, the body, it is the representative square peg of an evolutionary gothic tradition unable to fit the round hole chipped by the criteria of psychological expectation.

In place of the central taboo that marks the psychological gothic — the fictional representation of psychic fragmentation — *Moreau* posits as its core taboo violation the frightening prospect of a biologically determined universe. In an attempt to explain why "of Wells' five major scientific romances," *Moreau* "is probably the least widely read or taught," Wells scholar Frank McConnell makes just this point when he contrasts *Moreau* with its immediate predecessor, *The Time Machine.* While the latter "emphasizes ... the possible dangers of the human *future,*" the former dwells on "the animal, chaotic, bloody origins and hidden nature of the human *present.*" That is, the horrors of *The Time Machine* are only prospective, and thus avoidable, whereas in *Moreau,* its horrors are *already* with us. Even the fundamental philosophical underpinnings of the two novels underscore this difference. While in *The Time Machine,* the two "voices of determinism and free will ... are still there," in *Moreau* "the tone of both is significantly darkened, until the idea of 'determinism' ... becomes a grim algebra of pain and suffering" and "free will ... has become, by the end, only a bitter mockery of man's pretensions to 'humanity' in the face of his animal heritage" (89). In other words, though *Moreau* has never been classified as such, McConnell suggests that what has dimmed the general response to it, leaving it "the least widely read or taught," is its status, unbeknownst to itself, as a naturalist novel. Not unlike his naturalist contemporary, Rudyard Kipling (despite their political differences), Wells regards our behavior as no less determined than

that of our primate cousins — the logical result of millions of years of evolutionary molding.[7] It is an approach notably anti-Freudian in tone because it locates the tragic source of evil less in childhood trauma than in genetic heritage, producing a horrific angle of vision that grates against the traditional conception of the gothic as the fictional stronghold of "psychomachia."

Horrifying though it may be, small wonder *Moreau* has no place to call home.

The American Craze for Psychomachia

Faced with the scathing reception of the critical elite, defenders and promoters of the gothic tradition logically turned to the province of psychological criticism to make their case for the academic canonization of the gothic fiction. Unfortunately, the result was not to the benefit of all members within that tradition. In approaching the gothic tradition with the tools of psychological criticism, critics unwittingly warped that tradition as works which spoke to psychological issues through mimesis (the psychopath) or symbolism (the supernatural) qualified for the distinction of gothic, while others were relegated to the genres of science fiction or naturalism — demonstrating through tautology that the only real horrors are psychological ones. This is an especially unusual development in the critical understanding of American literary history in light of the tremendous impact evolutionary theory had after publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* on the philosophers, sociologists, scientists, statesmen, and literati of America. One would think, given this effect, that there would be some serious consideration of the relationship between America's gothic and evolutionary fiction traditions. But quite the contrary has in fact been the case. Rather than explore the evolutionary horrors of the American gothic, American literary criticism, because of its own peculiar institutional evolution, has instead reinforced the psychological fence built around America's gothic

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[7] For the influence on Wells of Kipling's brand of naturalism as taken from his *Jungle Books*, see McConnell, 100-01, Costa 16, and especially Platzner.

tradition by arguing that the psychological emphasis of the gothic tradition in America is what has made that tradition distinctively American.

Similar to the dearth of gothic criticism more broadly, Frank writes of this side of the Atlantic that, "until the 1920's," there was "no critical effort made to define the American Gothic or to distinguish it from the English parent form" (*Through* x). More particularly, because gothic fiction had been viewed as "incompatible with the proper code of realism," no real breakthroughs occurred until Fred Lewis Pattee and H. P. Lovecraft respectively proposed "the forbidden counter-myth of America as fallen Eden, a mythic environment where apprehension and anxiety overshadowed ... brighter hopes and expectations" (xi). Thus did the "gothic landscape" become the focus of attention until the 1960s, when it was successfully amalgamated into the broader heavily psychologized approaches of Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* and Irving Malin's *New American Gothic*. While Fiedler made use of Freudian insights and Jungian archetypes to argue for the "failure of the American fictionist to deal with adult heterosexual love and his obsession with death, incest, and innocent homosexuality," Malin stuck solely to Freud-inspired notions of blurred identities and narcissistic obsessions to explore an American gothic tradition notable for its highbrow pedigree.[8] Indeed, Fiedler and Malin differed little from Pattee and Lovecraft in positing as distinctively American the psychological projection of personal anxieties on one's surroundings, as American homes, families, and landscapes were transformed into silvered mirrors of the psychomachic self. Even Donald Ringe's seemingly anti-Freudian, heavily historicized *American Gothic* is belied by its subtitle, "Imagination and Reason in Nineteenth Century Fiction," as well as by its premise of the role played by

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[8] The subjects of Malin's 1962 study — Truman Capote, John Hawkes, Carson McCullers, James Purdy, J. D. Salinger, and Flannery O'Connor — reflects a more academic than popular understanding of the modern American horror tradition. Compare Malin's choices with Stephen King's expressed preferences in his 1981 *Danse Macabre* for H. P. Lovecraft, Robert Bloch, Richard Matheson, Ira Levin, and Jack Finney. This separation of gothic fiction into high and either middle or lowbrow streams is integral to the sullied reception of the evolutionary gothic — usually characterized as middle or lowbrow — because it squares so poorly with the psychoanalytic expectations of academic critics.

American Scottish rationalism in founding a gothic that looked to troubled psyches instead of supernatural causes to explain marvellous events.[9]

Dissertation studies too reflect a penchant for psychological treatment. Frank, for example, quotes as a "provocative conclusion" JoAnne Yates' assertion that the "American experience forced writers again and again to turn inward into the mind and heart rather than outwards toward society. If writers were to find terror in the new world, which many did, they were forced to find it not in outmoded social systems but within man himself.'" But there is nothing provocative about a conclusion derived from the Jamesian notion first proposed in his 1879 *Hawthorne* that lack of an American social scene compelled writers like Hawthorne to turn inwards, to the psyche, for his fictional materials: ""The fine thing in Hawthorne is that he cared for the deeper psychology, and that, in his way, he tried to become familiar with it" (51). Nor do any of the rest of Frank's citations argue with this penchant to categorize the American gothic tradition as a psychological one.[10] Even his approving citation of Stephen King's image in *Danse Macabre* of the American gothic "as an internal mood," in which "entrapped or enclosed characters 'turning inward instead of growing outward,'" provide, "'in what might be termed a psychological pathetic fallacy,'" "'a closed loop of character'" as "physical surroundings ... mimic the inward-turning of the characters themselves,'"

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[9] Ringe notes: "To the Scottish philosophers, the imagination was a deceptive faculty. If not kept firmly under the control of reason, it could make the observer misperceive actuality and even see things that were not there" (5). This, according to Ringe, was the dominant intellectual force which obligated American writers to walk a literary highwire, acknowledging the laws of reality, apropros Common Sense philosophers, on the one hand, while giving free play to the creative imagination, on the other. Ringe's conclusion is not unpredictably that writers like Brown, Irving, Cooper, Poe, Hawthorne, and James had to turn to the misperceiving psyche in order to satisfy simultaneously the philosophical commitment to reality and the "strength of popular demand and felt need ... to allow some play for the imagination" (9).

[10] Dissertations by Dimaggio, Tucker, and Green cited by Frank illustrate the psychological thrust of interpretations of the American gothic.

demonstrates the academic propensity to define the American gothic as a primarily psychological genre (*Through* xiv).[11]

The Absence of History and Why Dreiser Had To Go

Given the psychological emphasis academic literary critics have placed on the gothic tradition, one would think there would be no great difference in the treatments accorded the American and British gothic traditions respectively. Such a thesis, however, is not borne out by the treatment tendered the American gothic tradition.[12] While it is true that both traditions tend to be approached from psychological perspectives by academia, the psychologization of the American gothic tradition has become even more deeply entrenched because of the direction taken by the broader flow of the academic interpretation of American literature. More specifically, by following the thesis first suggested in the complaints of those like Cooper, Hawthorne, and James that lack of a rich, social milieu left little choice but to dive into the tumultuous sea of the American psyche, modern American literary criticism has inclined to value the psychologically transcendant over the historically particular. If the American gothic is a psychological genre, so the argument runs, it is only because all of American literature, when at its best,

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[11] Interestingly, Frank fails to note the direct derivation of King's declaration here from his discussion of Malin's thesis (King 280-81). Despite the dominant emphasis in American literary criticism on the American gothic as a psychological genre, Frank pushes a little too hard here by citing only one of several differing interpretations proposed by King in *Danse*.

It is also worth pointing that there have been treatments of America's gothic tradition in terms other than psychological. See, for example, the essay collections by Kerr et al., David Mogen et al., and Carpenter and Kolmar. But, by and large, no matter the angle taken, whether the focus is on spiritualism, the frontier, or the haunted home, the foundation for discussion continues to be the fragmented psyche. Only the Crowley collection seriously considers a materialist rather than psychological perspective for discussing the American gothic.

[12] Frank asserts that while "the English gothic had dealt with physical terror and social horror, the American gothic would concentrate on mental terror and moral horror" (xii). This thesis, however, is arguable. The British gothic is just as much about mental terror and moral horror as the American. The American gothic only appears to be more so because of the anti-historical emphasis in academic interpretations pf American literature. Frank here reproduces for gothic fiction the distinction James and his followers struck between the social embeddedness of the British novel and the fabled lack of social texture in the American romance. See the discussion that follows.

is psychological — it has to be, given the paucity of social materials with which the artist has to work. The failure of the evolutionary gothic to make its mark may be ascribed, therefore, not only to the psychologization of the gothic on both sides of the Atlantic, but, more particularly, to the pro-psychological dehistoricization of American literature in the twentieth century.

Recently this dehistoricization of the American literature has come under considerable fire from a number of critics. In debates over the American literary canon, for example, much fine scholarship has been produced on how the select group of writers chosen for canonization has been reinforced by the ways in which that canon has been read. Russell Reising, Paul Lauter, Nina Baym, and Jane Tompkins are only a few who have begun to question not only the selection of authors and works for canonization, but more importantly, the ways of reading which have predetermined those choices. Reising, for instance, describes two methods by which the dehistoricizing critical tendencies of American canonizers have created a tradition that weeds out writers who presumably fail to fit universal, transhistorical aesthetic criteria:

> Recent theorists of American literature tend to minimize such social and historical context in one or both of two ways. First they devalue, often suppress, writers and varieties of writing that do reflect interest in a historically determined social milieu. Second they either de-emphasize what social reference exists in the writers and works they study, or they turn them into non- or anti-referential elements. (34)

Tompkins comments to the same effect when she argues:

> ... what distinguishes a work *as literature* ... is the way it separates itself from transitory issues.... The fact that a work engages such issues [local historical ones], in this view, is an index not of its greatness, but of its limitation; the more directly it engages purely local and temporal concerns, the less literary it will be, not only because it is captive to the fluctuations of history, but also because in its attempt to mold public opinion it is closer to propaganda than to art, and hence furnishes material for the historian rather than the literary critic. (186)

In confronting the anti-historical forces in American literary criticism, Reising and Tompkins point up the connection between critical modes of thought and specific interpretative conclusions. According to each, modes of analysis that ignore historical considerations go hand-in-hand with the common interpretation of American literature as being about eluding the constraints of history. As Soviet critic A. N. Nikolyukin points out, more often than not the mode of criticism adopted — "Freudian, mythic, existential, and so forth" — reflects "a subjective-idealistic conception of literary development" whose "common tendency is to confirm the estrangement of American literature from the sociohistorical conditions of its formulation" (540). In other words, what has estranged American literature from its historical context is not the textual subject-matter at hand, but the ways in which American texts are read.

A number of sources have been offered to explain these new critical tendencies, which have so effectively siphoned off so many literary works: the ideological fiction of universality and the "Great Book"; the attempt to protect white, male privilege in universities and culture-at-large by excluding from curricula the strange and thus "unreadable" experience of women and minorities; the effort to generate a science of reading to compete with the better financed government- and university-funded "hard" sciences; the struggle to create a unifying American identity which favored freedom and despised communism under the watchful eye of the Cold War.[13] But the formulation that I think best explains how the evolutionary gothic specifically came to be cut from the heavily psychologized American gothic originates in the efforts of American critics to evade history by defining that evasion as what makes the best American fiction distinctively *American.*

Consider in this regard, for example, the work of Richard Poirier, whose *A World Elsewhere* epitomizes the attempt to distinguish as uniquely American the struggle

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[13] On the argument for universality, see Smith, chap. 2; on the protection of privilege, see Lauter 22-47 and Baym 3-18; on the phenomenon of funding, see Eagleton 123-24; on the Cold War theory, see Pease.

to escape history. In this significant modern study of the American literature, Poirier both echoes and sums up a longstanding conception of American literature, one which originated in Henry James and found full fruition in the work of post-war American literary critics. Following the lead of his critical predecessors, Poirier implies the aesthetic failure of the America's evolutionary fiction tradition when he asserts that the "most interesting American books ... carry the metaphoric burden of a great dream of freedom — of the expansion of national consciousness into the vast spaces of a continent and the absorption of those spaces into ourselves." This notion, in fact, becomes his thesis for what is best in American fiction, as he settles on the greatness of those "classic American writers" who attempt "through style temporarily to free the hero (and the reader) from systems, to free them from the pressures of time, biology, economics, and from the social forces which are ultimately the undoing of American heroes and quite often of their creators." With the clarion call of freedom determining which books we canonize and which we don't, how can any work of evolutionary fiction possibly pass through the aesthetic sieve Poirier constructs? When Poirier argues that "the books which in my view constitute a distinctive American tradition ... resist within their pages forces of environment that otherwise dominate the world'" (5), what chance is there for an evolutionary gothic tradition in light of the relative worthlessness of all evolutionary fiction?

If Poirier is guilty of dehistoricization, his reasoning is at least justified by his treatment of it as a quintessentially American theme. But this interpretation of American literature, underwritten by a critical distaste for America's longstanding determinist tradition, is not unique to him. As Reising makes clear, it is only one of the more recent in a long line of dehistoricized readings of American literature by such critical luminaries as R. W. B. Lewis, F. O. Matthiessen, and Charles Feidelson. Indeed, it is one repeated enough to let us know that the attempt to characterize American literature as the struggle to escape the chains of history has its own prehistory, one that precedes even the

new criticism of the 1950s by half a century, when the terms of debate were first being set by two schools of philosophy and their American literary representatives.

The setting of those terms began, appropriately enough, with the explosive impact of Darwinism on Western thought. With the theory of natural selection, Darwin opened the floodgates of philosophy to a species of materialism that found itself ably represented in the "block universe" theories of reality and behavior of Herbert Spencer and his materialist-determinist inheritors. Also influenced by Darwin, but in direct opposition to Spencerian doctrine, was the far more fluid, dialectical view of human psychology of pragmatists William James and John Dewey. The effect on American literature was immense and immediate as these two philosophical camps found their respective representatives in the naturalist writers, on the one hand, and in what Lionel Trilling called the "moral realists," on the other.

To progressive American literary critics of the 1920s and 1930s, Dreiser and James figured as the main representatives of these two camps, with preference going to the former. The consequent struggle in the 1950s was to wrest American literature from the grip of Dreiser's domination and place it under the rule of Henry James, a struggle that was taken up by Lionel Trilling in a rearguard attack on critical predecessors Vernon Parrington and Granville Hicks. Their praise of Dreiser's "tough" representation of a harsh, unyielding reality and disparagement of James' genteel concern with manners had only contributed, according to Trilling, to the wrong direction American literature had taken in allowing social realists like John Dos Passos, Sherwood Anderson, and John Steinbeck to overshadow modernists like F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway. To Trilling, social realist writers, as the direct inheritors of Spencer and the naturalists, represented everything that was wrong with the liberal imagination.

To reign victorious over the "socially engaged" fiction Parrington and Hicks promoted, Trilling returned to the original debate between William James' faith in free will and Herbert Spencer's hard determinism by linking the Jamesian novel and its modernist

inheritors to the American romance, a maneuver whose effect was to place naturalists like Dreiser and his social realist descendants outside the pale of the American Renaissance. Moreover, even in spite of the careful distinctions James was to draw between the novel and the romance, Trilling saw in him a standard bearer of the type of anti-determinism that exemplified what was best in American fiction (the very view adopted by Poirier). The thematic link Trilling forged between the Jamesian novel and the antebellum American romance — the struggle of the individual to achieve a certain moral freedom — became a weapon with which to beat down the prominence of American naturalism, and consequently the evolutionary gothic.

To give his argument substance, however, Trilling, unlike Poirier, points out what he considers the very real political stakes involved in preferring James to Dreiser. Despite its seeming incoherence as a collection of loosely organized essays, Trilling's *Liberal Imagination* offered a cogent argument for why naturalism, and its social realist legacy, failed as a school of art and as a tool of democracy. Unlike his formalist contemporaries, Trilling ascribed a socially practical function to literature, and that function, as expressed in "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," was to represent a "culture's hum and buzz of implication." By picturing that "part of culture" where "assumption rules," literature served the socially critical function of dissecting "the old opposition between reality and appearance, between what really is and what merely seems" (201). Unlike other artistic media, literature, in laying bare the mental processes involved in working one's way through the "buzz and hum of implication," empowered readers by functioning as a guidebook to how one achieves a true understanding of one's position in reality, a function ideally represented in the works of James, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner,

In contrast to this modernist commitment to exploring the interaction of mind and reality, Trilling describes the more insidious preference of naturalists like Dreiser, social realists like Anderson, and critics like Parrington and Hicks for representing reality as

"external and hard, gross and unpleasant" (209), where appearances *are* the only knowable reality. Trilling attacks them for favoring dualistic "block-universe" representations of reality over James' dialectical understanding of reality, a reality that is always already qualified by the subjectivity of the individual. And for Trilling this is more than just a philosophical quibble, for the refusal of writers like Dreiser or Anderson to respect the individual understanding of reality was pernicious, notwithstanding what they thought their fiction accomplished. In response to Hicks and Parrington's praise of the social realist writer's struggle for social justice and their dismissal of James' genteel "moral realism" as politically conservative, Trilling argues that the largely pessimistic systems espoused by Dreiser and the like exemplify a type of gross utilitarianism that willingly sacrifices individuals to the greater good. The refusal to respect the subjectivity of the individual by calling it effete and then submerging it in some objective, anti-human, abstract system, is, though Trilling, never says so, no different from those systems constructed by Nazism or Stalinism to justify their inhuman treatment of individuals. The replacement of "natural, direct human feeling" with "abstraction" (211) — the result of the post-Spencerian subjugation of mind to reality — and the refusal to explore manners in any depth in order to broaden "social sympathies" can only lead to a diminution in our "love" for the individual because "our novels can never create characters who truly exist" (210). Unable to love characters who are two-dimensional at best because their relationship to reality is determined rather than dialectical, we become morally indifferent to their fate: the antithesis of what liberal democracy is about.[14]

For critics like Trilling, the practical value of reading novels that explore the dialectical relationship between the apprehension of reality and reality itself lies in its

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[14] Trilling's efforts were, as Donald Pizer has described in a letter to me, "symptomatic" of the postwar response to naturalism. See also his *Theory* 54-57, 69-71, and 215-16, nn. 2 and 5. W. M. Frohock, commenting on Norris' reputation, notes, for example, how the "enormous weight of preference for the novel according to Henry James, with its severe restriction of point of view to the 'central moral consciousness,' has put older and simpler procedures in a poor light. Everything in the complaints of adverse judges like Lionel Trilling and the late Joseph Warren Beach in their dismissals of the novels of Dreiser is equally applicable to Norris" (15).

contribution to the development of a "critical" ability necessary for functioning in a liberal democracy. To experience the interplay of mind and reality, even in the work of writers with fascistic leanings, like Eliot or Lawrence, is to learn how to exercise one's moral scruples and discover how much freedom lies in the recognition of that interplay. In his effort to recoup a proper understanding and appreciation of freedom from the dark legacy of Nazism and the threat of Stalinism, Trilling inverts the roles played by Dreiser's naturalism and James' realism by arguing that what is significant is not what class the writer belongs to or presumably pleads for, but the effect had on the critical temperament by the writer's representation of reality. To Trilling, despite their good intentions, Dreiser and his ilk fail because, in the final analysis, they offer an image of reality that is deterministic and futile, generative of a fascistic rather than democratic sensibility. Where Dreiser questions the "self-seeking passions" of ever-desiring individuals, James throws doubt upon the "moral passions" of the self-righteous who know no greater pleasure than that of legislating the "right" relations among individuals: "Some paradox of our natures leads us, when once we have made our fellow men the objects of our enlightened interest, to go on to make them the objects of our pity, then of our wisdom, ultimately of our coercion. It is to prevent this corruption, the most ironic and tragic that man knows, that we stand in need of the moral realism which is the product of the free play of the moral imagination." What the Jamesian novel insists upon that the social realist work of moral outrage does not is the involvement of "the reader himself in the moral life." And this it accomplishes by "inviting him to put his own motives under examination, suggesting that reality is not as his conventional education has led him to see it" (214-15). In other words, the Jamesian novel teaches us to be skeptical of righteousness, or at least enough so that we might learn to choose what is right rather than have it determined for us by another. The Dreiserian suggestion that human beings must have their own best interests dictated to them because they are too enmeshed in their determined states to know what those interests are was for Trilling an invidious and presumptuous

conclusion, one that showed little faith in either the educability or freedom of the individual.

The rarefied atmosphere of Trilling's academic plea for a consciousness-raising moral skepticism, however, should not mask the fear that drives his program to reverse American literary tastes. Trilling's effort to rewrite American literary history is more than an academic quarrel over political values and the literary representation of reality. It is also the expression of a profoundly personal sense of fear, the dark side of all eminently rational presentations (and there is no doubt that this is exactly what Trilling thinks he is about). Fear of coercion, fear of communism, fear, most of all, of determinism and its acceptance. The failure of the liberal imagination for Trilling is epitomized by the twin evils of a deterministic materialism and a passive mysticism so well represented by Dreiser and Anderson. The exercise of moral faculties and a faith in moral and intellectual "complexity" of a dialectical understanding of reality is, for Trilling, what keeps at bay the shadows of an evolutionary and environmental determinism and motivates his attack on naturalist and social realist fiction. It is fear of these that, in the end, justify Trilling's aesthetic preferences and critical program.

The failure of the evolutionary gothic, a by-product of Trilling's calculated and devastating attack on the individual-sacrificing determinism of American naturalism, did not necessarily mean the failure of gothic altogether. For if there was one abstract system Trilling thought worked because it presumably respected the individual apprehension of reality, it was that of Freudian psychology. Despite objections Trilling had to the vulgar application of Freudian psychoanalysis to literature, he evinces a healthy respect for its utility. In "Freud and Literature," for example, he argues that because in the "Freudian view," "the mind ... helps create its reality by selection and evaluation," reality remains "malleable and subject to creation." As such, Freud is linked to James through the dialectical vision of Dewey, since, "to use a phrase of Dewey's ... the reality to which

[Freud] wishes to reconcile the neurotic patient is ... a 'taken' and not a 'given' reality" (42). Moreover, if, as Trilling suggests in "Art and Neurosis," "we are all ill," but "ill in the service of life-in-culture" (173), especially the artist, it should be obvious that Freudian psychology offers the best chance for reading literature in a way that respects the dialectical relationship of mind and reality.

Regardless of the compromises Trilling would make with abstractions he deplored in other systems of thought, his blessing on psychoanalytic approaches contributed significantly to the triumph of a Jamesian realism over the evolutionary ethos of James' naturalist contemporaries, lending a certain credibility to the widespread use of psychoanalytic criticism. Indeed, even without Trilling's blessing, it would have been surprising had the academic establishment from the 1950s on not made use of psychoanalytic categories for discussing America's gothic. Even though Freud's theories were intended primarily for the examination of neurotics rather than psychotics, there were few approaches so well suited to examining the "taken" rather than "given" realities of America's gothic protagonists. As an attempt to alter the American critical preference from Dreiser to James through a synthesis of Dewey and Freud, Trilling's work stands as a paradigmatic example in the broader stream of American literary criticism of how the psychological treatment of American gothic became an academic reality.

Facing the Last Taboo

In the end, there's something rather unusual, if not ironic, in describing in evolutionary terms the displacement of evolutionary fiction. With the recent reintroduction of a historicizing sensibility into the study of literature and its reception — in this case, of canon formation — a window has been opened on to the study of determinism in American fiction in a way that had been foreclosed by 1) the ahistorical approach of post-war criticism, 2) the effort to treat the dehistoricization of American literature as a correct interpretation of what America's "best" authors sought to achieve, and 3) the struggle to

valorize those works that preferred a dialectical psychology to a deterministic materialism. But Reising, alongside Frank Lentricchia and Terry Eagleton, is very clear in warning us that the onset of structuralist and post-structuralist theories in the 1970s and 1980s, with their heavy emphases on language and free play, have not necessarily contributed more towards rehistoricizing literature and opening the American canon. This continues to be true of American gothic studies as well, as may be witnessed from a 1985 dissertation on American gothic by Gary Lee Green, who sees as central to the American Gothic the projection of a "fear that self-autonomy is merely a linguistic construct, a fear based on the self's relation to an environment which appears to prohibit a coherent sense of self" (qtd. in Frank *Through* xiii). But this is just another argument for the treatment of the American gothic as projected psychomachia — only now with a Lacanian, poststructural twist.

All this effort to get around the evolutionary gothic — the emphasis of gothic studies on the American gothic as a psychomachic genre; the stress placed by American literary criticism on an anti-determinist American literary canon — is just so much energy spent on avoiding a confrontation with the taboo of determinism. The fear evoked by the specter of determinism is not a dim emotion felt in response to a mild threat. It is an intense fear when properly apprehended because of the extreme danger posed by the paradoxical consequence of accepting a determined existence, since to accept such a state is not merely to violate the tabooed separation between freedom and slavery, but to swallow up in the process of acceptance that separation's condition as a taboo. Whereas for the psychomachic protagonist, horror of his psychic dissolution or evil character traits remains logically plausible, in deterministic fictions, the predication of a tabooed determinism on the experience of moral horror becomes impossible in a universe that has been emptied of moral content by its own inevitability. The experience of horror in a determined universe is an act of bad faith; to be horrified by it is no different from being horrified by the law of gravity.

This cutting off of feeling implied in the adoption of a deterministic credo runs strongly against the individualistic current of American and Western ideologies. The conception of individual freedom as an illusion is fundamental to the formulation of a deterministic universe. Recourse even to such philosophico-religious alternatives as an unassailable faith in free will or the assumption of freedom in light of the impossibility of ever completely apprehending one's own determined condition, appear at best face-saving gestures when confronted by the full force of determinism. Perhaps the most telling irony of the transgressive entry into the determined reality is how recognition of it becomes the object of a compelling and insoluble paradox: horror at the prospect that the possibility of feeling horror may be foreclosed; horror at the loss of horror.

The fear of determinism, its status as the most awesome of our epistemological taboos is what marks in part the history of criticism's response (or rather lack of response) to those literary attempts to formulate its possible reality. The aspersions cast on such literary works as aesthetically inadequate, fascistic, or un-American may be less rational than irrational, motivated more by fear than the illogicality of a determined and determining reality, a fear that has been aggravated by the twentieth-century application of its most insidious and heavy-handed form — biological determinism.

There is no apologizing for or defending of the atrocities of history that sprang from the scientific theories of racial difference that grew out of a nihilistic faith in a biologically determined universe. The capacity of guards and administrators at Nazi concentration camps to exterminate the demonized and dehumanized millions that passed through their hands stems directly from the legacy of a scientific racism that swept America and Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Trilling's literary backlash against a defeated Nazism and an emergent Stalinism revealed the biological determinism of the naturalists for what it could become. It was, in a sense, the legacy of Auschwitz that awoke him to fear and vigilance of the determinist streak in American fiction. But while Trilling's analysis of this pattern of deterministic thought rightly focuses our

attention on the ideological uses and abuses of that special and often frightening relationship between our biological origin and who we are as human beings, it is not enough to permit us to dismiss that relationship altogether.

In approaching the taboo of determinism, we approach what Trilling perhaps despised most when he championed James over his naturalist contemporaries — the preference of mind over "not-mind." Trilling, in the philosophical tradition of John Dewey and William James, characterized the relationship between mind and environment as dialectical, not unidirectional. But one suspect that what he dreaded most was the complete submergence of mind, not in its environment, but in the body itself. Greater than the fear of an environmentally determined universe is that of a biologically determined one. In contrast to the psychological gothic, for which the psychotic fragmentation of the unitary ego functions as its primary horror, for the evolutionary gothic, it is the collapsing of mind into body, symbolized by the reversion of human into animal, that characterizes its central taboo. In the evolutionary gothic, unlike the psychological, human behavior is drawn from the monism of Darwinian instinct rather than from the dualism (or dialecticism) of Freudian conflict. Trilling was quite right to attack the materialism and mysticism of Dreiser and Anderson, having recognized in each the horrific potential for an evolutionary gothic which writers like Norris and London would actively embrace.[15]

How To Lose a Tradition

In tracing the erasure of the evolutionary gothic tradition, one notices right away an ironic element in its disappearance: the looming sense of fear. Moreau's treatment by

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[15] In one of the few times he uses the word "horror", Poirier captures this sense in his discussion of Dreiser as a writer for whom "'Individuality' becomes indistinguishable ... from anonymity" and "a man's body or his voice" is "lived by something which needs not only him but billions like him in order to express itself'" (248). This sinking into anonymity, this sense of being lived through, captures in many respects the the possible reality of a determined universe. In his analysis of Dreiser, Poirier pinpoints what the evolutionary gothic is in large measure about — puppethood.

Wells scholars suggests this fear, a fear of literary sensationalism and artistic degradation. It is this same fear which moves the creators and critics of great or "serious" art, like Wordsworth and Kendrick, to condemn the entire gothic enterprise. But there is no monopoly on fear by these guardians of art, who have met their match in gothic scholars whose fear of rejection has encouraged them to psychologize the gothic tradition in order to insure its academic acceptance. Nor does the cycle of fear cease with the detractors and defenders of the gothic tradition as the greater community of scholars of American fiction, scholars like Trilling and Poirier, is forced to face the materialistic, deterministic ethos of its otherwise beloved literary tradition. In all this dodging of America's (and Britain's for that matter) evolutionary gothic tradition, Wells scholars, gothic scholars, and American literary scholars have worked hard to make light of a tradition that testifies to what may be America's darkest fear: the conquest of body over mind, the dissolution of spirit in matter, the triumph of reasonless force over free will.

The cry of the individual, of individualism itself, has been, in many respects, the centerpiece of the various maneuverings that have raised the banner of the inner spirit over that of external force. Reising, for example, notes two methods "theorists of American literature" have used to minimize "social and historical context" in literature. Either "they devalue ... writers and varieties of writing that do reflect interest in a historically determined social milieu" or they "de-emphasize what social reference exists in the writers and works they study" (34). That is, theorists either decanonize or dehistoricize those works or writers that do not fit their individual-driven literary aesthetics. So the same might be said of the treatment accorded the evolutionary gothic, whose frightening claims do not even acknowledge the efficacy of historical forces beyond those that have molded the body and its biological drives. With the aesthetic valorization of psychomachia there has followed either the exclusion of writers or writings that highlight biological horrors or the "de-biologization" of works already a part of the academic gothic canon.

Hence the unorthodox but perfectly plausible tradition which can be traced from Poe through Norris and London to H. P. Lovecraft, each of whom has suffered in one form or another the warping effect of the attempt to keep the gothic clear of an overwhelming determinism. The "de-biologization" of Poe's horrors, the recategorization of Norris and London's gothic fictions, and the critical disdain showered upon Lovecraft all represent attempts to sweep under the academic rug the materialistic and deterministic ethos of their horrifying visions. In "reconstituting" this tradition, which has been sacrificed to the snobbery, aesthetics, and fears of academia, it is not a matter of wading into this hidden stream of fiction to fish out the respective themes of individual texts. Positing a *tradition* rather entails assuming commonalities in theme and philosophical implication. It also assumes a healthy respect for historical context. What terrifies and what horrifies are always already conditioned by history, by the local and temporal concerns of writers and their readers. Such is the case of the evolutionary gothic, for which the shifting sands of time can make what was once a chilling prospect for one audience of readers anything but for another. It is not infrequent to find this historicization of response lacking from the study of horror fiction, in light of the universal, though unannounced, ahistorical use of psychological and mythopoeic systems of interpretation. After all, what myth would be worth its salt if it didn't transcend time? What psychoanalytic approach merit serious consideration if there were no collective unconscious or a transhistorical image of the family romance?

But, as is evident from the return to history in recent literary and cultural studies, if there is one thing that does transcend history, it is the *particularity of history itself.* The irony of this examination of the gothic then will be its attempt to particularize, to historicize, a mode of thought — evolutionary thought, that is — which has prided itself on its capacity to make transhistorical claims (or at least claims as old as the dawn of human history). The fear of evolutionary determinism, indeed, *my fear* of evolutionary determinism, demands its treatment in local, historical terms. If I trivialize by

historicizing the evolutionary ethos that underwrites the fiction I explore, it is because I, like Trilling, am motivated just as much by fear as by a conviction of what is right or useful, just as much by the legacies of genocide, race war, neo-Nazism, eugenics, supremacism, and ethnic cleansing as by the presumption that my approach just makes more sense than another. If I use (and at times, albeit unintentionally, abuse) history by enmeshing my writers in it, it is because, to be blunt, I fear more *falling out* of history, than being trapped in it. Like Trilling once again, to pontificate universal or espouse transhistorical schemes is to participate in the type of totalizing coercion he dreaded.

And, in the end, I think one does well to dread it.

Chapter Two
Evolutionary Shadows and Gothic Paternities in Edgar Allan Poe

If there were one writer responsible for initiating the American evolutionary gothic tradition, the horrors of the body's intrusion into the mind, that writer would have to be Edgar Allan Poe. Generally regarded as the "father" of the American gothic, Poe has traditionally been interpreted in psychological terms, nor without good reason. The deliberate emphasis he placed on the relationship between form and affect in his poetry and fiction was complemented by the intense investment he made as a writer in the creation of characters. A pedant at heart, Poe paid a strict attention to psychological detail, for which information he scavenged from journal and newspaper articles as well as medical dictionaries and encyclopedias. But the impetus to the psychological analysis of Poe's fiction has been provided less by his conscious concerns with characterization than by his personal biography. Oscillating between the extremes of high-flown passion and intense depression, humbling mendicancy and supercilious arrogance, self-annihilating humility and vicious criticism, Poe, author and alcoholic, was himself as good a candidate as any for the couch to which so many committed his characters.[1] Not surprisingly, after the seal of approval given by Marie Bonaparte's Freudian psychobiography, psychologically-inclined gothic scholars made ample use of Poe as a point man in the academic canonization of gothic literature. Unfortunately, one result of the intense psychologization of Poe has been the disinclination to explore his work from a

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[1] To comprehend how emotionally extreme Poe could be, there is no better evidence than his collected letters and reviews. His depression can be tracked in his response to the death of his wife, Virginia; his begging and guilt-laden ultimatums appear in letters to his foster father, John Allen Poe; his scathing criticism and abject humility can be found side-by-side in both reviews and letters; his paranoiac defensiveness and desire to be thought well of appear prominently in his letters to Sarah Helen Whitman. To get a broader understanding of the forces at work in producing these extremes of feeling, see Silverman.

historicized scientific viewpoint that grapples with the troubled relationship between biology and mind in antebellum America.

Adumbrating the Evolutionary Gothic

To place Poe within an evolutionary rather than psychological gothic tradition is an exercise that must be done with care. It would be glib to assume critics have been mistaken in focusing on the formal and psychological subtleties that were so obviously Poe's subject. But Poe also prided himself on his acquaintance with the sciences of his time, physical and biological as well as psychological. Furthermore, as a pantheistic materialist, Poe shares with London, Norris, and Lovecraft views that lend themselves just as much to evolutionary as psychological horrors. While it is true Poe died ten years before publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species,* a work that forced Western science like no other in natural history up until that moment to entertain seriously the possibility of species evolution, Darwin's ideas did not emerge in a vacuum. On the contrary, there was before Darwin far more in the way of evolutionary thought than is commonly supposed, especially in America where the sciences were beginning to flourish, and popular interests in physical anthropology and the medical understanding of insanity were growing in response to increasing tensions over race relations and heightened fears of criminality.

Poe, the voracious would-be scientist, cannily availed himself of these trends, exhibiting a scientific curiosity hardly to be equalled among antebellum American writers. So great was his interest in science that is is only because of his commitment to its incorporation within the pages of his fiction that he can be profitably treated as a gothic writer whose fiction is marked by a number of pre-Darwinian evolutionary "tropes." Where evolutionary theory as a basis for literary horror directly informed the fiction of London, Norris, and Lovecraft, for Poe, its presence appears in obscure, fragmented form. Much of this fragmentation can be attributed to the lack of coherence between

various disciplines before their post-Darwinian synthesis. Before Darwin, despite the link already established between mental illness and criminality, there still existed no connection between these two areas of study and the newly-emergent, racially-charged science of physical anthropology (then becoming known as ethnology). Only after the decline of phrenology and its replacement, on the one hand, by the degenerationist theories of Morel and, on the other, by the Darwin-inspired criminal anthropology of Cesare Lombroso were the three sewn together. Where before Darwin, hereditary mental illness and potential criminality were sundered from the racialist image of an evolving humanity, once their hands were joined, mental illness, criminality, and race were transformed into scientifically measurable indicators of our uncomfortably close proximity to our evolutionary origins. The post-Darwinian concept of the intense collapse of mind into body, of individual mentality into evolutionary origin, was simply not available to Poe. Lacking the post-Darwinian coherence from which Norris, London, and Lovecraft benefited, Poe's quasi-evolutionary themes at best foreshadowed patterns these writers would incorporate more explicitly into their post-Darwinian fictions.

Because Poe lacked immediate scientific reasons to collapse hereditary illness with physical anthropology, images of beast-like men and man-like beasts, criminalized animals and animalized criminals, common to naturalist fiction, are rare in his works. Nonetheless, they are there, though informed by a pre-Darwinian physical anthropology and taxonomy that labored under the political and social pressures of American race relations. At the same time, despite the unerring proto-Freudian elements of his depicions of criminal insanity, Poe also depended heavily on a psychiatric tradition that stressed the biological and hereditarian image of mental illness, foreshadowing Norris' interest in degeneration, London's faith in atavism, and Lovecraft's eugenical anxieties.

Incorporating Poe into an evolutionary gothic thus depends upon shifting the traditional focus on his interest in psychomachia to his simultaneous fascinations with, on the one hand, the horrors of animalism and race and, on the other, the curse of heredity.

To achieve this shift, however, we are obligated to assume a new position as readers. That is to say, to understand Poe as an evolutionary gothic writer whose influence may be felt in Norris, London, and Lovecraft, we must re-read his tales through the Darwin-tinted lenses of that post-Darwinian generation of writers instead of through the Freud-tinted spectacles of our own. In order to discuss him as part of an evolutionary gothic tradition, we must read him from a *historicized* position, not as citizens of the 1990s, but as those of the 1890s, who saw evolution in everything around them.

As academic legatees of the academic infusions in the 1950s of formal and psychological criticism, we tend to read, and especially teach, Poe in either Freudian or post-Freudian terms. Nor is this modern application of Freudian criticism the imposition it seems, since even in Poe's time there was a recognition of unconscious drives.[2] But such a psychological emphasis still overlooks the biological images and interpretations more evolutionary-minded writers like London, Norris, and Lovecraft were likely to have extracted from Poe's work. So the question is not only how much did pre-Darwinian evolutionary thought inform Poe's writing, the central concern of this chapter, but just as important, what themes in Poe's work did his post-Darwinian descendants find for themselves *prefigured.*

Polygenism and Monogenism, or the Origin of Species According to Poe

Before Darwin, strands of "evolutionistic" thought long permeated the work of many of the leading scientists and philosophers in France, England, and Germany. But of the many issues debated, perhaps the single most important bone of contention was where did different, particular new, species come from? Before Darwin, most adhered to theories that accorded with the firmly held belief in the Great Chain of Being. According to the Great Chain, each species created by God constituted a link in an unbroken chain.

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[2] See Ellenberger 53-181 and Whyte 99-145.

But for naturalists, especially those concerned with taxonomy, this proposition only begged the question of where did species come from not mentioned in the Bible. Varying answers were given. Linnaeus thought new species came from hybrid crosses of those originally created by God. Buffon, disagreeing with Linnaeus, argued instead for an absolute "fixity of species," in which seemingly new species were merely examples of extreme variations of those original species rather than the products of hybridization or transmutation (Bowler, *Evolution* 59-76). According to the Buffonian theory of "degeneration," as it came to be known, different species were variations that had "degenerated" from their first God-created ancestors.

In contrast to these static "variation" theories, which were grounded in deistic theologies of design, there developed the "transmutational" theories of materialists like Diderot. Whereas variation theories held that modifications in a species, vis-a-vis Buffonian degeneration, were largely the result of fitting an organic form to its natural function — a deistic notion at heart — transmutationalists like Diderot speculated "if living things were produced by chance, instead of by design, there was no reason why they should preserve their form through successive generations." Eschewing a dependence on a literal reading of the Biblical creation of species favored by variationists, Diderot, with d'Holbach, looked to the spontaneous generation of life from inanimate matter instead of some mythical degeneration from an original ancestor to explain the origin of species. According to the transmutationalist view, "the spontaneous generation of life itself" became "little more than a kind of chemical reaction" in which "living structures" were "formed whenever the correct substances" were "brought together" (Bowler 79-80).

Most materialists, however, held that only the simplest organisms generated spontaneously, a view that remained unchanged until Lamarck introduced his own theory of transmutation, in which he combined his theory of species differentiation with the notion of organic spontaneous generation. At first an opponent of transmutation,

Lamarck later suggested that the current version of any species was no more than the end product of its transmuted progression through other species, starting from some original, spontaneously generated germ (Bowler 84-86). This was not a Darwinian theory, since branching was not an element of it. Rather, integrating the environmentalism of Buffonian degeneration with the transmutationalism of the materialists, Lamarck argued that the spontaneously generated germ was set on a progressive path by a designing God in that germ's development through species. Although Lamarck's theories were radical for his time, the effect of his ideas, like those of fellow travellers Diderot, d'Holbach, and De Mettrie, were not lost on the materialistic Poe.[3]

In fact, Poe rather enjoyed showcasing his knowledge of scientific curiosities, dressing up scientific ideas and speculations in literary form, usually as hoaxes. Tales such as "The Thousand-and-Second Tale of Scheherazade," "Von Kempelen and His Discovery," "Mellonta Taunta," and "The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall" bristle with scientific odds and ends lifted from magazines, newspapers, and encyclopedias. However, one of the more interesting indicators of Poe's scientific ideas about evolution, particularly human, appears in "Some Words with a Mummy." Though the tale begins rather creepily with the exhumation of an Egyptian mummy, it quickly degenerates into a soapbox for Poe to castigate the scientific presumptions of his era. With an ironic impunity, Poe ridicules the relative lack of scientific progress in his time by placing in the mouth of his revivified mummy the supposedly radical ideas of American antebellum science, now recast as common lore in Egypt. Thus is every scientific idea proffered by the mummy's interrogators reformulated as having been long recognized in ancient Egypt. More specifically, Poe takes to task, with a heavy-handed irony, Biblical

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[3] With regard to the preceding discussion and what follows, I have attempted to indicate in the bibliography first editions in English of relevant European titles, though most could be found cited secondhand in the writings of American and British naturalists. For more on the roles of those just discussed in the birth of evolutionary theory, see, on Linnaeus, Bentley, et al. 144-73, Eiseley 16-26, Greene, *Death* 131-37; on Buffon, Bentley, et al. 84-113, Eiseley 39-45, Greene, *Death* 138-55; on Diderot, Bentley et al. 114-43; on Lamarck, Eiseley 46-52, Bentley, et al. 265-91, and Greene, *Death* 155-66.

accounts of creation. At one point, an interrogator notes how "'since it is quite clear ... that at least five thousand years have elapsed since your entombment, I take it for granted that your histories at that period ... were sufficiently explicit on that one topic of universal interest, the Creation, which took place, as I presume you are aware, only about ten centuries before.'" (Poe, *Poetry* 816). Here, even as Poe takes advantage of the widely held belief in the 6,000 year old date of creation popularized by Bishop James Ussher and the newfound interest in egyptology stirred by the popular lectures of George R. Gliddon and publication of Samuel Morton's *Crania Aegyptica,* he is careful not to let his presumptuous interrogator receive satisfaction as he finds he must repeat "his remarks" so "the foreigner could be made to comprehend them" (817), the "foreigner" failing to grasp the "universal interest" in "Creation.".

The response of the Egyptian is telling. Suggesting Poe's own knowledge and interest in materialistic theories of creation, it is offered as a necessary revision to the more superstitious suppositions of the Mummy's interlocutors:

> "The ideas you have suggested are to me, I confess, utterly novel. During my time I never knew any one to entertain so singular a fancy as that the universe (or this world if you will have it so) ever had a beginning at all. I remember, once, and once only, hearing something remotely hinted, by a man of many speculations, concerning the origin *of the human race;* and by this individual the very word *Adam* (or Red Earth) which you make use of, was employed. He employed it, however, in a generical sense, with reference to the spontaneous generation from rank soil (just as a thousand of the lower *genera* of creatures are germinated) — the spontaneous germination, I say, of five vast hordes of men, simultaneously upspringing in five distinct and nearly equal divisions of the globe." (817)

Through his mummy, Poe spoofs Biblical accounts of the creation, employing a mock Higher criticism by which the evolution of Adam from *Adamah,* "Red Earth," is treated in materialistic rather than spiritual terms as a scientific instead of supernatural transformation. Though the reaction of the Mummy's questioners to this materialistic description of human origins cautions us as to what are Poe's actual beliefs in this matter ("Here, in general, the company shrugged their shoulders, and one or two of us touched

our foreheads with a very significant air" [817]), it is more likely, given the materialist philosophy Poe espoused at this period in letters and short pieces, that the characters really "touched" by false beliefs are the mummy's inquisitors.[4]

While there's little else in Poe specifically on human evolution, Poe's views in "Some Words" do open up a vista to us on his participation in contemporary disputes in physical anthropology. Theories of the origin of humanity had been the concern of a good number of scientists and philosophers in America and Europe. By the 1840s, there had developed two distinct pre-Darwinian views on human origins: monogenism and polygenism. The former, held by European scientists like Carolus Linnaeus, Count de Buffon, Georges Cuvier, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Pierre de Maupertuis, James Cowles Prichard, William Charles Wells, and Immanuel Kant, as well as American counterparts Samuel Stanhope Smith and Hugh Williamson, asserted that all humanity derived from one source — specifically, one "true" Adam and Eve.[5] The separation of the races was the consequence of a Buffonian degeneration from ancestral man, the result of differences in climate, diet, and society between "tribes" that had become geographically isolated from one another. The main benefit of this view was that it maintained the Great Chain of Being by agreeing with the Scriptural image of a single Adam.

If, on the other hand, "Some Words with a Mummy" can serve as an index to Poe's views, it appears he shared those of polygenists like Lord Henry Home Kames,

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[4] For examples of Poe's materialism, see his stories "The Power of Words" and "Mesmeric Revelation" as well as his attempt at a cosmogony in "Eureka: A Prose-Poem." Among his letters, see EAP to Thomas H. Chivers, 10 July 1844 (*Letters* 260) and to James Russell Lowell, 2 July 1844 (*Letters* 256-57).

[5] Though Blumenbach's theories were not translated into English until 1865, the influence of his work caqn be seen in the 1810 edition of Smith's *Essay*.... and Williamson's *Observations*.... (Stanton 11; Greene, *American* 329). Buffon's theory, which appears in the first volume of his *Natural History*, was well-known to American scientists, while the first Enlgish edition of Cuvier's *Essay* appeared in 1813. Kant and Maupertuis' contributions were less likely to be known in America than the rest.

Edward Long, Bernard Roman, Charles White, Charles Caldwell, Josiah C. Nott, and Samuel G. Morton, who maintained that the different races of men were the results of separate creations, originating from different Adams.[6] This view not only fit quite comfortably the materialist credo of spontaneous generationists, but also better suited the new American scientific racialism that was emerging to confront a growing abolitionism. For while in America, monogenism was the more religiously conservative, it was also the more politically liberal of the two in the debate over slavery.

The Ape That Would Be A Man, or Primatology and Race in Poe's Time

If Poe was a polygenistic materialist, then his place in an evolutionary gothic becomes even more problematized. For the primary horror of Darwinism lay in the close relationship human beings had through their primate ancestors to the animal world. This, however, doesn't appear to be the case for Poe, who looked more to Diderot and the polygenists than to Lamarck for his theories of human evolution. Whereas Diderot had posited a "seed" from which humanity sprung directly, Lamarck had treated humanity as only the final step in a series of successive transmutations through *other* species, that is, from unicellular amoeba to multicellular organism and so on upwards. In other words, in contrast to Diderot, Lamarck's theory held out the possibility of descent from ape as one of the many transmutational stages passed through. So if the Mummy's theory does

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[6] I do not mention the polygenistic Paul Broca and Louis Agassiz or include the later writings of Josiah Nott and Samuel Morton, as the debate continued long after Poe's death in 1848. See for accounts of that debate and its impact on race relations, Stanton 1-24 and 82-196; Frederickson 71-96; Horsman 43-61; Haller, Jr. 70-79; Jordan 216-39 and 486-509. For accounts in general of the impact monogenism and polygenism had on human evolutionary theory, see Greene, *Death* 221-47 and *American Science* 322-36; Bowler, *Theories* 55-56; and Gould 39-69. Poe's "five vast hordes" suggests, if not familiarity with Blumenbach, "founder of the five-race theory of anthropology" (Stanton 11), then knowledge of Blumenbach's American champions, monogenist Samuel Stanhope Smith and polygenist Samuel G. Morton (Stanton 31-33).

accurately reflect Poe's beliefs, Poe appears not to have scientifically recognized humanity's passage through primate.[7]

But lack of scientific recognition of such a connection did not necessarily preclude deployment of a *cultural* one. Despite pre-Darwinian resistance to transmutation theories, the close connection between man and animal, particularly negro and primate, in antebellum America was not an uncommon image. Once Linnaeus made the fateful step of placing human beings in the same class as primates, it was inevitable an ambivalence would emerge among naturalists about, as Huxley famously phrased it, "man's place in nature," particularly among monogenistic variationists whose environmental emphasis stood them closer to their materialist opponents than they perhaps cared to admit. As Peter J. Bowler puts it, whereas the "more radical materialists made surprisingly little effort to exploit the implications of Linnaeus' classification of man" since the "possibility of arguing for a gradual evolution of man from animal ancestors does not seem to have excited them," Buffon, "who took the problem of the apes most seriously," did at least

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[7] This was not to say, however, Poe was unfamiliar with Lamarckian principles, though he makes no direct mention of Lamarck, or Lamarck's sources — Diderot, La Mettrie and d'Holbach.

Lamarck asserted that physical or behavioral characteristics acquired in an individual organism's lifetime for adaptive purposes could be biologically transmitted to its offspring. This emphasis on the organic acquisition of characteristics, specifically through changes in habit, is spelled out in *The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall*, suggesting Poe entertained Lamarckian notions as early as 1835. The problem for Pfaall as his balloon leaves earth's atmosphere is how will he survive the thinner atmosphere. His solution is distinctively Lamarckian: "I could see no reason ... why life could not be sustained even in a *vacuum*; [since] the expansion and compression of chest, commonly called breathing, is action purely muscular, and the *cause*, not the *effect*, of respiration. I conceived that, as the body should become habituated to the want of atmospheric pressure, these sensations of pain would gradually diminish" (970). In this emphasis on "habituation," Poe's hints at his familiarity with Lamarckian ideas. Stronger evidence later emerges in Hans Pfaall's observations of the effect of the thinning atmosphere on the pregnant cat with him: "I had imagined that the *habitual* endurance of the atmospheric pressure at the surface of the earth was the cause ... of the pain attending animal existence at a distance above the surface. Should the kittens be found to suffer uneasiness *in an equal degree with their mother*, I must consider my theory in fault, but a failure to do so I should look upon as a strong confirmation of my idea" (973). Fortunately for Hans, the kittens do adapt upon birth to the "highly rarefied atmosphere" into which they have been born, confirming his notion that "a person born in such a *medium* might, possibly be unaware of any inconvenience attending its inhalation" (980).

Given the Lamarckian tenor of *Hans Pfaall*, written in 1835, ten years before "Some Words with a Mummy," it is possible Poe at the time might have entertained monogenistic rather than polygenistic notions, the former being grounded in environmental influence theories of racial change. This contrasts a decade later with the polygenic generational theory espoused in "Some Words with a Mummy." When Poe might have undergone this change in viewpoint (if, in fact, there was a conscious change) is a bit harder to assess.

accept "a physical resemblance between the apes and man ... because he was developing his theory of 'degeneration' at this time." To Buffon, therefore,

> the possibility of an evolutionary relationship must have seemed very real. Yet Buffon shied away from this conclusion and argued that the resemblance was only physical; stories of intelligent actions by apes were fabrications and in fact the dog came closer to man in this respect. For Buffon, our mental faculties distinguish us completely from the animal kingdom and these cannot be explained in material terms. (*Evolution* 87)[8]

Nor was Buffon alone in expressing a reluctance to relate human beings biologically to primates. Other early examiners of the relationship between human and primate also shied away, such as Petrus Camper, who explicitly warned in his comparative study of human and primate facial features against treating other races of men as biologically originating from primates (Bowler 93).[9] Still some found it harder to deny a connection in the face of the growing interest in a proper taxonomy, the increasing number of reports on primate behavior and anatomy, and the political and social pressures which were

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[8] Bowler tellingly adds the "only materialist to suggest a genuine connection between man and the apes was Lamarck, whose theory of development naturally implied that man has evolved from a lower form. The orangutan was pointed out as the most likely ancestral form, but by the time Lamarck made this suggestion the materialist outlook represented by his theory had gone out of fashion" (87). But whether Lamarck had become outmoded is debatable. While materialism *á la* Diderot may have moved on, other Romantic materialist philosophies did not. Poe's own is the clearest evidence of this fact. Additionally, the Lamarckian transmission of acquired traits appears to have been alive and well in America, not only in Poe's writing (see preceding note), but in the racial views ofAmerican monogenists, who depended on the tranformative effects of environment and the transmission of these effects at birth to explain racial varieties.

[9] Camper's facial angle comes from his *Physical Dissertation on the Real Differences Presented by the Facial Traits of Men of Different Countries and Different Ages* (1791) and his posthumous *Dissertation on the Natural Varieties Which Characterize the Human Physiognomy* (1792). The idea that the "Negro might be a hybrid produced by intercourse between white men and apes" or that orang-outangs might possibly have been able in the course of time to develop into full-fledged human beings" was disputed by Camper, who referred such wild theorists to his own *Natural History of the Orang Outang and Other Kinds of Apes* of 1782 (Greene *Death* 182). Camper's work first appeared in English in 1794. Camper's warning it should be added was lost on Manchester surgeon Charles White and his American disciple, Dr. John A. Smith, who, as polygenists, saw negroes as a biological midway point between Europeans and apes. As the lowest form of humanity, their distance from Europeans and proximity to apes were for White and Smith reasons enough to accept the thesis of separate creations. On Smith and White, see Jordan 499-506 and Greene, *American Science* 327-28

moving pro-slavery naturalists to find other, preferably scientific, means for combatting the rising tide of abolitionism.

Naturalists had long been fascinated by primates and their anthropomorphic likeness. Accounts of primates had a long and rich history before Poe. One of the earliest English descriptions of primates was Andrew Battell's 1625 account of his encounter with a gorilla. In 1641, Nicolaas Tulp offered a description of a chimpanzee he labeled an "Indian Satyr," while Jakob de Bondt produced in 1658 his analysis of an orangutan, which he, in the taxonomic rage of his era, promptly designated *Homo Sylvestrus.* One of the better known accounts in English was Edward Tyson's dissection and description of a chimpanzee in his 1699 *Anatomy of a Pygmy.* Still, the search was on for a reliable scientific account of the much-rumored man-sized anthropoids Buffon called "pongos." True, there had been some confusion about the status, in Arnout Vosmaer's dissection of 1776, of a baby orangutan, which he later handed over to Petrus Camper, who, from his own study of it, published his *Natural History of the Orang-Outang and Other Kinds of Apes* (1779-1782). But no full-sized, man-like beast would appear until the notorious "wild" orangutan from the jungles of Borneo was captured in 1780 and described by the Baron von Wurmb (only to be mistakenly reclassified by Etienne Geoffrey St. Hilaire as another primate species). A lack of primate specimens, much innuendo, and a good deal of anthropomorphization (most egregiously practiced by de Bondt and later Wurmb) inevitably led to the confusing classifications and reclassifications of "jockos" (small apes) and "pongos" (large apes) Buffon and Cuvier subsequently indulged. All was finally unraveled, however, by Richard Owen in 1835, when he carefully distinguished infant from adult orang-outangs, and both from the chimpanzees.[10]

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[10] This rather complicated story is handled in more detail by Greene, *Death* 175-99. As for gorillas, they would not be accounted for again until 1847 by Thomas Savage and Jeffries Wyman, the year before Poe died. Finally, while the accounts of Battell and Tyson were originally in English, translations of all except Tulp, Vosmaer and de Bondt were available in English in Poe's time. For an even more comprehensive treatment on just about every ape study done in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth century, see Yerkes, 1-34.

In many of these accounts, there had either been hints or outright declarations closely associating blacks and primates. Suggestions were common of interspecies copulation as well. While some had hypothesized coitus between whites and apes to be responsible for the evolution of negroes, others, such as Buffon and James Burnett, had suggested negroes and apes (particularly negro women and male apes) sexually commingled freely (Jordan 228-39).[11] Much of this material was, of course, fodder for the likes of Charles White (and his American disciple, Dr. John A. Smith), who, though a polygenist, thought "the Negro was intermediate between the European and the ape, the other human races occupying intermediate positions between the European and the Negro" (Greene, *American* 327). With blacks occupying the bottom rung of the human ladder and apes holding the highest in the mammalian, the intertwining of the two was inevitable, and not to be lost on Poe.

His hostility towards and belittling of blacks was, therefore, not unusual, given his Southern origins and his probable encounters with Northern racism. Yet as a materialist, it is more likely he looked to science rather than the Bible for explanations of black inferiority: hence the ready association of blacks with primates, a cultural connection Poe exploits to generate within his readers a fearful awe of the man-like ape that appears in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Though a detective tale, "Rue Morgue" is easily violent enough, reflecting the gothic tradition from which it sprang, to merit treatment here as a work of horror fiction.[12]

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[11] The interbreeding of whites and apes is specifically referred to by Camper as a common, but mistaken assumption (Greene *Death* 192). Burnett and Buffon's theories were doubt better known because they were more easily imagined by white America.

[12] The detective and gothic genres have always been close. John G. Cawelti, for example, notes when "one thinks about it, the close resemblance between Dupin and the gothic villain is immediately clear ... . One might interpret Poe's invention of the detective as a means of bringing the terrifying potency of the gothic villain under control of rationality" (qtd. in Streithman, 200). Even T. S. Eliot in his "From Poe to Valéry" likewise discerns a connection between the two: "Sherlock Holmes was deceiving Watson when he told him that he had bought his Stradivarius violin for a few shillings at a second-hand shop in Tottenham Court Road. He found that violin in the ruins of the house of Usher" (Eliot 30).

Though treating orangutans as "human" cousins continued to be the subject of serious debate, Poe felt no qualms in making use of that connection for dramatic purposes in "Rue Morgue." Just consider the interestingly inaccurate ideas about primate behavior Poe recounts:

> "Read now," replied Dupin, "this passage from Cuvier."
> It was a minute anatomical and generally descriptive account of the large fulvous Ourang-Outang of the East Indian Island. The gigantic stature, the prodigious strength and activity, the wild ferocity, and the imitative propensities of these mammalia are sufficiently well known to all. I understood the full horrors of the murder at once. (*Poetry* 424)

Despite the credibility of Poe's ostensible source, the eminent natural historian, Georges Cuvier, one immediately notices the emphasis laid in this version of Cuvier's account on the "imitative" propensities of the orangutan.[13] Our introduction to the absurd extremity of the orangutan's imitative behavior appears in the discovery by the French sailor of it "[r]azor in hand, and fully lathered ... sitting before a looking-glass, attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had no doubt previously watched its master through the key-hole of the closet" (428-29). The orangutan that can act so human — that is, lather itself, sit before a looking glass, and shave — points less to any accurate knowledge about primate behavior than to Poe's horrific intention to heighten the man-like qualities of this particular primate.

But imitation by the orangutan of its owner only presages more troubling possibilities. Upon closer reading, the very gruesomeness of the crime is marked less by an unreasoning animal frenzy than a semi-human rage, the acts of a human idiot in a gorilla suit. In the course of the murder, for example, not only does it flourish a "razor ... in imitation of the motions of a barber" (this, in spite of the fact that all the orangutan

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[13] Poe's source, according to Mabbott, was almost certainly Thomas Wyatt's *Synopsis of Natural History* (1839), which Poe claimed to have helped edit, and not Cuvier's *Règne Animal* (1817), from which Wyatt's description comes (Poe, *Collected* 573 n. 35). For other sources concerning Poe's orangutan, see Poe, *Collected* 521-25.

had ostensibly seen was the sailor shave his face),[14] but, at the "sight of blood," it is inflamed by "anger into [a] phrenzy" that ends in the daughter's strangulation. This last bestial act of enflamed bloodlust then is immediately qualified by the all-too-human sense of shame and guilt that drives the orangutan to stuff the daughter's corpse up the chimney and hurl the old lady out the window. These expressions of emotion (guilt) and ingenuity (hiding evidence) seem, while bestial in their crudeness, quite human by virtue of their very presence. Even for the scientific-minded, the above would have constituted quite extraordinary feats for a beast which, according to France's other greatest naturalist, Buffon, was less intelligent than a dog. But then again, Buffon's decision to accord a greater intelligence to dogs than to primates appears as more of a defense than a tested hypothesis, given the connections a growing number of naturalists were beginning to draw between primates and men.

Irrespective of whether Poe really thought an orangutan capable of intelligent acts, his humanization of this particular one prefigures the evolutionary collapse of the human and primate exploited by by Norris, London, and Lovecraft. In the narrator's sudden comprehension of the "full horrors of the murder," that is, of the ape that would be a man, Poe expects his readers to share in the narrator's recognition of the violated taboo which separates human and beast, a recognition that would have meant little if not for the traditional racist link between blacks and orangutans vivid in the minds of those readers. With this association in mind, Poe draws their attention to how this orangutan from the wilds of Borneo is kept under control by its French owner: "He had been accustomed, however, to quiet the creature, even in its fiercest moods, by the use of a whip." In fact, it is the sight of this whip that leads "the Ourang-Outang" to spring "at once through the door of the chamber, down the stairs, and thence through a window, unfortunately open, into the street" (429). The slave, having escaped its master, now roams free to wreak its

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[14] That is, unless Poe meant to be metaphorical, depending upon an elliptical simile, as in it "flourished a razor [as if] in imitation of the motions of a barber."

havoc. But its imitative playfulness, a trademark characteristic of antebellum descriptions of blacks, both free and slave, is hardly a game to the two women assaulted. Rather there is something of a joke in poor taste at work as Poe's orangutan "plays" barber with a real razor and the hair and heads of actual women. In its sudden transformation from playful child to fiendish brute, Poe's orangutan, iinstantiates within itself the antebellum stereotype of blacks as child-animals, who at any moment may change from a fount of entertainment to a source of life-threatening danger. Once this transformation from child to animal has been completed and the damage done, it takes but a moment for the monstrous beast to revert back again to guilty child and obedient slave: "Its wandering and wild glances fell at this moment upon the head of the bed, over which the face of its master, rigid with horror, was just discernible. The fury of the beast, who no doubt bore still in mind the dreaded whip, was instantly converted into fear" (430). In foregrounding the "dreaded whip," the powerful symbol of slavery, Poe offers a stern reminder of the force that lies behind the maintenance of the social order, or, put another way, of what it takes to control an "imitative" man-like beast let loose among defenseless white women.

But these images of animal savagery need not be restricted to blacks alone, as Poe capitalizes on the already rich Americal literary traditions of the captivity narrative and frontier romance to link orangutan and Indian: "As the sailor looked in, the gigantic animal had seized Madame L'Espanaye by the hair ... and was flourishing the razor about her face." As the "screams and struggles of the old lady" give way to "the hair being torn from her head" (430), the scene becomes the fictional parody of an Indian scalping. Indian warrior and Negro slave, often bestialized in the presence of white women when unfettered by the artificial restraints of white civilization, find themselves aptly represented by the savage semi-human orangutan that had stirred so much interest in antebellum America.

Caution, however, should be applied here. "Rue Morgue," though something of a lark as detective tales go, is not any sort of obvious allegory of the threats posed to whites and "civilized" society by free blacks and Indians. Rather it is a tale that depends for its horrors on a constellation of already available images of frenzied violence in American culture. This tale, while ostensibly of a French detective in Paris investigating two murders, was still written by a white Southern writer for an antebellum American audience, and there's no denying that, lacking any real data about how primates behaved (or blacks and Indians for that matter), Poe had little choice but to depend on the popular images of human violence, often racialized, in American culture to make his humanized orangutan truly horrifying.

Yet even as the cultural echoes of imagined black and Indian violence in the humanized behavior of Poe's orangutan violate the tabooed separation between man and primate, it is still a taboo violated in a highly controlled manner. After all, the link between of primate and man is still limited by the association of primate to the black and Indian Other, which for Poe's presumably white audience, was tolerable enough. But there are hints that "Rue Morgue" goes further than that, and that the association between human and primate is not limited solely to non-whites. But wherein does this more serious violation lie? In Poe's explanation of the art of detection. In his classic comparison of chess and draughts, Poe has Dupin attribute the superior analytical mind to the card-player. Where the chess-player "calculates," the card-player "analyzes," displaying greater "acumen" in preference to the chess player's "attention." For the card-player, "the difference in the extent of the information obtained lies not so much in the validity of the inference as in the quality of the observation." Because the "analyst throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith," the card-player proves more than merely "ingenious," the characteristic trait of those who, as Dupin puts it (in Coleridgean terms) "are always fanciful." Rather he is among "the truly imaginative" who are "never otherwise than analytic" (398-399). In other words, while

the "fanciful" read the board, the "imaginative" read their opponent — by *being* their opponent.

This opening explanation, of course, poses an obvious problem. If Dupin achieves his victories by "becoming" his opponent, then, so far as one can gather from the inner logic of the story, Dupin is equated with the orangutan. With such a conclusion, there is a very strong inclination here to treat the story as a spoof of ratiocination. But the degree of seriousness with which Poe typically treated his tales of successful ratiocination should give us pause. Dupin is in no way made manifestly equivalent to the man-like orangutan. Instead each is an endpoint in the polar opposition of the cerebral to the instinctual, of the human to the animal. But the tale's prolix opening and its inappropriate (unless ironic) ending suggest that if Dupin is not much like an orangutan, an orangutan may nonetheless be too much like a man.[15]

Minstrels, Savages, and Black Rebellion

Even though in Poe's era, one commonly found, especially in antebellum Christian moral fiction, individuals being compared with beasts, there remained an insurmountable obstacle to the evolutionary joining of the two. Of the many naturalists who had brushed by the issue, only Lamarck had suggested the possible evolution of man from ape. That so little should come of this, as opposed to the firestorm of debate that followed in Darwin's wake, is perhaps the best testimony to how unimaginable the prospect of biological descent from ape must have seemed to the rest of the Western world. True, humanity may have stood between the apes and the angels in the Great Chain of Being, but that did necessarily imply a biological link between them. Within the

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[15] Consider in this regard the tale's tantalizing, final paragraph. Dupin notes, "that [the Prefect] failed in the solution of this mystery, is by no means that matter for wonder which he supposes it; for ... [he] ... is too cunning to be profound. In his wisdom is no *stamen*. It is all head and no body, like the pictures of the Goddess Laverna , — all head and shoulders like a codfish" (431). Dupin, therefore, we must assume, is more "body" and a little less "head." But is this just another oblique way of saying to catch an orangutan, you have to be one?

limits of the pre-Darwinian Western mind, there could be no connection between human being and primate, since they were more than merely separate species — they were separately created species. The only question that remained for monogenists and polygenists, thus, was did racial differences constitute evidence of extreme variation within a single species or separate creations within the human species. Given the strict adherence of both camps to the Biblical dating of the earth's age, the answer was not only unclear, but, for all intents and purposes, impossible of resolution without further evidence.

As a result, what this left for Poe and other antebellum writers to use was the vast reservoir of cultural associations which had accrued over the centuries with the development of the slave trade between blacks, children, and animals. These are the stereotypes Poe draws upon for "Rue Morgue" as they are the same foreshadowed in an earlier experiment of his, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. In its attempt to represent primitive society, *Pym* taps this reservoir of racial and cultural stereotypes, organizing them in ways that spoke to the Darwinian concerns of his literary inheritors. As it evolves from a semi-parodic allegory of the American revolution into one of black freedom and rebellion, *Pym* deploys a collocation of images which, by aligning blacks with savages, animals, rebels, minstrels, and children, not only drives home antebellum fears of black manumission in the South, but lends itself to subsequent use by post-Darwinian writers like London and Lovecraft. In other words, though underwritten by the political and social concerns of its time, *Pym* prefigures, as George Frederickson has put it, the "black image in the white mind" London and Lovecraft would adopt in their fictional representations of black savagery and evolutionary origin.

Framed by the bright liberation of the American Revolution and dark fears of black rebellion and violence, *Pym* rests uncomfortably between parody and allegory.[16]

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[16] In this analysis, there is no attempt to analyze *Pym* as a coherent, unified narrative, a much debated topic in the history of its interpretation. Instead, I draw from it thematic fragments if only to illuminate

Structured as a series of rebellions that grow in size and intensity, it opens with a pattern of small, personal revolts: the countermanding of Captain Block's order by his crew in the search for Pym and Augustus' rammed sloop (1014); Pym's rude confrontation with his grandfather before sneaking aboard the *Grampus* (1020-21); Augustus's rebellious presumption of his father's favor in stowing Pym away ("and as to his father, he would only laugh heartily at the joke" [1020]).[17] This patternassumes a much darker cast, however, once Captain Barnard's crew aboard the *Grampus* mutinies.

The reader is not made aware of this fact until after Pym is released from his premature burial in the ship's cargohold. But even down there, the"powers of blackness" as Harry Levin has put it, both literal and figurative, contribute to a pattern that will culminate in fears of black freedom. Foreshadowing Poe's fascination with enclosure and entombment in later tales, Pym's entrapment in a pitch dark cargohold anticipates his later encounters with a more literalized "blackness." Capitalizing on the symbolic power of a visual blackness that literally has Pym at its mercy ("so intensely dark" is it in the cargohold that Pym cannot even "see" his own hand), Poe metaphorically adumbrates those fears of blackness, of black people and their black deeds, the rest of the story tells. That is to say, what begins as impressionistic and psychological — a dimmed vision, a darkened soul — is transmogrified into a material fear as blackness finds its concrete objectification in the cook and Tsalal islanders.

Small wonder Pym emerges from the blackness below only to find the black cook above with a leading role in the mutiny. In a prefiguration of the violence and treachery of the black residents of Tsalal, Poe underscores the mercilessness of the cook in his role as mutineer. With a double-edged rhetorical flourish, Poe suggests simultaneously both the strength and heartlessness of the cook, who lifts an unconscious sailor "in his arms as

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the broader stream of cultural concerns that have worked their way in piecemeal fashion into the narrative. For an overview of the question of thematic unity in *Pym*, see Pollin 11-14.

[17] On the pattern of revolt in *Pym* see Quinn.

he would a child" only to toss "him deliberately into the sea" (1042). Unlike in Melville's *Benito Cereno,* there is no moral ambiguity about the cook's role in this rebellion. He is moral monster and nothing less. Predictably, it is the he who assumes the lead in the horrors that follow: "A scene of the most horrible butchery ensued. The bound seamen were dragged to the gangway. Here the cook stood with an axe each victim on the head as he was forced over the side of the vessel by the other mutineers" (1042). Clearly black freedomhas its price, according to Poe, a point made evident by the fact that even after the other mutineers grow tired of and guilty about their atrocities, the black cook — "who in all respects was a perfect demon, and who seemed to exert as much influence, if not more, than the mate himself" (1043) — insists on continuing the work of braining captives.

Once the mutiny is over, Poe intensifies the parodic element of this allegory of rebellion with the Mate and Cook parting ways over what is to come after their "Revolution." While the mate's "party" is "for seizing the first suitable vessel which should present itself, and equipping it ... for a piratical cruise," the cook's favors acting "as circumstances should suggest," with one party member dwelling "on the perfect security and freedom from all restraint to be enjoyed" (1050). A party of work (in the form of piracy) and another of play (sailing around the Pacific) having been formed, by July 5th, according to Pym's log, a political feud has developed between the two, with the thirteen sailors drawing up sides. While this parody of the day after the American Revolution, with its thirteen colonies as sailors split between black and white, play and work, abolition and pro-slavery seems comic enough, its dark undertones stay with it as readers are prepared for the final journey South.[18]

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[18] Pollin notes that the count is, in fact, incorrect, presumably the result of the hurried production of *Pym:* "Poe's count here is doubly wrong, for the sixteen mutineers ... reduced by Bonner's death and now that of Simms, should total fourteen. Moreover, the names listed add up to twelve; perhaps he carelessly counted 'Seymour, the black cook' as two" (254). If Poe did miscount because careless, it was carelessness with a purpose, to parody the American Revolution.

Even though the black cook's presence within the tale is short-lived, his violent behavior after the mutiny foreshadows the wages to be paid by a white America for black freedom, a theme taken up as Pym and Peters travel further South. The air growing "tolerably warm" (1135), the two southbound travellers with their crew arrive at Tsalal where all is black — the sea ("extraordinarily dark colour" [1135]), the island (1171), the people (1136), their teeth (1178), their weapons ("clubs, of a dark ... wood" [1136]), their domestic animals (1142-3), even the island's birds (1143). Suddenly the Revolution parodied in the mutiny has turned into a racial allegory of abolitionist victory, as a black South of free negroes is comically reproduced in the minstrelsy and foolishness of the primitive Tsalalians. Poe works hard to parody negro dialect and make use of primitive stereotypes in designing their silly personal names ("Too Wit" [1137], "Nu-Nu" [1177]), caste designations ("Wampoos or Yampoos" [1142]), town names ("Klock-Klock" [1141]) and language ("Anamoo-moo! and Lama-Lama!" [1136]).[19] Nor does he feel the least compunction in satirizing the childlike ignorance of Too Wit's fright at his mirrored reflection (1138), the animistic beliefs of the Tsalal chief, who "whine[s]" and "howl[s]" in sympathy with "the sufferings of the schooner" (1137) gashed by an axe blow, or the Tsalal's monarch's failure to understand the white repugnance of his relish for a meal of "palpitating entrails" (1145).[20]

But these comic, primitive actions eventually give way to the treacherousness of Tsalal's residents. Once the minstrel show is over, these humorous savages suddenly

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19 While several of Poe's names and sounds are drawn from the Hebrew, their transliteration into English, with their embarrassing double entendres, emphasize their comic quality. See Kaplan 138-43, who takes perhaps too literally Poe's use of Hebrew as a sign of the Biblical allegory he argues Poe has constructed. Cf. Pollin's rejoinder, who notes the parodic element of Tsalalian speech (322-23,330).

20 Pollin notes several immediate sources for Poe's Tsalal, its residents and their origins. Sources include, among others, Washington Irving's *Astoria* (Pollin 21), a review by Charles Anthon (26, 324), an anonymous tale in *The Baltimore Saturday Visiter* (26, 353), Voltaire's *Voyages de Scarmentado* (353), Alexander Keith's *Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion* (34, 360), Benjamin Morrell's "descriptions of the blacks of the Massacre Islands and of the degraded Patagonians" in his *Narrative of Four Voyages* (360), and *Rees's Cyclopaedia* articles on "Jews" (360). My own interest is in the broader stream of American thought concerning the nature and image of blacks as savages, a significant element of post-Darwinian evolutionary discourse. See Pollin for bibliographic citations.

become "the most barbarous, subtle, and bloodthirsty wretches that ever contaminated the face of the globe" (1150). Poe's Pym is quick to point out how cunningly the playfulness of the Tslalians, like Babo and his cohorts in *Benito Cereno,* masked all along a "deeply-laid plan for [the crew's] destruction" by what "appeared to be the most wicked, hypocritical, vindictive, bloodthirsty, and altogether fiendish race of men upon the face of the globe" (1174). But this is not to imply that Poe's bumbling savages bumble for the sake of appearances, solely in order to deceive. On the contrary, the Tsalal islanders really are as foolish as they seem. It just happens that they are also as treacherous, an indication of the suppleness of an ambiguous antebellum stereotype that could treat blacks as both entertainment and threat without seeing a contradiction. And Poe's view was not uncommon. That blacks could be both amusing and dangerous at the same time illustrates only too well how all it took, according to antebellum thought, was a change in conditions from slavery to freedom for the savage within to displace the minstrel without, the very same freedom that changes an otherwise entertaining orangutan that comically attempts to shave into a razor-wielding beast.

In positing this dual image of blacks, this ability to turn on a dime from fun-loving Sambos into a bloodthirsty horde, Poe takes advantage of the commonplace threatening image of slave revolt. Born of memories of L'Ouverture Toussaint's takeover of Haiti, but made especially ominous by Nat Turner's 1831 revolt, the image of rebellious slaves running the South had become a riveting one in response to abolitionist agitation. Though "the danger of slave unrest and rebellion in the South" first posed as "a recurring theme of [pro-abolition] colonizationalist literature" that sought to expatriate slaves, it quickly became a tool in the hands of pro-slavery proponents for maintaining Southern slavery (Frederickson 8).[21] The impetus to colonizationalist arguments had

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[21] More common, according to Frederickson, was for the South to adopt a paternalistic argument that the slave benefited under its master, an argument intended to "put to rest their own nagging fears of slave rebellion" (52).

come ironically enough from the image of free negroes in the North "as a social danger" (Frederickson 5). The belief that free blacks were unable to live in a civilized manner and the association of racial inferiority with cultural backwardnesss were likewise common in pro-slavery writings. While polygenistic arguments for the separate creations which Poe later adopted did not assume their full force until after the 1830s, there were enough precursors in the pro-slavery writings of Richard Colfax, J. H. Guenebault, James Kirke Paulding, and William Drayton to give the polygenistic position a certain authority.[22]

The behavioral basis for this polygenistic difference, formulated in Paulding and Drayton's works,[23] appears opportunely in Pym. Southerners, who in "moments of candor," admitted "their suspicion that duplicity, opportunism, and potential rebelliousness lurked behind the mask of Negro affability" (Frederickson 53), found an outspoken champion in Drayton, who essentially thought slavery kept blacks from regressing into their natural, primitive state. Drayton asks his readers to consider "the madness which a sudden freedom from restraint begets — the overpowering burst of long buried passion, the wild frenzy of revenge, and the savage lust for blood, all united to give the warfare of liberated slaves, traits of cruelty and crime which nothing earthly can equal" (qtd. in Frederickson, 54). With the naturalization by Drayton and Paulding

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[22] A recent debate, it should be noted, has emerged over whether Poe in fact reviewed James Kirke Paulding's *Slavery in the United States* and William Drayton's *The Southern Vindicated* (Ridgeley 1-3, 6). Though the review appears in the Harrison edition of Poe's collected works, many scholars today think the review not written by Poe. Even so, the two books were well-known and quite popular for their time. Furthermore, whoever is the reviewer noticeably stakes out a polygenistic position, denying "they [negroes] are, like ourselves, the sons of Adam, and must therefore have passions and wants and feelings and tempers in all respects." Instead, the reviewer asserts "how a difference might and should have been brought about" between black and white "is a short one": "It was the will of God it should be so" (Poe, *Collected*, v. 8, 270-271). While it is not completely clear whether this assertion stands as evidence of belief in a separate creation or not, what it certainly does not do is adopt the environmentalist position of monogenists.

[23] While Frederickson takes as his central text Colfax, noting how "In the late 1840s and 1850s [Colfax's] arguments [of the "natural inferiority' of blacks] would be placed in a framework of respectable scientific theory by the 'American School of ethnology," he adds "subsequent to the publication of Colfax's *Evidence* ... , the same historical and biological case against the Negro was presented" in Drayton and Paulding (50). As evidence, Frederickson cites Paulding on how the differences between whites and blacks were "equivalent to those which separate various species of animals" based on "natural inequalities" (91).

of negroes as biologically distinct and innately savage, Poe no doubt thought he was on firm ground scientifically when he chose to caricature his residents of Tsalal as bloodthirsty, duplicitous savages.

This dark side of the minstrel-turned-rebel also echoes the child/animal association common in American discourse on slavery and Romantic discourse on primitivism. Even as Poe suggests a canniness on the part of the Tsalal islanders, he also indulges the stereotypical association of children and animals with the foolish but dangerous primitives. This association, which was not always compatible, became especially prominent in the split between paternalistic and biological pro-slavery arguments. Where the former depicted the negro as a dependent child to be treated kindly, the latter argued for his status as subhuman beast to be handled without sympathy (Frederickson 83-84). Poe leans towards the latter in *Pym,* a signal of the steam this argument continued to gather as the paternalistic view fell under the fire of the abolitionist charge that one does not enslave one's "children." The polygenistic view of the races, on the other hand, gained ground in the South and among the ethnologically-minded North by sundering whites from blacks biologically with a strict hereditarianism that would not be seen again until the eugenics movements of Lovecraft's day. The corollary to adopting the polygenism of a Drayton was to transform the free black more into an animal than a child, a primitive to be extirpated (or enslaved) rather than protectively patronized. Drawing on the polygenistic emphasis on black savagery and regression, the surest sign of hereditary difference, Poe intensifies this difference by playing up the undiluted blackness of Tsalal. Allegorically blackening their bodies and their world, Poe emphasizes their radical difference from the world of whites. They are inherently different, an inheritance suggested not only by the symbolic intensity of their blackness, but by their "naturalized" detestation for all that is white (Poe, *Poetry* 1138, 1182).

In the volatile mixture of race, science, and politics, this long tradition of conflating black with "savage" and animal was reconfigured with far fewer changes than

might have been expected in the evolutionary anthropology of Edward Tylor and Lewis Henry Morgan, upon whom Freud heavily depended for his treatment of the "savage" as neurotic and child in *Totem and Taboo.* While the childish foolishness and animalistic dangerousness of Poe's islanders expresses in fictional form fears of rebellion and black freedom in an age beholden to the rationalizations of slavery, it also foreshadows the same qualms about racial difference and inherent savagery post-Darwinian evolutionary gothicists, especially London and Lovecraft thought natural to the non-white in their midst.

The Man Who Would Be An Ape

The stereotypical reiteration of blacks as primitive, as an amalgam of child and vicious animal, for whom freedom implies barbarism, anticipates the images that survival theorists in evolutionary anthropology drew upon to understand primitive societies. The difference between the two versions of primitivism lay largely in the direct biological connection Darwin established between primates and humanity, a connection available to Poe in the form only of a racial hierarchy that placed blacks closer to primates than whites, but which recognized no historical, evolutionary relationship. This clear division between the origins of species (as well as races) thus protected humanity from the taint of animal origin, making the metaphorical use of animal traits safe. One could be like a beast without having to worry about being physiologically descended from one. The mark of the beast thus could thus ennoble as well as stain a character, rendering the character who was both human and beast morally as well as physically ambiguous.

Poe exploits this ambiguity in the figure of Dirk Peters, the one character in *Pym* who straddles physiologically this metaphorical fence typically reserved in antebellum America for blacks between the human and the animal. As the halfbreed "son of an Indian squaw" (1043), a genealogy which establishes his place and character in the spectrum of racially charged pre-Darwinian images, Peters proves to be "one of the most

purely ferocious-looking men" Pym has "ever beheld." He is "short in stature"; his limbs have a "Herculean mold"; his hands are "so enormously thick and broad," they barely "retain a human shape." What non-human shape they suggest is indicated by the shape of "His arms, as well as his legs," which are "*bowed* in the most singular manner." The simianism of Dirk's mien is fleshed out further as we discover him to be "entirely bald" and to be the possessor of "mouth" that extends "from ear to ear," with teeth so "exceedingly long and protruding," they are "never even partially covered ... by the lips." Of the many sources which have been suggested for Poe's orangutan in "Rue Morgue," critics could not have done better than to take note of the ape-like Peters.

Like the racialized orangutan, the animalized Peters also assumes racial overtones. Without blinking, Poe connects Peters phrenologically with negroes as Pym notes how his "head was equally deformed ... with an indentation on the crown (like that on the head of a negro)."[24] But it is Peters' half-breed heritage that really frames his simian potential for violent action. To cover his baldness, Peters wears wigs which, "formed" from either "the skin of a Spanish dog or American grizzly bear," complement "the natural ferocity of his countenance." The unrefined dog and bearskin wigs let Poe play up the association of "skin-wearing" with barbarism, specifically Indian, accommodating Peters' "Upsaroka character." Yet despite Peters' dreadful appearance, so suggestive of ill, this foreboding of his mixed blood strangeness is shortly replaced by an amazing compound of white ingenuity and Indian energy which we find constantly on display.

Unlike the cook, who is vicious because it is in his nature to be so when free, Peters poses more of a moral puzzle. One comes away with the strange feeling that Peters should have been half-black rather than half-Indian, for even though Indians were not as highly positioned racially as white Europeans, they were hardly as low on the

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[24] Poe was a strong proponent of phrenology. See "The Imp of the Perverse" (*Poetry* 826-27), "Some Words with a Mummy" (817-18), his reviews of Sarah L. Miles (*Essays* 329-32) and Longfellow (760-61). Poe also underwent phrenological examinations of his own head (*Letters* 185).

biological scale as blacks. Yet despite his obvious simianism, so much of a man does Peters prove that it is with some difficulty we remember the animal description given him. Instead of black in race and deed, Peters comes up Indian, underscoring the cultural ambiguity of Poe's feelings towards the Indian Other, an ambiguity reflected in Peters' conduct within the tale, as well as within his physical makeup. No doubt this ambiguity drew its energy from the ambivalencies of antebellum American attitudes towards Indians. With Southern states clamoring for the forcible removal of their Indian populations and the Jackson administration eager to comply, tensions were bound to arise in political discourse and literature between the Rousseau-inspired Jeffersonian ennoblement of the Indian and the increasingly popular image of the bloodthirsty Indian savage (Horsman 189-207).[25]

Suspended within this ideological conflict of images, while Peters may be the most "ferocious-looking man" Pym has ever seen, he hardly ends up proving so in the course of the story. If anything, he emerges as more the romantic hero of the tale than Pym himself, who, despite a good deal of running and cogitating, with an occasional act of bravery thrown in (though always out of desperation), it is Peters who really does most of the necessary gruntwork of keeping Pym and himself alive. Foreshadowing the ambiguities about animal/savage energy London and Norris would wrestle with, Poe animalizes Peters if only to justify the exorbitant energy needed to perform those wondrous feats of heroism that make *Pym* a sea romance.

Whether Poe realizes it or not, *Pym* conducts a rather unsteady questioning of the physical vitality of the supposedly superior European that anticipates later naturalist attacks on Victorian gentility and male effeminization. In the physical, moral, and racial ambiguity of Peters, *Pym* opens up for consideration a possibility that would be leaped

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[25] Nor did Poe's ambivalence about Indians give over as suggested by the *Journal of Julius Rodman,* in which Indians appear both as members of a "treacherous" (1204) and "ugly ill-made race" (1224) and as "really gallant-looking men" (1225).

upon by the naturalists who, despite reservations of their own, nonetheless explored how the worship of European whiteness and Victorian intellectualism had come at the expense of a necessary animal energy still obvious in the "savages" being "discovered" daily by imperialistic Western ventures. And that failure of energy, that enervation of self finds itself explored over and over again in Poe's tales of inbreeding and insanity.

Heredity, Biology, and Madness, or the Wages of Incest

In Poe's antebellum America, the link between heredity and race was not a sure thing. Those who studied the subject of racial origins still preferred monogenistic to polygenistic theories for the most basic of reasons. First, it fit Scripture far more closely than polygenist theses, which had to posit separate creations presumably undisclosed in the Bible. Second, and, more importantly, monogenism depended on an environmentalist thesis which treated racial differences as the results of variations in climate, diet, and society rather than as the endless repetition of racially identical beings. Monogenists thus adopted their position not only because it fit Scripture, but also because its environmentalist basis implied that changes in character and physiology could be influenced by altering the environment. This essentially Lamarckian thrust allowed for the exercise of will and for social reforms to improve the human condition by precluding a hard hereditarian determinism. The notion that one's biological heritage determined one's character and destiny, irrespective of environmental circumstances, was simply not welcome at a time when social reform movements, often religiously inspired, were at their peak.

But the influence of environment on race and character still remained open to debate. With race, there were fewer constraints on Poe to adopt a biological and materialist position, since, as a polygenist and anti-abolitionist, he encountered fewer objections to ascribing hereditarian causes to the natural inferiority of blacks. The question, however,

became a bit stickier when addressed to the insane and criminal classes. Because the insane could not seem to help their insanity, there was a great deal of room for speculation on the biological sources of insanity. For criminals, however, in light of penological reform movements, the question of whether criminal activity was the result of a conscious act of depravity or of a "moral insanity" that rendered the criminal unable to distinguish good from evil, was a bit trickier to decide.[26] After all, there would be little room for reform if the public-at-large were to adopt a strictly biological interpretation of criminal behavior. Yet despite the investment reformers had made in the inviolability of free will and human moral conduct, the close connections constantly being drawn by medicine between criminal and insane behavior only helped enlarge the gray areas of biology and behavior post-Darwinian generations would eventually blanket over the whole of human reality.

Still the resistance of those early reformers to hard biological explanations had a powerful effect on subsequent American thought. Nor has this resistance been absent from our own response. But once we acknowledge the enlargement of that gray space in Poe's time, we can't avoid taking note of the wrench this circular connection between biology and behavior throws into Freudian and post-Freudian attempts to understand the motivations of Poe's criminally insane characters. True, episodes of schizophrenia, paranoia, dementia praecox, manic-depressant syndrome, incestuous desire, guilty paralysis and so on abound in his fiction. Nor need one deny the intense interest in environmental influences on criminal insanity expressed by Poe, whose own difficulties with alcohol, gambling and opium inexorably drew him into those dark caverns of mind his tales relentlessly interrogated. But Freudian explorations of Poe are of limited worth when treating what not only Poe thought the causes of insanity and criminality, but what his more immediate Darwin-influenced legatees thought as well.

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[26] On "moral insanity," a medical-legal condition first described by James Cowles Prichard and Isaac Ray, see Fink 20-78.

The major problem with the Freudian approach, which allows for this revisionary reading of Poe as part of an evolutionary rather than psychological gothic, is the emphasis on the role played by childhood trauma and experience in the development of the individual psyche. While in Poe's era the notion of childhood trauma or experience as a *conscious concept* was not altogether absent, it nonetheless played a far lesser role than it did after Freud. More often than not psychosis was *not* the result of traumatic emotional experiences, unreconciled Oedipal complexes, or failed mirror-phases. Causes were rather differently diagnosed in antebellum America and rooted far more in the body than the tradition of Poe scholarship has acknowledged.

The causes of insanity, as understood in Poe's time, were a complex affair. One of the first steps, however, to be taken towards the integration of the deranged psyche with the body, opening the doors for the hereditary notions of post-Darwinian degenerationists, was the displacement of Galen's anatomy and Hippocrates' humoral theory with the new anatomy of Andreas Vesalius. For with the new anatomy came the drive to tie mental disease to specific bodily organs. While, some, like Robert Whytt and William Cullen, attributed mental disorders to disturbances in the nervous system which might or might not include the brain (Alexander 110-11), others were beginning to focus more specifically on the diseases of or damage to the brain itself. The effort to understand the relationship between mental illness and cerebral damage gathered ground after Giovanni Morgagni's close anatomical explorations of the brain ruled out as causes of insanity mistaken diagnoses by predecessors of postmortem brain decay and coincidental brain lesions which had no effect on sanity. With the path cleared, medical doctors, like Charles Bell and John Haslam were invigorated to study even more closely the brain for clues to the causes of insanity.

At the same time, other physicians, like Vincenzo Chiarugi and William Battie, in their treatises on mental illness, had localized the causes of insanity in either deteriorated or damaged brain tissue. Such speculations took more solid form in the work Antoine

Bayle and Louis Calmeil, who had determined that inflammation either around or within the brain was specifically responsible for paralytic dementia. The work of both of these scientists was brought to English attention by George Mann Burrows, who elaborated on their researches to propound his own explanation for the "General Paralysis of the Insane" (Hunter 779-80) Yet despite much of this earlier work, cerebral localization as the source of both insanity and overall human behavior found popular acceptance only after the tidal wave of phrenological thought came crashing on American shores.

Despite surface similarities to the long tradition of "face-reading," which in the late eighteenth century culminated in the introduction of Lavater's physiognomy, Franz Joseph Gall's phrenology differed in several fundamental and important ways. Whereas Lavater sought to read the "soul" from the face, Gall concentrated more on how the skull revealed, through the impression made on it by the brain, the character of an individual. Unlike Lavater, whose art of physiognomy depended on the Cartesian distinction between mind and body (and thus between mind and brain), Gall, as a medical student, had quite consciously collapsed the mind into the brain, rendering character and behavior *physiologically* definable as well as locatable.

Gall's view was notably deterministic in character. Tying character traits to compartmentalized areas on the surface of the brain, his phrenology did not allow for the type of modifications his student, Johann Gasper Spurzheim, would later introduce. Whereas Gall had "accepted the existence of evil ... propensities in mankind," labeling certain cerebral compartments accordingly, Spurzheim "deliberately omitted from his categories all faculties which were inherently evil." Instead, "all were intrinsically good and only from the abuse of them could evil result" (Davies 8). Spurzheim, with Scottish proteges, George and Andrew Combe, introduced into Gall's phrenology a Lamarckian element that sat well with American reformers. It was this very element, in fact, that proved the new science's most effective selling point for the Fowler brothers and Samuel Wells, when they embarked on their mission of phrenological reformation. The popular

phrenological chart put out by Orson Squire Fowler, for example, outlines in simple terms, suitable for mass consumption the basic connection between physiological principles of phrenology and self-reformation. Drawing on certain mechanical principles exhibited by other muscles of the body, Fowler would argue that since size equals power, and exercise increases size (and thus power), then surely particular types of behavior (as well as diet, exercise, good habits, and proper thinking) must modify those cerebral compartments linked to them. In other words, "According to the phrenological doctrine of the growth of the faculties through exercise, a person can consciously develop and cultivate his ... socially desirable propensities, and inhibit or atrophy his vices" (5). Practice "benevolence," and the cerebral faculty of benevolence will physiologically grow in size and strength; avoid "combativeness," and the faculty for that dastardly form of behavior will shrink and weaken accordingly.

Yet even as phrenology, with the help of practical phrenologists, left its mark on reformational movements in education, penology, magnetism, health, medicine, and religion, it was still a theory too materialistic for its own good. Many of its critics, for example, noted its deterministic foundation, arguing that if "phrenology were confirmed ... then so were atheism, fatalism, materialism, and the denial of moral responsibility" (Davies 67). If phrenology was less popular than animal magnetism, it was because, according to Robert Fuller, because its "master image was incompatible with the pragmatic temper of the American people." As "a physiological explanation of moral character," it forced "one to accept the concept that personality is rigidly determined by inherited brain organs" (51). Phrenologists, of course, denied these charges. Yet even the pseudoscience's most vocal defendants could not completely get around its taint of heredity and determinism. Orson Fowler's phrenological chart confessed as much when it admitted differences in brain size between individuals and races that no amount of education or behavior modification could bridge (qtd. in Davies 178, 180).

These taints of materialism and heredity, however, were not enough to keep Poe from treating phrenology seriously. If anything, the materialism of phrenology is more than likely to have appealed to the scientific-minded Poe, whose polygenistic views and pantheistic materialism were hardly popular themselves. Though not an outspoken determinist, Poe does appear to have entertained such views. In his letter of 10 July 1844 to Thomas H. Chivers, for example, Poe adopts the rather anti-progressive stance of disagreeing with the belief "in man's advance toward perfection," arguing instead "Man is now only more active, not wiser, nor more happy, than he was 6000 years ago" (*Letters* 260). With an anti-perfectionism grounded in a materialistic God ("God is material"), Poe's thought adumbrates the hard determinisms of the naturalists and Lovecraft. By jettisoning a spiritual God, Poe managed to eliminate, among other things, soul-based theories of insanity, then popular in Germany during the Romantic era (Ackernecht 60-64), that depended on the Cartesian distinction between mind and matter, as well as a progressive God whose interventions could improve the human lot. Poe's God, as he makes clear in *Eureka,* is a "first cause" God and nothing more. Having opened up the universe, God appears solely in the natural laws of the universe, no more, no less.

Poe's materialistic collapsing of spirit into matter and its laws echoes the determinisms of the French materialists who probably influenced his polygenistic views. How far Poe was willing to indulge such deterministic views, particularly biological ones on the origins of insanity, remains to be seen, but phrenology certainly lent support to them. If Poe did come to depend upon biologically determined images of mental illness later adopted by post-Darwinian evolutionary gothicists, he was not without precedent. Hereditary views of disease were hardly uncommon prior to Poe, and with the medical localization of disease in the brain and the flowering of phrenology (which sealed human behavior within the brain), they only gathered in strength with each new generation.

In terms of modern medicine (that is, after the Renaissance), the hereditary image of disease found no better known representative than in the work of Robert Burton, who, in his 1621 *Anatomy of Melancholy*, attributed his own melancholic condition to "it[s] being an hereditary disease" (qtd. in Hunter 96).[27] A century later, William Battie's 1758 *Treatise on Madness,* in distinguishing between two causes of insanity, "Original" and "Consequential," concluded that, whereas the latter was the result of cerebral disease or physical injury to the brain, the former, "when it neither follows nor accompanies any accident" was likely to be hereditary, and, even more grimly, not "removable by any method which the science of Physick in its present imperfect state is able to suggest" (406). In his 1800 *Medical Jurisprudence: On Insanity,* John Johnstone seconded Battie's claims, asserting, "Of all the hereditary diseases, madness is supposed to be most constant and perservering, for even if one generation escape, the taint is presumed to cling to the succeeding branches" (577).[28] In 1814, Joseph Adams, the first to devote a treatise exclusively to the hereditary properties of madness, thoughtfully distinguished "family" (single generation) from "hereditary" (multiple generations) madness, as well as the "disposition" to insanity, "induced without any external causes," from the "predisposition," which requires "some external cause to induce the disease" (691-92). (Logically enough, predispositions to madness were curable, or at least preventable, unlike dispositions.) Finally, in his well-known *A Treatise on Insanity* of 1837, the work that defined the legal concept of "moral insanity," James Cowles Prichard took note of how "In many instances it has been found that an hereditary tendency to madness has existed in the family" (839).

In America, like the materialist and environmentalist tensions within phrenology, the hereditary origins of mental disease vied with external factors as causes. For

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[27] All citations of pre-1850 medical sources that follow are taken from Hunter.

[28] Burton suggested the same when he mentions how melancholy "skippes in some Families ... sometimes every third in a lineall descent" (97).

example, America's most esteemed doctor, Benjamin Rush, had attributed to insanity and criminality a polyglot of causes, from alcohol consumption to overexcited passions to excessively swelled "blood-vessels of the brain." One definite cause of madness, however, treated in his 1812 *Medical Inquiries and Observations upon Diseases of the Mind* was also heredity. Citing Burton for support, Rush in a study of two twins who had sunk into madness readily concluded a "predisposition to certain diseases seated in parts contiguous to the seat of madness, often descends from parents to their children" (667). Nor did heredity as a cause diminish in the age of antebellum reform. Amariah Brigham, who later founded the *American Journal of Insanity* and was himself a leading phrenologist, had adopted in his 1832 *Remarks on the Influence of Mental Cultivations Upon Health* Esquirol's Lamarckian suggestion that "Not only do commotions which powerfully affect the minds of people, occasion immediate insanity in adults, but *they predispose the next generation to this terrible disease* " (824).

But heredity remained at best a possible cause among many so long as heredity and excitability remained mutually influential. on the interaction of body and mind. Poe appears to have understood this tenuous connection between biology and environment. According to David Butler, Poe's accurate description of the medical condition of hypochondriasis in "Fall of the House of Usher" suggests some familiarity with the medical works of Benjamin Rush, J. G. Spurzheim, John Conolly, James Johnson, and Ralph Fletcher. Yet even Butler in his attempt to unravel "the connection between the imaginative power which characterizes romantics like Usher and actual madness" (2) concludes physicians were unable "to agree upon the location of the seat of the disorder in their attempts to explain its psychosomatic operations" (5). While, on the one hand, hypochondriasis could "be centered in the intellect," with its "physical symptoms ... wholly the creations and not the causes of mental distress" (5), there was, on the other, the "belief that the tendency to nervous disorder was hereditary," a belief " widespread among physicians in Poe's time" (6).

Yet despite this connection between hereditary and environmental causes, Poe lays little emphasis on the former, perhaps for the same reason the naturalists were afterwards to be so little regarded: reductive biological explanations threaten the complex literary portrayal of mental illness by diminishing the dialogue between psyche and environment. Still, as interested as Poe was in documenting environmental influences on the diseased mind, he could not completely neglect hereditary causes. In the *Journal of Julius Rodman,* for example, it is the "instigation" of Rodman's "hereditary hypochondria" that leads "him to attempt [his] extraordinary journey" west (1188-89), while in "William Wilson," Wilson points out "I am the descendant of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable temperament has at all times rendered them remarkable; and, in my earliest infancy, I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character" (338). The full treatments of the inherited diseased imagination, however, would have to await two of Poe's classic tales "Fall of the House of Usher" and "Berenice."

Like Roderick Usher, the protagonist of "Berenice" is also entombed within his ancestral home. Living where "there are no towers in the land more time-honored than [his] gloomy, gray, hereditary halls," Egæus is born to a "line" that "has been called a race of visionaries." But Poe makes a rather dark pun on the word "visionary." One aspect of the family's "visionary" heritage is expressed in "the character of the family mansion," in its "frescos," "tapestries," "chiselling," "gallery of antique paintings," the "fashion of the library chamber," but most especially in the "very peculiar nature of the library's contents" (225), hinting at the role art and architecture are to play in serving as an index to the diseased psychological condition of Egæus' line.

The morbid degeneration of Egæus' visionary heritage occurs primarily as a result of this isolation within his ancestral home. The first sign of his decline symbolized by his birthplace: the family library. As his symbolic mother, the library assumes a personified responsibility for Egæus' distorted image of himself as he awakens "from the long night ... into the very regions of fairy-land — into a palace of imagination — into

the wild dominions of monastic thought and erudition." Never properly born into a "real world," Egæus comes to live in this "fairy-land" by having "loitered away" a "boyhood in books" and "dissipated" his "youth in reverie." Weaned on books and undernourished by reality, Egæus appears both surprised by and yet resigned to his discovery that "as years rolled away ... the noon of manhood found [him] still in the mansion of [his] fathers." Soon enough, Egæus' visionary heritage assumes a darker cast as mental "stagnation" sets in and a "total ... inversion ... in the character of [his] commonest thought" comes about. Now the "realities of the world" affect him "as visions, and as visions only, while the wild ideas of the land of dreams" become "not the material of ... everyday existence" but his "existence utterly and solely in itself" (226).

One might think Egæus' problem, roughly speaking, is the exacerbation of his visionary imagination through overexposure to the cultural products of fictional experience. In other words, Egæus incessantly daydreams, substituting fantasy for reality, because he reads too many books. Yet despite the support given to this traditional image of the ills hypochondriasis held for the oversensitive artist, Poe emphasizes more significantly the role played by physical isolation from outside experience. In other words, Egæus is wrapped up in his fictional reality because of his physical confinement within his mansion and library as well as psychologically within his own mind. The substitution of fantasy for reality as his reality underscores the metaphorical autoeroticism of everyday experience for him. That his only other companion is his first cousin, Berenice, is apt, illustrating how incestuous the closed quality of his existence has become. There is no exogamous stimulation from a world outside his "family mansion" to counter his being "ill of health and buried in gloom." Nor are we to be fooled by Berenice, who, though "agile, graceful, and overflowing with energy," proves no healthier than her cousin, her frivolous energy masking her true illness just as Egæus' visionary inheritance obscures his congenital insanity.

It is no coincidence both Egæus and Berenice are afflicted by disease: he with monomania, she with catalepsy. Yet despite apparent differences, their conditions bear an basic similarity to one another. Berenice suffers from a "species of epilepsy not unfrequently terminating in *trance* itself" (227), a malady that leads her, as it will Madeline Usher, to her premature burial. Egæus' own condition, a "disease" that achieves "a monomaniac character of a novel and extraordinary form," though never properly designated a "trance," nonetheless exhibits the trance-like qualities of his cousin's cataleptic episodes. Whether musing "for long unwearied hours with [his] attention riveted to some frivolous device" in a book, "absorbed for the better part of a summer's day in a quaint shadow," or losing himself "for an entire night in watching the steady flame of a lamp," all of which culminates in the mystical Eastern practice of repeating "monotonously some common word, until the sound, by dint of frequent repetition ceased to convey any idea whatever to the mind," Egæus so overfocuses his concentration that his monomania is rendered indistinguishable from his cousin's catalepsy. In those moments when he loses "all sense of motion or physical existence, by means of absolute bodily quiescence long and obstinately persevered in" (227), Egæus literally reproduces in himself Berenice's illness.

Egæus' condition thus ends up as the inverted replica of Berenice's own. Where her formerly active nature is supplanted by paralyzing, cataleptic seizures, Egæus' unusual torpidity, which leads to his trance-like episodes, is suddenly thrown off at the tale's close as we learn how, despite poor health, he has dug up his own cousin, broken open her coffin and wrenched out every one of her teeth. That their conditions are so similar — their behaviors only mirrored inversions of each other — suggests just how insidiously the "same" they, in fact, are. In other words, how closely *related* they are, both symbolically and biologically. Though never overtly stated, both suffer from diseased conditions that, as identical, albeit inverted, versions of a degenerative

hereditary "visionaryism," emphasize how incestuous their *origin* as well as their relationship is.

That their problem stems from the *degree* of incestuousness implied in their near incestuous relationship and its endogomous quality illustrates the stress Poe's era placed upon racial blood purity. Permeating the text is the largely obscured but powerfully influential notion that inbreeding, instead of guaranteeing quality of "blood," is responsible for the deterioration of mental health and physical vigor. Though, on the one hand, the depiction in "Berenice" of Egæus' split subjectivity, driven by the Romantic image of the unconscious, may doubtlessly explain his hallucinations, eccentricities, motivations, and criminal behavior, there is just as much evidence to suggest that the inevitable breakdown of mind was the product of inherited insanity and mental degeneration from inbreeding. True, the concept of gene pools was not yet operative, but the need to "revitalize" blood by moving beyond the family group had not gone unrecognized in Poe's era and earlier.

This basic thematic pattern of "Berenice" is redeployed in "Fall of the House of Usher" as both narrator and Usher point out the distinctly hereditary component of the latter's "acute bodily illness": "I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art." The close connection antebellum physicians drew between madness and the artist, placed in the background in "Berenice," dominates in "Usher," with its emphasis on heredity augmented by Roderick's admission of "the nature of his malady" as a "constitutional and family evil" (322). Though some doubts are sown about the Roderick's condition in his treatment of this evil as "a mere nervous affection," his having to "immediately add" that his affection "would undoubtedly soon pass off" obliges us to recognize in the defensiveness of this reaction the deeply engrained, constitutional nature of his disease.

Picking up where "Berenice" leaves off, "Usher," from the its very beginning, gives notice that this "family evil," exacerbated by the estate, mansion, and library, as well as Roderick's artistic productions, appears to be the consequence of a disease never worked out of the family. As the narrator notes, "I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honored as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain." The narrator treats this "deficiency" of "collateral issue" and "the consequent undeviating transmission from sire to son" as responsible for the merger of familial name and the name of the estate (318). Through this merger, the expression "House of Usher" assumes the full weight of the dead metaphor implied by the use of "house" to designate individuals within a family line.

Through the convenient fiction of a direct line of descent, Poe manages to amalgamate the Ushers with their estate, unifying them in some transcendental sense with the home they inhabit. This, of course, lends itself readily to the equation of Usher's diseased imagination with the architecturally bizarre and misleadingly dilapidated condition of his home. Despite the fact that no "portion of the masonry had fallen" and the "fabric gave little token of instability," "the crumbling condition of the stones" and "a barely perceptible fissure" that runs the entire length of the home suggest the true state of the Ushers (319-20). Though they appear mentally intact, they are like their home, about to crumble at any moment; all may be fine without, but decay and rottenness abound within.

But this need not describe their mental conditions alone, since it parallels their hereditary compositions as well. What, after all, is responsible for the long neglect and rotting interior of their ancestral home? That which is responsible for Egæus' decline: isolation. If the masonry does look like its about to crumble, it is only because, like that "specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected

vault," there is "no disturbance from the breath of the external air" (320). There is no "vitality" within because there is no infusion of energy from without. If, indeed, no lateral branch of the family has "endured" and "the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always ... so lain" (318), how natural to find paralleled in the neglect and disrepair of their home from isolation, the diseased transmission of hereditary conditions within the Usher enclave. The imminent collapse of a home left too long in disrepair because of the family's isolation mirrors only too well the hereditary debilities that have intensified with their confinement to the limited gene pool of the Usher line.

Like Egæus and Berenice, the unusually isolated Ushers also appear not to have practiced exogamy with any real consistency. While it is true that Poe includes as an escape clause to avoid offending his readers mention of "very trifling and very temporary variation[s]" within the family line of descent, this functions as more of a confirming irony that emphasizes the basic incestuousness of the family's sexual history. In the end, the Ushers' plight stems not so much from their being practitioners of incestuous love as the progeny of it. The degree to which they are products of such relations are evident in the narrator's attention to the "striking similitude between the brother and sister," to which Usher, "divining, perhaps [his] thoughts, murmured ... that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them"(329). While Roderick and Madeline's twinning may operate as a symbolically biologized attestation to their incestuous origin, what is especially telling is how closely they physically resemble each other. Since as brother and sister, they are clearly *fraternal* twins,[29] their description as hermaphroditic male and female replicas of

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29 This point deserves some elaboration. Knowledge of embryology in Poe's time was very limited. Though the distinction between identical twins and fraternal twins may have been recognized, their distinction in terms of heredity and genetics would more than likely have not been. Therefore, though I make much of the fact that Roderick and Madeleine look *too much* alike, I cannot say with certainty whether Poe emphasized their physical resemblance to contrast the conscious recognition that fraternal twins need look no more alike than siblings born separately.

each other only reinforces their status as endproducts of a family whose genetic variety has been constrained by inbreeding.

Like "Berenice," "Usher" too has interwoven into the tapestry of its narrative the red thread of incest dread and the horrifying violation of the taboo against incest. But this source of horror is complemented as well by the attack on gender difference implied in their unusual similarity. The replication of Roderick and Madeline in each other suggests that restriction of the gene pool has not only worked family disease *in,* but has worked biological gender difference *out.* Fraternal twins need not resemble each other, and that Roderick and Madeline do hints at the threat to masculinity posed by incest. This was a touchy issue in Poe's time. Emasculation through the abrogation of gender difference was a powerful method of generating horror in a culture that thrived on highly delineated gender roles.[30] Hardly surprising then to find symbolized in Roderick's disease, as accurate a portrayal as it may have been of hypochondriasis in Poe's time, the effeminization of mental deficiency through the dissolution of gender difference. Roderick' exhibits a cadaverous complexion, has eyes "large, liquid, and luminous," lips "thin ... and pallid," and "silken hair" of a "wild gossamer texture" (321). Beautiful, yes, but, more significantly, he is "delicate." As such, his emasculation through hypochondriasis renders him especially vulnerable to sensorial experiences. Unable to handle the greater harshnesses of the external world, he can only eat the "most insipid food" and "wear only garments of certain texture." The "odors of all flowers" are "oppressive," his eye are "tortured by even a faint light," and only certain sounds "from stringed instruments ... did not inspire him with horror" (322). By knocking off all five senses, Poe foregrounds Roderick's limited capacity to admit sensual experience of the

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[30] The failure of masculinity with its criminal, homicidal consequences is a significant theme of several Poe tales. It is quite prominent in his tale of male impotence and alcoholism, "The Black Cat." It is suggested as well in "Morella" and "Ligeia."

world access to his body.[31] His body becomes a prison that must be protected from its environment. This excessive sensitivity, brought on by a disease born of incest and isolation, symbolizes in its own symptoms its cause. Where relief for Roderick lies in an even greater isolation of his body from sensorial experience, this is hardly the solution to his problems, having been their cause. If anything, his shutting out the world only closes the loop between him and his sister, as his denial of sensation approaches symbolically her full-blown catalepsy.

Like Egaeus and Berenice, these too tightly bound siblings also labor under mental disorders that are inverted versions of one another. At first, Madeline suffers from a "settled apathy," that is marked by a "gradual wasting away" indicative of a "partially cataleptical character" (323). Only after her burial is there a sudden burst of energy, as "the rending of her coffin" is followed by "the grating of the iron hinges of her prison and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault" (335). This energy is matched, prior to her burial, by (in a strange contrast to his inability to handle intense physical stimulation) Roderick's energetic artistry: the "fervid *facility* of" his musical "*impromptus,*" the "wild fantasias" of his "rhymed verbal improvisations" (325), the "wild air" of his waltzes (324), as well as the "earnest *abandon"* (327) of his beliefs. But his "nervous affection" also assumes, like Madeline's catalepsy, a quiescent form reminiscent of Egæus' monomaniacal episodes. Whereas before her interment, Madeline's apathy is contrasted with the strange mixture of Roderick's wild imaginative energy, after she struggles to free herself from her premature tomb, Roderick becomes as cataleptic as she: "His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony rigidity" as he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering

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[31] Streithman notes Usher's condition, an "[e]xcessive sensitivity to touch, pain, or other sensory stimuli," "is termed *hyperesthesia* ; it includes hyperesthesia optica (sensitivity to light), tactile hyperesthesia (sensitivity of touch), olfactory hyperesthesia (sensitivity to odors), and gustatory hyperesthesia (senstivity to taste)." Usher appears to suffer from all of these, as well as "either auditory hyperalgesia (a painful reaction to sounds not ordinarily unpleasant) or hyperacusia (overacute hearing due to an increased irritability of the sensory neural mechanism)" (66).

murmur, as if unconscious of the [narrator's] presence" (334). Only when Madeline appears in the doorway do both embrace in a paradoxical excess of energy and enervation that appropriately consumes both. So closely have Roderick and Madeline come to resemble each other in biological ancestry, hereditary disposition, and physiological identity, that even their status as individuated linguistic signs is obscured in their ambiguous death embrace. The two are dissolved into one as the corpse, "bore ... to the floor ... a victim to the terrors" (335), is left ambiguously unidentified.

Poe's Children: Legacy and Predisposition

Poe is an unusual figure to focus on as a forerunner of post-Darwinian evolutionary gothic. The emphasis he consciously placed on the full characterization of the psychoses of his characters has traditionally militated against analyses that are neither formal nor psychological. However, one need not suggest a direct line of descent to realize that the scientific trends Poe drew upon to inform his narrative horrors were the same drawn upon by subsequent writers. Though Poe was read by Norris, London, and Lovecraft, his influence is marked not so much by direct antecedence as by confluence of thought and philosophical orientation. That is to say that while Norris was more inclined to look to Kipling and Zola for his literary inspirations, and London to draw more on Darwin, Spencer, and Nietzche than Poe, with only Lovecraft admitting the overwhelming influence of Poe, parallels in thought and reading between all four writers cannot be ignored as our attention is drawn to the tradition they, consciously or not, mapped out.

The central difference between Poe and his descendants lay in the absence of Darwin, and it was in the wake of Darwin that the various areas of interest to Poe were sewn together in ways not seen before. Mental illness as a sign of evolutionary degeneration was not conceivable because there was as of yet no popularized image of

evolution itself. Poe, like most around him, still held to Bishop Ussher's calculation that the age of the earth was 6000 years old. Indeed, it was this inability and, in some cases, refusal, of those in the sciences to accept an older earth that led to the monogenist-polygenist debate in the first place. The catastrophistic theories of earth's development, espoused by Cuvier, still depended upon a Scriptural interpretation of the earth's age, leaving the extension of its age, as first suggested by Joseph Hutton, for Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* before it could take root. And the first theory to link species evolution with the uniformitarian expansion of the earth's age wouldn not appear until 1844 in Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of Creation,* which Poe knew though he had not read it.

Though Poe lacked the basic components for a post-Darwinian evolutionary view of the relation of the races to each other and of humanity to the animal world, Darwin's groundbreaking theory of natural selection, with its hints of human evolution from primate, did not in any way radically undo the image humanity had of itself. A review of the history of Darwin's reception and the emergence of such disciplines as criminal and evolutionary anthropology, as well as theories of atavism and degeneration in response, reveals how little had really changed. The racial categorization of Poe's era underwent few, if any changes, after the "Darwinian revolution." True, certain sciences, like phrenology, died out. But just as phrenology was born from the ashes of Lavater's physiognomy, so too was Lombroso's criminal anthropology built on the ruins of phrenology. Only now the former bore an evolutionary character absent from the latter. Where before Darwin, phrenology claimed the privilege of being able to detect from the contours of skulls criminals and geniuses, after Darwin, these compartmentalized cerebral faculties gave way to the hunt for simian attributes which, alas, performed the same function only in evolutionary terms. It is because there was no biological connection between primate and human being that Poe could produce a strange figure of Dirk Peters, who, had he been given his fictional existence after Darwin, would have with his

Lombrosian features, probably suffered the fate of a McTeague rather than that of a romantic hero.

Lack of an evolutionary connection also explains the strange disjunctions in Poe's representation of blacks. Where in "Rue Morgue," there is the figure of the orangutan, in which is contained the various cultural associations which had accrued between primates and negroes, in *Pym,* we find those characteristics are strangely absent, Poe's foolish and savage Tsalalians, not unlike their orangutan cousin, nonetheless revealing themselves to be far less simian than the ostensible hero of the tale, Dirk Peters. This lack of coherence between savagery and cultural backwardness, on the one hand, and simianism, on the other, would have to wait for Darwin to be ultimately unified. As the racial hierarchies of monogenists and polygenists were transferred into and transformed by the new Darwinian reality, the disjunctions between race, cultural and technological primitivism, and animal nature were reconfigured into a coherent, racialist whole. The transition from religious to scientific hierarchies of racial difference, initiated in antebellum America, was to be completed after Darwin. And one writer who took this transition to heart was Jack London, the only one of the three who traveled enough to explore firsthand this new evolutionary relationship between the races. For Poe, the savagery of darker races metaphorically suggested by their connection to the animal world was, for London, literalized biologically by Darwinism.

Moreover, in Poe's era, explorations of mental illness tread a separate path from that being paved by pre-Darwinian natural history. While there had been some notorious attempts to link the pre-Darwinian category of racial difference to disease and heredity, those efforts had by and large failed,[32] the glitch remaining in the hard-and-fast distinction between humans and animals. Once, however, that chasm was crossed, the

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[32] The most famous is the to do made over the 1840 census, which allowed many to take note of the disposition to insanity of free negroes in the North. See for a short history of race and insanity in the United States, Prudhomme and Musto, 25-60. On the political uses made of the census, and the adverse effects freedom had on black sanity, see Prudhomme and Musto, 27-35 and "The First U. S. Census."

floodgates were opened for treating mental illness and criminal behavior as forms of a degenerative, often race-based animalism. The sensitivity of the artist in "Usher" made way for the sensualism of the artist in *Vandover.* Either way, both images drew on the longstanding tradition of seeing artists as prone to madness, the difference residing primarily in the absence and presence of specifically evolutionary determinants. Even as both draw on the image of the mad artist, in "Usher" there are no such determinants, while in *Vandover* there are.

There is also in "Usher" and "Berenice" the operative image of incestuous degeneration, and while this image had no evolutionary linkages in Poe's day, it did in Lovecraft's. Like that of the mad artist, the popular notion of incestuous degeneration, with its transmission and intensification of hereditary illness, found itself brought into the evolutionary arena. While Norris ignored this relationship between incestuous union and hereditary illness, depending for his insights into degeneration on the sexual beast in each of us and the racially programmed one ready to emerge at a moment's notice, Lovecraft did. Even though the image of familial degeneration had appeared as early as 1877 in Richard Dugdale's *The Jukes,* the hard hereditarian implications of it, adumbrated in Poe, would not sweep the popular imagination until *The Kallikak Family* in 1912 by leading eugenicist, Henry Herbert Goddard. And it was this image of the troubled progeny of inbred union, an offshoot of eugenic thinking, that would characterize Lovecraft's dark eugenic fantasies.

Finally, unlike Norris, London, and Lovecraft, Poe lacked the coherent determinist philosophies that emerged in response to Darwinism. While the materialist notions Norris and London wrestled with and Lovecraft wholeheartedly embraced were present in Poe's thinking, especially in his later life, the deterministic questions with which the former three struggled were not as prevalent. In part this was due to the obvious unpopularity of such notions in an age of reform and self-help. But even with this lacuna in Poe's outlook, there was a dark enough impression left by his characters,

the victims of either bad breeding or "irresistible impulses," to justify, at least in Lovecraft's opinion, the idea that Poe had eschewed the proper presentation of character because he knew, consciously or not, that character was largely determined by forces external to it. Nor is this impression of a deterministic ethos, tragically drawing characters to their horrifying acts and horrible fates, so farfetched as it seems, given Poe's interest in exploring insanity from *the inside.* This touch of verisimilitude was just the type needed to raise hairs on its readers' heads because it made his villains just as much victims as victimizers. While Poe's emphasis on the psychotic will draws on the same willful drive of the Byronic villain of the British gothic, Poe's characters differ radically from their Radcliffean precursors by failing to understand why they do what they do.[33] And this withholding of understanding prefigures the deterministic ethos naturalist fiction relished in its presentation of characters who, as the victims of biology and environment, enact, without ever comprehending their plights, their fated ends.

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[33] This point is quite significant. Poe's greatest achievement as a gothic writer, unlike so many of his predecessors and contemporaries, was actually to study psychosis in an attempt to get the "facts right" as they were then understood. This is very much like London, who prided himself on his ability to research his novels, and Norris, more specifically, who paid close attention to the popular medical literature of his day in trying to understand from the "inside" how a man degenerates. The deterministic feel of Poe's insane narrators, therefore, derives not only from his intensive research of what the mind of an insane individual supposedly is like, but, equally important, from the specific notion of moral insanity, which, defined by the contemporary leading authority on medical jurisprudence, Isaac Ray, held that the morally insane individual was simply unable to distinguish right from wrong. That knowledge of right from wrong, the basis, some argue, for any exercise of free will, is bound to lead to a deterministic end when it is absent. With no moral sense, what guideline is there to follow but the grooves etched by the predetermined flows of desire and external circumstance?

Chapter Three
The Lamarckian Horrors and Orthogenetic Nightmares of Frank Norris

The Naturalist Gap in the American Gothic: The Case of Frank Norris

Any attempt to treat Frank Norris, unlike Poe, as an author of horror fiction is one rife with difficulties. The problem with including Poe in an evolutionary gothic tradition is in his largely being seen as the fountainhead of America's psychological gothic tradition. To move Poe into the former tradition, one must merely reconsider the role of biology (and race) in works that are already understood as gothic in intent and effect. With Norris, however, problems arise in just considering his work a part of the gothic tradition at all. This doubtless explains why not one major work of gothic criticism has ever treated either *McTeague*or *Vandover and the Brute* as examples of gothic literature — and this even in spite of their obvious gothic overtones.[1]

Part of the explanation lies, of course, with the guiding principle that has defined what counts as gothic literature, and that is the conventional distinction, as Todorov has described it, between "uncanny" or "marvellous" literature. Gothic critics, in paying heed to this distinction between uncanny or psychomachic fiction and marvellous or supernatural fiction, have made it impossible to acknowledge other gothic forms, such as the materialistic or supranatural gothic. Gothic works must treat either horrifying misapprehensions of reality (uncanny) or physical impossibilities (marvellous) if they are to qualify as gothic at all, and where they are not about the insane or the undead — to use

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[1] Bibliographies are not excepted from overlooking Norris' contributions. There is no mention of either novel in Barron, Tymn, Frank's *Guide to the Gothic* or *Gothic Fiction: A Master List*; Fisher's *The Gothic's Gothic* carries one reference, according to which Norris' novels are examples of "[f]lawed Gothic melodrama" (263). Only in Frank's *Through the Pale Door* is there an earnest effort to discuss the naturalist gothic character of *Vandover* and *McTeague* (185-86).

the two most common types of uncanny and marvellous fiction — then they are not gothic as far as the academy cares.[2]

This, one might argue, is the "problem" with treating naturalist works as part of the gothic canon. Because naturalist fiction bypasses the distinction between uncanny and marvellous, the dark works of that tradition find no purchase within the larger American gothic tradition. In naturalist fiction, what horrifies are not subjective (uncanny) or objective (marvellous) distortions of the known world, but objective reality itself, or, in the specific case of Norris, biological reality. In *Vandover* and *McTeague*, beneath the fumbling actions of the protagonists, Norris plants the ticking timebomb of evolutionary pressure, such that the horrible fates that befall them become the inevitable because programmed results of millions of years of animal evolution. And Norris is clear in suggesting that there is no escaping the determining reality of these evolutionary forces. Yet as horrifying as such a thesis is for two ostensibly "realist" novels, because *Vandover* and *McTeague* are without tell-tale fantastic transformations of Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* or even Wells' *Moreau,* there is no reason, so far as gothic critics can tell, to treat either of these as part of the gothic canon. With only Vandover's post-syphilitic hallucinations and much purple prose about the "aroused beast" in *McTeague* to convey a more conventional sense of horror, Norris' fiction seems too mundane, neither marvellous nor uncanny enough, to gothic scholars to be properly placed within the gothic tradition.

But this contraction of what we are to understand as horrifying only diminishes the richness of the gothic vein in naturalist fiction. Despite the image he held of himself as a realist, Norris reveals himself to be quite comfortable working with gothic motifs, symbols, images, and ideas. Many of his short stories abound with gothic paraphenalia,

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[2] There is a third category , according to Todorov, and that is the "fantastic," by which is meant a genre of works in which we are left to wonder whether we are witnessing the hallucinations of a twisted mind or are watching authentic supernatural occurences. The classic example is, of course, Henry James' *Turn of the Screw* .

laboring under the dreary atmosphere of a Poesque gloominess. Like any good student of his craft, Norris exhibits in his fiction the influence of past masters like Poe and popular contemporaries like Ambrose Bierce, sharing with each a morbid penchant for sadistic ironies and grim streak of dark humor. Among the sixty or so tales written both before and after *Vandover* and *McTeague,* one finds horrid scenes of physical degeneration ("The House with the Blinds") ghostly visitations ("The Ghost in the Cross-Trees"), psychic distortions ("The Dual Personality of Slick Dick Nickerson"), atavistic episodes ("A Case for Lombroso" and "Lauth"), supernatural revenge ("Le Jongleur de Taillebois"), and dark comic ironies ("The Passing of Cock-Eye Blacklock"). In seeking a literary paradigm for his "bloodier" brand of fiction, Norris logically turns to the one fictional genre that existed primarily to shock its readers — the gothic. For it was in the gothic tradition Norris found the strength and support to harden the edge of his own fiction.

Poe and Norris: Brothers in Effect

Of the many American writers who guided Norris' hand, there is a good case to be made for treating Poe as a major influence. While the little direct evidence from Norris himself suggests Poe may have had far less of an impact than Emile Zola or Rudyard Kipling, there is nonetheless an significant confluence between the two, not only in their fiction, but more significantly, in their ideas about fiction writing.[3] On the occasion of Frank Stockton's death, for example, Norris distinguishes in his 1902 essay, "Salt and Sincerity," between two types of fiction writers: "*constructive* " artists like Stockton, Kipling, and Poe and those who "*explore* like Eliot, Flaubert, or Hardy." The achievement of the former specifically was in their ability "to put a story together so as to

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[3] On Poe's influence, see Hill, "Poe's 'Fall'" and Vance 123-27. In addition, Poe's popularity in the 1880s and 1890s grew, following publication of George Woodberry's 1885 *Life of Edgar Allan Poe* and his 1894-95 edition of Poe's works. For a comprehensive bibliographic survey of Poe materials in the 1890s, see Fisher, "Poe in the 1890s."

achieve a given effect." "In Poe," Norris noted, "the effect aimed at was the horrible." He continues

> The first [constructionists] deal with events; the second [explorers] with people. The first build up a situation; the second assume that a certain situation already exists and proceeds to disintegrate it to its elements—some of these elements being episodes, some living human beings. Unquestionably the greater works of fiction belong to the latter class. But the "constructionists" occupy a place of undeniable importance. (Pizer, *Literary Criticism* 202)

Revealing himself to be familiar not only with Poe's short prose, but his literary poetics as well, Norris, despite his treatment of Poe as a "mere" constructionist, a class from which he means to exempt himself, was far more of a constructionist than he was willing to admit. A master of effect himself, Norris' strength lay far more in his skill at "building up" situations than in disintegrating them.

The emphasis Norris places on "effect" echoes closely Poe's disquisitions on this literary objective. In the "The Philosophy of Composition," Poe asserts that once a poet alights upon an original subject for a poem, the rationale behind picking and choosing a tone, a subject, a locale, and so on must inevitably be subordinated to the achievement "of an effect" if that poem is to succeed as a work of art (Poe, *Reviews* 13). But this need not apply to poetry alone. In his review of Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales,* Poe administers the same theory to prose works as well, arguing that the "skilful literary artist .... If wise" will not have "fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single *effect* to be wrought out" will combine "such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect." Poe continues, "If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, he has failed in his first step." Thus does Poe concludes that in "the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design" (572).

This attention to the generation of effects is picked up by Norris in his own effusions on prose composition. In his 1896 *Wave* essay, "The Modern Short Story," Norris, for example, takes stock of the "very clever trickery" of "withholding the real point and meaning of [a] story until the last sentence or paragraph," noting how, by disclosing "the whole purport of the story in a single instant," the writer delivers to readers "the accumulated effect of the preceding pages with the suddenness and force of a mild electric shock" (Pizer, *Literary Criticism* 50). Later, Norris elaborates on this rather Poesque effect in his 1901 essay, "The Mechanics of Fiction," lauding those "masters" of fiction who, through an "infinitely slower ... approach, leading up to [the] pivotal element," achieve their literary effect "with all the violence of an explosion," leaving readers "stunned, breathless and overwhelmed by the sheer power of its presentation" (59-60). Norris even reproduces Poe's dicta on what short fiction can perform when he describes the reading experience of "the uninitiated," who "without an eye to the mechanics, without a consciousness of the wires and wheels and cogs and springs of the affair," are left stunned "that these great scenes of fiction—short as they are—some of them less than a thousand words in length—should produce so tremendous an effect by such few words, such simple language." As Norris notes, cinching his connection to Poe, "it seems as if here in a phrase one could resume the whole system of fiction-mechanics—preparation of effect" (60).

The question which must be answered, however, once we accept the common vision of Poe and Norris on the significance of literary effects, is to what end does each turn his literary effects. Notwithstanding differences in tone, method, and object, for Norris, like Poe, "the effect aimed at was the horrible"; his object, like Poe's, to shock, jolt, and jar readers awake out of the habituated perception of their relationship to reality. Though each comes at it from a different angle, their objective is the same — to emphasize our helplessness before the combined force of biology, environment, and unconscious psyche, to defamiliarize our comprehension of our place in reality by

questioning our ability to act freely within that reality. It is in our recognition of that which destroys McTeague and Vandover as well as Usher that Norris and Poe achieve their ultimate effect—namely, that we are not the free entities we assume we are; that, in fact, we may be always already the victims of circumstance.

Gothic Effects and the Paradox of Evolutionary Horror

Signalling his appreciation of Poe's emphasis on effect, Norris would make ample use of it in his two early novels to generate many of the same feelings of horror readers had experienced reading Poe's fiction. If there was a dramatic difference in their deployment of effects, it was less in their narrative organization than in the their subject. While Norris and Poe employed much the same methods for horrifying readers, the objects they chose for horrifying readers were radically different, a difference that was largely the result of the shattering impact Darwinism had on America.

Whereas in the pre-Darwinian gothic tradition, the mark of the beast stood as a *metaphorical* violation of the villain's humanity, in the post-Darwinian, it became a biological reality. Before Darwin, popular belief in the Scriptural explanation of human origins and acceptance of the Great Chain of Being had assured readers that animal propensities, while a part of them, were, at best, the test of their souls by their God-given corporeal being. Because pre-Darwinian readers had been created separately from the other animals of the earth, their relationship to them was at worst a simile. They were *like* animals, sharing particular properties with them, not *of* them. Only with Darwinism did they finally fall in among them.

With the villain in the pre-Darwinian gothic functioning as a metaphorical beast, a deviant among the morally upright, his threat in the traditional gothic is minimized to that of the individual to society. Madman or madwoman, lecherous priest or family murderer, torturer or cannibal, the gothic villain lives on the fringes of society, an outcast who somehow infiltrates human society. His acts of violence and cruelty may horrify,

but only in a limited sense: they horrify as the acts of one who is an exception, not the rule, a bad apple cast within a barrel of good.

This image of the villain, however, began to break down after Darwin, as the metaphorical animal within was biologically literalized and all humanity found itself branded with the mark of the beast. Thus was the highly individual psychopathy of the Byronic villain of gothic romance supplanted by a universal animalism whose presence corrupted even the most civilized.

This radical transformation in horror, derived largely from the abrupt infusion of materialism and determinism that accompanied Darwinism, had an immediate effect on the literary handling of character. Where in the pre-Darwinian gothic, the villain suffered from an excess of will whose effect was to place him above the laws that bound the rest of humanity, in the post-Darwinian gothic, the evolutionary deviant labored under an absence of will, the consequence of which was to render him a slave to natural law. Unlike the pre-Darwinian gothic villain, the evolutionary gothic protagonist was more victim than villain inasmuch as his horrifying transgression of the rules that make civilized life possible testified to the ontological status of his deviance. His plight was not the idiosyncratic overreaching individualism of the earlier gothic villain, but the universal deterministic animalism to which all humanity was subjected. By dissolving the division between human and animal, naturalists like Norris could attack not only the hubris of humanity and the illusion of free will, but the moral structure of human society itself. With Darwin's natural selection behind them, naturalists took upon themselves the task of reversing the values of contemporary society by illustrating the deformative effect had upon the "natural" self by the misconceived norms of civilized life. In trying to make angels of men and women, so naturalism argued, turn-of-the century American society made the tragic error of ignoring the ape within.

But the naturalist attack on social mores acquires an even more disturbing quality from the intensity with which biological instinct as a behavioral determinant is

introduced. Particularly troubling is the incapacity of the determined individual, in his or her descent into non-consciousness, to recognize the taboo prohibitions that make human civilization possible. Unlike the pre-Darwinian gothic villain, who consciously disobeys the rules of human society, naturalist human animal does not even recognize his transgression as a violation. Instead to him knowledge of taboo, the foundation of law and custom, is foreclosed. In a radical departure from an older gothic tradition, the reader is horrified in evolutionary gothic less by the commission of any specific act of violence or brutality than by the predetermined character of that act. What horrifies is not the conscious disregard of law, but rather its unconscious disregard in the loss of humanity that is put on display in the evolutionary gothic protagonist's submersion into a roboticized animalism.

By introducing perpetrators who, in submitting to the beast within, fail even to recognize the boundaries of law, the evolutionary gothic elicits from readers a horrified response that differs fundamentally from that evoked by the conventional gothic because it is a response predicated on paradox. In our confrontation with the amoral determinism of the naturalist universe, our horror of the predetermined transgression of law reveals itself to be a gesture in bad faith — since one cannot be horrified by what is inevitable — the result of which is ironically the intensification rather than diminution of our sense of horror. As terrible as the conscious act of transgressive violence might be, far more chilling was the prospect of a universe in which that act of human evil was not evil at all, but normal.

Instead of confirming the deterministic ethos of the naturalist universe, this intensification upsets it by reinforcing the structure of morality human society has specifically designed to divide the human from the animal world. In other words, naturalism, instead of collapsing social mores in an amoral universe, strengthens them by soliciting our dread of the amorality of that universe. The primary horror of Norris' early novels derives then not merely from our witnessing individual horrors — the murders of

Trina, Maria, and Marcus, the drowning of Zerkow, the beating of the Polish Jew from the lifeboat, Dolly's decay, and Vandover's madness — but from the threat of amoralism implied in the predetermined status of those events. If Norris' early novels horrify, they do so in an effort to fend off the acceptance of the deterministic, amoral universe post-Darwinian thought suddenly made conceptually available.

Roads That Must Be Travelled: How to Adapt to Darwin

By the 1890s, when Norris began work on *Vandover* and *McTeague,* the relationship Darwinism held to other competing and complementary theories of evolution was a complicated affair. While much has been made of Norris' encounter with evolutionary thought through his biology instructor at Stanford, Joseph Le Conte,[4] his exposure to the Darwinian thought of his day could by no means be limited to the classroom as the spate of ideas which followed in the wake of Darwinism flooded the popular press, political rallies, and academic institutions. On campuses, in newspapers, even within branches of government, scientists, politicians, business leaders, and social activists were exhaustively arguing the merits and demerits of theories of degeneration, atavism, and arrested development, of new disciplines like criminal anthropology, evolutionary anthropology, and Spencerian sociology, of the Great March theory and the imperial sweep of the Saxon, of the "rising tide of color" some foresaw in the flood of immigration and growth in racial miscegenation. Evolution was all the rage, and there could be no denying the force of its impact on the mind of the young and impressionable Norris.

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[4] In *The Novels of Frank Norris,* Pizer attributes an "immediate and lasting effect" on Norris to his charismatic biology instructor, Joseph Le Conte (16), especially with respect to the latter's emphasis on the "twofold potential of the animal in man" (17), according to which which "those parts of the animal which clashed with the spiritual — that is, sensual pleasure and gross sexual desire — were vestiges of man's animal past hindering his gradual evolution toward the dominance of spirit over body" (17-18). According to Le Conte himself, " [t]rue virtue consists, not in the extirpation of the lower, but in its subjection to the higher. The stronger the lower is, the better, *if only* it be held in subjection" (qtd. in Pizer 15). While Le Conte's "ethical dualism" does inform Norris' novels, it would be foolish to ignore the broader context in which Le Conte's thought developed.

After the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species,* something of a ripple effect occurred in Western thinking.[5] On the one hand, while Darwinism helped unify a number of ideas already afloat in the the sciences that had yet to find popular acceptance — the extended age of the earth, the transmutation of species — there nonetheless remained some disturbing gaps. By integrating what he had learned from agricultural breeding practices ("artificial selection"), his reading of Malthus, and his observations abroad, Darwin extrapolated his theory of natural selection, according to which nature selected those traits that best adapted species to their environment. There were, however, several difficulties with his formulation, especially for American scientists. First, Darwin could not explain the source of these new traits. Nature may have selected one trait over another, but that did not explain what caused the trait in the first place. This predictably opened up the possibility that the variations themselves were randomly generated, and that survival of a species was a matter of trial and error. That is to say, if a species developed a trait that "worked," that favored its survival in a particular environment, it survived. If not, it died. But this conclusion led to a second problem. For if trial and error were the baseline conditions of organic survival, how then could one reconcile the amount of life wasted in the process with the "designed" universe of a benevolent God? Not only was natural selection disorderly and wasteful, a character quality foreign to a rational deity, but it was unjust and immoral; if anything, the sacrifice of "hecatombs" to the survival of the few seemed downright pagan, an image of nature that rubbed strongly against the grain of American secular and religious thought. Finally, there was a third obstacle to the acceptance of natural selection. If natural selection were the only mechanism of evolution, then all "evolution" was tied to survival requirements of a particular environment. As such, there could be no necessary progression from lower to

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[5] Much of what follows is drawn from Bowler, *Evolution* 240-81 and *Eclipse,* perhaps the most thorough analysis of popular post-Darwinian evolutionary alternatives. On theistic evolutionism, see 44-57; on neo-Lamarckism 58-106; the American School 118-40; orthogensis, 141-81. The discussion of degeneration appears in Ackerknecht 54-59; of the relationship of degeneration to evolutionary theory in Bowler, "Holding"; on degeneration, more generally, see Chamberlin and Gilman.

higher species, since evolution described not an ascension, but an adjustment. A "higher" species thus placed in an environment that demanded greater organic simplicity obviously could not be higher if it could not survive in this new environment. As Darwin's opponents argued, natural selection not only denied a rational God, but a teleological one as well. To them, natural selection was, in one fell swoop, random, wasteful, and undirected: it was all that the contemporary notion of an orderly universe was not.

Still, even with such objections standing in its way, natural selection upon its initial reception swept all before it. The amount of evidence Darwin had amassed joined with Huxley's outspoken campaign to popularize this revolutionary (or, as Huxley saw it, evolutionary) view to squelch all oppents. But after this initial welcome, objections swiftly began to accrue in response to the implicit randomness, wastefulness, and aimlessness of Darwin's *modus operandi* of species evolution. Various "alternative" theories of adaptation were proposed, one often blending into another. First among these was the doctrine of theistic evolutionism, a descendant of the natural theology of William Paley, Robert Chambers, Louis Agassiz, and Richard Owen. Theistic evolutionism counted among its post-Darwinian proponents the Duke of Argyll, George St. Jackson Mivart, and William Lawrence. But the interventionist image of the deity theistic evolution depended upon could not stand up to the explanatory force of Darwinian selection. It consequently declined, leaving in its wake to contest with natural selection, the newer, more materialistic theories of neo-Lamarckism and orthogenesis .

Though Lamarck had fallen into obscurity, the victim of Cuvier's anti-transmutationalist objections, his ideas still had wide circulation. Reintroduced into popular and scientific circles by Robert Chambers, Lamarck's ideas would ironically reappear full blown in the tenets of neo-Lamarckism years before Lamarck's own rediscovery. Neo-Lamarckism subsequently drew several notable figures into its circle of thought. For example, despite their initially forceful championing of natural selection, Herbert Spencer

and Ernst Haeckel quickly incorporated Lamarckian elements into their pet theories of evolution, while Samuel Butler waged an all-out, pro-Lamarckian war against natural selection. Stated simply, Lamarckism held that variations were not randomly generated, but were rather inherited as characteristics "acquired" through their exercise by a previous generation. Most famous of the examples taken from the animal kingdom, of course, was the giraffe, whose long neck was the result of generations of shorter-necked precursors who had stretched their own to forage. The muscular alteration becoming physically encoded was then passed on to the offspring. In this way, neo-Lamarckism killed two birds with one stone, by not only offering an explanation for Darwin's variation, but also by restoring design to an orderly, life-efficient universe. No more unexplained, random variations, no more pagan sacrifices to survival. Neo-Lamarckism, unlike natural selection, allowed organisms to determine their own fates.

But neo-Lamarckism did not satisfy all; it too had its problems. Though some argued it was teleological by virtue of its having allowed species to improve themselves and progress upwards, there were those who thought it failed to accomplish even this function, since as a method of adaptation, it remained subject to the same constraint natural selection was: the organism had to adjust to its *given* environment. This is where orthogenesis stepped in as an alternative. Grounded in Germany's long tradition of philosophical idealism, orthogenesis, as first formulated by Theodore Eimer, placed "form" above "utility," arguing that the development of new traits were not determined by an organism's response to a given environment, but were directed systematically from within. Orthogenesis thus conceived of biological change as the result of the pre-programmed development of a trait, a "variation-trend." This wasn't to say orthogenesis was completely cut off from environmental pressures. Rather, the position taken by its supporters was that once a trend was called forth by such pressures, it developed thereafter with no regard for what initially called it forth.

This inner-directed response to the anti-teleological character of natural selection and neo-Lamarckism respectively, however, also had its dark side. At first offered as a solution to the riddle of extinct species, which were then gaining greater notice from a rapidly exhumated fossil record, orthogenesis was soon overshadowed by its own thesis that a progressive pattern once established in the inheritance and development of a trait could continue beyond the point of adaptive usefulness. This is how orthogenesis, for example, explained the mystery of the extinct "Irish elk." If Lamarckism were true, orthogeneticists pointedly asked, how did there then develop a species of elk with an antler spread so large it couldn't defend itself? If cumbersomeness and entanglement among forest branches were all an escaping elk could expect of its antlers when confronted by a predator, why didn't they shrink in size? Lamarckism could not explain this. Nor could natural selection (so it seemed). But orthogenesis could, since according to it, the antlers of the elk, once they started growing, continued to do so irrespective of deleterious consequences. Once initiated, this "programmed" pattern of development could not be checked.

Though neo-Lamarckism and orthogenesis stood in opposition to each other, both also shared traits that drew them together. In fact, orthogenesis was itself born out of Lamarckism. Though grounded in an idealism that privileged form over function, orthogenesis still had to reconcile itself to its original purpose: what contribution did it make to the survival of a species? Despite its emphasis on the indifference of developmental changes to environmental pressures, orthogensis, to work as an evolutionary theory, still had to acknowledge those pressures if it was to function as an alternative theory of adaptation. This it did by adopting the Lamarckian assumption that a species did alter its behavior, its "habits," in response to an environment, but as soon as the path of development was established for acquiring that trait, that development continued unabated, even after the trait was no longer needed. This, of course, ran contrary to Lamarckism, which held that once a character was no longer needed, it atrophied from

disuse and ceased to be transmitted. But, orthogeneticists were quick to point out, if so, why didn't the aforementioned antlers of the Irish elk shrink?

So there they stood, two of the earlier theories that, according to Bowler, would come to "eclipse Darwinism." Drawing on each other for support even as they opposed one another, together they would form a vicious circle that helped open the doors to their integration with the growing popular and academic interest in theories of degeneration. A standard epithet of castigation in the eighteenth century, often wielded by neoclassical scholars when seeking to humble contemporaries for their vices, it assumed a more specifically medical pedigree with the development of nineteenth-century psychiatry. The "degeneration hypothesis" itself had been derived, for example, from the attempts of psychiatrists to discover somatic explanations for mental illness. Yet despite the successful anatomical diagnosis of syphilis-induced general paralysis in the work of Bayle, Calmeil, and Burrows, physiological explanations for mental illness continued to fall short of general expectations. In France, building on a growing tradition of hereditary diagnoses of mental illness first formulated by Philippe Pinel, Etienne Esquirol, and Felix Voisin, Prosper Lucas and J. Moreau de Tours began to lay an emphasis on heredity far beyond anything proposed by their predecessors. In 1857, Benedict Augustin Morel's *Traite des Dégénérescences* appeared, sparking widespread interest in the phenomenon of mental degeneration. Morel's work subsequently influenced that of Wilhelm Griesinger, Valentin Magnan, Cesare Lombroso, and Max Nordau, complementing studies also then being done on the presumably atavistic effects of alcohol (Fink 76-98). Still, as Edward Ackerknecht points out, though "attractive in its own right, the degeneration hypothesis would never have acquired the significance it did if it had not coincided with the Darwinian theory, then sweeping all before it" (54). How coincidental this convergence was, however, is a matter of debate.

The credibility lent to the degeneration hypothesis by the theory of natural selection and its neo-Lamarckian and orthogenetic alternatives was itself of a piece with

the spirit of the times. Having never fully emerged from under the shadow of the eighteenth-century obsession with degenerationism, nineteenth-century scientists were just as eager to explain degeneration as they were progression. Even Darwin himself suggested a role for degeneration when he pointed out that natural selection need not be progressive, only that it be "assessed on the basis of increased biological efficiency" (Bowler, "Holding" 333), so if efficiency demanded greater organic simplicity, so be it. To Spencer, who defined true evolutionary progression as the movement from organic simplicity to greater organic complexity, degeneration thus signalled a reversal of direction from complexity to simplicity. Since in order to call out a new variation, one that contributed to organic complexity, there needed to be an environmental stimulus, evolutionists reasoned that with "the lessening of the stimulus provided by the environment," the result could only be for those acclimated to such environments, "organic degeneration."

Because natural selection denied any teleological end to evolution, as a theory of species adaptation, it saw no obstacle to propounding a rationale for species degeneration. This is ostensibly what the more moralistic neo-Lamarckism and orthogenesis sought to prevent in their own formulations. That they failed in this endeavor,is not surprising in light of the moral character of these theories. Inasmuch as natural selection was a non-teleological, materialistic theory of adaptation, one that reduced substantially the roles of will and deistic design, it served little purpose to discuss the degeneration of a species as "degeneration." While adaptations that demanded organic simplification could be called degenerative, to do so would be an imposition of human criteria on an indifferent biological world. To assume complexity is good and simplicity bad, according to natural selection, was to miss the point, since complex and simple are irrelevant categtories of quality in a world where one either adapts or dies.

This, however, is not the case for neo-Lamarckism and orthogenesis. Both proposed to reincorporate free will (neo-Lamarckism) and rational design (orthogenesis) into the evolutionary process, they could not help but carry with them the moral motivations of their original introduction. Consequently, when it came to discussing human affairs, it was far easier and far more popular to describe degenerative character traits under the watchful eye of these two theories. Because neo-Lamarckism depended on the transmission of acquired characters developed through physical exertion, "the theory also implied," as Bowler notes, "that organs no longer required would diminish in size through the cumulative effects of disuse," consequently leading to organic degeneration. Extended to a cultural level, neo-Lamarckism thus assumed that the modern luxuries of civilization could only end in human degeneration as environmental challenges were minimized by the ease with which organic necessities were provided. Instead of providing a complex, challenging environment that engaged human survival skills, civilization, by simplifying our lives, cushioned us, thereby contributing to our personal and cultural degeneration. If fault was to be found, therefore, according to neo-Lamarckism, one need look no further than the individual will, which, in failing to fend off degeneration, even in spite of its degenerative environment, assumed responsibility for its sad condition.

In contrast to neo-Lamarckism, which, by reintroducing free will, could hold it responsible for one's personal degeneration, orthogenesis offered as its explanation of degeneration the overdevelopment of the ideal form. By employing the idealism of German philosophy to understand species variation, orthogenesis attempted to restore the rational order of a lost deity (lost with the decline of theistic evolutionism) to the natural world. How it came by its explanation, however, was through the phenomenon of species extinction, an ill omen for an otherwise orderly theory. Initally adopted for survival, once a "variation-trend," according to orthogenesis, was set in motion, its overdevelopment could result in organic degeneration by diminishing the suvivability of

the affected organism. Orthogenetic degeneration was less the result of external overabundance — as in the case of neo-Lamarckian, with its civilized comforts that reduced environmental challenges — than of an internal overabundance, a kind of genetic overflow. To orthogeneticist, the evolutionary evil was not lack of environmental challenge, but poor pre-programming. In either case, whether speaking of external conditions or internal variation-trends, one literally degenerated, according to neo-Lamarckism and orthgenesis respectively, from too much of a good thing.[6]

Naturalism, Habit, Orthogenesis, and Determinism

Though no scientist, Norris could hardly have ignored these trends that eventually came to eclipse Darwinism, and which subsequently informed theories of human behavior and development. Among late nineteenth-century evolutionary scientists of the "American School," mixtures of orthogenesis and Lamarckism commonly pervaded their research. Leading American figures like Alpheus Hyatt, Edward Drinker Cope, Alpheus Packard, and Henry Fairfield Osborn readily integrated elements of Lamarckism and orthogenesis into their paleontological studies as initial adaptations were converted from acquired characters into unmodifiable progressive characters that explained species extinctions.

Yet despite the concentration of these Lamarckian orthogeneticists in fossil science,[7] the evolutionary patterns they discerned swiftly made the transition into those

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[6] A very important objection must here be stated with regard to the contemporaneity of orthogenesis. The term "orthogenesis" was not popularized until the translation of Theodore Eimer's work roughly at the end of the century, and thus a few years after the composition in 1894-95 of Norris' early novels. Yet even though the wide, scientific application of the term would not occur until after the novels were written, the seeds, if not the central tenets of, orthogenetic thought were nevertheless embedded in the theories of degeneration Norris used. If I liberally use the term then, it is only because many of the principles that would come to characterize this alternative to Darwinism and neo-Lamarckism had been largely prefigured by the literature of degeneration and the novels themselves.

[7] I should qualify this assertion by noting that even among these animal and fossil scientists, some would later apply their theories to hominid evolution. One such application was Hyatt's theory of racial senility, for which see Hyatt, "Cycle of Life" and Bowler, "Holding" 340-42.

categories of change and adaptation sociologists had been steadily applying to human affairs. Inspired by the popular and academic writings of social Darwinists and Lamarckian sociologists like Lester Ward, John Fiske, Peter Kropotkin, Henry Drummond, and Herbert Spencer, the superimposition of natural selection, neo-Lamarckism, and orthogenesis from the vegetable and animal kingdoms on to the human was carried out with few reservations.[8] With that gesture, as evolution became the screen through which all reality was to be filtered, an American naturalist movement in literature rose in response, its writers weaving the many strands of evolutionary thought into their productions.[9]

In the animal world, the development of Lamarckian characteristics was typically achieved through exercise of a particular muscle or organ, the enlargement or extension of which was hereditarily passed on. In human affairs, the emphasis was less on physical attributes than on mental and behavioral characteristics as the elements of personality were transformed into hereditary biological traits. In animal evolution, the inheritance of a behavioral attributes were commonly treated in terms of the acquisition and transmission of "habits." After several generations of hereditary transmission, these habits, such as the stretching of the giraffe's neck in order to survive, became "instincts." Thus, not only were physiological changes biologically encoded, so were the behavioral habits responsible for those changes. And it was through this transformation of habit into instinct that human behavior found itself biologized.[10] What was originally a Lamarckian adjustment in response to an environmental pressure became a hereditarily

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[8] For overviews, see Hofstadter, Bannister, and Degler 3-59.

[9] Several scholars, however, have been careful to point out the significant differences between American and continental naturalists, especially with respect to Norris who autographed letters and books as the "little Zola." Frohock notes there "are grounds for wondering whether Norris ever really understood the nature of French naturalism at all," given Norris' belief that naturalism is "the opposite of realism" (8). See also Chase 185-87.

[10] As early as 1855, "Spencer adopted the Lamarckian view that habits eventually turned into biologically imprinted instincts" (Bowler *Theories* 54). See, as an example of Spencer on the development of complex muscular coordination and its transmission, *Principles of Psychology* 547-48.

transmissible, roboticized response, the origin of which was likely neither to be remembered nor to hold any value after the passage of much time. This is the plight of the characters who enact their personal dramas in *Vandover* and *McTeague.*

Pliability: Adjusting to Oblivion

When Darwin first proposed his theory of natural selection, the element which caught the attention of supporters and detractors alike was its emphasis on survival. Despite the few Lamarckian intrusions, Darwin himself had held rather rigorously to the notion that survival was a matter of adapting or dying. Much depended on the luck of the draw. If an organism had, fortuitously enough, the proper trait or traits, its chances of survival increased; if not, they diminished. Adaptability became the catch-all notion, and Lamarckians were not far behind in championing the organism's own capacity to "adapt" through adjustment of its behavior (in the case of animal life) to the rigors of changing environments.[11] Orthogenetic notions, however, derived from the tradition of medical degeneration and the new found science of criminal anthropology, remained operative, restoring that lost sense of control with which natural selection had initially threatened Western science.

The transposition of this orthogenetic loss of control to Vandover's ability to adapt prominently figures in his infinite "pliability." In contrast to the eternal "rustling" of Charlie Geary, Vandover is forever "adjusting" to new circumstances. The first mention of this amazing adaptive power occurs after his father decides to send him to Harvard instead of Paris. Worried that "Vandover was still very young and would be

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[11] One difference that must be pointed out was that between the neo-Lamarckian adaptation of plants and animals. Plants adapted by physiogenesis, animals by kinetogenesis. In kinetogenesis, animals alter their physiology by changing their behavioral habits, thereby developing either greater muscle tissue or new muscular structures. In physiogensis, plants, because they lack a muscular structure and, therefore, the need for any muscle-building locomotion, undergo triggered, direct physiological changes. Despite problems of explanation, neo-Lamarckians continued to depend more heavily on flora than fauna to defend their position. When it came to explaining human evolution, however, they looked to their explanation of animal adaptation to explain the development (and degeneration) of human traits (Bowler *Eclipse* 62-63).

entirely alone in Paris," his father ironically takes this measure to shield him from being "exposed to every temptation" (11). Yet even though Vandover at first takes "his father's decision hardly," little by little "the idea of college life" becomes "more attractive" to him (12). At this point, we are introduced to Vandover's most distinctive character trait, his "pliable nature": "There was little of the stubborn or unyielding about Vandover, his personality was not strong, his nature pliable and he rearranged himself to suit his new environment at Harvard very rapidly" (13).[12]

Pliability proves to be the source of Vandover's undoing, his greatest character flaw. His "yielding disposition," for example, leads "him to submit to Geary's dictatorship," the deleterious effect of which is not so much Geary's abuse of Vandover, as the encouragement of "easy, irresponsible habits" in Vandover himself. Vandover consequently becomes "indolent," shirks "his duty whenever he could," and comes to rely on Geary to "pull him out of any difficulty" (14). All are signs of trouble to come, and yet, despite indulgence of the classic degenerative idea that Vandover's failure lies in his refusal to *resist* his environment, his pliability still remains perhaps the most effective means by which he *survives.* Pliability, which is but adaptability by another name, though a degenerative vice, can't shrug off connotations of being preservative measure.

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[12] For alternate interpretations, see Hochman 3 and 129 n. 5. Her own psychoanalytic approach is an attempt to restore a coherence to the novel critics have generally found lacking (59). This distinctly post-Trilling maneuver, however, assumes that the application of psychoanalysis provides a more a coherent framework for reading the novel than Norris' obvious use of a philosophically deterministic Darwinism. Nor is Hochman alone of this opinion. See Hochman 133 n. 15 for other psychoanalytic treatments. One attempt to respond to critical efforts to jettison Norris' deterministic ethos may be found in Conder (215-16), who reasserts Norris' "hard determinism" as an integral element of *McTeague.*

Let me add that my interpretation takes at face value what some have called the "naive" reading of *Vandover.* Instead of treating his story as one hedged in by a third person limited consciousness, I regard it as one in which Norris rather than Vandover speaks. In doing so, I presumably forgo the ironic interpretation of the tale as one of a fallible narrator who is victim not to his evolutionary heritage, but to his thinking himself the victim of one. It is an angle that has some merit — much of the narrative is limited voice, and Vandover's introspective powers are not the greatest. But the inconsistency of that limited voice, the constant intrusion of a voice that can only be read as Vandover's with a struggle, allows for the following reading of Vandover's decline as not merely a matter of poor understanding, emotional inadequacy, bad childrearing, and uncritical thinking.

Continually "fitting into new grooves," "contented in almost any environment" (20), Vandover has at his disposal several mechanisms for adjusting to his changing environment, each of which will come to foreshadow his degenerative state at the novel's conclusion. Most effective is his knack for "forgetting" whatever bothers him. After his episode of near-nausea at church services, Vandover at first bemoans how "some time he would surely be called to account for it," only to immediately check "himself suddenly, not daring to go further." This resistance to thinking about his behavior, an initial step in strengthening his ability to adapt by simply forgetting, is again effectively called upon when he learns of Ida's pregnancy. After much self-castigation, he abruptly absolves himself of responsibility by giving "an irritated shrug of his shoulders as if freeing himself from the disagreeable subject" (67). And when Turner rejects him as a lover, he responds again by "thrusting the disagreeable subject from his thought, by refusing to let the disgrace sink deep in his mind, by forgetting the whole business as much as he could" (152). Indeed, Vandover adapts so well through this method, that even he's surprised by its efficacy in handling his father's death: "But it was not long before Vandover had become accustomed to his father's death ... He wondered at himself because of the quickness with which he had recovered from this grief, just as before he had marvelled at the ease with which he had forgotten Ida's death" (117).

Vandover's pliable nature, however, is complemented not only by his ability to forget, but also by his "proleptic memory," that is, his knowledge that he *will* forget: "[H]e began to see that there would come a time when he would grow accustomed to Ida's death and when his grief would lose its sharpness" (89). So well does this means help him adjust to stressful situations that, in a moment of horror for the reader, we find Vandover even anticipating the forgetfulness that will overtake his intense fear of his repeated syphilitic attacks:

> A new thought had come to him. Wretched as he was, he saw that in time his anguish of conscience, even his dread of losing his reason, would pass from him; he would become used to them; yes,

> even become used to the dread of insanity, and he would return once more to vice, return once more into the power of the brute, the perverse and evil monster that was knitted to him now irrevocably. (183)

And, indeed, this hypothesized point in time is reached as the "strange blurring mist" that had "at first ... been a source of terror to him" (202) settles suffocatingly upon his clouded mind.

Aided by this resistance to thinking, an extraordinary ability to forget, and the solace of knowing he will forget, Vandover's pliability eventually strains the limits of his identity as it orthogenetically overruns his ability even to obstruct his perpetual adjustment to new conditions. Vandover has "so often rearranged his pliable nature to suit his changing environment" that he finds he can "be content in almost any circumstances." The result of this almost uncontrollable ability to adapt is underscored in his final degeneration, which is aptly represented by his sudden descent into "a state of absolute indifference" after his first lycanthropic fit. It is at this point, having "no pleasures, no cares, no ambitions, no regrets, no hopes," that Vandover resignedly submits to his "passive existence," becoming "an inert, plantlike vegetation, the moment's pause before the final decay, the last inevitable rot" (205). His ability to adapt as a way of being has at last stretched itself *beyond* the point of adaptability. Instead of his pliability contributing to his survival, it literally adapts him out of existence.

It would be remiss to assert, however, that full responsibility for Vandover's downfall lies with biology alone. Much of his plight is laid by Norris at the doorstep of America's Victorian pretensions, Vandover's pliability underscoring not so much his unsuitability to the social mores of human society as the unsuitability of such mores to human nature itself.[13] The continual repetition of remorse, resignation, and adaptation

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[13] The most powerful argument for environmental causes in Vandover's degeneration can be found in McElrath 55-71. There are several points of agreement in what follows between his arguments and my

that characterizes Vandover's response to behavior he knows to be sinful instead of reinforcing these mores, just wears away at them, throwing into question why they're imposed at all.

This erosion of Victorian mores thus begs two questions. First, what are Victorian mores seeking to restrain? And, second, when Vandover adapts to his environment, what exactly is he adapting to? Taking the latter first, there are two levels on which Vandover adjusts to his surroundings One is on a material plane. This involves his adjusting to new economic, emotional, physical circumstances when confronted by unforeseen turns of events. After the death of his father, for example, he adjusts easily to his new lifestyle, while after his precipitous decline into syphilitic insanity, again he quickly, albeit unhappily, accommodates himself to his poverty. These adaptations are those on most obvious level, adjustments signalized by Norris' use of the word "pliable" and its various forms. These adaptation are, in the most traditional sense, degenerative, as examples of Vandover fitting the grooves of his new environment with minimal resistance. This, however, is *not* what Victorian mores seek to protect Vandover from.

Instead what they seek to protect Vandover from is the sinful, sensual lifestyle he also, in a sense, has adapted to. His pliability refers not only to his ability to survive adversity and adjust to new material circumstance, but also to his knack for getting around the pressures of social opinion, of picking up new habits, and pleasing himself sensually. One way of getting around social strictures is, as we've seen, to ignore, forget, or anticipate release from the moral consequences of his actions when confronted with having done wrong. Another, however, is to relativize social mores either by rationalizing his behavior by treating his enjoyment of sensual pleasures as an exercise in eye-opening tolerance.

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own. However, there are different emphases. McElrath holds environment as the primary culprit, I regard it as contributory only because in *Vandover* there is so little sense of an alternative.

Vandover's relativizing of his bad behavior is primarily a matter of comparing it with that of those around him and doing as they do. College, for example, introduces Vandover to many of his worst vices. When he first gambles and drinks, he goes "'in for it'" only "because the others [do] without knowing why" (15). The hypocrisy of late nineteenth century American mores is laid bare as Norris answers the question of why men drink and gamble with a tautology: they do because others do. Social mores give way to immediate social pressures as Vandover comes to tolerate in himself what he tolerates in others because all already tolerate such behavior both in themselves and in others. Even the prissy Dolly is a "beer" drinker (irrespective of his abstinence from "wine or spirits") and a frequenter of the Imperial, an oyster house of ill repute. In such company, no wonder Vandover can listen to "certain practices, which he had always believed to be degrading and abominable, discussed with shouts of laughter." With the "fine quality of this first sensitiveness blunted" by "his experience at college," he learns to tolerate "these things in his friend now" (20-21).

His ability to tolerate vice, however, as a sign of his pliability, achieves perhaps its most eloquent expression in his castigation of the social hypocrisy surrounding him: "all this talk of women demanding the same moral standard for men as men do for women is fine on paper, but how does it work in real life? The women don't demand it at all" (72). In fact, "a girl don't want to know the particulars of a man's vice; what they want is that a man should have the knowledge of good and evil, yes, and lots of evil" (73). Though this assertion may function as a rationalization for Vandover's poor behavior, it does also add with a studied irony to the social pressures already exerted by peers to drink, gamble, smoke, and chase "chippies." In other words, Norris makes it clear that Vandover's pliability, his immense capacity to adjust, is less discouraged than encouraged by the subversion of Victorian mores by those around him, both by the men he imitates and the women whose subversive desires he is bold enough to speak aloud.

If Vandover is too pliable for his own good, it is only because his pliability ironically bespeaks what Victorianism is itself all about — conformity.

The Inevitability of Sexual Instinct

Vandover's pliability, which at first worries us, becomes a source of horror as we witness the extremes to which it takes him. In contrast to gothic horror, with its traditional focus on the singularity of psychopathic or supernatural eruptions in an otherwise stable universe, the deterministic horrors of the evolutionary gothic strike fear into readers because of its all-embracing foundation. What bothers us about *Vandover,* like the publishers who initially refused to publish it, as well as its outraged readers in 1917, is the nerve it strikes in its depiction of what commonly went on (and may still go on) in college and high society. Our horror is that Vandover is less unique than unlucky, no different from the men and women around, just unfortunate enough to get "caught."

In trying to determine the point of origin of Vandover's horrifying fate, Norris draws a fine line between environmental and biological influences. Indeed, the emphasis Norris places on the role of environment would suggest he leaned on it as the determining force behind Vandover's decline. Perhaps the scene most revealing in this regard is the fourteenth chapter of the novel. There, Vandover's year-long indulgence of sensual pleasures after Turner's rejection of him climaxes in his epiphanic attempt to turn himself around after attending the opera. Norris outlines in detail the confluence of innate and environmental factors that bring Vandover to this juncture, explaining how it came about that Vandover's "first instinctive purity" (159) should evaporate under "the early taint of vice" (159) that led to his decline. Having lost his father and then Turner (160), without either religious training or stoic philosophical guidance (161), and finally having so "persistently kicked against the pricks" of "[c]onscience, remorse, repentance," that he ceased "to feel them at all" (162), Vandover is, according to Norris, without those environmental restraints that might have halted his slide downwards. That is to say, he

apparently lacks sufficient willpower to fend off his pliable nature because he grew up in an environment that neither restrained that nature nor taught him how to restrain it. Vandover, in essence, was never taught to say no.

His tragic passivity, which leads to his decline, however, is not merely a matter of so much bad luck in having lost a father and mother, lacking religious convictions or a sound, temperate philosophy and so on. No, the development of Vandover's pliable, passive nature is less the result of poor luck than the failure of his environment to provide those conditions, that might have encouraged active resistance to his pliable nature, in spite of these losses. Vandover's problem is aptly captured by Dolly who, despite Vandover's accurate, scathing indictment of female, Victorian hypocrisy, proclaims, in terms that later come to haunt Vandover: "'It's a man's duty to protect a girl, even if he has to protect her against herself'" (75). So too is it thus an environment's duty to protect its organisms, even if it is to protect them from themselves. In this case, the environment at issue is American society itself, and as such, Vandover's failure is not his, but that of his social environment.

But in suggesting that American society has failed its young men by relinquishing its cultural duty of protecting them from themselves, a question is begged: what is it in themselves that they are to be protected from? Well, according to Norris, the answer is tautologically enough "themselves." That is, what they are to be protected from are those seeds of destruction sown by our own evolutionary heritage and the physiologically determined needs and desires that that heritage has produced. And this is the source of those horrors that give the evolutionary gothic its deterministic power.

While it is true that to contain this innate self-destructiveness, driven by the blind instinct of physical desire, Norris does include, perhaps vis-a-vis Le Conte, compensatory "good" instincts, these instincts don't amount to much. Certainly they aren't as "good" as they seem. Take Vandover's recollection of his former possession of that "instinctive purity of the fragile, delicate innocence," so much like that of the

Rousseauian child (159). A crass romanticization, this portrait of childhood innocence shortly gives way to Norris' depiction of Vandover as having until "very late ... kept" as "his innocence, the crude raw innocence of the boy, like that of a young animal, at once charming and absurd." As such, Norris, suggests that Vandover's "instinctive purity" is less a moral trait, than a prelapsarian *amoral* characteristic. If Vandover was pure of the "knowledge of good and evil" before his rude awakening into sexuality, what must be wrong with Vandover is really what is wrong with the rules of his society, since it is not possible to maintain any type of instinctive purity when such purity means to be asexual, and shielded from all knowledge of sex. To be pure, therefore, according to Victorian standards, means to abdicate the beast completely, an impossible condition for human beings now part of the animal kingdom. Purity, in Norris' scheme, does not mean a complete ignorance of sexuality, but the amoralization of our attitudes towards it. The discovery of the "knowledge of good and evil" is not the discovery of the evil beast within, but of a cultural construct, for the beast within, when properly understood, is not evil, but amoral — it is but a dumb brute society has cast as "evil," and put in a cage accordingly.

This hidden amoralism subverts whatever pretensions the novel has then to being a moral fable once we acknowledge how much of a cultural construct the moral valuation of Vandover's "beast" really is. As a part of the human condition, sexuality, and its emergence, are inevitable. However, because inevitable, any functioning notion of free will, upon which Victorian moral categories are predicated, finds itself precluded. Despite the pejorative connotations of Norris' rhetorical use of "beast," the inevitable emergence (and not practice) of Vandover's sexuality takes it out of the sphere of ethics, for how can we condemn that which is natural and waited but for a "trigger" to be brought to the surface.

Of course, questions may arise about the nature of those triggers. But from the two climactic experiences that introduce Vandover to the world of sexuality — discovery

of an article on obstetrics and his encounter with the "blunt Anglo-Saxon name" (8) of "whore" — Norris makes it clear it would have been near impossible for Vandover *not to have* stumbled across a sexual trigger. Norris' language testifies as much when he takes note of how, without apparent cause, "Little by little the crude virility of the young man began to develop" in Vandover. Vandover's "bestial" nature, emerging with the onset of that "distressing, uncanny period" of puberty, is characteristically symbolized by Vandover's sudden voraciousness: "His appetite was enormous. He ate heavy meat three times a day, but took little or no exercise." Darkly foreshadowing Vandover's later pliable nature and sexual appetites, his postpubescent hunger and apathy beg whether any other adolescent would have experienced this biological change any differently. And if so, to what then must we attribute Vandover's appetite and apathy? Family environment? Norris offers no background, suggesting, whether we like it or not, Vandover's condition is that of any child's. The discovery of sexuality through the involuntary onset of puberty is a biological inevitability. But if puberty, a purely biological function, is what stirs the "beast," one must wonder if Norris plays fair with Vandover when he lets the negative connotations of his pre-Darwinian gothic use of "beast" overtake the obviously amoral implications of this involuntary reality.

Indeed, one might ask how fair is it to treat the beast pejoratively when the role played by environment as opposed to biological instinct in Vandover's decline is even further minimized by his ability, vis-a-vis a sixth sense, to ferret out sexual knowledge: "Till very late he kept his innocence ....But by and by he became very curious, stirred with a blind unreasoned instinct." With such an instinct already in place, it would have been unusual for it not to have been stirred by encounters with cultural representations of sexuality. Attesting, in fact, to the overwhelming power of biological instinct over environmental factors, Vandover's first "knowledge" of sex comes, symbolically and ironically enough, from the very instruments of instruction intended to curtail sexual vice: "In the Bible which he read Sunday afternoons, because his father gave him a quarter for

doing so, he came across a great many things that filled him with vague and strange ideas," ideas helped along by the minister from whom he learns of "'women in the perils of child-birth'" (8). That Vandover is even paid to read the text that, instead of saving him, entices him forward on his road to ruin, ironically foreshadows his discovery of the "blunt Anglo-Saxon" word (since Vandover is literally paid to indulge his interest in sex). With dark humor, Norris comically suggests not only that what makes sex a vice is the Victorian treatment of it, but how its vehicle of warning — organized religion — is what often introduces the beast in us to it.

Vandover's lustfulness, an inevitability, thus finds itself both driven and hedged in by the unconscious ironies and crass hypocrisies of the Victorian society within which he moves. The Victorian attempt to stifle sexuality, rather than reducing its presence, actively encourages its necessary outlet in unregulated forms. With sexuality inscribed into the animal character of humanity, its expression, Norris is at pains to point out, is not only commonplace but necessary. After all, how much more sinful is Vandover than his peers? From his college days, we learn he did as others did, more often following rather than initiating the bouts of drinking or gambling. As for his sexual proclivities, they seem mundane in light of the "twenty fellows" Vandover meets at Henrietta Vance's party, who, with the exception of Dolly Haight and one other fellow, Vandover knows to have "been inside of a disreputable house." Like so many other men of a "certain class," Vandover too would "on rare occasions ... permit himself to gratify [his "beast's"] demands, feeding its abominable hunger from that part of him which he knew to be the purest, the cleanest, and the best" (22). Hiring prostitutes to satiate the beast is not unique to Vandover, with the result that what is so outrageous is not that whoring occurs, but that its commonness bespeaks the too tight leash Victorian mores has placed on the necessary expression of natural sexual instinct.

Nor is this expression of sexual instinct restricted to men since even the most seemingly asexual characters and social classes also manage to express themselves sexu-

ally, albeit in heavily ritualized forms. Unlike the men, who are readily lumped together, the women of the novel fall into a tripartite division of female sexuality. Yet as shocking as Flossie's prostitution and Ida's fatal transgression of social mores appear, they are no less so than the rather overheated sexuality exuded at certain moments by even the most high-classed, reputation-conscious asexual women. The dancing couples at Turner's otherwise absurdly conservative home illustrate quite explicitly how "universal" sexual instinct truly is.

> Some of the couples waltzed fast, whirling about the rooms, bearing around corners with a swirl and swing of silk skirts, the girls' faces flushed and perspiring, their eyes half-closed, their bare, white throats warm, moist, and alternatively swelling and contracting with their quick breathing. On certain of these girls the dancing produced a peculiar effect. The continued motion, the whirl of the lights, the heat of the room, the heavy perfume of the flowers, the cadence of the music, even the physical fatigue, reacted in some strange way upon their oversensitive feminine nerves, the monotony of repeated sensation producing some sort of mildly hypnotic effect, a morbid hysterical pleasure the more exquisite because mixed with pain. These were the girls whom one heard declaring that they could dance all night, the girls who could dance until they dropped.

Like Ida and Flossie, even these young ladies must express libido in some form or another, and this they achieve through the prescribed transgression of dancing. But Norris' sensual description of the almost orgasmic experience these high society women undergo only presses the case for the inevitability of sexuality in the human condition. Like Vandover, they too are filled with the beast; and like Vandover, they too must be protected from themselves.

The Quest for Sensation: Art and Gambling

With sexuality an inevitability, a strange permutation is worked on the image of Vandover's pliability, as the apparent passivity of this degenerative habit assumes aspects more indicative of the presence than absence of will. Concealed behind this misleading

passivity lies an active will that manifests itself through more than just an "insatiable" sexual hunger, insofar as fulfillment of this hunger is itself only part of a greater quest for sensation and stimulation. This urge, at first engaged to stave off repeated bouts of boredom, is complemented by his pursuit of pleasure in art and later of stimulation from gambling, a quest that comes full circle as it comes to compensate for the degenerative, numbing effects of Vandover's increasingly debilitating syphilitic attacks.

Art, in particular, has an ambiguous effect on Vandover. On the one hand, it is his salvation and source of strength in his struggle to raise himself above the level of the beast. At the same time, however, it is also means by which he is further enchained to that beast, and subjected to temptations no different from his sexual hungers or descents into quiescence. Certainly it compensates for the lack of a "feminine influence," since Vandover "might have been totally corrupted in his earliest teens had it not been for ....his artistic side" (9). Indeed, after his year-long debauch, it is the salvationary effect of this artistic side that is rekindled when he "discovers" the opera, at which he is transformed into "a little child again, not ashamed to be innocent, ignorant of vice, still believing in his illusions, still near to the great white gates of life" (158). Attending the opera even leads him to turn "instinctively as he always did when greatly moved" to his painting (163). But at this point, it is but to learn, with devastating effect, that he no longer possesses sufficient motor control to paint well.

Art clearly holds a redemptive value for Vandover, a value Norris, as a would be painter, no doubt understood well. But Art remains a double-edged weapon, as capable of dragging one into the quagmire of sensation as of lifting one out of it. Vandover's own painting habits reflect this ambiguous quality of artistic production. He, for example, draws "nude women better than any one in the school." Indeed, "his feeling for the flesh, and for the movement and character of a pose" is especially "admirable." But there is a drawback as "[p]ortrait work and the power to catch subtle intellectual distinctions in a face" prove "sometimes beyond him"(48). Driven more by sensual

gratification than intellectual achievement, Vandover expresses in his artistic abilities the strengths and limitations of his character. While Art may not seduce Vandover into a type of gross sexuality, it does not necessarily free him from it either. Nor does music for that matter, despite his epiphany at the opera. Like McTeague who plays his six airs with such mechanical repetitiveness, Vandover, who after "lunch loitered about the house while his meal digested feeling very comfortable and contented," plays both on his banjo and piano "three pieces he had picked up," three pieces "he always played ... together and in the same sequence" (23). The obvious roboticism of his pliable, habit-driven nature, shatters any illusion there might possibly have been of Vandover appreciating music beyond a level of sheer animal pleasure. Even after his father dies, at which point he decides to take "up his banjo-playing seriously, if it could be said that he did anything seriously" (135), we learn the goal even then of his playing is but to produce numbers "that never failed to produce a tremendous effect" (136). Once again art has become a not-so-subtle exercise in pleasure and stimulation rather than an education in resistance.

So Art never really does save Vandover. At best, it stands in for the more degenerative habits of eating gluttonously, drinking excessively, or "feeding the beast" sexually. It does not undo the beast, it merely appeases it, replacing one form of pleasure with another. Art, in this respect, is part of the greater quest for sensation that already characterizes Vandover's degeneration, just another expression of the hidden "will" that motivates his pleasure-seeking behavior.

Still the presence of a will or willfulness in *Vandover* seems at odds with the thematic tenor of the novel. Ostensibly Vandover's problem is that he lacks willpower, the expression of which should be manifested in a strengthening of resolve to resist physical temptations, social pressures, and his too easy readjustment to changing material circumstances. But the novel does not deliver this point of view with any steadfast coherence. On the contrary, lack of will is hardly the appropriate phrase to use in characterizing Vandover's pleasure-seeking. Rather there is an expression of will in his active pursuit

of pleasures, an expression that upsets the passive-degenerative thesis of the novel. That is to say, there are several instances where instead of resisting easy adjustment to his new environment, Vandover goes *out of his way* to seek pleasure in violation of his quiescent nature. For example, despite his distinct lack of pleasure in overindulging alcohol, Vandover nonetheless forces himself to drink when he goes out on one of his suggested many "drunks": "Certainly, neither he nor any of the others drank because they liked the beer; after the fifth or sixth glass it was all they cold do to force down another" (15). This episode is repeated again in his next drunk with Ellis and the Dummy: "The beer began to go against Vandover's stomach by this time, but he forced it down his throat, shutting his eyes" (42). While Vandover is pressured by peers in both instances to drink until drunk, one nonetheless must admit that their forcing themselves to drink does constitute an act of will, a *quest* for sensation that actively subverts the earlier image of Vandover's pliability. Vandover's flaw then is not so much his inability to resist his environment — since the easier choice during his drinking binges would have been not to drink at all — as it is his inability to resist his instinctual drive for sensation. His "pliable nature" is not all it seems as we find him moved to act not in accordance with his vaunted pliability, but in opposition to it, his passivity masking a species of will that goes after various forms of sensation.

But a paradox immediately ensues, since the supposed purpose of drinking until drunk (and not for taste) is to experience the sensation of drunkenness and its accompanying oblivion. The quest for sensation is in this sense appropriately symbolized by drink, since its purpose is, in providing stimulation, to gratify instinctual desires and surfeit them. The vicious circle of the drive for sensation and quiescence that follows is symbolically recaptured in Vandover's syphilitic degeneration, as his capacity for feeling any stimulation is slowly diminished and his quest for sensation is transformed from a desire to feel something into a need to feel anything. This is how gambling comes to supplant his earlier pursuits of pleasure in art, sex, and drink. In a

reversal of the sought after effects of these, their once benignly numbing pleasures are now replaced by a need for stimulation in and of itself. This is what gambling hopefully provides. As Norris points out, "it was not with any hope of winning that [Vandover] gambled — the desire of money was never strong in him — it was only the love of the excitement of the moment" (214). Gambling is for Vandover a "new pleasure for which he had longed, the fresh violent excitement that alone could rouse his jaded nerves," "crisped" by the increasing number and intensity of his attacks. His need for stimulation to counter the numbing effects of his condition comes to stand in ironic contrast to the loss of self brought on by his consumption of drink, sensualization of art, and thoughtless indulgence of sex. With a rather disturbing poetic justice, Vandover's frenzied quest for sensation before his syphilitic attacks becomes grotesquely exaggerated by the very condition contracted through that quest. Syphilis, leaving the realm of disease, thus assumes the status of symbol, as its numbing effect, through the "crisping" of nerves, parodies Vandover's former search for sensation and quiescence, rendering the latter inevitable by making the former impossible.

In classic degenerative discourse, lack of stimulation was typically characterized as the source of human degeneration. The absence of challenge led in turn to quiescence and thenceforward to degeneration, a pattern Vandover adopts in his perpetual readjustment to new circumstances with minimal effort. But Vandover's quiescence, early in the novel, does have its limits. These become obvious in his struggles since Vandover's will-to-sensation is nothing less than an unceasing quest for "amusements," physical stimuli, and intense mental distractions to to stave off boredom. But a paradox arises in Vandover's quest to lose himself in these amusements and fend off the working mind, for how can the any degenerative hypothesis be valid when it is obvious that Vandover, despite his mythic pliability, can't stand the boredom that comes with quiescence? Vandover's quest for stimulation is not only one for quiescence, but, more

significantly, for forgetfulness, a supine mindlessness symbolized by the absence of thought.

> It surprised him that he could find occasion to be bored so soon after what had happened; but he no longer wished to occupy his mind by brooding over anything so disagreeable and wanted some sort of amusement to divert and entertain him. Vandover had so accustomed himself to that kind of self-indulgence that he could not go long without it. It became a simple necessity for him to be amused, and just now he thought himself justified in seeking it in order to forget about Ida's death. (86)

Again, we find Vandover not without a will that, in some sense, resists its environment. Like his forcing himself to drink, despite tears and a distaste for beer, like his gambling if only to feel something, anything, his active "forgetting" of events itself represents a similar exertion of will. But if such forgetting is an expression of his pliability, then his pliability must be of a special sort, one recognizable as an expression of will rather than lack of it — a will moved by instinct and habit rather than consciousness, a Lamarckian adaptation intended to maintain Vandover's survival. If his pliability does express some type of will, it is a will of the animal at its most animalistic. Vandover's impetus to forget, to seek a state of complete thoughtlessness through perpetual stimulation, is no different from the transcendental oblivion of animal experience, an experience comprised solely of sensation, timelessness, and immediate gratification: the antithesis of a human order built upon the deferral of immediate gratification through work.

Work — that other edge of Art — is what represents Vandover's salvation. Art as a source of pleasure in either creation or appreciation is not what saves him — it is the abdication of pleasure in the "work" that goes into art that constitutes the artist's humanity. And it is this refusal to work that is Vandover's grand failing. Why doesn't Vandover become a true artist? Not because he hates art, nor because he is unable to appreciate and enjoy it. It is because he can't stand the "work" that must go into it, the painstaking deferral of gratification that inheres in the creation of "great" art. In his first

serious attempt at painting, for example, Vandover noticeably "loved to paint and to draw," but "it bored him to work very hard, and when he did not enjoy his work he stopped it at once." This conflict between boredom and amusement is neatly summarized by his unfortunate reasoning: "If his painting amused him, very good; if not, he found something else that would" (47). Insofar as painting is less work than just another form of pleasure to Vandover, it fails him as a source of salvation.

The division between animal and human existence for Vandover, therefore, turns not on a conflict between passivity and activity, but on that between pleasure and work. Traditionally characterized as the surest expression of the active human will, work is conceived as resistance because it transforms its environment. The issue isn't will or lack of it, but Vandover's refusal to work, to re-form his environment rather than just resist its prohibitions on gratification. The only work, one might say, Vandover does perform is that of pleasing himself. But that is the "work" animals, not human beings, perform.

This substitution of pleasure for work typifies Vandover's confusion over proper methods for reforming himself. One opportunity to "reform," for example, occurs after his father's death, at whose passing he finds his "desire of vice ... numbed" and "his evil habits all deranged." Finally, there is a "chance to begin anew, to commence all over again." But Vandover mistakenly assumes that the means of reforming his vice is just a more intensive application of his infinitely supple pliability: "he would merely have to remain inactive, impassive, and his character would of itself re-form upon the new conditions" (132). Vandover reasons, logically enough its own limited way, that if he does nothing, nothing wrong can happen. But this is exactly what is false about his reasoning, since it is doing nothing that gives free rein to the instinctual self.

> But Vandover made another fatal mistake: the brute in him had only been stunned; the snake was only soothed. His better self was as sluggish as the brute, and his desire of art as numb as his desire of vice. It was not a continued state of inaction and idleness that could help him, but rather an active and energetic arousing and spurring up of those better qualities in him still dormant and inert. The fabric of his nature was shaken and broken up, it was true,

> but if he left it to itself there was danger that it would re-from upon the old lines. (132-33)

Here we see what is really at stake in Vandover's mistaken choice, in his submitting to his pliable nature. For his pliability is not in itself the mark of the beast, but the opening through which the animal will-to-sensation enters and subverts the work-oriented, deferral of desire that makes him human. It is not that Vandover lacks will, it's that he lack the "right" will exerted in the right direction — not the will from within to resist his environment without, but rather a will developed by his environment to resist the instinctual, animal drives from within. If Vandover's animal self gains its foothold from his idleness, it is because his pliability has opened the gateway to that most dreaded experience of all — boredom. That is to say, his idleness, the result of his habitual pliability, is what powers the quest for sensation because it both threatens Vandover with actually having to think about his actions while simultaneously forgoing the sublimation of animal energy in hard work.

Work and Forgetting: The Man Who Became a Beast

Vandover's animal quest for forgetfulness, foreshadowed by his continual "shrugging off" of thoughts that bother him and anticipations of forgetfulness in the face of current crises, culminate in the final destruction of mind by his syphilitic degeneration. Already without the motor control to paint, as his disease progresses, he falls subject to a "strange blurring" that makes it "impossible to keep his mind fixed upon any subject" and a "queer numbness in his head" when reading (202). The intensity of this literal loss of mind is graphically illustrated by the great shock he receives, "sudden enough to penetrate even [his] clouded and distorted wits," that he has gambled all his money away. With acid irony, Norris parodies the quest for sensation Vandover had sought through gambling to relieve his "jaded" and "crisped" nerves by having those very nerves and his befogged mind register his own bankruptcy. After that experience, Vandover's

degeneration into a body without intellect, a mind that forgets its own existence, is rendered complete.

Appropriately enough, this final degeneration is mapped out for us just before he is overwhelmed by the last lycanthropic fit that fully bestializes him. In this scene, Vandover's identity comes completely apart, as there sits, in opposition to the "real Vandover," "the wolf, the beast" that struggles "to gain the ascendency" and "absorb" this "real Vandover into its own hideous identity." Meanwhile above both floats a "third self, formless, very vague, elusive," that, standing aside, watches "the strife of the other two." But as the next paroxysm overwhelms Vandover, demanding "all his attention with a tremendous effort of the will" to combat its effects, once again a "queer numbness" descends on his "brain like a fog," rendering his "third self ... vaguer than ever" as it "dwindle[s]" and "disappear[s]." once his third self that keeps him human because it possesses the faculty for discriminating the details of reality disappears, Vandover's view of the "reality of things" begins to grow "dim and blurred." Finally, he ceases even "to know exactly what he [is] doing" as his "intellectual parts" drop "away one by one, leaving only the instincts, the blind, unreasoning impulses of the animal" (228).

With consciousness gone, Vandover is left fully bestialized. His propensity to forget has been given literal form by the syphilitic fog that now "enwraps" his brain. Apropos the symbolic significance his syphilitic condition achieved of literalizing, through the "crisping" of nerves, his once conscious quests for sensation and quiescence, his condition acquires even greater symbolic resonance as it literalizes physiologically his erstwhile active efforts to forget. His identity having been absorbed by the beast of biological being, Vandover literally *loses* his memory, that aspect of consciousness that defines human identity by segmenting time and stands sentry over that transcendental state of the eternal now, that sensational ever-present of animal existence.

Indeed, it is this loss of his sense of time that provides the frame of reference for the novel, his loss of memory and mind sandwiching its limited third person narrative. At the novel's opening, Norris treats as "a matter of wonder to Vandover that he was able to recall so little of his past life" (1), with two exceptions. One is the death of Vandover's mother, a shock akin to that which penetrates his distorted wits after he bankrupts himself. Other than this episode, Vandover's prepubescent life, tellingly enough, is a haze. The other, that of "a rank thirteen-year-old boy, sitting on a bit of carpet in the back yard of the San Francisco house playing with his guinea-pigs," a scene, characterized by Hochman as "a muted image of mothering" apparently denied him (Hochman 45). By the novel's close, Norris' pathetic portrayal of the anti-temporal, stream-of-consciousness talk that constitutes Vandover's babbling to Geary (Norris *Novels* 243-46) fittingly closes the narrative frame of the novel, leaving us to ponder the cyclical beginning implied in the final scene in which Vandover stares in the eyes of "the little boy standing before him eating the last mouthful of his bread and butter" (260).

Vandover's final degeneration into animal consciousness, the quest for sensation that has destroyed his time-consciousness, is treated by Norris in horrifying terms. *Vandover* closely follows Aristotelian tragedy by evoking a certain pity for Vandover. Indeed, we can't help but feel sorry for him, our sympathies and frustrations drawn to focus on those aspects of his character that helped predetermine his fall, the absence of those environmental factors that might have prevented it, and his bad luck (sleeping with a diseased prostitute; losing the benign influence of his mother at an early age). But *Vandover* also engages our sense of horror at his helplessness — the foundational horror of the last taboo of determinism.

Naturalism has been, and still remains, a source of discomfort for American literary criticism.[14] But attacks on it only serve to obscure its function as a fertile source

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[14] See, for example, Seltzer 25-44.

not of truth, but of fear — perhaps a fear of truth, or, rather, a fear of a possible truth. The horror of Norris' vision resides in the credo humanity cannot contain the animal within; its manifestation is inevitable. The best we might do is re-channel its energies into the deferred gratification of "work," but that is only the best.[15] While Norris does have it in for the hypocritical complicity of American victorian attitudes in ignoring, concealing, and even condoning the sins its very repressiveness drives its young men and women to commit, he does not offer much in the way of an alternative. And though he suggests, albeit incoherently, that an environment must be generated that encourages active resistance to the beast within, and that this resistance should take the form of work in one form or another, he offers no real alternative to his characters for the world they live in, as they fall victim to the imperatives of biological drives. The horror of Vandover specifically is not that he acted any more immorally than the rest, but that, unlike the rest, he got caught — in this case, through the random contraction of syphilis.[16] But that sense of horror particular to Vandover does not detract from the general sense of horror that, while Vandover may have gotten caught, and suffered the consequences of his desires in the symbolic form of his syphilitic condition, he has not necessarily acted any worse than any of his contemporaries. To put it as bluntly as possible, the horror of Vandover's syphilitic condition is not merely Vandover's experience of it, nor even of its symbolic echoing of his quests for sensation, quiescence, timelessness, and forgetfulness, but its symbolic echoing of every character's basic animalness. Through Vandover's syphilis, we see recreated that experience of animal being every character at one point or another tends towards behind the veil of civilization. Vandover's

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[15] This is, however, the point of much cultural psychoanalysis. See Freud 26-30; Brown 55-67 and 137-44; and Marcuse 50-70.

[16] How random Vandover's contraction is, however, is an easily disputed point. More than likely to have continued frequenting houses of ill-repute, he was bound to contract something. (Dolly's infection, on the other hand, truly is random.) With Vandover behaving no differently than most of the young men he know, we're left to wonder how many of those eighteen other young men at Henrietta Vance's party also are syphilitic.

degeneration into a wolf is but the literalization of what the remaining characters actually are beneath their sheepskins.

But the final irony of Vandover's quest for stimulation and non-consciousness doubles back on him with tremendous ironic force when we find him ultimately transformed not into a wolf, but into a draught horse with work reinscribed into his life from the outside in instead of from the inside out. The difficult final chapter of the novel is a painful parody of his *failure* to work. At first Vandover refrains from painting because of his boredom with hard work; later his nervous degeneration snuffs out his ability to paint well; and, finally, by the end of the novel, he loses his job as a "second-class workman" because he is "so irregular" and can "never be depended upon" (232). But when he turns to Geary for employment, he works as he has never done before. The prospective tenant's demand that the cottage "be cleaned pretty thoroughly," which Geary seconds forcefully, leads to what is surely one of the most grueling scenes in the novel for the reader as the burnisher and his wife painstakingly direct Vandover in the thorough and careful execution of his work. Work, as the thing that might have humanized Vandover, has arrived too late. Now work, instead of being creative, as it might have been in his art, is the alienated labor of the pack animal Vandover has become.

His degeneration into animal consciousness, the end result of his inability to work and defer gratification, as well as his refusal to accept responsibility for his reckless behavior, strikes with unusual ironic force. For by escaping his human responsibilities by becoming animal, Vandover is enslaved to a human world that is no Rousseauian romantic state of nature. To live in the human world, one must bear the burden of time, endure the deferral of gratification, cope with the inevitable boredom of work, and bear responsibility for the moral consequences of one's actions. To do differently is to be enthralled to those like Geary who would use others as the tools of their gratification. But it is not too clear from the novel if it ever could have been otherwise for Vandover.

The Faulty Wiring of Instinct, or How to Program a Tragedy

Often *Vandover* and *McTeague* are paired not only because they were written roughly about the same period, but also because both treat Norris' dark vision of the ubiquity of biological and environmental determinants in human behavior. Though both feature similar themes — the predominant role of biological instinct in the tragic fates of characters — there are still vast differences between the two. *Vandover*, for example, is, as I treat it here, the "earlier" novel. In it, Norris outlines as a basic instinctual, sometimes self-contradictory, drive, that for stimulation and quiescence. This drive is expressed in Vandover's pursuits of painting, music, sex, drink, and gambling. In *McTeague,* however, Norris layers on a third instinctual drive ignored in *Vandover,* that of biologically engrained "racial habits." With this new element, Norris generates a tripartite structure of instincts. In *Vandover,* the conflict between Vandover's pliability and his quest for sensation is submerged by the symbolic link established between the two in his syphilitic condition. That is to say, stimulation and quiescence are alternating facets of the same instinctual drive. In *McTeague,* however, quiescent, sexual, and orthogenetic racial instincts are sifted out, with, as a result, their continually interfering with one another other, providing the foundation for the dramatic conflicts of the novel.

As cynical as *Vandover* is in its portrayal of the overwhelming, degenerative power of quiescent and sexual instincts, *McTeague* emphasizes even more disturbingly the degree to which human beings are, in fact, programmed by their instinctual drives. In *Vandover*, all of the characters express in form or another a desire for the same thing — stimulation and the quiescence that follows. An obvious conflict thus arises between the animal desire for stimulation and the Victorian restraints placed upon that desire. How characters line up in the moral hierarchy of the novel thus is largely determined by how well they accept these restraints. Vandover accepts them least, Turner most, Geary somewhere between the two. In *McTeague*, however, less the source of conflict are the

social restraints imposed by Victorian standards of appearance than the clashing instinctual behaviors that predetermine the conflicting desires and tragic interactions of characters. In the end, despite the greater rhetorical emphasis in *Vandover* on the presence of the "beast," with its graphic representation of Vandover's degeneration, *McTeague* is the more horrifying because it is the more biologically deterministic of the two novels.

In *McTeague,* Norris quite headily commits himself to exploring the predetermining effects of racial instinct. Norris himself had long held a profound belief in biologically inscribed instincts as a material basis for racial differences in behavior. In his 1902 essay, "The Frontier Gone At Last," Norris would, for example, recapitulate the "long march" theory in crudely biological terms: "The race impulse was irresistible. March we must, conquer we must, and checked in the Westward course of empire we turned Eastward and expended the resistless energy that by blood was ours in conquering the Old World behind us" (113).[17] Yet despite the militant tone and diction of this sentiment, Norris is frightened by this impulse. Like the fears that had informed Spencer's utopian conclusions to the belligerent foundations he discerned in humanity's amoral struggle, Norris too retreats from his own march by formulating a positive end to his dark determinism.[18] Allowing that races "must follow their destiny blindly," he wonders "is it not possible that we can find in this great destiny of ours something a little better than mere battle and conquest, something a little more generous than mere trading and underbidding?" The answer, of course, is yes. To have answered otherwise would have meant adopting, not so much the harsh realities of the Darwinian view, as its dark

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[17] See on the rhetoric of expansionism and the Saxon sense of "world mission," Horsman 272-97.

[18] Norris appears less frightened by this impulse in earlier essays composed both during and just after he was writing *McTeague* and *Vandover.* See Pizer's introduction in Norris, *Literary Criticism,* 100-01 and nn. 3, 5-9, and 12. Specific essays by Norris lauding Anglo-Saxon achievements and militancy include his "Ethics of the Freshman Rush," "A Defense of the Flag," and "Outward and Visible Signs. V. Thoroughbread." Pizer also notes influences in particular of Herbert B. Adams, the greatest American supporter of the Great March theory, and Norris' history instructor Bernard Moses, chairman of Berkeley's history department (100).

conclusions. This is why for Norris, there must "with constant change of environment" come "the larger view, the more tolerant spirit," an American spirit, to be precise, with its "unconscious lesson in patriotism." While the bellicosity of this "self-laudatory mood" would seem to demand a more pessimistic outlook, Norris backs off from the darker implications, by treating the warring necessitated by the march as a temporary phenomenon that shall surely lead to a "new patriotism, one that shall include all peoples" (Pizer, *Literary* 115).

While such a conclusion does seem to agree with the suggestion of earlier critics that Norris had late in his life bud as a socialist,[19] I suspect Norris' "new world" patriotism was more a backing away from the rather horrific conclusions of the Great March theory itself: that the state of humanity as one of perpetual struggle. The "faith" literally expressed by Norris, an outgrowth of the same faith expressed by Spencer's American supporter, John Fiske, founders under the faulty logic of a Christian evolutionism that tried to have it both ways: tried to have Darwin's natural selection and God's utopian beneficence. In the end, like neo-Lamarckism and orthogenesis, which had compromised themselves in order to accommodate the religious and teleological yearnings of scientists and non-scientists alike, the utopian theism of Spencer, Fiske, Le Conte, and others, could not cope with the horrible, amoral implications of their own accession to the reality of evolutionary struggle. It was a faith that thinly papered over the potential horrors implicit in the ateleological, materialist determinism "hard" Darwinists stood their arguments upon.

Moreover, the Norris of 1903, with his Great March and its utopian conclusions, was not the Norris of the 1890s. While Norris may have had faith in a good end even at this early a stage in his writing, it is hard to get around the sense of inevitability that broods over *McTeague*. The fear that underlies Norris' Saxonist acceptance of racially-

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[19] For a list of other critics who saw in Norris a budding socialist, see Dillingham 94 n. 13.

driven instinctual behavior, while it only peeks out from *Vandover,* comes to full fruition in *McTeague.* The racial harmony at the end of the Great March is jettisoned in *McTeague* as overlapping and contrary instincts that motivate his characters run into one another, transforming the novel into a biological dance of death. Indeed, the faith held out by evolutionary theism is turned on its head as *McTeague* illustrates in no uncertain terms how biologically inscribed habits run explicitly counter to the desires these very habits had been initially encoded to satisfy. So entrenched do these habits in fact prove, they become, like Vandover's pliability, literally non-adaptive, subverting their self-preservative function by outlasting their self-preservative origins, and thereby jeopardizing the organism by virtue of their continued existence. These "habits" of thought and behavior, the outward signs of biologically-inscribed instincts given birth by the organic drive for self-preservation, assume a "life" of their own, subverting not only the individual will, but even the ostensible goal of evolution itself: preservation of the species.

The Beast Who Became a Man

In *McTeague,* Norris begins where *Vandover* leaves off. In contrast to Vandover, who degenerates from human to beast, McTeague is introduced in the first few pages already at his most bestial.

> ... [McTeague] took off his coat and shoes, unbuttoned his vest, and, having crammed his little stove full of coke, lay back in his operating chair at the bay window, reading the paper, drinking his beer, and smoking his huge porcelain pipe while his food digested; crop-full, stupid, and warm. By and by, gorged with steam beer, and overcome by the heat of the room, the cheap tobacco, and the effects of his heavy meal, he dropped off to sleep. (263)

Like Vandover, McTeague too is, like an animal, in pursuit of appetite-driven, creature comforts. Unlike Vandover, however, who strives for this condition throughout,

McTeague achieves it without trouble. There are no nagging desires to produce Art, no obligations to go to college or maintain appearances to offset "these Sunday afternoons" he "invariably" spends "in the same fashion." "[C]rop-full, stupid, and warm," McTeague is at his happiest, his "only pleasures" being "to eat, to smoke, to sleep, and to play upon his concertina" (263). The supine laziness Vandover struggles to achieve, McTeague attains with neither difficulty nor obstruction.

But McTeague's paradisaical lifestyle is of short duration. The ease with which he revels in the timeless stupor of his Sunday afternoon bouts of physical satiety is cut short by the orthogenetic character of a separate set of intersecting *contrary* instincts about to emerge. Above and beyond the search for physical satiation hovers a second level of instinct, one quickly which intrudes upon the first: the gender-based instinct of sexual desire. As Norris frames it, in his darkly comic manner, upon meeting Trina, McTeague's "narrow point of view" is "at once enlarged and confused": "all at once he saw that there was something else in life besides concertinas and steam beer." Now everything is "to be made over again" as his "whole rude idea of life" is "changed." For with this "enlarged view" suddenly stirs the "male virile desire in him," which, "tardily awakened, aroused itself, strong and brutal ... resistless, untrained, a thing not to be held in leash an instant" (281). Sexual instinct has come to the fore, running in a direction contrary to McTeague's previous pursuit of "crop-ful" warmth and stupidity.

But there is something unorthodox in this representation of sexual instinct, for, in contrast to Vandover, McTeague's discovery of it is remarkably late. How strange it is that during all those years at the mining camp, and later, while working in his dental parlor, not once does McTeague encounter a woman who taps this vast reservoir of sexual energy that leads to the emergence of his "other" half.[20] Set over against Vandover, who can "smell" out the "mystery" of sex from a minister's words "with the

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[20] Interestingly enough, this prolonged latency is contrasted with McTeague's longstanding awareness of how poorly alcohol sits with him — a telling lapse.

instinct of a young brute" (8), McTeague leads a strangely unrealistic life of unrelieved quiescence. Between the habitual thoughtlessness of his dental labors, and the soporific oblivion of his Sunday pleasures, not once does he encounter the instinctual sexuality Norris so obviously implants beside his Vandover-like pliability.

The incredibility of this sudden sexual awakening in McTeague so late after puberty underscores how much Norris must manipulate his representation of character in order to highlight the essential incompatibility of instincts that mark human behavior. At first, the nature of this incompatibility is obscured by an initial dependence on an ethical dualism in the description of McTeague's awakening: "Suddenly the animal in the man stirred and woke; the evil instincts that in him were so close to the surface leaped to life, shouting and clamoring." His evil instincts stirred, McTeague is thrown into a "crisis that had arisen all in an instant; a crisis for which he was totally unprepared." In response, "[b]lindly and without knowing why," he fights "against it, moved by an unreasoned instinct of resistance." It is at this point that "a certain second self, another better McTeague rose with the brute; both ... strong, with the huge crude strength of the man himself" (283). Presumably these two instincts, fighting "the old battle, old as the world, wide as the world," epitomize in some vague sense the conflict between animal sexuality and the human spiritual resistance to it. But in the long run this bifurcation of instinctual drives fails to accommodate the structure of instincts that carries through the rest of the novel.

While this dichotomy of instincts does reflect, as Pizer has pointed out, Norris' dependence on Le Conte's theories of conflicting animal and spiritual instincts, the rest of the novel doesn't really support this scheme. The only manifestation of this opposing "spiritual" instinct crops up on the level of sexuality, leaving the impression that McTeague's resistance may be more of a sop to Norris' Victorian readers in order to avoid having to dramatize a rape scene than any close reading of Le Conte. That McTeague can "instinctually" resist attacking the anesthetized Trina, and yet lacks a

complementary "instinctual" forms of resistance to either his animal-like apathy earlier or his later alcoholic atavism,[21] forces into the open the selectivity with which the Le Contian division of instincts is applied.

But even on the level of sexual instinct, Norris' Le Contian division is not altogether consistent. For example, when Trina, "once caught" in McTeague's "huge arms," has a "second self ... wakened within her ... that shouted and clamored for recognition," we are given to understand that, though fear-inspiring, this "second self" is anything but evil: "Was it something to be ashamed of? Was it not, after all, natural, clean, spontaneous? Trina knew that she was a pure girl; knew that this sudden commotion within her carried with it no suggestion of vice" (325-26). So how does it come about that McTeague's second self is motivated by "evil instincts" while Trina's is not? Is this a difference in perspective of the two characters? Or a difference in our perspective? Or has Norris quickly jettisoned the moral division of Le Contian instincts for another scheme altogether? Any or all of these choices are appropriate for this particular scene. But as the novel progresses, it becomes quite clear that the Le Contian dichotomy must give way to the tripartite division of instincts Norris decidedly pursues.

As confirmation, the Le Contian split is even further weakened by the inability of characters to recognize that distinction in others. For instance, though McTeague's instinctual resistance proves inadequate to stop him from kissing Trina "grossly, full on the mouth" (284), we nonetheless do find him capable of resistance. But such resistance does not do much to curtail Trina's repeated experience of an "intuitive feminine fear of the male" (285). In fact, resistance on the part of McTeague seems rather out of place. That Norris must treat it as "instinctual" appears even less fit when compared with the far more reasonable, anything-but-instinctual pressures exerted by Victorian society on

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[21] This applies equally well to all of the other characters who are powerless to resist their instinctual tics, even when they threaten another human life. Consider Trina's refusal to give McTeague enough money to feed himself, an act that leads to his murder of her. Note, no instinctual generosity ever arises to rebut Trina's instinctual hoarding.

Vandover to resist his instinctual urges. By intinctualizing McTeague's resistance, instead of ascribing it to social pressure, Norris can't help but encourage us to believe that McTeague's "good" self is only a fictional device to defuse a potential act of rape, and that, as such, the Le Contian dichotomy is far less significant as a determinant of human behavior than the tripartite scheme of quiescent, sexual, and racial instincts developed in the novel.

The issue, therefore, is not so much one of resistance to instinct, since none of the characters, with the exception of McTeague's bathetic struggle in the dental parlor, actively opposes whatever instincts or habits do emerge. Instead the novel concerns itself with how the inevitable "tapping" of instincts determines behavior in the form of habit. While at the novel's opening, McTeague's quiescence does stand as a given, his and Trina's sexual instincts do not. They have yet to manifest themselves, they have yet to be "tapped." Prior to the tapping of this instinctual reservoir, McTeague, we learn, holds the rather "perverse dislike of an overgrown boy" for "all things feminine" (279). Trina too appears a stranger to her sexual instincts, one in whom "the woman ... was not yet awakened," "without sex," and "almost like a boy" (279).[22] "Boy-ness" constitutes the original prepubescent state before the creation of gender difference.[23] But once their sexual instincts are tapped, the dynamics of gendered instinct-driven behavior overtakes the two. McTeague not only "must have Trina in spite of everything," but, in direct opposition to the warning in *Vandover* that a man's obligation is to protect a women even from herself, McTeague must "have her even in spite of herself" (290).

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[22] Unlike McTeague, because of late nineteenth century ideals about women, Trina's sexlessness comes across as more plausible than McTeague's absurdly late sexual awakening — a testament to how much we still live with such ideas.

[23] Consider in this respect his casting of women as "Iron Madonnas" in *Blix, A Man's Woman,* and *Moran and the Lady Letty.* The women in these novels, never socialized as Victorian women, are, as a result, manly (or boyish) — the foundational aggressive Darwinian creature.

The dynamics of sexual passion consequently define "man" as he who desires that which he can't have and woman as she who, in being desired, fully gives herself to the desirer. The result is anything but healthy, according to Norris, since the "very act of submission that bound the woman to him forever had made her seem less desirable in his eyes." Thus is their "undoing ... begun," and yet, as Norris continues, "neither of them was to blame":

> From the first they had not sought each other. Chance had brought them face to face, and mysterious instincts as ungovernable as the winds of heaven were at work knitting their lives together. Neither of them had asked that this thing should be — that their destinies there very souls, should be the sport of chance. If they could have known, they would have shunned the fearful risk. But they were allowed no voice in the matter. Why should it all be? (326)

The fates of McTeague and Trina are predetermined, according to Norris, by instinct and chance. Yet questions arise about Norris' representation of this fated encounter, especially as the relationship of chance to instinct draws answers that contradict those Norris provides. The claim that if "they could have known, they would have shunned the fearful risk" begs the obvious question, "could they have known?" — to which Norris suggests no, given the "mysterious" quality of instinct. More significantly, however, even this implied question of would they have "shunned the risk" had they known must fall before the more deterministic possibility of *could* they have shunned the risk even if they had known?

The answer here too appears to be no. Norris' notion of "chance" is derived in large part from the importance Darwinian thought had placed on the selection of random variations by any number of possible environmental conditions. But what Norris treats as chance shrinks to a surety within his scheme of instinctual overdrive. If Trina had avoided McTeague, who's to say that her essential "woman" and her instinctual drive to "merge her individuality" (392) with her desirer would not have been tapped by another?

(Marcus?) Or that McTeague's encounter with another attractive woman would not have also provoked a desire to achieve complete mastery? For neither of these to occur would entail delineating lives for these two characters that would be improbable, if not impossible (even according to Norris' own ideas of realism). Trina could never safely encounter a man who might be attracted to her; McTeague, a woman who attracted him. Indeed, that neither has until this period experienced any form of sexuality begs the vague unreality of the fictional lives they have already lived.

Norris' treatment of chance is simply not true to the role chance plays in Darwinism, nor that played in human affairs. The chances he describes are a bit different. For chance, according to Norris, is not that bit of bad luck that operates wholly from outside the sphere of human behavior to direct our actions, but rather that bit of bad luck that "taps" latent tendencies already existent within us. What renders Norris' treatment of chance in bad faith, therefore, is the emphasis he lays on chances that are in fact inevitabilities in human affairs. If the latent "Man" and "Woman" of McTeague and Trina are what chance activates, how favorable are the odds in averting tragedy when what activates these postpubescent sexual drives is the mere meeting of a man and a woman of approximately the same age? Not favorable at all I think. With chance made certainty, *McTeague* traps both Norris and reader in a deterministic world of tappable instincts.[24]

The cycle of domination and passivity, followed by indifference and self-sacrifice, in McTeague and Trina's relationship, really does appear as inevitable rather than the unfortunate result of a chance meeting. Consequently their true tragedy lies not in their meeting, which draws their sexual instincts to the surface, but in the bonds these instincts forge between two people who feature a third level of instinctual drives not at all

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[24] Contrast this with Vandover's return by boat to San Francisco. The shipwreck that occurs is a far better example of chance in operation than Trina's encounter with McTeague — that is, of a woman meeting a man and each finding the other mutually attractive.

compatible with their attraction to each other, and thus short circuiting this otherwise ostensibly successful relationship.

The Short Circuit of Racial Instinct

Like the arousal of sexual instinct, racial instincts too are "tapped" by what seem chance incidents. Trina's lottery triumph, for instance, supposedly serves as just one more example of how chance presumably determines the directions relations will take. But there is much to suggest that her cash winning merely intensifies an inevitable trait that would have been tapped at some point or another in the future. Trina's stereotyped racial instinct is that of "hoarding": "Economy was her strong point. A good deal of peasant blood still ran undiluted in her veins, and she had all the instinct of a hardy and penurious mountain race — the instinct which saves without any thought, without idea of consequence — saving for the sake of saving, hoarding without knowing why" (358).

This hoarding instinct is initially foreshadowed by the "blindly persistent" (280) resistance, couched as womanly vanity, Trina expresses at having a dead tooth removed. Trina, however, doesn't show her true obsessive stinginess until after McTeague loses his license. It is with this sudden loss of income that her instinct assumes pathological dimensions. But even before then, her instinct for hoarding becomes evident in her reluctance to pay for her wedding, it proving "a dreadful wrench" to her once she finds she must break "in upon her precious five thousand" (372). Already adumbrated by such scenes, Trina's penury resurfaces again as we find her hiding money from McTeague, despite claims of how she "'didn't use to be so stingy," and such rationalizations as "[s]ince I won in the lottery I've become a regular little miser'" (411). Indeed, we are led to wonder that since some encounter with money must occur in her lifetime, is there any way she could not have ended up a miser? Marcus, her cousin, for example, never falls directly into any money , and yet Trina's acquisition of money (as well as his humiliation

at the picnic) proves more than enough to avenge himself on McTeague's by having his dental license revoked. It's certainly appears enough to die for at the novel's conclusion. But then again, as Trina's blood relation, Marcus only expresses the same hoarding instinct traceable in the Sieppe ancestry.

The true tragedy of Trina's Germanic instinct to hoard, however, is the challenge it poses to her female instinct to submit sexually. Her love for the abusive McTeague, a love driven by the submissive "Woman" within stands in direct opposition to the resistant parsimony of Germanic hoarder. This conflict is in turn paralleled by McTeague's own conflicting "racial" instinct: his alcoholic atavism. Aside from the influence of Lombrosian theories of alcoholic atavism, Norris makes ready use of the Celtic heritage implied in the Irishness of McTeague's name to prepare his readers for his protagonist's violent alcoholism. Unlike the hardy Heise, McTeague "can't drink whiskey" because it "disagrees" with him (468). Yet in contrast to money or sex, McTeague's encounter with whiskey is one of the few truly fortuitous events. In part this is because McTeague *knows* what alcohol does to him (though only in vague terms), as he knows what it did to his father, who every "other Sunday ... became an irresponsible animal, a beast, a brute, crazy with alcohol" (1). Yet even in spite of these circumstantial qualifications, it is not altogether chance that drives him to drink, but rather chance of a special sort. In this case, it is Trina's denial of carfare that leads to his taking a drop of whiskey. That is to say, the tapping of Trina's hoarding instinct taps, though indirectly, McTeague's instinctual atavism. The result is a type of poetic justice as Trina's near "murder" of McTeague ("'*You're* going to catch your death-a-cold' exclaimed Heise" [467]) is revisited upon her by his narratively necessary encounter with whiskey to relieve his drenched condition.

McTeague and Trina probably could have muddled through quite well in their circumstances if not for the growing intensity and inevitable self-destructiveness of their racial instincts. But the overtaking of their wills by their instincts underscores more than

a simple determinism, since Norris' is more emphatically biological than otherwise. More specifically, his biologically determined universe partakes of current neo-Lamarckian and orthogenetic views of human evolution. Originally proposed to reintroduce the order each thought lacking from natural selection, both end up darkly coloring the lives of Norris' characters through his depiction of racial instinct.

The non-adaptive quality of habitualized instincts is encapsulated by Maria Macapa's "tic":

> "Tell us your name," repeated Marcus.
> "Name is Maria — Miranda — Macapa."After a pause, she added, as though she had but that moment thought of it, "Had a flying squirrel an' let him go."
> Invariably Maria Macapa made this answer. It was not always she would talk about the famous service of gold plate, but a question as to her name never failed to elicit the same strange answer, delivered in a rapid undertone. (277)

This harmless automatic response of Maria's has no obvious downside but to emphasize the orthogenetic undercurrent of neo-Lamarckian notions of "habitual" behavior. According to neo-Lamarckian ideas, animal habits responded to environmental changes, their consequent physiological effects being passed on to offspring. But this only left unanswered, if a habit is a survival response, what happens when the danger or deprivation that required it no longer exists? One answer was, if the habit was not harmful to the organism, there was *no need* to drop it, hence it remained. This, however, was merely the first step in the darker prospect of a neo-Lamarckian habit assuming an orthogenetic character as this initially adaptive change was left to continue unabated, perhaps even intensifying in time, until it proved, whether directly or indirectly, harmful instead of useless.

This is Maria's case. Her "tic," ostensibly presents no dangers. Yet imprinted upon her in such a way as to be beyond her control, it suddenly becomes harmful upon contact with Zerkow's instinctual acquisitive need for gold. The story Maria tells, and

yet has no conscious memory of, taps the "inordinate, insatiable greed" of Zerkow (293), a character so ruled by his "dominant passion" for gold as to render it an instinctual trait by virtue of the stereotypical emphasis placed on his Polish Jewish ancestry. Like the chance crosswiring of Trina's hoarding with McTeague's alcoholic atavism, something similar emerges from Zerkow's encounter with Maria's unconsciously intense description of the gold serving set, an encounter that triggers a set of responses that end in tragedy and horror. Here, however, it is not any chance encounter with money that stirs up a buried instinct, for Zerkow begins where Trina's degeneration ends: he already hoards to the detriment of his personal appearance and surroundings. Zerkow's murderous obsession is stirred only upon his encounter (in this case, a fictional one) with a great deal of gold.[25]

The irony of Maria's strange habit is that its initial uselessness, its vestigial nature, at first transformed into a source of her danger by attracting the predatory Zerkow, now becomes the foundation of her survival. In a Lamarckian irony, instead of her habit having developed in protective response to her environment, it alters its environment in such a way as to provide the only means of her survival. It is, in a sense, a self-justifying trait, creating the danger it must then protect its host organism from — a truly grim caricature of Lamarckian evolution. But the ironies pile up as the very goal of evolution — reproduction — finds itself parodied by being the source of Maria's undoing. Once she gives birth, she is deprived of her story, and thus her only means of survival. Without it, she perishes at the hands of Zerkow, since it is only the continued existence of the story that has prevented him from killing her. But to kill her is to kill the story, and with the story end for good, so too must end Zerkow, who lived but for her

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[25] A distinction should be made between the inevitability of the onset of Trina's hoarding instinct and Zerkow's chance encounter with Maria's story. For Zerkow, when first introduced to the reader, has already attained that stage of instinctive greediness Trina only reaches by the end of her role in the novel. Whether Trina too would have reached Zerkow's insane murderousness is unclear, though it is ironically foreshadowed in her denial of carfare to McTeague, and thus her unintended, indirect, near murder of him from exposure to inclement weather.

story of gold. In the strangest irony of all, not only does Maria's tale preserve her life, but it preserves his as well. Without it, Zerkow is without the comfort Maria's tale provided to his own instinctual craving for gold; without it, hallucination must replace her story. Fully engulfed by delusions of gold, Zerkow is later "found floating in the bay," with there clutched "in both his hands ... a sack full of old and rusty pans, tin dishes — fully a hundred of them — tin cans, and iron knives and forks, collected from some dump heap" (487). Zerkow's instinctual "passion," instead of serving or preserving him, orthogenetically overwhelms him, paralleling in a more extreme form the self-destructive greed of Trina.

The Irony of Work and Gold: When Instinct Overtakes Exchange-Value

Admitting, "'I can't help it. It's stronger than I'" (411), Trina testifies to how indomitably her "intuitive desire of saving, her instinct of hoarding" tramples her individual will. What better illustrations are there of the insidious orthogenetic character of this instinct than those of that penury that jeopardizes McTeague's health when she deprives him of carfare, of that greedy reluctance to lend money to her family, which bursts whatever bonds of kinship lay between them, or of that stinginess that so ruins her once lovely face and figure.

So powerful is her hoarding instinct that it even overrides, in a stunning irony, the exchange-value of money. While much of the novel may be about greed, it is greed of a very special sort — a greed one only with difficulty can characterize as human. Trina is an especially telling example, since her hoarding defeats the purpose of gold-acquisition in the first place, by subverting the exchange of pleasures (both necessities and luxuries) for work through the medium of money. Indeed, "greed" is not even the right term to describe Trina's character trait since her hoarding is really just that — hoarding, in the most animalistic sense. Driven by instinct rather than self-interest, Trina is unable to acknowledge the exchange value of gold. She hoards as a rodent hoards, out

of an animalistic sensorial pleasure in the gold itself; hence Trina's gothic sexualization of gold. Whether placing a gold coin in her mouth or lying naked on a spread of gold pieces, all the while "taking a strange and ecstatic pleasure in the touch of the smooth flat pieces the length of her entire body" (515), Trina restores, in a bizarre irony, to gold a use-value on the most basic sensual level.

The only input from society itself, in this exchange of gold's exchange value for its sensorial use value, is its emphasis on saving gold. A more socially conscious interpretation might hold that the greed of society has been symbolically internalized in Trina on a biological level, a view suggested by the notion that if economic value had been placed on cowrie shells or blades of grass, Trina's hoarding instinct would not have operated any differently. But any implied criticism of American gilded age capitalism begins to fall short as the replacement of economic motives with biological instincts appears less a sick permutation of our society than an inevitability in every human society. At some point, the novel suggests, saving out of self-interest is bound to be supplanted by sheer animal pleasure in the object itself and its accumulation. Norris rather darkly suggests that, following Spencer, if indeed, habits do eventually become instinctualized, how can any human society that depends on some medium of exchange avoid the instinctualization of hoarding? Avoid the conversion of a behavioral habit actuated by rational self-interest into an instinctual trait that sacrifices deferred for immediate gratification, economic interest for sensualism, exchange value for a pleasure-based use value?

Indeed, how can any society that prides itself on the capacity to accumulate wealth avoid the sensorialization of that medium of exchange, as habit is transformed into instinct? Consider, in this light, the adumbration of Trina's sensorialization of gold by Maria's intensely pleasurable description of it in terms of sound ("'And it rang when you hit it with your knuckles, didn't it? .... 'Sweeter'n any church bell'" [352]), sight ("'It fair dazzled your eyes. It was a yellow blaze like a fire, like a sunset'" [352]), touch ("

thick, fat gold ....solid, solid, heavy, rich, pure gold'" [296]), and taste ("'It was soft gold, too; you could bite into it, and leave the dent of your teeth'" [296]). This festival of the senses is, in turn, reproduced in Trina's delight in the sight ("She polished the gold pieces ... until they shone"), feel ("she would draw the heap lovingly toward her and bury her face in it"), taste, sound ("She even put the smaller gold pieces in her mouth, and jingled them there") and even smell of gold ("she ... delighted at the smell of it").

Sensorialized, gold becomes for Trina, Maria, and Zerkow an end in itself. But the exchange of gold's exchange value for its sensorial use value is not the only exchange of values that occurs. Gold is exchanged for work; this is the focus of its exchange value. But by corrupting the exchange value of gold, Trina also corrupts the use value of work. The substitution of gold's exchange for its use value is replicated in inverted form in the substitution of the use value of work for the exchange value of gold. Work exists, for Trina, solely to be exchanged for gold, now hoarded to satisfy an instinct, not for the necessities or luxuries of daily living.

This transformation, however, is not a mere reversal. For the exchange value of gold subsists in its serving as the medium of exchange of work for sensual pleasures. We work to acquire gold, which we exchange for goods that deliver pleasure by satisfying our needs and desires. But for Zerkow and Trina, since pleasure itself is derivable only from gold, the use value of goods that typically provide animal pleasures is better abandoned. Outside of Trina, the proper relations among work, gold and pleasure assume the following structure:

Work (Time/Labor)	Gold	Pleasure (Goods/Services)
Use	Exchange	Use
Human	———	Animal

Work in terms of time and energy is exchanged for pleasure in the form of goods and services, with gold as the medium of transfer. Work, with its implied deferral of immediate gratification, is what defines our humanity, while pleasure, by satisfying our needs and desires, characterizes our animality. But this norm, according to *McTeague,* is easily disturbed in a post-darwinian age where instinct and habit, once tapped, can spin so far out of control that the human structure of relations finds itself corrupted by our evolutionary heritage. With instinct determining human behavior, the human use-value of work and the animal use-value of pleasure find themselves collapsed into gold.

Now work and pleasure are valuable only in terms of their exchange value, as both are sacrificed to the accumulation of gold. With instinct and habit overriding human imperatives, the use and exchange values undergo a gross distortion as Trina's sensorialization of gold comes to supersede human values placed on production and sensation.

Work	Gold	Pleasure
Exchange	Use	Exchange
Animal	———	Human

With gold as goal, work, instead of redeeming character by establishing one's humanity, is itself degraded into an instinctualized animal habit.

> Trina had her own little trade. She made Noah's ark animals for Uncle Oelbermann's store. Trina's ancestors on both sides were German-Swiss, and some long-forgotten forefather of the sixteenth century, some worsted leggined wood-carver of the Tyrol, had handed down the talent of the national industry, to reappear in this strangely distorted guise. (357)

The intensity of Trina's work habits, her "national industry," exhibited initially by her incessant tidying up, eventually gives way, along with her personal hygiene (497), to her need to "'get to work'" (501) whittling wooden animals not unlike, symbolically enough,

herself. With the amputation of her fingers, Trina's cry "'And my work!'" (508) comes as no surprise, the significance of her work defined not by a sense of failure at her inability to provide toys for children, or provision her own needs, but in her incapacity to acquire gold for herself.

In an inversion of the novel's beginning, we see Trina become more animal than even McTeague. If work is the defining characteristic of being human, McTeague ironically fits the human world better than Trina, in whom work has been animalized. Though McTeague too works from "habit," his work still has pleasure as its proper goal; McTeague still recognizes the exchange value of gold. This is why, for example, at the moment when McTeague rages to regain control over himself beside the prone, anesthetized Trina, what saves him from his bestial self is work. Having kissed Trina, "he threw himself once more into his work with desperate energy" (284); work channels this energy, containing it. Work humanizes McTeague, by properly deferring the animal pleasures he invariably must have. In Trina, this hierarchy of meanings and values is reversed, as her work assumes an animal-like roboticism, an instinctually atavistic quality, in which we sense she could not have *not worked*, while her relation to pleasure proves anything but animal. Her complete abstinence from living comfortably or feeding herself and McTeague properly become distorted, sick versions of the human resistance to animal pleasures that a character like Vandover had lacked the strength to forgo.

This distortion of work and pleasure, the instinctualization of the former and the ironic humanization of the latter (through abstention) become in Norris' hands darkened versions of those orthogenetic dispositions that destroy the organism they were meant to preserve. Trina's continual assertion about her penury, that "it's a good fault," is more than mere rationalization. It is an ironic assertion that evades admitting the potential self-destructiveness of those instincts presumed to maintain our existence. Trina's "fault" may be "good," but only to a point. Thereafter, like poor Maria's storyspinning tic, which only brings Zerkow's greed down upon her, it becomes a threat. Nor is there

much that can be done about it. In a world blindly determined by biological instincts and their uncontrollable development, what mechanism is there to check such development. In *McTeague,* we find none, and this is where the horror of the evolutionary gothic assumes its full dimensions.

For if behavior is determined by the cumulative effect of generational habits hard-wired into us biologically, what brakes can be put on them when they overreach the individual will? Norris hints that, at best, sufficient environmental pressures towards greater altruism, towards a lesser emphasis on capitalist hoarding, may inculcate new habits, which in turn may become innate — a distinctly Lamarckian position. But that is the best one can hope for, a hope dimmed, whether Norris admits it or not, by the very nature of human society, which is built upon the deferral of gratification through saving. Moreover, with the progress of society predicated on the accumulation of national wealth, with its concomitant robber barons, monopolies, and slew of technological advances, how worthwhile is it to reduce that otherwise "good fault" of saving, when to do so might invite a regression into barbarism? And finally, even if society could be changed, lessening the development and perpetuation of the hoarding instinct, could the centuries of hoarding already hardwired into Trina, Marcus, Zerkow, Maria, ever really be undone? In *McTeague*, Norris is not so optimistic.

New Legacies: New Directions

With the introduction of Darwinism to America, the fundamental fears of gothic fiction were shaken to their roots. The fears of individualistic psychopathy run rampant were supplanted by those of materialism and a hereditary determinism. The emergence of a powerful materialistic science gave notice to gothic writers that the true horrors of modern society were not tales of ghosts or diseased minds, but of our evolutionary heritage and its usurpation of free will. Our fear was not that of the morally insane, and of their inability to distinguish good from evil, but of the possibility that there was no

good and evil, that in the post-darwinian age, we were, indeed, now beyond good and evil.

Though Norris proved a trenchant critic of his era, harshly censorious of the unnatural restraints imposed by Victorian society, of such venial sins as gambling, drinking and whoring, and of the capitalistic worship of money, his expression of moral indignation in his two early novels just barely compensates for their dark, deterministic implications. Despite efforts to minimize his stifling biological determinism by emphasizing the roles of chance and environment, Norris still cannot get around the inevitability of tragedy implied by the inheritance of instincts that frustrate the survival of the organism. Vandover's effortless and uncontrollable pliability, coupled with an active animal quest for sensation that negates work and thought, parallels the faulty wiring of tappable instincts that, instead of complementing one another, both within and between individuals, only provoke conflicts that end in disaster. In either case, though Norris takes a stab at arguing that an altered environment could have averted these tragedies by minimizing the probability of chance events that draw these self-destructive instincts out, the underwriting biological determinism that informs both novels suggests there is no possible societal configuration that could have avoided tapping these self-imploding instinctual drives. Despite the reformatory ethos of Norris' naturalism, the deterministic underpinnings of his early works undermine the practical utility of his social criticism. In other words, would a more open society have made a less lustful Vandover? Would a less greedy milieu have created a less avaricious Trina or Zerkow? Once again, I think such changes would have little altered the plights of the protagonists.

Nor is this hard and fast determinism so radical as it seems. The brief, but bright celebrity status materialist and determinist philosophies enjoyed during the enlightenment, particularly among the French philosophes, had never been completely forgotten, even in Poe's era. Poe himself had never comfortably fit the mainstream of Romantic thought, inclined as he was to materialistic, scientific theories of mind and matter. This

deterministic feel achieved in Poe's fiction emerges full-blown in Norris. The obvious similarities between Usher and Vandover, both drawn from a long tradition of treating sensitive artists as predisposed to insanity and sensualism, should not obscure the more telling connection between the two: the harsh whip of determinism that leaves both characters at the mercy of circumstance — for Usher of his inherited disease, for Vandover of his bestial nature. In either case, the afflictions of both are biologically inscribed, severely diminishing the role of environment which at best functions as a contributory rather than primary cause of their decline. Though Usher's affliction may be intensified by his gloomy ancestral home, while Vandover's degeneration is hurried along by his publicly puritanical, but privately permissive society, neither mansion nor milieu is as powerful a force as the internally-driven, biologically inscribed predispositions of the two victims.

By focusing on the power of heredity in Poe, and redrawing its relations to our evolutionary heritage, Norris augments the deterministic impact of the former. Moreover, by taking advantage of orthogenetic notions, according to which the translation of habit into instinct could lead to unmodifiable forms of behavior that self-destructively intensify in time, Norris adumbrates the hard hereditarianism of Lovecraft and the American eugencs movement. Though Lovecraft depended more on vivid fantastic transformations to carry the weight of his horrors, the hard hereditarian doctrines that made such horrific imaginings possible found their source in the very orthogenetic notions Norris made use of for spinning his tales of uncontrollable degeneration. Though Lovecraft gives no indication whatsoever of having read Norris, it is not unusual to find family resemblances between the two and the biological horrors each employed to shock his readers.

Chapter Four
The Civilized Savages and Savage Civilizations of Jack London

To speak of Jack London as a writer of horror fiction is to confront a number of difficulties in genre definition. Notwithstanding his frequent indulgence of shocking literary effects, London continues to be regarded primarily as a significant contributor to the American realist tradition. His simple, spare prose style and unflinching representation of Nature's potential for brutality have had a significant influence on lowbrow and highbrow fiction alike, from the pulp fictions of Edgar Rice Burroughs and Dean Ray Koontz to the powerful twentieth-century literary naturalism of Sinclair Lewis and John Steinbeck. His trademark tales typically depict characters living on the margins of existence, be it in the Alaskan wastes or South Sea islands, in the wretched hovels of the poor or the merciless confines of the ship. The effect of his categorization as a hard-bitten realist and writer of high adventure, however, has been to render his absence from the gothic tradition unremarkable, an absence too attributable to the nature of his horrors. For, unlike his gothic predecessors, London was more inclined to derive his horrors from the grim materialistic nature of reality than from those subjective or objective distortions of it commonly found in conventional gothic literature.[1]

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[1] This is not to say that London did not try his hand at producing fiction with distinctly gothic overtones. Tales of madness and criminality, often run through with a darkly humorous streak, were a staple of his repertoire. Among his better tales may be numbered "The Eternity of Forms," "Moon-Face," "In a Far Country," "The Leopard Man's Story," "The Man with the Gash," "Just Meat," and "Even Unto Death." Moreover, despite a deep philosophical materialism, London did dabble in the paranormal and supernatural with "Who Believes in Ghosts!" "Planchette," and *The Star-Rover.* He also produced a number of dark science-fiction pieces and tales of dystopian futures, including "A Thousand Deaths," "A Curious Fragment," and *The Iron Heel.* Finally, true to his naturalist orientation, even London's tell-it-like-it-is, full-length works of reportage, *The Road* and *The People of the Abyss,* abound with horrific episodes, including whippings, beatings, and fits of insanity.

The Horrors of Stoicism

Like Norris, London saw horror less in psychotic or supernatural deformations of reality than in the harsh dictates of reality itself. Harsh and unyielding, reality is what terrified, not its corruption by sick minds or supernatural bugaboos. Such silliness was, for London, of a piece with the sentimental treatment of reality by such popular writers as Robert W. Chambers, Richard Harding Davis, and George Barr McCutcheon, and it was in response to them and their ilk that London, Norris, and other naturalists struggled to debunk through the depictions of a harsh and immutable reality the fatally flawed sentimentalism of American popular fiction at the turn of the century. For London, American authors needed to show life for what it was, not how they wished it to be. To that end, London took upon himself the task of redirecting the horrors of the gothic tradition by substituting for the conventional portrayal of psychopathological and supernatural terrors the shocking image of reality itself. There was little reason, as he saw it, to write about ghosts or madness when the experience of horror could be so easily found in our daily lives.

Nor was London alone in exploring horrors of a different stamp from those conventionally treated in the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century gothic tales and novels. In his decision to depict the horrifying possibilities of a determined universe, London gave expression to an interest held by a number of his naturalist colleagues, especially Norris. But when it came to how that reality was to be represented, London appears to have followed Stephen Crane rather than Norris in opting to depict the brutality of life *sans* authorial intrusions of moral outrage. The consequence was the formulation of a narrative indifference that has since become a hallmark of London's writing. This indifference, which characterizes his short stories of the Klondike,[2] is the

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[2] Examples of this authorial stoicism that jeopardize the distance supposed to obtain between the horrific fate of victims and the reactions of readers are found in "The White Silence," "The Law of Life," "At the Rainbow's End," "To Build a Fire," and "Finis."

same that distinguishes *Call of the Wild* and much of *White Fang*. In all of them, the effect of this tone is to produce a naturalist emasculation of moral outrage and human horror that stands in contrast to the maudlin moralizing of American sentimental fiction. London's tonal indifference proves especially effective in his two classic dog stories because their subject presupposes an unbridgeable distance between London's readers and his animal protagonists. That is to say, London introduces a tone that successfully eschews human moral categories by taking its stoicism from the natural world. If we are horrified by the merciless treatment of White Fang or Buck, it is in large part because we feel driven to personify and identify with them. What hurts them, hurts us. But our sense of horror is intensified by the contradiction we immediately discern between our readiness to treat their pain as more than just that of animals suffering and the grim reality of their pain as being no more than that of animals suffering.

Of course, London knew that pain and suffering, while terrible, were nonetheless inherent conditions of material existence. They simply could not be avoided. But in his refusal to horrify by treating as immoral what is in fact amoral (such as pain), London turns up a gothic gold mine, for what better means for shocking readers could there be than that of placing them face to face with those forces responsible for pain and suffering that stand beyond good and evil? Instead of moralizing by horrifying, in the manner employed by traditional writers of gothic fiction, London confronts the sloppy sentimentalism of his readers with their misapprehension of the human condition by attacking their ignorant, if not willful denial of the basic truths of human evolution and the implications those truths held out for a life potentially nasty, brutish, and short. In London's view, evolution can not horrify because it is a process not subject to human moral categories. It *is*, and that is enough to know. To be horrified by the theory of evolution, by the struggle for existence, by the kinship of human and beast, is no different from being horrified by the law of gravity — a reaction less sentimental than philosophically unsound.

Yet even as London takes note of the dampening effect that is supposed to be had on feelings of horror by the deterministic and materialistic implications of evolution, there remains an implied concession on his part to how much the clear refusal of narrator or author to obtrude his or her moral disapproval of these terrible events actually contributes to the intensification of those feelings. As London cannily recognizes, the success of naturalist horror resides not so much in any transgressive act of violence as in the materialistically stoic attitude towards that act. In the changed philosophical status of that transgressive act from immoral to amoral, the act can no longer even be labeled transgressive because it has been emptied of moral content by its resituation in the natural (and thus necessary) order of things. London successfully exploits this paradox of naturalism by shocking readers not with horrifying acts, but with the horrifying stoicism of the implied author.

Yet even as London struggles to shock his readers with the moral indifference of his narrative persona, he recognizes that such indifference can never be shared by readers. True stoicism, the capacity to deprive horrifying events of their moral offensiveness, is simply beyond the grasp of human understanding and feeling. And where it is achievable, no longer are we then in the domain of human feeling, but in the world of animal indifference. In a sense, therefore, the failure of literary stoicism can be seen as integral to London's project, not only as a naturalist who shocks us into recognition of an indifferent universe, but as a socialist too. For it is in our inability to be true stoics that our humanity is affirmed.

As London conceived of it, the roles played by Nature, determinism, and necessity did not necessarily entail the attainment of an inhuman indifference. On the contrary, in light of their reality, what was called for, if anything, was a reconsideration of the *objects* of our feelings of horror (as well as of our other emotions). The goal of London's literary stoicism was not to develop with readers an invulnerable indifference. This, after all, was not possible, since human beings could not help but feel. But just

because we cannot help but feel does not give us license to sentimentalize reality by attributing to it feelings or a sense of poetic justice. Rather London's goal was to develop a new sensibility by which reader's feelings were to be redirected from fantasy to fortitude, from escapism to action. His goal, in the end, was to compel readers to come to grips with a reality that, harsh and unyielding, drew victory over its human subjects by playing upon their unreasoning faith in a dog-eat-dog individualism. To London, the only answer humanity could make to an indifferent Universe was through the social restructuring of socialism. London's narrative indifference was essentially a lesson to readers that in a materialistic universe, oblivious to human concerns, there is no one else to depend upon other than one's fellow human being.[3]

London Reads Poe: Gothic Muscles

This shift in the basis of horror from transgressive act to indifferent consideration of that act was, in many respects, a revolutionary transformation. For London, in particular, this shift was an argument for the reality of evolution as well as a plea for socialist reform. But it was a shift that was to sabotage London's place in the American horror tradition. Instead of looking to the clearcut gothic foundation of horror in psychological or supernatural violations of reality, London trapped readers between the poles of amoralism and moral outrage through the artful use of his literary stoicism. By creating a tension the academic gothic tradition could not handle, this stoicism wreaked havoc with those gothic conventions by which implied readers apprehended the horribleness of events. And it was through the subversion of traditional gothic horrors that London's fictional works stepped out of the gothic and into the naturalist-realist tradition.

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[3] An excellent treatment of this thesis appears in Reesman.

But this subversion of literary horror did not mean London stood so far afield that he was unable to appreciate the relationship of naturalism to the gothic tradition. London understood that the naturalist transformation of literary horror bore a far closer connection to its gothic origins than naturalists were willing to openly admit. While London himself showed a marked preference for the naturalists and realists of his day, particularly the work of Kipling, Wells, and Stevenson, he did exhibit a special fondness for Edgar Allan Poe, to whom he devoted in the June, 1903 issue of *The Critic* his essay, "The Terrible and Tragic in Fiction."[4]

In "The Terrible and Tragic," London tries to get at the heart of fear-inspiring literature by explaining its popularity and relationship to naturalism through the evolutionary origins of humanity. London opens his essay with a number of citations from Poe's letters to highlight the posthumous popularity of Poe's horror tales, even in spite their condemnation by genteel readers "as a class of stories eminently repulsive and unreadable" (Hedricks 329). In fact, wielding Poe's late nineteenth-century popularity as a weapon, London proceeds to club his fellow writers and editors, as well as the "'namby-pamby' magazine[s], filled with 'contemptible pictures, fashion-plates, music, and love-tales'" Poe had despised in his own era (330). In citing Poe as a champion of the type of writing London advocated, London finds a protonaturalist ancestor who, like himself, had also waged war on the cult of sentimentality.

Nor does London think himself alone in having discovered in Poe a champion of literary anti-sentimentalism, a warrior in the cause of the "terrible and tragic in fiction." London uncovers the same anti-sentimental tendencies in Ambrose Bierce's *Soldiers and Civilians,* William C. Morrow's *The Ape, The Idiot, and Other People,* H. Rider

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[4] Other references to Poe in London's work appear in the *The Sea-Wolf* (*Novels & Stories* 481-82) and his short story "Samuel" (*Complete* 1619). In a letter to George Sterling of March 7, 1916, London writes with respect to Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum," "I for one would not attempt to give such a story the Poe Treatment, because no matter how successfully I might do it, it would be rejected by the editors and sneered at by the magazine readers" (*Letters* 1542). Compare this sentiment with London's essay as discussed below

Haggard's *She,* and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (333-34). Even in the tales of modern realists, stories like Maupassant's "The Necklace" or Kipling's "The Man Who Was," London detects a fundamental "lack of love" (335) which distinguishes them as truly "terrible and tragic." Linked by the bond of anti-sentimentalism to Poe, modern realists and gothicists alike become fellow-travellers in the fight for a rougher, harsher fiction, standard-bearers in London's war for a "magazine devoted primarily to the terrible and tragic ... [a] magazine such as Poe dreamed of, about which there shall be nothing namby-pamby, yellowish, or emasculated" (335).

The links London consequently forges between himself and Poe as well as between the gothic and modern realist traditions become crucial to his endeavor to establish a place in American literary history for naturalism — a place he specifically locates in America's gothic tradition. For, like naturalism, the gothic is a masculine mode of literary representation, neither "yellowish" nor "emasculated," inasmuch as it too eschews sentimentalism. And how does the gothic remove this modern taint of sentimentalism? By tapping at the most primal of human emotions — fear, the fear that strips away the layers of sentiment with which London's softer contemporaries have festooned reality, the fear that reveals in its starkest colors the eat-or-be-eaten nature of a materialistic, Darwinian universe.

It is this fear that explains as well the paradoxical reception accorded gothic and naturalist fiction, a reception he takes note of in the disturbingly parallel response given Poe's short stories and his own. Never at a loss for exposing the hypocrisies of his age, London can not resist pointing out, despite their Victorian shudders, the inexorable attraction of Poe's fiction for such readers. Though not yet familiar with psychoanalytic the-

ory,[5] London does describe something akin to an unconscious process in his explanation for why those who so heatedly object to tales of terror persist in reading them:

> A person reads such a story, lays it down with a shudder, and says: "It makes my blood run cold. I never want to read anything like that again." Yet he or she will read something like that again, and again, and yet again, and return and read them over again. Talk with the average man or woman of the reading public and it will be found that they have read all, or nearly all, of the terrible and horrible tales which have been written. Also, they will shiver, express dislike for such tales, and then proceed to discuss them with a keenness and understanding as remarkable as it is surprising. (331)

Even as "so many condemns [sic] these tales" yet, London notes, they "continue to read them." And in the hands of London, the attraction of prudish readers to gothic fiction becomes just so much ammunition in his war on their reading habits. After having uncovered the dirty pleasures these readers take in the horrible, London is left to wonder if such folks are "honest when they shudder and say they do not care for the terrible, the horrible, and the tragic." With a smirk, he sarcastically concludes, "Do they really not like to be afraid?" or "are they afraid that they do like to be afraid?"

Had London been familiar with Freud at the time of the essay, doubtless he would have explained in psychoanalytic terms this apparent conflict between the outraged expressions of disgust by his post-Victorian readers and their compulsive return to such tales. But at this time London was a committed Darwinian who had only just recently read and been deeply impressed by August Weismann's theories of genetic memory, to which he turns to explain the insuperable attraction of the horrible.

> Deep down in the roots of the race is fear. It came first into the world, and it was the dominant emotion in the primitive world. To-day, for that matter it remains the most firmly seated of the emotions. But in the primitive world people were uncomplex, not yet self-conscious, and they frankly delighted in terror-inspiring tales and religions. (331)

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[5] His first serious encounter with Freud and Jung would come in 1914: "He devoured the works of Freud, Prince and Jung, fascinated by what he could grasp of their claims for psychoanalysis" (O'Connor 367).

Unlike London's self-denying and genteel bourgeoisie, his savages, not "yet self-conscious," have little trouble reveling in the dreadful pleasures of the terrible and the tragic. They at least know how to enjoy a good tale of terror, and experience no shame in feeling fear — the most basic and natural of emotions in a Darwinian universe. But, wonders London, given contemporary reading habits and the irresistible return of such delicate readers to what they claim to despise, how far apart can the modern bourgeoisie truly be said to be from their savage ancestors?

London's answer suggests not very far at all, particularly if we admit the reality of ancestral memory. For behind the thin disguise of Victorian properness is a savage delight in being scared witless. Beneath the "ecstasies of fear" experienced by a child or the "fluttering" heart of the "man or woman who goes alone down a long, dark hall or up a winding stair" are the vestigial remnants "of the savage who has slept, but never died" (332). In his usual deference to race and class as causal agents, London pays particular attention to the prevalence of the savage in "the rising bourgeoisie," who, "fresh from oppression," "seem to possess an excess of fear, and to respond more readily to things fearsome" (332). Thus are the cowardly, inferior plebeians from whom the bourgeoisie come "no different from the negro mammy" who, though but "a couple of generations from Africa," still "stands in fear of the Voodoo" (332). True, the now dominant bourgeoisie may be "self-conscious" of their shamefully fear-filled origins. But this self-consciousness only testifies to how unconvincingly bourgeois protests against horror mask their true plebeian origin and the bourgeois reader's savage love of terror (333). London's bourgeois readers, like the black mammy, cannot escape their origins.[6] Like it

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[6] To get a sense of how London uses the way classes and races see themselves to explain the origins of one another, consider the quote in full:

> But to-day it would seem that this same bourgeoisie, firmly seated and triumphant, is ashamed of its old terror, which it remembers dimly, as it might a bad nightmare. When fear was strong upon, it loved nothing better than fear-exciting things; but with fear far removed, no longer menaced and harassed, it has become afraid of fear. By this is meant that the bourgeoisie has become self-conscious, much in the same fashion that the black slave, freed and conscious of the stigma attached to "black," calls himself a

or not, whether they approve or disapprove, the evolutionary universe in which they live makes clear that fear is a fundamental part of the human condition, and to think otherwise is just so much misguided hypocrisy.

By drawing the civilized and the savage together, London transforms the gothic from a psychological into an evolutionary genre. This is how he establishes its link to naturalism. For naturalism, like the gothic, also taps at raw human emotions, the rawest of which is fear, the substructure upon which all other human sophistications of emotion and intellect are built. According to a naturalist logic, therefore, in digging at the roots of our psyches, the gothic unearths not the childhood traumas of the Freudian psyche, but the genetic origins of ancestral memory, with fear, hardwired into us by millions of years of struggle and survival, as its central component. As the anonymous narrator of London's prehistoric fantasy *Before Adam* puts it in his description of dreams of his primeval existence:

> In my days only did I attain any measure of happiness. My nights marked the reign of fear — and such fear! I make bold to state that no man of all the men who walk the earth with me ever suffer fear of like kind and degree. For my fear is the fear of long ago, the fear that was rampant in the Younger World, and in the youth of the Younger World. In short, the fear that reigned supreme in that period known as the Mid-Pleistocene. (1)

Fear, for London, is what makes the world go round. It is what forces life up the evolutionary ladder; it is what connects all animal life. Most important, fear, ever present in our genetic memories, is what links us to our savage past. It is the central element of the human condition, and the key to the close connection London draws between our savage ancestors and their civilized descendants. And that this connection assumes the importance that it does for a socialist like London reveals the early attachment to and education in evolutionary theory to which he submitted all subjects. The valorization of

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colored gentleman, though in his heart of hearts he feels himself a black nigger still. (333)

fear and the link it establishes between humanity and its prehistoric origins are only part of a larger scheme in the all-encompassing logic of London's evolutionary *Weltanschauung.*

The Logic of Racism: Socialism and Evolutionary Anthropology

London's immersion in evolutionary theory was by and large the result of the rage for evolutionary thinking that had swept much late-nineteenth-century Anglo-American discourse. Darwin's *Origin of Species* held an especially honored place, being one of the two books London would take with him to the Yukon during the winter of 1897-98, as he holed up on Split-Up Island, eighty miles from Dawson City. Already a committed socialist, by the time he "withdrew from the university, he was conversant in Charles Darwin, Thomas Henry Huxley, [and] Herbert Spencer" (Hamilton 8). Nor did London ever stop broadening his knowledge of things evolutionary as he continued to read widely in the works of Friedrich Nietzche, Ernst Haeckel, Henri Bergson, David Starr Jordan, August Weisman, and scholars of economics, sociology, psychology, and anthropology, many of whom had been influenced by the post-Darwinian emphases on development, struggle, and progress.[7]

Like so many others of his time, London also turned to the tools of evolutionary analysis when addressing issues of class, race, and society. His integration of Darwinism and socialism, while a strange combination to modern readers, was not the

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[7] Besides the abovementioned, London is known also to have read the scientific works of Herbert Conn, the sociological treatises of Edward Ross, John Fiske's reinterpretation of Spencer, Enrico Ferri's work on criminal anthropology, and the paleoanthropological works of James Hewitt, Winwood Reade, and John Moore. He absorbed the Darwin-inspired nationalist tractates of David Starr Jordan and Josiah Strong. Later, when he went to sea with Charmian in *The Snark,* his reading turned to the anthropological studies of Bradley Osborn, Herbert Webster, George Turner, Thomas Williams, Wilfred Walker, and Charles Tyler. His later reading included works by Jacques Loeb, Michal Fitch and Caleb Saleeby, and those on race and medicine by Charles Woodruff. For an excellent treatment of London's reading history, see Hamilton 8-41. Other notable titles discovered by Hamilton to have been in London's library include works by William Heineman, Richard Lynch Gardner, Henry Holt, Thomas Speed Mosby', Alfred Paul Karl Edward Schultz, and Ernst Teichmann. For full bibliographic information, including London's marginal annotations, see Hamilton 50-300.

least bit unusual for the time.[8] London's own attempt to synthesize the two had been based on the crucial introduction of social instincts by Darwin, Spencer, and other theorists of human evolution. While Darwin had addressed them in *Descent of Man* and *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* as follow-ups to the *Origin of Species,* Spencer had attempted to explain all of human history through an evolutionary, developmental model that depended on the rise of social instincts. Spread across several works, Spencer's evolutionary theory of human history, which after its first formulations would undergo few variations during his lifetime, is summed up succinctly by Marie de Waal Malefijt:

> In early societies, cooperation was geared primarily toward survival, and in this "militant phase" people were trained for warfare, the individual was submerged in the group, status was the basis of social relationships, and cooperation was compulsory. Those who were best adapted to this kind of life became dominant, and those societies that were strongest conquered the weaker ones. Larger and larger social units were thus created, until a kind of equilibrium of powerful nations was achieved. At that point, the industrial society emerged. It was more peaceful, individual differences became respected, contract regulated social relationships, and economic cooperation between nations and between individuals became favored. This cooperation was no longer compulsory, but voluntary. Struggle for survival no longer selected the physically strong, but rather the personality that sought security for life and property, and was altruistically inclined. (Malefijt 132)

In this grand theory of human development, Spencer borrowed many of his notions not only from the works of other pre- and post-Darwinian contemporaries, but also from the earlier tradition of Scottish rationalism, with its emphasis on the natural human instincts of sympathy and benevolence, and its utilitarian legacy.[9] There was little doubt that in

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[8] See Zirkle on on the relationship of socialism to evolutionary theory. On London specifically, see 318-37.

[9] Images of sympathy and benevolence permeate the works of Francis Hutchison, Adam Smith, Dugald Stewart, and even their skeptical opponent, David Hume. Though transformed by romantic thought, which had even further emphasized the roles of sympathy and imagination, the instinctualist basis for altruism continued into the work of Spencer's immediate predecessors, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham. While questions of instinct are not directly addressed, for broader examinations of the connections in evolutionary thinking between these schools of philosophical thought, see Bowler, *Invention* 17-22 and Burrows 24-101.

formulating his biologically-driven history of human progress and development, Spencer had generated a theory of history well suited to the temperament of the late nineteenth century.

Where Spencerianism failed, for London, however, was where the economic materialism of Marx entered. The adoption of Marx was not a purely academic exercise for London. While not altogether destitute, London could hardly be said to have experienced the same "respectable" adolescence Spencer did. After gaining notoriety as an oyster pirate, at sixteen, he became a deputy patrolman for the California Fish Patrol. One year later, he was serving as an "able-bodied seaman aboard the *Sophia Sutherland,* a sealing schooner" (*Letters* xxxii). Upon his return, he slaved away at ten cents an hour in a jute mill and later became a coal heaver at the local power plant. Fed up with long hours and low wages, he briefly joined the western arm of Coxey's Industrial Army of the Unemployed in their march on Washington D. C., but soon deserted it to tramp on his own. Eventually he wound up serving a one-month term in the Erie County Penitentiary for loitering. Taking a job as a coal stoker on a train, he finally returned to California, where he enrolled in Oakland High School. By April of 1896, he had joined the Socialist Labor Party (*Letters* xxxii-xxxiii).

After this firsthand acquaintance with the seamier side of life, London understood well the drudgery of manual labor, the smallness of American wages, the plight of the unemployed, and the impotence of the poor before the law. For London, human justice demanded for London the Marxist revision of the Spencerian scheme of social development. The emphasis Spencer had placed on an altruistic individualism was to London an emphasis misplaced, since according to him, individualism was not the objective of evolution, but its root evil, an evil which capitalism actively encouraged and was therefore to be overcome. Unlike Spencer, London had no faith that evolutionary forces would generate the respectable, Victorian utopia Spencer obliquely intimated. The individualism Spencer continually held up as the source of man's salvation was, as

London saw it, by its very nature destructive. Hence the heated attacks on it in some of his best fiction, including his two most powerful novels, *Martin Eden* and *The Sea-Wolf.* Indeed, so powerful were London's portrayals of individualism in them that he often found himself having to correct radical misinterpretations of them as panegyrics to individualism. As many a critic saw in the strenuous individualism of Wolf Larsen evidence of London's own, others discerned in Martin Eden's downfall a critique of socialism.[10] Yet in both cases, London took pains to point out to readers and critics alike that both novels were explicitly intended as criticisms of individualism. In one heated exchange with Philo M. Buck, Jr., he wrote, "I was a socialist before I was a writer. I believe in a culture far beyond present-day culture. I do not believe in war. I am *not* an individualist," and *The Sea Wolf* and *Martin Eden* were "written as indictments of individualism" (1096).[11]

In part these misinterpretations were the result of the tricky position London had staked out in joining socialism to Darwinism. While individualism did verify the reality of the Darwinian struggle for existence, it did not constitute, as London reasoned, all of that reality. Rather the development of reason and social instincts suggested that there were far greater social possibilities available to humanity than those provided by the destructive machinery of American capitalism. Unfortunately, London's socialism stopped at the color line, it being for whites only. In early letters to Cloudesley Johns, London had articulated his socialist racism often. As he put it, in one of his more heartless outbursts on the question of the future survival of races:

> ... [Socialism] is devised for the happiness of certain kindred races. It is devised so as to give more strength to these certain kindred favored races

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[10] Franklin Walker notes that "the reader cannot help feeling that London's real loyalty is with Larsen, who speaks his own language (345-46). With respect to *Martin Eden,* see below and note 14.

[11] See London's letter of 17 January 1910 to the *San Francisco Bulletin,* for his response to a sermon delivered by Charles Brown arguing for the treatment of Martin Eden as a testimony to the failure of socialism. In his letter to the editor, London retorts *Martin Eden* is not "an autobiography," but is "an indictment of that pleasant, wild-beast struggle of Individualism" (864).

> so that they may survive and inherit the earth to the extinction of the lesser, weaker races. The very men who advocate socialism, may tell you of the brotherhood of all men, and I know they are sincere; but that does not alter the law — they are simply instruments, working blindly for the betterment of these certain kindred races, and working detriment to the inferior races they would call brothers. It is the law, they do not know it, perhaps; but that does not change the logic of events. (90)

London meant to be quite clear on this issue. The destined role of socialism for whites did not necessarily preclude the extension of white altruism to other races or other species. But let "Mr. White meet another white hemmed in by dangers from the other colors," and, whether Mr. White knows the other fellow or not, "they will hear the call of blood and stand back to back" (92). In the end, the call of race is always more powerful than that of altruism, and, for London, this was crucial to the future of the races.

For the ideas on race London held were grounded not only in the same popularized march and migration theories held by other naturalists, like Norris and Dreiser, but specifically in the works of David Starr Jordan, who, then serving as the first president of Stanford, was later to become a future leader of the eugenics movement. So taken was London with Jordan that he would cite large passages from his *Care and Culture of Men* and *Imperial Democracy* (82; 99-100) to Johns, recapitulating along the way the latest racial migration theories (86-87). Not surprisingly, London concluded early on that "the Teutonic is the dominant race of the world," adding a "man's a man, no matter what his blood, so long as that blood is good." This, of course, left little hope for the "negro races, the mongrel races, the slavish races, the unprogressive races," which were "of bad blood — that is, of blood which is not qualified to permit them to successfully survive the selection by which the fittest survive, and which the next few centuries, in my opinion will see terribly intensified" (87). Their destiny lay in extinction, a not illogical conclusion for an "evolutionist," who, "believing in Natural Selection, half believing Malthus' 'Law of Population,' and a myriad of other factors thrown in," could

not "but hail as unavoidable, the Black and the Brown going down before the White" (61).

To London, the law of natural selection, immutable and indifferent to human desires and wishes, affected the human world no less than the animal and vegetable kingdoms. The only hope for humanity, therefore, lay in the further development and functional integration of its altruistic social instincts into society. It was these instincts that fulfilled the goal of natural selection — the attainment of greater efficiency. It was also these instincts that remained, tragically enough, unavailable to non-white races. With reproductive efficiency as the paramount goal of natural selection, nature could hardly afford to consider the niceties of intercultural civilized behavior. The call of blood was stronger than that of transracial benevolence, and efficiency by its nature presupposed the elimination of inefficiency — namely, non-white races. In the end, the "different families of man must yield to law — to LAW, inexorable, blind unreasoning law, which has no knowledge of good or ill, right or wrong; which has no preference, grants no favor ... which is unconscious, abstract, just as is Time, Space, matter, motion; of which it is impossible to postulate a beginning nor an end." For Law is of a "higher logic, which the petty worms of men must bow to, whether they will or no" (90). And the operation of this Law, even in human civilization, demands that "[c]ulture, training, eradication of acquired inefficiency (hereditary inefficiency kills itself off in short order when deprived of accessions from environment) tend toward the weeding out, the clarifying of the race" (92).

If, indeed, "inefficiency kills itself off," there was little hope to be had for non-whites. Where once the most efficient form of natural selection favored individual struggle, with the emergence of social instincts, group cooperation replaced individual competition as the guarantor of individual survival. It was not strength in numbers per se, but social interdependence and ingenuity that marked the emergence of humanity — and all in the name of efficiency. With the forces of natural selection having "generated

the altruistic in man," it was now for "the race with the highest altruism" to "endure — the highest altruism considered from the standpoint of merciless natural law, which never concedes nor alters." Against this highest altruism, the "lesser breeds cannot endure" (92), especially in light of the ceiling London thought natural selection imposed on the social development of non-whites. As he frames it, in a rhetorical question to Johns, "Do you know that the physiologists say that the difference between the highest forms of man and the lowest forms of man is greater than the difference between the lowest forms of man and the highest forms of the rest of the vertebrates?" (90). Given this almost unbridgeable gap, no wonder, according to London, evolution for some has ground to a complete halt: "The black has stopped, just as the monkey has stopped. Never will even the highest anthropoid apes evolve into man; likewise the negro into a type of man higher than any existing" (132). With no prospects for the development of more efficient, altruistic instincts, non-whites, especially blacks, must rest content with having reached the apex of their own evolution. Unable to develop further, lacking not only the actual instincts of a high enough altruism, but even the potential for their development, non-whites fall outside the pale of socialism. For them there are no benefits to be derived from the introduction of a socialist order. One might sum up their dilemma, which London obliquely does, as that of their being stuck in capitalism.

The Ladder to Civilization in Evolutionary Anthropology

But how is it that non-whites should come to be stuck in such a state? The answer for London lay in his joining together an earlier nineteenth-century evolutionary anthropology with his own latter-day socialism. As a self-professed evolutionist, London, like any other concerned in the debates that raged around Darwinism, took as central the question of hominid evolution. Yet even though information on human evolution remained slim, scientists were not to be deterred from speculation. After all, as many reasoned, was not natural selection itself a highly speculative theory drawn from

circumstantial evidence? Had not even Darwin proposed a little more than a decade after *Origin of Species* his own theories of human evolution in *Descent of Man?* Nor was he first in the matter, Huxley having already broached the subject several years earlier in *Man's Place in Nature.*

Yet even with the contributions of these profound thinkers, the prehistoric evolution of humanity continued as dark as ever to the sciences. That is, to all except one, the young science of anthropology. In the mad rush to cut up Africa and parcel out Pacific Islands, new opportunities for anthropological research were constantly being introduced. London, the would-be world traveller, was especially attracted by the prospects for adventure these newly colonized territories offered, since they also represented an opportunity to further his education in (and possibly confirm) his Darwinian ideas about humanity. In preparation for his trips to the Pacific Islands, London thus made a conscious effort to read heavily in anthropology. But it was an anthropology underwritten by the logic of an evolutionary anthropology.[12]

Evolutionary anthropology had originated in the work of several individuals, each of whom had come to his conclusions before and thus independently of the publication of *Origin of Species.* Of particular importance were the contributions of three lawyers, Henry Maine, Johann Bachofen, and J. F. McLennan. Each had attempted to abstract from the social and legal codes of contemporary primitive societies and recorded ancient civilizations the prehistoric practices of humanity. Maine, for example, deduced from Roman law that patriarchy must have been the earliest form of family and political organization. Bachofen, on the other hand, inferred a matriarchal order from the erstwhile practice of temple prostitution and the testimony of ancient Greek scholars to the derivation of children's names from their mothers. Moreover, this matriarchal order,

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[12] In the discussion that follows on evolutionary anthropology and its effect on racial determinism, see Malefijt 116-159; Hays 15-83; Wallace 19-27; all of Street, but especially, 78-93 and 106-119; Bowler, *Theories* 50-54 and *Invention* 30-39 and 75-97; Harris 53-107; Stepan 20-47; Stocking 110-60; and all of Hodgen.

the result of a matrilineal order designed to establish stable kinship relations, also suggested to Bachofen that the earliest human group relation must have been hetairistic and therefore one in which biological fathers could never be known. J. F. McLennan, from his studies of the cultural game of mock bride capture, deduced the prehistoric omnipresence of a bloodier form of bride capture, a practice that must have lay in a shortage of women from daughter infanticide. To McLennan, this shortage implied the reality not only of a more war-like bride capture, but also of polyandry, a practice for which he found support in the custom of levirate, the Biblical injunction placed on a younger brother to marry the wife of his deceased older sibling.

While the suggestive deductions of all three had no immediate impact on the negative perception of racial difference, they did open the doorway to such a perception. But this change would have to await the contributions of other anthropologists in the formulation and expanded application of the concept of "survivals." Thus was it left to Edward Tylor to define formally the concept of "survivals" as the "processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried by force of habit into a new society ... and ... thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has evolved" (qtd. in Hodgen 37). This definition not only accurately described how Maine, Bachofen, and McLennan had seen Roman law, temple prostitution, and mock bride capture respectively, but also helped explain how it was that three lawyers were able to extract the social organization of prehistoric humanity from them. It was how Tylor himself would handle the development of religion, which, at its advent, was no more than "early efforts by the human mind to grapple with puzzling phenomena such as dreams" (Bowler, *Progress* 36).

Yet even with Tylor's contribution of the concept of survivals to this method of anthropological sleuthing, the type of evolutionary racism London systematically practiced had yet to emerge. This, in large part, had been because many evolutionary anthropologists, Tylor foremost among them, had styled themselves profound believers

in the "psychic unity" of humankind and the capacity of all cultural groups to progress. This position stood in direct opposition to the rigid racist legacy of polygenism, which had fettered races to their origins. But even the liberal progressionist tendencies of the age could not check the drive to hierarchicalize. Lewis Henry Morgan was especially significant in this regard, having expanded the concept of survivals from specific practices to entire cultures (Malefijt 151). Tylor followed suit, generating a tripartite structure of cultural evolutionary stages — savagery, barbarism, and civilization — through which humanity had to pass (141). Meanwhile Morgan created a seven-tiered structure in which he distinguished Lower, Middle, Upper Savagery from Lower, Middle, Upper Barbarism, and both from Civilization. Yet even more disturbing was Morgan's assignment of extant cultures to each of these stages. Though he admitted Lower Savagery no longer existed (it being a truly prehistoric stage), he did relegate to Middle Savagery the very groups London himself regarded as the lowest of the low, Australians and Polynesians (150).

Despite the origin of cultural evolutionism "in a desire to preserve a faith in the worldwide unity of human nature," in the end, "it proved impossible for the anthropologists to resist the growing feeling that the culturally primitive races were also intellectually inferior." Even Tylor came to agree that "some races" had "shown themselves incapable of rising very far up the scale of civilization because of their smaller brain size" (Bowler, *Theories* 52-53). Though Tylor never completely threw in with those who tied the capacity for cultural progress to biological origin, to others, like John Lubbock, "the connection seemed inescapable" (53). Lubbock's contribution was especially telling because his "comparative method" worked from "the assumption that technologically primitive peoples represent[ed] exact equivalents of earlier stages in the development of more advanced societies" (*Progress* 35-36). While his attempt to "restore modern savages to the good graces of European opinion by asserting that there was 'no evidence of general degradation' among them" (Hodgen 32) did help in the progressionist cause

against religious degenerationists like Richard Whately, Lubbock's transformation of contemporary primitives into literal relics of the past also gave permission to the intellectual entertainment in other quarters that racial origin could, indeed, limit cultural progress.

Combined with the hardening racial determinism of popular race theorists like Arthur de Gobineau and Madison Grant, the introduction of the concept of survivals and its application to entire cultures only contributed to the image of primitive peoples racists already held. Valuable for the moment as living fossils (and thus as objects of research), non-white primitives were living on borrowed time before their final obliteration by the imperialist sweep of white, Western world powers. Having developed concurrently with the biologically deterministic criminal anthropology of Cesare Lombroso and anthropometry of Paul Broca, nineteenth-century evolutionary anthropology was swiftly coopted as just further evidence of the biological inferiority and cultural stagnation of non-whites. No small wonder that despite whatever glimmers of sympathy London may have held for Alaskan and Hawaiian natives, he should come to see them, as he had all primitive non-whites, destined for extinction.

But, for London, cultural evolutionism described only half the story, for it had omitted the Marxian progression of modern society. The problem posed by Tylor's and Morgan's models of human progress from savagery through barbarism to civilization was that they stopped at civilization. This, according to London, was inadequate, for had they read their Marx, they would have realized that even within civilization there is a progressive development in human social organization from feudalism through capitalism to socialism. The movement from savagery to civilization, therefore, was nothing less than a mirror of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. In same the way barbarism marked the great divide between itself and civilization, so too did capitalism mark that between itself and socialism.

The analogy he consequently drew between barbarism and capitalism and between civilization and socialism became emblematic of the cyclical evolutionary model to which he subscribed in his darker moments. If non-whites did not deserve to share in the socialist revolution, it was because their barbarism mirrored with too great an accuracy the failings of white Western capitalism. With capitalist and barbarian (or savage — London hardly distinguished between the two) as alter-egos, too close for white comfort, London had little trouble seeing in the jungles of the Solomon Islands, the same menagerie of beasts he had encountered in London's East End[13]. His terrifying trip to Guadalcanal Island, the inspiration for "The Red One," impressed upon him perhaps more than any other event the missing altruism, and thus biological inferiority, of non-whites. To his good friend and literary protege, George Sterling, he had described the Solomon Islands as the "rawest edge of the world," a place where "[h]ead-hunting, cannibalism and murder are rampant." This description was itself the result of one especially terrifying incident recalled in that same letter of having been "wrecked on a reef," from which London and his crew found themselves having to hold off "with rifles" cannibalistic bushmen who had rushed to attack (*Letters* 770).[14]

For London, cannibalism held special symbolic significance because it emblematized what was worst in natural selection and, therefore, in capitalism itself. What better evidence was there for the inferiority of non-whites, for their lack of altruistic instincts and thus inability to benefit from socialism, than the disgusting and primitive cannibalism of the South Sea islanders he encountered? Equating savagery and capitalism came easily to London. While on different levels evolutionarily, organizationally the two stood on the same plane, both being underwritten by the same dog-eat-dog (or rather human-eat-

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[13] See *The People of the Abyss* in London's *Novels & Social Writings* 163-64.

[14] More tales on the South Pacific isles were collected by London for *A Son of the Sun*. Its title, a reference to the white, racially superior protagonist, is taken from the contemporary image of Saxon march west in pursuit of the setting sun, a standard image of Great March theories. On such theories, see Pizer, *Literary Criticism* 100-01 and nn. 3, 5-9, and 12.

human) individualism that, in destroying Wolf Larsen and Martin Eden, marked the fearful foundations of evolutionary struggle.

Savage Man: Civilization's Hyde

This equation of capitalism and savagery, while fundamental to London, was a troubling equation, one riddled with ambiguities and anxieties. On the one hand, there was a rigid line to be drawn between whites and non-whites, between the progressive, socialist evolution of former and the cultural stagnation of the latter. Yet, on the other, there was no denying the common evolutionary ancestry of the two. While whites might be destined for great achievements, London reluctantly had to admit their potential for cultural regression, their capacity to return to their ancestral, symbolically non-white origins. This capacity to return to savage origins is, in fact, what London depends upon to establish his link between naturalism and the gothic, fear being the emotion of survival and self-preservation and, therefore, the most logical of responses to the perpetual threats posed by natural selection at its most brutal. In hearkening back to that earliest form of fear, gothic and naturalist fiction restores readers to their original savagery, to a time when individualism reigned supreme and none was to be trusted, to a time fossilized and preserved in the non-white savagery and cannibalism of the Solomon Islands. The link naturalism and the gothic established between the modern bourgeois individual and the cannibalistic primitive through that most evolutionary of fears — the fear of being eaten — is possible only because the capitalistic world of the bourgeoisie was organizationally identical to the cannibalistic one of the savage.

The line between white and savage was for London, therefore, anxiously thin, the capitalistic excesses to which he had been witness standing as reminders of the little that separated jungle and civilization from one another. And it is this proximity of individualism and barbarism that is brought by "The Red One" to its unique level of naturalist horror. Tracing with a biting irony the descent of Walter Bassett, a man of

science and learning, into savagery, London demonstrates how even the most cultivated are helpless before their primitive origins. Both an allegory and parody of religious belief and evolutionary development, "The Red One" frames, in horrific terms, the futile evolutionary aspirations of a humanity trapped by its biological origins.

Prophetically "The Red One" opens with an "abrupt liberation of sound" that is "likened to the trump of an archangel," a sound Walter Bassett hears as he lies ill with jungle fever in the hut of a cannibalistic medicine man. Like that liberated sound, capable of bringing down walls "before so vast and compelling a summons" (198) Bassett's memory is similarly liberated as he is moved to recall "all that had occurred since that day on the beach of Ringmanu when he first heard the sound and plunged into the jungle after it" (199). Unfortunately what he recalls is far from pleasant. Arriving with his black servant, Sagawa, on one of the Solomon Islands to capture a foot-wide African butterfly, the two are set upon forthwith by local headhunters who force Bassett (Sagawa not surviving the attack) to flee and fight his way through the jungle. Thus is his transformation from civilized man into savage begun.

Nor does it prove a difficult transformation for Bassett to make. With his arrival on this dreadful island of headhunters and cannibals, his effeminized occupation of butterfly catching is placed at first contrasted with the savagery of the island's cannibals. But once in the jungle, effeminacy is abruptly discarded as he becomes as savage as his pursuers in order to survive. In the jungle ambush of him and his servant, net is swiftly replaced by gun as Bassett blows "the life out" of a "bushman," who nearly gets him with a tomahawk, and promptly peppers another trying to run off with Sagawa's head. Only after this bloodletting does Bassett suffer the "distinct dreadful shock" of realization that for "the first time in his life he had killed a human being" (200). At this point he is swept by "nausea as he contemplated the mess of his handiwork" (200). But this squeamishness is quickly overcome once he finds himself having to "kick to death" a

wounded bushman who "had sunk its human teeth into the ankle of his stout tramping boot" (201).

But Bassett's descent into savagery is not yet complete. There is much further to sink as Bassett is enveloped by the nightmarish jungle world he has entered. After this attack, Bassett is left to wander the forest, his vision blurred, his "body full of poison" (201) and racked with pain. In this state, all he can remember is having entered a village where he finds "a girl ... suspended by one arm in the cooking sun." Realizing that "[p]erhaps for days, she had so hung" (201), with all of her bones broken, he resolves to shoot her but no longer recalls if he does. Following this memory is another of having invaded a second village in which, after commandeering a roasting pig and "ready to depart with a hind quarter ... in his hand," he is suddenly seized by "a wantonness of savagery" and "deliberately" fires "the grass thatch of a house with his burning glass" (202).

While London frames thus brutality to appear as the result of Bassett's diseased and desperate state, this transformation from civilized man to savage would not have been possible had not Bassett this regressive potential in the first place. In a parody of the man-making scenarios common to much naturalist adventure fiction,[15] Bassett's defeminization is treated as anything but ennobling, his regression into savagery standing as a cynical warning of how easily the veneer of civilization and its effeminate, butterfly-catching pursuits are dissolved by crises of survival. Even the tools of modern science (the "burning glass") serve rather than moderate Bassett's savagery, illustrating only too well the pet Marxist notion held by London that technological advancement need not entail moral progress. Indeed, so "inured to savagery" does Bassett become, a conversion ironically acknowledged by his honorable position in the "devil-devil house"

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[15] The transformation of mice into men was a stock-in-trade theme among naturalists. Among the more notable examples are London's *The Sea-Wolf*, Norris' *Moran of the Lady Letty*, and Kipling's *Captains Courageous*.

of the tribal witch doctor, that even he comes to admit it as "he chuckle[s] again with glee of the recollection" (201) of the bushman he had kicked to death.

Evolutionary Allegories: Up From Man

Bassett's transformation from effeminized, civilized man to savage, however, is only the starting point of his allegorical and satirical rebirth. Only after he has reaching the nadir of savagery may be he start upon his symbolic rebirth into humanity, a transition that is dramatized by his emergence from the jungle into the grasslands. With his memory of events sacrificed to the travails of disease and desperation, there is little left but the remembrance of "the dank and noisome jungle," recollection of which heavy-handedly replays the dog-eat-dog image of evolutionary theory London abhorred. In the jungle, it is "always twilight" because sunlight cannot "penetrate its matted roof a hundred feet overhead." But worse than its lack of light is its "evil" stink, for "beneath that roof" presides "an aerial ooze of vegetation, a monstrous, parasitic dripping of decadent life-forms that rooted in death and lived on death," an image of parasitism that mirrors his anthropophagical pursuers, those "ghosts of evil that dared not face him in battle but that knew, soon or late, that they would feed on him" (202).

Stinking from the evil organic overabundance that has begun to decay under the weight of its own parasitism, the jungle London describes takes upon itself the full weight of all he opposed in the Spencerian interpretation of evolution. In the eternal feeding frenzy that London thought characterized jungle existence, there was no place, so far as he could see, for the advancement true struggle demanded. Where pickings are anything but lean, and all is fair game, even human beings for each other, there was no way, as London knew from his deep study of Darwin, for an evolution based on the paucity of natural resources to operate. In the jungle, where resources are anything but scarce for its omnivorous inhabitants, there can be no evolutionary struggle and, therefore, no ascent of species. Without the challenge posed by a harsh environment to

develop, the result is a parasitic degeneration that turns men into savages rather than into men, into eaters of each other than into developers of new food sources (i.e. husbandmen). To London, the anthropophage was but the most advanced of that degenerate class of parasitic organisms that knew not the true struggle for resources that made evolutionary progress possible.[16]

Bassett's descent into savagery and immersion in the ethos of the jungle, however, undergoes a radical change with the arrival of "the day of the grass lands" (202). Leaving the jungle, he reacts with an almost epiphanic gratitude to the savannah he has stumbled upon: "And beginning at the edge of it, grew the grass — sweet, soft, tender, pasture grass that would have delighted the eyes and beasts of any husbandman." While no literal "husbandman", Bassett does experience a metaphorical conversion from jungle savage to first farmer that marks the transformation of his story from an adventure yarn into an evolutionary allegory. Moreover, with this topographical transformation, there is a significant change in Bassett's immediate situation, for "pursuit" ceases "at the jungle-edge" (203). In having "crawled into [the grass] a dozen yards, buried his face in it, smelled it, and broke down in a fit of involuntary weeping" (202-03), Bassett announces his entry into domain of humanity.

In this scene, London takes special pains to provide an allegorical subtext, drawing on speculations concerning the transition from arboreal to terrestrial life common to contemporary theories of human evolution. This descent from the trees, London well knew, was considered central to the process of humanization. Darwin had, for example, treated this change of habitat as the first and perhaps most significant step in human

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[16] See previous chapter and Bowler "Hold" for contemporary notions of how organic degeneration derived from unchallenging environments. One should also note the link between Bassett and his pursuers in the similarity of sources of their degeneration. For London's anthropophages, their degeneration is the result of their unlimited appetites and surplus food sources. According to most degeneration theories, Bassett's effeminization would itself have signalled a similar cause — a degenerate softness stemming from being overfed and pampered. The potential savage in Bassett is not merely a matter of his evolutionary link to his degenerative cousins, but the direct result of his own civilized degeneracy. Bassett has not so much descended into savagery as been prepared for it.

evolution.[17] Whether the result, according to Darwin, of "a change in ... procuring subsistence, or some change in the surrounding conditions" (qtd. in Landau 45), London fully exploits this transition to explain Bassett's weeping, the "pleasure" of the "husbandman," and sudden cessation of pursuit. With Bassett's movement from the jungle to the grasslands, a symbolic metamorphosis is enacted as he is transformed from savage primate into domesticated human being. Moreover, Bassett's symbolic rebirth from primate to humanity becomes all humanity's as his evolutionary transubstantiation is prophetically saluted by the "wonderful sound" of the Red One, which calls from "across that leagues-wide savannah." Like "the trump of an archangel," "like a benediction to his long-suffering, pain-wracked spirit" (203), the Red One's ring pays a resounding tribute to the trials and tribulations of evolution symbolized by Bassett's personal struggle to survive the transformation from arboreal to terrestrial ancestor, from ape to human being. Indeed, by blessing his transformation, the Red One amalgamates in its ring the story of Genesis and evolution, an amalgamation that is not without its ironies.

The first irony drawing stories of Genesis and evolution together is the introduction of the savage Balatta, who, when she first stumbles upon the ill and enfeebled Bassett, squeals "with delight at sight of his helplessness" and is "for beating his brains out with a stout forest branch." It is through Bassett that we then receive our first description of Balatta "as innocent of garb as Eve before the fig-leaf adventure." In this encounter, first man meets first woman, with Bassett and Balatta playing the roles of a modern Adam and Eve respectively. But London's pair is far from the idyllic couple a more sentimental fiction writer might have described. Instead, caked with "the dirt of days and nights," which has sullied "the pristine whiteness of his skin" (203), Bassett is ironically paired with a black proto-woman who is herself systematically savaged by

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[17] Terrestrialism, encephalization, and bipedalism were considered in the nineteenth century the three most important steps in the transition from ape to human. For interesting overviews of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century attempts to organize these changes sequentially, see Landau; Bowler, *Theories*.

London's vicious racism. "Squat and lean," "asymmetrically limbed," "string-muscled," and "dirt-caked from infancy," Balatta is "as unbeautiful a prototype of woman as [Bassett], with a scientist's eye, had ever gazed upon." Her sex is "advertised by the one article of finery with which she was adorned, namely a pig's tail, thrust through a hole in her left ear-lobe" and so lately "severed, that its raw end still oozed blood that dried upon her should like so much candle-droppings." But worst of all is "her face," a "twisted and wizened complex of apish features, perforated by upturned, sky-open, Mongolian nostrils, by a mouth that sagged from a huge upper-lip and faded precipitately into a retreating chin, and by peering, querulous eyes that blinked as blink the eyes of denizens of monkey-cages" (203-04). Here, as in his letters and South Sea stories, London's firmly held belief in the degenerated, proto-simian condition of non-white savages is given free reign. But in "The Red One," London has taken special care to fashion his barbed representation of Balatta into a caricature of the Biblical Eve. As a profound materialist, London was doubtless amused by the implied religious offense of this satirical portrait of Balatta, his "ape-woman," as the first true Eve.

But there is an irony tied more closely to Bassett's situation, for his welfare now depends on Balatta, who tries to claim him as her property. Luckily for Bassett, Balatta is is opposed by the witch-doctor, Ngurn, who wants Bassett's head for curing, and the other villagers, who want "his body for the roasting oven." And they are all kept in check by Bassett's shotgun after it takes the head off of a villager who has accidentally discharged it. Thereafter, Bassett's objective is to remain conscious "until he could intimidate the bushmen with the simple magics of compass, watch, burning glass, and matches" as well as the awful shotgun (205). Though trapped within the village by his feverish condition, Bassett nonetheless persists in his struggle to move on to his next stage in his rehabilitation. Having started his expedition as a scientist, only to be reborn through the savagery of the jungle into manhood, Bassett continues in the effort to recoup

his original position of scientist through investigation of the Red One and its glorious sound.

The Savage Scientist

Despite his professed love of science, London's attitude towards scientists has always been somewhat ambiguous.[18] Bassett's conduct, in particular, raises troubling questions about how noble or "evolved" can any scientist truly be. Certainly one trait in favor of scientists is their sense of self-sacrifice — a sign surely of that altruism London revered. Moreover, this sense of self-sacrifice is a masculine trait, a point made in Bassett's decision, "as only a man can do who is capable of martyring himself for the cause of science," "to violate all the fineness and delicacy of his nature by making love to the unthinkably disgusting bushwoman" (208-09). This is no small matter for "a fastidious man," for whom back "in England, the charm of woman ... had never been robust." But it is a decision with a rather carnivalesque consequence, insofar as the decision to make love to a being just above ape makes a mockery of this Christlike sacrifice of his masculinity for the good of mankind. This act of self-sacrifice seems especially ironic in light of the primitive society he is stuck in, with its silly, sadistically violent taboos on touching. Bassett's personal taboo, for example, on "touching" the repulsive Balatta anticipates the same taboo broken by a "girl of nine" who stumbles into the chief, violating his personal taboo on female flesh. Thus is she condemned to "three days and nights in dying before the Red One" (209). Given the resemblance between Bassett's rationalized self-sacrifice and the human sacrifices made by the villagers to the Red One, Bassett is hardly so distant from his captors.

This distance shrinks even further with Bassett's decision in the next stage of his plan to sacrifice not himself, but Balatta by taking advantage of the "[e]ternal female she

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[18] See as evidence of this ambiguity, such tales as "The Shadow and the Flash," Enemy of the World," "Goliah," and "A Thousand Deaths."

was, capable of any treason for the sake of love" by making a "more thorough love" to her (209). Little does Balatta realize how her submission to the harsh dictates of Bassett's desire allow him, as a "[s]cientist first" and "humanist afterward," to offer her up with an easy conscience to the Red One in order to satisfy his curiosity. In forcing her to lead him to the Red One, Bassett exacts the "ultimate love-payment" by having her break "the taboo of the Red One." This he demands without regard for the consequences that might befall her — "a week of torture, living" before the Red One. "Yet did Bassett insist on having his man's will satisfied, at the woman's risk, that he might solve the mystery of the Red One's singing, though she should die long and horribly and screaming" (210). Even with the sympathies of London's post-Edwardian readers mitigated by his dehumanized portrait of Balatta, Bassett's inhumanity cannot be overlooked. Certainly, his scientific sacrifice of Balatta seems no better and no more justified than the sacrifices performed by the tribesmen he denigrates. In this sacrifice of Balatta to the Red One, Bassett seals his transformation into savage. His ascent to humanity was nothing more than a false start. Through the rationalizations of science, Bassett has come no further than the lowest savage.

But London means to go even further, for Bassett's true savagery lies in his remorseless, genocidal solution to delivering the Red One into the hands of whites: "What he had to do was recover from the abominable fevers that weakened him and gain to civilization. Then would he lead an expedition back, and, although the entire population of Guadalcanal be destroyed, extract from the heart of the Red One the message of the world from other worlds" (215). This not unusual solution to extirpate the entire island population for the sake of the Red One sadly echoes the role played by the Red One for its worshippers: "By virtue of the Red One many alien villages had been devastated and even wiped out, the prisoners sacrificed to the Red One" (206). The bloodied symbol of religious and scientific excess, the Red One is personified by its worshippers as being "more bestial powerful than the neighbor tribal gods, ever a-thirst for the red blood of

living human sacrifices." Thus is the civilized scientist draw into the circle of savagery by the genocidal sacrifices he willingly consider, and which are practiced by the villagers. No longer is he a mere captive of the village. Whether he realizes it or not, as suggested by his status as the honorable guest of the village medicine-man, Bassett has become, through his shared worship of the Red One, a full-fledged member of the savage tribes he detests.

The Red God

Despite the evolutionary allegory of his passage through the jungle, Bassett never really evolves beyond the cannibalistic savages with whom he resides. Nor does his discovery of the Red One, a tribal God recognized by Bassett for an extraterrestrial object, advance his condition. Bassett remains a savage. How much of a savage, however, is illustrated by the vehemence with which he deifies the Red One. In the way that Balatta is made the parodic figure of a Biblical Eve, so is the Red One transformed into a materialist parody of the Biblical God. Instead of the ubiquitous and omnipotent entity of Scripture, London offers the Red One, a mysterious alien presence that has descended from the starry reaches of a wide and unfathomed universe, silent and unanswering.

Like the unknowable God London cites from Spencer, whose qualities remain beyond description, the Red One likewise can only be described through metaphors that reflect its fundamental indescribability.[19] Upon first hearing it, for example, Bassett characterizes its sound as "challenging and demanding," as exhibiting "such profounds of volume that it seemed intended for ears beyond the narrow confines of the solar system" (198). "Sonorous as thunder ... mellow as a golden bell, thin and sweet as a thrummed taut cord of silver," the Red One, he concludes, is "none of these, nor a blend of these."

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[19] In an early letter to Cloudesley Johns, London expresses his agreement with Spencer's position, arguing that "the infidel that positively asserts that there is no God, no first cause, is just as imbecile a creature as the deist that asserts positively that there is a God, a first cause" (*Letters* 85-86).

In fact, there are "no words nor semblances in his vocabulary and experience with which to describe the totality of that sound" (199). This transcendence of human conceptual categories is repeated as well in the visual impact of the Red One. Like a "pearl, with the depth of iridescence of a pearl," yet larger than "all pearls of earth and time welded into one," the Red One is colored in a manner "undreamed of [by] any pearl or ... anything else, for that matter, for it was the color of the Red One." Unique unto itself, its color can be captured only through simile: "He liked the color quality of it to ... some sort of lacquer applied by man, but a lacquer too marvelously clever to have been manufactured by the bush-folk." "Brighter than bright cherry-red ... its richness of color was as if it were red builded upon red. It glowed and iridesced in the sunlight as if gleaming up from underlay under underlay of red" (211). Caught in a tangle of "as if's," the Red One comes to appear as indescribable as it sounds, compelling Bassett to work hard to describe its color adequately. But, like the poetically inadequate attempt to capture its sound, this futile exercise in description only leaves him exhausted, the Red One having outstripped the limitations imposed by human language.

Yet even as sound and sight prove beyond Bassett's conceptual reach, rather than accept the limitations imposed by this alien contact, he indulges in a type of speculative worship that stands ironically at odds with his scientific background. Even something sensual is introduced as Bassett is seduced into worship by his recollection of how, in spite of his light "touch on so vast a mass," it should "quiver under the finger-tip caress in rhythmic vibrations that became whisperings and rustlings and mutterings of sound — but of sound so different; so elusive think that it was shimmeringly sibillant; so mellow that it was maddening sweet, piping like an elfin horn" (213). Reveling in the sense of transcendence that accompanies this titillating sound, the source of so much aural, visual, and tactile pleasure, Bassett is furthered enticed to compare the Red One to the Judeo-Christian god, a connection reinforced by his constant use of biblical allusions.

Upon first hearing the Red One, for example, Bassett likens its sound at one point to "an archangel's trump" (199), at another to "a benediction" (203). At a third, the Book of Joshua is obliquely suggested by the "[w]alls of cities" Bassett imagines that "might well fall down before so vast and compelling a summons" (198). Finally, in one particularly lengthy tirade, in which Bassett bemoans its landing among ignorant Solomon Islanders, the Red One appears as "God's Word ... fallen into the muck mire of the abyss underlying the bottom of hell," "Jehova's Commandments ... presented on carved stone to the monkeys of the monkey cage at the Zoo," "the Sermon on the Mount ... preached in a roaring bedlam of lunatics" (213). With this angry assertion, a hierarchy begins to gather shape as Bassett places on opposite ends of the evolutionary spectrum Balatta, humanity's Eve, and the Red One, Bassett's personal God.

Yet, unlike the parodic transformation of the Biblical Eve into a simian Solomon Islander, the transubstantiation of this mysterious extraterrestrial object into the living God is tinged with both a certain seriousness as well as a studied irony. The result is to render the irony less comic than tragic as Bassett's thoughts are reformulated into the most basic questions of the evolutionist-materialist position: "Who were they, what were they, those far distant and superior ones who had bridged the sky with their gigantic, red-iridescent, heaven-singing message?" Bassett wonders "had they, too, trod the path on which man had so recently, by the calendar of the cosmos, set his feet"? To send the Red One, "surely they had reached those heights to which man, in tears and travail and bloody sweat, in darkness and confusion of many counsels, was so slowly struggling." Did they win "Brotherhood"? Or "had they learned that the law of love imposed the penalty of weakness and decay? Was strife, life? Was the rule of all the universe the pitilessness of natural selection?" And, most importantly, were "their far conclusions ... shut" up in the Red One, waiting to be read?

But these questions, spoken more in the voice of London than of Bassett, are soon displaced by the darker, more mercantile, scientific interests of the latter, who

begins to wonder "[w]hat engines and elements and mastered forces, what lore and mysteries and destiny-controls, might be there!" Might not the Red One contain "vast histories, profounds of research achieved beyond man's wildest guesses, laws and formulae that, easily mastered, would make man's life on earth, individual and collective, spring up from its present mire to inconceivable heights of purity and power"? The sudden interest in gathering power, of achieving a mastery over one's destiny, assumes an ironic hue as "Time's greatest gift to blindfolded, insatiable, and sky-aspiring man" is vouchsafed Bassett. His "lordly fortune to be the first to receive this message from man's interstellar kin!" (214-15) is less his gain, as London pointedly suggests, than our loss.

In Bassett's interior monologue lie intermixed hubris and hope. Though it is clear that Bassett's speculations are just that — speculations — it is by no means clear how ironically they are to be taken, especially from a feverish man who has revealed himself to be far closer to his savage hosts than he dare admit. Ironic or not, these crucial questions about natural selection and socialism would remain the very questions with which London was to wrestle the rest of his days. London's extraterrestrial is the fictional locus of both his belief in and doubts about the cultural evolution of humanity into socialism and the cessation of natural selection through the achievement of "Brotherhood."

For Bassett, however, the Red One is ultimately a trap, a seduction into savagery and scientific pride. While the questions Bassett asks may be spoken with London's voice, insofar as they are asked by Bassett, they must go unanswered, sinking in a flood of ironies that threatens to submerge London with his character. Taking Bassett's reasoning at face value, we find that the Red One's chance location on one of the Solomon Islands, where no "white man ... had gazed upon the Red One and lived" (215), opens the very dark possibility that extermination of the Solomon Islanders, who prevent through their ignorance the advancement of humanity, may, indeed, be just what London advocates. Despite the ironies that envelop Bassett, there does peek out from

behind the tale, the very earnest, disturbing suggestion, apropos London's racism, that humanity truly cannot progress so long as the superstitious primitives who cover much of the globe are permitted to exist.[20]

But peeking is about as far as one gets, for irrespective of how seriously London intends these genocidal sentiments to be taken, the ironic treatment of Bassett cannot prevent them from undermining the superior position Bassett insists on claiming for himself. His reversion to savagery in the jungle and subsequent adoption by cannibals subvert whatever worth he might have had as receiver and revealer of the Red One. Despite his claims to evolutionary superiority as a white scientist, his anti-humanist brand of scientism hardly qualifies him for a representative of civilization. His heartless sacrifice of Balatta as well as his eager entertainment of mass extermination lowers rather than raises him in the eyes of readers and, one might assume, the Red One whom he reveres. In one sense then, the Red One is quite appropriately placed in its savage homeland, this domain of cannibalism and superstition serving as the symbolic homeland from which all humanity has sprung.

With Bassett's final request of Ngurn that he die hearing the Red One, the gap between him and his savage caretakers is sealed. His worship of the Red One, pulling him ever closer to the savages he once saw himself so far above, reaffirms the savagery within that has been masked by the trappings of civilization without. In the decision to die as a savage dies before the Red One, the self-sacrifice of the scientist and the ghastly human sacrifice of the savage are unified. The rationale of the scientist is become the ritual of the savage as scientist and savage become one and the promise of evolution is broken by the degenerative potential for savagery within all.

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[20] London's genocidal sentiments, foreshadowed in his letters on race to Cloudesley Johns, also figure in his socialist and capitalist nightmares. In these, London headily welcomes the sacrifice of a few for the greater good of the many. See, for example, "The Minions of Midas" and "Goliah." For a tale more attuned to London's genocidal sentiments, see "The Yellow Plague."

Barbarian State

Through the figure of the savage, London signals in "The Red One" the close relationship between animal and human. Still London was unsatisfied with the suggestion that there inhered in each and every human being, on the basis of biology alone, a hidden savage. For, as a socialist, London saw in the degenerative potential of humanity, a potential assured by Darwin, a far greater role for human social relations than that imagined in "The Red One." The cult of the scientist, as represented by Bassett, was for London inadequate to describe the potential for full-scale degeneration that might be be imagined. Rather one had to turn, as any true socialist must, to the broader influence of economics than any sociological subsection of Western behavior — e.g., scientific — to understand fully the threat posed by evolutionary degeneration. And in order to make that point, London looked to the science fiction sub-genre of post-apocalyptic narrative, specifically the plague narrative, to carry the weight of his thesis.[21]

Hence *The Scarlet Plague,* which, through its artful framing and deft combination of it post-apocalyptic setting and fallible narrator, succeeded where the preachier *Iron Heel* failed as a socialist indictment of capitalistic excess. Unlike "The Red One," with its tight focus on the plight of on particularly unfortunate individual, *The Scarlet Plague* extends the relationship between civilization and barbarism by considering the dire effects of what London conceived to be the end result of an overzealous laissez-faire capitalism: plutocracy. The transformation of a plutocratic capitalism into a neolithic savagery was a for London a simple transition, the plague itself serving as the symbolic catalyst for linking these two social states.

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[21] Though one of the earlier works in this genre, *The Scarlet Plague* was by no means the first. Precedents can be found in the plague narratives of Daniel Defoe (*A Journal of the Plague Year*), Mary Shelly (*The Last Man*), and Edgar Allan Poe ("Masque of the Red Death," "King Pest," "Shadow — A Parable"). London's debt to Poe's "Masque of the Red Death" is especially evident (Labor 109). While it seems unlikely London knew Mary Shelley's little-read *Last Man,* he did own a copy of Defoe's *Journal* (Hamilton 101).

In an effort to resolve the connection between capitalism and savagery, London thus turns to physical atavism as his central evolutionary metaphor. Foreshadowing the human social atavisms to come, London opens his tale with descriptions of the physical regressions that have already overtaken the domestic animals which now roam the devastated California countryside. The "wolfish-looking dog that was only reminiscent of a collie" (159) is no more than just an example of one of those "the domestic animals" that after the plague go "wild" and prey "on one another." As London's narrator forebodingly recalls, "'The chickens and ducks were the first to be destroyed, while the pigs were the first to go wild, followed by the cat. Nor were the dogs long in adapting themselves to the changed conditions'" (185-86). In true degenerative fashion, with the social restraints that domesticated them no longer in place, their latent "original" natures resurface to accommodate their new post-plague existence.

This reversion to an original wildness is mirrored by the social anarchy that overtakes human society once the plague breaks out. In a tragic return to Hobbes' state of nature, Darwin's natural selection, and Spencer's survival of the fittest, the pre-apocalyptic society of London's fantasy is literally consumed by chaos. The raging fires, frequent lootings, reckless murders, destroyed property — all taken from London's experience of the San Francisco earthquake — are swiftly deployed in the effort to heighten how closely lurks the threat of barbarism. The very restraints that physiologically domesticate animals become in *Plague* symbols of the same that civilize humanity. With these restraints gone, the physical regressions that bestialize domestic animals parallel the social regressions that bestialize people. The awesome and frightening power of the random violence that erupts with the dropping of social restraints is made vivid in one episode recalled by London's narrator, as a drunk "miscreant" encountered by a group of fleeing professors and their families not only sets fire to one professor's home, but, in "the most absolute, wanton act," draws a pistol and randomly shoots another through the head. Even the humanity of the most civilized cannot withstand the brutal drive to survive as an

infected "little nurse-girl in the family of Professor Stout" is mercilessly "thrust ... forth from the building" in which the group has holed up. Yet even as London's professor of the humanities pleads "We felt like brutes, but what were we to do? There were four hundred of us, and individuals had to be sacrificed" (182), he cannot rationalize away the shrinking gap between civilization and savagery that is suggested in his refusal to confront his complicity in the heartless act. How fitting then that Smith's listeners, as he recounts the story of the scarlet plague, should be three bearskin-dressed, illiterate children, "true savages" who have "begun the custom of wearing human teeth" and in "another generation will be perforating [their] noses and ears and wearing ornaments of bone and shell" (164).

It is only with the greatest reluctance that Smith confronts his small contribution to civilization's demise and its replacement by a savage state. Instead he prefers to revel in fonder memories of the plutocratic regime from which he benefitted, Smith being no less a product of his pre-apocalyptic era than his savage grandchildren are of their post-apocalyptic condition. Smith, after all, was born into a plutocratic order. Just consider his mention of the appointment of "Morgan the Fifth" to "President of the United States by the Board of Magnates" (158), or his "predestined career" of professor, an occupation that had been held by his father and "his father before him" (174). In both examples, London suggests a parallel between a plutocratic capitalism and medieval monarchy. The plutocratic nature of this pre-apocalyptic world is laid bare by the answer Smith gives to the "sensible question" posed by one of his savage listener — that is, who got the food while Smith, as a university professor, would "just talk, talk, talk"?: "Our food-getters were called *freemen.* This was a joke. We of the ruling classes owned all the land, all the machines, everything. These food-getters were slaves. We took almost all the food they got, and left them a little so that they might eat, and work, and get us more food" (167). Yet even as Smith makes a good faith effort to confront his complicity in the ruling order, he still cannot help being a product of that society. Despite his sympathy

for the "freemen," his perception of the injustice done them continues to be clouded by pleasant reminiscences of the good life once led, aptly symbolized by the "lecture courses" he gave, which were so "very popular" (167).

But confront his complicity he must, since it is the very conditions imposed by the ruling classes that are responsible for the onset of the plague and the consequent degeneration of society into barbarism. Recollecting the growing number of epidemics of the pre-apocalyptic era, Smith notes how, in "spite of all these diseases, and of all the new ones that continued to arise, there were more and more men in the world." This "abysmal fecundity," as London called it, was nothing less than a concrete instance of Malthus' doctrine at work. According to Malthus, increases in population eventually outpaced available food resources, a notion which helped Darwin formulate his theory of natural selection. But Malthus' doctrine affected more than Darwin. It also influenced Marx, who argued that the imbalance between population and subsistence was intensified rather than alleviated by technological progress. Or, as Smith frames it, "because it was easy to get food," "the more men there were; the more men there were, the more thickly were they packed together on the earth; and the more thickly they were packed, the more new kinds of germs became diseases." Between his firsthand observations of disease in the poverty-stricken, overcrowded East End of London and his personal experience of tropical illnesses,[22] London had more than his share of personal knowledge upon which to draw for the fantastic scenario outlined by Smith of the plague's origin:

> There were warnings. Soldervetzky, as early as 1929, told the bacteriologists that they had no guaranty against some new disease, a thousand

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[22] London's worst run-ins with tropical diseases are described in his letters of October 25 and December 22, 1908. Each details illnesses picked up by him, Charmian, his valet, and the crew in the Solomon Islands while aboard *The Snark*. London writes that he was "the sickest of anybody on board," having "accumulated several new and alarming diseases, two of which have been utterly unheard-of by any white man I have met in the Solomons" (*Letters* 754). The editors note "JL suffered from infected open sores, or yaws, malarial fever, two fistulas, and pellagra" (456 n. 2). The progress and decline of his physical maladies appear in various letters over the next year. Later, London would come across Charles Woodruff's *Effects of Tropical Light on White Men*, which ostensibly explained to London's satisfaction his afflictions (774 n. 2). Sources in popular culture and history for his image of disease are manifold. For one historical overview of plague itself, however, see McNeill 208-58.

> times more deadly than any they knew, arising and killing by the hundreds of million and even by the billion. You see, the micro-organic world remained a mystery to the end ... For all they knew, in that invisible micro-organic world there might be as many different kinds of germs as there are grains of sand on this beach. And also, in that same invisible world it might well be that new kinds of germs came to be. It might be there that life originated, the 'abysmal fecundity,' Soldervetzky called it, applying the words of other men who had written before him ... " (170)

In this bacteriological description, London reshapes a theme already touched upon in "The Red One": the parasitical underside of evolution. The "abysmal fecundity" responsible for the scarlet plague, which kills even the scientists "in their laboratories" (172), is used explicitly by London to point out the fearful uncontrollability of organic life.

Drawing on Malthusian and Darwinian population-to-food ratios, London anticipates the *The Scarlet Plague* in his essay "The Human Drift," in which he provides what amount to his own horrific solution to the problem of overpopulation. In "Drift," London argues that while "[u]ndreamed efficiencies in food-getting may be achieved," "soon or late, man will find himself face to face with Malthus' grim law." "Somewhere in the future is a date when man will face, consciously, the bitter fact that there is not food enough for all of him to eat" (*The Human Drift* 19). Overpopulation eventually must lead to famine. But even if this Malthusian dictum should not come to pass, there is always disease to relieve the pressures of overpopulation, for there are always "drifts in the world of micro-organisms, hunger quests for food" (21) sure to arise in "crowded populations." With these "new drifts of hungry life seeking to devour us" (22), humanity is reinserted into the natural order as prey, as well as predator, no less subject to the whims of Nature and its random organic developments than the rest of organic life. In using an overheated expression like "abysmal fecundity" to capture the yeasty character of existence, London emphasizes the terrible price paid by our insertion into that Darwinian order.

But he is careful to note that, while disease may reinsert humanity in Nature, responsibility for its outbreak must still be laid at the doorstep of modern civilization. After all, in *The Scarlet Plague,* it is the ruling classes that, by crowding the ruled, unwittingly speed up the evolution of predatory micro-organisms and thus hasten the outbreak of disease. Nor is Smith so blind as to exonerate the ruling classes of responsibility for the post-apocalyptic barbarism under which the world suffers. As Smith puts it, "In the midst of our civilization, down in our slums and labor-ghettos, we had bred a race of barbarians, of savages; and now, in the time of our calamity, they turned upon us like the wild beasts they were and destroyed us." Hardly the enlightened Marxists, not only do these new barbarians destroy their rulers, but they destroy "themselves as well," inflaming "themselves with strong drink" and committing "a thousand atrocities," all while "quarreling and killing one another in the general madness" (179).

The result is the rise of the Chauffeur, the atavistic representative of this new world order. A "large, dark, hairy man, heavy-jawed, slant-browed, fierce-eyed," "narrow" and "suspicious," the Chauffeur is a "brute, a perfect brute," an "iniquitous, moral monster, a blot on the face of nature" (188). Freed from the oppression of his plutocratic superiors, the Chauffeur reveals himself to be no exemplar of a chivalric proletariat. After the devastation of the plague, for example, he takes for his wife the daughter of a magnate. But no princess is she to him. Instead, repeatedly beating her "with those terrible fists of his," he makes "her his slave" (190). Smith himself only has scorn for the Chauffeur, and his "talk about ... motor-cars, machinery, gasoline, and garages" as well as "his mean pilferings and sordid swindlings of the persons who had employed him" (188). But, as the Chauffeur acutely retorts, "'You had your day before the plague ... but this is my day, and a damned good day it is. I wouldn't trade back to the old times for anything'" (191). It is, indeed, the Chauffeur's day.

Yet, while there is no sympathy for the Chauffeur, who is all Smith says, there is none extended to Smith either, who, as cultured as he is, is revealed to be neither as

heroic nor as civilized as he thinks himself. In the treatment of capitalist plutocracy as a breeding ground for barbarism, London not only points to the creation of barbarians among the lower classes, but also suggests how thin veil of savagery behind which the ruling classes hide, a savagery that emerges after the plague strikes. This conflict between and confluence of savagery and culture figure most markedly in Smith himself. Honor and nobility, the fruits of acculturation, for example, swiftly give way to cowardice once Smith is confronted with the Chauffeur's brutality and superior strength (191). But Smith's accession to this new order can't mask the savage lack of restraint that always underlay the habits of the ruling classes.

Take Smith's gluttony at the tale's opening, an adumbration of later revelations of his plutocratic sensibility. At the mention of food, "his old eyes" shine "greedily" (158), as he "sniff[s] eagerly" at the campfire to which he is brought. A certain black humor, typical of London, assumes control as Smith burns himself on a too-hastily-eaten hot mussel. Yet, even in spite of this warning, his eyes continue to burn "with greediness as a large crab" is placed before him, from which he takes a bite only to find himself spitting pieces of an empty shell — much to the delight of the young savages, who have in their savage cruelty taken advantage of his importunate hunger. When finally he is served, we are embarrassingly invited to watch as he "snuffled and muttered and mumbled, making almost a croon of delight, as he began to eat" (161). And once he finishes his meal, we find him wearied and overstuffed, having not unexpectedly "eaten too much" (162). Despite his pretensions to culture, Smith exhibits no less restraint than his savage compatriots. Instead, fed without having to do much, he comes to resemble not only his former, plutocratic employers, but the Chauffeur as well, who forces his enslaved wife to "gather the firewood, build the fires, cook, and do all the degrading camp-labor" (190). Not that Smith uses same brutal means to receive the benefits that he does. Instead his situation serves as a sad parody of these other, more savage forms of exploitation.

That there is something of the savage in Smith, there can be no doubt. London, however, refuses to let matters stand at that, relishing instead the irony of exploiting the degree to which the seeds of civilization are to be found in that avatar of savagery, the Chauffeur. In speculations on the prospects of re-civilization, Smith, blind to the ironies of the pre- and post-apocalyptic worlds he and the Chauffeur inhabited, laments the slowness of that progress:

> "But it will be slow, very slow; we have so far to climb. We fell so hopelessly far. If only one physicist or one chemist had survived! But it was not to be, and we have forgotten everything. The Chauffeur started working in iron. He made the forge which we use to this day. But he was a lazy man, and when he died he took with him all he knew of metals and machinery. What was I to know of such things? I was a classical scholar, not a chemist. The other men who survived were not educated. Only two things did the Chauffeur accomplish, the brewing of strong drink and the growing of tobacco."

In this little twist of fate, by lodging the dream of civilization in the atavistic savage, London piles up the ironies of Smith's post-apocalyptic world. By virtue of his barbarian breeding under a plutocratic order, the Chauffeur is left behind as the only survivor knowledgeable in the mechanical arts upon which civilization is founded. Because of his work with cars, in particular, he logically becomes the first blacksmith. This development stands in ironic contrast to Smith, whose training as a "classical scholar" rather than a "chemist" underscores the uselessness of his humanistic learning amidst the harsh realities of a less refined existence.

Yet even as the Chauffeur represents the only hope for re-civilization, he also embodies the sins of that same civilization. His legacy is thus a morally mixed one, as he introduces with metallurgy the "brewing" of alcohol and "growing of tobacco," sins encouraged by the barbaric existence under a "civilized," plutocratic regime. In him are thus placed, by virtue of his pre-apocalyptic victimization, the frustrated hopes of a utopian society, in him are embodied the blessing and curse of civilization.

But then again much the same might be said of Smith, insofar as he too represents the promise and curse of civilization. Intelligent and sympathetic, gluttonous and cow-

ardly, he unknowingly gives notice of his capacity for civilization and savagery in his concluding remarks to the child-savages who surround him. In his warning against the "medicine-men," who "call themselves *doctors,*" but "in reality ... make for superstition and darkness.... are cheats and liars.... and ... strive to rule us" (195), Smith officiates as a representative of civilization, his tirade against medicine-men and religion bespeaking London's materialism and cynical view of organized religion and religious faith, as well as the broader popular and anthropological disparagement of savage superstition.[23] In Smith's formulation, rationality must prevail over superstition if civilization is to reemerge. But, like the legacy of the Chauffeur, Smith's advice is adulterated by an unacknowledged savagery, as he expatiates to the boys on the wonders of gunpowder. Fondly wishing he had the formula to it, Smith snarls "[t]hen would I make powder, and would I kill Cross-Eyes and rid the land of superstition" (195). Unwittingly, Smith reintroduces into his dream of civilization, one of the very weapons that en-savages civilization, a gesture ironically made in the name of restoring civilization by ridding it of medicine-men. In advocating the elimination of savagery through savagery, Smith gives voice to the very barbarism he condemns, aligning him not only with the Chauffeur, but intertextually with Bassett, the butterfly collector who goes "native."

In *The Scarlet Plague,* London realizes in fantastic fictional form what he had struggled to represent in the realism of *The Sea-Wolf* and *Martin Eden.* Only, instead of attacking individualism directly, as he does in the latter two, he takes up the banner against the anti-democratic tendencies of capitalism through subtler means. Whereas in "The Red One," the cannibalism of savage society serves as the distorted alter-ego of hubristic individualism, in *The Scarlet Plague,* London is more explicit about how capitalism itself systematically generates a barbaric state. Once again, savage and

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[23] In several letters, London makes clear his profound materialism. See *Letters* 270, 877, 951, 1091, 1339. On the question of faith itself, see note 19. With respect to organized religion, London was generally contemptuous. For some of his more disputatious replies to various religious ideologues, see *Letters* 864-66, 1453-54, 1470. On the disdainful anthropological image of primitive superstition in popular literature, see Street, 154-85.

civilized states are linked through the medium of natural selection. In "The Red One," the mediating factors are biology and religious yearning; in *The Scarlet Plague,* that factor is economics. In either case, the link between human and savage is firmly established by the potential for regression, a potential that, in Lamarckian fashion, is readily reinforced by the dictates of civilized life gone awry. The rationalized hubris of science and the exploitativeness of capitalism join hands to to provide the cultural drive to barbarism London distinguishes in modern society. While this fear of cultural degeneration was only reluctantly admitted by an otherwise stoic and optimistic London, as part of the price of admission to the theater Darwin built, it was a fear whose role could not be dismissed.

Chapter Five
Eugenics and its Discontents in H. P. Lovecraft

The Strange Reception of Lovecraft

In contrast to Norris and London, Lovecraft poses quite a set of different problems for the formulation of an evolutionary gothic tradition. Whereas for the former two the question raised was whether the harsh realities of naturalism flowed within the gothic stream, for Lovecraft the question is less one of genre than of value, less one of does he write horror than one of whether he even merits inclusion in this cast of characters claimed to have played essential roles in the development of evolutionary horror in America.

The answer is by no means a simple one, given the split that has developed in his reception between academic and popular cultures, professors and aficionados, literary critics and Lovecraft's friends. Part of the difficulty lies with Lovecraft himself. A prolific letter-writer, he maintained long-term correspondences with unusual steadfastness. A sense of his output is conveyed by Lovecraft scholars Kenneth W. Faig, Jr. and S. T. Joshi, who note that "Lovecraft's letters dwarf, in sheer volume, the rest of his output combined. He wrote an estimated 100,000 letters, totalling several million words" (Joshi, *Four Decades* 14). All written by hand, his letters reached forty or fifty pages in length. Often packed with advice and encouragement for would-be authors, his letters helped create literally a new generation of "weird" fiction writers who would later commit themselves to the preservation, emulation, and dissemination of Lovecraft's work. Though Lovecraft died relatively young at the age of 46 in 1937 of a stomach disorder, his contemporaries — August Derleth, Donald Wandrei, Clark Ashton Smith, Fritz Lieber, J. Vernon Shea, Frank Belknap Long, Wilfred Branch Talman, Zealia B. Bishop, E. Hoffman Price, Catherine L. Moore, and Robert Bloch — proved more than capable of keeping his work in the public eye. Most significant, in this regard, was the

decision of August Derleth and Donald Wandrei to begin Arkham House, a publishing venture that struggled to keep the fiction of Lovecraft and his pulp contemporaries available.

One of the stranger permutations in the history of American pulp fiction writing, Lovecraft's adoption and promotion by fellow writers of horror has been the source of much commentary. Whereas Lovecraft and fellow pulp writer, Robert E. Howard, creator of Conan, could have found themselves in the dustbin of literary history like so many antebellum and postbellum popular writers before them, both were saved and promulgated.[1] The result was not only scores of literary imitations and cinematic spin-offs, but the generation of a large and loyal fandom outside the purview of academic sensibility.

Since his death, Lovecraft's legacy has proven an unusually tangled one, typical of a writer whose work has proven commercially and artistically usable by popular culture (in contrast to the more respectful approach to classical works). Nor is this tangled legacy a simple matter of stolen goods, for Lovecraft often actively encouraged colleagues and proteges alike to make use of his extraterrestrial histories and pantheon of mythical figures, both of which would would figure during his lifetime and after his death in the works of Clark Ashton Smith, Robert E. Howard, August Derleth, Robert Bloch, and Frank Belknap Long.[2] Since then, his influence has figured directly in the works of such popular science fiction and horror writers as Colin Wilson, Brian Lumley, Ramsey Campbell, Joseph Payne Brennan, Lin Carter, Fritz Leiber, Joanna Russ, Philip

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[1] While Lovecraft was by and large salvaged by Derleth and Wandrei, eventually finding himself on the back issue list of Ballantine books, it was up to fantasy writers Lin Carter and L. Sprague de Camp to do a similar service for Robert E. Howard, whose works have spawned more imitators and spin-offs in the form of novels, comic books, and movies than even Lovecraft's.

[2] Indeed, Lovecraft and his friends shared a wry enough sense of humor to use one another as protagonists in each other's stories. In one tale by Frank Belknap Long, Lovecraft appears as its hero (*SL II* 217). For another by Robert Bloch, Lovecraft gives express permission for a Lovecraft-like protagonist to be killed (*SL V* 156). Later Lovecraft would return the favor by to driving his narrator, coyly named Robert Blake, insane in his 1935 tale "The Haunter of the Dark."

José Farmer, Stephen King, Graham Masterton, Gene Wolfe, Gahan Wilson, Ed Gorman, and F. Paul Wilson.[3]

After the Arkham house printings, Lovecraft's work has found itself on the back-list of popular publishers. His short tales are frequently anthologized, while his letters, most of which are housed in the John Hay Library at Brown University, remain in print in a five-volume series from Arkham House. Foreign editions of his work abound, especially in France, where he is both popular and better regarded critically.[4] There are a number of small publications devoted exclusively to the study of his work and that of his contemporaries, while several B-grade films have been produced based on his novellas and tales.[5] His fiction has even generated several role-playing games.

However, unlike his embrace by popular readers, his reception among academics has been somewhat more mixed, posing serious questions about the relationship and differences between these two reading cultures. No matter how many popular, contemporary writers may sing his praises in essays and with imitations, it takes only one Jacques Barzun to put a nail in his literary coffin by asserting: "How the frequently portentous but unintelligible H. P. Lovecraft has acquired a reputation as a notable performer is explained only by the willingness of some to take the intention for the deed and by a touching faith that words put together with confidence must have a meaning" (qtd. in Cannon

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[3] See, for example, story collections compiled by Derleth (1969 and 1990), Berglund, Bloch, and Weinberg, as well as full-length novels and collections by Robert Bloch and Colin Wilson.

[4] Ballantine books in the United States and Panther books in Great Britain are responsible for Lovecraft's paperback circulation. In 1981, S. T. Joshi records 197 reprints of Lovecraft stories in anthologies (*H. P. Lovecraft and Lovecraft Criticism* 142-172). For foreign translations and editions, see 196-262. Like Poe's early and eager reception in France, the French, as Cannon notes, "can claim the honor of having been first to appreciate Lovecraft's worth" (H. P. Lovecraft 124). Cannon here refers to the 1972 publication of *Lovecraft, A Study in the Fantastic* by the highly regarded gothic scholar, Maurice Lévy.

[5] Current publications include *The Crypt of Cthulhu, Lovecraft Studies,* and *Studies in Weird Fiction.* Defunct magazines also devoted to Lovecraft included *The Arkham Collector, The Acolyte,* and *Nyctalops.* On films based on Lovecraft's works, see articles by Campbell, Rogers, Schweitzer, and Strick 19-21.

123).[6] Unfortunately the result of this academic view has been to distort the horror tradition by separating its popular from its academic reception, a distinction that has not gone unnoticed by Lovecraft scholars.[7] While it is true one can still find much scholarship on Lovecraft's life and work not only in the journals devoted to him but in studies by scholarly fans (some academic, some not), Lovecraft still remains outside the purview of the academic gothic — and this in spite of the ready admission by nearly all modern horror writers of his influence.[8]

There are several reasons Lovecraft is generally frowned upon by academic scholars of the gothic. Frequently he is chastised for his laborious overwriting and predictable endings, his lack of artistry figuring prominently in his use of pretentiously arcane words like "eldritch" and "noisome" as well as in his annoying habit of stringing together adjectives to achieve revolting effects rather than just showing what it is that is so revolting. Some have, moreover, attacked Lovecraft's personal life and opinions. His strange habits, nervous illnesses, overheated and highly personalized racism, vocal anti-eroticism, and apparent celibacy have all served as grist to the mill of those who would banish him to the netherworld of pulp fiction trash.[9]

But no responsible historian of gothic and horror literature can ignore the impact of Lovecraft on modern horror. Despite the apparent importance of Edgar Allan Poe in

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[6] An excellent summary of Lovecraft's reception is to be found in Joshi, *Four Decades* 1. Another troubling aspect of Lovecraft's reception has been his well-known racism, for which see note 10.

[7] See especially Cannon 124.

8 A quick sampling of major critical works on horror and fantastic literature illustrates Lovecraft's slim purchase in the academic gothic canon. Compare the distinct treatment Poe receives, while nary a word about Lovecraft, in the supposedly comprehensive studies by Elizabeth McAndrew, William Patrick Day, Neil Cornwell, Victor Sage, and James Twitchell. One critic, Donald Ringe, even suggests the American gothic, as he defines it, stops with Henry James. Of course, this isn't to say all is against Lovecraft, who is mentioned in more adventurous critical overviews of Rosemary Jackson, David Punter, Terry Heller, S. L. Varnado, and Manuel Aguirre. But these latter tend towards being exceptions, not the rule.

[9] Attacks and defenses of Lovecraft have been notable for the heat with which opponents have taken to their sides. For an exemplary attack, see Barclay 83-85. For an equally vehement defense, see Bloch's, "Introduction," in Lovecraft, *The Dunwich Horror* xv.

academic characterizations of the gothic tradition, to anyone who knows anything about American horror, Lovecraft is perhaps the most influential writer on its modern direction since World War II. To put it bluntly, the notion that Edgar Allan Poe is the father of American horror is more academic myth than historical reality. However, because this myth is one with a substantial reality in academia, it is at least worth some investigation, for it points not only to the essential difference between Poe and Lovecraft, but to the long misapprehended connection between them.

Despite his outspoken worship of Poe, Lovecraft differs significantly from him by grating even more than his predecessor against the Jamesian emphasis on psychological realism and complexity adopted by academia as the basis for literary quality. This emphasis, responsible for the "psychologization" of the gothic that eventually opened the pearly gates of academia to Poe and his ilk, is what has shut them on Lovecraft and his. Despite a common interest in horrifying readers, Lovecraft, unlike Poe, was far less taken with the terrors of aberrant psychology than in the horrifying prospects of yet unknown dystopian realities.[10] Notwithstanding apparent similarities between them, the work of each is really an inverted image of the other. Unlike Poe, whose concern lay with documenting those states of insanity that lead to horrifying ends, Lovecraft concentrates on those objects of horror that result in insanity itself. Indeed, even as his characters are driven insane, Lovecraft tenaciously skirts analysis of their psychopathological destinies, showing instead a pronounced interest in the object that affects the mind adversely than in the process of mental disintegration itself. And in expressing his disdain for the human mind, just so much further does he fall outside of the purview of Jamesian academic criteria.

However, we must not fool ourselves into thinking that Lovecraft sacrificed portrayals of psychological complexity simply because he was unable to handle them. Quite

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[10] There are, of course, notable exceptions, such as "The Tomb" and "The Rats in the Wall," both obvious tributes to Poe.

the contrary, Lovecraft purposely eschewed investigations of this presumed complexity because he thought the very humanistic values invested in such projects misguided.[11] For Lovecraft not only saw in the effort to understand and represent the complexity of the human mind a terrible waste of energy, but found justification for this position in the most unlikely of predecessors — Poe himself.

Poe's Child

Though academic critics do not recognize him as such, popular readers, writers, and Lovecraft scholars readily perceive in Lovecraft Poe's true inheritor.[12] Certainly Lovecraft saw himself as such, a position he intimates in the several letters he wrote, acknowledging Poe's presiding influence. As he notes to Reinhardt Kleiner, "When I write stories, Edgar Allan Poe is my model. I never choose normal subjects, and frequently deal with the supernatural"(*SLI* 19). Elaborating on this influence, he adds in a later letter to Kleiner: "Poe was my God of Fiction. I used to love the horrible and the grotesque, much more than I do now, and can recall tales of murderers, spirits, reincarnations, metempsychoses, and every shudder-producing device known to literature" (20).

Though Poe's influence is beyond dispute, what Lovecraft saw in him differs remarkably from what contemporary writers and critics have discerned in Poe's fictional art. Where for us, Poe has become the proleptic recorder in fictional form of the modern psychopathological condition, Lovecraft instead saw the first purveyor of a truly "weird" fiction, which in 1926 he defined in a letter to Wilfred Branch Talman: "As to what is

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[11] Consider in this regard Lovecraft's reservations about Freud and his preference for Adler (*SL I* 134). One of Lovecraft's more materialist suggestions for dream origins emerges in full-blown, fantastic form in "Dreams in the Witch-House." In this tale, dreams are essentially the incursions through space-time from other dimensions from which we are sensorially blocked in our waking states. Lovecraft's reinterpretation of dreams is drawn in part from his materialist reading, on which, see Joshi "The Sources for 'From Beyond.'"

[12] See in particular essays by Mabbot, Taylor, and Cerasini.

meant by 'weird', and of course weirdness is by no means confined to horror, I should say that the real criterion is *a strong impression of the suspension of natural laws or the presence of unseen worlds or forces close at hand"* (*SLII* 69). With regard to Poe, Lovecraft thus argues that, whereas "The Pit and the Pendulum" fails as an example of "weird" fiction because "the horrors are too patently *physical,* and of merely human origin" (69), "The Fall of the House of Usher," "Ligeia," "Fact in the Case of M. Valdemar," "Ms. Found in a Bottle," and "the later parts of *Arthur Gordon Pym"* (70) succeed because of the "strong impression" they leave "of the suspension of natural laws," the trademark of "weird" fiction.

But such a strange emphasis hardly appears unusual when considered in terms of Lovecraft's wider outlook. Throughout much of his life, Lovecraft had expressed a far greater interest in violations of natural law than in the laws of human conduct. As late as May of 1935, for example, he would write with complete conviction to fellow *fantasiste,* Catherine L. Moore, that in "the weird field.... the 'hero' of such a story is never a *person* but always a *phenomenon* or *condition,* the 'punch' or climax is not what *happens to anybody,* but *the realization that some condition contrary to actual law as we understand it has (fictionally) had a brief moment of existence"* (*SLV* 157). Having characterized himself as a writer of weird fiction who followed such rules, Lovecraft provides to fellow writer, Frank Belknap Long, one of the more interesting re-readings of Poe, one that in effect reorients our perspective on Poe by its clear opposition to those psychoanalytic approaches that would sweep, after Lovecraft's death, the academic study of Poe. For it is the type of re-reading that restores to Poe his materialist views. As Lovecraft puts it, "Poe is the apex of fantastic art" because "there was in him a vast and cosmic vision which no imitator has been able to parallel." His work was "totally devoid of the sensual, because his dominant excitant lay outside the domain of human relations altogether." For Poe stood in "awe of the atom in the presence of the infinite," exhibiting "the essentially *intellectual* wonder of one who looks out upon the ... abysses which en-

gulf the entire world, yet of which the sensually-minded are utterly unconscious." Though Lovecraft does admit there "may be something rather sophomoric in my intense and unalterable devotion to Poe; a devotion which has lasted for some twenty-five years without diminution, " he still regards him as "beyond anything this age can produce" as well as "America's sole contribution to the general current of world literature."[13] For his worth, according to Lovecraft, lies in his serving as "the father of most of the redeeming features of decadent literature" — its materialist ethos — a point lost on "the actual decadents" who "have failed to comprehend the magnificent and ultra-human point of view on which his unique creations are based" (*SL* II 173).

With such seemingly bizarre ideas about literary quality, Lovecraft was bound to be disdainful of most great modern literature. He was especially critical of nineteenth-century realism and early twentieth-century modernism. But his highly erratic notions of literary worth did not emerge out of a vacuum. Rather, they were determined by a number of personal and philosophical positions perfectly consonant with the era in which he lived, though his adoption of them would prove so extreme as to render his criteria for literary merit absurdly narrow-minded. Yet, within those criteria, his ideas did make a type of sense, suggesting how iconoclastic rather than ignorant Lovecraft was in his literary choices. That Poe should be graced with the honor of being the only major American contribution to world literature only makes sense if one takes into account the value

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[13] Lovecraft's recognition that his intense attachment to Poe was perhaps "sophomoric" should not entice us to overlook his intellectual accomplishments, for by no means were his reading and comprehension of literature sophomoric. He was fluent in Latin and a voracious reader of Roman literature and history. Though he had a particular penchant for eighteenth-century English writers, particularly Johnson, Swift, Addison, and Steele, he knew Shakespeare and Marlowe well enough to claim, albeit with the greatest reluctance, the superiority of Elizabethan literature to his cherished Augustan age. Of the British romantics, he was unusually attached to Keats. With regard to American letters, he knew well Cooper, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Emerson and Whitman, and had a special fondness for Irving (*SL I* 73, 334). He also read Tolstoy, Dickens, and Thackery, though he didn't much care for their brand of realism; Dostoyevksy, on the other hand, he greatly admired (73, 97), as he did such French writers as Hugo, Baudelaire, Mallarme, and Valery. He kept as up-to-date as he could with work of Upton Sinclair, Theodore Dreiser, H. L. Mencken, and H. G. Wells (284) and with the popular fare of Ben Hecht, Edward Guest, and Robert Chambers (284). But he responded perhaps with the greatest ambivalence to the modernism of Eliot, Stein, Joyce, and Yeats, admiring their brilliance of technique while despising their humanistic ethos (230).

Lovecraft attached to the depiction of violations of natural law and what such violations did to the human sense of self in a material universe. Fluent with the work of Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, and Haeckel, Lovecraft saw in the evolutionary and cosmological schemes worked out by these thinkers the essential insignificance of humanity within what was otherwise an infinite universe. Given his early interest in chemistry and life-long attachment to astronomy, Lovecraft's scientific materialism hardly comes as a surprise. To Frank Belknap Long, he recommended "Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* and Hugh Elliot's *Modern Science and Materialism*" to counteract Long's "placing too much credence in any vague and unexplainable force of 'life' beyond the ordinarily known mechanical forms." For, Lovecraft adds, though the "human brain represents a certain pattern of considerable elaborateness and complexity ... there is nothing 'remarkable' or 'unheard of' in its superiority." Rather, Lovecraft argues, "whenever we investigate the vague claims of those vitalists, Bergsonians, and 'Creative Evolutionists' who speak of the non-materiality, universality, and continuity of life, we find their conceptions basically and essentially *mythological and poetical."* In the end, they "have, and can have, no clear idea of what they really mean; but derive their images from allegory and obsolete metaphysics" (158-159). In letter after letter, as well as story after story, like sentiments are expressed, Lovecraft's basic materialism and continual devaluation of human life cropping up again and again as a warning against human hubris: "It still remains a fact that man is the most complex organism in this immediate part of the universe, but *what of it?* " (*SL IV* 136). True, humanity may be a more complex organism, but not one in any essential way "differentiated from the rest of molecular matter" (136).

While Lovecraft's materialism was not unusual for the time, what makes it peculiar is the intensity with which he applies it to life and literature alike. As literature in the late-Victorian, Edwardian, and early modernist period turned to the portrayal of human character and personality with a vehemence heretofore unknown, Lovecraft could only respond with a species of contempt. It wasn't that he didn't respect such writers as Joyce

and Dreiser for doing what they did within the parameters they had set for themselves, namely of accurately describing human behavior and thought and the forces that impinged upon them, be it through the objectivist lens of Dreiser or the subjectivist filter of Joyce. It was merely that given the relative insignificance of humanity, the intensity of introspection demanded by either narrative mode was to Lovecraft a type of highbrow decadence, a humanistic sensualism that valued human sensation and thought far above what either merited. Of Dreiser, for example, he writes to Long: "Dreiser ... is certainly a great artist of a sort. He is a genuine realist who can manage to give a certain dramatic ... march to the melange of sordidness in average existence." But, at the same time, the "amount of real interest in the draggled flounderings of a muddled lower-middle-class mind in the toils of social inhibition would seem to me to be definitely limited." True, "it may symbolise the writhings of man in the clutch of the infinite, but after the novelty of the analogy has worn off one loses patience with the spectacle of sheer, stupid, ox-like misery." Eventually, the "sodden and restricted perspective of the sort of people Dreiser knows and understands, comes to pall on a mind of more extended contacts, to whom the universe has a subtler perspective, and for whom it presents a vastly different and infinitely more etherealised set of problems and situations" (*SL* II 80). In Lovecraft's view, the insipid concentration on human concerns seemed an especially solipsistic direction to take in an age of Darwin and Einstein, each of whom, in expanding the universe, had diminished the human place in it. If modern fiction failed, it was in its having tightly focused on petty human concerns rather than cosmic ones. Modern fiction was at heart bathetic, making far more of human feeling and thought than either deserved. Much more interesting, as well as useful, on the other hand, was that brand of fiction which questioned the parameters of human knowledge about the universe and the place of humanity in it.

With such an anomalous view of literature, it was a simple task for Lovecraft to transform Poe from the much-criticized representer of overwrought psychopaths into the

progenitor of a didactically useful literature in an age of hubristic introspection. As Lovecraft argues, "I do not think that a man who is interested in human conduct can be an artist at all, that is, unless he forgets this interest when he takes up his pen for the purposes of art." This, in fact, is Poe's achievement, for if "Poe never drew a human character who lives in the memory, it is because human beings are too contemptible and trivial to deserve such remembrance." That is to say, "Poe saw beyond the vulgar anthropocentric sphere, and realised that men are only puppets; that events and circumstances are the only vital things" (*SL I* 137). Thus in one fell swoop does Lovecraft rescue Poe from the criticisms of realism by presenting him as the forebear of a modern literary determinism and materialism.

What is especially unusual about Lovecraft's description of Poe, however, is its uncanny similarity to the project of American naturalism. The treatment of human character and behavior as functions of a deterministic universe, the very universe Lovecraft himself believed in, draws Lovecraft far closer within the circle of the naturalism than even he may have realized. Like so many naturalists, Lovecraft also bought into the popular determinism that followed in the wake of Darwin. As he put it to Kleiner, "Determinism, which you call Destiny, rules inexorably; though not exactly in the personal way you seem to fancy." Rather, the " real fact is simply that every event in the cosmos is caused by the action of antecedent and circumjacent forces, so that whatever we do is unconsciously the inevitable product of Nature rather than of our own volition." Put another way, the "chain of appearances are [sic] as much a part of fate as the result, which the latter may be, and more; there is no such thing as a final result, since all cosmic existence is but an endless and purposeless chain beginning and leading nowhere." With such a grim view of the universe, Lovecraft logically comes to the anti-teleological conclusion that no "life has any meaning or central principle, a man is merely an infinitesimal fragment of that cosmic mess of matter which is the playground of capricious kaleidoscopic natural forces" (*SL I* 132-33). It is only by drawing such a dramatic connection

between his deterministic philosophy and the consequent insignificance of humanity that Lovecraft can even decry the bad faith of a naturalist like Dreiser. Hence the ambivalence of Lovecraft's response. Even as he admires Dreiser's ability to depict the sordidness of reality, he vituperates the boredom that inevitably accompanies this sordidness, proof of the Lovecraftian conclusion that the only truly interesting literature is that which bursts the deterministic rules responsible for that sordidness. If there is a radical separation between Lovecraft and the naturalists, it is in the strange irony that the only means by which a stultifying determinism may be overcome is through its fantastic violation. In cherishing violations of a material universe over and above human considerations, in replacing a dark dreary realism with a horrific but exciting fiction of the "weird," Lovecraft leaves once and for all the Jamesian camp of academic aesthetics to enter the world of popular standards by offering the very escapism popular readers indulge to escape their own determined lives.

Strange Confluence: Lovecraft and Naturalism

Despite Lovecraft's wide reading in American and European literature, in spite even of his familiarity with Dreiser, there is no evidence that he had been especially familiar with the fictional productions of Jack London and Frank Norris. This is not to say, of course, that Lovecraft did not know the work of either. But to suggest a direct link between them would be dubious at best. Nonetheless, all three — Norris, London, and Lovecraft — did read Poe. All three did hold slightly varying materialistic and deterministic positions. And all three were heavily influenced by post-Darwinian evolutionary theory.

Consider, for example, London and Lovecraft.[14] Differences between the two men could not be more clearly marked. London was extremely athletic and handsome, a

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[14] One link of literary influence between London and Lovecraft, at least, may be traced through Edgar Rice Burroughs. Burroughs, who had thought of writing a book-length biography of London (Porges

womanizer as well as a world traveler; Lovecraft was sickly, neither terribly handsome nor erotically inclined, and had been out of the United States only once.[15] London's prose was famed for its clear, simple, almost Spartan, journalistic style; Lovecraft's was a syntactically complex throwback modeled on the styles of such Augustan luminaries as Johnson, Addison, Steele, Swift, and Irving. London was a writer largely of naturalist adventure tales; Lovecraft's fictional productions were mainly tales of cosmic terror.

Yet despite these vast differences, there are a number of significant intellectual similarities.[16] Their early scientific reading is almost identical, both having been profoundly affected by the works of Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall, and Haeckel. Each in letters had recommended the writings of these distinguished scientists to friends and colleagues for a fully modern understanding of the world. Both acknowledged the influence of Nietzche, both adopted hard deterministic positions they readily contrasted to the vitalist views of creative evolutionists like Henri Bergson, and both in their fictions criticized the self-important image humanity held of itself.[17]

If there was a major difference in their philosophical thought, it was in the degree to which the teleology that invested London's philosophy absented itself from Lovecraft's. In contrast to the utopian-minded London, Lovecraft saw himself as an "indifferentist," as one who "*does not regard the quality of favourableness to man as any*

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278), also exerted a strong influence on the young Lovecraft (*Uncollected Letters* 2). Moreover, Robert E. Howard, Lovecraft's close contemporary, was heavily influenced by both London and Burroughs (Lieber 3). Meanwhile, Lovecraft did know the work of London's naturalist contemporary, Rudyard Kipling (Cannon 138 n. 4), though Lovecraft would claim that Kipling was at best only "tolerable" (*SL I* 73)

[15] Lovecraft's short trip to Quebec is recorded in *To Quebec and the Stars* 111-265.

[16] One rather out-of-the-way connection that merits mention is the circuitous link that existed between them through their friends. One of Lovecraft's most devoted colleagues was Clark Ashton Smith, California weird poet who stood as protege to a member of London's private circle, poet George Sterling. Lovecraft's correspondence with Smith, however, began in August of 1922, about six years after London died.

[17] For Lovecraft's views on Bergson, see above. For his recommended reading and his opinions on Nietzche, see *SL I* 87. For London's views, see previous chapter. On Nietzche's influence, however, see Bridgewater 163-70.

intrinsic mark of probability." In other words, the "real philosopher knows that, *other* evidence being equal, favourableness or unfavourableness to mankind means absolutely nothing as an index of likelihood, that is, that a future hostile to man is precisely as probable as one favourable to him" (*SL IV* 40). What Lovecraft's anti-teleological position lacked that London's optimistic one held was that one influence which organized London's view, but held no sway in Lovecraft's, the thought of Herbert Spencer. Where in the Spencerian universe, the Darwinian struggle for existence eventually resulted in a utopian order, in the Lovecraftian, that struggle remained open-ended — the very position staked out by London's Wolf Larsen. The altruism that London lifted from Spencer to defend his socialism appears nowhere in Lovecraft's materialism.

This absence itself was the result of several major developments in the evolutionary debates of the 1920s, the origins of which lay in the eugenics of Charles Darwin's cousin, Francis Galton, and the final development and dissemination of August Weismann's germ-plasm theory.[18] Before Weismann, the most vexing question in evolutionary circles, presuming the theory of natural selection held true, had remained what caused the physical variations in species that led to the "survival of the fittest." In response to the disturbing implications of the apparent randomness and wastefulness of natural selection, Darwin's lack of a definitive answer opened the gates to more comforting alternatives like theistic evolutionism and neo-Lamarckism.[19] The appeal of neo-Lamarckism in particular was especially obvious to political and social reformers, like sociologist Frank Lester Ward, who found in it a way to to turn Darwinism against the laissez-faire policies of social Darwinists, who saw in natural selection ample justification

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[18] Haller notes "Weissman, like Galton earlier, rejected inheritance of acquired characters because of dissatisfaction with many of its implications. But Weismann went beyond Galton in providing a specific biological alternative to explain heredity" (59).

[19] Though an alternative to the seeming randomness of natural selection, orthogenesis was not a particularly comforting one.

for exploitative capitalism.[20] As reformers conceived it, so long as characteristics were acquirable in a lifetime, there was still hope. Implement the right political reforms and those environments once responsible for poverty, criminality, and ignorance would now produce citizens who, regardless of race or ethnicity, would be naturally inclined to do good and work hard.

This conflict between neo-Lamarckian reformers and social Darwinists, however, shifted with the introduction of the germ-plasm theory by Weismann, one of the more vocal opponents of neo-Lamarckism. In an effort to end the nonsense of neo-Lamarckism, Weismann performed the rather notorious experiment of surgically removing the tails of mice over several generations. As Weismann reasoned, according to Lamarckian principles, cut off enough tails and a mouse would eventually have to be born without this unused appendage. But, as he predicted, no such change developed as mice continued to be born with their tails. Thus arose the germ plasm theory, which argued that all the biological information for organic development inhered in the germ plasm of the sex cells rather than in the somatic cells of the body, as so many neo-Lamarckians had claimed. Because in this plasm was located all we were and ever would be, bodily variations could stem only from mutations to the plasm itself.

The germ plasm theory found confirmation in the popularized versions of the mutation theory, which had been deduced by Hugo DeVries from his work on plant hybridization and by Thomas Hunt Morgan from his experiments on fruit flies. In an effort either to confirm or disprove the recently re-discovered work of monk Gregor Mendel on plant cross-fertilization, DeVries and Morgan's experiments helped lay the groundwork

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[20] See Hofstadter, esp. 51-104, Russett 83-124, Bannister, Kaye, and Degler.

for the synthesis of evolutionary theory and population genetics, a connection that would not be fully formulated until Lovecraft's final years.[21]

Yet despite the great advances that were being made in the development of a greater understanding of human genetics and evolution, the more immediate effect had by the germ plasm and mutation theories on debates concerning the human condition were anything but salutary. Once it had been demonstrated that traits acquired in an individual organism's lifetime were *not* passed on biologically to its progeny, a dark shadow fell across ideological debates concerning the relationship between human behavior and genealogical origin. In contrast to the reformist potential that had inhered in neo-Lamarckism, there now arose the notion that not only were individuals the cumulative products of their unvaried, randomly generated genetic heritage, but more significantly, they were *stuck* within that heritage. Anatomy was destiny, only now with a vengeance.

These developments had a tremendous impact on ideologies of race and class.[22] The manifest character traits of the racially different and economically destitute were no longer indices to their genetic heritage, but the signs of an unalterable state. The unseemliness of the poor, the mentally handicapped, the colored, and the immigrant was not a passing phase, eradicated with a change in environment, but a permanent and incurable condition. With the triumph of the germ plasm and mutation theories came the ever more

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[21] On mutation theory, see Chap. 8 of Bowler, *Eclipse*. On the link between evolutionary theory and population genetics, otherwise known as the "Modern Synthesis," see Julian Huxley, Mayr, and Dobzhansky.
There's much to suggest that even if Lovecraft had known of the "modern synthesis," it would not have altered his views in any substantial way. This is because the major change in thinking about race came not from discoveries in genetics, but from the war that was being waged by cultural anthropologists Franz Boas and Alfred Kroeber on evolutionary anthropology (Degler 59-104). Yet despite the death blow cultural anthropology was delivering to racial anthropological thought, Lovecraft appears to have been unfamiliar with these developments in anthropology. Moreover, even if he had, he would probably have remained immune to them.

[22] For an excellent overview, see Higham, who discerns three distinct patterns in the rise of American nativism — anti-radicalism, anti-Catholicism, and Anglo-Saxonism. Each pattern was indulged by Lovecraft, especially in his early years. After the devastating effects of the Great Depression, however, his politics would become more socialistic, though not necessarily pro-democratic. Any such change, alas, cannot be claimed for his biological views, despite the diminution in the abusiveness of his expression of them in the 1930s.

clamorous call of the eugenicists, whose approach to social ills eschewed the sunny optimism of turn-of-the-century reformers. Inasmuch as altering the environment could do nothing to improve the lot of America's unwanted, extreme measures had to be taken, such as mandatory intelligence testing, legalized separation, deportation, sterilization, and, if need be, outright elimination. Only these could save a superior human stock from an inferior.[23]

The effect of this hardened determinism was to increase the paranoia, particularly racial paranoia, of Americans. Like London, whose racial paranoia led him to impose a ceiling on the neo-Lamarckian development of altruistic instincts by non-whites, thus barring them from the benefits of socialism, Lovecraft indulged an urge to raise his Saxon stock to an unassailable position of superiority. As early as 1915, Lovecraft had adopted as a scientific "truth" the superiority of the Saxon: "Science shows the infinite superiority of the Teutonic Aryan over all others." This notion, according to Lovecraft, was but all the more reason to avoid that "racial mixture" which could only "lower the result," a prospect "even more repulsive to consider than the elaborately staged racial suicide" of the war in Europe (*SL I* 17).

Fortunately Lovecraft had little need to worry about the prospect of "race suicide" for himself. Having failed entrance into the armed services, Lovecraft was rescued from the threat of his genetic stock wasted by being killed. Of more pressing concern to him, however, was the quality of that stock, the value of which he attempted to gauge by tracing it several generations back. In a letter of 1921 to friends Alfred Galpin and Maurice Moe, Lovecraft defined himself as being "essentially a Teuton and barbarian; a Xanthroic Nordic from the damp forests of Germany or Scandinavia, and kin to the giant chalk-white conquerors of the cursed, effeminate Celts ... " (*SL I* 156). This paranoid pride in

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[23] For overviews of American eugenics, see Higham 149-57 and 273-77, Gould 158-73, Degler 32-55, Haller 3-176, Ludmerer 1-165, and all of Pickens. On racism more generally during the interwar years, see Banton, Barker, Gosset, Cravens,Poliakov, and Stepan.

his ancestry would be tested by two rather startling discoveries among his family records. First, that his great-great-grandmother was a "Welsh gentlewoman of unmixed Celtick blood!" (*SL II* 181), and second that his "great-great-great-grandmother," a certain "*Mary Trefusis,*" was also "a full-blooded Cornish Celt!" (183). Even as Lovecraft interlards this discussion of his family tree with such playful disclaimers as "I *swear* that the Celtick taint hath not reached my rural Saxon heart" (181) or "Yes, after all, there's a lot of the good old Saxon left in Grandpa Theobald [Lovecraft's nickname for himself], and I defy any young whipper-snapper to philosophise it away!" (185), these defenses cannot but fail to mask a very real fear of "the cursed, effeminate Celts."

Not that such paranoia was atypical of the time. On the contrary, the hard determinist line adopted by eugenicists thrived on such personal insecurities by capitalizing on the fears of an America in transition. For Lovecraft, however, there was a personal stake in the matter, his troubled family history and personal medical conditions feeding the desperate search for genealogical confirmation of his biological worth. As James Turner points out, when Lovecraft's father "broke down" in 1892, Lovecraft believed it was "of a paralytic stroke." But "hospital records" indicated "paresis," of which Lovecraft's father subsequently died, hospital-bound, in 1898 (*SL I* Introduction xxiv). His mother meanwhile spent two years in a sanitarium due to a "nervous illness." She died subsequently in May of 1921 during an operation for a "digestive trouble of sudden appearance" (*SL I* 133). Nor did Lovecraft fare much better. In addition to allergies to cold and seafood, he was beset "by nervous tensions, frequent and prolonged headaches, insomnia, and nightmares" (Introduction, xxiv).

Disturbed by his family's "nervous" history as well as by his own frail health, Lovecraft duly compensated for both through his golden ancestry. To Long, for example, though he could not "claim to be a 100% Teuton" — his "dark hair and eyes" forbidding him "that honour" — he was at least "content to survey" his "ample height and pallid complexion (bleach'd by the deep Saxon forests and Scandinavian snows) and

pronounce" himself "99.9% Teutonick," a "supposition...borne out" by his "coarse features — the rough-hewn physiognomy of a Viking warrior — " and his "enthusiastick response to warlike and imperious stimuli" (*SL I* 273-74). Such a clinical view of his Nordic pedigree, however, was not to stand alone. As a writer of "Nordick" imagination, Lovecraft was "naturally" inclined to supplement the salt of science with the spice of fantasy by recalling a time when "the world was ours, and the mountainous billows heaved with the Cyclopean rhythm of our barbarick chants and shouts of mastery!"

> By Woden, were not our deeds and battles, our victories and empires, all parts of a poem more wonderful then aught which Homer cou'd strike from a Grecian lyre? Ho! Yaaah! We are men! We are big men! We are strong men, for we make men do what we want! Let no man balk us, for our gods are big gods, and our arms and our swords are tough! Hrrrr! The stones of towns fall down when we come, and crows love us for the feast of dead men we give them. The lands shake with the thump of our feet, and hills grow flat when we stride up and down them. The floods are dry when we have drunk them, and no beasts are left when we have killed and gorged. By day we kill and seize, at dusk we feast and drink, by night we snore and dream big dreams of strange seas we shall sail, old towns we shall burn, stout men we shall slay, wild beasts we shall hunt, deep cups we shall drain, fat boars we shall tear limb from limb with our hands, and gnaw with our sharp teeth. Great Thor, but this is life! We ask no more! (275)

Though consciously cast in the purple prose of popular epic fiction, Lovecraft nonetheless intended that this fantasy stand as a testament to his genetic legacy. But irony is all one tastes as Lovecraft's imagined forebears are contrasted with the nervous gentleman who "should have matriculated at Brown University" in 1908, but was unable because he was still "prey to headaches, insomnia, and general nervous weakness, and ... an allergy to cold temperatures that made it physically dangerous for him to venture outdoors when the mercury fell below 20° Fahrenheit" (Introduction xxv). In spinning such fantasies, Lovecraft, unmarried and living with his mother at thirty because of his meager income, staves off the threat of personal degeneration by providing himself with a biologically

predetermined masculinity.[24] With a life so devoid of manly vitality, no surprise, as Maurice Lévy has so eloquently argued, Lovecraft "*dreamed himself* a giant with blue eyes" (30).[25]

Atavism and White Apes

The fear of effeminization, of the potential for physical degeneration was nothing new for an era preoccupied with the oppressive influence of the past. Lovecraft's obsession with his genealogical origins — even his passions for eighteenth-century British literature and colonial American architecture — were but reflections of the emphasis on origins laid by the hard determinism of his age. Hence his fascination with things "old," a fascination that permeates nearly all of his fiction, even his science fiction dystopics, with their extraterrestrial entities immensely more ancient than the human civilizations they threaten, as well as his more traditional horror tales, with their supernatural atavisms. Just consider *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward,* in which we meet the young Charles Ward, who has his identity literally stolen from him after he is murdered and replaced by the resurrected form of his great-great-great-grandfather and wizard extraordinaire, Joseph Curwen; or "The Tomb," where we are introduced to Jervas Dudley, a descendent of the extinct Hyde family, from whose cemetery vault he leaves each morning, after having slept in it, with a "suddenly acquired archaism of diction" and an eerily minute knowledge of the eighteenth century; or "The Rats in the Walls," in which we are invited to watch the sudden degeneration of the protagonist into the cannibalism of his aboriginal ancestors. But it is in one of Lovecraft's earliest stories, "Facts Concerning

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[24] By the time of the above fantasy, however, Lovecraft had met Sonia Greene, whom he would shortly marry only to separate from two years later without issue.

[25] Lévy also quite ably handles the issue of how Lovecraft's letter fantasies operate as overcompensations for his personal neuroses and physical failings (25-26). One might also note the one element missing from Lovecraft's Viking fantasy: sex. The rather difficult and trying issue of Lovecraft's asexuality has been a touchy topic for Lovecraft fans and critics alike. On Lovecraft's attitude toward eroticism which, Lévy quite rightly notes, is aligned with his fantasies of degeneration, see *SL I,* 106-07, 129, and 305

the Late Arthur Jermyn and His Family," that we find his hereditarian fears most clearly laid out.[26]

As Lovecraft well understood, for the horror of heredity to have its proper impact in a eugenic age, the secret, particularly the family secret, as a narrative trope, had to be handled with care, a point that became apparent in the brouhaha that shortly preceded the publication of "Arthur Jermyn." When it was first published in *Weird Tales* in 1921, "Jermyn" had been retitled, much to Lovecraft's dismay, "The White Ape." Aside from objecting to the crass commercialism of the new title, Lovecraft immediately recognized that the new title upset the narrative construction of the tale by revealing its horrific premise at the very beginning. Rest assured, Lovecraft informed *Weird Tales* editor, Edwin Baird, had he entitled a story *The White Ape, there would be no ape in it*" (*SL I* 294). In "Arthur Jermyn," secrecy was essential to the success of the tale; it was the key, as Lovecraft properly intuited, to the horrific oppressiveness of a biologically determined past.

To achieve its horrific impact, however, "Arthur Jermyn" uses the detective fiction form, since only through it could Lovecraft properly exploit the dark power of the family secret. Deeply influenced by Doyle's Sherlock Holmes mysteries as well as Poe's horror tales alike, Lovecraft conspicuously joins together the suspenseful, fact-finding narrative thrust of the detective tale with Poe's sage advice for the achievement of a unified effect to deliver at the end of "Arthur Jermyn" its dark, shattering epiphany[27]. To catch our interest Lovecraft cleverly baits his hook by opening "Arthur Jermyn" rather dramatically as we are made witnesses to the night Arthur "soaked himself in oil and set fire to his clothing ... after seeing the boxed *object* which had come from Africa" (49).

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[26] On Lovecraft's hereditarianism in his fiction, see Bender; Lévy 73-78; de Camp, "H. P. Lovecraft and H. S. Chamberlain" and "Lovecraft and the Aryans"; Keller; Mosig; St. Armand, "H. P. Lovecraft: New England Decadent."

[27] For Doyle's influence on Lovecraft, see *SL I* 20 and Cannon, "The Return of Sherlock Holmes."

Little else thereafter are we offered, except vague hints from Lovecraft's implied narrator that "Life is a hideous thing," and that "Science, already oppressive with its shocking revelations, will perhaps be the ultimate exterminator of our human species — if separate species we be." Ominously we are informed, if we "knew what we are, we should do as Sir Arthur Jermyn did" (49).

But what is it that we are that Jermyn discovered? What is this oppressive secret that is "the ultimate exterminator" of humanity? Whatever it is, the answer, as "Arthur Jermyn" suggests, is a matter for the genealogical detective. The solution to Jermyn's self-immolation, for example, lies far back in the past, its origin in those early explorations of the Congo by his great-great-great-grandfather, Wade Jermyn. Our first clues concern his adventurous ancestor's return from his second trip there with a son and a wife, the latter of whom he isolates in a "remote wing" of the Jermyn House to keep her from public view. Later Wade Jermyn returns with his mysterious wife to the Congo, where she dies. In these events are the seeds of Arthur's horrifying act, and only after the tale has fully unwound, with generation after generation of male Wades passing through, do we come to Arthur's nerve-shattering discovery. For in the package sent to him from Africa containing what is reported to have been a "white ape-goddess" from the ruined city of a "nameless, unsuspected race of jungle hybrids" (54), Arthur discovers the mummified remains of his great-great-great grandmother. This is the "*object* in the box" that drives Arthur to his horrible end. Arthur's hybrid origins — at first suggested by Wade Jermyn's "bizarre conjectures on a prehistoric white Congolese civilisation" (49) and drunken mutterings in local taverns of "creatures half of the jungle and half" of a "forgotten city" (50) that "sprung up after the great apes had overrun" it (51) — are by the tale's close confirmed. The rumored hybrids are not rumors at all, as the white goddess is transformed from jungle myth into biological fact: "The stuffed goddess was a nauseous sight, withered and eaten away, but it was clearly a mummified white ape of some unknown species, less hairy than any recorded variety, and infinitely nearer

mankind — quite shockingly so" (58). What had so worried Arthur about his ancestry becomes a grim reality as we learn of the "golden locket" bearing the "Jermyn arms" (58) that had been draped about the white goddess' neck.

With the mystery solved, the implications of the vague introduction come clear; the way in which science may oppress us with its discoveries has been revealed: we are not a separate species from primate. Rather we are the inheritors of a simian past, the subjects of a determined nature as only members of the animal world can be. Despite his accomplishments as an explorer and anthropologist, Arthur Jermyn discovers himself to be, in the most literal sense, no better than an ape. And bolstering that connection between Arthur and his ancestor was the emerging focus in evolutionary thought on missing links.

While many of the basic elements of the hard hereditarian determinism of the eugenics movement had been anticipated by the racialist ideologies of pre-Darwinian polygenists and their immediate post-Darwinian descendants, it wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century that the determinist, materialist, and hereditarian strands of race theory finally found themselves woven together. It was this tapestry of thought that was Lovecraft's legacy, and as his legacy, it inevitably colored his reading of evolutionary thinkers. Though Lovecraft knew Darwin's work well and was probably drawn to those conclusions in *Descent of Man* (1871) and *Emotional Expression in Animals* (1871) on the consanguinity of human and primate, the driving force behind "Arthur Jermyn" is more likely to have been Huxley's *Man's Place in Nature* (1863). In contrast to *Descent,* which focused on the hypothetical effect of natural selection on human evolution, *Man's Place* made its case for the fundamental similarity of human and primate through the use of comparative anatomy. The number of similarities, Huxley concluded, could not help but lead to the conclusion that human and ape shared a common ancestry. But as for the type of solid evidence that could only come from the fossil record in the form of a "missing link," Huxley was less than convinced by what contemporary paleoanthropol-

ogy had to offer. Fossil discoveries by 1863 were too few and, as Huxley noted with respect to the most exciting of them — skull fragments found in the Neander valley near Dusseldorf — in "no sense ... can the Neanderthal bones be regarded as the remains of a human being intermediate between Men and Apes. At most they demonstrate the existence of a man whose skull may be said to revert somewhat to pithecoid type" (205).[28]

But it would be left to another major influence on Lovecraft, Ernst Haeckel, to popularize for good the idea of a "missing link" and the need to locate evidence of that link. As Haeckel theorized in his popular treatises on evolutionary theory, it was only a matter of time before the expanding field of archaeology yielded up this missing link. Indeed, there was enough popularity in the idea for one such explorer, Eugene Dubois, to claim that distinction for his 1891 Java man tooth, skullcap, and femur (which distinction, ironically enough, Haeckel denied him in 1895).[29] However, the notion of a missing link would have to await Arthur Smith Woodward's announcement in 1912 of the Piltdown man before it could serve Lovecraft's popular audience. The sad and convoluted story of what subsequently came to be known as the Piltdown hoax would exert, until its debunking in 1953, an unusually strong and unfortunately distorting influence on physical anthropology for years to come.[30] In Lovecraft's era, however, it offered the eugenically minded a stunningly powerful weapon with which to promulgate their pet theories of racial difference. More specifically, because the Piltdown man featured a

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[28] Irrespective of Huxley's disclaimers concerning the little light thrown by the fossil record on the consanguinity of human and primate, Lovecraft no doubt would have agreed with Huxley's race-based conclusion that the Neanderthal skull most closely resembles that of contemporary Australians (205).

[29] Haeckel first suggested the possibility of a missing link in 1866 in his *Generelle Morphologie,* long before the recovery of many of the most significant hominid fossils. Still, his hypothetical *Pithecanthropus alalus* had struck a chord with those anxious to find that link. One such was Dubois, about whose discoveries there was debate whether the skullcap and femur, the two remains upon which he based his reconstruction, belonged to the same skeleton. See on the the missing link and human fossil history more generally Bowler, *Theories* 21-40, Brown 9-21, Eldridge and Tattersall 67-86, Reader 20-81, Millar 13-100, Moore 233-312, and Wendt 191-231, 291-301, and 383-423.

[30] On Piltdown man, in addition to what is cited in note 29 above, see also Millar 114-49, Blinderman 3-63, and Spencer *Piltdown* 29-131.

rounded human skull with an ape-like jaw, it not only helped bolster popular belief in a missing link, but supported the reintroduction by eugenicists of older ideas, like facial angle indexes, for determining the proximity of apes and non-whites.[31] It was the type of discovery that furthered the eugenics movement by fueling the anxieties about miscegenation of its adherents.

The possibility of a missing link, as suggested by the increase in the number of human fossils recovered, did more than just lend support to evolutionary claims of human descent from primate. It also realized in concrete form eugenicist concerns about human origins. In the Piltdown man and other such fossil discoveries lay the seed of Lovecraft's fantastic premise in "Arthur Jermyn" that species can interbreed. Recalling older myths of black-primate crossings, neanderthals and Piltdown man both breathed new life into the popular belief in the proximity of primates and people, a belief Lovecraft capitalizes on in his image of a white Congolese civilization that is overrun by apes and with whom its members can interbreed.[32]

Curiously enough, despite the impetus provided by new fossil discoveries to the resuscitation of images of black-primate miscegenation, Lovecraft is artful enough in his profound racism to rework this obvious association into something just as racist, but presumably far more frightening to his supposed white audience. As a result of white-ape interbreeding, a phenomenon typically reserved only for blacks, Lovecraft transforms the white ape goddess into the clearest testimony of human-primate connection by linking the

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[31] Of the Piltdown man, who would make his appearance in "The Rats in the Walls," Lovecraft notes to Frank Belknap Long: "No line betwixt 'human' and 'non-human' organisms is possible, for all animal Nature is one — with difference only in degree; never in kind." He adds, "I know that the tendency is to give a separate classification to the Neanderthal — Piltdown-Heidelberg type — using the flashy word 'Eoanthropus' — but in truth this creature was probably as much a man as a gorilla. Many anthropologists have detected both negroid and gorilla resemblances in these 'dawn' skulls, and to my mind it's a safe bet that they were exceedingly low, hairy negroes existing perhaps 400,000 years ago" (*SL II* 258).

[32] Lovecraft would use the idea of a "white Congolese civilization" again in his "Picture in the House." In this tale, his narrator comes across a copy of Pigafetta's *Regnum Congo*, in which he finds "engravings ... drawn wholly from imagination and careless descriptions" of "negroes with white skins and Caucasian features" indulging their cannibalistic appetites (*Dunwich Horror* 119).

white Jermyns directly to their primate ancestry. Instead of mediating, as London does in "The Red One," white evolutionary ancestry through blacks, Lovecraft employs fantasy to suggest the inherent power of bodily reproduction to drag even the most "advanced" human species down to the level of primate.[33]

The horrific vista opened by this image of the evolutionary origin of white humanity from primate is driven home by the biologically determined appearance and behavior of the Jermyn line. Consider the effect had by Wade Jermyn's tabooed relations with his white ape goddess on the physiques and physiognomies of his descendants. Philip Jermyn, Wade's son, despite "a strong physical resemblance to his father" in "frame," proves "small, but intensely powerful,"; indeed, of such "incredible agility" that he soon acquires a "reputation for feats of strength and climbing" (51). As for Philip's son, Robert, though he turns out "[t]all and fairly handsome," he does exhibit "a sort of weird Eastern grace despite certain slight oddities of proportion" (51). And Robert's children? Two are "never publicly seen on account of deformities in mind and body," while his other child, Nevil, proves a "singularly repellent person" (52). Luckily Nevil's child, Alfred, exhibits no such obvious deformities, just a fascination with a circus gorilla that eventually mauls him to death. But it is to Alfred's son, Arthur, the "hero" of our tale, that the greatest stroke of misfortune falls. Though five generations removed from his white ape ancestress, still "Arthur's case was very striking": "It is hard to say just what he resembled, but his expression, his facial angle, and the length of his arms gave a

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[33] This is not to say, however, that despite Lovecraft's levelling of the races, "Arthur Jermyn" is devoid of racist content. Aside from contemporary popular associations of blacks and primates, consider the effect of the testimony given by the "aged chief called Mwanu" (54). Though he claims not to know "what the white apelike creature could have been," he does think "they were the builders of the ruined city" (55), an assertion that contrasts the latter with those who clearly did not build them: black Africans. This is confirmed by Arthur who, upon discovering the remains of the decimated city, concludes quickly that though its "size must have been exaggerated, yet the stones lying about proved that it was no mere Negro village" (55). In a veiled manner Lovecraft attacks black intelligence through his suggestion that even the miscegenated products of whites and apes possess architectural skills superior to those of their black African neighbors. Nor does Wade Jermyn's conflicting account that the city was built before the coming of the interbred white apes argue with the contemporary eugenical belief that blacks were incapable of producing "cities," the surest sign of civilization. If there was any advanced lost civilization to be found in Africa, it could only have been built by prehistoric whites, even white apes.

thrill of repulsion to those who met him for the first time" (54). Cannily, Lovecraft draws on Petrus Camper's "facial angle index," often employed by eugenicists, to gauge Arthur's simian affinity with races obviously inferior to his New England pedigree. The degree to which Arthur suffers under the curse of his genetic inheritance emerges in Lovecraft's rather unfortunate attempt at black humor through the "whimsical comparison" (57) of the Belgian correspondent who has shipped Arthur the mummified ape: a "jocose suggestion" about a "certain resemblance as connected with the shrivelled face" that "applied with vivid, ghastly, and unnatural horror to none other than the sensitive Arthur Jermyn" (58).

Thus does the genetic loop that opens with a white ape ancestress close with Arthur's physical recapitulation of her, a loop that is reinforced by class-based biological adulterations that exacerbate Arthur's troubled origins. For this infusion of simian stock is followed immediately by violations of class-bound social contracts laid upon the Jermyns by their pedigree. Wade's sexual indiscretion is but the first in a series of sexual transgressions that contribute to a eugenical rewriting of the sins of the fathers. Son Philip, for example, "after succeeding to his title," marries "the daughter of his game-keeper, a person said to be of gypsy extraction." True to this break he makes with his class, he subsequently joins "the navy as a common sailor, completing the general disgust which his habits and misalliance had begun" (51). Grandson Robert, on the other hand, as an erudite scholar, chooses instead to follow in his father's anthropological footsteps. Suitably enough, he marries the "seventh Viscount Brightholme" (52). But, alas, even this infusion of noble blood is not enough to prevent the birth of two deformed children or Robert's second son, Nevil, from running away "with a vulgar dancer" (52). Nor does this class degeneration cease with Nevil, whose son, Alfred, after joining "a band of music-hall performers," marries, like his father, below his class — in this case, one of the performers. Only in this case he does his father one better by deserting "wife and child to travel with an itinerant American circus" (53).

Luckily, Arthur, unlike his irresponsible father and grandfather, turns out more like his great-grandfather Robert. He is a "poet and a dreamer," both "[g]ifted and learned." Yet, even though he is of a "poetic rather than scientific temperament," still he plans "to continue the work of his forefathers in African ethnology and antiquities" (53-54). But Arthur cannot eschew his heritage. For not only is he the recipient of a simian ancestry, but he is also the victim of a history of class degeneration, which was no small matter to an era in which class status served as an index to biological quality.[34] Instead of having the intrusive simianism under which the Jermyns labor dissipate over the spread of five generations, Lovecraft, with a heavy-handed emphasis on the power of heredity, has it prevail as it struggles to reproduce itself in the predetermined behaviors and sexual misalliances of the Jermyns. Double unlucky is Arthur, cursed not only by the potent heredity of his great-great-great grandmother, but by its equally effective manner of maintaining its biological grip on the family line through the infusion of the hereditary material of daughters of gypsy gamekeepers, "vulgar" dancers, and music hall performers.

Through the Jermyn's ancestry, its strange infectiousness and capacity to reproduce itself in spite of the diluting force of time, we witness the complete conquest of body over mind, heredity over environment. In a crassly biological "return of the repressed," in which unconscious memory is displaced by a genetic determinism, Freud stands undone as eugenics overtakes psychoanalysis, and what is latent is "blood" and what is manifest are violent rages, family desertions, and out-of-class marriages.

The victory of body over mind, of biology over free will and environment underscore Lovecraft's dual fascination and disgust with the horrors of biological degeneration. The effect of the invasion of one's biological integrity, of one's blood, by foreign elements that eventually coerce body and mind is exaggerated by an extraordinary faith in

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[34] See for sources those cited in nn. 24 and 36.

the power of inheritance and its effects. In "Arthur Jermyn," Lovecraft depends upon the trope of the loop to create a certain biological repetition-compulsion, which is then played out in Arthur's fate. Individual identity is subverted by the eternal repetition of biological forms and their determined actions. Like the repetitiousness of Norris' Vandover or the cyclical quality of London's histories, the recycling of the biological past of the Jermyns erupts with a savage force that is broken only by the suicidal act of immolation that terminates the family line. What began with the metaphorical heat of Wade Jermyn's sexual desire in the sultry, sweltering tropics of the Congo ends in the burning up of his progeny. This looping of genetic inheritance culminates in the image of an overheated sexuality that literally reduces its final descendant to cinders.

Arthur's tragic fate, however, is more than just a symbol of an excessive biological energy. For he is also the victim of the same crossed wires that transform Norris' heroes into self-destructing automatons. Arthur too is prey to a nature made up of conflicting, hereditary forces. Though he ends up an anthropologist, still he is unlike "any other Jermyn who had ever lived, for he was poet and a dreamer." Indeed, so much so that, even as neighbors "who had heard tales of old Sir Wade Jermyn's unseen Portuguese wife declared that her Latin blood must be showing" (53), others "sneered at his sensitiveness to beauty, attributing it to his music-hall mother, who was socially unrecognised" (54). But whether a sign of Latin ethnicity or class degeneration, his poetic sensitiveness, in the tradition of Poe's Usher and Norris' Vandover, does indicate the presence of a certain morbidity, a potential decadence, that inevitably hovers above all who are *too* sensitive. Not surprisingly, Lovecraft liberally borrows from "Fall of the House of Usher" to describe this aspect of Arthur's dire inheritance: "Madness was in all the Jermyns, and people were glad there were not many of them. The line put forth no branches, and Arthur was the last of it" (50).

Like the characters in *McTeague*, whose hereditary characteristics so tragically short-circuit each other, Arthur is also the victim of crossed wires. His unusual ugliness

and starkly simian qualities, instead of indicating a stereotypically brutish obliviousness, are welded to a remarkable sensitivity that responds to his family curse with self-destructive intensity. Arthur is just as sensitive to horror as to beauty. By chaining Arthur's hereditary sensitivity to the physical and sexual grossness of his body, a body that has been laid before the uncontrollable forces of evolution, history, and desire, Lovecraft deepens our horrified response to poor Arthur's condition. But we should be careful to recognize at this point that our horror derives not so much from the dissolution of the traditional dualism between mind and body in a biologically-determined universe, but from Arthur's *consciousness* of that dissolution. Unlike McTeague or even Vandover, both of whom remain ignorant of the determining forces that impinge upon their existence, Arthur, as an anthropologist and a scientist, understands only too well the dark implications behind those forces. Unlike the former, whose tragic fates appear to be driven in part by their inability to comprehend their fates, Arthur fully understands his, but recognizes simultaneously his utter helplessness before it, his absolute inability to do anything about it. In contrast to Norris' characters, who might have benefited from full comprehension of the tragic ends to which their behaviors were driving them, Arthur, even with full knowledge, is allowed no choice. Eventually, the legacy of his great-great-great-grandmother must assume control and the remainder of his days be determined by her animal ancestry.

Decadent Detectives

In documenting the fear of the loss of control over one's biological heritage, Lovecraft gives mute testimony to his own fears. Despite a "99.8%" Teutonic stock, ever present to him was the curse of the "Celtick taint" and a family history of disease and mental illness. The entrapment of a sensitive soul in a degenerate body was a fate that, alas, had not restricted itself solely to Arthur. But even if "Arthur Jermyn" does express Lovecraft's personal eugenic anxieties, it is only a small piece in the worried

puzzle Lovecraft's vision of a materialist universe posed for the eugenically minded, a small piece that is enlarged upon in his next, most telling tale of degeneration, "The Lurking Fear."

While "Arthur Jermyn," in presenting a character sensitive to the anguish of horror, follows a pattern adopted by many of Lovecraft's tales, it differs significantly in its avoidance of presenting that decadent sensibility Lovecraft introduces in such tales as "The Tomb" and "The Hound,"tales whose characters begin as masked versions of their author in their quests for the types of titillations Lovecraft exhibited in his preference of weird to realistic fiction. Through this quest for decadent pleasures, Lovecraft was often able to provide his characters with the motivations that have traditionally enmeshed gothic heroes and heroines in their horrific circumstances. Such is the case of the narrator of "The Lurking Fear," who, in following his strange desires, fully established the link only hinted in "Arthur Jermyn" between the gothic novel and the detective tale.

Once again, the search is for origins — this time for the cause of a series of terrible crimes in the Catskill mountains. Yet, though there will be no familial link between the tale's protagonist and his discovery, the investigation he initiates does not vary considerably from Jermyn's. Like Jermyn, the narrator of "The Lurking Fear" is also a sensitive soul. Unlike Jermyn, however, he also exhibits a distinct penchant for things morbid. A journalist by trade, he is a "connoisseur of horrors" (*The Lurking Fear* 4), whose "love of the grotesque and the terrible" has made his "career a series of quests for strange horrors in literature and life" (1). This search for thrills is what impels him to solve the riddle of the lurking fear, irrespective of its dangers, which he overlooks, having based his decision to investigate upon that conventional self-endangering curiosity one typically finds in the gothic novels Lovecraft knew well. His appeal is of the type employed by Edgar Huntly, Victor von Frankenstein, or Dr. Jekyll: "I had already decided not to abandon the quest for the lurking fear, for in my rash ignorance it seemed to me that uncertainty was worse than enlightenment, however terrible the latter might

prove to be" (7). Indeed, so driven is he to unravel the mystery of the lurking fear, that even after the brutal murder of several compatriots, he persists in his investigations rather than depart scared and beaten. Willing to follow the lurking fear even into its underground warrens, his cry is better knowledge than ignorance, better curiosity than indifference. Even sanity is not too high a price to pay for knowledge: "It was amply large enough for a man to wriggle through; and though no sane person would have tried at that time, I forgot danger, reason, and cleanliness in my single-minded fever to unearth the lurking fear" (15).

The need to know, to discover the reality behind the appearance, no matter the cost, reflects the intense anxieties that underlie the eugenic fantasy. Beginnings, origins — they are everything in the Lovecraftian tale because, unlike the subjective ambiguities of the psychopathological tale or the objective distortions of the supernatural yarn, it is scientifically explicable. The "Lurking Fear" can be explained — and when it is, it will be neither the product of hallucination nor of superstition. It will be real because it will be possible. This is the functional premise of the weird tale and the eugenic nightmare.

Drawing our "connoisseur" of horrors into the dreadful discoveries he will make is the "catastrophe which first brought the region to the world's notice": the discovery, following a "squatter stampede," of the slaughter of an entire village. With twenty-five of its inhabitants missing and the other fifty "horribly mangled, chewed, and clawed" corpses (2-3), so begins the quest of this connoisseur of horrors, who has arrived to investigate the haunted ruins of the Martense mansion from which, so the squatters claim, the horror originated. His hope? To see, with two companions, "long associated with me in my ghastly explorations because of their peculiar fitness," the "half-glimpsed fiend" (1-2) responsible for these terrible atrocities. His method for achieving his goal is elaborate:

> I had thoroughly searched the ruin before, hence knew my plan well; choosing as the seat of my vigil the old room of Jan Martense.... The chamber [measured] about twenty feet square.... It lay on the second

> story, on the southeast corner of the house, and had an immense east window and narrow south window, both devoid of panes or shutters. Opposite the large window was an enormous Dutch fireplace.

In this fairly tight description, by laying out the location and dimensions of the room, Lovecraft prepares his reader for the "airtight" plan that follows.

> As the tree-muffled thunder grew louder, I arranged my plan's details. First I fastened side by side to the ledge of the large window three rope ladders which I had brought with me. I knew they reached a suitable spot on the grass outside, for I had tested them. Then the three of us dragged from another room a wide four-poster bedstead, crowding it laterally against the window. Having strewn it with fir boughs, all now rested on it with drawn automatics, two relaxing while the third watched. From whatever direction the demon might come, our potential escape was provided. If it came from within the house, we had the window ladders; if from outside the door and the stairs. (5)

Escape routes in either direction established, the plan appears foolproof. Yet what follows is a complete catastrophe. Both companions disappear from either side of the narrator without a peep, and as for the narrator himself, all he sees of the lurking fear is a shadow on the chimney above the fireplace of "a nameless, shapeless abomination which no mind could fully grasp and no pen even partly describe" (6).

The confusing result is almost too much to comprehend. How does it come to pass that neither companion escapes, despite access to exit routes on either side? Whatever the answer is, Lovecraft artfully postpones it in order to heighten the effect of its final presentation. For the moment, the plan's failure must instead serve as a red herring that will be addressed in the second part of the tale. Meanwhile the narrator, despite the shocking disappearance of his two companions, has ventured once more into the hills to investigate, this time with one Arthur Munroe, who provides the important suggestion of studying the countryside for clues. Having pondered earlier why in the mansion "had it picked them, and left me for the last?" (7), the narrator considers the knotty problem of the disappearance of his two companions in greater detail:

> My mind turned to that odd question which had kept recurring ever since the nightmare thing had happened; and again I wonder why the demon, approaching the three watchers either from the window or the interior had begun with the men on each side and left the middle till the last when the titan fireball scared it away? Why had it not taken its victim in natural order, with myself second, from whichever direction it had approached? With what manner of far-reaching tentacles did it prey? Or did it know that I was the leader, and saved me for a fate worse than that of my companions? (10-11)

By now, the red herring is only too obvious, the continual repetition of "it" giving the answer away even as Lovecraft strives through repetition of the pronoun to reinforce our continued identification with the narrator's mistake, namely that there is only one such beast. That his assumption of a single entity is a mistake, however, does not occur to him until, after encountering one such monster, he learns of another which has been burned alive in one of the Catskill hamlets.

Here then is ostensibly the solution to the lurking fear: there are two creatures. But this too proves a red herring once the narrator takes notice, as per the suggestion of his new companion, of the "various points and lines of the mound system" that riddle Tempest Mountain. Now a series of speculations follow. Realizing that the countryside "must be honeycombed," he begins to wonder how many creatures there must have been "that night at the mansion ... they took Bennett and Tobey first ... on each side" (19). Now is our narrator prepared to learn the secret of the lurking fear, the key to which has always lain in the uncountable noun "fear." At first, suggesting a single demonic entity, the "fear" is feverishly transformed into two and then many, perhaps too many such entities — a literal overflow of devilish beings that no one, even at this point of the narrator's startling revelation, has yet had a clear look at.

Nor can the implications of this discovery be overstated as the typically energizing solution to who did it is abruptly supplanted by the darker notion of a horrible entity that is not singular but myriad, a horrifying plethora of ghastly beings, whose very abundance suggests threateningly prolific origins. Thus are we led by Lovecraft

through the tropes of detective fiction to the grim Darwinian calculus of a biological threat that is not a mere one or two quirks of nature, but a veritable fountain of spawning evil.

Lessons in Degeneration

This reproductive superabundance, as witnessed in the concluding scene, proves a eugenical nightmare as the narrator watches there stream forth from the caverns below the mansion the inbred Martense family descendants. Of course, such a fantasy itself could only produce the impact it did because of the growing literature on inbreeding and degeneration that tapped to fears sweeping America and Europe. In the wake of the criminal anthropology of Cesare Lombroso and his disciples, reform-minded tracts, like Charles Loring Brace's *The Dangerous Classes of New York,* on the relationship between criminality, pauperism, and heredity threw into relief the threat posed by the transmissibility of pathological behaviors to offspring. One of the earliest contributions to this school of thought was Richard Dugdale's *The Jukes, a Study in Crime, Pauperism, Disease, and Heredity* (1877), the stunning sales of which did much to popularize the notion of criminality and pauperism as hereditary characteristics. But Dugdale, like Lombroso, Brace and other pre-1900 hereditarians, tended to be Lamarckian in his views, holding that the hereditary transmission of such delinquencies found both cause and cure in one's environment. As Dugdale saw it, because "environment tends to produce habits which may become hereditary, especially so in pauperism and licentiousness," reformers could do no better than to eradicate these ills by altering that environment (qtd. in Degler 38). By Lovecraft's day, however, this view was no longer viable in light of recent eugenical discoveries. Hence the need, as Henry H. Goddard saw it, for his far more modern 1912 study, *The Kallikak Family, A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness.* This, shortly followed by his *Feeblemindedness: Its Causes and Consequences* in 1914 and Arthur Estabrook's eu-

genical re-examination of the Jukes in 1916, contributed substantially to the popular reception in America of the new hard hereditarianism of the eugenics movement.[35]

Suddenly the threat of feeble-mindedness, now held by Goddard as the culprit responsible for criminality, became all the rage in the United States. The movement to test intelligence in order to ferret out the feeble-minded achieved a previously unknown legitimacy with the administration of intelligence tests to two million World War I draftees.[36] Unfortunately, the results that were published in 1921 under the direction of Robert Yerkes did not bode well for America, especially for its poor, immigrant, non-white, and mentally handicapped citizens. That the tests themselves were poorly designed and badly administered was beside the point. As Stephen Jay Gould points out, so long as the results desired were the results obtained, even when such results appeared ridiculous (most Americans, for example, even those of the "best stock," scored as "morons"), no eugenicist was going to object to the net result. For them, intelligence tests confirmed their worst fears of these maginalized groups by providing an "objective" basis for those fears, one so objective that by "1915 thirteen states had empowered the government to render sterile certain criminals and mentally defective persons in public institutions" (Degler 45).[37] Moreover, this move to eugenically clean up America's biological stock continued well into the 1920s and 1930s. By 1927 involuntary sterilization laws had been deemed constitutional, by 1930 "some thirty states had

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[35] For an overview of the role played by the genre of "family studies" in the eugenics movement, see Rafter 1-31. Rafter notes that aside from those by Dugdale, Stoddard, and Estabrook, additional studies that because of their initial popularity remain "relatively accessible" include A. E. Winship's *Juke-Edwards: A Study in Education and Heredity* (1900), Arthur Estabrook and Charles B. Davenport's *The Nam Family: A Study in Cacogenics* (1912), Estabrook and Ivan E. McDougle's *Mongrel Virginians: The Win Tribe* (1926). Rafter's *White Trash* itself is an invaluable resource for its reproduction of fifteen harder-to-find family studies of the sort already listed. For full bibliographical information, see 379-82.

[36] On intelligence testing, see Kamin 1-13 and Gould 146-233 For less focused discussionson the relationship of intelligence testing to the eugenics movements, see sources mentioned in note 24 above.

[37] For a more detailed discussion on sterilization policy in the United States, see Reilly 30-148.

enacted such laws," by "the opening of the 1930s, some 12,000 sterilizations had been performed in the United States" (45-46).

Lovecraft's own response to this discourse of degeneration was to reconfigure it in his dark fantasy fiction. In this case, his recipe for degenerating one's family stock may be abstracted from the steps taken by the Martenses. All begins with "Gerrit Martense, a wealthy New-Amsterdam merchant who disliked the changing order under British rule" (12-13). The first step in the direction familial degeneration derives not surprisingly from a combination of geographical isolation and self-imposed exile. "Of Gerrit Martense's descendants," we are told, "less is known than of himself; since they were all reared in hatred of the English civilisation, and trained to shun such of the colonists as accepted it." Living in a manner "exceedingly secluded," the Martenses grow "heavy of speech and comprehension." As their "social contacts" become "fewer and fewer," family members take the rather perilous step in Lovecraft's era of "intermarrying with the numerous menial class about the estate." Finally, though many "of the crowded family" who "degenerated," move across the valley to merge "with the mongrel population which was later to produce the pitiful squatters," the "rest" decide to stick "sullenly to their ancestral mansion, becoming more and more clannish and taciturn" (13). From this short history, Lovecraft makes it clear that while the isolation and exile of the Martenses do not lead immediately to incest, they do hint at the next worst possibility — marrying out of one's class.

By positing strictly biological causes for their sullen, clannish, taciturn, anti-social characteristics, Lovecraft suggests a eugenically credible pattern of degeneration for this wealthy Dutch pedigree. Having interbred with those below their class, the Martenses were doomed to degenerate. Just consider their descendants, the "squatting mongrels" who have spread themselves across the Catskills, a population that is transformed by Lovecraft into the objects of both a harshly comic pity and a silently furtive fear. On the one hand, the local Catskills population is cast as weak and effeminate.

When reporters, for example, arrive at Tempest mountain, the "degenerate squatter population" speak of the demon attack with a "whimpering insistence." During the attack itself, the "pitiful throngs of natives shrieked and whined of the unnameable horror which had descended upon them" (3). Later when the narrator and Arthur Munroe try to "gather a body of squatters as helpers," they prove "[t]imid," with only "a few of the younger men ... sufficiently inspired by [Arthur and the narrator's] protective leadership" to join (10).

This pitiful weakness, however, also carries an undercurrent of danger because of their degenerate state and basic criminality. This oscillation between cowardliness and dangerousness is aptly captured in the conclusion drawn by reporters that "some hideous animal must be the cause" of the massacre, since none prove willing to "revive the charge that such cryptic deaths formed merely the sordid murders common in decadent communities" (3). In one fell swoop is the squatter community thus rendered coward and criminal. But their personally being freed from blame does not necessarily free from blame what they represent. Indirectly, the squatter community is responsible for these deaths. After all, it is by interbreeding with such criminally-inclined inferiors that the first step in the degeneration of the Martenses is taken.

This infectious criminality emerges full-blown in the death of Jan Martense. The "first of Gerrit's descendant's to see much of the world," upon his return "after six years of campaigning," he comes to be "hated as an outsider by his father uncles, and brothers" because, among other things, he no longer shares "the peculiarities and prejudices of the Martenses" (13). When Jan ceases to be heard from, a corresponding friend who is determined "to visit Jan in person" instead finds "the mansion in great decrepitude." There, the "sullen, odd-eyed Martenses, whose unclean animal aspect shocked him," tell him "in broken gutterals [sic]" of Jan's death (14). This already advanced state of degeneration of the family is subsequently confirmed by forensic analysis of Jan's exhumed body, which reveals a crushed skull. The open accusation of murder

that follows, however, only further isolates the Martenses from the remaining population. Already devastated by their interbreeding with menials and servants, the Martenses sink even deeper into degeneration from the consequent inbreeding that follows.[38]

Testimony to how far they sink appears in 1816, after local "squatters" notice the absence of lights in the mansion. A search party that is sent discovers the mansions "deserted and partly in ruins." Left behind are only two clues as to what has happened to the family. First are the "improvised penthouses," evidence of "how numerous" the clan "had grown prior to its migration." Second is the abandoned "decaying furniture and scattered silverware," signs of how "very low" the "cultural level" of the family "had fallen" (14-15). And intertwined into these two foreshadowing clues are the hidden fears of reproductive proliferation and cultural decay Lovecraft taps.

For it is at the "hole at the base of the old chimney" beneath the family hearth that the narrator finally discovers the true symbolic "hole" at the center of the Martense family. With cinematic verve, Lovecraft plunges our hero into darkness through use of the well-known draught of wind, which blows out his candle. Left in the dark to listen to the rumble of thunder, he sits silently as he waits to see what will emerge. And what does emerge fulfills all of the eugenic hints that have honeycombed the tale, like the tentacled spread of underground burrows that emanate from the Martense mansion.

> .... The things came abruptly and unannounced; a demon ratlike scurrying from pits remote and unimaginable, a hellish panting and stifled grunted, and then from the opening beneath the chimney a burst of multitudinous and leprous life — a loathsome night-spawned flood of organic corruption.... Seething, stewing, surging, bubbling like serpents' slime it rolled up and out of that yawning hole, spreading like a septic contagion and streaming from the cellar at every point of egress. (20)

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[38] After documenting their isolation, heaviness of speech, diminishing "social contacts," intermarriage with menials and so forth, Lovecraft adds in the next paragraph the almost impossible claim that most "of this information reached the outside world through young Jan Martense." While the criminal degeneration of the Martenses may in part be attributed to their interbreeding with the "degenerate" locals, because Jan is descended only one generation from the progenitor of the Martense clan, Gerrit, Jan's murder can only be the result of the accelerated degeneration of his family, a degeneration so accelerated that it upsets the credibility of the tale.

With his usual gusto, a far from concealed disgust with sexuality and reproduction overwhelms Lovecraft's description of this birthing of "leprous life" and "organic corruption" from this subterranean hole. From where once the heat of a chimney held rule, there now bubbles forth the the products of overheated libidinal lusts. In this frightening image of overflowing life, Lovecraft taps a common image of eugenicist thought, which saw the reproductive capacity of degenerate populations as a threat. From the unrestrained sexuality of those reduced by isolation to interbreeding and then inbreeding, Lovecraft paints a horrific portrait of the plethoric vitality of degeneration.

But Lovecraft means to push further by detailing the form this "stew" of organic corruption takes:

> God knows how many there were — there must have been thousands. To see the stream of them in that faint intermittent lightning was shocking. When they had thinned out enough to be glimpsed as separate organism, I saw that they were dwarfed, deformed hairy devils or apes — monstrous and diabolic caricatures of the monkey tribe. They were so hideously silent; there was hardly a squeal when one of the last stragglers turned with the skill of long practice to make a meal in accustomed fashion on a weaker companion. Others snapped up what it left and ate with slavering relish. (21)

> What I saw in the glow of flashlight after I shot the unspeakable straggling object was so simple that almost a minute elapsed before I understood and went delirious. The object was nauseous; a filthy whitish gorilla thing with sharp yellow fangs and matted fur. It was the ultimate product of mammalian degeneration; the frightful outcome of isolated spawning, multiplication, and cannibal nutrition above and below the ground; the embodiment of all the snarling and chaos and grinning fear that lurk behind life. (22)

In a return to "Arthur Jermyn," Lovecraft milks the stereotype of degeneration to its last drop. Without ever referring to incest outright, he lets the mention of isolation and "cannibal nutrition" carry their imagistic weight through the white gorillas who now inhabit the tunnels beneath the Martense mansion. Quite graphically, Lovecraft pushes the limits of the conception of organic chaos in an unintended but nonetheless exaggerated

parody of the Darwinian struggle. Not only are these degenerate beasts cannibals, but, more repulsively, their cannibalism does not even respect the biological boundaries of family.

The implications are chaotic on a scale unimagined even by Darwin. In "The Lurking Fear," Lovecraft horrifically imagines the sexual reproduction of the meat that will be eaten, a "Modest Proposal" without the protective frame of satire. The fantastic product of an abhorrence of sexuality driven by contemporary eugenic fears of reproduction and degeneration, "The Lurking Fear," like "Arthur Jermyn," spins a web of Darwinian chaos that levels sexuality and death. Emerging from the womb only to be returned to the stomach, the Martense monstrosities realize in fantastic terms the fierce biological drives to feed and breed that marked the materialistic Darwinism that Lovecraft zealously adopted, and that eugenicists regarded as the most obvious indicators of human degeneration. The Martenses, born to serve as the fuel of another's survival and future reproduction, become emblems of the same self-consuming biologically determinism that ruled the destiny of the Jermyns, and possibly the Lovecrafts.

The sexual heat that ends in Arthur's incineration is reproduced in the self-annihilating power of Darwinian reproduction in "The Lurking Fear." The cross-species copulations realized by the Piltdown man for Lovecraft in "Arthur Jermyn" are complemented by the excessive and degenerative sexuality of the inbred and feeble-minded populations imagined by Lovecraft's fellow eugenicists. Through the power of literary fantasy, Lovecraft reconceives organic matter at its most basic level by eliminating the cerebrations of a pompous humanity by introducing degenerated "gorilla" things that know only to copulate, reproduce, and feed. For in a post-Darwinian world, in which materialism and eugenics go hand-in-hand, this is the only reality worth knowing. The mind-shattering horror for the narrator is his discovery through the degeneration of the Martense of a biologically-determined universe in which the *need* to feed and breed supersedes *human* controls on that universe. The apparent chaos is chaos only by contrast

with the rules of human conduct. The prohibitions on incest and cannibalism, which are distinctly human institutions, are cast aside by Lovecraft's Darwinian life-driven universe, a universe in which degeneration is but the pejorative name given by humanity for an overly energetic, ever proliferating organicism.

Whose Shadow Is Over Innsmouth?: The Case Against Immigration

When "Arthur Jermyn" and "The Lurking Fear" were written in the early 1920s, the anti-immigration sentiments of the eugenics movement were already at a fever pitch. Yet even though neither tale addressed directly the American fear of immigrants, both did concern themselves with issues that would later be transferred to these different-looking foreigners and the threat posed by them of racial degeneration and cross-class interbreeding. Seven years after passage of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924, there appeared in 1931 Lovecraft's "The Shadow over Innsmouth." By then the eugenic and anti-immigration movements had moved on to new concern and new problems. But not Lovecraft. While "Shadow" differed from "Arthur Jermyn" and "The Lurking Fear" by participating in the "mythos" Lovecraft had established of extraterrestrial monstrosities buried within Antarctic glaciers or submerged beneath the South Seas, its concerns with questions of racial degeneration differed hardly a whit. Instead of this new fictional context drawing "Shadow" away from Lovecraft's eugenic worries, "Shadow" tied this broader fictional context to those anxieties, continuing in many respects the eugenic tropes adopted in earlier tales.

Like "The Lurking Fear," for example, "Shadow" also features a nameless narrator caught up in events of a Holmesian sort. In "Shadow," however, he is a traveller with an interest in architecture and things old rather than a journalist with a taste for the decadent. Moreover, unlike his fictional predecessor, whose goal is to scoop the solution to a mass murder, the narrator of "Shadow," in his trip from fictitious Newburyport to the mythical Arkham, from "whence [his] mother's family was

derived" (305), is caught up in a quest for answers that is linked far more intimately to his past than either he or the reader suspects.

Like so many of Lovecraft's horror tales, "Shadow" also depends on a mixture of detective and gothic tropes. But Lovecraft does "The Lurking Fear" and "Arthur Jermyn" one better by intensifying the efficacy of these tropes through use of an elaborate frame. Prolonging the mystery surrounding Innsmouth, Lovecraft has his narrator learn about its strange inhabitants and their unorthodox history in three repeat performances, replete with overlaps, red herrings, and clues planted in the form of gossip, folk tales, and hearsay. The first version comes from the Newburyport ticket-seller, who mistakenly suggests to the narrator that he might reach Arkham more cheaply by a bus that passes through the otherwise better avoided Innsmouth: a mistake because mention of this town "not shewn on common maps or listed in recent guide-books" only spurs the narrator to investigate it, a decision he rationalizes by asserting that a "town able to inspire such dislike in its neighbours" surely "must be...unusual, and worthy of a tourist's attention" (305). Echoing that love of things unusual so characteristic of Lovecraft's other decadent and self-destructive narrators, this rationalization provides the necessary push to place him in the jeopardized state which will make this horror tale run.

What follows is a lengthy description by the Newburyport ticket-seller of Innsmouth oddities, a description that is repeated with a few important changes by the grocery clerk in Innsmouth. Thereafter, all that needs to be known of the village's true state is revealed in a third account by the village's oldest resident, the drunken Zadok Allen. With each repetition, with each re-presentation of facts, Lovecraft builds up the impact of the horrifying transgression that is continually being hinted at by the "Innsmouth look." Consider the ticket-seller's description of the "look": "Some of 'em have queer narrow heads with flat noses and bulgy, stary eyes that never seem to shut, and their skin ain't quite right. Rough and scabby, and the side of their necks are all

shrivelled or creased up. Get bald, too, very young. The older fellows look the worst.... Animals hate 'em" (308). In this colloquial disquisition on the "look," Lovecraft cannily closes off this description with that mythic image of animals as accurate indicators of what is "right" in the natural order to suggest the profound wrongness of the inhabitants of Innsmouth. This moral "sixth" sense — a mysticalization of the heightened use of non-visual senses like smell or hearing by animals — capable of distinguishing good from evil becomes a dramatic device to accentuate the all-too-human focus on socially constructed appearances instead of biological realities. Even the narrator's visceral response, the "wave of spontaneous aversion which could be neither checked nor explained" (313) that overwhelms him upon seeing his first native Innsmouther, illustrates this dichotomy. Among the villagers, "instinctively" he finds he dislikes "without being able to define or comprehend them" those "certain peculiarities of face and motions" (317) the residents of Innsmouth exhibit.

Through these "instinctual" responses, Lovecraft widens the gulf between the civilized, liberal response normally expected of people and the gut-level sense of wrongness felt by the narrator, a split that contributes to the effectiveness of the several red herrings the ticket-seller unknowingly plants. One such is the role of prejudice, which is suggested by how "everybody raised Cain when [Old Man Marsh] married an Ipswich girl fifty years ago" because Marsh's "mother seems to've been some kind of foreigner — they say a South Sea islander" (306). In taking note of the way "folks here and hereabouts always try to cover up any Innsmouth blood they have in 'em," the ticket-seller finds evidence for his contention that "the real thing behind the way folks feel is simply race prejudice," a sentiment from which not even he is excepted: "I don't say I'm blaming those that hold it. I hate those Innsmouth folks myself, and I wouldn't care to go to their town" (307). As for the origins of the Innsmouth look, given what "New England ships used to have to do with queer ports in Africa, Asia, the South Seas, and everywhere else, and what queer kinds of people they sometimes brought

back with em," no doubt "there must be something like that back of the Innsmouth people." This last, misleading suggestion is complemented by an oblique reference to the sins of inbreeding when he adds the "place was always cut off from the rest of the country by marshes and creeks, and we can't be sure about the ins and outs of the matter" (307). Though conjecture, this suggested origin for the degeneration of Innsmouth is helped along finally in its mission to mislead by the "plague of '46," which "must have taken off the best blood in the place," leaving behind "what they call 'white trash' down South — lawless and sly, and full of secret doings" (309).

Racial migration, inbreeding, disease — each is a red herring meant to trap narrator and reader alike. Nor is the effectiveness of each diminished by the indirectly quoted testimony of the grocery clerk, most of whose description comprises what he has and has not either seen or heard. Among other things, he notes the dangerousness of the waterside slums and the officially disavowed local churches, the inordinate amounts of liquor consumed by residents (another red herring at degenerative origins), their queer appearance and "disgusting" voices, their fondness "of the water" and of "[s]wimming races," their reticence with strangers and evasion of government officials, the strange "chanting" in the "churches at night," the absence of old people, the abundance of fish about the port harbor, and the "excess of weird jewellery [sic]." Different in tenor from the ticket seller's account, which includes far more of the "known" history of Innsmouth, the grocery clerk's account joins with it to create a narrative tension that grows with the accumulation of inexplicable facts. From its strange history to the even stranger practices of its residents, Innsmouth appears as a puzzle to be solved by the narrator, a puzzle whose solution lies in the discovery of the mysterious sexual taboo that was violated.

At first, one might suspect the degeneration of Innsmouth's residents to be, in a possible reworking of "The Lurking Fear," the result of *inbreeding*. But as the tale progresses, what one ends up with is an intensified version of the *interbreeding* treated in

"Arthur Jermyn." The final revelation comes in Zadok Allen's narrative of Captain Obed Marsh's trip to the South Sea Islands. There Marsh stumbles across "Kanaky's" bedecked with strange gold jewelry and surrounded by plentiful fishing. Once Marsh wins their trust, the islanders reveal to him how both have been acquired through their worship of and subsequent interbreeding with the "Deep Ones," an ancient, amphibious race of monstrosities that once ruled the earth. Here then is the sexual taboo whose violation lies at the heart of the tale: the repulsive sexual intermingling of humanity and these frog-like beings. But try as the tale might, the horror of the Deep Ones holds little real power unless one considers how Lovecraft's audience might have responded, for despite the careful veiling of anti-immigrant sentiments on display in other tales, he cannot conceal behind the Deep Ones his obvious dislike and fear of immigrants whose racial stocks threatened the purer races of America.[39]

Though "Shadow" appeared five years after his brief stay in New York, his experience of its immigrant masses was sufficient to deter him from ever considering living there again. To Lovecraft, the immigrants he encountered "could not by any stretch of the imagination be call'd human." Rather they were "monstrous and nebulous adumbrations of the pithecanthropoid and amoebal." "Vaguely moulded from some stinking viscous slime of earth's corruption," Lovecraft's immigrants are described as "slithering and oozing in and on the filthy streets or in and out of windows and doorways, in a fashion suggestive of nothing but infesting worms or deep-sea unnamabilities" — the same "deep-sea unnamabilities" found in "Shadow" (*SL I* 333). Like his immigrants, the Deep Ones and their human-hybrid offspring, for example, emit "overpowering"

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[39] Consider his 1925 tales "He" and "The Horror at Red Hook," both written during Lovecraft's two-year residence in New York City. In both, his deep resentment of immigrants rises to the surface. In "He," another nameless narrator wanders streets that "seethe" with "squat, swarthy strangers with hardened faces and narrow eyes, shrewd strangers without dreams," unlike the narrator, who is a "blue-eyed man of the old folk" (*The Tomb* 58-59). In "The Horror at Red Hook," New York police detective Thomas F. Malone is exposed to "seas of dark, subtle faces" (72), "swarthy, sin-pitted faces" (74), swarthy evil-looking strangers" (76), "squat figures and characteristic squinting physiognomies" (78) and so on, all of which are implicated in the satanic cult Malone uncovers that is responsible for the kidnapping and ostensible human sacrifice of "blue eyed Norwegian" children (85).

stenches and move via various forms of "shambling," "hopping" and "flopping." Lovecraft lays a particular emphasis on the repulsiveness of their speech, with scattered references to "guttural words" (341), "mumbling in a throaty voice of peculiar repulsiveness" (342), and "hoarse barkings and loose-syllabled croakings" that bear "little resemblance to recognised human speech" (345). As they gather in intensity, these noises are subsequently transformed into a "bestial scraping and bellowing" and a series of "shocking guttural murmurs" (358) that culminate in "a bestial babel of croaking, baying, and barking without the least suggestion of human speech" (359). Powerfully reflected in these "croaking, baying voices," which "held all the dark shades of expression ... their staring faces lacked" (361) are Lovecraft's distrust of and frustration with the immigrant masses he could not understand. In spite of the fantastic form given "Shadow," Lovecraft's personal disgust with immigrant speech is barely contained by the "babel" of sound that threatens to overwhelm the pure English of his Nordic America.

But the most obvious and distasteful literary crime Lovecraft commits is the oblique reference to Nazism made in the symbols capable of restraining the Deep Ones. The occasion for revelation of these signs occurs when Obed Marsh returns to the South Pacific to restore contact with his newfound Kanaka friends. What Obed discovers instead, however, is an empty island:

> Obed he faound the island people all wiped aout between v'yages. Seems the other islanders had got wind o' what was goin' on, an' had took matters into their own hands. S'pose they musta had, arter all, them old magic signs as the sea-things says was the only things they was afeard of. No tellin' what any o' them Kanakys will chance to git a holt of when the sea-bottom throws up some island with ruins older'n the deluge. Pious cusses, these was — they didn't leave nothin' standin' on either the main island or the little volcanic islet excep' what parts of the ruins was too big to knock daown. In some places they was little stones strewed abaout — like charms — with somthin' on 'em like what ye call a swastika naowadays. Prob'ly them was the Old Ones' signs. (333)

Though Lovecraft did not live to see the final implications of Hitler's eugenical policies, he did express in letters a certain sympathy for the German desire to keep racial and cultural stocks pure, a sympathy not uncharacteristic for one who had awarded himself a "chalk-white" Teutonic ancestry. Hence, the swastika that keeps the Deep Ones at bay. This nightmarish symbol, which would come to stand for all that was wrong with racial purification policies of Nazy Germany was for Lovecraft in the early 1930s an opportunity to intimate, albeit quietly, his own sentiments about the very immigrants who threatened the eugenical and cultural soundness of America.[40]

While it is true that the immigrant threat, as conceived by America, had tapered off dramatically with the successful passage of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1924, an act that had been fervently battled for by eugenicists and members of the Immigration Restriction League, the racial anxieties expressed by the proponents of eugenics had by no means been assuaged. Though the eugenics movement had had little if any impact on the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act, the smallness of its role did not diminish the significance held by the bill for final justification of its views.[41] For even in spite of the sudden closing off of immigration, there was still the problem posed by those immigrants *already in* America, a problem that continued to plague eugenicists like Lovecraft. It is at this point that the effect had by the sea of racist literature in which Lovecraft swam must be factored in. Between Edward Ross' *The Old World into the New* (1912) and Madison Grant's bestselling *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), just two of

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[40] For Lovecraft's views on Nazi racial policy, see *SL IV* 247-58. Moreover, despite their supposed independence from human history, even his tales of the Cthulhu mythos are heavily weighted with pro-Saxon, anti-black,anti-immigrant sentiments. In "Crypt of Cthulhu, a tale fraught with voodooistic "savage" rites performed by "mongrel celebrants"of a "very low, mixed-blooded, and mentally aberrant type" (138-39), Lovecraft treats readers to the amoral world ruled by Cthulhu and his colored minions, a world "free and wild and beyond good and evil, with laws and morals thrown aside and all men shouting and killing and revelling in joy" (*The Dunwich Horror* 141).

[41] Degler argues, however, that though "students of the effect of biological ideas on social thought ... have pointed to the Immigration Act of 1924 as a prime instance of the undesirable effects of intelligence testing on social policy," nonetheless a "close examination of the history of the legislation ... suggests that the role of intelligence testing in the law's enactment was insignificant" (52). To review the debate, see cited in Degler 52-54 and nn. 44-47.

many works that stigmatized Southern and Central Europeans immigrants as mentally inferior, the menace posed by these foreigners to American anglo-Saxon purity was, even with the floodgates of immigration closed, as great a threat as ever. Feeble-mindedness, a danger once relegated America's poor and colored, was immediately extended to its newest huddled masses as the intelligence studies of Kimball Young, Louis Terman, Carl C. Brigham, and Robert Yerkes confirmed American fears of this influx of immigrants and the threat it posed through racial adulteration to anglo-Saxon intelligence.

The fear of immigrants expressed by Lovecraft, however, did not remain exclusively focused on the threat of their cultural difference and obvious inferiority. Rather immigrants served as the perfect post-Darwinian symbol of the proximity between humanity and its animal counterparts. The fundamental threat posed to Lovecraft by the immigrant was the reification of the image of uncontrollable animal sexuality demanded by a materialistic Darwinism. As lesser organisms on the eugenic chain of being, Lovecraft's immigrants were naturally more reproductive than their Nordic counterparts. And it is their rate of reproduction that stands as the central threat to the purity of America's racial stock.

There is, therefore, something of siege mentality expressed in "Shadow," a not unusual sentiment for the period. For Lovecraft, the immigrant, like the inbred degenerate, offered solid evidence of the dark side of Darwinism, proof of the uncontrollable energies — particularly sexual — that invested organic existence. Consider in this regard the sexual disgust that literally clamors for recognition in the overdetermined descriptions of Lovecraft's "Deep Ones," a disgust that is extended to creatures in his other tales, from the "shoggoths" of *At the Mountains of Madness* to his god-like "Cthulhu" in "The Call of Cthulhu."[42] But before embarking upon a Freudian reading that looks to

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[42] See, for example, Punter 279-89. Stephen King notes "sex will almost certainly continue to be a driving force in the genre of horror; sex that is sometimes presented in disguised, Freudian terms, such as

Lovecraft's childhood to explain this disgust, an old gesture by now in Lovecraft studies, one might do better to consider the insights granted in the integration of that disgust with the horror of sexuality that underwrote more broadly the eugenicist image of the immigrant. The similarities between Lovecraft's descriptions of his monsters and his epistolary representations of immigrants underscore the degree to which personal anxieties about sexuality found their material symbolization in eugenicist myths of unrestrained immigrant sexuality and reproductiveness.[43] After all, it is the Deep Ones who, according to Zadok Allen, "hankered arter mixin' with the folks" (331) in the Polynesian islands, a "hankering" that is expressed again in their desire "to mix like they done with the Kanakys" in Innsmouth. Nor is this hankering without just cause since, according to Obed, "they brung us fish an' treasure, an' shud hev what they hankered arter" (337).

Not surprisingly, the desire to violate this taboo against interbreeding is cast as the sick desire of the alien Other. Both Kanakas and Innsmouthers, of course, "balk" (331) at the repulsive suggestion. But why the Deep Ones want to mix, other than from some unnamed, undiscriminating sexual drive, remains unclear. In keeping with the eugenic vision of an uncontainable immigrant sexuality, a sign of the propinquity between immigrant and animal, there is also the quiet suggestion of subjugation through sexuality, of conquest through adulteration. This abundant reproductive capacity is repeatedly insinuated by the sporadic mention of numbers Lovecraft plants throughout the tale. For instance, with "all kinds o' cities on the sea-bottom" (330), Obed has little trouble finding the Deep Ones again after the extermination of the Kanaka islanders, since, as the Kanaka chief had explained on his first voyage, "the things was scattered

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Lovecraft's vaginal creation Great Cthulhu" (67). See, for example, Lévy's comparison of Lovecraft's description of shoggoths in *At the Mountains of Madness* (*At the Mountains* 105) and his letter dated {Find letter}.

[43] Compare his description of immigrant homes — "I thought of some avenue of Cyclopean and unwholesome vats, crammed to the vomiting point with gangrenous vileness, and about to burst and inundate the world in one leprous cataclysm of semi-fluid rottenness" — with his description of Cthulhu after it is struck by a ship: "There was a bursting as of an exploding bladder, a slushy nastiness as of a cloven sunfish, a stench as of a thousand opened graves" (153).

all over the world, so's anybody that looked abaout cud find a nest an' bring 'em up ef they was wanted" (332). Even after the location of the nest by Innsmouth is revealed to the government, which sends forthwith a "deep-diving submarine" to discharge "torpedoes downward in the marine abyss just beyond Devil Reef" (304), the nest, we learn, is "hurt, but not destroyed." Indeed, the "Deep Ones could never be destroyed" because there's just too many of them.

How many? Enough apparently for us to know that, after the attack on Devil's Reef, for "the present they would rest." But "some day, if they remembered, they would rise again," and next time it "would be a city greater than Innsmouth" (367). Nor is this any mean threat, our having been informed earlier of the disdain with which the Deep Ones respond to the fears expressed by Obed's Kanakas of being attacked by other islanders: "they dun't keer much, because they cud wipe aout the hull brood o' humans ef they was willin' to bother" (331). The paranoiac fear of being overrun, a fear that once upon a time had taken the form of the "sleeping giant complex" which fueled turn-of-the-century anti-Asian sentiment, perfectly characterizes the eugenic fears of immigration Lovecraft treats. In light of the swastika meant to protect us from the Deep Ones, how eerily proleptic appear the opening descriptions of the "strange and secret investigation" conducted by the "Federal government" of "certain conditions." Add then to this the "raids and arrests ... followed by the deliberate burning and dynamiting ... of ... crumbling, worm-eaten, and supposedly empty houses" and one begins to appreciate the degree of paranoia Lovecraft means to generate through his fantastic imagery of the threatening Other. Nor does he stop here as keener "news-followers," already puzzled by "the prodigious number of arrests, the abnormally large force of men used in making them, and the secrecy surrounding the disposal of the prisoners," are left to wonder at information gap that follows this mobilization of government forces: "No trials, or even definite charges, were reported; nor were any of the captives seen thereafter in the regular gaols of the nation. There were vague statements about disease and concentration

camps, and later about dispersal in various naval and military prisons." To those who read the Deep Ones literally, these actions appear benign enough as far as standard horror fare goes. But, when filtered through Lovecraft's view of immigrants and non-whites, they begin to sound like the opening shots of a Nazi police state. Like the immigrant hordes they stand in for, the Deep Ones also pose a threat to national security. And in sending the Deep Ones to concentration camps or in handing them over to the executioner, Lovecraft proffers solutions no different from those propounded by the more vituperative of race theorists, Nazi or otherwise. While there is no debating that the menace represented by the Deep Ones is a fantasy, to Lovecraft the threat they symbolized stood for something very real.

Whose Shadow Is Over Innsmouth?: The Case for H. P. Lovecraft

After the framing narratives of ticket-seller, grocery clerk, and Zadok Allen, the final twist of the tale is reserved for our discovery that the narrator is, unbeknownst to himself, the descendant of a Deep One. This, of course, necessitates a compromise in our sympathies for him as well as a revision in our analysis of his story. This twist especially raises serious questions about reading "Shadow" as the fantastic reconfiguration of Lovecraft's fears of immigration and immigrants.

There is no new insight in the notion that taboo violations just as much attract as repel, an idea as old as Freud's speculations on that circle of fear and desire in *Totem and Taboo.* In "The Lurking Fear" and "Arthur Jermyn," for example, though Lovecraft makes obvious use of taboo violations to pontificate against socially unwelcome behaviors and sentiments, particularly the menace of miscegenation, the sheer energy with which he invests these tales only serves to underscore the unconscious fascination held by him for the aberrant and chaotic sexuality he detests. In classic gothic manner, he secretly indulges what he condemns by showcasing it in extreme fantastic form.

In "The Shadow over Innsmouth," however, he departs from this formula by foregrounding this conflict in the story itself. Even as the fear of immigrant sexuality is put on display, a certain fascination with it peeks out from behind the literary curtain. Consider, for example, what entices the Kanakas to interbreed with the Deep Ones. According to Zadok, the Kanakas establish contact with the Deep Ones after "plenty o' fish ... druv ... in from all over the sea" (331) are promised them. But when "it come to matin' with them toad-lookin' fishes, the Kanakys kind o'balked." Their minds, however, change once they learn their children acquire immortality. True the children of this monster-human mixture will adopt the physical characteristics and appearance of Deep Ones as they age, but this appears a very small price to pay for eternal life. Not surprisingly, everybody eventually "got aout o' the idee o' dyin'" (332), Lovecraft having put together a deal not altogether bad.[44]

And this troubling attraction continues into the conclusion of the tale with the narrator's decision, after recovering his lost heritage, to rejoin his fellow Deep Ones rather than take his own life — unlike Arthur Jermyn. But Lovecraft is careful at this point to raise questions about how voluntary the narrator's decision is. Despite the great shock of his revelation for the unprepared reader, one need not have waited to reach the end of the tale to experience the powerfully disturbing effects of his biological coercion, which is foreshadowed in his response, before he even leaves for Innsmouth, to the "queer-looking" tiara on display at the Newburyport Historical Society. Upon seeing its "reliefs" of "fabulous monsters of abhorrent grotesqueness and malignity — half ichthyic and half batrachian," he is suddenly struck by "a certain haunting and uncom-

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[44] Obed and his fellow Innsmouthers, on the other hand, don't come out so good. Unlike the Kanakas who without fish would starve, the citizens of Innsmouth are lured into establishing contact by promises of gold and good fishing. Moreover, unlike the Kanakas, the townsfolk never really agree to interbreed with the Deep Ones. Instead they are coerced into doing so after they fail in their attempt to incarcerate Obed and his cohorts. Once the town is invaded, the public treatment of the catastrophe, especially after the first miscegenated children are born, as the "disease of '46" reinforces the connection drawn between the Deep Ones and the immigrant invaders they represent. On immigrants as carriers of disease, see Kraut.

fortable sense of pseudo-memory, as if they called up some image from deep cells and tissues whose retentive functions are wholly primal and awesomely ancestral" (312). Now for the reader who doesn't suspect the surprise ending, this pseudo-memory at first appears as an ancestral memory, apropos of Weisman's germ-plasm theory. In this interpretation, the reliefs of amphibious beings trigger in the narrator ancestral memories of his evolutionary origin from the sea. But this interpretation is shortly turned on its head once it is discovered that the memory switch which has been tripped is "ancestral" in the familial, and not evolutionary, sense. The memory which has been fished out derives not from the steady stream of organic history, but from that of his family line, the genetic legacy of a great-great-great-grandmother, who is herself a Deep One. Yet even this turn of the screw is one too few as Lovecraft nastily intimates the derivation of all humanity from the Deep Ones. As Zadok recounts, the Kanakas "finally larnt something as put a new face on the matter. Seems that human folks has got a kind o' relation to sech water-beasts — that everything alive come aout o' the water onct, an' only needs a little change to go back agin" (331). Ostensibly this evolutionary branching of humans and Deep Ones is what allows the two species to mate successfully.

Thus are we returned to square one through the mechanism of ancestral memory as evolutionary origin and family origin are collapsed into into one. Capitalizing on the analogies post-Darwinian evolutionary theory made possible between the birth waters and the evolutionary origin of life from the sea, Lovecraft instantiates in the very body of his narrator the inextricable ties between the individually human and universally organic forces of survival, sexuality, reproduction, and even death. Hence the irresistible draw to the water that eventually overwhelms all of the hybrid offspring of the Deep Ones, a return to the maternal and Darwinian womb that is fully encapsulated in the narrator's resolution to rejoin the Deep Ones rather than kill himself: "The tense extremes of horror are lessening, and I feel queerly drawn toward the unknown sea-deeps instead of fearing them" (367).

But it is only after he meets in telepathic dreams his great-great-great-grandmother and grandmother, both of whom have already joined their fellow Deep Ones, that he makes the decision to rejoin them, knotting even tighter the familial and evolutionary strands that have been woven about him. Nor is this maternal call of the deep so unusual a literary gesture on the part of Lovecraft, for whom the conflation of family and species held a personal appeal in light of the narrator's matrilineal heritage.

Similar to "Arthur Jermyn," "Shadow" also resorts to the eugenicist image of the ancestor whose racial stock overwhelms that of descendants. Like the ancestral white ape mother, that symbol of the unrestrained non-white sexuality who has overpowered her weaker descendants, it takes only one Deep One — in this case, the narrator's great-great-grandmother — to overwhelm the rest. But it is not enough merely to state this parallel. Nor is it enough to suggest this as but a typical example of eugenicist fears expressed in fantasy form, since for Lovecraft, there were personal stakes in the matter. The racial paranoia inspired by the hard hereditarianism of the eugenics movement could not leave an individual with so troubled a family history and so complicated a personal medical history unaffected. The strong resemblance between the narrator's genealogy and Lovecraft's, the same Lovecraft who feared the Celtic taint of a great-great-great grandmother and her daughter, can not be ignored. In "Arthur Jermyn," despite its female origin, the curse passed on to Arthur remains largely patrilineal. It is the sin of the fathers Darwinized, appropriate to a son whose father died in a hospital of paresis. In "Shadow," on the other hand, the seething fear of Darwinian sexuality, epitomized by the alien immigrant class whose racial stock threatened the Nordic purity of Lovecraft 's America, shortly gives way the allure in the matrilineal curse of the Deep Ones, an allure missing from the patrilineal fate meted out to Arthur. In "Shadow," suicide is decidedly not embraced by its nameless narrator. Instead there is enacted a return to mother, a return to origins that is less liberating than infantilizing, a return that speaks to the higher

value Lovecraft had placed on the passing of a beloved mother than on the death of a father he was never to know as an adult.

In "Shadow" is thus intermixed a set of concerns that simply refuse to be separated from one another. Or put another way, what is the Shadow over Innsmouth? Is it the phantom of a threatening immigrant population, the living, breathing avatar of Lovecraft's Darwinian materialism? Is it the specter of a family history of racial infestation, mental illness, and physical frailty? Is it the wraith-like embrace of a self-directed nihilism that saw hope only in a self-obliterating return to the womb? Or is it perhaps a shadow so dark that what has cast it must remain forever obscured by the paranoiac fissures of text, mind, and culture that produced it?

This is hardly a set of rhetorical questions to which the answers must inevitably be yes. The paranoia of Lovecraft's fiction is obvious. But in its obviousness lies also its overdetermined character, and settling on simple answers simply will not do. Nor is it satisfactory to assume that his fear of and fascination with the linked threats of sexuality and degeneration, which overlaid much, if not all, of his writings, were so deeply hidden from himself that he could not recognize their taint in his own project as a horror writer. Despite his objections to Dreiser or Joyce's sensualism, there is little doubt that Lovecraft himself proved an able advocate of a powerful sensualist literature. In this sense, he is not unlike Norris' Vandover, writing for the same reason Vandover gambles — to register new sensations on already crisped nerves. Despite his attack on the sensualist ethos of humanistic literature, Lovecraft well knew that in his "weird" fiction were contained the very thrills, drawn from violations of epistemological taboos instead of from the petty criminalities of a sordid reality, he criticized. After all, what could be more "sensualist" than the horrific sensations he strived to produce — the bristling neckhairs and quickening heartbeat? What Lovecraft was probably less prepared to admit was the degree to which his quest to produce horrific sensation might have stood in for the eroticism he claimed to show no interest in.

It is easy, perhaps too easy, to suggest that the labored breathing and rush of adrenaline from reading horror served only as substitutes for the expression of a degenerative sexuality Lovecraft feared. This is not exactly a new insight. What does, however, seem more original is to suggest that the vicarious expression of sexuality offered by weird literature served the dual function of providing an escape valve from the weight of a determined past while still allowing for the appearance, so important to the repressed Lovecraft, of a civilized demeanor. To suggest that Lovecraft's advocacy and production of a weird fiction is no different than sticking dirty magazines between textbook covers is neither so far off the mark nor so demeaning as it seems. For one who, in accepting a hard hereditarian, materialistic Darwinism, must have seen himself as especially cursed in having a paretic father, a mentally ill mother, and a frail personal constitution, his solution seems neither outrageous or ill-founded. In many ways, one might argue it was perfectly logical in its distinctively *popular* response to the oppressive determinisms of a modern, scientific world, the type of response subsequent writers and readers have since picked up on with neither shame nor remorse.

Conclusion

The Fear of Evolution and the Evolution of Fear

With Lovecraft, this examination of the American evolutionary gothic tradition is brought to a close — though this is not to suggest the complete abandonment of this tradition. On the contrary, it remains as vibrant as ever, having assumed forms quite different from its appearance in the fictions of Poe, Norris, London, and Lovecraft. No longer is the alignment of racial character and species difference tolerated in fiction and film as it once was, and with good reason The shadow cast by the Holocaust, the looming presence of which can be felt in Lionel Trilling's objections to a deterministic literary tradition, has been assimilated by the modern popular consciousness. No longer do the biological determinants of race carry the same cultural weight they once did. Despite the cries of a conservative few, the biology of race as a causal explanation of behavior and ability has largely gone the way of phrenology. Nor is there much need for the biologically determined image of race in the gothicized science fiction of modern popular writers (and filmmakers for that matter) when so much new material is available for exploring contemporary fears of evolution, material in the ravages of radiation poisoning and random mutation, in the conspiratorial air of genetic engineering and cybernetics, and in the eerie strangeness of artificial intelligence and xenobiology.

Today, the modern artist knows that there is no market for exploiting biological fears of race, criminality, and miscegenation. Race prejudice is no substitute for modern science. And yet still it is with difficulty that such an artist denies the derivation of his or her work from a tradition established by Poe, Norris, London, and Lovecraft, individuals for whom race, criminality, and insanity were inextricably linked to one another. For them, this linkage was made possible by the materialistic and deterministic views each held, views which not only attached mind to matter, but enslaved the former to the latter.

Lovecraft's reading of Poe as a materialist determinist who cared little for character because character mattered so much less than external circumstance (that is, biological or environmental), may be taken as an accurate reading of all four writers. Even for the modern writer who forgoes dirtying his hands with the racism of these predecessors, one still finds that characteristic tic by which popular fears of evolution are exploited through representation of the mind's domination and sometimes dissolution by the body. The manipulations of character which produce the human and non-human monstrosities of Poe, London, Norris, and Lovecraft reflect an understanding of what their readers feared most: the loss of control which stands at the heart of all horror fiction.

From such a premise, one could persuasively argue that the "monster" of the evolutionary gothic is ideally characterized not by the beast, but by the automaton. In the heavy-handed biological determinism of the evolutionary gothic, one finds beast and machine blended as the reader's attention is focused on the programmability of the living organism. Nature, instead of opposing human will, masters it by assuming the role of programmer. Instinct and adaptation, heredity and self-preservation are codewords for the lines of programming that have made Usher insane, McTeague a murderer, Bassett a savage, and Arthur Jermyn a primate. With a distinctive grimness, garden and machine are become one: the natural and the mechanical are unified under the big tent of evolutionary determinism, whose central horrifying tenet is that not only is all as it is supposed to be, but there is a not a damned thing to be done about it. In the evolutionary gothic, the premise is simple: there can be nothing more horrifying than to bear witness to the pre-determined character of lived experience — at which point such experience is not even lived, but fated.

Long opposed by a philosophical dualism which, by separating mind from matter, granted psyche and soul a freedom otherwise denied these undefinable entities, determinists responded by adopting a hard-headed materialism that eliminated soul and psyche altogether. Perhaps the greatest irony of the rise of a materialistic determinism

was the boost given it by the most important Enlightenment opponent of materialism, French philosopher Rene Descartes. Descartes' dualism of mind and body was anathema to those who sought to derive the former from the latter. Little, however, did Descartes know how much he himself would contribute to the cause of materialism in his attempt to distinguish man from animal by arguing that animals were themselves little more than machines. It took no great leap of imagination for a philosopher like Julien Offray de La Mettrie to exploit this mechanistic view of animal life and apply it to human beings by asserting that while Descartes was correct in assuming animals were like machines, he was mistaken in presuming that human beings were not of the animal kingdom (La Mettrie 142).

For La Mettrie, a physician by trade, there was no horror in accepting man as a machine. The same could not be said of La Mettrie's many detractors, to whom may be added the American audiences of Poe, Norris, London, and Lovecraft. For them, the shocking depravity of gothic's traditional villains was far less shocking than watching the merciless forces of biology and environment at work in the fictional worlds of Usher, McTeague, Walter Bassett, and Arthur Jermyn. Unlike the psychological gothic tradition (or rather psycholgical treatment of the gothic tradition), the evolutionary gothic would do readers the favor of explicitly thematizing the experience of horror itself by pointing to the fundamental loss of control that makes horror possible at all. In other words, evolutionary gothic, like few other genres, makes clear that in order to understand horror one must recognize its epistemological constitution as a trap. The experience of horror in the deterministic work of fiction is not that of the prison (as the fictional tradition of naturalism has been traditionally metaphorized). For while the prison may capture the ethos of the evolutionary gothic, it does not reflect the readerly experience of it. The trap, on the other hand, does by recreating the sense of surprise — the "effect" theorized by Poe or Norris — that comes with the recognition of its being sprung: the recognition that all was, indeed, fated to end as it had.

To experience the springing of the trap is to witness the violation of a taboo, since it is in such violations, or transgressions, that we find the horror experience properly defined. To be more specific, the moment at which a taboo is to be violated is the point that separates the experiences of terror from horror. In the case of the former, we respond with fear as we approach the imminent violation of that taboo; in the latter we are forced to witness, and undergo the anguish of witnessing, that violation. The passage from terror into horror, experienced vicariously through narrative art, is thus always a journey into helplessness. Taboos and their transgression have been the object of a number of studies in which taboos have served as focal points in the socialized expression of guilty desire, religious awe, socially unregulated behavior, or socially inexplicable experience. Yet no matter what the interpretation, all point in the same direction: taboo is the fence that divides not so much the sacred from the profane or the knowable from the unknowable, as chaos from order and powerlessness from control.[1]

But while psychological, anthropological, and theological explanations help to explain the experience of horror as a confrontation with transgression, they fail by their persistence in characterizing horror as a construct almost exclusively of civilization and culture. In treating the social construction of fear, these various theories fall short in explaining the phenomenon of fear itself. The objects of fear may change — speaking to their historical contingency and consequently to the fact that what scared Poe's audience need not scare us or scare us in the same way — but the sensation of fear itself remains the same. Beneath the shifting images that shake us, in their evocation of uncontrollable shivers or an anguished sense of horrified disbelief, there rests a distinctly neurophysiological foundation. It is not enough to say, as with Freud, that the

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[1] There have been a number of attempts to distinguish terror from horror, not all of which agree with each other. See for example Radcliffe 149-50, Robert Hume 284, Varma 130, Norton 35, Twitchell 16-21, Heller 13-17, Schneider 133-34, Aguirre 86-87, King 21-25. On horror and its relation religion, see Otto 1-71, Schneider 121-28 and Varnado chapters 2 and 9; on its relation to psychology, see Jones, Jackson, and Kristeva; on its relation to social taboos, see King 134, 278, Punter 405, Freud, *Totem and Taboo,* Douglas Chapters 1 and 6, Grixti 3-22.

phenomenon of fear is the return of the repressed — and that what is repressed is the painful memory of terrible violence and forbidden lusts checked by social strictures.[2] For our reactions prior to and even after the return of repressed memories is still of a piece bio-physiologically with the less than psychoanalytic confrontation with an imminent and obvious danger — a gun pointed to the head or witnessing of a murder, the sudden swerving of a speeding car on an icy road or the traumatizing survival a collision. There may be no return of the repressed here, but there are bodily sensations closely related in physiological effect.

To get at the heart of fear, the experience of it, and not at its historically contingent sources, is to return our focus to its evolutionary origin. The helplessness of the individual in the face of violence — the fundamental element of all taboo violations — has a distinctly evolutionary character. Whether we speak of physical, emotional, or epistemological violence, the transgressions of body or mind, of the body by the mind or of the mind by the body, we must explore why we respond with fear to the helpless state into which we are cast by the experience of these violations.

Consider again Freud, the traditional source of most speculation on the etiology of fear. Unknowingly, Freud has served the evolutionary gothic tradition better than one might suspect given the preceding discussion by latching on to the most significant aspect of human experience — the extended immaturity period of human development. It is by taking into account the length of that period that psychoanalysis has been able to erect the superstructure of fear and guilt on a foundation of infantile fantasy and anxiety and its formation into violence against self and other. According to Freudian credo, because they are helpless, infants and children must fantasize in order to establish a type of control over their environments. With adulthood these fantasies, usually violent and sexual in nature, are brought up short by the reality principle. Consequently, it is this

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[2] See in particular his essay "The Uncanny" and his discussion of 'anxiety,' 'fear,' and 'fright' in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 12-13

fantastic redefining in childhood of reality that becomes the ruling principle of the return of the repressed: desires forbidden in an adult world become sources of pain and anxiety, and thus objects of fear. Here the loss of control is expressed as the function of a mental unconscious that does not heed society's rules. Instead it follows its own, many of which it subsequently becomes the psychoanalyst's job to figure out.

Unfortunately, psychoanalysis is of little value in the deterministic world of the evolutionary gothic. In the psychological gothic, the battled waged within the minds and hearts of characters and readers alike is an unconscious one between infantile desire and adult restraint, between the quest for the power and license to break all taboos and a fear of reprisal from within (guilt) and without (physical punishment). In the evolutionary gothic, the perceived threat of punishment is secondary to what lies at the heart of fear: helplessness. The expression of desire in the evolutionary gothic is never offered as the act of overreaching will, but always as an act of slavery. Desire in the evolutionary gothic is ultimately transgressive not because it is responsible for the victimization of another, but because it testifies to helplessness of the desirer. What horrifies is not merely the victimization of the victim, but the victimization of the villain by those forces of biology and environment that stand in opposition to any expression of free will.

In contrast to the psychological tradition, in which the the villainous will poses as an outrageous disregard for the laws of civil society, the evolutionary gothic tradition foregrounds the helplessness that underwrites all horror fiction, highlighting the looming sense of inevitability one suffocates under even in the most seemingly anti-deterministic gothics. London perhaps came closest to pinpointing the place of fear in the human condition by suggesting the common bond between naturalist and gothic fiction in the emphasis each laid on the link between fear and self-preservation. To London, the experience of fear restored the truth of evolution to its rightful place in the order of things by making animals of men and women. Gothic and naturalist fiction were valuable inasmuch as they were the only art forms that performed the function of generating the

mind-numbing, soul-cleansing fear normally seen only in the struggle for survival. The benefit of these two fictional forms was the length both went to restoring the reader's body into the act of reading itself, by having the experience of reading actually mapped in the nerve endings of frightened readers. Within the confines of this interpretation, one can not even in good faith separate the psychological from the materialist gothic, given that all gothic is a material or more accurately psychosomatic experience. There is no separation of mind and body in the gothic experience, and it is in that sense one may call our encounter with the gothic an evolutionary experience.

In his *Dreadful Pleasures,* James Twitchell opens his discussion of the phenomenon of horror with a bio-physiological description that goes right to the heart of the matter: "What we call gooseflesh is usually caused by abrupt changes in body temperature and is the warm-blooded animal's attempt to shove up its thermostat. Our teeth chatter, knees knock, and skin shivers when we are either cold or frightened. It is almost as if the body is saying, 'Move, you fool, move!' But we don't. We stand still and shudder, suddenly paralyzed" (11). In the spirit of this discussion of "gooseflesh," Twitchell also attempts to tie the etymological origins of terms like "horror" and expressions like "the creeps" to their biological origins:

> To understand the meaning of "horror" we are initially taken back to the Latin word horrere, which means "to bristle," and it describes the way the nape hair stands on end during moments of shivering excitement. In fact, the shiver we associate with horror is the result of the constriction of the skin that firms up the subcutaneous hair follicles and thus accounts for the rippling sensation, almost as if a tremor were fluttering down our back. From this comes the most appropriate trope for horror — creeping flesh or, more simply, the "creeps." This physiological phenomenon clearly has self-defense as its biological purpose, for we pause momentarily in horror, frozen between fight and flight, ironically at our strongest and yet most vulnerable. Medical science is now exploring the biochemical substance, corticotropin, that triggers this response by signaling the pituitary gland to produce hormones. (10)

In literally making the word the flesh by deriving the former from the latter, Twitchell grounds the experience of fear in the body in a way most psychological analyses ignore. That Twitchell himself swiftly foregoes the body for the mind, tying all effective horror art to the psycho-anthropological fear of incest, should not distract us from the intricate connection between body and mind in the experience of fear.

To discuss fear in evolutionary terms is not to suggest that mind may be fruitfully ignored. The dialectical relationship between mind and reality for which Trilling fought in the wake of Dewey and Freud cannot be so blithely disregarded. In order to feel fear, one must be able to apprehend danger. Fear is by its nature a product of the interaction of mind and reality. The distinction between the psychological and evolutionary gothic lies the nature and level of that interaction. The rarefied psychoanalytic conception of fear as the return of repressed memories or conflict of id and superego denies this level of fear to the animal kingdom. To animals is reserved the fear of the immediate bodily danger. In the animal world there are no taboos to be broken, and as such, fear is of a sort different from that experienced in the realm of humanity.

But to distinguish between the sources of fear is not to do away with the shared experience of fear between human being and animal. While there is much room for debate about animal consciousness and whether our fellow mammals experience such primal emotions as jealousy and hatred, or even if they do, whether they experience them in the same way human beings do, there is not much to dispute the fact that animals do experience fear.[3] Different in degree, perhaps, but in kind, not at all. And it is because that difference is one of degree and not of kind that evolutionists like London can posit the link between man and animal as basic, perhaps the most basic element of the human-animal relationship.

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[3] There is actually far more room here to debate than is generally acknowledged. For recent studies of animal intelligence, emotion, and consciousness, see Dawkins, Griffin, and Walker.

Still, there is that difference in degree to be reckoned with, a difference into which the naturalist and gothic traditions have wedged their way, illuminating those darker corners of the human mind that lie within easy reach of the beast. In the psychoanalytic treatment of fear, it is our greater intelligence compared with that of other animal species that renders our experience of it so radically different. Our confrontation with the loss of control — the irresistible emergence of repressed and painful memories, the confrontation with the obliterating sublimity of the Almighty, the disturbing encounter with a socially tabooed or epistemologically incomprehensible event — is directly linked to our capacity for memory, rationality, and self-consciousness, character qualities denied other organism. Yet at the same time, encounters with the above often represent the defeat, if not destruction, of these very humanizing qualities.

To argue this last point is to return to square one and admit that the essential function of fear is to dehumanize by eliminating the restraints placed upon us by memory, rationality, and self-consciousness. In other words, fear animalizes us by returning us to the extended period of immaturity and helplessness into which every human being is born. The process of animalization is linked to that of infantilization. However, what is often glossed over in this seemingly Freudian interpretation of fear is the connection between the particular structure of this lengthy phase of immaturity and our evolutionary difference as a species, for which one could do no better than by taking a look at our closest mammalian cousins. Despite the fact that human beings and chimpanzees share roughly 99% of the same genetic material, the two species differ radically from one another. The most significant of these differences is that in brain size, which is largely responsible for the abnormal length of time its takes human beings to reach maturity. If one has ever wondered how it is that chimpanzees after birth are so quickly able to perform bodily feats of strength and coordination denied human children for so long a period, it is to brain size one must look for the answer. Unlike a human brain, that of a chimpanzee undergoes little growth from the moment that chimpanzee is born. The

change in size is an increase of roughly 40%, as compared with the trebling of size that occurs in the first three years of development of a human child.

But why should this dramatic increase in brain size render human children helpless for such an extended period? That too is closely linked to our evolutionary heritage. Despite the difference in brain size, human beings and their primate cousin are anatomically similar, so much so as to make it impossible for human beings to give birth to children with their full brain weight. Rather than expand dramatically the size of the birth canal — a rather clumsy method in evolutionary terms for accommodating the unusual brain size of the human species — the path taken by natural selection appears to have been that of increasing the size of the brain outside of rather than inside the womb.

At this point, one could argue that there is a cosmic irony at play in the literature of fear, an irony that becomes especially apparent in the evolutionary gothic tradition. The lesson of that tradition, as we have followed it, has been that humanity's greatest fear is of the loss of its own humanity. The horrific implications of the deterministic and materialistic literary and philosophical traditions all point to this one central premise: we are not the masters of our fate, we are not the exercisers of a free will, perhaps the truest expression of our humanity. Instead we are the puppets of heredity and environment, the victims rather than honorees of self-consciousness, who, unlike our brethren below us, have been cursed with the capacity to comprehend our determined states. Even when fictional characters — like Usher, Egaeus, Vandover, McTeague, Bassett, Smith — fail to understand their plights, we as readers do not. We recognize the grooves, the tracks of biological and environmental forces along which they have been fated to ride, and to these there is but one response: the shudder of fear, the refusal to look, *really look,* into the abyss.

But the irony? What else but the fact that the fear we feel in response to our confrontation with helplessness in a determined universe is itself the hand-me-down of human evolutionary development. If fear is grounded in helplessness, and our capacity

to comprehend helplessness as the basis of our fears largely derives from our infant experience of helplessness — an experience denied the rest of the animal world — then truly we are trapped, trapped within a new naturalist paradox.

At first naturalism had asked how was it possible to feel horror in a determined universe, one in which morality could have no meaning where events were inevitable. What good or evil could there be in a world ruled by natural law that had only to answer to itself? To this vision of reality, as naturalists well knew, there could be but one response: horror. True, it was a response in bad faith, but only in a world of the coldest logic. In one of feeling human beings it was in the best faith possible. It was the expression of our human outrage at our animal origin, at the implicit drudgery of a seamless, uninspired, unchangeable, inevitable universe. How much eerier must it therefore seem that the expression of such horror may itself be the by-product of our human evolutionary heritage. There is perhaps no one who would have savored this irony more than London, no one who would have taken greater relish in the idea that our horror of determinism was itself the product of a step taken by the blind god of evolution in its decision to lengthen our experience of helplessness in order to maximize our brain size. This is the abyss of the evolutionary gothic, an abyss composed of endless ironies in which horror is re-read as a construct of biology and we are left to wonder dazedly that had biology not taken the fateful step of making us human, our capacity to be horrified at the prospect of being no more than animal automatons might never have come into being.

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